

Groton Daily Independent

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Thursday, June 20

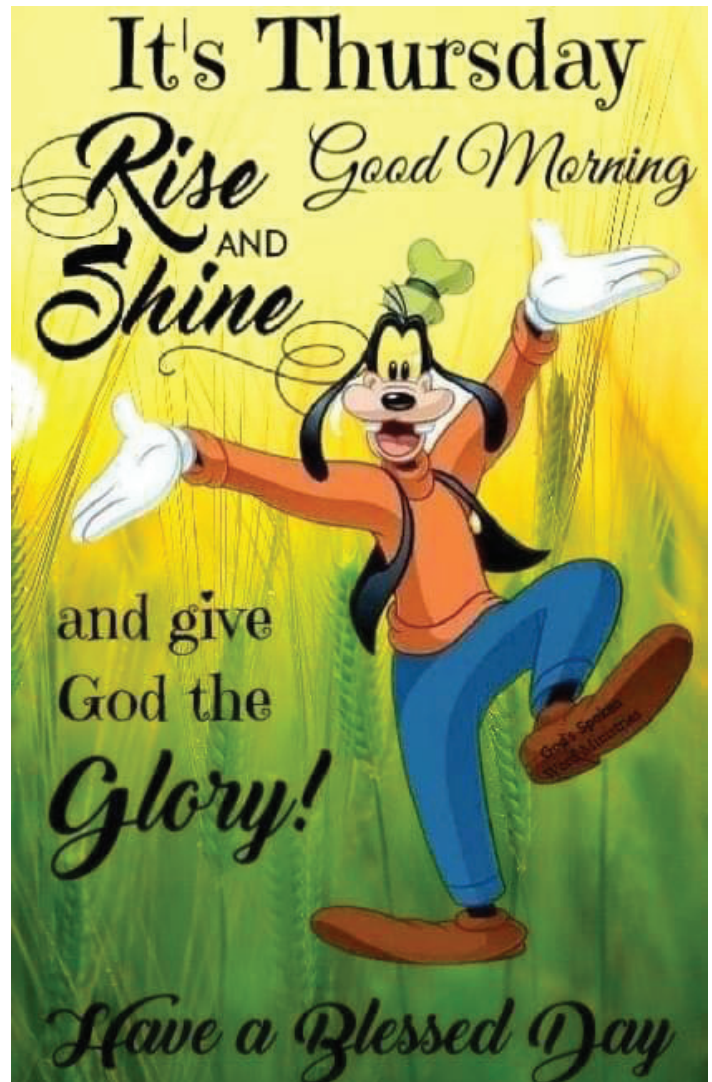
Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, vegetable capri blend, apricots, whole wheat bread.

- Junior Teeners at Redfield, 5:30 p.m. (2)
- U12 R/B hosts Aberdeen 11-12, 5:30 p.m. (2)
- U10 B/W hosts Aberdeen, 5:30 p.m. (2)
- U8 R/B at Claremont
- SB at Webster (U8 at 6 p.m. (1), U10 Blk at 6 p.m. (2), U12 at 7 p.m. (2))
- SB U14 at Oakes, 6 p.m. (1)
- Wage Memorial Library Story Time, 10 a.m.
- Transit Fundraiser, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Groton Community Center
- Youth Golf Lessons at Olive Grove

Friday, June 21

- Senior Menu: Chicken pasta salad, grape juice, dinner roll, apple crisp, carrots and peas.
- Junior Legion at Clark Tournament
- Junior Teeners at Aberdeen Smitty's, 5 p.m. (2)
- SB 10 Gld at Frederick 6 p.m. (1)
- T-Ball G/B scrimmage, 6 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



Saturday, June 22

- Junior Legion at Clark Tournament
- Legion at Northville Tournament
- U8 R/B - Groton Tourney
- Groton Triathlon, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

1440

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Putin, Kim Sign Pact

Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement yesterday in Pyongyang, reportedly the first such document between the two countries to include limited defense aid in over 30 years. The pair announced the deal amid Putin's first official visit to the country in a quarter of a century, their second meeting since September.

The two nations, beyond sharing a small 10-mile land border, have a history of alignment since World War II. Although neither side released a text of the agreement, Putin indicated in a joint press conference the countries would provide mutual assistance in the face of aggression, without elaborating on those terms. The leaders also alluded to increased economic ties as well as the sharing of military munitions, technology, and intelligence.

The pact comes days after reports surfaced the two countries have likely illicitly traded arms amid Russia's war in Ukraine.

Hajj Heat Deaths

Hundreds of people have died this week in Saudi Arabia from suspected heat-related illness while performing the Hajj pilgrimage. While the death toll was not immediately available, estimates have ranged from 550 people to over 600 as of this writing.

The five-day Hajj pilgrimage is a sacred Islamic journey to the city of Mecca involving a series of rituals. It is one of the largest mass gatherings in the world, this year attracting over 1.8 million people. While details surrounding the reported deaths were not available, temperatures this week reportedly surpassed 125 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade and over 2,700 people were confirmed to have been treated for heat-related illness.

While security efforts at the Hajj have worked to reduce the threat of deadly crowd surges, heat is also increasingly a concern. Dates for the Hajj follow a lunar calendar moving between seasons, with researchers warning the years 2047-52 and 2079-86 may pose a heightened heat risk for Hajj pilgrims.

OpenAI Door Closes, Another Opens

OpenAI cofounder Ilya Sutskever announced a new venture yesterday, Safe Superintelligence Inc. The project will seek to launch a "safe" artificial general intelligence, hearkening to OpenAI's founding goals but without its current pressures from investors and consumers.

The project—cofounded by OpenAI colleague Daniel Levy and Apple's former AI lead Daniel Gross—comes after Sutskever announced his departure last month from OpenAI. Sutskever was part of the OpenAI board that ousted CEO Sam Altman in the fall, though he soon backtracked and worked to bring Altman back. Sutskever did not provide much detail on Safe Superintelligence, including its investment structure. He says safety would be engineered into the AI system from the beginning rather than adding fixes in response to discovered lapses.

Artificial general intelligence describes a general purpose data system with human-like capabilities, with the term "superintelligence" referring to a system whose capabilities extend beyond humans.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

MLB holds moment of silence at all 15 games yesterday to honor Baseball Hall of Famer Willie Mays. James Chance, No Wave music icon and frontman for the Contortions, dies at 71. Justin Timberlake's lawyer says the singer will "vigorously" fight his DWI charges. Rappers Swizz Beatz and Timbaland strike deal with X for exclusive distribution rights for their Verzuz content. "Inside Out 2" continues record-breaking haul at box office for animated films, pulling in \$49M in last two days.

Science & Technology

Saturn's moon Titan has waves strong enough to erode its coastlines, new study suggests; filled with liquid methane and ethane, Titan is the only other place in the solar system home to active oceans, lakes, and rivers.

Researchers create a spinal cord injury "atlas," mapping out the molecular changes of different cell types following nerve damage; study also yielded a potential gene therapy for spinal injuries.

New algorithm spots AI hallucinations—false information generated by the platforms, presented as real—roughly 80% of the time

Business & Markets

Inflation in the UK fell to lowest level in three years, with year-over-year price rises slowing to 2% in May; economic data comes ahead of July 4 national elections.

UK regulator initiates investigation into whether Hewlett Packard Enterprise's planned \$14B acquisition of Juniper Networks would result in competition concerns in the country.

Luxury sneaker maker Golden Goose delays initial public offering in Milan, citing market volatility due to European Parliament elections and France's snap election; Golden Goose—worn by celebrities like Taylor Swift—was set to go public tomorrow.

Politics & World Affairs

Tropical Storm Alberto, the first named storm of the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season, approaches north-east Mexico and the Texas coast with winds of 40 miles per hour.

Hurricane season is expected to have above-average activity; see previous write-up.

Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry (R) signs law making the state the first to require the Ten Commandments to be posted in every public school classroom.

Last year's rail derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, released toxic chemicals to 16 states, according to a new study; pollutants disappeared within three weeks after the accident.

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Can online health information be trusted? Here's how to tell

By Mayo Clinic Press Editors

Whether you're reading about treatment outcomes or simply trying to find a healthy diet plan, it can be hard to know if you can believe what you read on the internet.

No information you find online can replace a medical professional's advice. But most health care professionals welcome you doing your own research and bringing it into the clinic to discuss. In fact, it's always a good idea to ask them if your online searches have landed on trustworthy sources. Your clinic also may recommend specific websites or articles.

But while you're at home browsing the web for health topics, there are a few ways you can protect yourself from false information. Here's what Mayo Clinic experts recommend.

Look for clues in the web address

The last 3 letters of the website's address let you know what type of organization owns the site. Sites that end in these letters can typically be trusted:

.gov (a U.S. governmental agency)

.org (a nonprofit organization, like a research society)

.edu (an educational center, like a university)

Websites that end in .com are commercial sites and are not always reliable sources of information.

Find out who wrote the information

Is the article written or reviewed by a health care expert? A blogger with no medical experience? Or a representative for a drug company who will say anything to sell a product?

You'll often see the author's name and title at the top or bottom of articles. You also can look in the About Us section to see who's in charge of writing the information on the website.

Look for:

Information that is written or reviewed by medical or scientific experts, like people with M.D. or Ph.D. after their name.

A list of sources for each article, so you know where the information came from.

Check the date

Most reputable health sites will include a date on their webpages. This shows when the article was written or last reviewed. If it's several years old, it may be out of date. Or it could be a sign that the website is no longer being reviewed.

If you're not sure if the information is current, ask a health care professional.

Does it sound too good to be true?

Be wary of websites that promise "miracle cures" or are selling a product. If something seems too good to be true, it probably isn't true.

To be sure, you can search trustworthy sites. If you can't find the same information on websites for national medical organizations or government agencies, you can be sure it's not accurate.

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Trust your health care team. If there was a quick solution to your health issues, they would tell you about it.

What about the news?

Reading the news is often where people get their information. But when it comes to reporting about medical research, even reputable news sites may not tell the whole story.

So how do you know if you can trust the article? Check to see if it:

Quotes the authors of the study.

Interviews medical or scientific experts not involved in the study, for more fair reporting.

Is written by a health reporter who is trained to understand medical research.

Even better, find the original study the news is reporting on. It may be published in a medical journal. Often, a single article is only part of the research on a topic. If you need help understanding the study or how it relates to the overall research, ask your health care team to help explain it.

Can you trust social media?

Social networking sites contain plenty of fake news, misinformation and other people's opinions. But if you know where to look, social media also can be a handy way to gather information from trustworthy sources.

Look back at the sites you've found that end in .gov, .org or .edu. Most will have links to their social media accounts. You can follow them to get updates on the latest news and information. You often can follow your health care clinic's social media as well.

Plus, social media can be helpful for connecting with other people who have similar health conditions. You may find support by following the stories of others and sharing your own. Just remember that you shouldn't take medical advice from anyone but your health care team.



GROTON
CUSTOMER APPRECIATION

Walking Tacos!

11 am - 2 pm
Groton Bank

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26

DACOTAH BANK

MEMBER FDIC



Taken on the steps of Lincoln Hall at Northern State University on April 29th, 2024 – Nurses from all generations, workplaces, and specialties gather together.

Front Row L to R: Marlys Schmidt, Guyna Dehne, Elaine VanDover, Janeen Haas, Kayla Hintz, Makenzie Zimmerman, Holly Zimmerman, Mary Krumm
Second Row: Carrie Hanson, Claire Wheeler, Cindy Rau, Janet Hollister, Angie Sanderson, Chris Sanderson, Allie Cleberg
Third Row: Barb Goehring, Kathy Mertz, Sharon Fischer, Heather Wiedner, Diana Kirschenman, Lynn Knott, Kathy Larson, MaKenzie Huber
Fourth Row: Payton Gross, Regan Leicht
Fifth Row: Morgan Browning, Kim Kendall, Theresa Huff, Lisa Dennert Howard, Lyncee Monson, Linda Erienbusch, Kristen Tobin, Brenda Bahr, Jen Kludt, Candi Perry, Taryn Martin, Heather Hedges, Mary Vidoloff
Sixth Row: Sara Wolf, Louise Nash, Lea Niederbauer, Linda Burdette, Dana Dohman, Deb Heine, Jeanette Hahler, Lindsey Hahler, Becky Mattern, Pam Seyer, Nicole Zelmer-Cease, Rachel Sturgeon
Back Row: KaSara Sutton, Kristi Kolb, Diana Hayes, Brenda Heinert, Erin Keeley, Janet Bitz, Nancy Hartung, Melissa Waldner, Shelby Boettner, Ashley McKane, Melissa Podoll, Laura Snover, Jennifer Powell, Nellie Hatfield, Kim Russell

Nurses Make a Difference: A Voice to Lead Through the Generations of Nurses **By Barb Goehring, RN, BSN**

Thank you to all of the nurses in our communities, region, and state who support the care of those in need. We are very appreciative of their commitment to the nursing profession.

The impact nurses make on healthcare is unparalleled. To honor nurses, National Nurses Week is celebrated from May 6-12, 2024, and National Nurses Month is celebrated throughout all of May. Both are opportunities for hospitals, employers, workplaces, and individuals to acknowledge their nurses.

Nursing is a career chosen by individuals who have a desire to enter a profession of caring and compassion. Nursing is a calling in life, a journey of caring for people of all ages from birth to death. Being a nurse means providing selfless and holistic care while respecting a patient's dignity. It is a profession with many facets, including helping people to heal, promoting health and healthy behaviors, and preventing illness. Nurses also provide education in schools and communities and are often seen as a trusted health resource.

Some of the earliest nurses set an example that encouraged future daughters, sons, siblings, spouses, and grandchildren to continue a family tradition in the nursing profession. There is no greater adventure than following in the path of a family member whom one respects and looks up to.

One of a nurse's primary functions is to serve as a counselor by advocating for the patient. Nurses work closely with the care team and the patient to align each of their goals for the patient's outcomes. Nursing can be described as both an art and a science, a heart and a mind. At its heart lies a fundamental respect for human dignity and an intuition for a patient's needs.

When the experienced nurse works as a mentor to new graduate nurses, there is an emphasis on the quality of care provided to each patient. As a teacher to the new nurse, their leadership is guided by the experiences they have encountered throughout their own career.

The values of a nurse include care, compassion, competence, communication, courage, and commitment. A successful nurse also possesses the qualities of patience, empathy, the ability to think critically, an astute attention to detail, flexibility, adaptability, working well on a team, creative problem-solving, and professionalism, just to name a few.

Groton Post 39 Fall After Strong Showing By Perham Buzz U18 Legion By GameChanger Media

Groton Post 39 couldn't keep up with Perham Buzz U18 Legion and fell 8-2 on Wednesday in the Battle of Omaha Tournament.

Groton Post 39 got on the board in the top of the third inning after Colby Dunker hit a sacrifice fly, and Ryan Groeblichhoff grounded out, each scoring one run.

Perham Buzz U18 Legion made the score 4-2 in the bottom of the third after Evan Kovash doubled, scoring two runs, Ashton Detloff hit a sacrifice fly, scoring one run, and Bradyn Anderson hit a sacrifice fly, scoring one run.

Brevin Flihs started on the mound for Groton Post 39. They surrendered five hits and six runs (four earned) over four innings, striking out three and walking two. Anderson opened the game for Perham Buzz U18 Legion. The righty gave up three hits and two runs over three innings, striking out two and walking three.

Dunker went 1-for-2 at the plate as the left fielder led the team with one run batted in. Dunker, Gavin Englund, Flihs, and Carter Simon each collected one hit for Groton Post 39. Bradin Althoff led Groton Post 39 with two walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, accumulating seven walks for the game.

Kovash drove the middle of the lineup, leading Perham Buzz U18 Legion with two runs batted in. The third baseman went 3-for-4 on the day. Perham Buzz U18 Legion were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Blaiz Schmidt had the most chances in the field with 10.

Groton Post 39 will travel to Northville Tournament for their next game on Saturday.

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Groton Transit Fundraiser

Thursday, June 20th, 2024

5:00 pm - 7:00pm at

Groton Community Center

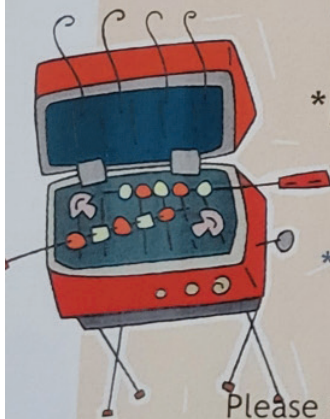
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Tree planted in memory of Janice Flihs

Members of the Groton Garden Club planted a tree at the Groton Baseball Complex in memory of Janice Flihs. Flihs was a member of the Groton Garden Club. Pictured in back, left to right, are Linda Anderson, Shirlee Briggs (Janice Flihs' daughter), and Deb McKiver; and in front are Pat Larson, Denise Sombke and Becky Aldrich. (Courtesy Photo)



Nicholas Groeblichhoff, Braxton Imrie and Alex Abeln helped plant the tree for the Groton Garden Club. (Courtesy Photos)





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Explaining the lawsuit against South Dakota's abortion-rights ballot measure

Claims are rooted in years of prior legislating and litigating

BY: SETH TUPPER - JUNE 19, 2024 6:00 AM

A new court fight over South Dakota's abortion-rights ballot measure could hinge on a complicated answer to a simple question: Does a set of six-year-old petition requirements still exist?

The court fight started Thursday, when the Life Defense Fund filed a lawsuit in state court. The lawsuit challenges the legitimacy of a citizen-initiated Nov. 5 ballot question that would reinstate abortion rights. The Life Defense Fund is a ballot question committee organized to oppose the measure.

Dakotans for Health is the ballot question committee that supports the measure and gathered the petition signatures to put it on the ballot. Instead of filing a response in state court, Dakotans for Health asked a federal judge on Tuesday to intervene on its behalf. To understand why, it's necessary to retrace a series of legislative and court battles dating to 2018.

That's when the Republican-dominated Legislature enacted restrictions on the petition process that citizens use to place measures on the ballot. The restrictions were intended to prevent non-South Dakotans from circulating petitions, in part by requiring petitioners to provide information proving their South Dakota residency.

One year later, in 2019, some lawmakers said out-of-state petitioners were circumventing the law. So the Legislature repealed part of the 2018 law and replaced it with a new law. Among other things, the 2019 law required all petition circulators to publicly disclose personal information including their address, email and phone number.

A ballot question committee, SD Voice, and a liberal blogger, Cory Heidelberger, successfully sued to block the 2019 law. They said the law violated their First Amendment free speech rights, had a chilling effect on petition circulators, and imposed "unwarranted new restrictions on the ballot measure process, for the purpose of further consolidating power in South Dakota's dominant political party."

In 2020, legislators responded with another new law applying similar requirements, but only to paid petition circulators. Dakotans for Health successfully sued to block that law. A federal appellate judge in the case wrote, "While South Dakota has important interests in protecting the integrity of the ballot initiative process, it has no interest in enforcing overbroad restrictions that likely violate the Constitution."

Both the 2019 and 2020 laws included a 30-day residency requirement for petition circulators. That specific requirement was challenged in yet another lawsuit, filed by the League of Women Voters. The league agreed to drop its narrower lawsuit when Dakotans for Health succeeded with its wider suit.

According to the Life Defense Fund, the end result of all that lawmaking and litigating is that the original 2018 law still stands. It's still "good law," the group claims, because none of the subsequent bills that sought to repeal or amend it are currently in force. Those bills were challenged by opponents and blocked by the courts.

The Life Defense Fund therefore asserts that the abortion-rights petitioners were obligated to comply with the 2018 law, which requires sworn statements including information proving the petitioners' South Dakota residency. The Life Defense Fund says Dakotans for Health failed to obey that law, and "therefore the entire petition is disqualified."

Dakotans for Health says the Life Defense Fund lawsuit is an illegal attempt to resurrect the 30-day resi-

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dency requirement for petitioners and “flout” the related court decisions. That’s why Dakotans for Health is asking a federal judge to prevent any state court from enforcing the residency requirement.

There are other allegations in the Life Defense Fund lawsuit: petition circulators failed to provide a required handout to signers, some signatures were counted as valid even though they’d been crossed out on the petition, some signers didn’t list the county where they’re registered to vote, some signers were allegedly duped into thinking they were signing a petition about repealing the sales tax on groceries, and so on.

“This will be proven by witness testimony,” Sara Frankenstein, the attorney for the Life Defense Fund, told South Dakota Searchlight.

Dakotans for Health, represented by attorney Jim Leach, asserts that the Life Defense Fund’s other allegations are insufficient to achieve its aim of removing the abortion-rights measure from the ballot. The petition circulator residency questions are “critical to the possible success” of the lawsuit, Dakotans for Health says in its federal court memorandum.

Nancy Turbak Berry, a Democratic former legislator who leads a coalition advocating for the ballot measure, panned the Life Defense Fund’s legal strategy.

“It is a press release masquerading as a lawsuit, designed solely to allow the opponents of reproductive freedom to peddle more inflammatory lies,” she said.

Dakotans for Health filed its ballot petition in May with about 55,000 signatures. The Secretary of State’s Office validated the petition after sampling the signatures and estimating that 46,098 of them were from South Dakota registered voters — more than the 35,017 needed to qualify for the ballot.

Abortions are currently banned in South Dakota, except to “preserve the life of the pregnant female.” The ballot measure would legalize abortions in the first trimester of pregnancy but allow the state to impose limited regulations in the second trimester and a ban in the third trimester, with exceptions for the life and health of the mother.

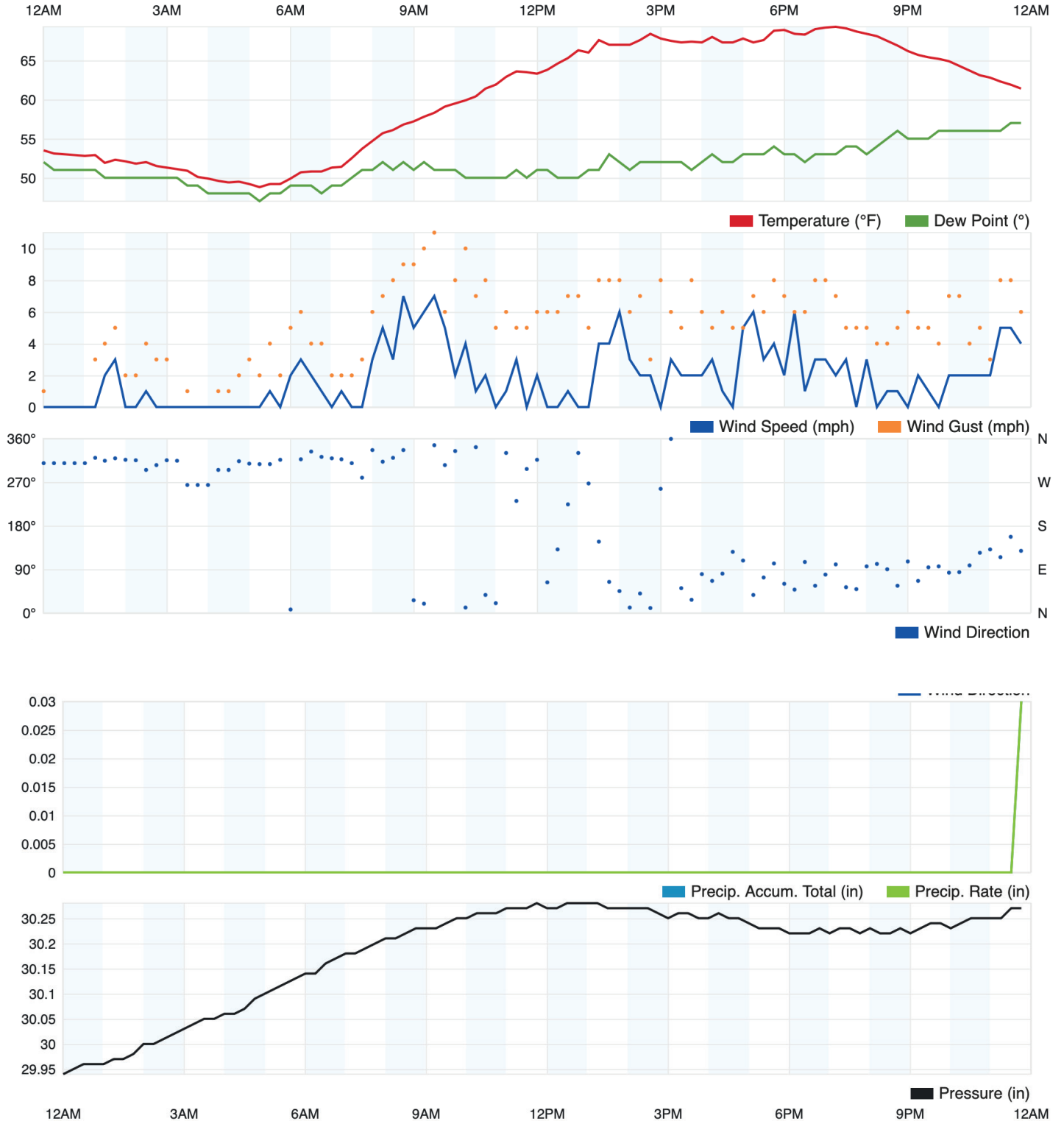
South Dakota Searchlight’s Joshua Haiar contributed to this report.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

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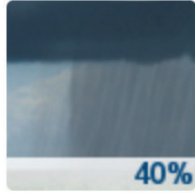
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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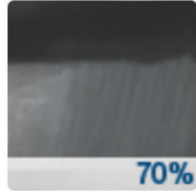
Thursday



High: 72 °F

Chance
Showers

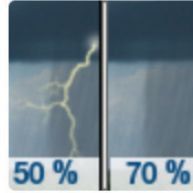
Thursday
Night



Low: 59 °F

Showers
Likely

Friday



High: 75 °F

Chance
T-storms then
Showers
Likely

Friday Night



Low: 63 °F

Showers

Saturday



High: 82 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms

Returning To Unsettled For The Rest Of The Week

Thursday



Highs:
64-68°F

Chance Precipitation:
35-90%

Friday



Highs:
72-80°F

**Severe Storms
Possible**
Chance Precipitation:
60-90%

Saturday



Highs:
77-83°F

Storms Best in the
Morning
Chance Precipitation:
20-30%

An active weather pattern will return with periods of showers and storms later tonight through Saturday morning. Some storms on Friday may become strong to severe.

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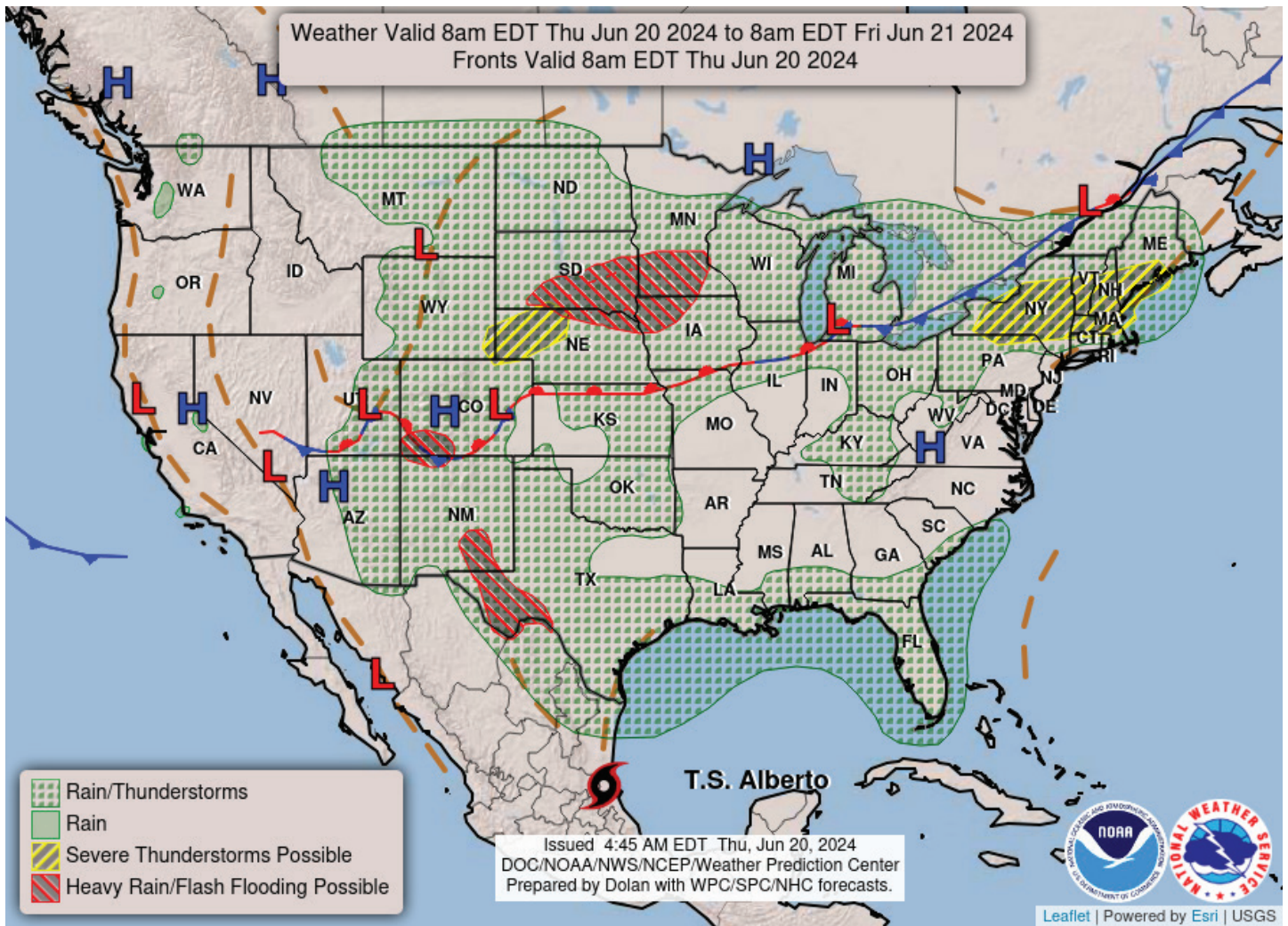
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 69 °F at 7:14 PM
Low Temp: 69 °F at 7:14 PM
Wind: 11 mph at 9:31 AM
Precip: : .03 + it rained after midnight

Day length: 15 hours, 44 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 101 in 1988
Record Low: 34 in 1969
Average High: 82
Average Low: 56
Average Precip in June.: 2.42
Precip to date in June: 2.28
Average Precip to date: 9.67
Precip Year to Date: 9.35
Sunset Tonight: 9:26:18 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:42:15 am



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Today in Weather History

June 20, 1957: An F2 tornado moved ENE from near Rockham to near Athol and Ashton. One person was killed as a mobile home was destroyed near the start of the path. Four barns were destroyed, and one house was unroofed.

Also on this day, an F5 tornado cut a swath through Fargo, North Dakota killing 10 and injuring at least 103 people. This tornado was the northernmost confirmed F5 tornado until the Elie, Manitoba tornado on June 22, 2007.

June 20, 1989: A meteorological "hot flash" hit Pierre. Descending air from collapsing thunderstorms caused the temperature in Pierre to warm from 86 degrees at midnight to 96 at one a.m. and to 104 at 2 a.m. Pierre's record high for the date of 105 degrees in 1974.

1682 - A major tornado ripped through southwestern Connecticut, passing through Stratford, Milford, and New Haven, and then into Long Island Sound. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1921 - Circle, MT, received 11.5 inches of rain in 24 hours, a record for the state. The town of Circle received a total of 16.79 inches of rain that month to establish a rainfall record for any town in Montana for any month of the year. (The Weather Channel)

1928 - A farmer near Greensburg, KS, looked up into the heart of a tornado. He described its walls as rotating clouds lit with constant flashes of lightning and a strong gassy odor with a screaming, hissing sound. (The Weather Channel)

1964 - A squall line producing large hail swept through central Illinois. A second squall line moved through during the early morning hours of the 21st, and a third one moved through shortly after dawn. The series of hailstorms caused nine million dollars damage. Hailstones as large as grapefruit caused heavy damage to trees, utility lines, crops and buildings. The thunderstorms also produced as much as five inches of rain in an eight hour period. (David Ludlum)

1970: Nesbyen, Norway reached 96 degrees on this day, becoming the warmest temperature recorded in Norway.

1987 - Thunderstorms prevailed east of the Rockies, producing severe weather in the Central High Plains Region. Thunderstorms spawned four tornadoes in Colorado, and produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Goodland, KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty-eight cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 97 degrees at Flint, MI, and 104 degrees at Chicago, IL, equalled records for the month of June. Thunderstorms in North Dakota produced baseball size hail near Kief, and wind gusts to 100 mph near McGregor. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - An early morning thunderstorm produced wind gusts to 61 mph at Pierre, SD, and the hot thunderstorm winds raised the temperature from 86 degrees at midnight to 96 degrees by 1 AM, and 104 degrees by 2 AM. Butte, MT, and Yellowstone Park, WY, reported snow that afternoon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2001: Large hail driven by strong thunderstorm winds raked Denver International and front-range airports. Wind gusting to 54 mph along with hail as large as 2 inches in diameter punched at least 14 thousand holes and cracks in the flat roofs of several buildings at Denver International Airport. Also, 93 planes and hundreds of cars were damaged. About 100 flights had to be canceled stranding 1500 travelers. The Airport was completely shut down for about 20 minutes. The storm also damaged ground avoidance radar used to track planes on the ground to prevent collisions. Damage was estimated at 10 million dollars not counting the cost to the 93 airliners. The storm moved south and struck Watkins Colorado with hail as large as 2 1/2 inches in diameter and winds gusting to 60 mph.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

OUR NEEDS FROM HIS RICHES

An architect designed a cluster of office buildings around a central green area. After they were built he called a landscape architect and asked him to plant grass in the area among the buildings.

Puzzled, the landscape architect asked, "But where do you want me to allow space for the walks?"

"Don't worry about that. Just plant the grass," said the architect.

A few months later the buildings were filled with occupants. As the people went from one building to another they made pathways in the grass. The architect then decided it was time for the walkways.

"Do you see those paths created by the people?" he asked the landscape architect.

"Yes," came the reply.

"That is where I want you to place the walks," said the architect. "It was important for me to see the needs of the people going from one building to another before we located the walks."

That's the way our Lord works. When we have a need, He is ready to respond to us from His riches.

When we are afraid, He will increase our faith. When we grieve, He will give us His unending grace. When we are overcome with the world's problems, He will give us His peace. His riches will match our needs.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to trust You completely for all that we need. We have the promise of Your Word that if we ask, You can and will meet our every need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.18.24

21 22 50 55 67 20

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$80,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 19 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.19.24

19 21 24 44 51 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$3,500,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 34 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.19.24

10 16 18 19 31 10

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 49 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.19.24

14 17 18 20 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 49 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.19.24

16 23 35 50 59 21

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 18 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.19.24

4 27 44 50 64 7

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$72,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 18 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined
Yankton Press & Dakotan. June 17, 2024.

Editorial: Biofuel Emissions Study Raises More Questions

A recent study by a nonprofit environmental group raises more questions about the climate benefits and impact of ethanol.

According to a South Dakota Searchlight story (via the Minnesota Examiner), the report, which was produced by the Environmental Integrity Project (EIP), indicates that the amount of pollutants released into the air by U.S. biofuel refineries came out to about 12.9 million pounds. This rivals the 14.5 million pounds emitted annually by the nation's oil refineries. The information was derived from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) emission inventories.

These pollutants include formaldehyde, which, as the Searchlight story put it, is "a widely recognized carcinogen, especially when emitted in gaseous form."

The amount of formaldehyde released by biofuel plants in 2022 was estimated to be three times the amount expelled by petroleum refineries.

"Despite its green image, the biofuels industry releases a surprising amount of hazardous air pollution that puts local communities at risk — and this problem is exacerbated by EPA's lax regulation," according to Courtney Bernhardt, EIP's director of research.

This isn't the first time that the advantages of ethanol — which has long been hailed as an important fuel additive that could address everything from environmental and climate change issues to expanding the nation's fuel supply — has been called into question.

Some critics have noted that the impacts of ethanol production also have to factor in the amount of fuel burned by farmers to produce corn for the ethanol plants (not to mention also citing the number of acres devoted to growing corn for fuel as opposed to corn for food).

In 2016, a review published by the Yale School of the Environment stated, "Higher-ethanol blends still produce significant levels of air pollution, reduce fuel efficiency, jack up corn and other food prices, and have been treated with skepticism by some car manufacturers for the damage they do to engines."

A 2022 study partially funded by the National Wildlife Federation and U.S. Department of Energy reported that ethanol may create more harmful emissions than regular gasoline. In reporting on the five-year study, the Axios new site said, "Ethanol produces more carbon emissions than gasoline because of the amount of farmland that's required to grow the corn crops and the tillage associated with it."

The new EIP report takes a somewhat different tact, focusing on the emissions from the biofuel plants rather than the emissions created by the production of corn for the ethanol plants.

However, there are also arguments in favor of ethanol production. Not surprisingly, the biofuel industry is leading that charge: The Renewable Fuels Association declares on its website, "Grain-based ethanol cuts greenhouse gas emissions significantly — by 44 to 52% compared to gasoline, according to the Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory." Whether those figures factor in the crop production emissions is not clear.

Either way, we face a new round of questions about biofuel production, which has become a staple of the regional farm economy. While we shouldn't expect one report to change that fact, it's worth noting and it's important to continue studying all the ramifications of this energy source.

END

Alberto, season's first named tropical storm, dumps rain on Texas and Mexico, which reports 3 deaths

By ALFREDO PEÑA and MARIANA MARTÍNEZ BARBA Associated Press

TAMPICO, Mexico (AP) — Tropical Storm Alberto rumbled toward northeast Mexico early Thursday as the first named storm of the season, carrying heavy rains that left three people dead but also brought hope to a region suffering under a prolonged, severe drought.

Mexican authorities downplayed the risk posed by Alberto and instead pinned their hopes on its ability to ease the parched region's water needs.

"The (wind) speeds are not such as to consider it a risk," said Tamaulipas state Secretary of Hydrological Resources Raúl Quiroga Álvarez during a news conference late Wednesday. Instead, he suggested people greet Alberto happily. "This is what we've been for for eight years in all of Tamaulipas."

Much of Mexico has been suffering under severe drought, with northern Mexico especially hard hit. Quiroga noted that the state's reservoirs were low and Mexico owed the United States a massive water debt in their shared use of the Rio Grande.

"This is a win-win event for Tamaulipas," he said.

But in nearby Nuevo Leon state, civil protection authorities reported three deaths linked to Alberto's rains. They said one man died in the La Silla river in the city of Monterrey, the state capital, and that two minors died from electric shocks in the municipality of Allende. Local media reported that the minors were riding a bicycle in the rain.

Nuevo Leon Gov. Samuel García wrote on his account on social media platform X that metro and public transportation services would be suspended in Monterrey from Wednesday night until midday Thursday when Alberto has passed.

Late Wednesday, Alberto was located about 40 miles (64 kilometers) east of Tampico, Mexico, and about 250 miles (402 kilometers) south-southeast of Brownsville, Texas, with maximum sustained winds of 50 mph (85 kph), according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center. The storm was moving west at 13 miles per hour.

Alberto was bringing rains and flooding to the coast of Texas as well.

The U.S. National Weather Service said the main hazard for southern coastal Texas is flooding from excess rain. On Wednesday the NWS said there is "a high probability" of flash flooding in southern coastal Texas. Tornadoes or waterspouts are possible.

Areas along the Texas coast were seeing some road flooding and dangerous rip currents Wednesday, and waterspouts were spotted offshore.

In Mexico, residents expressed hope for Alberto bringing rain.

Blanca Coronel Moral, a resident of Tampico, ventured out to the city's waterfront Wednesday to await Alberto's arrival.

"We have been needing this water that we're now getting, thank God. Let's hope that we only get water," said Coronel Moral. "Our lagoon, which gives us drinking water, is completely dry."

Authorities closed schools for the remainder of the week in Tamaulipas as there could be localized flooding.

As much as 5-10 inches (13-25 centimeters) of rain was expected in some areas along the Texas coast, with even higher isolated totals possible, according to the National Hurricane Center. Some higher locations in Mexico could see as much as 20 inches (50 centimeters) of rain, which could result in mudslides and flash flooding, especially in the states of Tamaulipas, Coahuila and Nuevo Leon.

Alberto was casting rain showers on both sides of the border, extending up much of the south Texas coast and south to Mexico's Veracruz state.

Alberto was expected to rapidly weaken over land and dissipate Thursday.

New law requires all Louisiana public school classrooms to display the Ten Commandments

By SARA CLINE Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Louisiana has become the first state to require that the Ten Commandments be displayed in every public school classroom, the latest move from a GOP-dominated Legislature pushing a conservative agenda under a new governor.

The legislation that Republican Gov. Jeff Landry signed into law on Wednesday requires a poster-sized display of the Ten Commandments in “large, easily readable font” in all public classrooms, from kindergarten to state-funded universities.

“If you want to respect the rule of law, you’ve got to start from the original lawgiver, which was Moses” who got the commandments from God, Landry said.

Opponents questioned the law’s constitutionality and vowed to challenge it in court. Proponents said the measure is not solely religious, but that it has historical significance. In the language of the law, the Ten Commandments are “foundational documents of our state and national government.”

The posters, which will be paired with a four-paragraph “context statement” describing how the Ten Commandments “were a prominent part of American public education for almost three centuries,” must be in place in classrooms by the start of 2025.

Under the law, state funds will not be used to implement the mandate. The posters would be paid for through donations.

The law also “authorizes” but does not require the display of other items in K-12 public schools, including: The Mayflower Compact, which was signed by religious pilgrims aboard the Mayflower in 1620 and is often referred to as America’s “First Constitution”; the Declaration of Independence; and the Northwest Ordinance, which established a government in the Northwest Territory — in the present day Midwest — and created a pathway for admitting new states to the Union.

Not long after the governor signed the bill into law at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School in Lafayette on Wednesday, civil rights groups and organizations that want to keep religion out of government promised to file a lawsuit challenging it.

The law prevents students from getting an equal education and will keep children who have different beliefs from feeling safe at school, the American Civil Liberties Union, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Freedom from Religion Foundation said in a joint statement Wednesday afternoon.

“Even among those who may believe in some version of the Ten Commandments, the particular text that they adhere to can differ by religious denomination or tradition. The government should not be taking sides in this theological debate,” the groups said.

The controversial law, in a state ensconced in the Bible Belt, comes during a new era of conservative leadership in Louisiana under Landry, who replaced two-term Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards in January. The GOP holds a supermajority in the Legislature, and Republicans hold every statewide elected position, paving the way for lawmakers to push through a conservative agenda.

Similar bills requiring the Ten Commandments be displayed in classrooms have been proposed in other states including Texas, Oklahoma and Utah. However, with threats of legal battles over the constitutionality of such measures, no state besides Louisiana has succeeded in making the bills law.

Legal battles over the display of the Ten Commandments in classrooms are not new.

In 1980, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a similar Kentucky law was unconstitutional and violated the establishment clause of the U.S. Constitution, which says Congress can “make no law respecting an establishment of religion.” The high court found that the law had no secular purpose but rather served a plainly religious purpose.

Putin signs deals with Vietnam in bid to shore up ties in Asia

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a series of deals with his Vietnamese counterpart To Lam on Thursday, during a state visit that comes as Moscow is seeking to bolster ties in Asia to offset growing international isolation over its military actions in Ukraine.

The two signed agreements to further cooperation on education, science and technology, oil and gas exploration and health. They also agreed to work on a roadmap for a nuclear science and technology center in Vietnam.

Following the talks, Putin said that the two countries share an interest in “developing a reliable security architecture” in the Asia-Pacific Region based on not using force and peacefully settling disputes with no room for “closed military-political blocs.”

Vietnam’s new President To Lam congratulated Putin on his re-election and praised Russia’s “domestic political stability.”

Putin arrived in Hanoi early Thursday morning from North Korea, where he and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed an agreement that pledges mutual aid in the event of war. The strategic pact that could mark the strongest connection between Moscow and Pyongyang since the end of the Cold War comes as both face escalating standoffs with the West.

Putin drove to Vietnam’s Presidential Palace on Thursday afternoon, where he was greeted by school children waving Russian and Vietnamese flags. There, he shook hands with and embraced Lam before a bilateral meeting and a joint briefing to the media.

He met Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh later in the afternoon and is also scheduled to meet Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong — Vietnam’s most powerful politician — and parliamentary chief Tran Thanh Man.

Russia is keen to maintain “close and effective cooperation” in energy, industry, technology, education, security and trade, said Russian Ambassador to Vietnam Gennady S. Bezdetko on Wednesday, according to Vietnamese official media.

The trip has resulted in a sharp rebuke from the U.S. Embassy in the country.

Much has changed since Putin’s last visit to Vietnam in 2017. Russia now faces a raft of U.S.-led sanctions for its invasion of Ukraine. In 2023, the International Criminal Court in Hague issued an arrest warrant for Putin for war crimes. The Kremlin rejected it as “null and void,” stressing that Moscow doesn’t recognize the court’s jurisdiction.

Putin’s recent visits to China and now North Korea and Vietnam are attempts to “break the international isolation,” said Nguyen Khac Giang, an analyst at Singapore’s ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

The U.S. and its allies have expressed growing concerns over a possible arms arrangement in which Pyongyang provides Moscow with badly needed munitions for its use in Ukraine, in exchange for economic assistance and technology transfers that could enhance the threat posed by Kim’s nuclear weapons and missile program.

Both countries deny accusations of weapons transfers, which would violate multiple U.N. Security Council sanctions that Russia previously endorsed.

Meanwhile, Russia is important to Vietnam for two reasons, Giang said: It is the biggest supplier of military equipment to the Southeast Asian nation, and Russian oil exploration technologies help maintain its sovereignty claims in the contested South China Sea.

“Russia is signaling that it is not isolated in Asia despite the Ukraine war, and Vietnam is reinforcing a key traditional relationship even as it also diversifies ties with newer partners,” said Prashanth Parameswaran, a fellow with the Wilson Center’s Asia Program.

It is unlikely that Vietnam will supply significant quantities of weapons to Russia, because that would risk progress the country has made with NATO members on military equipment, particularly the U.S., which has donated naval patrol vessels and is in talks to supply aircraft, said Ridzwan Rahmat, a Singapore-based analyst with the defense intelligence company Janes.

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"There is progress that you wouldn't have imagined just 10 years ago," he said. "So I would imagine Vietnam wouldn't want to take a risk, inviting the wrath of Western countries by supplying the Russians."

Hanoi and Moscow have had diplomatic relations since 1950, and this year marks 30 years of a treaty establishing "friendly relations" between Vietnam and Russia.

Evidence of this long relationship and its influence can be seen in Vietnamese cities like the capital, where the many Soviet-style apartment blocks are now dwarfed by skyscrapers and a statue of Vladimir Lenin, the founder of the Soviet Union, stands in a park where kids skateboard every evening. Many of the Communist Party's top leadership in Vietnam studied in Soviet universities, including party chief Trong.

In an article written for Nhan Dan, the official newspaper of Vietnam's Communist Party, Putin vowed to deepen the ties between Moscow and Hanoi and hailed Vietnam as a "strong supporter of a fair world order based on international law, on the principles of equality of all states and non-interference in their domestic affairs."

He also thanked "Vietnamese friends for their balanced position on the Ukrainian crisis," in the article released by the Kremlin.

Given Putin's international isolation, Vietnam is doing the Russian leader a "huge favor and may expect favors in return," wrote Andrew Golezinski, the Australian ambassador to Vietnam, on social media platform X. He said that it would have been hard for Vietnam to decline the visit since Putin was already in Asia and Vietnam has historical ties with the former Soviet Republic, but said that it was unlikely that the two would be strategic partners again. "Vietnam will always act in Vietnam's interests and not anyone else's," he wrote.

Vietnam's pragmatic policy of "bamboo diplomacy" — a phrase coined by Trong referring to the plant's flexibility, bending but not breaking in the shifting headwinds of global geopolitics — is being increasingly tested.

A manufacturing powerhouse and an increasingly important player in global supply chains, Vietnam played host to both U.S. President Joe Biden and the leader of rival China, Xi Jinping, in 2023.

Vietnam has remained neutral on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But neutrality is getting trickier, with the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi criticizing Putin's visit, saying that "no country should give Putin a platform to promote his war of aggression and otherwise allow him to normalize his atrocities." If Putin is allowed to travel freely it "could normalize Russia's blatant violations of international law," the statement said.

Vietnam needs support from the U.S. to advance its economic ambitions and diversify its defense ties, Parameswaran said. "It has to carefully calibrate what it does with Russia in an environment of rising tensions between Washington and Moscow."

Bilateral trade between Russia and Vietnam was at \$3.6 billion in 2023, compared to \$171 billion with China and \$111 billion with America.

Since the early 2000s, Russia accounted for around 80% of Vietnam's arms imports. This has been declining over the years due to Vietnamese attempts to diversify its supplies. But to entirely wean itself off Russia will take time, said Giang.

What's known, and not known, about the partnership agreement signed by Russia and North Korea

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Both Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un say the strategic partnership they signed in their summit in Pyongyang is a breakthrough, but what it means for their relationship is still uncertain.

While the agreement could represent the countries' strongest deal signed after the Cold War, there are differing opinions on how strong of a security commitment Russia made to North Korea.

Kim claimed that the deal elevated bilateral relations to the level of an alliance, although Putin was more understated and did not call it an alliance.

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The day after the deal was signed at a Pyongyang summit on Wednesday afternoon, North Korean state media released the text of the agreement, which vows mutual defense assistance and broader cooperation in military, foreign policy and trade. Russia has still not published its version of the text.

Officials in rival South Korea said they're still trying to assess what it all means, including what Russia's response might be if the North comes under attack.

Relations between sprawling Russia and small, isolated North Korea — both of them nuclear powers — have warmed significantly in recent years amid Russia's growing acrimony with the West over the invasion of Ukraine and suppression of all domestic opposition.

The new agreement could bring them even closer, while also posing new challenges to the international community.

What's in the new partnership, according to Kim and Putin:

What did Russia promise? Most of the debate over Putin and Kim's comprehensive partnership agreement revolves around Article 4. According to North Korean state media, the article states that if one of the countries gets invaded and is pushed into a state of war, the other must deploy "all means at its disposal without delay" to provide "military and other assistance."

But it also says that such actions must be in accordance with the laws of both countries and Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which recognizes a U.N. member state's right to self-defense.

To some analysts, that sounds like a promise that Moscow will intervene if North Korea comes under attack, renewing a promise made under a 1961 treaty between North Korea and the Soviet Union. That deal was discarded after the collapse of the USSR, replaced in 2000 by one that offered weaker security assurances.

Cheong Seong Chang, an analyst at South Korea's Sejong Institute, said the agreement echoes the language of the 1961 treaty, as well as provisions of the U.S.-South Korea mutual defense treaty about activating channels to coordinate if either of faces the threat of invasion.

"North Korea and Russia have completely restored their Cold War-era military alliance," Cheong said.

But other experts were cautious. Ankit Panda, a senior analyst at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said Article 4 is carefully worded to avoid implying automatic intervention. It's also not clear why the article invokes the U.N. Charter.

Still, the big picture is that "both sides are willing to put down on paper, and show the world, just how widely they intend to expand the scope of their cooperation," Panda said.

How far will military cooperation go? Putin essentially linked military cooperation with North Korea to Western supplies of weapons to Ukraine, referring to high-precision weapons systems, warplanes and other high-tech weapons.

"The Russian Federation does not exclude the development of military-technical cooperation with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in accordance with the document signed today," Putin said.

That statement in effect formalizes something Western countries claim is already happening.

The U.S. and other allies allege that Russia has received ballistic missiles and ammunition from North Korea as the Ukraine war depletes Moscow's inventory, and that Russia has made technology transfers to Pyongyang that could enhance the threat posed by Kim's nuclear weapons and missile program.

North Korean state media said the agreement requires the countries to take steps to strengthen their joint defense capabilities, but didn't specify what those steps would be, or whether they would include combined military training.

The agreement also calls for the countries to actively cooperate in efforts to establish a "just and multipolar new world order," the North's Korean Central News Agency said, underscoring how the countries are aligning in face of their separate, escalating confrontations with the United States and its allies.

Panda said the agreement's language about joint measures on strengthening defense capabilities are "broadly indicative of continued cooperation on a range of technical initiatives."

What's the economic aspect of the pact? The partnership also calls for developing economic ties, an especially important issue for North Korea as it suffers under an array of international sanctions. North Korea needs goods and material, and in turn can supply Russia's war-depleted workforce with labor; those

workers in turn could convert wages in rubles to dollars or euros and send hard-currency back home.

Putin said the Russian-North Korean trade turnover has risen nine-fold over the past year, but admitted that the amount itself remains "modest."

Ahead of the summit, South Korean analysts said the North might seek to increase labor exports to Russia and other activities to get foreign currency in defiance of U.N. sanctions, although sensitive details of agreements between Kim and Putin weren't likely to be publicized. The text published by North Korea called for strengthened cooperation in a broad range of areas, including trade, science, technology and tourism.

Climate change made killer heat wave in Mexico, Southwest US even warmer and 35 times more likely

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Human-caused climate change dialed up the thermostat and turbocharged the odds of this month's killer heat that has been baking the Southwestern United States, Mexico and Central America, a new flash study found.

Sizzling daytime temperatures that triggered cases of heat stroke in parts of the United States were 35 times more likely and 2.5 degrees hotter (1.4 degrees Celsius) because of the warming from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas, World Weather Attribution, a collection of scientists that run rapid and non-peer reviewed climate attribution studies, calculated Thursday.

"It's an oven here; you can't stay here," 82-year-old Magarita Salazar Pérez of Veracruz, Mexico, said in her home with no air conditioning. Last week, the Sonoran Desert hit 125 degrees (51.9 degrees Celsius), the hottest day in Mexican history, according to study co-author Shel Winkley, a meteorologist at Climate Central.

And it was even worse at night, which is what made this heat wave so deadly, said Imperial College of London climate scientist Friederike Otto, who coordinates the attribution study team. Climate change made nighttime temperatures 2.9 degrees (1.6 degrees Celsius) warmer and unusual evening heat 200 more times more likely, she said.

There's just been no cool air at night like people are used to, Salazar Pérez said. Doctors say cooler night temperatures are key to surviving a heat wave.

At least 125 people have died so far, according to the World Weather Attribution team.

"This is clearly related to climate change, the level of intensity that we are seeing, these risks," said study co-author Karina Izquierdo, a Mexico City-based urban advisor for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Centre.

The alarming part about this heat wave, which technically is still cooking the North American continent, is that it's no longer that out of the ordinary anymore, Otto said. Past studies by the group have looked at heat so extreme that they found it impossible without climate change, but this heat wave not so much.

"From a sort of weather perspective in that sense it wasn't rare, but the impacts were actually really bad," Otto told The Associated Press in an interview.

"The changes we have seen in the last 20 years, which feels like just yesterday, are so strong," Otto said. Her study found that this heat wave is now four times more likely to happen now than it was in the year 2000 when it was nearly a degree (0.5 degrees Celsius) cooler than now. "It seems sort of far away and a different world."

While other groups of international scientists — and the global carbon emissions reduction target adopted by countries in the 2015 Paris climate agreement — refer to warming since pre-industrial time in mid 1800s, Otto said comparing what's happening now to the year 2000 is more striking.

"We're looking at a shifting baseline - what was once extreme but rare is becoming increasingly common," said University of Southern California Marine Studies Chair Carly Kenkel, who wasn't part of the attribution team's study. She said the analysis is "the logical conclusion based on the data."

The study looked at a large swath of the continent, including southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Belize and Honduras and the hottest five consecutive

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days and hottest five consecutive nights. For most of the area, those five days ran from June 3 to 7 and those five nights were June 5 to 9, but in a few places the peak heat started May 26, Otto said.

For example, San Angelo, Texas, hit a record 111 degrees (43.8 degrees Celsius) on June 4. Between June 2 and June 6 the night temperature never dipped below 80 degrees (26.7 degrees Celsius) at Corpus Christi airport, a record each night, with two days when the thermometer never dropped below 85 (29.4 degrees Celsius) according to the National Weather Service.

Between June 1 and June 15, more than 1,200 daytime high temperature records were tied or broken in the United States and nearly 1,800 nighttime high temperature records were reached, according to the National Center for Environmental Information.

The attribution team used both current and past temperature measurements, contrasting what is happening to what occurred in past heat waves. They then used the scientifically accepted technique of comparing simulations of a fictional world without human-caused climate change to current reality to come up with how much global warming factored into the 2024 heat wave.

The immediate meteorological cause was a high pressure system parked over central Mexico that blocked cooling storms and clouds, then it moved to the U.S. Southwest and is now bringing the heat to the U.S. East, Winkley said. Tropical Storm Alberto formed Wednesday and is heading to northern Mexico and southern Texas with some rains, which may cause flooding.

Mexico and other places have been dealing for months with drought, water shortages and brutal heat. Monkeys have been dropping from trees in Mexico from the warmth.

This heat wave "exacerbates existing inequalities" between rich and poor in the Americas, Izquierdo said, and Kenkel agreed. The night heat is where the inequalities really become apparent because the ability to cool down with central air conditioning depends on how financially comfortable they are, Kenkel said.

And that means during this heat wave Salazar Pérez has been quite uncomfortable.

North Korea says deal between Putin and Kim requires immediate military assistance in event of war

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The new agreement between Russia and North Korea reached by their leaders at a Pyongyang summit requires both countries to use all available means to provide immediate military assistance in the event of war, North Korean state media said Thursday.

Both North Korea's Kim Jong Un and Russia's Vladimir Putin had described the deal reached Wednesday as a major upgrade of bilateral relations, covering security, trade, investment, cultural and humanitarian ties. Outside observers said it could mark the strongest connection between Moscow and Pyongyang since the end of the Cold War.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency on Thursday reported the language of the comprehensive strategic partnership agreement. The agency said Article 4 of the agreement states that if one of the countries gets invaded and is pushed into a state of war, the other must deploy "all means at its disposal without delay" to provide "military and other assistance." But it also says that such actions must be in accordance with the laws of both countries and Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which recognizes a U.N. member state's right to self-defense.

The summit between Kim and Putin came as the U.S. and its allies expressed growing concern over a possible arms arrangement in which Pyongyang provides Moscow with badly needed munitions for its war in Ukraine, in exchange for economic assistance and technology transfers that could enhance the threat posed by Kim's nuclear weapons and missile program.

Following their summit, Kim said the two countries had a "fiery friendship," and that the deal was their "strongest-ever treaty," putting the relationship at the level of an alliance. He vowed full support for Russia's war in Ukraine. Putin called it a "breakthrough document" reflecting shared desires to move relations to a higher level.

North Korea and the former Soviet Union signed a treaty in 1961, which experts say necessitated Mos-

cow's military intervention if the North came under attack. The deal was discarded after the collapse of the USSR, replaced by one in 2000 that offered weaker security assurances.

A full day after the summit, South Korean officials said they were still interpreting the results, including what Russia's response might be if the North comes under attack. Analysts were mixed on whether the agreement obligates Russia to an automatic military intervention on behalf of the North in war situations or was carefully worded enough to avoid such a commitment. It also wasn't immediately clear why the article invokes the U.N. charter.

"We are currently reviewing the specifics of the treaty signed between Russia and North Korea during President Putin's visit to North Korea. We will announce our government's position after we are done," Lim Soosuk, South Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, said during a briefing.

Still, Lim expressed regret that Moscow and Pyongyang signed the agreement while openly talking about military and technology cooperation that would be in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

"Based on our close analysis and assessment of the results of (Putin's) visit, including the comprehensive strategic partnership treaty signed between Russia and North Korea, we will work with the international community, including our allies and friends, to take correspondingly stern and decisive measures to any actions that threaten our security," Lim said.

The deal was made as Putin visited North Korea for the first time in 24 years, a visit that showcased their personal and geopolitical ties with Kim hugging Putin twice at the airport, their motorcade rolling past giant Russian flags and Putin portraits, and a welcoming ceremony at Pyongyang's main square attended by what appeared to be tens of thousands of spectators.

According to KCNA, the agreement also states that Pyongyang and Moscow must not enter into agreements with third parties if they infringe on the "core interests" of another and must not participate in actions that threaten those interests.

KCNA said the agreements require the countries to take steps to prepare joint measures for the purpose of strengthening their defense capabilities to prevent war and protect regional and global peace and security. The agency didn't specify what those steps are, or whether they would include combined military training and other cooperation.

The agreement also calls for the countries to actively cooperate in efforts to establish a "just and multi-polar new world order," KCNA said, underscoring how the countries are aligning in face of their separate, escalating confrontations with the United States.

Kim in recent months has made Russia his priority as he pushes a foreign policy aimed at expanding relations with countries confronting Washington, embracing the idea of a "new Cold War" and trying to display a united front in Putin's broader conflicts with the West.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at their highest point in years, with the pace of both Kim's weapons tests and combined military exercises involving the U.S., South Korea and Japan intensifying in a tit-for-tat cycle.

The Koreas also have engaged in Cold War-style psychological warfare that involved North Korea dropping tons of trash on the South with balloons, and the South broadcasting anti-North Korean propaganda with its loudspeakers.

Russia obliterates front-line Ukraine towns by retrofitting bombs and expanding its air base network

By LORI HINNANT, VASILISA STEPANENKO and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KHARKIV, Ukraine (AP) — The first shock wave shattered aisles stacked almost to the ceiling with home improvement products. The next Russian bomb streaked down like a comet seconds later, unleashing flames that left the megastore an ashen shell.

A third bomb failed to detonate when it landed behind the Epicenter shopping complex in Kharkiv. Investigators hope it will help them trace the supply chain for the latest generation of retrofitted Russian

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"glide bombs" that are laying waste to eastern Ukraine. The Soviet-era bombs are adapted on the cheap with imported electronics that allow distant Russian warplanes to launch them at Ukraine.

Other cities that have been devastated by the weapons include Avdiivka, Chasiv Yar and Vovchansk, and Russia has nearly unlimited supplies of the bombs, which are dispatched from airfields just across the border that Ukraine has not been able to hit.

Store manager Oleksandr Lutsenko said the May 25 attack hints at Russia's aim for Kharkiv: "Their goal is to turn it into a ghost city, to make it so that no one will stay, that there will be nothing to defend, that it will make no sense to defend the city. They want to scare people, but they will not succeed."

Russia has accelerated its destruction of Ukraine's front-line cities in 2024 to a scale previously unseen in the war using the glide bombs and an expanding network of airstrips, according to an Associated Press analysis of drone footage, satellite imagery, Ukrainian documents and Russian photos.

The results can be seen in the intensity of recent Russian attacks. It took a year for Russia to obliterate Bakhmut, where the bombs were first used. That was followed by destruction in Avdiivka that took months. Then, only weeks were needed to do the same in Vovchansk and Chasiv Yar, according to images analyzed by AP that showed the smoldering ruins of both cities.

Now, Russia is putting the finishing touches on yet another airstrip less than 100 kilometers (60 miles) from Ukraine and launching the bombs routinely from multiple bases just inside Russian borders, according to the AP analysis of satellite pictures and photos from a Russian aviation Telegram channel.

The bombing of the Epicenter in Kharkiv killed 19 people, including two children. In all, glide bombs have hit the city more than 50 times this year, according to Spartak Borysenko of the Kharkiv regional prosecutor's office.

He showed investigation documents to AP that identified at least eight Russian air bases used to launch the attacks, all within 100 kilometers (60 miles) of Ukraine. He said at least one of the munitions had foreign electronics and was made in May. That date suggests Russia is using the bombs rapidly and that it has successfully circumvented sanctions for dual-use items.

Photos on Russian Telegram channels linked to the military show glide bombs being launched three and four at a time. In one launch of four bombs, the AP traced the aircraft's location to just outside the Russian city of Belgorod, near the air base now under construction. All four bombs in the photo were headed west — with Vovchansk and Kharkiv in their direct line of fire.

At the end of May, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia was launching more than 3,000 of the bombs every month, with 3,200 used in May alone.

Oleh Katkov, whose military-oriented site Defense Express first traced the launch location, said hitting air bases is key to slowing the pace of the bombings by forcing Russian planes to launch farther away.

"This doesn't mean they will completely stop their bombings, but it will become more difficult for them," Katkov said. "They will be able to make fewer sorties per day."

For months, Ukrainian officials complained bitterly about restrictions on using Western-supplied weapons against targets in Russia, including the airfields that house Russian bombers. The United States and Germany recently authorized some targets in Russia, but many others remain off-limits.

The newest airfield, just outside Belgorod, has a 2,000-meter (-yard) runway, the AP analysis found. Construction began late summer 2023, during the failed Ukrainian counteroffensive.

A Ukrainian intelligence official, who provided information to AP on condition of anonymity, said his government had been closely following the construction, which did not yet appear complete in a photo taken mid-June.

The official also noted that Belarus provides sanctuary for Russian bombers. A map created by the Ukrainian battlefield analysis site DeepState showed 10 airfields in Belarus, including five just across the border from Ukraine.

In all, the DeepState map shows 51 bases used by Russia within 600 kilometers (370 miles) of Ukrainian-controlled territory, including three in occupied eastern Ukraine, six in the illegally annexed peninsula of Crimea, and 32 in Russia.

"The greatest strategic advantage Russia has over Ukraine is its advantage in the sky," Zelenskyy said

last week. "This is missile and bomb terror that helps Russian troops advance on the ground."

Russia launches up to 100 guided bombs daily, Zelenskyy said. Besides missiles and drones, which Russia already routinely uses for attacks, the bombs cause "an insanely destructive pressure."

The base material for the glide bombs comes from hundreds of thousands of Soviet-era unguided bombs, which are then retrofitted with retractable fins and guidance systems to carry 500 to 3,000 kilograms (1,100 to 6,600 pounds) of explosives. The upgrade costs around \$20,000 per bomb, according to the Center for European Policy Analysis, and the bombs can be launched up to 65 kilometers (40 miles) from their targets — outside the range of Ukraine's regular air defense systems.

The bombs are similar in concept to the American Joint Direct Attack Munition, or JDAM, missiles, which have had their GPS systems successfully jammed by Russian forces in Ukraine.

Because Russia does not have the strength to occupy eastern cities such as Kharkiv, bombing is their preferred option, said Nico Lange, an analyst with the Center for European Policy Analysis.

"From their point of view, the strategy seems to be to terrorize the cities enough that people will leave," Lange said.

Back at the Epicenter home improvement store, surveillance footage taken just before the explosion showed salesperson Nina Korsunova walking across the floor toward the aisle that she was staffing that day. Then there was a blinding flash, and the camera cut out.

Korsunova curled into the fetal position as a display crashed on top of her. She uncovered her eyes just in time to see the second bomb streak inside. With her eardrums blown out, she could hear nothing and saw not a single sign of life.

"I thought I was alone and that they had abandoned me there. It gave me the strength to climb out," she said. She crawled over piles of shattered lamps, and cables snarled her legs as she climbed through debris from the electrical supply aisle.

Two weeks later, the skeleton of the building reeked of a disorienting combination of scorched metal and laundry detergent that spilled from melted jugs in the cleaning products aisle.

Neither Korsunova nor the store manager have any plans to leave their hometown.

"It didn't break me," she said. "I will remain in Kharkiv. This is my home."

Alberto, season's first named tropical storm, dumps rain on Texas and Mexico, which reports 3 deaths

By ALFREDO PEÑA and MARIANA MARTÍNEZ BARBA Associated Press

TAMPICO, Mexico (AP) — Tropical Storm Alberto formed Wednesday in the southwestern Gulf of Mexico, the first named storm of what is forecast to be a busy hurricane season. Authorities in Mexico reported three deaths from its rains.

Alberto, which is bringing strong winds, heavy rainfall and some flooding along the coasts of Texas and Mexico, is expected to make landfall in northern Mexico early Thursday.

"The heavy rainfall and the water, as usual, is the biggest story in tropical storms," said Michael Brennan, director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Hurricane Center.

Civil protection authorities in the northern state of Nuevo Leon said one man died in the La Silla river in the city of Monterrey, the state capital. They also said that two minors died from electric shocks in the municipality of Allende. Local media reported that the minors were riding a bicycle in the rain.

Nuevo Leon Gov. Samuel García wrote on his account on social media platform X that metro and public transportation services would be suspended in Monterrey from Wednesday night until midday Thursday when Alberto had passed.

The National Hurricane Center said late Wednesday that Alberto was located about 135 miles (220 kilometers) east of Tampico, Mexico, and about 320 miles (510 kilometers) south-southeast of Brownsville, Texas, with maximum sustained winds of 50 mph (85 kph). The storm was moving west at 9 miles per hour.

The center of the storm was expected to reach the northeastern coast of Mexico south of the mouth of

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the Rio Grande by Thursday morning.

As much as 5 inches (13 centimeters) to 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain was expected in some areas along the Texas coast, with even higher isolated totals possible, Brennan said. He said some higher locations in Mexico could see as much as 20 inches (50 centimeters) of rain, which could result in mudslides and flash flooding, especially in the states of Tamaulipas, Coahuila and Nuevo Leon.

The municipal government of Tampico, a port city in Tamaulipas state, announced Wednesday afternoon that authorities had activated a command center in coordination with the water, electricity and oil companies.

Many residents were excited about the prospect of heavy showers, as Tamaulipas and most of Mexico has been dealing with extreme droughts.

"We have been needing this water that we're now getting, thank God. Let's hope that we only get water," said Blanca Coronel Moral, a resident of Tampico. "Our lagoon, which gives us drinking water, is completely dry."

Tamaulipas Gov. Américo Villarreal said Wednesday on X that schools across the state will remain closed between Wednesday and Friday.

The coordinator of civil protection in Tamaulipas, Luis Gerardo Gonzalez, said they have 333 shelters distributed throughout the state at each municipality. "As the storm moves, we will be opening up more shelters."

Authorities urged residents to be aware of the alerts the state and municipal civil protections are sharing. They anticipate the storm arriving overnight with communities closest to the coast most affected.

Tropical storm warnings were in effect from the Texas coast at San Luis Pass southward to the mouth of the Rio Grande and from the northeastern coast of Mexico south of the mouth of the Rio Grande to Tecolutla.

"Rapid weakening is expected once the center moves inland, and Alberto is likely to dissipate over Mexico" on Thursday, the center said.

The U.S. National Weather Service said the main hazard for southern coastal Texas is flooding from excess rain. On Wednesday, the NWS said, there is "a high probability" of flash flooding in southern coastal Texas. Tornadoes or waterspouts are possible.

NOAA predicts the hurricane season that began June 1 and runs through Nov. 30 is likely to be well above average, with between 17 and 25 named storms. The forecast calls for as many as 13 hurricanes and four major hurricanes.

An average Atlantic hurricane season produces 14 named storms, seven of them hurricanes and three major hurricanes.

Brennan said there will be dangerous rip currents from the storm and drivers should watch out for road closures and turn around if they see water covering roadways.

Areas along the Texas coast were seeing some road flooding and dangerous rip currents Wednesday, and waterspouts have been spotted offshore. "We've seen a few brief spin-ups and some waterspouts out there," said Tyler Castillo, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service office in Corpus Christi.

Tim Cady, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Houston, said they'll be keeping an eye on coastal flooding as high tide approaches Thursday morning.

"When we have these strong onshore winds combined with the high tide, that can result in coastal inundation, particularly in our lower-lying coastal areas," Cady said.

Can a marriage survive a gender transition? Yes, and even thrive. How these couples make it work

By JEFF McMILLAN Associated Press

Marissa Lasoff-Santos and the person she would marry quickly fell head over heels in love. Lasoff-Santos was a gay woman. Her girlfriend was a bisexual woman — or so they thought. Now her partner has become her husband, and they both identify as queer. And things are better than ever.

"We've always just had this deep connection, so that's why, like, I never stopped loving him throughout

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any of this," says Lasoff-Santos, a 33-year-old librarian in Michigan. "I've become more attracted to him. I guess part of it is just, like, that confidence in him and, like, he just seems so happy."

Lasoff-Santos' relationship and others like it show that a partner's gender transition does not necessarily mean a death sentence for a marriage. Data is scant, but couples and therapists say that in many cases, a relationship grows and flourishes under the light of new honesty.

Such marriages, when they do prevail, can underscore the resilience of love, the flexibility of sexual identity and the diversity in LGBTQ+ relationships 20 years after the first same-sex marriages in the U.S. and with Pride Month in its sixth decade.

"Even though he was the one transitioning, I felt like I was going through my own transition," Lasoff-Santos says. "It was definitely hard to not, I guess, come across as kind of selfish, because I was going through all these emotions, and he was going through his own journey."

Kristie Overstreet, a sexologist and psychotherapist who says she has worked with trans people for 18 years, says about 2 in 5 relationships survive a transition. And Kelly Wise, a sex therapist in Pennsylvania, estimates that about half of relationships in his practice that experience a gender transition end — for many reasons.

"Gender identity milestones often arise around times that many things are evolving within people and their relationships," Wise says in an email.

A recent U.S. Census Bureau report on same-sex households doesn't reflect marriages in transition because the bureau doesn't ask questions about gender identity.

Avril Clark operates Distinction Support, an online network that helps supportive partners of trans and nonbinary people. Her spouse, a soccer referee at the time, came out as transgender in 2018, changed her name to Lucy and brought the couple much attention. Before then, Avril says, they had kept their arrangement private and "lived a double life" for 15 years.

"I needed somebody to talk to that knew how I was feeling," Avril says. "And I looked around, and there weren't any groups that were for me. They were full of people that were very angry and bitter and didn't want anybody else's relationship to work because their relationship hadn't worked."

Lucy Clark says Avril had been pressing her to come out for years, "but I didn't because I thought it would affect football. And I loved football and had it in my mind that I would give it up." She didn't, and she now manages Sutton United Women in south London.

Avril Clark says that when she took over Distinction in 2017, it had about 50 members worldwide, but now there are "way over 500."

"I've got this group with all these people on it, all fighting, some of them fighting to make their relationship work," she says.

The Reddit group r/mypartneristrans, which describes itself as "a supportive, educational, and safe space for the partners of trans and gender-diverse people," counts 61,000 members.

Topics include questions about how to handle Mother's Day and Father's Day; unwelcoming relatives; sex and pregnancy; and how to categorize a cisgender partner's sexual orientation. In other words, now that I'm a woman married to a woman, does that make me a lesbian?

Clark says some people call themselves "heteroflexible."

"It doesn't mean 'I am a lesbian' or 'I'm a gay person,'" she says. "It just means, 'For this one person I am prepared to be flexible.'"

She estimates her group is 90% cisgender women and 5% transgender or nonbinary people who may also have a partner in transition. The remaining 5% are cisgender husbands, she says.

For people already in a same-sex relationship, a partner's gender transition can bring angst but also self-discovery.

Lasoff-Santos says she had previously wondered if she could ever be married to a man. "And I always said no. And I think it's hilarious just now that I am."

Couples in transition find different ways to address life from "before" — trips, memories, weddings, anniversaries, family events, photos.

"The partner that isn't transitioning may want to display and still share all of these versus their partner who may not want these visible or talked about," Overstreet says in an email.

Lasoff-Santos and her husband married in 2018 as he was beginning his transition. They had a son in 2020. When her husband shows their son pictures of himself pre-transition, it's just "Papa with long hair," Lasoff-Santos says.

One partner may sense a shift the other does not. Emily Wilkinson, 33, who lives near Seattle, says she doesn't doubt "that I love Cameron and will continue to love Cameron." But her vision of their love has changed since her spouse began transitioning last year.

For Cameron, 39, "Our love doesn't feel any different to me, but I'm not the one who has to adjust in our relationship." They spoke on the condition that their last name not be used to avoid potential consequences at work, where they are not out.

There can be joy in coaching a partner in their new identity.

Rhiannon Rippke-Koch, 45, lives in a small city in Iowa with Sophia Koch, her recently transitioned wife of the same age. She recalls the first time Sophia got to be herself for a whole weekend, during a trip to Des Moines.

"I took her to Victoria's Secret and had them measure her for a bra," Rippke-Koch says. "And I took her to Sephora, and they did, you know, the whole makeup thing where, you know, with color palettes, and showed her how to do her eyeshadow and foundation and all that sort of stuff. So —"

"It was awesome," Sophia finishes, beaming.

The couple also bond over experiences Sophia previously denied herself because of notions about masculinity — musicals, flowers. Rhiannon says they're now "much more intimate, and not even in a sexual way. But we talk about things more. We have more things in common now than we did before."

The fate of the latest cease-fire proposal hinges on Netanyahu and Hamas' leader in Gaza

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — The fate of the proposed cease-fire deal for Gaza hinges in many ways on two men: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas' leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar.

Each leader faces significant political and personal pressures that may be influencing their decision-making. And neither seems to be in a rush to make concessions to end the devastating eight-month-long war and free hostages taken by Hamas in its Oct. 7 attack.

Hamas has accepted the broad outline of the plan but requested "amendments." Netanyahu has publicly disputed aspects of it, even though the U.S. has framed it as an Israeli plan.

Among the major sticking points is how to move from an initial temporary truce in the deal's first phase to a permanent cease-fire that includes an end to the fighting and full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza.

Here is a look at what may be driving the two leaders:

Netanyahu is 'buying time' Throughout the war, the long-serving Israeli leader has been criticized for letting political considerations get in the way of his decision-making.

His government is buoyed by two ultranationalist parties that oppose cease-fire deals. Instead, they prefer continuous military pressure to try to defeat Hamas and free the hostages. They also talk about "encouraging" Palestinians to leave and reestablishing Israeli settlements, which were dismantled when Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 after a 38-year occupation.

Netanyahu himself has taken a tough line on the cease-fire, saying he will not end the war until Hamas' military and governing capabilities are destroyed.

But with his hard-line partners pledging to topple the government if a cease-fire is struck, Netanyahu has been pushed even farther into the corner. His reliance on them to remain in power recently intensified after a centrist member of his war Cabinet, former military chief Benny Gantz, quit over frustrations with Netanyahu's handling of the conflict.

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Netanyahu has had to balance internal pressures against demands from the Biden administration, which is promoting the latest cease-fire proposal, and from families of hostages who believe only a deal can set their loved ones free. Tens of thousands of Israelis have joined mass protests in support of the hostage families.

Netanyahu appears to be siding with his far-right governing partners for the moment, knowing they hold the key to his immediate political survival, although he says he has the country's best interests in mind.

Their departure from the government could lead to new elections, which would open him up to a vote that could end his rule and likely the start of investigations into the failures of Oct. 7.

Netanyahu is also on trial for corruption, proceedings that have continued throughout the war yet have faded from the public consciousness. A cease-fire deal could refocus attention on the charges, which have dogged the Israeli leader for years and which he adamantly denies.

Netanyahu's political fortunes appear to have improved over the course of the war. His public support plummeted in the aftermath of Hamas' surprise attack on southern Israel. But over time it has gradually ticked up. While he would still face a tough path toward reelection, he isn't a write-off.

"He runs the war as he wants, which means very slowly. He's buying time," said Gideon Rahat, a senior fellow at the Israeli Democracy Institute, a Jerusalem think tank, and chairman of the political science department at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

Rahat said Netanyahu is also keen to push on with the war in the hopes that former U.S. President Donald Trump returns to office, possibly giving Israel more leeway in its fight against Hamas.

"I don't see any cease-fire that really comes close to being something he adopts," Rahat said. "But he's not the only one that controls reality."

Sinwar's mission is to survive Hamas' leader in Gaza also appears to be in no rush to sign on to a deal.

The militant group's exiled leadership is somewhat varied in its opinion on how to approach a cease-fire agreement. But Sinwar — the mastermind of the Oct. 7 attacks — has particular weight on the matter.

As a Hamas stalwart who spent decades in Israeli prisons, he has incentives to keep the war going.

On a personal level, his life may be on the line. Israel vowed to kill him in response to the October assault, and Sinwar is believed to be hiding deep within Gaza's underground tunnels surrounded by Israeli hostages.

If a cease-fire takes hold, Sinwar will be taking a great risk stepping out in public.

"I think he understands that he's kind of a dead man walking. But it's a matter of how long can he hold out?" said Khaled el-Gindy, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Middle East Institute think tank.

But Sinwar is motivated by more than just his own personal fate. Steeped in Hamas' radical ideology, Sinwar seeks Israel's destruction and has made political gains by watching the war harm Israel's international standing and boost support for the Palestinian cause.

Israel has faced surging international criticism — from its Western allies, from the international justice system, from protesters around the world — over its conduct during the war. That has deepened Israel's global isolation, brought accusations that it is committing genocide against Palestinians and driven the prosecutor at the International Criminal Court to seek the arrests of Israeli leaders.

Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank, wrote on the social platform X that Sinwar was also "counting on the sustained global outcry due to the horrendous killing of Gazans to force Israel to stop the war eventually," on his own terms.

But Sinwar could face some difficult questions of his own when the war ends — not only over his personal role in the atrocities of Oct. 7 but also from the Palestinian public as the full extent of the wartime devastation and the years-long process of reconstruction sink in.

El-Gindy said Sinwar wasn't deterred by the high price Palestinian civilians in Gaza are paying in the war, seeing it as an unavoidable sacrifice on the road toward liberation.

From Sinwar's perspective, continuing to fight Israel's powerful army, even if only through pockets of resistance, denies Israel a victory, el-Gindy said.

"Their whole mission is to survive," he said. "If they survive, they win."

New Mexico wildfire claims second life, while rain offers hope of relief

By MORGAN LEE and ANDRÉS LEIGHTON Associated Press

ROSWELL, N.M. (AP) — Heavy rain and hail fell Wednesday around an evacuated village in New Mexico threatened by wildfires that have killed at least two people and damaged more than 1,400 structures, offering the hope of some assistance for firefighters but adding the threat of high winds and flash floods.

Air tankers dropped water and red retardant earlier on the pair of fires growing in a mountainous part of the state where earlier in the week residents of the village of Ruidoso were forced to flee the larger of the two blazes with little notice.

New Mexico State Police spokesman Wilson Silver said Wednesday that officers discovered the skeletal remains of an unidentified second person in the driver seat of a burned vehicle. It's the second confirmed death in the blazes. The first fire victim was a badly burned 60-year-old man found by the side of the road near the popular Swiss Chalet Inn in Ruidoso.

Weather patterns were shifting Wednesday with moisture arriving from the Gulf of Mexico, said Bladen Breitreiter of the National Weather Service office in Albuquerque.

"It will be a challenging situation going into the late afternoon and evening," said Breitreiter, who has been an incident meteorologist at past wildfires. "The potential for scattered to isolated thunderstorms could help, but it depends on where they hit. If the rain misses the fires, downward winds could cause problems for firefighters on the ground."

He said rain could also lead to dangerous flash flooding in newly burned areas.

It wasn't immediately clear if the rain and hail that started around Ruidoso on Wednesday afternoon was falling on the fires themselves, or if it would slow their progress. The National Weather Service issued a flash flood warning for the area until later Wednesday evening.

The two fires remained at 0% containment Wednesday afternoon as crews used heavy equipment to build fire lines while water and retardant was dropped from the air, authorities said.

Officials said hundreds of firefighters were on the scene and watching to stop any spot fires that could flare up. More personnel from departments from around the region were continuing to arrive.

Ruidoso and much of the Southwest has been exceedingly dry and hot this spring. Those conditions, along with strong wind, whipped flames out of control Monday and Tuesday, rapidly advancing the South Fork Fire into the village. Along with homes and businesses, a regional medical center and the Ruidoso Downs horse track were evacuated.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's office confirmed one fatality as a result of the fire but said it had no further details.

About 1,400 structures have been destroyed or damaged, but it's unclear how many were homes. A flyover to provide more accurate mapping and a better assessment of damage is being organized, Lujan Grisham said.

Ardis Holder left Ruidoso with her two young daughters, her gas tank nearly on empty as she prayed that they'd get out safely. She was sure the house she rented in the village she grew up in is gone, based on the maps she'd seen.

"We were already seeing where all the fire hit, it's everywhere," she said late Tuesday from a shelter in nearby Roswell. "If there's something standing, that's awesome. But, if not, we were prepared for the worst."

Lujan Grisham on Wednesday requested a major disaster declaration from President Joe Biden's administration that would free up federal funding for immediate housing and other assistance for the people affected.

"New Mexico has faced disaster before, but the scale of this emergency requires immediate federal intervention," she said.

The day before, she declared a county-wide state of emergency that extended to the neighboring Mesalero Apache Reservation where both fires started and deployed National Guard troops. That declaration unlocks additional funding and resources to manage the crisis.

Nationwide, wildfires have scorched more than 3,280 square miles (8,495 square kilometers) this year

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— a figure higher than the 10-year averages, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. About 20 wildfires currently burning are considered large and uncontained, including blazes in California and Washington state.

Lujan Grisham said the two southern New Mexico wildfires together have consumed more than 31 square miles (80 square kilometers). The exact causes of the blazes haven't been determined, but the Southwest Coordination Center listed them as human-caused.

Ruidoso and areas around Santa Fe and Española, New Mexico, have served as the backdrop this year for filming of a movie starring Matthew McConaughey and America Ferrera about the devastating 2018 wildfire in Paradise, California. That fire killed 85 people and nearly erased the community in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

While many older residents call Ruidoso home year-round, the population of around 7,000 people expands to about 25,000 during the warmer months, when people from hotter climates seek the cool of the leafy aspen trees, hiking trails and a chance to go fishing.

Nestled within the Lincoln National Forest, Ruidoso boasts nearby amenities including a casino, golf course and ski resort operated by the Mescalero Apache Tribe. Horse races at the Ruidoso Downs also draw crowds as home to one of the sport's richest quarter-horse competitions.

Power outage leaves millions of Ecuadorians in the dark after transmission line fails

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — A failure in an energy transmission line on Wednesday produced an unexpected blackout throughout Ecuador, the government said, days after announcing that there would be power outages in the country due to production problems.

Ecuador's Minister of Energy Roberto Luque said in a message posted on X, formerly Twitter, that the failure was reported by the country's National Electricity Operator and caused "a cascade disconnection," leaving the nation without energy service.

He added that efforts are being made to solve the problem and repair faulty power lines as soon as possible.

In some sectors of the country the outage lasted 20 minutes, but media outlets and social media users reported that the problem continued in most cities.

Emilia Cevallos, a waitress in a restaurant north of the capital, Quito, said the blackout was surprising.

"We thought it was only in this sector, but when we left we realized that while some stores had connected generators, the majority did not have electricity," she said. "The traffic lights were not working either."

The Quito municipality said on X that traffic agents were mobilized to coordinate the flow of traffic. Quito Metro, the company that operates the city's subway system, said service was suspended as a result of the electrical failure.

Since last year, Ecuador has faced an electricity generation crisis that has led to rationing throughout the country. In April, the government of President Daniel Noboa began to ration electricity in the country's main cities as a drought linked to the El Niño weather pattern depleted reservoirs and limited output at hydroelectric plants that produce about 75% of the nation's power.

On Juneteenth, monument dedicated in Alabama to those who endured slavery

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Thousands of surnames grace the towering monument, representing the more than 4 million enslaved people who were freed after the Civil War.

The Equal Justice Initiative, a criminal justice reform nonprofit, invoked the Juneteenth holiday — the day that commemorates the end of slavery in the U.S. — on Wednesday as it dedicated its National Monument to Freedom.

The monument, which honors the people who endured and survived slavery, is the centerpiece of the

new Freedom Monument Sculpture Park in Montgomery, Alabama, where art and historical artifacts tell the story of enslaved people in the United States.

During the dedication ceremony, Equal Justice Initiative founder Bryan Stevenson recounted how enslaved people endured unspeakable horrors, but also left a legacy of perseverance and strength.

"Enslaved people in this country did something remarkable that we need to acknowledge, that we need to recognize and that we need to celebrate. Enslaved people resisted. Enslaved people were resilient. Enslaved people found ways to make a way," Stevenson said.

Juneteenth is a day to confront the brutality of slavery and its impact, but he said it is also a day to celebrate the dignity and strength of people who managed to love and survive despite what they faced.

"They never stopped believing. They never stopped yearning for freedom. This morning, as we leave here this Juneteenth morning, I hope we will be hopeful," Stevenson said.

Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, the day enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, found out they were free after the Civil War. The news came two months after the end of the Civil War and about 2 1/2 years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

Stretching four stories into the sky, the National Monument to Freedom is inscribed with 122,000 surnames that formerly enslaved people chose for themselves, as documented in the 1870 Census, after being emancipated at the Civil War's end. Those last names represent the more than 4 million enslaved people who were set free after emancipation.

The Equal Justice Initiative created the park to tell the story of enslaved people with honesty. The sculpture park is the third site created by the organization. The first two sites — the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, a memorial to people slain in racial terror killings; and The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration — opened in 2018.

Dr. Michele R. Williams and her mother, Barbara Y. Williams, scanned the rows of names on Wednesday morning, looking for their family surname, Murdough.

"There's a story connected to every single name and the families that they represent," Michele Williams said. Their ancestor, a man named Moses, is believed to have lived in one of the two slave cabins that were taken from an Alabama plantation to become an exhibit at the sculpture park.

"It was just heart-wrenching, but also super-moving," Michele Williams said of seeing the cabin.

Rifts seem to appear between Israel's political and military leadership over conduct of the Gaza war

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli army's chief spokesman on Wednesday appeared to question the stated goal of destroying the Hamas militant group in Gaza in a rare public rift between the country's political and military leadership.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted Israel will pursue the fight against Hamas, the group running the besieged Gaza Strip, until its military and governing capabilities in the Palestinian territory are eliminated. But with the war now in its ninth month, frustration has been mounting with no clear end or postwar plan in sight.

"This business of destroying Hamas, making Hamas disappear — it's simply throwing sand in the eyes of the public," Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the military spokesperson, told Israel's Channel 13 TV. "Hamas is an idea, Hamas is a party. It's rooted in the hearts of the people — whoever thinks we can eliminate Hamas is wrong."

Netanyahu's office responded by saying that the country's security Cabinet, chaired by the prime minister, "has defined the destruction of Hamas' military and governing capabilities as one of the goals of the war. The Israeli military, of course, is committed to this."

The military quickly issued a clarification, saying it was "committed to achieving the goals of the war as defined by the Cabinet" and that it has been working on this "throughout the war, day and night, and will continue to do so."

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Hagari's comments, it said, "referred to the destruction of Hamas as an ideology and an idea, and this was said by him very clearly and explicitly," the military statement added. "Any other claim is taking things out of context."

There have already been open signs of discontent over the handling of the war by Netanyahu's government, a coalition that includes right-wing hard-liners who oppose any kind of settlement with Hamas. Months of internationally mediated truce talks, including a proposal floated this month by President Joe Biden, have stalled.

Benny Gantz, a former military chief and centrist politician, withdrew from Netanyahu's war Cabinet earlier this month, citing frustration over the prime minister's conduct of the war.

And early this week, Netanyahu expressed displeasure with the army's decision to declare a "tactical pause" in the southern Gaza city of Rafah to help deliver humanitarian aid to the besieged territory. An aide said Netanyahu was caught off guard by the announcement, and Israeli TV stations quoted him as saying "we have a country with an army, not an army with a country."

Israel attacked Gaza in response to Hamas' Oct. 7 cross-border attack into southern Israel, which killed some 1,200 people and took 250 hostage.

Israel's war effort initially enjoyed broad public support, but in recent months wide divisions have emerged. While Netanyahu has pledged "total victory," a growing array of critics and protesters have backed a cease-fire that would bring home the roughly 120 hostages still in Gaza. The Israeli military has already pronounced more than 40 of them dead, and officials fear that number will rise the longer the hostages are held.

Inside Gaza, the war has killed more than 37,100 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between combatants and civilians. The war has largely cut off the flow of medicine, food and other supplies to Palestinians, who are facing widespread hunger.

The United Nations said Wednesday that its humanitarian workers were once again unable to pick up aid shipments at the Kerem Shalom border crossing from Israel because of a lack of law and order.

U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said that although there were no clashes along the route where Israel has declared a daily pause in fighting, the lawlessness in the area prevented U.N. workers from picking up aid. This means that no trucks have been able to use the new route since Israel announced the daily pause on Sunday.

In recent weeks, Israel's military has concentrated its offensive in the nearby city of Rafah, which lies on the border with Egypt and where it says Hamas' last remnants are holding out.

More than half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people had earlier taken shelter in Rafah to escape fighting elsewhere in the territory, and the city is now nearly empty as the Israeli military carries out air-strikes and ground operations.

The Israeli military says it has killed over 500 militants and inflicted heavy damage on Hamas' forces, but officials expect the operation to continue for at least several more weeks.

Israel also has taken over a 14-kilometer (8-mile) corridor along Gaza's border with Egypt, including the Rafah border crossing. Footage circulating on social media shows the crossing blackened and destroyed, with only the former passenger terminal remaining intact. Before Israel moved into the area, the crossing was used to deliver humanitarian aid and to allow Palestinians to leave the territory.

The head of the Rafah municipality, Ahmed al-Sufi, said Wednesday that Israeli strikes have destroyed more than 70% of the facilities and infrastructure. He accused Israeli forces of systematically targeting camps in Rafah, adding that entire residential areas in one neighborhood have been destroyed. Al-Sufi didn't immediately respond to a request for additional information.

In a separate incident, 11 people were killed in an Israeli airstrike in Rafah, said Dr. Saleh al-Hamas of the nearby European Hospital. There were no further details and the Israeli military had no immediate comment.

Colombian family's genes offer new clue to delaying onset of Alzheimer's

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Scientists studying a family plagued by early-in-life Alzheimer's found some carry a genetic oddity that delays their initial symptoms by five years.

The finding points to novel ways of fighting the mind-robbing disease — if researchers can unravel how a single copy of that very rare gene variant offers at least a little protection.

"It opens new avenues," said neuropsychologist Yakeel Quiroz of Massachusetts General Hospital, who helped lead the study published Wednesday. "There are definitely opportunities to copy or mimic the effects."

The first hint of this genetic protection came a few years ago. Researchers were studying a huge family in Colombia that shares a devastating inherited form of Alzheimer's when they discovered one woman who escaped her genetic fate. Aliria Piedrahita de Villegas should have developed Alzheimer's symptoms in her 40s but instead made it to her 70s before suffering even mild cognitive trouble.

The big clue: She also harbored something incredibly rare, two copies of an unrelated gene named APOE3 that had a mutation dubbed Christchurch. That odd gene pair appeared to shield her, staving off her genetic predisposition for Alzheimer's.

Quiroz's team then tested more than 1,000 extended family members, and identified 27 who carry a single copy of that Christchurch variant.

But would one copy be enough to offer any protection? Those Christchurch carriers on average showed their first signs of cognitive trouble at age 52, five years later than their relatives, concluded a collaboration that includes Mass General Brigham researchers and Colombia's University of Antioquia.

The findings, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, are encouraging, said Dr. Eliezer Masliah of the National Institute on Aging.

"It gives you a lot of comfort that modifying one of the copies could be really helpful," at least in helping to delay the disease, he said.

Already some very early work is beginning to explore if certain treatments might induce the protective mutation, he added.

More than 6 million Americans, and an estimated 55 million people worldwide, have Alzheimer's. Less than 1% of cases are like the Colombian family's, caused by a gene passed through generations that triggers the disease at unusually young ages.

Alzheimer's usually is a disease of people over age 65 and while simply getting older is the main risk, the APOE gene has long been known to play some role. It comes in three main varieties. Carrying one copy of the notorious APOE4 gene increases the risk -- and recent research found that having two copies of APOE4 can actually cause Alzheimer's in seniors. Another variety, APOE2, seems to reduce the risk while APOE3 has long been considered neutral.

Then came discovery of the Christchurch variant's seemingly protective role.

Silent changes in the brain precede Alzheimer's symptoms by at least two decades -- including buildup of a sticky protein called amyloid that, once it reaches certain levels, appears to trigger tangles of another protein, called tau, that kill brain cells. Earlier research has suggested something about the Christchurch variant impedes that tau transition.

Wednesday's study included brain scans from two people with a single Christchurch copy and autopsy analysis of four others who'd died. Quiroz cautioned there's still a lot to learn about how the rare variant affects the underlying Alzheimer's process — including whether it affects the common old-age type — but said tau and inflammation are among the suspects.

Scorching temperatures, humidity making life miserable for millions from Midwest to Maine

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A blistering heat wave Wednesday extended from the Midwest to New England, leaving millions of people sweltering through the Juneteenth holiday, including in places like northern Maine where they rarely experience such conditions this early in the year.

The city of Caribou, Maine, just 10 miles from the Canadian border, saw a record 103 degrees (39.4 C) on the heat index, which combines heat and humidity. The region was under a heat advisory until Wednesday evening and temperatures in Caribou were hotter than Miami: 94 degrees (34.4 C) compared with 89 (31.6 C), according to the National Weather Service.

Several residents said they were used to temperatures in the 70s and 80s in June and rarely this humid.

"I've seen this maybe one time before where it's been this hot in June," said Hannah Embelton, 22, a server at an ice cream store in Caribou, adding that customers were staying away from the soft serve options because they melt too quickly.

"We usually never get the brunt of all this heat and humidity because we are so north. Just how hot it is, that is all everyone is talking about," she added.

Over at Moose River Campground, about 13 miles from the border, owner Lisa Hall was fixing a cabin faucet amid the sizzling temperatures and said such conditions are more common in mid July or early August.

"I am sweating like crazy and it's way too hot," she said.

The dangerous temperatures were expected to peak in the eastern Great Lakes and New England on Wednesday and Thursday, and in the Ohio Valley and Mid-Atlantic on Friday and Saturday, the National Weather Service said. Heat index readings were expected to reach 100 to 105 degrees (37.7 C to 40.5 C) in many locations.

"We are seeing a ridge of upper level high pressure, which is bringing all this heat from the southern United States," said Kyle Pederson, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Boston.

"That is just causing lots of hot temperature in the mid- to upper 90s and the heat index to reach over 100. It's just going to make it feel warmer than it is outside," he said. "You will really feel that humidity and feel the heat quicker."

The conditions were expected to scale back some Juneteenth activities and limited options for relief. Cities that opened cooling centers this week advised that Wednesday's holiday meant some public libraries, senior centers and pools where residents could beat the heat would be closed.

That affected services in Indianapolis, where Horizon House, a daytime homeless service center, picked up slack from closed cooling centers and food pantries. The center served about 200 people a day this week, but the number jumped to 300 for lunch during its Juneteenth festival. It also gave out roughly 450 bottles of water.

"Today was downright swampy," said Courtney Kay Meyers, director of development and communications. "We're really struggling to keep up with water and demand for water."

Officials have urged people to limit outdoor activities when possible and to check in with family members and neighbors who may be vulnerable to the heat.

In New York, state parks have free admission Wednesday and Thursday, and select state-run pools and beaches opened early for swimming, Gov. Kathy Hochul said.

New York City beaches were open but public swimming pools there were closed until next week. The city has a list of hundreds of air conditioned sites that are free and open to the public. Public libraries, which have been used as cooling centers during other heat waves, were closed Wednesday because of the Juneteenth federal holiday.

Anne-Laure Bonhomme, a 43-year-old health coach, was visiting sites in New York with her family. "The humidity is pretty insane," she said.

People and even zoo animals were forced to find ways to thwart the muggy weather.

High humidity lingered over Indianapolis Wednesday making the deceptively cloudy day warm and un-enjoyable. Parks and walking trails were sparsely populated despite the holiday.

The Bennett family considered taking their 7-year-old and 4-month old to the pool or a splash pad on their day off of work, but decided it would still be too warm for the kids. Instead, Kayla and Sarah drove from Muncie to the Indiana State Museum in downtown Indianapolis to visit the indoor exhibits in the air conditioning.

"We decided to do something inside," Kayla said.

A recent study found that climate change is making heat waves move more slowly and affect more people for a longer time. Last year, the U.S. saw the greatest number of heat waves — abnormally hot weather lasting more than two days — since 1936.

Chicago broke a 1957 temperature record Monday with a high of 97 degrees (36.1 C). A cold front was expected to bring relief to areas near Lake Michigan on Thursday and Friday, the National Weather Service in Chicago said.

In California, wildfires erupted east of San Francisco in the state's historic Gold Country region and in the mountains of northern Los Angeles County after what had been a quiet start to fire season. Wildfires in southern New Mexico damaged 500 buildings Tuesday in a mountain village of 7,000 people that had been evacuated with little time to spare.

Meanwhile, a fresh batch of tropical moisture was bringing an increasing threat of heavy rain and flash flooding to the central Gulf Coast. Hurricane season this year is forecast to be among the most active in recent memory.

Hundreds died during this year's Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia amid intense heat, officials say

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

MECCA, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Hundreds of people died during this year's Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia as the faithful faced intense high temperatures at Islamic holy sites in the desert kingdom, officials said Wednesday as people tried to claim their loved ones' bodies.

Saudi Arabia has not commented on the death toll amid the heat during the pilgrimage, required of every able Muslim once in their life, nor offered any causes for those who died. However, hundreds of people had lined up at the Emergency Complex in Al-Muaisem neighborhood in Mecca, trying to get information about their missing family members.

One list circulating online suggested at least 550 people died during the five-day Hajj. A medic who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss information not released publicly by the government said that the names listed appeared genuine. That medic and another official who also spoke on condition of anonymity for the same reason said they believed at least 600 bodies were at the facility.

Deaths are not uncommon at the Hajj, which has seen at times over 2 million people travel to Saudi Arabia. There have also been stampedes and epidemics through the pilgrimage's history.

Each year, the Hajj draws hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from low-income nations, "many of whom have had little, if any, pre-Hajj health care," according to an article in the April edition of the Journal of Infection and Public Health. Communicable illnesses can spread among the gathered masses, many of whom save their entire lives for the pilgrimage and can be elderly with preexisting health conditions, it said.

However, the number of dead this year suggests something caused the fatalities to swell. Already, several countries have said some of their pilgrims died because of the heat that swept across the holy sites at Mecca, including Jordan and Tunisia.

Khalid Bashir Bazaz, an Indian pilgrim, speaking near the Grand Mosque on Wednesday, said he "saw a lot of people collapsing to the ground unconscious" during this year's Hajj.

Temperatures on Tuesday reached 47 degrees Celsius (117 degrees Fahrenheit) in Mecca and the sacred sites in and around the city, according to the Saudi National Center for Meteorology. Some people fainted while trying to perform the symbolic stoning of the devil.

Many Egyptians said they lost track of their loved ones in the heat and the crowds. More than 1.83 million Muslims performed the Hajj in 2024, including more than 1.6 million from 22 countries, and around 222,000 Saudi citizens and residents, according to the Saudi Hajj authorities.

On Wednesday at the medical complex in Mecca, an Egyptian man broke down when he heard his mother was among the dead. He cried for some time before grabbing his cellphone and calling their travel agent. "He left her to die," he shouted, referring to the agent. The crowd tried to calm him down.

Security appeared tight at the complex, with an official reading out names of the dead and the nationalities, which included people from Algeria, Egypt and India. Those who said they were kin of the dead were allowed inside to identify the deceased.

The AP could not independently confirm the causes of death for the people whose bodies were held at the complex. Saudi officials did not respond to questions seeking more information.

The kingdom's ruling Al Saud family maintains a major influence in the Muslim world through its oil wealth and management of Islam's holiest sites. Like Saudi monarchs before him, King Salman has taken the title of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, referring to the Grand Mosque in Mecca, home to the cube-shaped Kaaba that Muslims pray towards five times a day, and the Prophet's Mosque in the nearby city of Medina.

Saudi Arabia has spent billions of dollars on crowd control and safety measures for those attending the annual five-day pilgrimage, but the sheer number of participants makes ensuring their safety difficult.

Climate change could make the risk even greater. A 2019 study by experts at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that even if the world succeeds in mitigating the worst effects of climate change, the Hajj would be held in temperatures exceeding an "extreme danger threshold" from 2047 to 2052, and from 2079 to 2086.

Islam follows a lunar calendar, so the Hajj falls around 11 days earlier each year. By 2029, the Hajj will occur in April, and in the next several years after that it will fall in the winter, when temperatures are milder.

A 2015 stampede in Mina during the hajj killed over 2,400 pilgrims, the deadliest incident to ever strike the pilgrimage, according to an AP count. Saudi Arabia has never acknowledged the full toll of the stampede. A separate crane collapse at Mecca's Grand Mosque, which preceded the Mina disaster that same year, killed 111 people.

The second-deadliest incident at hajj was a 1990 stampede that killed 1,426 people.

Lionel Messi could be playing in his final tournament with Argentina at Copa America

By DEBORA REY Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — It's sad but true, Copa America could mark Lionel Messi's final chapter with Argentina's national soccer team.

The World Cup winner will turn 37 during the tournament in the United States, which kicks off Thursday. He's clearly past his peak at Inter Miami after two decades of playing at the highest level in Europe.

Messi has not set a date for his retirement and has kept the door open to playing in a sixth World Cup in 2026 to defend his title from Qatar. But he already recognizes his shortcomings.

"I don't think about that yet. The moment I feel that I am not going to help my team, I will retire," Messi said in March in an interview with Saudi broadcaster Riyadh Season. "I always ate well, trained. But as I grew I became aware that the physical effort we make is getting harder. As you grow old, things become more difficult."

Last year, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner struggled with muscular injuries while playing in MLS and for Argentina. That didn't change much in 2024.

Messi has shown he enjoys going out at night with his wife, Antonella, and his friends in Miami. He spends time with his three children, starts new businesses and lives as if soccer is slowly becoming a smaller part of his life.

Still, he has 12 goals and 13 assists for Inter Miami this season.

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"I have a good time at the club. I am lucky to have teammates and friends (Luis Suárez, Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba, all former Barcelona players) by my side," Messi told ESPN. "I have a good time in the national team, where I have teammates and friends, too. And I enjoy the little details that I know that when I don't play anymore, I'm going to miss."

Angel di Maria, a 36-year-old winger who has played alongside Messi for years with the national team, is sure to bid farewell to international soccer after the Copa America. That has also brought more questions about whether the team's biggest star will remain on the squad.

"As long as I feel like I'm fine and I can continue contributing, I'm going to do it. Today, the only thing I think about is getting to the Copa America well and being able to compete in it," Messi told the Star Plus platform in December. "Fighting for it again, as we always did, trying to be champions."

Argentina's all-time top scorer and the national team's leader with 26 World Cup appearances is also seeking records in the continental competition.

Messi, who won the South American championship in 2021, wants to become the Copa America's leading scorer. He has 13 goals in six editions, four behind Norberto Méndez of Argentina and Zinho of Brazil with 17.

He also wants to be the player with most appearances in the Copa America, a record he currently shares with former Chile goalkeeper Sergio Livingston, both with 34 games.

Messi's teammates don't want to see him go.

"We'll see how long, but while he's here we're going to enjoy it to the fullest," Argentina defender Cristian Romero said. "We grew up watching him. We are part of those tournaments."

Rickwood Field, Willie Mays' first pro park and monument of opportunity and oppression, welcomes MLB

By ALANIS THAMES AP Sports Writer

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Gerald Watkins watched Aaron Judge, Giancarlo Stanton and other New York Yankees wade through stalks of corn onto an Iowa field in 2021, near the filming site for the 1989 baseball movie "Field of Dreams."

Watkins thought about Rickwood Field, the 114-year-old ballpark in his hometown of Birmingham, Alabama, where Willie Mays got his start, and he called Major League Baseball with a pitch.

"The Field of Dreams is really cool," Watkins, 68, said, "but we have a real Field of Dreams here. This is a place where Willie Mays, among others, was standing in the outfield dreaming about being in the big leagues."

Now, the big leagues are coming to Birmingham. Rickwood Field, the oldest professional ballpark in the U.S. and former home to baseball Hall of Famer Mays and the Birmingham Black Barons of the Negro Leagues, will host an MLB game between the St. Louis Cardinals and San Francisco Giants on Thursday.

The game meant to honor Mays and many other Negro Leaguers will be both somber and reminiscent. Mays, the electrifying center fielder who left an enduring mark on baseball, died Tuesday, a day after announcing that he wouldn't attend the game in person.

"All of Major League Baseball is in mourning today as we are gathered at the very ballpark where a career and a legacy like no other began," MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred said in a statement. "Willie Mays took his all-around brilliance from the Birmingham Black Barons of the Negro American League to the historic Giants franchise. From coast to coast in New York and San Francisco, Willie inspired generations of players and fans as the game grew and truly earned its place as our National Pastime."

Rickwood Field — a landmark of hope Rickwood Field sits just a few miles west of downtown Birmingham — a rustic and modest green landmark with hints of history layered in its walls.

It's a time capsule of opportunity and oppression — a site for social gatherings like women's suffrage rallies and other political events, and host to the best baseball talents of the 20th century. Commercials and baseball films have also been shot there, including parts of the Jackie Robinson biopic "42."

Rickwood Field hosted Alabama's first integrated sports team, the minor league Birmingham Barons, in

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1964 — 17 years after Robinson integrated the majors. And it has seen more than 50% of baseball Hall of Famers walk its grounds, from legendary Negro Leaguers like Mays, Josh Gibson and Satchel Paige to MLB greats Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and Mickey Mantle.

"The majors? I didn't dream about the impossible," Mays recently told the San Francisco Chronicle. "I was taught to see your goal in your mind and work toward it. I could work toward getting to Rickwood Field and the Birmingham Black Barons. I didn't need to dream for that. For that, I needed to work hard. So, I did. Rickwood became my training ground."

Mays became a star there at only 17 years old, helping the Black Barons reach the Negro League World Series in 1948. Major league scouts came to see him play, and the Black Barons were so popular locally that ministers sometimes preached early on Sundays to accommodate fans eager to attend games.

"Rickwood is special because it's where so many baseball careers began, and it's still standing," said Roy Wood Jr., a comedian and actor born in Birmingham. "When you're there, you can still feel that history. I feel as strongly about Rickwood as someone would (feel) visiting their childhood home as an adult."

Wood played high school baseball at Rickwood Field in the 1990s. At the time, he said Rickwood was just another place for him to play the sport he loved. That changed when he learned the history.

A place where horror was allowed to take a pauseThe 10,800-seat stadium opened in 1910 during a time when baseball was the premier sport in Alabama. With few major league franchises in the South during those days, baseball fans in Alabama clung to minor league teams like the all-white Birmingham Barons, who played at Rickwood from 1910-1961, 1964-65 and 1981-87. Other white stars — like Hall of Famers Ty Cobb and Honus Wagner — came through Rickwood for spring exhibitions. Alabama and Auburn both used Rickwood as home fields for their college football teams.

For Black people, Rickwood and the Negro Leagues were an introduction to Black athletic talent.

"This league creates common heroes, common teams," said Rob Ruck, a historian focusing on Black and Latino roots in sport, "a national institution that Black Americans rally around, and it gives them a collective self-esteem because of their abilities in sport."

The field was also a bright spot amid the fight for racial equality in the 1950s and 1960s. Alabama, one of the epicenters of the Civil Rights Movement, was the site of marches for voting rights and boycotts, as well as brutal beatings, civil unrest and deadly bombings.

"It was a place where horror was allowed to take a pause for nine innings," Wood said. "... Rickwood was never going to solve Black people's problems, but it represented a place where Black people didn't have to think about them for a few hours."

Maintaining historyThe ballpark is still standing against many odds. Built around the same time as Pittsburgh's Forbes Field, Philadelphia's Shibe Park, Chicago's Comiskey Park and Detroit's Tiger Stadium, Rickwood has outlasted them all, with high school and college games still being played there.

Watkins and the Friends of Rickwood organization made up of about 30 volunteers have maintained it, along with others like Jabreil Weir, the head groundskeeper in charge of the field's day-to-day upkeep.

"Who would have thought MLB would come to Birmingham, Alabama?" Weir said. "Who ever thought that I would be in the position that I am to be a part of this event? These are moments that you dream of."

Weir has worked with MLB in preparing the stadium to host a major league game. Renovations include a new field with lights, upgraded dugouts, a new drainage system and a new backstopping netting system to protect fans during the game, according to Murray Cook, MLB's field and stadium consultant.

Other events have been held this week, including a Double-A game at the ballpark on Tuesday between the Birmingham Barons and Montgomery Biscuits of the Southern League. The game was paused while the PA announcer shared news of Mays' death, and fans reacted by standing, cheering and chanting "Willie! Willie!"

The game is part of an ongoing effort by MLB to highlight and celebrate achievements of Black players — a push that comes amid criticism for a league where the percentage of Black major leaguers is historically low. MLB's endeavors have also included grassroots programs for underprivileged youth players and the recent integration of Negro Leagues statistics into its official records.

"This gives us an opportunity to talk about race in the context of sport," Ruck said, adding later, "We've got to talk about race in serious ways, and I think this game, the stats, make that happen."

Japan, New Zealand agree on intel sharing pact amid growing regional security concerns

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan and New Zealand agreed Wednesday in principle on an intelligence sharing pact as their leaders shared concerns over the increasingly challenging security environment in the region, including closer ties between Russia and North Korea.

In a joint statement, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his New Zealand counterpart Christopher Luxon expressed concern about rising tension in the South China Sea, where China has become increasingly assertive in pressing its territorial claims.

Kishida and Luxon “welcomed the agreement in principle of an information security agreement” to facilitate classified information sharing, according to the statement released by Japan’s Foreign Ministry.

The two leaders also agreed to accelerate talks toward signing a pact that would allow the two countries’ forces to share logistical support and supplies during bilateral training and other operations.

Under Japan’s 2022 national security strategy the country has been accelerating military buildup and expanding defense partnerships amid threats from China, North Korea and Russia.

Kishida and Luxon condemned “in the strongest possible terms” the increasing military cooperation between North Korea and Russia, including the North’s shipment to Russia of ballistic missiles used against Ukraine, the joint statement said.

“There is no more important time than right now for our two countries to be engaging together to understand and to respond to the serious regional issues in Japan’s neighborhood,” Luxon told a joint news conference after the talks. He said the two leaders discussed Russian President Vladimir Putin’s visit to Pyongyang and “how North Korea is fueling Russia’s illegal war in Ukraine.”

Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Wednesday signed an agreement that pledged mutual aid if either country faces “aggression,” at a summit held at a time both face escalating standoffs from the West.

Putin’s visit was his first in 24 years as the United States and its allies expressed growing concerns over a possible arms arrangement in which Pyongyang provides Moscow with badly needed munitions for its war in Ukraine, in exchange for economic assistance and technology transfers that could enhance the threat posed by North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missile program.

Japan has signed similar intelligence agreements with eight other countries including the United States, Australia, Britain, India and South Korea, as well as with NATO. Japan is also negotiating with Canada over a similar deal and has agreed with Ukraine to start talks.

Firewall to deter cyberattacks is blamed for Massachusetts 911 outage

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A firewall designed to prevent cyberattacks and hacking was to blame for the 911 outage that hit Massachusetts this week, state officials said Wednesday.

Massachusetts’ 911 system was down for about two hours Tuesday, making it impossible for anyone to reach emergency services using the emergency number.

In a statement Wednesday, the Massachusetts State 911 Department determined the outage, which lasted from 1:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m., was due to a safety feature that prevents cyberattacks, though the reason for that is still under review.

While some calls didn’t go through, the state said the system “allows dispatch centers to identify the phone number of callers and return those calls.” As a result, the Department was not aware of any emergencies being negatively affected by the outage.

“The Massachusetts State 911 Department is deeply committed to providing reliable, state-of-the-art 911 services to all Massachusetts residents and visitors in an emergency,” Executive Director of the State 911 Department Frank Pozniak said in a statement. “The Department will take all necessary steps to prevent a future occurrence.”

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At the time of the outage, Boston Police Commissioner Michael Cox said it was important for residents to know alternative ways of getting help, particularly given the hot weather heading toward the Northeast. He advised the public to contact local police departments if necessary.

"In addition, if you're having any issues that are medical related, or EMS or fire-related, you can go and pull your local call box, that's the red light boxes that fire departments have on local street corners, to also get medical attention that way," he said.

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu said residents shouldn't worry about calling the correct number or facility for their emergency, but to just reach out to their nearest authorities.

Over at Tufts Medical Center, officials said operations were not affected by the outage.

"Our internal emergency number for Public Safety remained active and functional during the outage and appropriate responders were able to be reached this way from within the hospital," Jeremy Lechan, the media relations manager for the hospital said. "We are very glad to hear that the issue has been resolved and people in need outside the hospital can once again get the medical assistance they require."

Officials at Massachusetts General Hospital also reported no problems associated with the outage, and a spokesman for the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association said he wasn't aware of issues.

The Massachusetts disruption caused confusion in other northeastern states, where some residents also got notifications on their phones. But authorities in Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York and Vermont all said their systems were operational.

"We are aware that some individuals in Vermont have received wireless notifications about the Massachusetts event," Barbara Neal, executive director of the Vermont Enhanced 911 Board, said. "The official reason for that is unknown but it may be related to individuals having signed up for an alerting system in Massachusetts or having been at or near the Massachusetts border when the wireless alert was issued by Massachusetts."

Several years ago, Massachusetts suffered sporadic 911 outages. At the time, it was blamed on outages from Louisiana-based CenturyLink, which affected some Verizon customers. In April, workers installing a light pole in Missouri cut into a fiber line, knocking out 911 service for emergency agencies in Nebraska, Nevada and South Dakota.

On Juneteenth, a journalist honors ancestor at ceremony for Black soldiers who served in Civil War

By DARREN SANDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was the middle of the night in the summer of 2021 when I finally found the missing piece of my family history.

My great-great-great-great grandfather Hewlett Sands, born into slavery in Oyster Bay, New York in 1820, was one of the more than 200,000 names listed on the African American Civil War Memorial in Washington, D.C. That meant he was a soldier who served in a United States Colored Troops regiment that fought for the Union — and the freedom we still celebrate today.

As the screen glowed, a mix of emotions — anxiety, elation, pride — washed over me. It was the first step in understanding the story of his life. I want to share what I know about him!

I had to resist the urge to race to the Spirit of Freedom statue and trace my fingers over his name etched on the nearby Wall of Honor. I held off until the sun came up.

This Juneteenth I returned to the memorial to honor him and all who served our country, one that spent its first two centuries seeing most of its Black people as someone else's property. In a special ceremony Wednesday, I was helping carry on the more than 150-year-old commemoration of enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, finding out on June 19, 1865, that they'd been freed. It's been a longtime sacred celebration for many Black Americans, but only recently was recognized as a federal holiday.

I didn't go just for myself or my family. I also wanted to celebrate Frank Smith, a civil rights leader and the memorial's director, whose work preserving this lesser-known American history helped me understand where I came from and who I was.

One of Smith's biggest wishes is for the National Parks Service to assign a full-time ranger to the memo-

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rial site. If there was ever a candidate, it would be Marquett Awa-Milton. I first met him when I came to find my ancestor's name. He serves the memorial daily in full Civil War regalia, and was taking selfies and gladhanding visitors with his rifle sticking above his head as I arrived.

Soon, the ceremony began. Smith, who once presided over this event with just his staff and very little fanfare, opened the ceremony by welcoming about 150 people, many tucked under the shade as temperatures rose. Smith then asked me and two-dozen other volunteers to read the names of soldiers who were in Galveston when the war ended, including the 26th Regiment. After I read Hewlett Sands' name aloud, I took my wife, Jummy, by the hand and showed her the tiny corner of the memorial symbolizing his sacrifice. I felt again the same mix of pride and gratitude I first felt in the summer of 2021.

"Congratulations on finding your ancestor," Smith had told me again last week, as he had after he first told me in 2021 after I found my connection to Hewlett Sands. I think it is what he says to everyone who finds their ancestor on the wall, a thank you for all those men who sacrificed.

I learned about Hewlett Sands while researching my family's history, hoping to interweave it into a book I'm writing about Coretta Scott King's work to try and transform America into a nonviolent society after the assassination of her husband, Martin Luther King Jr. in April 1968.

Over the many decades since the Civil War, there was a lot of displacement among my ancestors; people moved away and never came back and a lot of our family stories were lost.

But I do know that the Sands men served valiantly in World War II. There was a newspaper headline about "The Sands Family Fights" with a photograph of several of them. We knew a lot more about World War II than the Civil War.

According to the records I found, Hewlett Sands was born on Nov. 29, 1820, in the home of the Townsend family, a wealthy and powerful family on Long Island who held many enslaved people before New York abolished slavery in 1827.

It's not clear to me how he spent much of his life between 1820 and 1852. He apparently worked as a farm laborer, and even as a clam digger. When he was 32, he met and married a young widow named Anne Amelia Payne, who took Sands as her last name.

In April 1861, Confederates fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina, igniting the Civil War.

In January 1864, Hewlett Sands would collect a \$300 bounty and join the 26th United States Colored Troops infantry regiment, which prepared for war along with thousands of other soldiers on Riker's Island. His enlistment papers say he was 42, but in fact he was about to turn 44.

According to military records, his regiment – after enduring rugged conditions in camp -- boarded a ship named Warrior in March 1864 bound for South Carolina, where they fought in the battle at Honey Hill and other engagements.

Life after the war for Hewlett Sands was defined by a series of economic hardships. He fell and lost vision in one eye; and he lost an inheritance he intended to pass down to his family through the generations. He died on April 8, 1901, at the age of 81.

But his and Amelia's son, James Edward Sands, got married and had two children, one of whom was Alfred Sands. Among Alfred's children was my grandfather Alonzo, who served with his brothers in World War II. In June 1960, Alonzo and Catherine Sands gave birth to a boy, Lonnie, who is my dad.

Like Hewlett Sands, I grew up in Long Island, in the town of Roslyn, where I developed a love for reading. I first read about the life of Martin Luther King at the Bryant Library, and by age 11 was giving speeches about him and his impact on my life. It was in Roslyn, as a boy, that I decided I wanted to be a journalist, after a compassionate Newsday reporter visited to get our family's side of the story in an article about a neighborhood controversy.

Now, working on this Juneteenth story as a journalist, I feel it's part of my mission to educate and inform people about all this. And to be able to share it with my dad, my mom – all of my family.

I have a very strong sense of connection to the idea Hewlett Sands risked his life for not just his family, but for a higher ideal. I think all those men shared a sense of doing something that was going to impact generations that they would never meet.

No one living had ever seen Hewlett's grave, and I went just the other day. On a cloudless day, my dad and I discovered his tombstone, inscribed Co. D 26th U.S. INF. Somehow, we felt a little closer to him, and a little closer to each other.

Willie Mays Appreciation: The 'Say Hey Kid' inspired generations with talent and exuberance

By JOSH DUBOW AP Sports Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Long after “The Catch” and his 660 home runs, and the daring sprints around the bases with his hat falling off, Willie Mays could still command a room like no other.

Mays was a frequent visitor to the downtown ballpark in San Francisco at 24 Willie Mays Plaza with his statue outside the stadium. He would often hold court with his contemporaries and the younger generation of players who hung on every word said by a player they were too young to have ever watched play.

His commanding voice and high-pitched laugh were recognizable anywhere. He was simply the “Say Hey Kid” from his days patrolling center field at the Polo Grounds in the 1950s, when baseball ruled New York City, to his death at age 93 on Tuesday afternoon.

As Hall of Famer Ken Griffey Jr. said: “He’ll always be the godfather of all center fielders.”

There may be players who hit more home runs, won more Gold Gloves, had more hits and captured more World Series titles than Mays. But there never was — and probably never will be — a player as dazzling and entertaining as he was for more than two decades on both coasts.

With a hat too small so it flew off his head as he raced around the field and his signature basket catches, Mays was a showman who could do it all as the consummate “five-tool player.” Perhaps no one combined the ability to hit for both average and power, to run the bases, field and throw like Mays did during his career spent mostly with the Giants in New York and San Francisco.

“Willie could do everything from the day he joined the Giants,” Hall of Fame manager Leo Durocher said. “Mays could do all the things you look for in a player better than anybody I ever saw.”

While Joe DiMaggio famously insisted on being introduced as the “Greatest Living Ballplayer” until he died in 1999, that title had really been held by Mays for more than a half-century.

The numbers are staggering: 660 homers, 3,293 hits, 6,080 total bases, 2,068 runs scored, two MVPs, and 24 All-Star games despite missing nearly two full seasons serving in the Korean War. There were also 12 Gold Gloves even though the award wasn’t even handed out his first five seasons in the majors.

But it was his joy that truly was infectious and inspiring, whether it was on the streets of Harlem where he famously played stick ball games with local kids before heading to the nearby Polo Grounds for his real job with the Giants or at the ballparks around the National League.

“You wanted to play like Willie and make those catches that he did,” Yankees slugger Aaron Judge said. “The numbers he put up on the field and what he did are impressive but him as a person and him as a human being is even bigger. He was bigger than baseball. He was something special and the baseball world is definitely going to be missing a great one.”

His greatness is best described by the reverence his contemporaries had for him.

“He played the game as if he was the only one out there,” Hall of Famer Ernie Banks once said. “His eyes would light up. His energy would kick in and he’d be ready to go. I had the privilege of watching and playing against a great talent.

“He played so hard, it inspired me to get out there every game. I couldn’t wait to play the Giants and watch him.”

Mays’ ability to inspire went far beyond the baseball field. He was born in 1931 in segregated Alabama, began his professional career in the Negro Leagues and became one of the early Black stars in baseball and the first Black player in the majors to be captain of his team.

But he also endured racism from his time in the minors in the previously all-white Interstate League and in San Francisco when he and his wife were initially rejected when they tried to buy a house in an exclusive neighborhood.

But later in life, he became almost universally loved.

“It’s because of giants like Willie that someone like me could even think about running for president,” President Barack Obama said when he gave Mays the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015.

Mays played his career when baseball truly was the American pastime and baseball’s best players were

the biggest stars in all of American sports.

He was honored in song from Terry Cashman's "Talkin' Baseball (Willie, Mickey & The Duke)" that remembered the great New York center fielders of the 1950s with Mays, Mickey Mantle and Duke Snider to the 1955 classic by The Treniers: "Say Hey (The Willie Mays Song) that perfectly encapsulated his style.

"He runs the bases like a choo-choo train
Swings around second like an aeroplane
His cap flies off when he passes third
And he heads home like an eagle bird."

Immigrant families rejoice over Biden's expansive move toward citizenship, while some are left out

By VALERIE GONZALEZ and JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of immigrants had reason to rejoice when President Joe Biden unveiled a highly expansive plan to extend legal status to spouses of U.S. citizens but, inevitably, some were left out.

Claudia Zúniga, 35, married in 2017, or 10 years after her husband came to the United States. He moved to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, after they wed, knowing that, by law, he had to live outside the country for years to gain legal status. "Our lives took a 180-degree turn," she said.

Biden announced Tuesday that his administration will, in coming months, allow U.S. citizens' spouses without legal status to apply for permanent residency and eventually citizenship without having to first depart the country for up to 10 years. About 500,000 immigrants may benefit, according to senior administration officials.

To qualify, an immigrant must have lived in the United States for 10 years and be married to a U.S. citizen, both as of Monday. Zúniga's husband is ineligible because he wasn't in the United States.

"Imagine, it would be a dream come true," said Zúniga, who works part time in her father's transportation business in Houston. "My husband could be with us. We could focus on the well-being of our children."

Every immigration benefit — even those as sweeping as Biden's election-year offer — has a cutoff date and other eligibility requirements. In September, the Democratic president expanded temporary status for nearly 500,000 Venezuelans who were living in the United States on July 31, 2023. Those who had arrived a day later were out of luck.

The Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which has shielded from deportation hundreds of thousands of people who came to the United States as young children and is popularly known as DACA, required applicants be in the United States on June 15, 2012, and continuously for the previous five years.

About 1.1 million spouses who are in the country illegally are married to U.S. citizens, according to advocacy group FWD.us., meaning hundreds of thousands won't qualify because they were in the United States for less than 10 years.

Immigration advocates were generally thrilled with the scope of Tuesday's announcement, just as Biden's critics called it a horribly misguided giveaway.

Angelica Martinez, 36, wiped away tears as she sat next to her children, ages 14 and 6, and watched Biden's announcement at the Houston office of FIEL, an immigrant advocacy group. A U.S. citizen since 2013, she described a flood of emotions, including regret that her husband couldn't travel to Mexico when his mother died five years ago.

"Sadness, joy all at the same time," said Martinez, whose husband arrived in Houston 18 years ago.

Brenda Valle of Los Angeles, whose husband has been a U.S. citizen since 2001 and, like her, was born in Mexico, renews her DACA permit every two years. "We can start planning more long-term, for the future, instead of what we can do for the next two years," she said.

Magdalena Gutiérrez of Chicago, who has been married to a U.S. citizen for 22 years and has three daughters who are U.S. citizens, said she had "a little more hope" after Biden's announcement. Gutiérrez,

43, is eager to travel more across the United States without fearing an encounter with law enforcement that could lead to her being deported.

Allyson Batista, a retired Philadelphia teacher and U.S. citizen, who married her Brazilian husband 20 years ago, recalled being told by lawyer that he could leave the country for 10 years or "remain in the shadows and wait for a change in the law."

"Initially, when we got married, I was naive and thought, 'OK, but I'm American. This isn't going to be a problem. We're going to fix this,'" Batista said. "I learned very early on that we were facing a pretty dire circumstance and that there would be no way for us to move forward in an immigration process successfully."

The couple raised three children who are pursuing higher education. Batista is waiting for the details of how her husband can apply for a green card.

"I'm hopeful," Batista said. "The next 60 days will really tell. But, obviously more than thrilled because every step forward is a step towards a final resolution for all kinds of immigrant families."

About 50,000 noncitizen children with parents who are married to a U.S. citizen could also potentially qualify, according to senior administration officials who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity. Biden also announced new regulations that will allow some DACA beneficiaries and other young immigrants to more easily qualify for long-established work visas.

Willie Mays, the Giants' electrifying 'Say Hey Kid,' dies at 93

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

Willie Mays, the electrifying "Say Hey Kid" whose singular combination of talent, drive and exuberance made him one of baseball's greatest and most beloved players, has died. He was 93.

Mays' family and the San Francisco Giants jointly announced Tuesday night he had died earlier in the afternoon in the Bay Area.

"My father has passed away peacefully and among loved ones," son Michael Mays said in a statement released by the club. "I want to thank you all from the bottom of my broken heart for the unwavering love you have shown him over the years. You have been his life's blood."

The center fielder, who began his professional career in the Negro Leagues in 1948, had been baseball's oldest living Hall of Famer. He was voted into the Hall in 1979, his first year of eligibility, and in 1999 followed only Babe Ruth on The Sporting News' list of the game's top stars. The Giants retired his uniform number, 24, and set their AT&T Park in San Francisco on Willie Mays Plaza.

Mays died two days before a game between the Giants and St. Louis Cardinals to honor the Negro Leagues at Rickwood Field in Birmingham, Alabama.

"All of Major League Baseball is in mourning today as we are gathered at the very ballpark where a career and a legacy like no other began," Commissioner Rob Manfred said. "Willie Mays took his all-around brilliance from the Birmingham Black Barons of the Negro American League to the historic Giants franchise. From coast to coast ... Willie inspired generations of players and fans as the game grew and truly earned its place as our National Pastime."

Few were so blessed with each of the five essential qualities for a superstar — hitting for average, hitting for power, speed, fielding and throwing. Fewer so joyously exerted those qualities — whether launching home runs; dashing around the bases, loose-fitting cap flying off his head; or chasing down fly balls in center field and finishing the job with his trademark basket catch.

Over 23 major league seasons, virtually all with the New York/San Francisco Giants but also including one in the Negro Leagues, Mays batted .301, hit 660 home runs, totaled 3,293 hits, scored more than 2,000 runs and won 12 Gold Gloves. He was Rookie of the Year in 1951, twice was named the Most Valuable Player and finished in the top 10 for the MVP 10 other times. His lightning sprint and over-the-shoulder grab of an apparent extra base hit in the 1954 World Series remains the most celebrated defensive play in baseball history.

"When I played ball, I tried to make sure everybody enjoyed what I was doing," Mays told NPR in 2010.

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"I made the clubhouse guy fit me a cap that when I ran, the wind gets up in the bottom and it flies right off. People love that kind of stuff."

For millions in the 1950s and '60s and after, the smiling ballplayer with the friendly, high-pitched voice was a signature athlete and showman during an era when baseball was still the signature pastime. Awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama in 2015, Mays left his fans with countless memories. But a single feat served to capture his magic — one so untoppable it was simply called "The Catch."

In Game 1 of the 1954 World Series, the then-New York Giants hosted the Cleveland Indians, who had won 111 games in the regular season and were strong favorites in the postseason. The score was 2-2 in the top of the eighth inning. Cleveland's Vic Wertz faced reliever Don Liddle with none out, Larry Doby on second and Al Rosen on first.

With the count 1-2, Wertz smashed a fastball to deep center field. In an average park, with an average center fielder, Wertz would have homered, or at least had an easy triple. But the center field wall in the eccentrically shaped Polo Grounds was more than 450 feet away. And there was nothing close to average about the skills of Willie Mays.

Decades of taped replays have not diminished the astonishment of watching Mays race toward the wall, his back to home plate, reach out his glove and haul in the drive. What followed was also extraordinary: Mays managed to turn around while still moving forward, heave the ball to the infield and prevent Doby from scoring even as Mays spun to the ground. Mays himself would proudly point out that "the throw" was as important as "the catch."

"Soon as it got hit, I knew I'd catch the ball," Mays told biographer James S. Hirsch, whose book came out in 2010.

"All the time I'm running back, I'm thinking, 'Willie, you've got to get this ball back to the infield.'"

"The Catch" was seen and heard by millions through radio and the then-emerging medium of television, and Mays became one of the first Black athletes with mass media appeal. He was a guest star on "The Donna Reed Show," "Bewitched" and other sitcoms. He inspired a handful of songs and was named first in Terry Cashman's 1980s novelty hit, "Talkin' Baseball (Willie, Mickey & The Duke)," a tribute in part to the brief era when New York had three future Hall of Famers in center: Mays, Mantle of the Yankees and Snider of the Brooklyn Dodgers.

The Giants went on to sweep the Indians, with many citing Mays' play as the turning point. The impact was so powerful that 63 years later, in 2017, baseball named the World Series Most Valuable Player after him even though it was his only moment of postseason greatness. He appeared in three other World Series, in 1951 and 1962 for the Giants and 1973 for the Mets, batting just .239 with no home runs in the four series. (His one postseason homer was in the 1971 National League playoffs, when the Giants lost to the Pittsburgh Pirates).

But "The Catch" and his achievements during the regular season were greatness enough. Yankees and Dodgers fans may have fiercely challenged Mays' eminence, but Mantle and Snider did not. At a 1995 baseball writers dinner in Manhattan, with all three at the dais, Mantle raised the eternal question: Which of the three was better?

"We don't mind being second, do we, Duke?" he added.

Between 1954 and 1966, Mays drove in 100 or more runs 10 times, scored 100 or more 12 times, hit 40 or more homers six times, more than 50 homers twice and led the league in stolen bases four times. His numbers might have been bigger. He missed most of 1952 and all of 1953 because of military service, quite possibly costing him the chance to overtake Ruth's career home run record of 714, an honor that first went to Henry Aaron, then Mays' godson, Barry Bonds. He likely would have won more Gold Gloves if the award had been established before 1956. He insisted he would have led the league in steals more often had he tried.

"I am beyond devastated and overcome with emotion. I have no words to describe what you mean to me," Bonds wrote on Instagram.

Mays was fortunate in escaping serious injury and avoiding major scandal, but he endured personal and

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professional troubles. His first marriage, to Margherite Wendell, ended in divorce. He was often short of money in the pre-free agent era, and he received less for endorsements than Mantle and other white athletes. He was subject to racist insults and his insistence that he was an entertainer, not a spokesman, led to his being chastised by Jackie Robinson and others for not contributing more to the civil rights movement. He didn't care for some of his managers and didn't always appreciate a fellow idol, notably Aaron, his greatest contemporary.

"When Henry began to soar up the home-run chart, Willie was loathe to give even a partial nod to Henry's ability, choosing instead to blame his own performance on his home turf, (San Francisco's) Candlestick Park, saying it was a lousy park in which to hit homers and this was the reason for Henry's onrush," Aaron biographer Howard Bryant wrote in 2010.

Admirers of Aaron, who died in 2021, would contend that only his quiet demeanor and geographical distance from major media centers — Aaron played in Atlanta and Milwaukee — kept him from being ranked the same as, or even better than, Mays. But much of the baseball world placed Mays above all. He was the game's highest-paid player for 11 seasons (according to the Society for American Baseball Research) and often batted first in All-Star Games, because he was Willie Mays. From center field, he called pitches and positioned other fielders. He boasted that he relied on his own instincts, not those of any coach, when deciding whether to try for an extra base.

Sports writer Barney Kremenko has often been credited with nicknaming him "The Say Hey Kid," referring to Mays' spirited way of greeting his teammates. Moments on and off the field sealed the public's affection. In 1965, Mays defused a horrifying brawl after teammate Juan Marichal clubbed Los Angeles Dodgers catcher John Roseboro with a bat. Mays led a bloodied Roseboro away and sat with him on the clubhouse bench of the Dodgers, the Giants' hated rivals.

Years earlier, when living in Manhattan, he endeared himself to young fans by playing in neighborhood stickball games.

"I used to have maybe 10 kids come to my window," he said in 2011 while visiting the area of the old Polo Grounds. "Every morning, they'd come at 9 o'clock. They'd knock on my window, get me up. And I had to be out at 9:30. So they'd give me a chance to go shower. They'd give me a chance to eat breakfast. But I had to be out there at 9:30, because that's when they wanted to play. So I played with them for about maybe an hour."

He was born in Westfield, Alabama, in 1931, the son of a Negro League player who wanted Willie to do the same, playing catch with him and letting him sit in the dugout. Young Mays was so gifted an athlete that childhood friends swore that basketball, not baseball, was his best sport.

By high school he was playing for the Birmingham Black Barons, and late in life would receive an additional 10 hits to his career total, 3,293, when Negro League statistics were recognized in 2024 by Major League Baseball. With Robinson breaking the major league's color barrier in 1947, Mays' ascension became inevitable. The Giants signed him after he graduated from high school (he had to skip his senior prom) and sent him to their minor league affiliate in Trenton, New Jersey. He began the 1951 season with Minneapolis, a Triple-A club. After 35 games, he was batting a head-turning .477 and was labeled by one scout as "the best prospect in America." Giants Manager Leo Durocher saw no reason to wait and demanded that Mays, barely 20 at the time, join his team's starting lineup.

Durocher managed Mays from 1951-55 and became a father figure — the surly but astute leader who nurtured and sometimes pampered the young phenom. As Durocher liked to tell it, and Mays never disputed, Mays struggled in his first few games and was ready to go back to the minors.

"In the minors I'm hitting .477, killing everybody. And I came to the majors, I couldn't hit. I was playing the outfield very, very well, throwing out everybody, but I just couldn't get a hit," Mays told the Academy of Achievement, a Washington-based leadership center, in 1996. "And I started crying, and Leo came to me and he says: 'You're my center fielder; it doesn't make any difference what you do. You just go home, come back and play tomorrow.' I think that really, really turned me around."

Mays finished 1951 batting .272 with 20 home runs, good enough to be named the league's top rookie.

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He might have been a legend that first season. The Giants were 13 games behind Brooklyn on Aug. 11 but rallied and tied the Dodgers, then won a best-of-three playoff series with one of baseball's most storied homers: Bobby Thomson's shot in the bottom of the ninth off Ralph Branca.

Mays was the on-deck batter.

"I was concentrating on Branca, what he was throwing, what he might throw me," Mays told The New York Times in 2010. "When he hit the home run, I didn't even move.

"I remember all the guys running by me, running to home plate, and I'm saying, 'What's going on here?' I was thinking, 'I got to hit!'"

His military service the next two years stalled his career but not his development. Mays was assigned as a batting instructor for his unit's baseball team and, at the suggestion of one pupil, began catching fly balls by holding out his glove face up, around his belly, like a basket. Mays adopted the new approach in part because it enabled him to throw more quickly.

He returned full time in 1954, hitting 41 homers and a league-leading .345. He was only 34 when he hit his 500th career homer, in 1965, but managed just 160 over the next eight years. Early in the 1972 season, with Mays struggling and the Giants looking to cut costs, the team stunned Mays and others by trading its marquee player to the New York Mets, returning him to the city where he had started out in the majors.

Mays' debut with his new team could not have been better scripted: He hit a go-ahead home run in the fifth inning against the visiting Giants, and helped the Mets win 5-4. But he deteriorated badly over the next two seasons, even falling down on occasion in the field. Many cited him as example of a star who stayed too long.

In retirement, he mentored Bonds and defended him against allegations of using steroids. Mays himself was in trouble when Commissioner Bowie Kuhn banned him from the game, in 1979, for doing promotional work at the Bally's Park Place Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey. (Kuhn's successor, Peter Ueberroth, reinstated Mays and fellow casino promoter Mantle in 1985).

But tributes were more common and they came from everywhere — show business, sports, the White House. In the 1979 movie "Manhattan," Woody Allen's character cites Mays as among his reasons for living. When Obama learned he was a distant cousin of political rival and former Vice President Dick Cheney, he lamented that he wasn't related to someone "cool" like Mays.

"Willie Mays wasn't just a singular athlete, blessed with an unmatched combination of grace, skill and power," Obama said Tuesday on X. "He was also a wonderfully warm and generous person — and an inspiration to an entire generation."

Asked about career highlights, Mays inevitably mentioned "The Catch," but also cherished hitting four home runs in a game against the Braves; falling over a canvas fence to make a catch in the minors; and running into a fence in Brooklyn's Ebbets Field while chasing a bases-loaded drive, knocking himself out, but still holding on to the ball.

Most of the time, he was happy just being on the field, especially when the sun went down.

"I mean, you had the lights out there and all you do is go out there, and you're out there by yourself in center field," he told the achievement academy. "And, I just felt that it was such a beautiful game that I just wanted to play it forever, you know."

Collecting sex-crazed zombie cicadas on speed: Scientists track a bug-controlling super-sized fungus

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

LISLE, Illinois (AP) — With their bulging red eyes and their alien-like mating sound, periodical cicadas can seem scary and weird enough. But some of them really are sex-crazed zombies on speed, hijacked by a super-sized fungus.

West Virginia University mycology professor Matt Kasson, his 9-year-old son Oliver, and graduate student Angie Macias are tracking the nasty fungus, called *Massospora cicadina*. It is the only one on Earth that makes amphetamine — the drug called speed — in a critter when it takes over. And yes, the fungus takes

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control over the cicada, makes them hypersexual, looking to spread the parasite as a sexually transmitted disease.

"They're zombies, completely at the mercy of the fungus," said University of Connecticut cicada researcher John Cooley.

This particular fungus has the largest known genome of any fungus. It has about 1.5 billion base pairs, about 30 times longer than many of the more common fungi we know, Kasson said. And when these periodical cicadas live underground for 17 years (or 13 years in the U.S. South), the spores generally stay down there with them.

"This was a mycological oddity for a long time," Kasson said. "It's got the biggest genome. It produces wild compounds. It keeps the host active — all these quirks to it."

Kasson decided to ask people from around the country to send in infected cicadas this year. And despite an injured leg, Kasson, his son and Macias travelled from West Virginia to the Morton Arboretum outside Chicago, where others have reported the fungus that takes over a cicada's nether parts, dumping the genitalia and replacing it with a white, gummy yet flaky plug that's pretty noticeable. The spores then fall out like salt from a shaker.

Infected cicadas are supposed to be hard to find.

Ten seconds after she hops off the golf cart, Macias is in the trees, looking. She emerges victorious, hand in the air with a cicada, yelling "I got one."

"That was just lucky," Oliver whines.

"Luck, huh? Let's see you get one," Macias replies.

Ten seconds later at a neighboring bush, Oliver finds another. And just a bit after that a photographer finds a third.

Kasson and his small team collected 36 infected cicadas in his brief Chicago area jaunt with people sending him another 200 or so from all over. He's still waiting for an RNA analysis of the fungus.

Some cicada experts have estimated maybe one in 1,000 of the periodical cicadas are infected with this fungus, but it's not much more than a guess. Mount St. Joseph University's Gene Kritsky, a biologist who wrote the book on this year's unique dual emergence, said it might be skewed because the healthy cicadas stay higher up in the trees.

This year "the fungus is about how it always is," Cooley said in an email. "It's not super common."

There's debate among scientists if the fungus infects more cicadas deep in the soil coming out of the ground after 13 or 17 years or if it infects the newly hatched nymphs on the way underground for more than a decade.

This fungus isn't the type of parasite that kills its host, but instead it needs to keep it alive, Kasson said. Then the infected cicadas attempt to mate with others, spreading the spores to its mate/victim. The males even pretend in their hypersexualized state to be females to entice and infect other males, he said.

The cousin to this fungus which infects annual cicadas out west also makes a psychoactive compound in the cicadas but it is more akin to psychedelics like magic mushrooms, Kasson said. So sometimes people, even experts, mix up the amphetamine that the infected 17- and 13-year cicadas produce with the more trippy compounds of the annual bugs, he said.

Either way, don't try it at home. Even though cicadas themselves are edible, not so much the infected ones.

In the interest of science, Kasson tried one during this emergence, making sure they were from the inside of a female so more antiseptic.

"Man, it was so bitter," Kasson said, explaining that he immediately rinsed his mouth out. "It tasted like something you would consider poisonous."

Coming back from cancer, Brazil rugby sevens star Raquel Kochhann ready to tackle her third Olympics

By JOHN PYE AP Sports Writer

She heard her No. 10 being called, tapped hands with a teammate who was leaving the field, and ran into position for Brazil, a smile on her face.

She made a quick sign of the cross, rubbed her hands and held them up with fingers splayed to receive the ball. And then Raquel Kochhann nodded: Play on.

That also seems to be her life motto. A deep desire to chase her dreams has seen Kochhann overcome breast cancer, surgery, and months of follow-up treatment to return to the highest level of rugby sevens and have a shot at her third Olympics.

After more than 1½ years on the sidelines, initially with an injured knee and then for her cancer recovery, Kochhann reappeared for Brazil in January at the world sevens series event in Perth. She helped Brazil reach the quarterfinals in Los Angeles, played in Hong Kong and in the series finale in Madrid.

Now she's preparing for the Paris Games, where women's sevens kicks off July 28.

The most difficult person to convince she'd be ready in time for Paris was her doctor "because of the complexity of the case," Kochhann says.

"He always supported me, but he was apprehensive and careful," the 31-year-old Brazilian tells The Associated Press. "To this day, his heart is in his mouth whenever I take some kind of hit."

Heavy hits are a regular occurrence in the condensed, fast-paced version of rugby known as sevens (because of the number of players on each team).

Upper-body collisions are frequent when players are either carrying the ball or tackling, which can make doctors nervous.

Not Kochhann. She believes she's done the work in the gym and in her recovery to prepare her body for anything the sport can throw at her. She also received medical clearance from the team.

In a social media post in late 2023 announcing her return to play, Kochhann urged followers to "play every game like it's your last."

"This phrase sounds cliché, but we don't know what tomorrow will bring, what if we don't have another opportunity?" she posted. "Our fate is unpredictable. An ACL injury in May 2022 turned out to be a lengthy breast cancer treatment. A lot of learning and personal growth."

Rugby roots A dedicated soccer player as a young athlete with ambitions of wearing the famous Brazil jersey, Kochhann first tried rugby at the age of 19. She was instantly converted.

She debuted for Brazil in 2014, won a bronze medal at the Pan American Games the following year, and was there in 2016 in the host team when rugby sevens made its Olympic debut at Rio de Janeiro.

Her mother couldn't attend the Olympic matches because she was dealing with breast cancer herself, but Kochhann reveled in the support from her sister, and thousands of new fans. The Tokyo Olympics were an altogether different experience as spectators were banned because of COVID-19 restrictions.

But she was determined and good enough to earn another Olympic experience, even when, while rehabbing her knee injury, she underwent scans for a lump in her breast and discovered it was malignant.

"Cancer wasn't a shock, given my family's medical history and genetics — and it could have happened at any moment in my life," Kochhann said in a matter-of-fact interview for the world sevens series. "I went through a preventive bilateral mastectomy and moved to the oncology department. I had to stop my career and went through chemotherapy to prevent the further spread of cancer."

All the while, health experts were telling her to stay physically active.

"Even if the therapy would bring me down physically," she says, "I kept believing I could beat this ... and I did."

Whatever transpires between now and late July, Kochhann wants her inspiring comeback to be a message "that everything in life always has a good side and a bad side."

"Our recovery and how we live life will depend on which side we choose to look at. I could be sad, upset about the injury and then the cancer, but that would use a lot of energy, and I chose to focus that energy

on recovery. Always seeing an opportunity in every difficulty.”

One of a kindThe easiest person to convince she could return to rugby was Brazil coach Will Broderick “who, like me, was eager to be able to train me and see me back on the field,” Kochhann says.

Broderick, who has been coaching the Brazil women’s sevens team since just before the Tokyo Olympics, felt like he barely had the right to assess Kochhann’s comeback.

“Because it’s just so far above what you could imagine a human being be able to do,” Broderick says in a telephone interview with the AP. “We witnessed it firsthand — she trained hard through chemotherapy, through radiotherapy. She was at the training center every day.

“If she wasn’t training, she was at the training sessions, helping with the filming and coaching. I’ve never seen anything like it in my life.”

Broderick always thought his playmaker would return but acknowledged there’s always the lingering doubt.

“There’s so many things that could go wrong but she is probably one of the most incredible people I’ve ever met,” he says. “To be honest, it’s phenomenal. Incredible. Then she comes back to train and how can I tell her ... she needs to push harder, work. Who am I to say that?”

But Kochhann was willing to push harder. The tradeoff was Kochhann becoming an inspirational presence for other players.

“She’s matured all the way through and she doesn’t let the little things bother her too much anymore, like refereeing decisions or little errors,” Broderick says. “She’s grown in that sense and how she handles the little setbacks because I guess that her perspective is completely different.”

US soldier convicted of theft in Russia and sentenced to nearly 4 years in prison

MOSCOW (AP) — A court in Russia’s far eastern city of Vladivostok on Wednesday convicted a visiting American soldier of stealing and making threats of murder, and it sentenced him to three years and nine months in prison.

Staff Sgt. Gordon Black, 34, flew to the Pacific port city to see his girlfriend and was arrested last month after she accused him of stealing from her, according to U.S. officials and Russian authorities.

Russia’s state news agencies Tass and RIA Novosti reported that the judge in Pervomaisky District Court in Vladivostok also ordered Black to pay 10,000 rubles (\$115) in damages. Prosecutors had asked for a sentence of four years and eight months in prison.

Black’s case occurs amid tensions over Russia’s arrests of American journalists and other U.S. nationals as the fighting in Ukraine continues.

Russia has jailed a number of Americans, including corporate security executive Paul Whelan and Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich. The U.S. government has designated both men as wrongfully detained and has been trying to negotiate their release.

Others detained include Travis Leake, a musician who has been living in Russia for years and was arrested last year on drug-related charges; Marc Fogel, a teacher in Moscow who was sentenced to 14 years in prison, also on drug charges; and dual nationals Alsu Kurmasheva and Ksenia Khavana.

The U.S. State Department strongly advises American citizens not to go to Russia.

Black was on leave and in the process of returning to his home base at Fort Cavazos, Texas, from South Korea, where he had been stationed at Camp Humphreys with the Eighth Army.

Cynthia Smith, an Army spokesperson, said Black signed out for his move back home and, “instead of returning to the continental United States, Black flew from Incheon, Republic of Korea, through China to Vladivostok, Russia, for personal reasons.”

Under Pentagon policy, service members must get clearance for any international travel from a security manager or commander.

The U.S. Army said last month that Black hadn’t sought such travel clearance and it wasn’t authorized by the Defense Department. Given the hostilities in Ukraine and threats to the U.S. and its military, it is extremely unlikely he would have been granted approval.

Black's girlfriend, Alexandra Vashchuk, told reporters earlier this month that "it was a simple domestic dispute," during which Black "became aggressive and attacked" her.

"He then stole money from my wallet and I didn't give him permission to do it," Vashchuk said.

On Wednesday, she told Russian news outlet Gazeta.ru that she considers the sentence "quite humane" and described Black as "violent and unable to control himself."

U.S. officials have said that Black, who is married, met Vashchuk in South Korea.

According to U.S. officials, she had lived in South Korea, and last fall she and Black got into some type of domestic dispute or altercation. After that, she left South Korea. It isn't clear if she was forced to leave or what, if any, role South Korean authorities had in the matter.

A US aircraft carrier and its crew have fought Houthi attacks for months. How long can it last?

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ABOARD THE USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER IN THE RED SEA (AP) — The combat markings emblazoned on the F/A-18 fighter jet tell the story: 15 missiles and six drones, painted in black just below the cockpit windshield.

As the jet sits on the deck of the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier in the Red Sea, its markings illuminate the enemy targets that it's destroyed in recent months and underscore the intensity of the fight to protect commercial shipping from persistent missile and drone attacks by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen.

But they also hint at the fatigue setting in, as the carrier, its strike group and about 7,000 sailors close in on their ninth month waging the most intense running sea battle since World War II. That raises difficult questions about what comes next as U.S. military and defense leaders wrangle over how they will replicate the carrier's combat power if the ship returns home to Norfolk, Virginia.

Already, the carrier's deployment has been extended twice, and sailors post dark memes around the ship about only getting one short break during their steadily growing tour. Some worry they could be ordered to stay out even longer as the campaign drags on to protect global trade in the vital Red Sea corridor.

At the Pentagon, leaders are wrestling with what has become a thorny but familiar debate. Do they bow to Navy pressure to bring the Eisenhower and the other three warships in its strike group home or heed U.S. Central Command's plea to keep them there longer? And if they bring them home — what can replace them?

U.S. officials say that they're weighing all options and that a decision is expected in the coming weeks.

U.S. commanders in the Middle East have long argued that they need an aircraft carrier in the volatile region. They say that it's an effective deterrent to keep Iran in check and that the ship gives them critical and unique war-fighting capabilities against the Houthis, who say their attacks are aimed at bringing an end to the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

The massive ship is a flexible, floating flight line that can launch fighter jets on a moment's notice, without any of the limits that host nations in the Middle East can place on Air Force aircraft taking off from bases on their soil. And those carrier-based jets can get within striking distance of Houthi weapon systems quickly without crossing borders.

"What the carrier brings is an offensive platform that's mobile, agile and doesn't have any access, basing or overflight restrictions," said retired Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, who headed U.S. Central Command for three years, ending in 2022. "It's sovereign U.S. territory. You can do as you want with those airplanes on that carrier. So that gives you enormous flexibility when you consider response options across the region."

Rear Adm. Marc Miguez — who commands Carrier Strike Group Two, which includes the Eisenhower and supporting ships — agrees that the aircraft carrier is crucial to America's military.

"Every time that there's a crisis on the globe, what's the first thing the president asks? 'Where are the U.S. aircraft carriers?'" Miguez told The Associated Press during a visit to the Eisenhower and the USS Laboon, one of the guided-missile destroyers accompanying it.

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On any given day, Navy F/A-18s roar off the Eisenhower and take out Houthi missiles or drones preparing to launch. The U.S. warships have fired volleys of Tomahawk missiles into Yemen to destroy warehouses of weapons, communications facilities and other targets.

Pentagon leaders worry that without the Eisenhower, they will need to tap more Air Force fighter jets based in surrounding countries, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

But many Arab nations place flight or other restrictions on the types of offensive strikes the U.S. can do from their land because of regional sensitivities. Others worry about triggering another war between Saudi Arabia and Yemen or inflaming tensions with Iran.

U.S. military leaders say the U.S. can adapt and get forces where they need to be. But that can require longer fighter jet flights from distant bases, requiring refueling capabilities and presenting other hurdles.

Extending the Eisenhower's deployment again is an option — but for many, it's the least desirable.

Navy leaders worry about the sailors, who actually have been able to see incoming Houthi-launched missiles seconds before they are destroyed by the ship's defensive strikes. And officials in the Pentagon are talking about how to care for the sailors when they return home, including counseling and treatment for possible post-traumatic stress.

Miguez also notes the strain on the ships themselves.

"We are constantly reminding the Department of Defense that we're going to need to take a respite and a break, to try and get back to maintenance," he said. "These ships are floating around in seawater. They're steel, and they require a lot of maintenance. And when you run them past red lines, when you run them past scheduled maintenance activities, you have to pay those off somewhere down the line."

A third option would be sending other ships — perhaps another carrier — to take the Eisenhower's place. But the massive ships are relatively rare. The U.S. operates 11, which is about 40% of the total number worldwide. Other countries have only one or two.

The U.S. could turn to France or the United Kingdom, which each have one, for at least a temporary stint in the Red Sea. U.S. officials have insisted that protecting the sea lanes is a multinational effort and having an ally take a turn could reinforce that message. It could give the U.S. enough breathing room to get another American carrier there, perhaps late this year.

Of the 11 U.S. carriers, four are deployed, three are in training and preparing to deploy, and four are in routine maintenance and repair, which usually lasts about a year or more.

The USS John C. Stennis, however, is undergoing its major, mid-life overhaul, which can last about four years and calls for the replacement and upgrading of the ship's nuclear propulsion system and other critical radar, communications, electronics and combat components. A carrier's lifespan is about 50 years.

One carrier is always based in Japan and does regional patrols and exercises, and another is generally deployed to the Asia-Pacific. That focus on Asia reflects the long-stated belief that China is America's top strategic challenge, and 60% of U.S. naval forces are based in the Pacific. The rest are Atlantic-based.

A third carrier is off South America's west coast, heading toward Japan, leaving the Eisenhower as the only one in the Middle East or Europe.

Lacking a carrier, another option would be to deploy the USS Wasp, a large amphibious assault ship now in Europe that carries F-35 fighter jets. Those jets do short takeoffs and vertical landings, so they can do strike missions off smaller ships.

Today in History: June 20, Queen Victoria takes the throne

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, June 20, the 172nd day of 2024. There are 194 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 20, 1837, Queen Victoria acceded to the British throne following the death of her uncle, King William IV.

On this date:

In 1782, Congress approved the Great Seal of the United States, featuring the emblem of the bald eagle.

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In 1863, West Virginia became the 35th state.

In 1893, a jury in New Bedford, Massachusetts, found Lizzie Borden not guilty of the ax murders of her father and stepmother.

In 1943, race-related rioting erupted in Detroit; federal troops were sent in two days later to quell the violence that resulted in more than 30 deaths.

In 1944, during World War II, Japanese naval forces retreated in the Battle of the Philippine Sea after suffering heavy losses to the victorious American fleet.

In 1947, Gangster Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel was shot dead at the Beverly Hills, California, home of his girlfriend, Virginia Hill, apparently at the order of mob associates.

In 1967, boxer Muhammad Ali was convicted in Houston of violating Selective Service laws by refusing to be drafted and was sentenced to five years in prison. (Ali's conviction was ultimately overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court).

In 1972, three days after the arrest of the Watergate burglars, President Richard Nixon met at the White House with his chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman; the secretly made tape recording of this meeting ended up with the notorious 18 1/2-minute gap.

In 1974, the film noir "Chinatown," starring Jack Nicholson and Faye Dunaway, was released by Paramount Pictures.

In 1990, South African Black nationalist Nelson Mandela and his wife, Winnie, arrived in New York City for a ticker-tape parade in their honor as they began an eight-city U.S. tour.

In 2014, the Obama administration granted an array of new benefits to same-sex couples, including those living in states where gay marriage was against the law; the new measures ranged from Social Security and veterans benefits to work leave for caring for sick spouses.

In 2016, a divided U.S. Supreme Court bolstered police powers, ruling 5-3 that evidence of a crime in some cases may be used against a defendant even if the police did something wrong or illegal in obtaining it.

In 2022, the nation's youngest children got their first chance at vaccines for COVID-19. Roughly 18 million kids under 5 became eligible, and shots began at a few locations.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Bonnie Bartlett is 95. Actor James Tolkan is 93. Director Stephen Frears is 83. Singer-songwriter Brian Wilson is 82. Actor John McCook is 81. Singer Anne Murray is 79. TV personality Bob Vila is 78. Actor Candy Clark is 77. Producer Tina Sinatra is 76. R&B singer Lionel Richie is 75. Actor John Goodman is 72. Rock musician Michael Anthony is 70. Rock musician John Taylor is 64. Rock musician Mark degli Antoni (de-gee-an-toh-nee) is 62. Christian rock musician Jerome Fontamillas (Switchfoot) is 57. Actor Nicole Kidman is 57. Country/bluegrass singer-musician Dan Tyminski is 57. Movie director Robert Rodriguez is 56. Actor Peter Paige is 55. Actor Josh Lucas is 53. Rock musician Jeordie White (AKA Twiggy Ramirez) is 53. Rock singer Chino Moreno (Deftones) is 51. Country-folk singer-songwriter Amos Lee is 47. Country singer Chuck Wicks is 45. Actor Tika Sumpter is 44. Actor-singer Alisan Porter is 43. U.S. Olympic beach volleyball gold medalist April Ross is 42. Christian rock musician Chris Dudley (Underoath) is 41. Rock singer Grace Potter (Grace Potter & the Nocturnals) is 41. Actor Mark Saul is 38. Actor Dreama Walker is 38. Actor Chris Mintz-Plasse (plahs) is 35. Actor Maria Lark is 27.