

US waits on Iran's peace deal response

Bloomberg News

The U.S. is waiting on Iran to respond to its proposal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and end a war that's killed thousands of people, with tensions still high in both the Persian Gulf and in Lebanon.

Iran's leaders are yet to indicate whether they'll accept the terms of the deal, though they've previously shown little sign of yielding on their nuclear program and accepting a moratorium on enriching uranium, which the U.S. is calling for.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian recently met with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei for nearly two and a half hours, the state-owned Mizan news agency reported Thursday, without saying what the talks were about or when they were held.

Iran is expected to send a response via Pakistan, acting as a

mediator, in the next two days, a person familiar with the matter said on Wednesday, asking not to be identified discussing sensitive information. Oil has declined sharply since news of the U.S. offer emerged on Wednesday, signaling some traders are optimistic a deal could be reached.

Israel said it killed a Hezbollah commander in a southern suburb of Beirut, its first strike on the city since a ceasefire began in Lebanon last month. That demonstrated the fragility of that truce, which paused a parallel war that was hampering peace efforts with Tehran.

Washington has relayed a one-page memo to the Islamic Republic that could reopen the strategic Strait of Hormuz and lift the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports, according to the person familiar with the matter. That would set the stage for a month of talks

aimed at securing a final agreement to bring the 10-week conflict to a close.

Should the negotiation get to that stage, the sides will discuss Iran's nuclear activities. President Donald Trump has repeatedly said the objective of the war is to prevent Tehran having a nuclear weapon, something Iran has always denied. Trump said Wednesday the U.S. is "going to get" the Islamic Republic's stockpile of highly enriched uranium as part of the agreement, though there's been no indication Tehran is willing to make that concession.

The U.S. will start a broader and more intense bombing campaign if Iran rejects the initial 14-point peace plan, Trump said earlier in a social media post, though he's repeatedly walked back on threats to escalate the conflict. He told PBS News Hour he believes there's "a very good chance" of a

deal, possibly before his scheduled summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing next week.

Iran's state-affiliated news agency ISNA said reports on elements of the proposal amount to "media speculation and atmosphere-building," adding that nuclear enrichment is not part of the current discussions.

Khamenei succeeded his father, Ali, who was killed by an Israeli strike on the first day of the war. He hasn't been seen in public since. Last week, in a statement, he said Iran would not give concessions on its nuclear program, describing it as a "national asset" that Iranians would protect at all cost.

Other outstanding issues include limits on Iran's ballistic missile program and its support for allied militant groups such as Lebanon's Hezbollah.

Navy base in Naples confirms elevated radon levels

By ALISON BATH

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The Navy's largest installation in Italy validated test results showing potentially dangerous radon levels at base schools and elsewhere, an about-face from an earlier rejection of the findings as unreliable.

A Naval Support Activity Naples school reception area, locker room and teacher's offices are among areas with levels of the gas requiring action, the base said Tuesday in a Facebook statement.

They are among 37 offices, workspaces and other locations around the base with excessive radon levels, according to the statement.

Studies have linked the color-

less, odorless gas to lung cancer.

Environmental Protection Agency guidelines say radon levels consistently at or above 4.0 picocuries per liter of air are hazardous. Levels found at the base range from 4.0 to 12.1 picocuries, data show.

The base is taking "immediate steps to prioritize and address every one of these cases," NSA Naples commander Capt. John Randazzo said in the statement.

Among those cases is a locker room at the middle/high school with a radon level of 10.7 picocuries. Several areas at an offsite computer and telecommunications station, including a watch floor, showed levels ranging from 4.3 to 12.1, according to the data.

In explaining the switch in ac-

cepting the results, Randazzo said the base had conducted a comprehensive analysis of the data to address quality assurance concerns.

"That detailed analysis, which was not available at the time of the initial (quality assurance) concern, demonstrated the results are within the acceptable standards for accuracy and precision," Randazzo said in the statement.

It wasn't immediately clear what measures the base will take to mitigate radon in those and other areas or how it would fund its efforts. But the mitigation measures will be completed within two years, officials said.

Radon levels can be lowered by means ranging from temporary measures like increasing

ventilation to adding a professionally installed depressurization system.

In February, Randazzo said the base was rejecting the results of a yearlong radon survey due to faulty blank control detectors. Those detectors indicated a problem with the entire testing process, Randazzo said.

The base did not release the results of the study conducted at nonresidential facilities from 2024-25 but said then that it hoped to complete retesting by 2027.

This week's announcement is the latest development in a yearslong effort to address radon issues at the base following a Defense Department Inspector General investigation prompted by a whistleblower complaint.

Poland, Lithuania eyes troops leaving Germany

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. allies on NATO's eastern flank plan to lobby President Donald Trump to shift troops from Germany to their countries.

Polish President Karol Nawrocki, speaking during a military exercise Wednesday in Lithuania, said his country is best-positioned to take on more American forces.

"We have the necessary infrastructure," Nawrocki said during news conference. "I will encourage Trump to ensure that these soldiers remain in Europe."

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda made a similar argument during the joint news con-

ference.

"We in Lithuania are ready to host as many allies as we are capable of," Nauseda said. "And to this end, we are developing all the necessary infrastructure both for exercises and for the deployment of troops."

Their bid for a larger American presence comes after the Pentagon announced last week that the United States will pull 5,000 troops from Germany.

Nauseda added that about 1,000 American soldiers are carrying out missions in the country on a rotational basis.

The two leaders were speaking during the Brave Griffin military exercise near the Suwalki Gap.

The narrow corridor between the Russian exclave of Kalinin-

grad and Kremlin ally Belarus is regarded by many as NATO's most vulnerable area.

Although the Pentagon hasn't publicly stated which unit will be removed, defense officials have told various news outlets that it involves a brigade combat team.

Given that the 2nd Cavalry Regiment is the only such force in Germany, the Vilseck-based unit appears to be targeted. Still, questions remain about where such a unit could realistically go.

While allies such as Poland are clamoring for more U.S. troops, most locations where U.S. forces currently operate in the country are geared toward rotational units and lack the infrastructure needed to host a

permanent brigade of nearly 5,000 soldiers along with hundreds of spouses and children.

For comparison, the Army's garrison in Vilseck has schools, a commissary and other tax-free shopping facilities. The Army has invested heavily in other quality-of-life measures, including modernized family housing units.

In its announcement last week, the Pentagon said it planned to complete the Germany withdrawal within a year, leaving little time to build the necessary infrastructure in Poland or elsewhere on NATO's eastern flank.

Trump, meanwhile, has given no indication where he would want to place any troops that are removed from Germany.

Japan sees decrease in airspace challenges from Chinese aircraft

By BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

Chinese pilots made the fewest approaches toward Japanese airspace in more than a decade this spring and summer, even as Beijing increased its drone flights near Japan's westernmost island, according to Japan's Joint Staff.

Japan Air Self-Defense Force pilots scrambled 265 times to meet foreign aircraft from April to September, down from 358 during the same period last year, Self-Defense Force data released Friday showed.

That's about 26% fewer intercepts in the first half of Japan's 2025 fiscal year than in 2024, continuing a three-year decline. Japan's fiscal year runs from April 1 to March 31.

Of those sorties, 198 involved Chinese aircraft, compared with 242 during the same period last year. The last time that number dropped below 200 was in the first half of fiscal 2013, when Japan scrambled 149 times against Chinese aircraft.

Only one aircraft — a Chinese helicopter

— entered Japanese airspace without permission this year, flying near the Senkaku Islands on May 3, according to the Joint Staff.

Most approaching aircraft enter Japan's 230-mile-wide air defense identification zone but turn back before reaching its 14-mile-wide territorial airspace.

However, Chinese drones transited between Yonaguni — Japan's westernmost island — and Taiwan "more frequently" than during the same period last year, according to the Joint Staff. A spokesman did not provide the exact number of drone transits. Some Japanese government officials speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

Japan's Ministry of Defense has warned in its 2024 and 2025 white papers that it may shoot down unmanned aircraft entering its airspace if necessary to protect the "lives and properties of people within Japanese territory."

Russia also reduced its airspace challenges, according to the Joint Staff. Japan scrambled 59 times against Russian aircraft during the six-month period, compared with 114 times a year earlier.

Strike on alleged drug boat kills 3

Stars and Stripes

U.S. military forces on Tuesday launched a strike on an alleged drug boat in the eastern Pacific, killing three people, U.S. Southern Command announced Wednesday.

The attack was the second in two days; a strike Monday in the Caribbean killed two. The Trump administration's campaign against alleged drug traffickers in the region, launched in early September, has killed at least 191 people.

"Intelligence confirmed the vessel was transiting along known narco-trafficking routes in the Eastern Pacific and was engaged in narco-trafficking operations," SOUTHCOM said in a statement that included a 27-second video of the strike. No U.S. troops were harmed.

Operation Southern Spear, the Pentagon's name for the campaign against drug trafficking in Latin America, has continued despite the U.S. military's focus on the Middle East.

Strikes under the operation have increased in frequency in recent weeks after a relative lull that followed the capture of former Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro.

House lawmakers in SC seek redrawn maps

The State

The South Carolina House lined up a chance to redraw its congressional maps Wednesday, joining an effort pushed by President Donald Trump to gain more reliably Republican seats in the South ahead of the 2026 midterms. Now, it is up to the state Senate to keep that chance alive.

The primary elections are scheduled to take place in 33 days, and the General Assembly has just four days before any incomplete bills will be dead.

Some lawmakers were also aiming to get out of the State House early to spend Wednesday evening at the Riverbanks

Zoo in Columbia with their families. Instead, House members debated and passed a resolution allowing them to redraw South Carolina's congressional map after the legislative deadline.

"We've done our part," said House Majority Leader Davey Hiott after the vote. "... See if they [the Senate] can get it passed as well, then we'll begin the process."

The vote shows the South Carolina House, which for months appeared skeptical of a redistricting effort, has an appetite to redraw the state's congressional maps just more than a month before voters are scheduled to go to the polls. An

effort from the S.C. House Freedom Caucus to redistrict stalled in an initial panel of lawmakers this February.

House lawmakers passed the amendment to the sine die resolution 87-27 Wednesday evening. Sine die, the official end of the legislative session, is at 5 p.m. the second Thursday of May.

Most years, the General Assembly passes a resolution outlining any work they can do after the deadline, which typically includes the state budget and conference committees.

Democratic lawmakers broadly opposed the plan, arguing House Republicans were

caving to the demands of Trump.

A "clean" version of the sine die agreement, which included limited tasks for lawmakers to take up out of session, was sent to the House in early February. But the House voted on it Wednesday evening to include the process of congressional redistricting.

A U.S. Supreme Court decision spurred interest in redrawing the seats, House leaders said.

The high court struck down a Louisiana congressional map, arguing a second majority Black district was illegal racial gerrymandering.

Lutnick criticized over Epstein statements

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, a former neighbor of Jeffrey Epstein who visited the disgraced financier on his Caribbean island, on Wednesday became the first sitting cabinet member to testify to the U.S. House committee investigating the sex offender's crimes and possible lapses in the law enforcement response.

Lutnick came under fire earlier this year after documents released by the Justice Department revealed the former chief executive officer of Cantor Fitzgerald LP visited Epstein's island in 2012, years after Epstein's conviction for the procurement of minors for prostitution.

House Oversight Chairman James Comer told reporters on Wednesday that Lutnick "wasn't 100% truthful" in prior public statements about whether he had visited Epstein's island but added he hadn't seen any evidence of wrongdoing by the Commerce secretary.

Democrats challenged the credibility of Lutnick's testimony to the committee. Several of the Democrats mocked Lutnick's clear recollection of a 2005 meeting with Epstein but inability to recall details of his visit to Epstein's private island seven years later.

"It was contortions and lies and no acknowledgment that he misled the American public," Rep. Ro Khanna of California told reporters.

Lutnick arrived at a Capitol office building on Wednesday morning surrounded by security and aides and did not respond to reporters' shouted questions.

He testified behind closed doors and left after about four and a half hours, again ignoring reporters on the way out.

The committee plans to release a transcript of the testimony in the coming days.

A Commerce spokesperson said beforehand that Lutnick looked forward to addressing questions on the record and called any claims against him baseless and inaccurate.

Schumer leads chorus of outrage over \$1B for Trump's 'free' ballroom

New York Daily News

Sen. Chuck Schumer led a chorus of Democratic outrage on Wednesday over a Republican proposal to spend \$1 billion on the glitzy White House ballroom that President Trump repeatedly promised would be built without using any public money.

The Senate minority leader and fellow lawmakers trashed the plan to rubber-stamp the 10-figure sum that would pay for security upgrades for the ballroom, which the proposal called the "East Wing Modernization project."

"One billion dollars for a super-sized, gilded ballroom as prices are skyrocketing and families are struggling to afford gas and rent is ridiculously out of touch," Schumer, D-N.Y., told the Daily News in an interview on Wednesday.

"Hardworking families want lower costs, not a golden ballroom," added Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., the top Democrat

on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The outrage came as Trump defended the ballroom against criticism that the costs have ballooned by his own admission from \$200 to \$400 million.

"It will be magnificent, safe, and secure!" Trump wrote on his social media site.

The president has repeatedly and emphatically said the sprawling 90,000-square-foot ballroom would be entirely bankrolled by private donors with "not one penny" from taxpayers.

The White House now says that claim didn't include the costs of a planned underground bunker beneath the hall, which will dwarf the actual White House.

The new \$1 billion was added to a \$72 billion GOP spending package that would fund immigration enforcement agencies carrying out Trump's controversial mass deportation campaign.

Russia urges foreigners leave Kyiv over threat

Bloomberg News

Russia told foreign governments and organizations to evacuate diplomatic staff and citizens from Kyiv, saying a retaliatory strike would be inevitable if Ukraine tried to attack Moscow during World War II Victory Day celebrations on May 9.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said late Wednesday that Russia had sent a message to all accredited embassies urging them to take “very, very seriously” a May 4 statement from the Defense Ministry warning of strikes if Ukraine interrupts the Moscow commemorations that include a military parade on Red Square.

“The instinct for self-preservation should not fail them,” Zakharova said, adding that any

strikes on Kyiv would include what Moscow called “decision-making centers.”

The latest statement was issued as Russia and Ukraine have traded accusations over proposals for a ceasefire. Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a unilateral truce for May 8-9 to cover the Victory Day celebrations, saying Russia expected Ukraine to abide by it.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who hasn’t committed to observe the Russian truce, countered with an offer to start a ceasefire from midnight Wednesday. He said Russian drone and missile attacks that followed the deadline showed that the Kremlin had rejected his offer.

Zelenskyy said in a Telegram

post shortly after the latest Russian warning that Ukraine had already made a clear proposal for a ceasefire and diplomacy, and that Moscow knew how to contact Kyiv or its partners to coordinate details.

While Ukraine was ready to end the war with dignity, if “the one person in Moscow who cannot live without war” cared only about the parade, “that’s a different story,” Zelenskyy said.

Russia had “fought to the point where even its main parade now depends on us. And this is a clear signal: Enough is enough,” he added.

Kyiv and Moscow continued to exchange drone strikes overnight, with Ukraine saying its forces downed 92 out of 102 unmanned aerial vehicles. The

Russian Defense Ministry said it intercepted 347 drones overnight, while Russia’s Samara region moved children and teachers at schools to shelters and halted some public transportation, the Interfax news service reported.

Latvia said two drones crashed in the eastern part of the country, and issued an air space threat warning early Thursday morning, the Baltic country’s military said. Fire services responded to reports that one of the drones hit an oil storage facility in the city of Rezekne, though no open fire was observed. Defense Minister Andris Spruds told Latvian TV that the drones were likely Ukrainian. Schools canceled classes in the regions affected.

Rubio discusses Mideast issues with Pope Leo XIV

Bloomberg News

Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with Pope Leo XIV in the Vatican to discuss the conflict in the Middle East, following a public clash between the pontiff and President Donald Trump in recent weeks.

Rubio and the pope spoke about “topics of mutual interest in the Western Hemisphere,” the State Department said in a statement Thursday. “The meeting underscored the strong relationship between the United States and the Holy See and their shared commitment to promoting peace and human dignity.”

The pontiff, Trump and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni were embroiled in a disagreement last month over the pope’s condemnation of the war in Iran. Trump said Meloni lacked courage and that he was “shocked” by her after she called his tirades against the Pope “unacceptable.”

Rubio, who was at the Vatican

for about two hours on Thursday, has insisted the trip isn’t meant to ease tensions and had long been planned. He’s also scheduled to meet with Meloni and Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani on Friday.

Rubio is Catholic and a potential Republican candidate for the 2028 presidential election, and Trump’s public fight with the pope could alienate a key demographic.

Trump continued criticizing the pope this week, saying the pontiff was “endangering” Catholics and that he probably tolerated Iran’s possession of nuclear weapons.

In an indirect response, Leo said: “If someone wants to criticize me for proclaiming the Gospel, let him do so truthfully.”

Relations between Washington and Rome, traditionally a political supporter of the Vatican, have also been strained by the war on Iran, with Italy recently denying the U.S. use of a base for combat purposes.

RFK Jr. nixes plan to ban minors from tanning beds

Los Angeles Times

Days before the 2024 presidential election, future Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. posted a statement on X promising to end the Food and Drug Administration’s “aggressive suppression” of such alternative therapies as raw milk, ivermectin, psychedelics and, somewhat perplexingly, “sunshine.”

While the post did not explain how the FDA was limiting Americans’ access to the sun, many dermatologists were dismayed when Kennedy abruptly withdrew a proposed FDA rule that would have banned minors from using devices that mimic sunlight — indoor tanning lamps.

The rule, which was withdrawn March 16, would have also required indoor tanning facility users to sign a form acknowledging the risk of cancer, early skin aging and other health effects.

Kennedy’s action comes at a time when many adherents of his Make America Healthy Again

movement have adopted regular sun exposure as a core principle of wellness, with social media influencers encouraging followers to abandon sunscreen and build up their “solar callus” instead.

The trend has frustrated many dermatologists, who warn that the damage of frequent sunburns and tans accumulates over a lifetime, and those acquired early in life appear to play a role in later risk of skin cancer. The Skin Cancer Foundation notes also you cannot build up a tolerance to sun exposure and “there is no such thing as a ‘solar callus.’”

Dermatologists have long cautioned that indoor tanning lamps are no less dangerous, since they expose users to ultraviolet light at concentrations far above natural sunlight. Like sunlight, the lamps emit two different types of ultraviolet wavelengths: UVA, which are longer and penetrate more deeply into the skin, and UVB, which are shorter and more easily burn the outer layers.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman arrested for driving over ducklings

FL ORLANDO — A Florida woman was arrested on animal cruelty charges after an investigation revealed she had driven over several baby ducks, according to the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

Beverly Sasberry, 64, was charged on 11 felony counts alleging she intentionally ran over the ducklings, the sheriff's office stated in a Facebook post.

The arrest came after a couple reported they had on April 25 watched a woman in a red Honda Accord drive over the group of ducklings on the west side of the city.

"The couple confronted the woman a few days later, and she told them she intentionally killed the ducks because she was upset they made a mess in her yard," the sheriff's office stated.

The couple then reported the incident to the sheriff's office and shared surveillance video of the woman driving over the ducklings.

Sasberry posted \$27,650 bond and was released from jail on May 1, according to the sheriff's office.

State to ban crypto ATMs over scam concerns

MN ST. PAUL — Minnesota is set to ban kiosks that sell virtual currencies like Bitcoin later this year under a bipartisan bill Gov. Tim Walz signed into law on Tuesday.

Local law enforcement and state regulators urged the Legislature to ban the kiosks because of what they described as

a growing problem with scams, particularly against older adults. There are around 350 kiosks in Minnesota.

The Department of Commerce estimated that state residents lost somewhere near \$1 million to kiosk scams in the last three years, with around half of that in 2025.

In a typical scam, fraudsters push people to deposit money into ATM-like kiosks and convert it into cryptocurrency — anonymizing the funds and making them almost impossible to recover.

FAA employee charged with threatening Trump

NH NASHUA — A federal employee in New Hampshire was arrested after emailing a death threat to the White House and conducting Google searches related to killing President Donald Trump, the U.S. Attorney for the district of New Hampshire announced.

Nashua resident Dean DelleChiaie, 35, a Federal Aviation Administration employee, appeared in federal court Tuesday on charges of interstate communication of a threat against the current president, U.S. Attorney Erin Creegan stated.

In late January, DelleChiaie allegedly began conducting internet searches with a government-issued work computer including: "how to get a gun into a federal facility, previous assassination attempts against the President, the percentage of the population that wants the President dead, and the phrase 'I am going to kill Donald John Trump,'" according to the criminal complaint.

The U.S. Secret Service inter-

viewed DelleChiaie in February about the alleged searches, the U.S. attorney said. According to the complaint, the defendant allegedly admitted to conducting the searches and owning three firearms.

On April 21, DelleChiaie allegedly used a personal email to send a threat to the White House's public email address. The email reportedly was sent with the subject "Contact the President," and allegedly stated, "I, Dean DelleChiaie, am going to neutralize/kill you — Donald John Trump — because you decided to kill kids — and say that it was War — when in reality — it is terrorism. God knows your actions and where you belong."

Juvenile charged in campus active shooter hoax

SC COLUMBIA — An arrest has been made months after a swatting incident at the University of South Carolina, where reports of an active shooter on campus turned out to be a hoax.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Pennsylvania said a juvenile will face charges because the person is believed to be responsible for a series of swatting hoaxes in 2025, including at the university's Columbia campus, university spokesman Jeff Stensland said Tuesday in a news release.

The juvenile, who was not publicly identified because of their age, is a self-identified member of the cybercriminal group "Purgatory," according to the release. That's who South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson called an "online gore-seeking group," that picked the university and other institutions at random, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.

Voters request over 565K mail-in ballots for primary

MD BALTIMORE — The Maryland State Board of Elections announced on Tuesday that 565,639 voters have requested mail-in ballots to vote in the 2026 primaries, suggesting that mail-in ballots will again make up a significant percentage of Maryland's voting turnout, according to State Election Administrator Jared DeMarinis.

The announcement comes as the state election board prepares for a Supreme Court decision that could affect how votes are counted in November, with the board hoping that practices implemented for the primary can avert headaches for voters in the fall.

Parents, teachers union sue state over vouchers

FL TALLAHASSEE — Contending that all schools receiving Florida taxpayer support are not treated equally, the Florida Education Association and seven parents have asked a Leon County court to find the state's education voucher and charter school systems unconstitutional.

In their 39-page lawsuit, filed Tuesday, they argue the current model violates the Florida Constitution's requirement that the state adequately provide for a "uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools."

A spokesperson for the Department of Education said the Florida Education Association is "once again wasting taxpayer dollars and members' dues on a frivolous lawsuit."

— From wire reports

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Wemby, Spurs rout T-wolves to tie series

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Whether it's chess, a drawing contest or table tennis, San Antonio Spurs All-Star Victor Wembanyama hates to lose. A loss in Game 1 of the Western Conference semifinals to the Minnesota Timberwolves only magnified that loathing.

Wembanyama responded by setting a suffocating tone as San Antonio handed Minnesota its largest postseason loss in franchise history, beating the Timberwolves 133-95 on Wednesday night to even their series at one game apiece.

Despite posting 11 points, 15 rebounds and setting an NBA postseason record with 12 blocks, Wembanyama shouldered much of the blame for the Spurs' 104-102 loss to the Timberwolves on Monday in Game 1.

The 7-foot-4 All-Star knew he needed to do more, especially offensively.

Was there some anger and frustration and a desire to get back on the court for Game 2? Absolutely.

"There always is," Wembanyama said. "In the playoffs, magnify

that."

What resulted was what Minnesota coach Chris Finch said was a punking before a raucous sellout crowd.

The Timberwolves were held to 35 points in the first half while shooting 7 for 24 from the field and 2 for 15 on 3-pointers.

Minnesota closed the game shooting 40% from the field, 30% on 3-pointers while committing 22 turnovers. San Antonio had a 58-36 scoring advantage in the paint, a 55-43 rebounding advantage and had nine blocked shots compared to two for Minnesota.

"We got beat in every way possible, it's as simple as that," Timberwolves forward Julius Randle said. "There's not really much to say from this game. They outthrustled us, out-physicaled us, executed, played better defensively, more energy. They just beat us in every way in this game. We've got to come back in the next game and be better."

Game 3 is Friday in Minneapolis followed by Game 4 on Sunday at the Target Center.

The Spurs and Timberwolves

went deep into their benches Wednesday with 10 minutes remaining in the game with only the margin of defeat undecided.

San Antonio's 38-point victory toppled Minnesota's previous largest postseason defeat of 30 points to the Los Angeles Lakers on April 29, 2003.

"I know this team's capable of doing all of this," Wembanyama said. "To be honest, I'm expecting this kind of response from myself, from my teammates. So, I'm not surprised by any means and I'm just going to keep working so we approach more games like we did tonight."

After blowing a nine-point lead in the fourth quarter Monday, Wembanyama and De'Aaron Fox both took accountability for the two-point loss.

Wembanyama and Fox combined for only 21 points in Game 1. The All-Star duo was a combined 0 for 12 on 3-pointers with Wembanyama missing eight.

"They acknowledged it, them being the leaders on our team," Spurs guard Stephon Castle said. "Coming out of Game 1, I mean,

it's going to happen. You're going to have bad shooting nights, but I mean, we have nothing but confidence in those two. So, I expect them to play well the rest of the series like they did tonight."

Wembanyama set the tone early in Game 2, scoring seven points on 3-for-4 shooting.

The Spurs missed their first three shots, but Wembanyama followed the third attempt by flying through the lane and throwing down a right-handed dunk to open the scoring.

Wembanyama had 14 points and nine rebounds in the first half while leading a defensive effort that limited Minnesota to 35 points, the fewest points by a San Antonio opponent in the first half of a playoff game since Memphis had 31 in 2013.

"I just think we respond well to adversity," Castle said. "I think we've done that all year. I mean, I don't think we were too shell shocked coming out of Game 1. I think we knew why we lost Game 1 and we addressed it right away. And I feel like that's what carried us through tonight."

Brunson takes control in Game 2; Knicks put Sixers in 2-0 hole

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jalen Brunson scored 26 points and helped New York seize control of a close game after a run of blowouts, leading the Knicks to a 108-102 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on Wednesday night for a 2-0 lead in the Eastern Conference semifinals.

Playing without the injured Joel Embiid, the 76ers put up a far better fight than in the Knicks' 137-98 romp in Game 1. The game featured 25 lead changes — the most in a playoff game in 11 years — and 14 ties. Neither team led by more than seven points.

"Most importantly it's staying poised, staying composed," Brunson said. "Just figuring out one just play at a time, one step at a time and not looking too far ahead."

Those kinds of situations are made for Brunson, who made the tiebreaking basket with 5:06 remaining and added another jumper for a 103-99 advantage with 3:45 to play before Mikal Bridges' basket made it a six-point game.

"They started switching a little bit and he got to his spots and scored a bucket and that's what he's expected to do for us," Knicks coach Mike Brown said of Brunson.

OG Anunoby added 24 points for New York, though he left late in the game, went to the locker room and didn't return to the bench. Brown said after the game he didn't have an update on the forward's status.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 20 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists for the Knicks, whose Game 1 victory made them the first

team to win three straight postseason games by at least 25 points.

Tyrese Maxey scored 26 points for the 76ers, who face another big climb after falling behind 3-1 against Boston in the first round.

The series moves to Philadelphia for Game 3 on Friday and Game 4 on Sunday, where Embiid will find out if gets his wish for the arena to be filled with Sixers fans or if New Yorkers made their way in.

Embiid was ruled out with right hip and ankle injuries after waking up with soreness and being unable to go through the 76ers' morning shootaround. But the 76ers, who won Game 2 in Boston without him while he was still recovering from a late-season appendectomy, got 19 points each from Paul George and Kelly

Oubre Jr. and 17 from VJ Edgecombe to nearly overcome their big man's absence.

They were ahead for the final time at 99-96 after Oubre's 3-pointer before Josh Hart made a 3-pointer with 6:52 remaining.

"I thought we had maybe four wide-open shots in a row that didn't go," 76ers coach Nick Nurse said.

"We just needed to keep the scoreboard moving and we played great offense. We just didn't shot-make."

Maxey managed only 13 points in Game 1 but was back to leaving defenders in the dust Wednesday, scoring 15 points in the second quarter and 19 in the first half.

The Knicks did a better job on him in the second half, led by Bridges, who also contributed 18 points.

Sabres revive power plays in Game 1 win

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Bowen Byram and Ryan McLeod scored on consecutive power play opportunities in reviving Buffalo's anemic special-teams unit, and the Sabres defeated the Montreal Canadiens 4-2 in Game 1 of their second-round playoff series on Wednesday night.

Josh Doan and Jordan Greenway also scored for Buffalo, which was making its first second-round appearance since 2007, and first overall in 15 years. Alex Lyon stopped 26 shots and improved to 4-1 since taking over the starting duties in Game 3 against Buffalo's opening-round opponent Boston.

Nick Suzuki and Kirby Dach scored for Montreal, which appeared slow to find its legs three days after defeating Tampa Bay in Game 7 of its first-round series. Jakub Dobes finished with 12 saves, and allowed four goals after allowing a combined two in splitting Games 6 and 7 against the Lightning.

Montreal has yet to win consecutive playoff games this postseason, and was coming off a series in which all seven games were decided by one goal, including four in overtime.

Buffalo hosts Game 2 on Friday night, before the series shifts to Montreal on Sunday.

The Sabres were the more rested team, having had four days off since beating Boston 4-1 in Game 6 on Friday.

"I like the quick start we got off to. I know we can be a lot better," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said, noting he thought Buffalo looked disjointed at times. "There's a couple situations in the game that we gave them a little bit of momentum."

Doan opened the scoring 4:31 in by converting Zach Benson's pass to cap a 2-on-1 after Montreal defenseman Lane Hutson fell and turned over the puck in front of his bench.

McLeod made it 2-0 by converting Benson's pass through the crease on Buffalo's second power play opportunity 13:26 into the first period. Byram

scored on the next opportunity by snapping in a shot from between the circles to put Buffalo up 4-1 midway through the second period.

Byram's goal was his fourth, matching the Sabres' franchise playoff record for defensemen, joining Mike Ramsey (1988), Jason Woolley and Alexei Zhitnik, who both scored four in 1999.

Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis was pleased with how much more room his players had to create with the puck after a tight-checking series against the Lightning. His only issue is the Canadiens need to take advantage of it.

"I'm confident that we can play any style. I'm confident that we could play the game that's in front of us. And I'm confident that we can learn from this one and be better," St. Louis said.

Buffalo converted 2 of 3 power play chances, breathing new life into a unit that went 1 of 24 against Boston. The Sabres' 4.2% conversion rate was tied for 865th out of 897 teams that

had 20 or more opportunities in a playoff series since 1978.

And Buffalo's man-advantage woes carried over from the final seven regular-season games, during which the team went 0 for 22.

McLeod didn't mind hearing questions about the power play on Wednesday night.

"I mean, maybe keep asking, if we're gonna keep scoring now," he said with a laugh. "It's a process of building it and getting your look. So I think, we got them tonight and it was going in."

Sabres captain Rasmus Dahlin limped off favoring his right leg with under three minutes left after blocking a shot by Jake Evans.

Dach scored the game's highlight goal, cutting Buffalo's lead to 4-2 with 3:29 left in the second. Driving up the right wing, Dach's centering pass was blocked by Lyon's stick. The puck caromed back to Dach who, while falling, was able to lift the puck over the goalie's glove.

Ducks defeat Knights, head home with series tied 1-1

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Beckett Sennecke, Leo Carlsson and Jansen Harkins scored, Lukas Dostal came 5.6 seconds from his first career playoff shutout and the Anaheim Ducks beat the Vegas Golden Knights 3-1 on Wednesday night to even their series at a game apiece.

The Ducks head home with the chance to grab hold of the best-of-seven second-round NHL playoff series, with Game 3 on Friday night. Vegas hopes to pull off a repeat of its first-round series when the Golden Knights went to Utah at 1-1 before winning in six games.

"That's not our tradition of playing that type of game, a low-scoring affair," Ducks coach Joel Quenneville said. "I think we've

had some stretches over the course of the season, particularly late. This is the only way you're going to be successful in playoffs is you've got to win games like tonight. It's going to take everybody to play these types of games, and I thought everybody contributed."

Sennecke, a finalist for the Calder Memorial Trophy that goes to the league's top rookie, became the fourth Ducks player 20 or younger to score multiple goals in a postseason.

Dostal saved 21 shots and nearly had his third career shutout, including regular-season play, before Mark Stone scored a power-play goal in the closing seconds.

Carter Hart made 25 saves for the Golden Knights. Brett Howden's four-game goal streak ended, as did Ivan Barbarshev's sev-

en-game point streak.

The Golden Knights' penalty kill gave them a chance. They killed all five penalties, including a stretch of 6:19 in the first period in which the Golden Knights took four penalties, including a double minor by Jack Eichel for high sticking. Vegas has killed off 19 straight penalties this postseason and is 24 of 25 overall.

Stone moved to the top line, William Karlsson shifted to the second and Pavel Dorofeyev dropped to the third.

Quenneville found some magic by moving Cutter Gauthier up to the second line with Mikael Granlund and Alex Killorn. That group had 20 scoring chances to one for Vegas after two periods, according to Natural Stat Trick. They finished with a 23-5 advan-

tage.

Quenneville also took forward Mason McTavish, who had a goal and three assists in the six-game first-round victory over Edmonton, out of the lineup. He failed to score on two shots in the opener of this series.

The Ducks broke through in the second period, controlling play for about six minutes as Vegas struggled to keep the puck out of its zone. Then finally it was too much, Jeffrey Viel passing from below the goal line to Sennecke, camped out in front of the net for the 1-0 lead with 8:37 left in the period.

Troy Terry's backhand pass to Carlsson at 6:36 of the third period made it 2-0 for the Ducks. Harkins added an empty-net goal with 3:30 remaining.

Rays beat Blue Jays, finish 3-game sweep

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Shane McClellan extended his scoreless streak to 16 2/3 innings, and the Tampa Bay Rays beat the Toronto Blue Jays 3-0 Wednesday to finish a three-game sweep for their 12th win in 13 games.

Tampa Bay has allowed 17 runs over the 13 games. The Rays have three shutouts in that span and have given up one run five times.

McClellan (4-2) yielded two hits over 5 2/3 innings in his third straight scoreless outing, struck out four and walked one. Kevin Kelly, Garrett Cleavinger, Bryan Baker and Ian Seymour finished the four-hitter, with Seymour getting three straight outs for his first professional save.

Tampa Bay has won 10 straight home games and is 14-4 at home in its first season back at Tropicana Field following a season across the bay at Steinbrenner Field while repairs were made at the Trop following damage caused by Hurricane Milton.

Defending AL champion Toronto had lost four straight and five of seven, dropping to 16-21.

Patrick Corbin (1-1) gave up two runs and five hits in 5 1/3 innings.

Tampa Bay took a 2-0 lead in the fourth when Johnny DeLuca hit an RBI double and scored on Chandler Simpson's two-out RBI single.

Guardians 3, Royals 1: Joey Cantillo and four relievers combined on a four-hitter, Chase DeLauter hit a go-ahead, two-run single and visiting Cleveland beat Kansas City to stop its three-game skid and the Royals' five-game winning streak.

Salvador Perez put Kansas City ahead with a third-inning sacrifice fly that scored Bobby Witt Jr. but DeLauter hit a two-run single in the fifth off Luinder Avila (0-2). David Fry added a run-scoring groundout in the eighth.

The game ended after a 1-2

curveball to Isaac Collins on the inside corner that initially was ruled a ball by plate umpire Edwin Moscoso. Catcher Austin Hedges challenged and the ABS changed the decision to a called third strike. Six of eight challenges in the game were successful.

Kansas City starter Cole Ragans left after three scoreless innings because of left triceps and elbow soreness.

Cleveland went 1 for 10 with runners in scoring position.

Dodgers 12, Astros 2: Andy Pages set career highs with three homers and six RBIs and Shohei Ohtani broke out of a slump with two hits to lead visiting Los Angeles to a rout of Houston.

Starter Tyler Glasnow allowed a solo home run in the first inning before leaving the game with low back pain before the second. He returned to the mound to warm up before the second inning but appeared to be in discomfort after throwing a pitch and signaled to the dugout before exiting the game.

Jack Dreyer (2-3) took over and pitched two scoreless innings for the win as one of six relievers who stepped in to hold Houston to one run after Glasnow's early departure.

Ohtani snapped a 0 for 18 skid with a double in the third inning and added an RBI single in the fifth. His hitless streak was the second longest of his career behind an 0 for 19 stretch in

Orioles 7, Marlins 4: Pete Alonso hit a three-run homer, Adley Rutschman had two RBI doubles and visiting Baltimore beat Miami.

Alonso has 57 extra-base hits against Miami since making his debut in 2019, the most by any player against an opponent in that span. He has hit 33 homers in 105 games against the Marlins, formerly a divisional foe during his seven seasons with the Mets.

Baltimore has won two straight at Miami after getting

outscored 39-10 during a four-game sweep by the Yankees in New York.

Brewers 6, Cardinals 2: Aaron Ashby tied Atlanta's Chris Sale for the major league lead with his sixth win, backed by Andrew Vaughn's three-run homer in a four-run first inning, and visiting Milwaukee beat St. Louis.

Ashby (6-0) entered to open the sixth and pitched two hitless innings, allowing his only runner to reach on a walk, as five pitchers combined on a four-hitter.

Andre Pallante (3-3) allowed five runs and eight hits in six innings as the Cardinals lost for the second time in nine games.

Rangers 6, Yankees 1: Nathan Eovaldi cooled off New York for the second time in eight days, and Texas got early home runs from Corey Seager and Evan Carter in a road victory.

Aaron Judge hit his major league-high 15th homer for the Yankees, who had won five straight games and 15 of 17. But right-hander Will Warren (4-1) was tagged for six runs and seven hits while throwing 90 pitches over four innings, a rare clunker for a New York rotation that began the day leading the majors with a 2.77 ERA.

New York had won eight in a row at home.

Nationals 15, Twins 2: CJ Abrams hit a grand slam with a career-high five RBIs, Drew Millas, Brady House and José Tena also homered and host Washington set its season high for runs in a rout of Minnesota.

Washington also established season highs with four home runs and 10 extra-base hits. The Nationals hit four homers in a four-inning span after hitting none in their previous four games.

Twins starter Bailey Ober (3-2) gave up five runs and six hits in five innings. The Twins allowed their most runs since a 17-6 defeat to Milwaukee last June 20.

Mariners 3, Braves 1: Bryan Woo tied his season best with nine strikeouts in six scoreless innings, Julio Rodríguez homered, and host Seattle beat Atlanta to hand the Braves their first series loss of the season.

Atlanta had won eight consecutive series and was 10-0-1 this season. The Braves became just the fifth team in the Wild Card era (since 1995) to go unbeaten in at least 11 straight series to open a season, joining the LA Dodgers (2020, 13 series), Arizona (2018, 12), Baltimore (1997, 14) and Philadelphia (1995, 12).

Angels 8, White Sox 2: Travis d'Arnaud hit a three-run homer, Walbert Ureña threw six innings of two-hit ball, and host Los Angeles defeated Chicago.

Los Angeles won a series for the first time since April 10-12 at Cincinnati. The Angels are 2-7-2 in series this season.

Phillies 6, Athletics 3: Edmundo Sosa hit a go-ahead two-run single in the eighth inning, Adolis García homered, and host Philadelphia rallied to beat the Athletics.

Brandon Marsh had a triple among his three hits for Philadelphia, which improved to 8-1 under interim manager Don Mattingly.

Red Sox 4, Tigers 0: Sonny Gray pitched five innings in his return from injury and visiting Boston finished a three-game sweep of Detroit.

Gray (3-1) was making his first start since facing the Tigers on April 20 at Fenway Park — a game he left after 2 2/3 innings with a strained hamstring. He gave up four hits and two walks while striking out two on Wednesday.

Padres 5, Giants 1: Pinch-hitter Ty France delivered a two-run triple in the seventh inning to put San Diego ahead to stay as it picked up a road win over San Francisco on Wednesday.

The Giants, who've lost eight of their past nine games, managed only three hits and struck out 13 times.