

US, China take a step back from tariffs

Associated Press

GENEVA—U.S. and Chinese officials said Monday they had reached a deal to roll back most of their recent tariffs and call a 90-day truce in their trade war to allow for more talks on resolving their trade disputes.

Stock markets rose sharply as the globe's two major economic powers took a step back from a clash that has unsettled the global economy. Economists warned that tariffs still remained higher than before and that the outcome of future talks was uncertain.

U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said the U.S.

agreed to drop its 145% tariff rate on Chinese goods by 115 percentage points to 30%, while China agreed to lower its rate on U.S. goods by the same amount to 10%.

Greer and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced the tariff reductions at a news conference in Geneva.

The two officials struck a positive tone as they said the two sides had set up consultations to continue discussing their trade issues. Bessent said at the news briefing following two days of talks that the high tariff levels would have amounted to a complete blockage of each side's

goods — an outcome neither side wants.

"The consensus from both delegations this weekend is neither side wants a decoupling," Bessent said. "And what had occurred with these very high tariff... was an embargo, the equivalent of an embargo. And neither side wants that. We do want trade."

"We want more balanced trade," he said. "And I think that both sides are committed to achieving that."

The delegations, escorted around town and guarded by scores of Swiss police, met for at least a dozen hours on both days

of the weekend at a sunbaked 17th-century villa that serves as the official residence of the Swiss ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva.

At times, the delegation leaders broke away from their staffs and settled into sofas on the villa's patios overlooking Lake Geneva, helping deepen personal ties in the effort to reach a much-sought deal.

China's Commerce Ministry said the two sides agreed to cancel 91% in tariffs on each other's goods and suspend another 24% in tariffs for 90 days, bringing the total reduction to 115 percentage points.

US keys on partnerships as China seeks Africa gains

BY ALISON BATH

Stars and Stripes

ABOARD USS MOUNT WHITNEY — China's efforts to buy influence in Africa through infrastructure and investment may not yield the returns Beijing hopes for, the Navy's second-highest commander in Europe and Africa said amid a 28-nation security exercise led by the United States.

African leaders increasingly view such overtures as tools used by China for economic leverage, Vice Adm. Jeffrey Anderson, commander of U.S. 6th Fleet and Striking and Support Forces NATO, said recently in an interview with Stars and Stripes.

When other countries come in "with a bag of cash or economic investments ... it comes with some strings attached," Anderson said. "They realize that these countries don't have their best interests in mind."

The U.S. is viewed as the "preferred partner," said Anderson, citing increasing participation

by African countries in military exercises and initiatives and an eagerness to work with the U.S. on solving security and other challenges.

"We're not necessarily asking (African countries) to choose between the United States and China, but we are asking (them) to be clear-eyed about what they take on" when accepting Chinese money, he said.

The military has long been part of a multipronged strategy in gaining U.S. influence in Africa.

But with the shuttering of most U.S. Agency for International Development functions, looming State Department cuts and freezes on foreign aid, a larger share of the partnership building that underpins African security is likely to come under the purview of U.S. forces.

And while U.S. military training and assistance is in demand, China has vied for African resources and looked into an enduring military presence along

the Atlantic coast.

China's soft power is visible in newly constructed roads, ports, schools and other infrastructure. For example, the Chinese government funded the construction of a \$60 million university in Praia, Cape Verde, which opened in 2021, University World News reported at the time.

It also financed the 10-island nation's first dam along with its presidential and government palaces and national stadium, according to the report.

And an estimated \$290 million Chinese resort hotel is under construction along the shoreline in Praia, not far from the small port where Anderson hosted African officials and dignitaries aboard the 6th Fleet flagship USS Mount Whitney on May 6 as part of the Obangame Express exercise.

Chinese warships also have made port calls in Praia, the Washington, D.C.-based think tank the Africa Center for Stra-

tegic Studies reported in March.

Cape Verde occupies a strategic mid-Atlantic Ocean location along a transshipment route between South America and both Europe and West Africa.

That position, along with natural deepwater ports, makes Cape Verde a target for drug-traffickers, transnational organized crime and others who threaten security in the mid-Atlantic, West Africa, Europe and the Americas, according to a 2021 State Department report.

U.S. officials also are concerned that China, which has an active stake in 35 West African ports through state-owned companies, could repurpose a commercial port for military use as it did in Djibouti in 2017.

Such moves weigh on Anderson as he balances limited resources and national security needs across an area of responsibility that covers about half of the Atlantic, stretching from the Arctic to Antarctica, and several seas off Europe's coastlines.

Hamas: American-Israeli hostage freed

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — An American-Israeli soldier held hostage for more than 19 months in the Gaza Strip was released Monday, Hamas said, in a goodwill gesture toward the Trump administration that could lay the groundwork for a new ceasefire with Israel.

The Israeli military confirmed that Edan Alexander had been turned over to the Red Cross and was being brought to Israeli forces.

Wearing shirts emblazoned with his name, Alexander's ex-

tended family gathered in Tel Aviv to watch the release. They cheered and chanted his name when the military said he was free.

Alexander was taken from his military base in southern Israel during Hamas' cross-border attack on Oct. 7, 2023, which set off the war in Gaza.

His release would be the first since Israel shattered an eight-week ceasefire with Hamas in March by unleashing fierce strikes on Gaza that have killed hundreds.

Israel has promised to intensify its offensive, including by

seizing the territory and displacing much of its population again.

Days before the ceasefire ended, Israel blocked all imports from entering the Palestinian enclave, deepening a humanitarian crisis and sparking warnings about the risk of famine if the blockade isn't lifted. Israel says the steps are meant to pressure Hamas to accept a ceasefire agreement on Israel's terms.

Israel says 58 hostages remain in captivity, with about 23 of them said to be alive.

Many of the 250 hostages tak-

en by Hamas-led militants in the 2023 attack were freed in ceasefire deals.

Television footage showed Alexander's mother, Yael Alexander, arriving at the Reim military base in southern Israel, where her son was expected to be taken first upon his release.

Trump on Sunday called the planned release "a step taken in good faith towards the United States and the efforts of the mediators — Qatar and Egypt — to put an end to this very brutal war and return ALL living hostages and remains to their loved ones."

Marines deploy F-35B squadron to Japan

BY BRIAN McELHINEY
Stars and Stripes

A fourth squadron of F-35B Lightning IIs arrived in Japan over the weekend to begin a six-month deployment, as the Marine Corps continues to modernize its aircraft in the Indo-Pacific.

Stealth fighters with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 211 at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., arrived Saturday at MCAS Iwakuni under the Unit Deployment Program, according to a news release from the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing that day.

The squadron joins the wing's Marine Aircraft Group 12 to provide "critical aviation support from naval and expeditionary environments" for U.S. and Japanese forces, the release said.

Wing spokesman Maj. Joseph Butterfield declined to say how many aircraft or Marines deployed with the squadron or how long it will be deployed, citing security reasons. A fighter attack squadron typically consists of about 10 aircraft, with pi-

lots and maintainers, he said by email Monday.

MCAS Iwakuni is home to two permanently stationed F-35B squadrons and another unit from Yuma, Fighter Attack Squadron 214, which arrived in March as the first F-35B rotational unit in Japan. The aircraft group also includes an aerial refueling squadron and logistics and support squadrons.

Until recently, the deployment program involved squadrons of F/A-18 Hornets and AV-8B Harriers. Hornets still deploy under the program as the Marines transition from fourth- to fifth-generation aircraft, but none are deployed to MCAS Iwakuni, Butterfield said.

The two rotational squadrons will support III Marine Expeditionary Force and joint force operations across the Indo-Pacific, Butterfield added.

The rotational presence "allows 1st Marine Aircraft Wing to maintain a continuous, forward-deployed posture while integrating additional squadrons into its daily training and operations," he said.

The base is also home to Carrier Air Wing 5, the Navy's air arm for the aircraft carrier USS George Washington, homeported at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan.

While deployed, the 211 squadron will participate in upcoming exercises alongside Japan and other allies, Butterfield said. The first F-35B rotational squadron flew alongside U.S. and South Korean air forces in Freedom Flag, which began in April and concluded May 2.

Lt. Col. Stephen Miggins, the 211 squadron commander, said he is "proud to augment MAG-12's squadrons during exercises in the Indo-Pacific."

"I arrived ahead of the rest of the squadron and was impressed by the enthusiasm of the local community during MCAS Iwakuni's Friendship Day on May 4," he said in a statement relayed by Butterfield. "While our deployment here will be brief, it will be focused on strengthening our partnerships and working alongside Japanese forces and other allied nations."

Russian drones hit Ukraine

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia launched more than 100 Shahed and decoy drones at Ukraine in nighttime attacks, the Ukrainian air force said Monday, after the Kremlin rejected an unconditional 30-day ceasefire in the more than 3-year war.

There was no response from the Kremlin, meanwhile, to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's challenge for Russia's President Vladimir Putin to meet him face-to-face.

The United States and European governments have made a concerted push to stop the fighting, which has killed tens of thousands of soldiers on both sides as well as more than 10,000 Ukrainian civilians. Russia's invading forces have taken around one-fifth of Ukraine.

Over the weekend, Russia shunned the ceasefire proposal tabled by the U.S. and European leaders but offered direct talks with Ukraine on Thursday.

Trump order aims to lower some drug costs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Monday signed an executive order setting a 30-day deadline for drug-makers to lower the cost of prescription drugs or face new limits over what the government will pay.

The order calls on the health department, led by Robert F. Kennedy Jr., to broker new prices for drugs. If a deal is not reached, a new rule will kick in that will tie the price of what the U.S. pays for medications to lower prices paid by other countries.

"We're going to equalize," Trump said during a Monday press conference. "We're all going to pay the same. We're going to pay what Europe pays."

It's unclear what — if any — impact the president's executive order will have on millions of Americans who have private

health insurance. The federal government has the most power to shape the price it pays for drugs covered by Medicare and Medicaid.

The federal government spends hundreds of billions of dollars on prescription drugs, injectables, transfusions and other medications every year through Medicare, which covers nearly 70 million older Americans. Medicaid, meanwhile, covers nearly 80 million poor and disabled people in the U.S.

Ahead of the signing, the nation's leading pharmaceutical lobby on Sunday pushed back against Trump's plan, calling it a "bad deal" for American patients. Drugmakers have long argued that any threats to their profits could impact the research they do to develop new drugs.

"Importing foreign prices will

cut billions of dollars from Medicare with no guarantee that it helps patients or improves their access to medicines," Stephen J. Uhl, the president and CEO of PhRMA, said in a statement. "It jeopardizes the hundreds of billions our member companies are planning to invest in America, making us more reliant on China for innovative medicines."

Trump's so-called "most favored nation" approach to Medicare drug pricing has been controversial since he first tried to implement it during his first term. He signed a similar executive order in the final weeks of his presidency, which called for the U.S. to only pay a lower price that other countries pay for some drugs — injectables or cancer drugs given through infusions — administered in a doctor's office.

That narrow executive order

faced hurdles, with a court order that blocked the rule from going into effect under President Joe Biden's administration. The pharmaceutical industry argued that Trump's 2020 attempt would give foreign governments the "upper hand" in deciding the value of medicines in the U.S.

Trump repeatedly defended pharmaceutical companies, instead blaming other countries for the high price Americans pay for drugs, during a wide-ranging speech at the White House on Monday.

He did, however, threaten the companies with federal investigations into their practices and opening up the U.S. drug market to bring in more imported medications from other countries.

"The pharmaceutical companies make most of their profits from America," Trump said. "That's not a good thing."

Dems decry GOP bill that includes cuts in Medicaid

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans unveiled the cost-saving centerpiece of President Donald Trump's "big, beautiful bill" late Sunday, at least \$880 billion in cuts largely to Medicaid to help cover the cost of \$4.5 trillion in tax breaks.

Tallying hundreds of pages, the legislation is touching off the biggest political fight over health care since Republicans tried to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, during Trump's first term in 2017 — which ended in failure.

While Republicans insist they are simply rooting out "waste, fraud and abuse" to generate savings with new work and eligibility requirements, Democrats warn that millions of Americans will lose coverage. A preliminary estimate from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said the proposals would re-

duce the number of people with health care by 8.6 million over the decade.

"Savings like these allow us to use this bill to renew the Trump tax cuts and keep Republicans' promise to hardworking middle-class families," said Rep. Brett Guthrie of Kentucky, the GOP chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which handles health care spending.

But Democrats said the cuts are "shameful" and essentially amount to another attempt to repeal Obamacare.

"In no uncertain terms, millions of Americans will lose their health care coverage," said Rep. Frank Pallone of New Jersey, the top Democrat on the panel. He said "hospitals will close, seniors will not be able to access the care they need and premiums will rise for millions of people if this bill passes."

Zepbound beats Wegovy for weight loss in trial

Associated Press

People taking Eli Lilly's obesity drug, Zepbound, lost nearly 50% more weight than those using rival Novo Nordisk's Wegovy in the first head-to-head study of the blockbuster medications.

Clinical trial participants who took tirzepatide, the drug sold as Zepbound, lost an average of 50 pounds over 72 weeks, while those who took semaglutide, or Wegovy, lost about 33 pounds. That's according to the study funded by Lilly, which was published Sunday in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Both drugs are part of a new class of medications that work by mimicking hormones in the gut and brain that regulate appetite and feelings of fullness. But tirzepatide targets two such hormones, known as GLP-1 and GIP, while semaglutide targets GLP-1 alone, said Dr. Louis Aronne, director of the Comprehensive

Weight Control Center at Weill Cornell Medicine.

"Two drugs together can produce better weight loss," said Aronne, who led the study and presented the findings Sunday at the European Congress on Obesity in Spain. While tirzepatide won out in what Aronne said many view as "a drag race of efficacy," both are important tools for treating obesity.

"The point of these medications is to improve health," he said. "The majority of people won't need the most effective medication."

The trial included 751 people from across the U.S. who were overweight or had obesity and at least one other weight-related health problem but not diabetes.

By the end of the trial, those who took Zepbound lost about 20% of their body weight on average, compared with a nearly 14% loss for those who took Wegovy.

Defense concedes Combs had violent outbursts

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The public knew Sean “Diddy” Combs as a larger-than-life cultural icon and business mogul, but behind the scenes, he was coercing women into drug-fueled sexual encounters and using violence to keep them in line, a federal prosecutor told a jury Monday during opening statements in Combs’ sex trafficking trial.

“This is Sean Combs,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Emily Johnson told the Manhattan jury as she pointed at Combs, who leaned back in his chair. “... During this trial you are going to hear about 20 years of the defendant’s crimes. But he didn’t do it alone. He had an inner circle of bodyguards and high-ranking employees who helped him commit crimes and cover them up.”

Those crimes, she said, included kidnapping, arson,

drugs, sex crimes, bribery and obstruction.

On the contrary, the trial of Combs is a misguided overreach by prosecutors, who are trying to turn consenting sex between adults into a prostitution and sex trafficking case, Combs’ lawyer Teny Geragos said during her opening.

“Sean Combs is a complicated man. But this is not a complicated case. This case is about love, jealousy, infidelity and money,” Geragos told the eight men and four women on the jury. “There has been a tremendous amount of noise around this case over the past year. It is time to cancel that noise.”

Geragos conceded that Combs’ violent outbursts, often fueled by alcohol and drugs, might have warranted domestic violence charges, but not the sex trafficking and racketeering counts he faces. She also told

jurors they might think Combs is a “jerk” and might not condone his “kinky sex,” but “he’s not charged with being mean. He’s not charged with being a jerk.”

Combs, wearing a white sweater, entered the packed courtroom shortly before 9 a.m., hugged his lawyers and gave a thumbs up to supporters seated behind him. The case has drawn intense public interest, and the line to get into the courthouse stretched down the block.

Combs, 55, pleaded not guilty to a five-count indictment that could land him in prison for at least 15 years if he is convicted on all charges. He has been held at a federal jail in Brooklyn since his arrest in September.

Prosecutors say Combs coerced women into drugged-up group sexual encounters he called “freak offs,” “wild king nights” or “hotel nights,” then

kept them in line through violence. He is accused of choking, hitting, kicking and dragging women, often by the hair.

Johnson told jurors about a night when Combs allegedly kidnapped an employee and threatened his one-time girlfriend, the R&B singer Cassie, whose legal name is Cassandra Ventura and who is expected to be a key witness. Combs told Cassie that if she defied him again, he would release video of her having sex with a male escort — video that the prosecutor called “souvenirs of the most humiliating nights of her life,” Johnson said.

Cassie filed a lawsuit in 2023 saying Combs had subjected her to years of abuse, including beatings and rape. The lawsuit touched off a law enforcement investigation and was followed by dozens of lawsuits from people making similar claims.

DOJ probes a planned Muslim community

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — The U.S. Department of Justice has opened a federal civil rights investigation into a Muslim-centered planned community around one of the state’s largest mosques near Dallas, U.S. Sen. John Cornyn said Friday.

The developers of the proposed planned community tied to the East Plano Islamic Center, which has not yet been built, have said they are being bullied because they are Muslim.

A federal probe would further escalate pressure on the proposed EPIC City, which is already facing mounting criticism and multiple investigations from Republican Gov. Greg Abbott and other GOP state officials who claim the group is trying to create a Muslim-exclusive community that

would impose Islamic law on residents.

Among its chief critics is the state’s hard-right Attorney General Ken Paxton.

Dan Cogdell, an attorney for EPIC City who defended Paxton in his 2023 impeachment trial when he was acquitted by the state Senate, said the developers have “done nothing illegal and we will cooperate fully with all investigations—regardless of how misguided and unnecessary they are.”

Plans for the mixed-used development include more than 1,000 homes and apartments, a faith-based school for kindergarten through 12th grade, a community college, assisted living for older residents and athletics fields. The community would be near Josephine, about 30 miles northeast of Dallas.

Trump fires top federal copyright official

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has fired the nation’s top copyright official, Shira Perlmutter, days after abruptly terminating the head of the Library of Congress, which oversees the U.S. Copyright Office.

The office said in a statement Sunday that Perlmutter received an email from the White House a day earlier that read “your position as the Register of Copyrights and Director at the U.S. Copyright Office is terminated effective immediately.”

On Thursday, President Donald Trump fired Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden, the first woman and the first African American to be librarian of Congress, as part of the administration’s ongoing purge of government officials perceived to oppose the president and his

agenda.

Hayden named Perlmutter to lead the Copyright Office in October 2020.

The office receives about half a million copyright applications per year covering millions of creative works.

Democrats were quick to blast Perlmutter’s firing.

“Donald Trump’s termination of Register of Copyrights, Shira Perlmutter, is a brazen, unprecedented power grab with no legal basis,” said Rep. Joe Morelle of New York, the top Democrat on the House Administration Committee.

Perlmutter, who holds a law degree, was previously a policy director at the Patent and Trademark Office and worked on copyright and other areas of intellectual property. She also worked at the Copyright Office in the late 1990s.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

4.1-magnitude quake rattles southern states

GA ATLANTA — A 4.1-magnitude earthquake in Tennessee woke up families and rattled homes as far away as Atlanta as it spread tremors across portions of the southern U.S. on Saturday morning. No injuries or major damage were immediately reported.

The website for the U.S. Geological Survey said the earthquake originated shortly after 9 a.m. EDT about 12 miles from Greenback, Tenn., which is about 30 miles south of Knoxville.

More than 23,000 reports from the public were received by USGS in the first hour after the earthquake, USGS spokeswoman Ayesha Davis told The Associated Press. Meteorologists at television news stations serving Georgia and North Carolina reported feeling the tremors as well.

There is a 5% chance of a magnitude 4 or larger aftershock in the next week, according to USGS.

USCG's plans to remove buoys raise concerns

MA BOSTON — The Coast Guard's plan to remove hundreds of navigation buoys along the northeast coastline is raising concerns among commercial fishermen and other mariners who depend on the markers to avoid rocks, fog and other dangers.

The plan calls for removing 350 of the 4,700 navigational buoys in waters from New York to the Canadian border, including dozens off Cape Ann penin-

sula and the North Shore in northeastern Massachusetts. Over the next five years, up to 1,000 buoys could be removed from the water, the agency said.

Matthew Stuck, the Coast Guard's first district chief of waterways management, said the project, which has been in the works for about two years, is meant to "rightsize" the number of navigation buoys on the water, and will improve waterway safety "by ensuring the right short-range aids work well with modern navigation technology."

Nearly every commercial and recreational boat has a GPS and other electronic navigation, and the new technology allows officials to rethink how many buoys need to be in the water. There is no timeline yet for removing the buoys, but the agency wants to hear from boaters about the plans, he said.

But the plan is raising safety concerns, especially among commercial fishermen, who say reducing the number of buoys means boaters would have to rely solely on electronic navigational systems to navigate harbors and avoid rocky ledges under the surface of the water.

Drug firms to pay state \$700M to settle lawsuit

HI HONOLULU — Pharmaceutical companies have agreed to pay Hawaii \$700 million to settle its lawsuit over the efficacy and safety of the blood thinner Plavix, the state attorney general's office announced Friday.

A court ruling last year ordered Bristol Myers Squibb Co. and three U.S.-based subsidiaries of French pharmaceutical

company Sanofi to pay a combined \$916 million.

But before an appeal was decided, a settlement was reached for the lower amount, the attorney general's office said.

First Circuit Court Judge James Ashford found that there was a risk that about 30% of patients, particularly non-Caucasians, might have a "diminished response" to Plavix but the companies did not update their labels, Attorney General Anne Lopez said last year.

Attempted prison escape thwarted at Leavenworth

KS FORT LEAVENWORTH — A photo circulating on social media shows an inmate left dangling, tangled in razor wire atop a fence as he tried to escape from the Disciplinary Barracks on Fort Leavenworth as two correctional specialists try to assist while apprehending him.

An Army spokesman on Thursday confirmed that two inmates tried to escape late last month.

"Correctional specialists at the Fort Leavenworth Army Corrections Brigade prevented an escape attempt on April 29, 2025," said Lt. Col. Bryen Freigo, a U.S. Army Combined Arms Center spokesman at Fort Leavenworth. "Two inmates sustained injuries during the incident, were treated, and returned to custody."

Task & Purpose, a news site for the military community, published a story on the attempted prison break last week.

Public safety was maintained throughout the incident, Friego said. The attempted escape remains under investigation.

Regarding the online photo, Friego said the person shown was misidentified by other media.

"As a matter of policy, we do not release inmate information," Friego said.

Family of pilot killed in wildfire settles lawsuit

CA LOS ANGELES — The family of a helicopter pilot who died when his helicopter crashed in 2020 while fighting a wildfire in Southern California reached a \$15 million settlement with the company that maintained the aircraft, their attorneys said Friday.

Michael Fournier was making water drops on Aug. 19, 2020, over hilly, rugged terrain when his bright red Bell UH-1H copter suddenly plunged into a hillside as he was helping battle the Hills Fire burning 10 miles south of the small Central Valley town of Coalinga.

Fournier worked for a private Southern California company that contracts with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, and other agencies to provide fire-fighting aircraft and other services.

"The Fournier family's lawsuit sought answers and accountability, and this result does just that," said Andrew Robb, one of the attorneys who filed the lawsuit. Robb said the family would not be making any public comments.

An investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board's concluded that the helicopter crashed because of "a hydraulic system failure."

— From wire reports

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Pacers rout Cavs for 3-1 series lead

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Pacers spent two days looking for solutions against top-seeded Cleveland.

On Sunday, they delivered an emphatic answer.

Pascal Siakam scored 21 points, Myles Turner and Obi Toppin each scored 20 and the Pacers tied an NBA playoff record with a 41-point halftime lead before blowing out the Cavaliers 129-109 to take a 3-1 series lead.

The No. 4-seeded Pacers can close it out Tuesday in Cleveland, where they've already won twice.

"We haven't done anything yet," coach Rick Carlisle said after earning his 33rd playoff victory with Indiana, passing Larry Bird for the most in the franchise's NBA history. "We're going to

keep approaching this like we have everything to prove. We know people don't believe in us, so we're just going to stay in the fight and keep fighting."

The Pacers certainly showed some resolve two days after an embarrassing 22-point loss on their home court, a game in which the Cavaliers dominated the glass and held two-time All-Star Tyrese Haliburton to four points and five assists.

This time, the towel-waving home crowd helped spur Indiana, right from the start of a physical, sometimes chippy game.

The Pacers built a 44-point lead before settling for an 80-39 halftime margin that matched the league's previous best since detailed play-by-play was kept, set by the Cavs in Game 2 of the 2017 Eastern Conference finals

against Boston.

Indiana did much of its damage without Bennedict Mathurin, one of its best scorers, who was ejected for a Flagrant 2 foul just 7½ minutes into the game. And with Donovan Mitchell missing the second half because of an injured left ankle, the Cavs had no chance.

Darius Garland led the Cavs with 21 points in his second game back from an injured toe. Mitchell finished with 12. Coach Kenny Atkinson said Mitchell would have an MRI exam Monday.

"Complete domination by them," Atkinson said briefly, before explaining that at least the Cavs have two of the final three games on their home court. "They dominated us in every facet of the game."

Indiana wasted no time taking

control with early runs of 11-2 and 13-0 to build a 48-23 lead with 9:24 left in the first half. They didn't stop — or back down — there, either, closing the half on a 19-2 run.

Aaron Nesmith's buzzer-beating midrange jumper put the Pacers in another exclusive club — the 10th team in playoff history and second this week to score 80 points in the first half of a playoff game. Oklahoma City scored 87 points in Game 2 against Denver.

Turner made all four of his 3-point attempts.

"We felt the last game, they set the tone from a physical standpoint," Haliburton said after finishing with 11 points, five rebounds and five assists. "Today, we came out and set the tone from the jump, really just rode that wave."

Thunder make clutch plays, rally past Nuggets in 4th

Associated Press

DENVER — The Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Denver Nuggets at their own game Sunday.

The NBA's youngest team made all the clutch plays in crunch time against an experienced squad teeming with a championship pedigree, knotting the second-round series with a 92-87 win in Game 4.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored nine of his 25 points in the fourth quarter, pulling the top-seeded Thunder from the brink of a 3-1 deficit against a Denver team known for closing out games while winning six of its last seven playoff series — and the two tight games earlier in this series that resumes Tuesday night in Oklahoma City.

About 36 hours after an exhausting overtime Game 3 Friday night, the early Mother's Day tip-off produced an ugly first half that featured a combined 25 points in the first quarter and ended with OKC up 42-

36 at the break.

The Thunder and Nuggets combined for 8-for-44 shooting in the first quarter. That's 18.2%.

It was even worse from farther out. Denver was 0-for-14 from 3-point range, while the Thunder were 1-for-11.

Things never got too much better. The combined shooting percentage of 33.5% was the worst in a playoff game in 21 years. Detroit and Indiana combined to shoot 30.8% on May 21, 2004.

"Quick turnaround with an early game today, we made an intentional effort to use our depth today and get everybody going," Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said.

Down by eight points early in the fourth quarter, the Thunder used an 11-0 run fueled by reserves Cason Wallace, who had two 3-pointers, and Aaron Wiggins, who added another, to wrest control.

Wallace's second 3 put Oklahoma City ahead for good at 75-

73.

"I really thought the difference in the game was their bench kind of lit a fuse for them," Nuggets interim coach David Adelman said. "They made 3s ... pretty incredible in a game where the two teams shoot 21-for-86 from 3."

Denver looked poised to put the top-seeded team in the West on the cusp of elimination when Aaron Gordon's turnaround jumper made it 73-66.

This time, however, it was the Thunder who came up big down the stretch and the Nuggets who fumbled away the chance to put OKC in a 3-1 hole. Denver's many late miscues included a key five-second inbound violation.

Nikola Jokic had 27 points and 13 rebounds but his three assists were a low for this playoff run and gave him 22 assists to go with 23 turnovers in this series.

Jokic said he never thinks about fatigue so he didn't blame anything or anyone else for Den-

ver's 31% shooting clip and 34 missed 3s. Adelman wouldn't go so far as to say the NBA erred with the early tip-off, either.

"I don't want to say that," Adelman said. "I will say that both teams were very tired coming off an unbelievably physical overtime battle late Friday night. ... I mean, both of us had super tired legs, so it was about who's going to make that final run."

Not his team, not this time.

"We fought. We stayed the course," Gilgeous-Alexander said, "... and then we closed the game."

The Thunder simply don't have Denver's playoff pedigree but Daigneault said his team is gaining that much-needed experience by the day.

"Every time you take punches and you get back up, you get stronger," he said. "That's what we're preaching to our team. We lost a tough one the other night in overtime. We stood back up today."

Bobrovsky shuts out Leafs to tie series

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — It's a formula the Florida Panthers keep using in the playoffs: Take a lead after two periods, then let Sergei Bobrovsky and the defense do the rest.

And it worked again.

Bobrovsky stopped 23 shots for his fifth career playoff shutout, Carter Verhaeghe and Sam Bennett scored and the Panthers beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 2-0 on Sunday night in Game 4 to even the Eastern Conference semifinal series.

Florida has won 25 consecutive playoff games when leading after two periods, a streak that goes back to May 5, 2022.

"It's a series," Bobrovsky said. "The bigger games are ahead, so we're excited about them. The series comes down to a best-of-three, so it's a big game, next one."

Home-ice advantage has held, and Toronto will hope that trend continues in Game 5 on Wednesday night. The Leafs won Games 1 and 2 at home, then dropped Games 3 and 4 in Sunrise.

"We had looks," Toronto coach Craig Berube said. "They're doing a good job of swarming us with numbers, obviously. ... It's a battle out there. This is what it is. They don't give you a lot."

Verhaeghe scored on a power play — Florida's fourth of the game — in the first period, Bennett added the insurance score with 7:50 left and Bobrovsky did the rest for his second shutout of this postseason.

Joseph Woll stopped 35 shots for the Maple Leafs.

"He was great," Berube said. "He played an excellent game."

Verhaeghe's goal came after

Matthew Tkachuk, along the left-wing boards, threaded a pass through the slot and past two defenders. It found Verhaeghe — who slammed a one-timer past Woll.

That was part of an early spree for Florida. The Panthers took 21 of the game's first 26 shots on net, controlling play for long stretches and keeping all the action in front of Woll. He held firm, time and again, keeping Toronto in it.

Bennett said enough.

He came in from Woll's left, with Verhaeghe opposite him, looking for a passing lane. When none appeared, Bennett went to the front of the net, watched Woll commit, then pushed the puck into the net before punching the air.

"That was more like the type of Panthers playoff hockey that we're used to," Bennett said.

It got chippy late, as games this late in a series tend to do.

Oliver Ekman-Larsson — part of the Florida team that won the Stanley Cup last season — delivered a shot to the head and neck area of Panthers forward Evan Rodrigues about five minutes into the third period. It was originally called a major, then downgraded to a minor after review.

Rodrigues will need further evaluation Monday, Panthers coach Paul Maurice said.

And four players — Toronto's Max Domi for boarding Panthers captain Aleksander Barkov; and Toronto's Bobby McMann, Florida's Aaron Ekblad and Panthers forward Brad Marchand on his 37th birthday — all got 10-minute misconducts as time expired.

"I think he'll be all right," Maurice said about Barkov.

Rantanen, disputed goal give Stars 2-1 lead over Jets

Associated Press

DALLAS — Mikko Rantanen had a goal and two assists, including on the disputed tie-breaking goal off defenseman Alexander Petrovic's skate that was finally confirmed after a lengthy review as the Dallas Stars beat top-seeded Winnipeg 5-2 on Sunday to take 2-1 lead in the second-round Western Conference series.

Officials looked at Petrovic's goal for well over five minutes after the NHL's situation room initiated a video review to determine if he kicked the puck into the net for a 3-2 lead with 16:09 left. The final decision was that replays supported the referee's on-ice call that goalie Connor Hellebuyck propelled the puck into his own net.

"At that point, you want them to take as much time as they need to get it right," said Stars coach Pete DeBoer, adding that the explanation he got was that

Hellebuyck was trying to make a play on the puck.

Jets coach Scott Arniel certainly didn't agree.

"The rule states that if the puck gets kicked, if it hits a body or a stick of anybody else other than the goaltender, it counts as a goal. It hit our goaltender's stick and went in the net. That is no goal," Arniel said.

"So they said that Helly propelled the puck in, and I haven't seen the word propelled in the rulebook."

Then only 49 seconds after play resumed, Rantanen scored his ninth goal of the playoffs — all coming in the past six games.

For Petrovic, who has played has played in all 10 postseason games after only five in the regular season for the Stars, got his first playoff goal since 2016 for Florida.

Game 4 is Tuesday in Dallas.

Roope Hintz had a goal and an assist for the Stars, and Wyatt

Johnston added a late goal. Sam Steel and Mikael Granlund each had two assists.

Rantanen, who has 18 points this postseason, had the primary assist on a power-play goal by Hintz only 2:27 in for a 1-0 lead. When Dallas scored again late in the first period for a 2-1 lead, Rantanen was on the ice for defenseman Thomas Harley's goal, but the assists went to Granlund and Steel.

That ended Rantanen's NHL playoffs-record streak of consecutive goals involved in at 13 for the Stars since Game 5 in the first round against Colorado.

"Obviously I'm happy to help the team, I'll try to keep doing that as much as I can on both ends of the ice," said Rantanen, who was traded to the Stars on March 7. "I'm just trying to stay in the moment and even keel after wins and good games."

Stars goalie Jake Oettinger stopped 23 shots.

Hellebuyck, the odds-on favorite to win his third Vezina Trophy as the league's best goalie and also among three finalists for the Hart Trophy that goes to the MVP of the regular season, dropped to 0-4 with a 6.65 goals against average in road games this postseason after giving up the five goals on 26 shots.

Nino Niederreiter got Winnipeg even at 2 midway through the second period on his shot from the bottom of the right circle after Josh Morrissey made a nifty move to get around Stars center Colin Blackwell before making the pass for the score.

The Stars had gone ahead 2-1 late in the first after Niederreiter tripped Granlund, who slid with the puck along the boards behind the net and got his knees to swipe it to Harley in the slot.

Kyle Connor scored for Winnipeg on a wraparound goal that got under Oettinger's extended glove.

Schwarber's 2 HRs lift Phils

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Kyle Schwarber homered twice to tie Aaron Judge for the major-league lead and extended his on-base streak to 46 games, and Zack Wheeler struck out eight in seven innings as the Philadelphia Phillies beat the Cleveland Guardians 3-0 on Sunday night.

Schwarber hit a solo shot off Luis Ortiz (2-4) in the second inning and a two-run blast off Tim Herrin in the eighth for his 14th of the season and 32nd career multi-homer game. He is the first player with a 46-game on-base streak since Paul Goldschmidt of St. Louis in 2022.

Wheeler (4-1) only permitted two runners to get past first base in his third consecutive win, giving up three hits with two walks. The right-hander matched his longest start of the season as the Phillies went 5-1 on a trip through Tampa Bay and Cleveland.

José Alvarado pitched the eighth and Jordan Romano earned his third save, wrapping up the three-hitter. Philadelphia has won 11 of 14 since falling to .500 on April 25.

Yankees 12, Athletics 2: Aaron Judge had four hits to get his average back above .400 and Ben Rice hit a grand slam to lead New York over the host Athletics.

Judge hit a two-run single in a five-run second inning against former teammate Luis Severino (1-4) and added hits in his final three at-bats to raise his average to .409 — the fourth-highest ever for a player with at least 14 homers in the first 40 games of a season.

Astros 6, Reds 0: Ronel Blanco (3-3) struck out a career-high 11 in eight innings and Shawn Dubin completed the two-hitter to lead Houston over visiting Cincinnati.

Yainer Diaz hit a three-run homer in the third, and Christian Walker added two hits and three RBIs to help the Astros

take the series 2-1.

Mets 6, Cubs 2: Francisco Lindor hit a go-ahead homer to start a four-run eighth inning and New York beat Chicago to avoid losing its second home series this season.

Lindor snapped a 2-2 tie against Porter Hodge (2-1) by lifting a full-count sweeper over the right-center field fence.

Cardinals 6, Nationals 1: Lars Nootbaar, Willson Contreras and Nolan Arenado homered, and St. Louis won at Washington to complete a three-game sweep.

The Cardinals have swept back-to-back series during an eight-game winning streak, their longest since August of 2022.

Rangers 6, Tigers 1: Nathan Eovaldi tossed seven shutout innings, Marcus Semien and Josh Jung hit two-run home runs and Texas beat host Detroit.

Eovaldi (4-2) limited the Tigers to two hits and a walk while striking out seven in his fifth consecutive quality start.

Red Sox 3, Royals 1: Rafael Devers' 440-foot homer snapped a 1-1 tie and Lucas Giolito pitched into the seventh inning for his first win since 2023 as visiting Boston beat Kansas City.

Giolito (1-1) allowed two singles and one unearned run in 6½ innings to get his first win for Boston. He missed last season with a partially torn elbow ligament.

Pirates 4, Braves 3: Joey Bart's fielder's choice on a hard grounder in the bottom of the ninth inning lifted Pittsburgh over Atlanta to win two in a three-game series.

Brewers 4, Rays 2: Christian Yelich and William Contreras hit back-to-back homers in the fourth inning for Milwaukee to help the Brewers beat host Tampa Bay and avoid a three-game sweep.

Tyler Alexander (2-3) came on with one out and two on in the

bottom of the fifth and pitched 1½ hitless innings. Trevor McGill pitched a perfect ninth for his fifth save as the Brewers snapped a three-game skid.

Twins 7, Giants 6 (10): DaShawn Keirsey Jr. singled home the winning run in the 10th inning as Minnesota beat visiting San Francisco, extending its winning streak to eight games.

The Giants scored a run off Jhoan Duran (1-0) in the top of the 10th, but in the bottom half automatic runner Ty France moved to third on Brooks Lee's single and scored on Ryan Jeffers' ground out. After an intentional walk and a groundout, Keirsey lashed a line drive down the left field line against Ryan Walker (1-2) to complete a 6-0 homestand for the Twins.

White Sox 4, Marlins 2: Tim Elko hit a three-run homer — his first hit in the major leagues — in the sixth inning to help Chicago beat visiting Miami.

The White Sox rebounded from getting swept in four games at Kansas City to win their third series of the season.

Blue Jays 9, Mariners 1: George Springer smacked a three-run homer in the fifth inning as Toronto completed a three-game sweep at Seattle.

Addison Barger added his first homer of the season, a solo shot in the seventh.

Orioles 7, Angels 3: Gunnar Henderson hit a two-run homer during Baltimore's four-run sixth inning, and Maverick Handley got his first two career RBIs in its victory over host Los Angeles.

Rockies 9, Padres 3: Hunter Goodman hit a double, a triple and a home run and had five RBIs to help Colorado beat visiting San Diego and snap an eight-game losing streak.

Dodgers 8, Diamondbacks 1: Tony Gonsolin pitched five scoreless innings and Freddie Freeman homered on a 4-for-4 day to lead Los Angeles over host Arizona.

Larson wins 3rd Cup race of '25 season

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — Kyle Larson took most of the drama out of his second straight spring victory at Kansas Speedway on Sunday.

After putting his No. 5 car on the pole for Hendrick Motorsports, Larson led 221 of 267 laps, winning both stages and cruising to his third NASCAR Cup Series win of the season. He was never challenged down the stretch by second-finishing Christopher Bell — and he most certainly didn't need another last-lap pass to win at the wire like he did a year ago.

The margin over Chris Buescher then was 0.001 seconds, the closest in Cup Series history. It was 0.712 seconds on Sunday.

"Glad to not win by an inch this time," Larson said with a smile. "A little safer gap."

Larson, who also has wins at Homestead and Bristol, has finished in the top four in each of his past four Cup races, and now he will take that momentum to Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Larson will be on track Tuesday as he begins another shot at "the Double" — running every lap of the Indianapolis 500 and Coca-Cola 600 on the same day Memorial Day weekend.

Last year, he contended in the rain-delayed Indy 500 before a speeding penalty on pit road resulted in an 18th-place finish. He then hopped a flight to Charlotte for the NASCAR race, but rain there kept him from ever completing a lap.

Even though Larson spent most of a hot, sunny day at Kansas in the lead, he found himself trailing Chase Elliott early in the final stage. But when Elliott's team dropped the jack too soon before his right rear tire was on during a pit stop, Larson was able to get to the front on the restart, and he spent the last 50 laps cruising to the victory.