

# Groton Daily Independent

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**Rehms Bridal Shower**  
 Open House Bridal Shower for Megan Rehms bride to be of Tanner Waage. Sunday, May 31st from 12:30 – 2:30 pm at the home of Brad and Brenda Waage – 201 E 9th Ave. Groton, SD 57445.  
 Due to COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines, this is a Come ~ Stop ~ Drop –n- Go shower. Drop a Card or gift pick up a cupcake to go! The couple is registered at AMAZON.com under wedding registry.

**YOU'RE INVITED TO A DRIVE BY BRIDAL SHOWER HONORING Taylor Hanson**  
 BRIDE TO BE OF BRANDON STANLEY  
 MAY 27 | 5-7PM | HOME OF SUE STANLEY  
 403 E 6TH AVE - GROTON  
 SOCIAL DISTANCING WILL BE PRESERVED. PLEASE DRIVE BY TO SHOWER TAYLOR WITH WELL WISHES OR A GIFT.

**Are You Looking For Relief From Back or Neck Pain?**

**Proven Relief**

Lee Goetz, PT, OCS

Eric Johnson, PTA

Taylor Spellman, PT, DPT

Macey Severson, PT, DPT

Erica Pfaff, PT, DPT

Orthopedic Physical Therapy Center, LTD orthoptc.com • 725-9900 • 6 N Roosevelt St., Aberdeen

**Try Physical Therapy First!**

- Back and Neck Care
- Warm Water Therapy Pool
- Post Operative Rehab
- Sports Rehabilitation

## OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans. © 2019 Groton Daily Independent

## GROTON AMERICAN LEGION

# Memorial Day Program

The Groton American Legion Post #39 will be performing Military Rites on the morning of Memorial Day May 25th, 2020 in accordance to the following schedule.

Huffton .....	7:30
James .....	8:15
Verdon .....	8:45
Bates/Scotland .....	9:15
Ferney .....	10:00
Andover (Catholic) .....	11:00
Groton .....	12:00

**Guest speaker  
at Groton: Lyle G.  
Bien, Vice Admiral,  
United States Navy  
(Ret)**



No meal, no program at Andover  
No lunch at Groton

There will be a program at the Groton cemetery with guest speaker Lyle G. Bien, Vice Admiral, United States Navy (Ret)

Admiral Bien has amassed 5,500 flight hours, 1300 carrier landings, 225 combat missions and is a former instructor at the Navy Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN)

**The program will be livestreamed at [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM)**

We welcome all to sit outside and enjoy the program while following the social distancing guidelines. We encourage all to wear masks.

We will also be broadcasting the program on FM 89.3 so the public will be able to attend without leaving their automobile.

### Helmer graveside service

Richard E. Helmer: December 16, 1926 – March 26, 2020

Private family graveside services will be held for Richard E. Helmer, on Saturday, May 23, 1:30 p.m. at the Andover Cemetery. Pastor Gary Compton, First Baptist Church of Aberdeen will officiate.

## Buy it Where you Burn it - Emerald Ash Borer Quarantine Area Expanded

PIERRE, S. D. – South Dakota State Parks are reminding campers that firewood originating from anywhere in the newly-expanded Emerald Ash Borer quarantine area is prohibited in all South Dakota state parks.

The recent discovery of a new infestation of Emerald Ash Borer in southeast South Dakota has prompted the South Dakota Department of Agriculture to expand the quarantine area, which now includes all of Minnehaha, Lincoln and Turner counties.

“Since it was implemented last year, visitors have been great about following the quarantine,” said State Parks Director Scott Simpson. “They really understand the devastating impact an emerald ash borer infestation would have on our state parks.”

South Dakota state parks located within the quarantine area will allow outside wood if it has a label affixed to certify it as emerald ash borer treated and safe to move. At all other state park areas, outside wood is allowed as long as it has never been within the quarantine area or if it has the certification label.

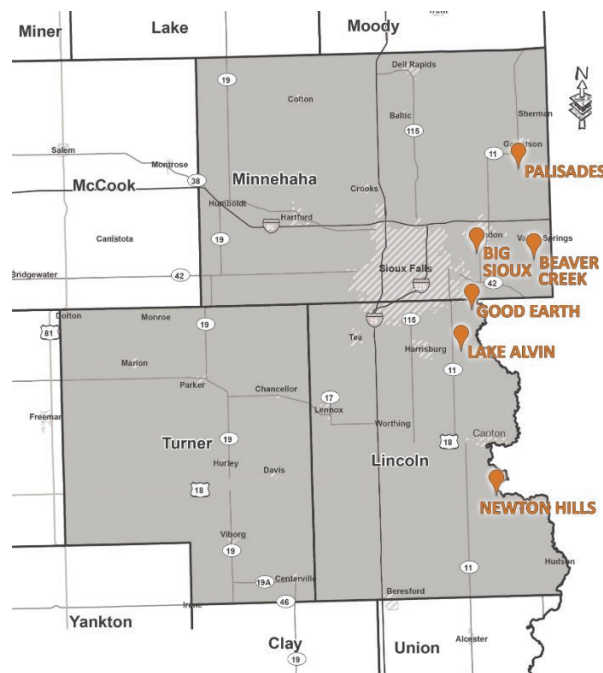
At all parks, campers can burn wood that has been purchased from the park itself. An out-of-state firewood ban is also in effect, which was put into place when neighboring states reported infestations of the invasive insect.

Over the past decade, knowing an infestation was imminent, Simpson said parks have been diversifying woodlands and reducing reliance on ash trees.

“Every year we can put off an emerald ash borer infestation in state parks is another year that our alternate species trees can grow larger and fill in the gaps,” he said.

The South Dakota Department of Agriculture first confirmed an infestation of Emerald Ash Borer in northern Sioux Falls in May 2019. This is the first expansion of the quarantine area. Emerald Ash Borer is an invasive insect that has killed tens of millions of ash trees in at least 32 states.

For more information about the quarantine and the Emerald Ash Borer, visit: [emeraldashborerinsouthdakota.sd.gov](http://emeraldashborerinsouthdakota.sd.gov).



**Map of Emerald Ash Borer  
Quarantine Area**

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## Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

The numbers are holding steady across the board; I would like to see them moving downward again, but for today, I'll be grateful there are no spikes.

We're at 1,558,800 cases in the US. New case numbers steady. NY leads with 359,235 cases, holding steady. NJ has 150,399 cases, also holding steady. Remaining top-10 states are as follows: IL – 100,713, MA – 88,970, CA – 86,120, PA – 68,151, MI – 52,988, TX – 52,157, FL – 47,463, and MD – 42,442. These ten states account for 67% of US cases. 4 more states have over 30,000 cases, 5 more states have over 20,000 cases, 10 more have over 10,000, 9 more + DC over 5000, 7 more + PR and GU over 1000, 5 more over 100, and VI + MP under 100.

Here's the latest on movement in new case reports. Those with substantial numbers of cases which are not showing much change include IL, MD, CA, CT, MI, LA, FL, and VA. States where new case reports are increasing include TX, DE, NC, AR, MN, ND, AZ, and ME. States where new case reports are decreasing include NY, GA, NJ, IN, MA, CO, PA, and WA. We'll watch the states showing increases and hope those with decreases continue the decline.

There have been 93,383 deaths in the US. Today the number of new deaths is holding. NY has 28,540, NJ has 10,747, MA has 6066, MI has 5060, PA has 4794, IL has 4547, CT has 3529, and CA has 3413. Three of these states report fewer than 100 new deaths, 5 of them fewer than 200. There are 10 more states over 1000 deaths, 7 more over 500, 14 more + DC and PR over 100, and 11 + GU, VI, and MP under 100. Things are still looking all right.

I don't want anyone to get the idea I am anti-religion, but I am once again going to mention that this is not a good time to go to church. That is to say I don't think you should attend indoor services; those drive-up arrangements many churches are trying are brilliant, even if they're not quite the same as sitting next to fellow worshippers for a more up-close and personal experience.

Here's why I am discouraging indoor services: Two reports surfaced a day or two ago of churches which recently reopened for worship services while carefully observing recommended precautions and then, despite the precautions, had to quickly close again after people turned up with positive diagnostic tests. A Baptist congregation in GA opened services observing six-foot spacing between family groups, leaving doors open so no one would touch door knobs, and limiting attendance; only 25% of the membership attended. And still several families tested positive after attending, so they've closed again, which was a responsible choice. And a Catholic church in TX likewise opened, observing reduced numbers and distancing. The report is not clear on this part, but I believe some members tested positive, although they were without symptoms. It is clear that 2 priests tested positive and 1 died, also that 3 religious also tested positive. They also did the responsible thing and closed back up.

Here's the thing about traditional indoor church: When you go for a service, you are there a long time, generally an hour or more. You're sharing air with everyone else there, and many church buildings are not well ventilated. You're praying aloud, maybe very loudly, and possibly singing, both of which more efficiently transmit virus than just breathing. And church congregations tend to run older than the general population, so you have a lot of high-risk people. Church is just not a good idea at the moment.

I have a fascinating website for you. The Dornsife School of Public Health is working with the Big Cities Health coalition through its Urban health Collaborative to, as they say, "advance its commitment to research, training, and policy translation in urban health locally and globally." Not long after this coalition

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formed, the current pandemic began, so one of its first efforts was to construct a mathematical model to estimate the effects of stay-at-home orders in member cities. This work resulted in this cool web site. You may want to click and see whether your city is listed. If you contributed to the effort, this will be an opportunity to sit smugly back and bask in your own virtue; if you ignored and inhibited the effort, they succeeded in spite of you. Shame on you. Here's the link: <https://drexel.edu/uhc/about/News/2020/May/How%20Many%20Lives%20Have%20Stay-At-Home%20Orders%20Saved/>

Something new being tried in the NYC public transit system is disinfection using high-intensity ultraviolet (UV) lamps. This is a thing you do when no one's riding because UV light at that intensity is highly damaging to the genetic material of living organisms, which is of course, why it's so good at killing pathogens—and messing up people. Now that this system is shut down every night, there have been aggressive disinfection efforts applied to all of the vehicles each night; this is a trial of what is hoped to be a more cost-effective and efficient disinfection method which kills both surface and airborne viruses and bacteria. Preliminary testing does show the lamps kill SARS-CoV-2; use testing should show whether it effective as applied in real life.

As work proceeds on vaccines—and there are over 100 vaccine projects underway right now, one question that has stuck in the back of many minds is whether (a) the antibodies we develop against SARS-CoV-2 are going to be protective against future infection, and (b) if so, whether protective antibodies will result from vaccination. It is important to recognize that, while antibodies that develop during an infection generally are protective against future infection for as long as they persist, now and then there is an exception. And those exceptions can be real doozies: For example, in HIV infection, antibodies that develop are not generally, for some pretty complicated reasons, protective; this is why there is still not an effective vaccine for HIV on the market. And it's this sort of thing that makes the experts reluctant to declare that recovery from Covid-19 will confer immunity to future infection.

A couple of new reports, both peer-reviewed, are giving hopeful signals on this front. These come from Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston where vaccine specialists are conducting studies done with rhesus macaques. We will, of course, want to remember that macaques are not humans, but this is a frequently-used animal model for human immunologic studies because we have a lot in common with them. These studies deal with an experimental vaccine which uses a common cold virus to deliver coronavirus antigen into cells to stimulate the immune system, but the purpose of the study was not to evaluate the vaccine. It was to evaluate the nature and quality of the immune response to this antigen, so it's about learning what kind of response the animals have to this virus.

The first experiment involved 9 monkeys, which were infected with SARS-CoV-2. The virus quickly spread into their upper and lower respiratory tracts, all of them developed pneumonia, and all of them recovered within about a month. Then a week later, they were exposed to the virus again, and although tiny amounts of the virus were detected in the lungs of some monkeys, none of them got sick. This indicates their earlier immune response protected them from subsequent infection. Once again, monkeys are not people, there weren't very many monkeys involved, and the finding needs to be confirmed in people, but this is very promising. (These results would also seem to predicate against the possibility that people are becoming reinfected after recovery, something about which we've talked several times, most recently just last night.)

The other study involved 35 macaques, 25 vaccinated and 10 given a placebo. The vaccine used was a DNA vaccine prototype developed for the experiment. I want to emphasize that the purpose here was not to test the vaccine, but to discover whether it is reasonable to expect that vaccination will result in protective antibodies. The vaccine used the component of the viral genome that codes for the spike protein used by the virus to bind and invade cells. (We have talked at some length about these S proteins on a

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couple of earlier occasions if you want to go back and brush up.) All of the vaccinated monkeys developed antibodies at comparable levels to what was observed in the recovered monkeys in the first experiment. The monkeys, vaccinated and unvaccinated, were then infected with the virus. All 10 of the unvaccinated monkeys developed high levels of virus in their lungs; none of the vaccinated ones did, and in fact, there was no detectable virus at all in 8 of them. Even though the number of test subjects was small, it is noteworthy that every vaccinated monkey was protected; most vaccines fail to provoke a protective response in some percentage of individuals. We should note also that it is likely that, whatever vaccines end up in use against Covid-19, they will not be 100% effective; this was a very small test. Researchers also found a direct association between the level of antibodies found in the monkeys and their level of protection from infection.

Dr. Louis Picker, associate director of the Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute at Oregon Health and Science University, who was not associated with this research, said these two studies have "convinced me that this is an infection that will be controllable with vaccination." That is really good news. Let's hope further work confirms these findings.

That's it for the day. With the numbers hanging in there and some real signs of progress, it is a good day to feel optimistic, even though the road ahead is clearly still a long one. With a brighter outlook ahead, please don't forget that there are people in the here and now whose lives don't look so bright at the moment. Whether it's worry or economic stress or illness or loss, you don't have to look far to see examples of suffering. Do two things: (1) When considering your own actions, decide that there's no excuse for taking out your troubles on others, and resolve to be kind, even when you're suffering; and (2) when considering the actions of others, allow that maybe they're suffering and have a reason for being cranky; then be kind. I know you see clearly what I'm doing here, but I mean it. It costs you not one cent to give others a break, to extend yourself even in your own time of need, and to treat others with kindness. Someone has to go first; might as well be you. The only remedy I know for the ugliness around us is beauty. The kind of beauty we see in a pleasing arrangement of dead cells on the exterior of someone's head is fleeting and ultimately unimportant; there is only a handful of people in history who are remembered for their physical beauty, and we don't even have pictures of most of them. On the other hand, the kind of beauty we see in someone's character has impact and endures; it can change the world. Focus on that kind, OK? No matter the shape of your nose, you can be a beautiful person. Go do that.

Stay healthy. We'll talk again.

## **GFP Commission Changes East River Antlerless Deer Tags**

PIERRE, S.D. —In an effort to reduce mule deer doe harvest during the east river deer hunting season, the Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission passed an administrative action converting all "any antlerless deer" licenses to "antlerless whitetail deer" licenses. The action does not affect the total number of licenses available or licenses that allow the harvest of a buck.

While the harvest of mule deer is limited, there are isolated pockets of mule deer habitat that does exist in portions of eastern South Dakota. The GFP Commission and Department will continue discussions on the management of mule deer and consider additional modifications early next year for future hunting seasons.

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## Area COVID-19 Cases

	May 12	May 13	May 14	May 15	May 16	May 17	May 18
Minnesota	12,494	12,917	13,435	14,240	14,969	15,668	16,372
Nebraska	8,692	9,075	9,416	9,772	10,220	10,348	10,625
Montana	461	462	462	466	468	468	470
Colorado	20,157	20,475	20,838	21,232	21,633	21,938	22,202
Wyoming	513	523	529	541	559	566	577
North Dakota	1,571	1,647	1,712	1,761	1,848	1,900	1,931
South Dakota	3,663	3,732	3,792	3,887	3,959	3,987	4,027
United States	1,370,016	1,390,764	1,417,889	1,444,870	1,467,884	1,486,423	1,508,168
US Deaths	82,389	84,136	85,906	87,595	88,754	89,550	90,338

Minnesota	+695	+423	+518	+805	+729	+699	+704
Nebraska	+120	+383	+341	+356	+448	+128	+277
Montana	+2	+1	0	+4	+2	0	+2
Colorado	+278	+318	+363	+394	+401	+305	+264
Wyoming	+3	+10	+6	+12	+18	+7	+11
North Dakota	+53	+76	+65	+49	+87	+52	+31
South Dakota	+49	+69	+60	+95	+72	+28	+40
United States	+22,628	+20,748	+27,125	+26,981	+23,014	+18,539	+21,745
US Deaths	+1,992	+1,747	+1,770	+1,689	+1,159	+796	+788

	May 20	May 21
Minnesota	17,029	17,670
Nebraska	10,846	11,122
Montana	471	478
Colorado	22,482	22,797
Wyoming	583	596
North Dakota	1,994	2095
South Dakota	4,085	4177
United States	1,528,661	1,551,853
US Deaths	91,938	93,439

Minnesota	+657	+641
Nebraska	+221	+276
Montana	+1	+7
Colorado	+280	+315
Wyoming	+6	+13
North Dakota	+63	+101
South Dakota	+58	+92
United States	+20,493	+23,192
US Deaths	+600	+1,501

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## May 20th COVID-19 UPDATE

Beadle County spiked with 25 more cases in the last 24 hours. Minnehaha County had 17 more cases, Pennington 11, Brown and Union counties each had 6, Aurora has spiked with 5 more cases, and Lincoln and Oglala Lakota each had 4.

North Dakota recorded 4 more deaths - none in South Dakota. That brings the death toll to 49 in North Dakota and 46 in South Dakota.

72 percent of South Dakota's have recovered compared to 62 percent in North Dakota.

**Brown County:** Percent Recovered: 55%

Active Cases: -2 (94)

Recovered: +8 (117) (DemKota: +4 (84) Total Positive: +6 (211) (DemKota: +4 (128)

Ever Hospitalized: 0 (10) Deaths: 0

Negative Tests: +24 (1036)

**South Dakota:** Percent Recovered: 72%

Positive: +92 (4,177 total) (34 more than yesterday)

Negative: +588 (26,212 total)

Hospitalized: +6 (333 total) - 81 currently hospitalized (4 more than yesterday)

Deaths: 0 (46 total) Recovered: +109 (3023 total)

Active Cases: 1108 (17 less than yesterday)

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Bennett 21, Brule +3 (100), Butte +4 (103), Campbell +1 (20), Custer 75, Dewey +22 (166), Edmunds +1 (45), Gregory 50, Haakon 20, Hanson +2 (48), Harding 3, Jackson 19, Jones 7, Kingsburg +4 (105), Mellette +1 (39), Perkins 14, Potter +2 (50), unassigned +88 (1733).

Aurora: +5 positive (2 of 8 recovered)

Beadle: +25 positive (19 of 68 recovered)

Brown: +6 positive, +8 recovered (117 of 211 recovered)

Buffalo: +2 recovered (1 of 5 recovered)

Clark: +1 recovered (2 of 4 recovered)

Clay: +1 recovered (9 of 15 recovered)

Corson: +1 recovered (2 of 4 recovered)

Fall River: +1 positive (2 of 4 recovered)

Jerauld: +3 positive, (5 of 10 recovered)

Lincoln: +4 positive, +3 recovered (167 of 209 recovered)

Lyman: +3 positive (3 of 6 recovered)

Minnehaha: +17 positive, ++88 recovered (2434 of 3182 recovered) {Smithfield: Employees: 841 of 853 recovered. Close-Contacts: 245 of 245 recovered}

Oglala Lakota: +4 positive (1 of 14 recovered)

Pennington: +11 positive, +4 positive (19 of 85 recovered)

Sanborn: +1 positive (3 of 7 recovered)

Todd: +1 recovered (7 of 17 recovered)

Turner: +1 positive (17 of 22 recovered)

Union: +6 positive, +2 recovered (46 of 68 recovered)

Yankton: +2 positive (26 of 44 recovered)

Fully recovered from positive cases: Bon Homme, Brookings, Deuel, Douglas, Faulk, Hand, Hutchinson, Hyde, Lawrence, McPherson, Miner, Spink, Sully, Walworth.

The NDDoH & private labs report 2,105 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 102 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 2,095. NDDoH reports four new deaths.

State & private labs have reported 72,003 total completed tests.

1,302 ND patients are recovered. One case reported on Tuesday in Cass County was reassigned out of state.



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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Cases
Aurora	8	2	60
Beadle	68	19	267
Bennett	0	0	21
Bon Homme	4	4	150
Brookings	14	14	518
Brown	211	117	1036
Brule	0	0	100
Buffalo	5	1	34
Butte	0	0	103
Campbell	0	0	20
Charles Mix	10	5	159
Clark	4	2	79
Clay	15	9	247
Codington	17	15	674
Corson	4	2	35
Custer	0	0	75
Davison	9	7	441
Day	11	9	98
Deuel	1	1	103
Dewey	0	0	166
Douglas	1	1	49
Edmunds	0	0	45
Fall River	4	2	98
Faulk	1	1	33
Grant	9	3	94
Gregory	0	0	50
Haakon	0	0	20
Hamlin	3	2	106
Hand	1	1	37
Hanson	0	0	48
Harding	0	0	3
Hughes	17	13	361
Hutchinson	3	3	138

Hyde	1	1	25
Jackson	0	0	19
Jerauld	10	5	46
Jones	0	0	7
Kingsbury	0	0	105
Lake	5	4	195
Lawrence	9	9	286
Lincoln	209	167	2082
Lyman	9	3	106
Marshall	3	1	74
McCook	5	3	156
McPherson	1	1	32
Meade	5	3	387
Mellette	0	0	39
Miner	1	1	30
Minnehaha	3182	2434	11438
Moody	18	10	150
Oglala Lakota	14	1	78
Pennington	85	19	1456
Perkins	0	0	14
Potter	0	0	50
Roberts	20	12	242
Sanborn	7	3	47
Spink	4	4	159
Stanley	9	7	52
Sully	1	1	16
Todd	17	7	255
Tripp	2	0	99
Turner	22	17	211
Union	68	46	371
Walworth	5	5	93
Yankton	44	26	675
Ziebach	1	0	26
Unassigned****	0	0	1723

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	392	0
20-29 years	767	0
30-39 years	957	1
40-49 years	756	1
50-59 years	705	7
60-69 years	385	7
70-79 years	104	5
80+ years	111	25

## SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	1916	24
Male	2261	22

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## Vold Auctioneers & Realty Lenling Inventory Liquidation Sale, Claremont, SD ONLINE ONLY SALE May 22-27, 2020



### Trailers, Vehicle, Lawn Mower, Scooter

Enclosed 8'x20' Roadmaster Specialty Trailer (Has lighting and outlets inside)  
18' Dressen Custom Trailer with ramps • John Deere 116 lawn mower • Honda Express Scooter  
1981 Mercury cougar XR-7 • C1500 truck for parts only



### Plumbing Supplies

Plastic sump pump hose • PVC pipe of many sizes and lengths • Urinal (NEW)  
3 toilets (2 new, 1 used) • 3 toilet seats • Pipe insulation • Flexible tubing  
Many various PVC connectors (too many to count) • Porcelain sink  
Misc. fittings and shut off valves • 3 hydrants (1 new, 2 used) • Many faucets and drains  
Homeguard sump pump • Many brass fittings of various sizes • Hose clamps (too many to count)  
Ritchie waterer parts

### Electrical and Heating Supplies

Thermador wall heater (NEW) • Energy-Mate wood burner for boiler  
Various types and sizes of electrical wire (several partial roles and several new roles)  
Homemade wire unwinders • Approximately 30 to 40 breaker boxes (some used, some new)  
Glass insulators • Gear for climbing electrical poles • Fuses (too many to count)  
Outlets (too many to count) • Light switches (too many to count) • Electrical boxes (too many to count)  
• Light bulbs • Electric motors • Duct work and stove pipe (many pieces)

### Tools, Garage and Shop supplies

Milwaukee right angle drill • Black and Decker cordless drill • Black and Decker bench grinder  
5 ton hydraulic bottle jack • Makita grinder • 2 Milwaukee heavy duty rotary hammer drills  
Black and Decker electric drill • Watsco vacuum pump • Drill bits • 40 pc tap and die set  
Circular saw • Pipe threaders • Cable crimper • Acetylene tank and torch  
Rockwell Jawhorse (new) • Echo Chainsaw • 2 wooden saw horses • 8' wooden A frame ladder  
2 wheel dolly cart • Appliance cart • 2 wood storage bins • Red Devil Paint shaker  
Plastic tub • Wood carts with wheels • Small chain bind • Ball hitches  
Hard hats and welding mask • Portable air compressor • Metal storage bin  
Empty oil barrel with hand pump • Insulation blower with hose • Many yard tools  
Arrow wood burning stove • Metal shelving • Wood tool box • Many wood storage bins  
Several metal work benches with top half shelving

### Collectibles, Neon Beer Signs, Pepsi Cola Pop Machine

3 large wooden crates • Wood crate with dividers • 2 copper wash tubs  
Fuller-Warren wood burning stove • Vintage scale • 2 collectible hardware scales  
Singer sewing machine (treadle machine) • 4 neon beer signs • 7up light up sign  
Zima electric reflective display • Water filter crock • Window shade cutter and shades  
Many collectible tins • 2 wooden barrels • Vintage folding chairs  
Pepsi Cola Pop Machine for glass bottles • National Cash Register

### Boat, Outdoors and Sporting/Fishing

Slick Craft Boat and Shoreland'r trailer • 3 sets of cross country skis • Earthquake garden tiller  
Go cart (needs work, comes with many spare parts) • 3 bikes • Brinkman Propane Grill  
Coleman folding table • Tent (3 room, believe all poles and stakes are there)  
Coleman air mattress • Fishing reels • Fish cleaning board • Fishing net  
Several fishing rods and reels • Tackle boxes • Ice fishing poles • Minnow buckets

### Store Displays and Office Equipment

2 glass display cases • Several display/work benches • 2 office desks  
Several metal filing cabinets • Maytag dryer • Microwave • Hot dog cooker



Register and Bid  
at HiBid.com



**Auctioneer's Note:**  
Gary Lenling has passed away and Marian is selling the business inventory. Take advantage of this opportunity to stock up on plumbing and electrical supplies for your business, home, office, or farm!  
Call for viewing. Pick up dates are Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from 1-4 p.m. both days.

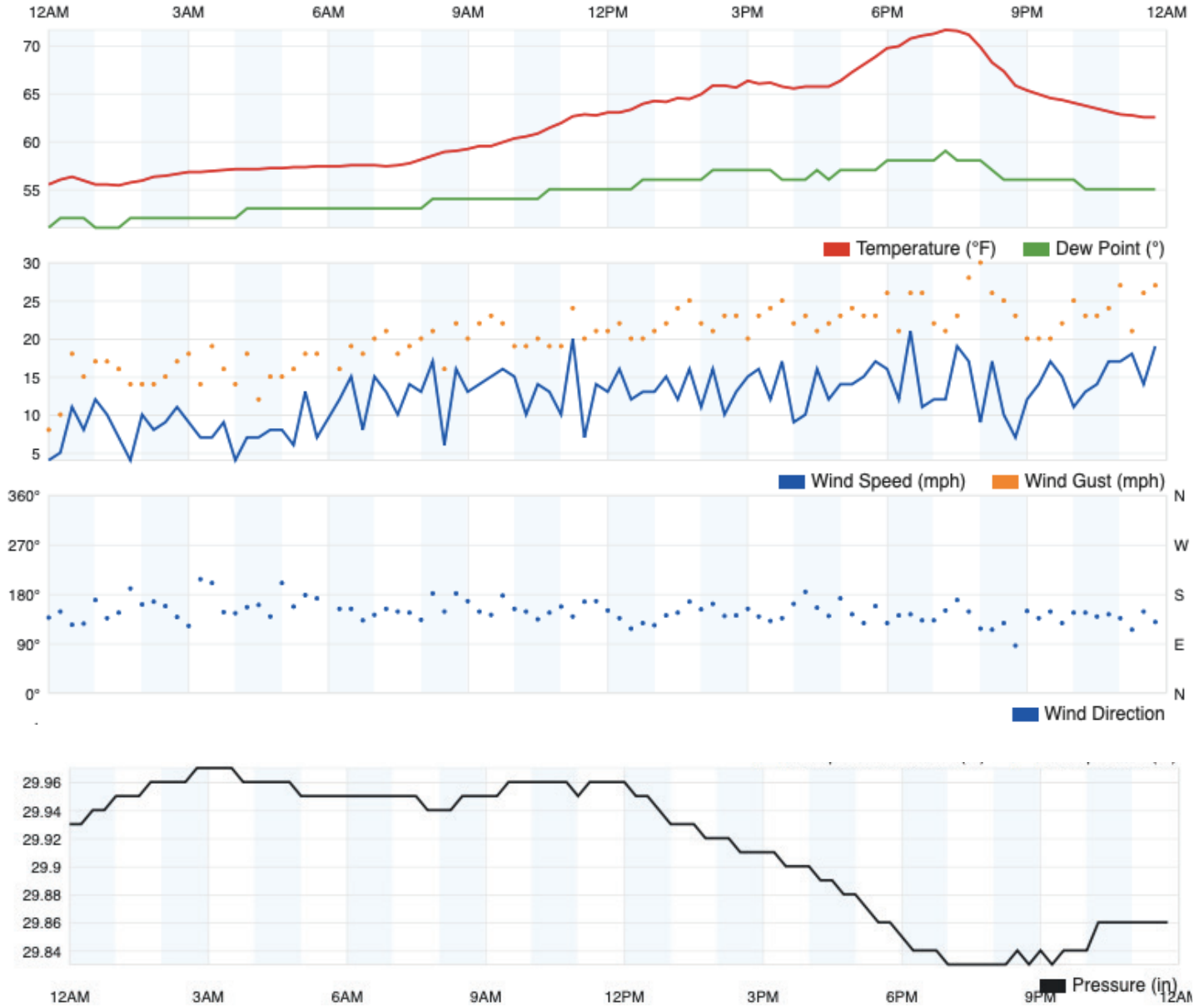
**TERMS:** Payment of cash, check, or CC must be made before removal of items. Nothing removed before settlement.  
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# Groton Daily Independent

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Cloudy and Breezy then Chance T-storms

High: 72 °F

Tonight



Chance T-storms

Low: 60 °F

Friday



Partly Sunny

High: 78 °F

Friday Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 58 °F

Saturday



Mostly Sunny then Chance T-storms

High: 81 °F

## Severe Weather Threat Saturday

### WHAT

Main Threat Will Be Severe Storms With Large Hail And Damaging Winds.

### WHERE

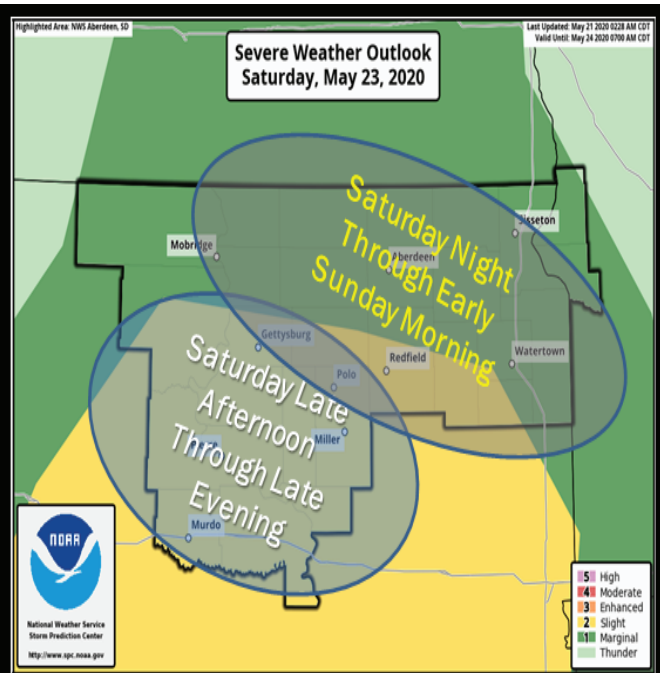
Primarily Across Central/South Central And Southeast South Dakota.

### WHEN

Saturday Late Afternoon Through Late Evening.

### ACTION

Monitor the weather forecast for further changes, and have a plan if severe weather strikes your area.



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 5/21/2020 4:33 AM Central

Still three days out, but the necessary ingredients to produce thunderstorms appear to be coming together for Saturday afternoon and night. For some locations, a few storms could grow to severe levels with large hail and damaging winds being the primary concerns at this time. Until then, there could be a few disorganized light showers or thunderstorms around today through Friday. Coverage of precipitation, if any showers or storms develop, would be rather limited. Temperatures today and Friday are expected to be right around to perhaps a few degrees above normal.

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## Today in Weather History

May 21, 1977: Observers south of Clear Lake saw five tornadoes. One was five miles south of town moving northeast. Another was four miles south and one mile west of Clear Lake. Both destroyed trees and some small buildings. Three other tornadoes were sighted about two miles south of town. These touched down only momentarily with no damage occurring.

Two tornadoes were seen in southern Codrington County. One was seen at Grover, and the other was five miles south of Watertown. No damage was reported.

A tornado was on the ground in the vicinity of Revillo. A few barns and some outbuilding were damaged.

May 21, 1992: A severe thunderstorm moved over Northwestern Edmunds County causing high winds and penny size hail. In Bowdle, there was considerable wind damage. Tree limbs more than five inches in diameter were broken off and fell on a car. Other tree branches went through the roof of a home. Two pickup trucks were rolled on their side. Three miles ENE of Bowdle a garage was moved 20 feet off its foundation and was stopped by a large tractor.

1860 - A swarm of tornadoes occurred in the Ohio Valley. Tornadoes struck the cities of Louisville, KY, Cincinnati, OH, Chillicothe, OH, and Marietta, OH, causing a million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1881: Clara Barton and a circle of close friends found the American Red Cross. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the History Channel.

1895 - The temperature at Norwalk, OH, dipped to 19 degrees to set a state record for the month of May. (The Weather Channel)

1896 - The mercury soared to 124 degrees at Salton, CA, to establish a U.S. record for May. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1949: A violent tornado crossed the Mississippi River from the St. Louis area into Wood River, then to Roxanna. This tornado damaged or destroyed 300 homes in these two towns, killing five people. Four people died in a destroyed restaurant in Palestine, Illinois; one body was recovered from a tree. A tornado causing estimated F4 damage killed five people and injured 55 in St. Louis and St. Charles counties in Missouri and Madison County in Illinois. This tornado was part of an outbreak that produced four different tornadoes and was responsible for five deaths and 57 injuries.

1980 - The temperature at Williston ND reached 102 degrees to set a record for May, and the next day the mercury hit 106 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Severe thunderstorms, developing along a sharp cold front crossing the central U.S., produced 60 mph winds and golf ball size hail at Sedalia, MO, and drenched Hagerstown, IN, with six inches of rain in one hour. Temperatures soared into the 90s ahead of the cold front. Paducah, KY, hit 94 degrees for the second day in a row. Light snow blanketed Montana, with three inches reported at Butte. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms swept across southern Louisiana during the morning hours spawning six tornadoes, and producing wind gusts to 88 mph at Jennings. Thunderstorms also produced five inches of rain in two hours at Lake Charles, causing local flooding. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms moving southeastward across the Central Plains Region into Oklahoma and Arkansas produced severe weather through the day and night. Thunderstorms spawned just four tornadoes, but there were 243 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Baseball size hail was reported at Augusta, KS, and thunderstorm winds gusted to 98 mph at Johnson, KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather across the southeastern U.S. for the second day in a row. Severe thunderstorms spawned five tornadoes, including one which injured a person at Richmond KY. There were eighty-seven reports of large hail or damaging winds, with hail three inches in diameter reported at Austin TX. Thunderstorms produced up to five inches of rain in Macon County GA, and heavy rains left nearly eight feet of water over roads near Stepstone KY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

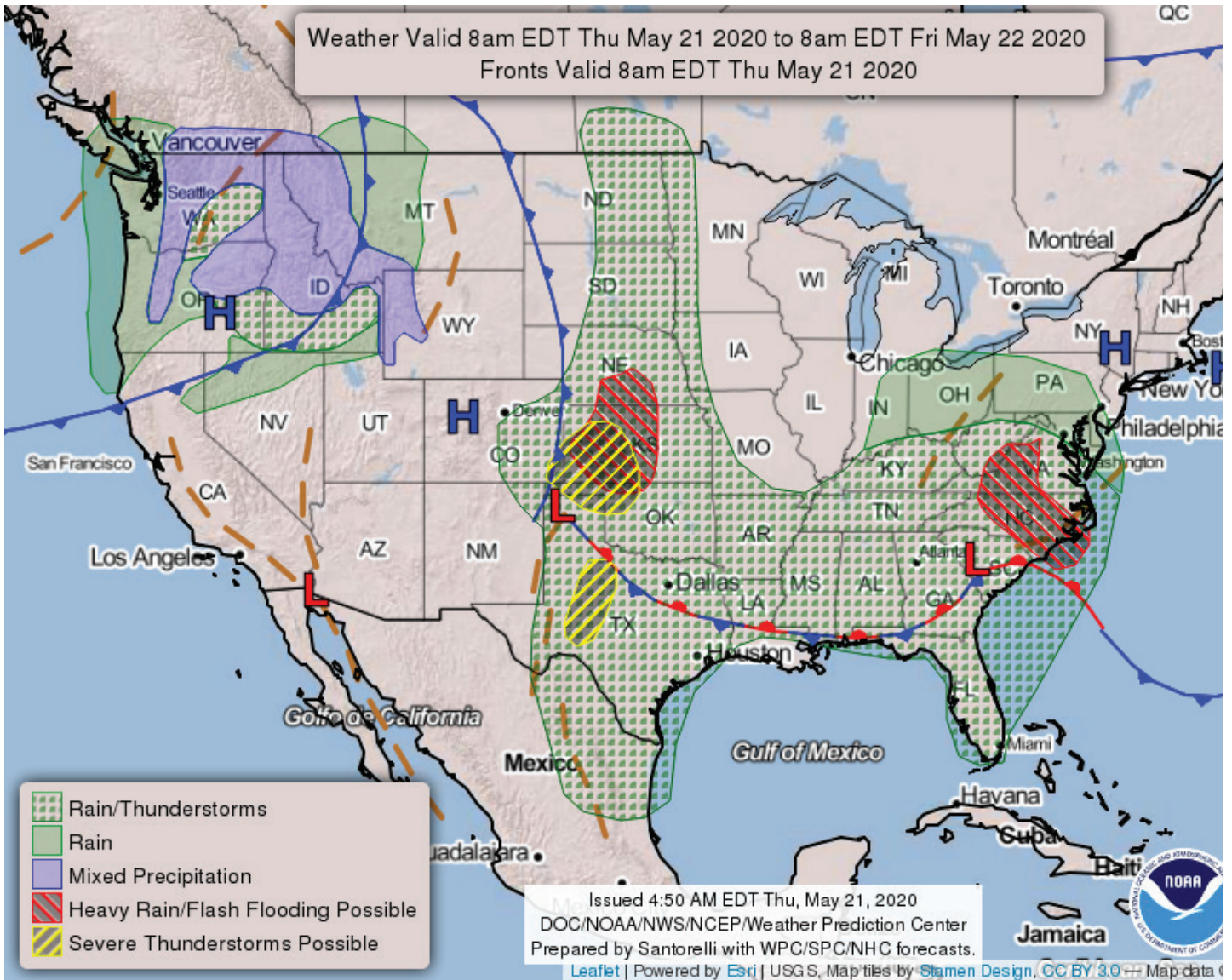
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 72 °F at 7:19 PM**  
**Low Temp: 55 °F at 1:20 AM**  
**Wind: 30 mph at 7:54 PM**  
**Precip: .00**

**Record High: 94° in 1925**  
**Record Low: 25° in 1895**  
**Average High: 70°F**  
**Average Low: 46°F**  
**Average Precip in May.: 2.06**  
**Precip to date in May.: 2.46**  
**Average Precip to date: 6.09**  
**Precip Year to Date: 4.36**  
**Sunset Tonight: 9:05 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:56 a.m.**



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## WHO ARE YOU FOLLOWING?

It was the first time that Wayne and his Dad rode their bikes through the neighborhood. Wayne was excited as they rode down one street and then another, turned left, turned right, and finally arrived at home. Taking off his helmet, Wayne looked up at a smiling father and said, "Thanks, Dad, if it weren't for you, I wouldn't have known where to go and I'd be lost by now."

The Psalmist expressed the same idea and trust when he said to the Lord, "Who have I but you?"

But not all of us have that much faith in the Lord. John reports a story about Jesus and His disciples. They were having some problems with His teachings and Jesus said, "This is very hard to understand." As a result, we read that "many of His disciples turned away and deserted Him."

Have you ever wondered why those disciples turned away from Jesus? The Bible does not give any specific reason. No doubt, in my mind, they left Him then for the same reason people leave Him today: self-centered desires and an unwillingness to make Him the Lord of their life.

Many accept the Lord for what they think He will do for them - not what they can do for Him and with Him and through Him. Many have expectations that go in one direction only: From God to us and for us for anything we want, now and forever, Amen.

But this is not how God works. If we accept Him as Savior and follow Him as Lord, wherever He leads us, "All these things (that we need) will be added to us."

Prayer: Teach us, Lord, that You call us to Yourself for Your purpose, May we love You, honor You and bring glory to Your name. May You be first and foremost in our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: John 6:64-67 Then he said, "That is why I said that people can't come to me unless the Father gives them to me." At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you also going to leave?"

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## 2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
  - **CANCELLED** Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
  - **CANCELLED** Fireman's Fun Night (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
  - **POSTPONED** Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
  - **CANCELLED** Father/Daughter dance.
  - **CANCELLED** Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
  - **CANCELLED** Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
  - 06/05/2020 Athletic Fundraiser at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS
  - 06/19/2020 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 06/20/2020 Shriner's Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 06/22/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ladies Invitational
  - 06/26/2020 Groton Businesses Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
  - 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
  - **CANCELLED** State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
  - 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
  - 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
  - 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
  - 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
  - 10/31/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
  - 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
  - 11/14/2020 Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
  - 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
  - 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
  - 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
  - 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates
- 
- Bingo every Wednesday 6:30pm at the American Legion Post #39
  - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Meat, American Legion Post #39 7pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
  - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Pizza, Jungle Lanes 8pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
- 
- All dates are subject to change, check for updates here



## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) \_ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

17-18-19-33-35

(seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, thirty-three, thirty-five)

Estimated jackpot: \$75,000

Lotto America

10-13-22-35-41, Star Ball: 6, ASB: 2

(ten, thirteen, twenty-two, thirty-five, forty-one; Star Ball: six; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.65 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$298 million

Powerball

18-34-40-42-50, Powerball: 9, Power Play: 2

(eighteen, thirty-four, forty, forty-two, fifty; Powerball: nine; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$95 million

### Workers cheered as they enter South Dakota pork plant

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Employees at a Smithfield pork processing plant in South Dakota where a coronavirus outbreak infected over 800 people were greeted at work Wednesday with thank you signs, cheers and waves from about a dozen area residents.

“They’re putting their health at risk just like the hospital workers are to continue on with this work, so I hope they feel appreciated,” said Becky Olson, a Sioux Falls resident who held a sign outside Smithfield’s entrance.

The plant has instructed many workers to return to work this week as it looks to scale up operations by the end of the month. Masked employees streamed into the factory entrance as trucks carrying pigs rumbled past.

Smithfield employees have faced stigmatization and anxiety even after the plant temporarily shuttered. A sign on the door of a local bar asked the plant’s employees not to come inside, and one employee has had had panic attacks as she prepared to go back to work, said Nancy Reynoza, who runs a Latino advocacy organization called ¿Que Pasa? Sioux Falls.

Some community advocates said the thank-you parade, while appreciated, doesn’t provide meaningful help for the immigrant communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the outbreak at Smithfield.

The Smithfield plant, which produces roughly 5% of the nation’s pork supply, gave an early warning of how quickly the virus can spread in meatpacking plants that are key to the nation’s food supply. Two employees at the plant have died from COVID-19, along with more than 20 meat and poultry workers nationwide.

Dave Tesphay, an employee who was reporting to work on Wednesday, said that with the pandemic “it was really scary at first.”

Smithfield shut the plant down for three weeks and has installed plexiglass barriers between work stations to prevent infections from spreading. The company is also spreading employees at least 6 feet (1.8 meters) apart when possible.

Tesphay said the plant’s closure and safety measures gave him confidence to return. The people who showed up to cheer him on made him feel the community cared, he said.

The event was organized by a group of friends who wanted to give meatpacking workers, many who are

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immigrants, a show of support similar to what health care workers have received during the pandemic. Sioux Falls mayor Paul TenHaken also got behind the idea, saying he would show up to cheer during the day.

## Democrats back attempt to shut down North Dakota pipeline

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Three dozen congressional Democrats are backing an attempt by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to shut down an oil pipeline in North Dakota while the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducts an environmental review.

The group that includes Sens. Cory Booker, Kamala Harris and Elizabeth Warren filed a brief in federal court Wednesday asserting that allowing the Dakota Access pipeline to operate during the review would give federal agencies “bureaucratic momentum” and violate treaty rights and tribal sovereignty.

“The pipeline’s ultimate fate will be a political decision and these leaders understand that DAPL should have never been routed through tribal lands,” Earthjustice attorney Jan Hasselman, who represents the tribe, said of the 36 Democrats.

A Department of Justice spokesman declined to comment on behalf of the Army Corps.

A half-dozen briefs have been filed by states and groups in favor of keeping the pipeline running.

The pipeline was the subject of months of protests, sometimes violent, during its construction in late 2016 and early 2017 near the reservation that straddles the North Dakota-South Dakota border. It began carrying oil in June 2017.

U.S. District Judge James Boasberg said in April the pipeline remains “highly controversial” under federal environmental law and requires a more extensive review.

## South Dakota gov. takes tribe checkpoint flap to White House

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said Wednesday she is appealing to President Donald Trump’s administration in her standoff with two American Indian tribes over coronavirus checkpoints they set up on federal and state highways.

Noem said at her daily briefing that she has sent affidavits and video to the White House, the Department of Justice, the Interior Department and her state’s congressional delegation, asking for help resolving the dispute.

“This is not taking sides. This is simply upholding the law,” the Republican governor said.

The tribes set up the checkpoints last month to keep unnecessary visitors off the reservations.

Earlier this month, Noem threatened to sue the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe if they did not remove highway stops within 48 hours. She backed away from that plan last week, offering to negotiate on the issue if they would take them off of U.S. and state highways.

“I know there are questions out there about respecting (tribal) sovereignty,” Noem said Wednesday. But she contends the checkpoints cannot legally be on those highways.

Harold Frazier, the chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, told Noem in a letter last week that the tribe would consider her request to restrict checkpoints to tribal roads. But he made it clear to The Associated Press that he believes the tribe’s sovereignty allows it to operate checkpoints anywhere on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation, in northern South Dakota. He said the checkpoints are essential to protecting the health of the people on the reservation.

Remi Bald Eagle, a spokesman for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, said Wednesday he would seek Frazier’s reaction to Noem going to the White House in the dispute.

Oglala Sioux president Julian Bear Runner, whose tribe is in the southwest corner of the state, did not immediately respond to requests for comment Wednesday.

## South Dakota officials report 92 new coronavirus infections

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials reported 92 new cases of COVID-19 Wednesday, bringing the state's total to 4,177.

There were no new deaths to report, leaving the statewide toll at 46.

Minnehaha County, South Dakota's most populous county, continues to lead the state in infections, with 3,182 cases and 40 deaths. But Beadle County reported the largest day-to-day increase on Wednesday with 25 new confirmed cases. Health officials have warned the the actual number of infections is higher because many people may not display symptoms or have not sought testing for mild symptoms.

Nearly three-fourths of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the state have fully recovered, while 1,108 have active infections. There are currently 81 people hospitalized from the virus, according to the Department of Health.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

## Developer's document revealed old mine uncovered by sinkhole

BLACK HAWK, S.D. (AP) — A developer's document for a subdivision where a massive sinkhole has caused evacuations in Black Hawk says county planners were told about an old mine underneath the property before construction began.

The Rapid City Journal reports the Meade County Planning Board approved the Hideaway Hills development after being told part of it would be built over a mine and that soil boring may be needed to determine if dangerous cavities exist, according to a document packet from the developer.

The 2000 document was also addressed to county commissioners and planning staff.

Fifteen families have evacuated their homes after the large sinkhole opened April 27 and exposed the mine 25 to 30 feet below ground.

Meade County is applying for a federal grant that could pay families 75% of their home value before the sinkhole emerged. The other 25% would pay for the cost of demolishing the homes, capping off utilities and redeveloping the area as a green space.

Gov. Kristi Noem says she plans to host a conference call with displaced families.

"There's been a lot of questions to me and my office about what is going on there with the homes and the families that are affected by the mine that is underneath that neighborhood," Noem said. There's also questions about "what role the state has in the situation."

Noem did not say when that call would take place.

## Crow Creek tribal leaders sentenced in embezzlement scheme

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A former chairwoman of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe and a council member have been sentenced in a tribal embezzlement scheme involving four others.

Together the six stole about \$1 million in tribal money and assets from March 2014 through February 2019, U.S. Attorney Ron Parsons said Tuesday.

Former chairwoman Roxanne Sazue was sentenced to one month in prison, five months on home confinement and was ordered to pay \$43,300 in restitution.

Former council member Tina Grey Owl was sentenced to five months in prison and five months home confinement. Restitution will be ordered at a later date, but officials said she stole about \$192,000 from the tribe.

Both will serve two years of supervised release after their sentences.

Three other defendants were previously sentenced for their roles in the embezzlement scheme.

Roland Hawk Sr., former treasurer, was sentenced to 42 months of imprisonment and ordered to pay nearly \$326,000 in restitution.

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Former council member Francine Middletent was sentenced to 30 months in prison and ordered to pay nearly \$274,000 in restitution.

Jacqueline Pease, who worked in the tribe's finance officer, was sentenced to three years of probation and ordered to pay \$74,100 in restitution .

Brandon Sazue, the sixth defendant, will be sentenced on June 16.

The investigation was conducted by the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

## Death and destruction after cyclone hits India, Bangladesh

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Wide swathes of the coasts of India and Bangladesh were flooded and millions of people remained without power Thursday, after the most powerful cyclone to hit the region in more than decade left dozens dead and a trail of destruction.

In the Indian city of Kolkata, home to more than 14 million people, large portions of the metropolis and its suburbs were underwater, including the city's main airport. Roads were littered with uprooted trees and lamp posts and electricity and communication lines were down.

Cyclone Amphan also badly damaged many centuries-old buildings when it tore through the city on Wednesday.

"It feels like a dystopian Jurassic Park of sorts," said Shuli Ghosh, who runs a cafe in Kolkata. "The roofs of many homes have flown away and the streets are waterlogged."

When the storm made landfall on Wednesday it lashed coastal areas in both India and Bangladesh with heavy rain, a battering storm surge and sustained winds of 170 kilometers per hour (105 mph) and gusts up to 190 kph (118 mph). It devastated coastal villages in both countries, knocking down mud houses, ripping out electricity poles and uprooting trees.

In Bangladesh, television stations reported 13 deaths, while 72 deaths were reported in India's West Bengal state. Officials said two people were killed in India's Odisha state.

Hundreds of villages in Bangladesh were flooded by tidal surges and more than a million people were without electricity.

Officials in both countries said the full extent of the damage remained to be seen as communication lines to many places remained down.

India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, said authorities were working on the ground to ensure all possible assistance to the those affected.

"No stone will be left unturned in helping the affected," Modi tweeted on Thursday.

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic and social-distancing measures had made mass evacuations ahead of the storm difficult. Shelters were unable to run at full capacity in many places and some people were too scared of the risk of infection to mass there.

Likewise the pandemic will have an impact on relief efforts and the recovery. The damage caused by the storm is likely to have lasting repercussions for poor families already stretched to the limit by the economic impact of the pandemic.

In India's Odisha state, the cyclone destroyed crops of Betel, a leaf used as a wrapper for chewing areca nut or tobacco. In Bangladesh's southwestern district of Bagerhat, more than 500 fish farms were flooded.

Debashish Shyamal, who lives in a fishing village along the coast of West Bengal took shelter with his family in a government clinic. He said the wind blew open the windows and doors and for hours they sat huddled inside, drenched by the torrential rain.

On Thursday, he woke up to dangling electricity wires, waterlogged streets and an entirely uprooted forest next to his village.

"There is nothing left," he said.

## China kicks off key political event delayed by pandemic

BEIJING (AP) — China began its most important political event of the year on Thursday after a two-month delay because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The opening of the annual session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference is a further sign of what the government says is its victory over the outbreak that originated in the central city of Wuhan late last year.

Conference members would "tell the world about how China, as a responsible major country, has taken firm action and contributed to international cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 epidemic," Chairman Wang Yang said in his report to more than 2,000 delegates in attendance. Wang's comments were included in Chinese and English-language transcripts distributed to reporters, although he skipped over them in his delivery, apparently to save time.

Rank-and-file members gathered in the vast auditorium inside the Great Hall of the People in the heart of Beijing wore masks. Other top officials, including Wang and president and leader of the ruling Communist Party, Xi Jinping, did not.

The session will be followed Friday by the opening of the National People's Congress, the ceremonial parliament. Premier Li Keqiang is to deliver a keynote speech outlining economic and social goals for the year.

It remains unclear whether Li will issue the usual gross domestic product growth target for the world's second-largest economy. Given the economic devastation caused by the pandemic, the targeted GDP will likely be considerably lower than last year's 6.0% to 6.5%.

Tens of millions of Chinese have been thrown out of work and it's unclear how many jobs will return after the crisis passes. Not only have domestic production and demand been hammered, but China's key export markets such as the United States and Europe have also suffered massive job losses and drops in consumption.

This year's meeting of the two bodies is being shortened to one week from the usual two as part of virus-control measures. Media access has also been largely reduced and only a limited number of reporters, diplomats and observers were permitted into the meeting hall.

Backed by massive state propaganda support, Xi has received plaudits at home for having contained the virus, even while the U.S. and others question China's handling of the initial outbreak.

The Chinese public is also largely seen as backing Xi in his confrontational approach to foreign policy challenges, including criticisms from the U.S., Australia and others.

Abroad, however, that policy has further bolstered concerns about China's intentions, and the Trump administration has increasingly pressed China over trade, technology and other issues. That may ultimately add to Xi's difficulties in reviving economic growth and jobs at a time when global markets are partly shut and skepticism toward China runs high.

## European plans to use apps in virus tracking face setbacks

By **DANICA KIRKA, VANESSA GERA and ELAINE KURTENBACH** Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Doubts were growing on Thursday over whether ambitious plans by European governments to use contact-tracing apps to fight the spread of the coronavirus will be able to be implemented with any real effectiveness soon.

In contrast, there appeared to be some movement forward in the sprint to find a vaccine against COVID-19, bolstered by a \$1 billion investment from the U.S. vaccine agency.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson pledged Wednesday to have a "test, track and trace" program for COVID-19 in place by June 1 as part of a strategy to persuade the country that it's safe to move on to the next stage of easing the lockdown and restarting the economy.

But the government also appeared to backtrack on an earlier pledge to make a smart phone app a pillar of that program.

Security minister James Brokenshire told the BBC on Thursday that he remains "confident" that the tracing system will be in place by June 1, but acknowledged that an app intended to help track the virus was

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not ready. He suggested "technical issues" were the reason for its failure to be introduced as planned by mid-May.

Experts say that being able to quickly identify people exposed to the virus can help stop the spread of the contagious respiratory illness, but efforts to put apps in place have come up across technical problems and fears of privacy intrusions.

The French government has also been forced to delay deployment of its planned contact-tracing app. Initially expected last week as the country started lifting confinement measures, it won't be ready before next month due to technical issues and concerns over privacy.

Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte said Thursday that the country's contact-tracing app would begin tests "in the coming days." But he made no mention of whether Italy had hired teams of contact-tracers to actually conduct interviews and get in touch with people who had been in contact with COVID-19 patients, as other European countries have done.

Spain's Economy Minister, Nadia Calviño, said Wednesday in parliament that Spain is making preparations to test a European Bluetooth-based app at the end of June in the Canary Islands.

But the adoption of the app has taken a back seat to the hiring of old-school human tracers in Spain. The government has said that the technology will be adopted only if it adds value to the tracing efforts that are being deployed by the country's 17 regional administrations.

Meanwhile, drug maker AstraZeneca said Thursday it has secured the first agreements for 400 million doses of a COVID-19 vaccine that is now being tested at the University of Oxford, one of the most advanced projects in the search for a vaccine.

The Anglo-Swedish company reported it had received more than \$1 billion from the U.S. Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority for the development, production and delivery of the vaccine, starting this fall.

AstraZeneca CEO Pascal Soriot said the company "will do everything in our power to make this vaccine quickly and widely available."

Around the world, the effort to get back to business is raising worries over risks of new infections.

In Italy, one of Europe's worst-hit countries, authorities warned that people are violating social distancing guidelines after a strict lockdown was lifted threatened the country's recovery.

"Now is not the time for parties, nightlife and getting together in crowds," Conte warned in parliament. "Be careful. Because exposing yourselves to contagion means exposing your loved ones to contagion."

Milan Mayor Giuseppe Sala said he was asking local police to increase patrols of night spots, be more severe in handing out fines and close any bars or restaurants in flagrant violation of the rules.

Cases in Milan, the seat of the hard-hit region of Lombardy, are rising as Italy continues to relax its long lockdown. Since Sunday, there have been 137 new cases in the city of 1.4 million residents.

From meatpacking plants in Colorado to garment factories in Bangladesh, workers are concerned over risks they face as they return to work after shutdowns. The safety questions apply even at the highest levels of the political spectrum.

In China, the country's communist leadership was taking extensive precautions to prevent any infections as it opens its National People's Congress on Friday and a parallel meeting of advisers on Thursday. The meetings in Beijing were delayed for nearly two months due to the pandemic.

An outbreak at the congress would be a potential public relations nightmare as President Xi Jinping showcases Beijing's apparent success in curbing the coronavirus that emerged in the central city of Wuhan late last year.

About 5 million people worldwide have been confirmed infected, and over 328,000 deaths have been recorded. That includes more than 93,000 in the U.S. and around 165,000 in Europe, according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University, based on government data. Experts believe the true toll is significantly higher.

## Detective, nurse, confidant: Virus tracers play many roles

By BRADY McCOMBS Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Health investigator Mackenzie Bray smiles and chuckles as she chats by phone with a retired Utah man who just tested positive for the coronavirus.

She's trying to keep the mood light because she needs to find out where he's been and who he's been around for the past seven days. She gently peppers him with questions, including where he and his wife stopped to buy flowers on a visit to a cemetery. She encourages him to go through his bank statement to see if it reminds him of any store visits he made.

Midway through the conversation, a possible break: His wife lets slip that they had family over for Mother's Day, including a grandchild who couldn't stop slobbering.

"Was there like a shared food platter or something like that?" Bray asks. "There was, OK, yep ... sharing food or sharing drinks, even just being on the same table, it can spread that way."

Suddenly, with a shared punch bowl, the web has widened, and Bray has dozens more people to track down.

She is among an army of health professionals around the world filling one of the most important roles in the effort to guard against a resurgence of the coronavirus. The practice of so-called contact tracing requires a hybrid job of interrogator, therapist and nurse as they try coax nervous people to be honest.

The goal: To create a road map of everywhere infected people have been and who they've been around.

While other countries have devised national approaches, a patchwork of efforts has emerged in the U.S. where states are left to create their own program.

Bray normally does this type of work to track contacts for people with sexually transmitted diseases. She is now one of 130 people at the Salt Lake County health department assigned to track coronavirus cases in the Salt Lake City area. The investigators, many of them nurses, each juggle 30 to 40 cases, and try to reach everyone the original person was within 6 feet (1.8 meters) of for 10 minutes or more. They stay in touch with some people throughout the 14-day incubation period, and calls can take 30 minutes or more as they meticulously go through a list of questions.

Some estimate as many as 300,000 contact tracers would be needed in the U.S. to adequately curtail the spread. While some states like Utah have reported having enough contact tracers, others are hundreds or even thousands of people short.

The contact tracers often find themselves in a tangled web of half-truths and facts that don't match up. Language and cultural barriers arise that require interpreters and taxing conversations that leave the investigators wondering if the person understands what they're trying to do.

They land on occasion into complicated family dynamics where people are reluctant to tell the truth.

Health investigator Maria DiCaro found out days into a case that a father was sleeping in his car because he and his wife were separating. The man had stopped returning DiCaro's calls, and that key information came from his child.

"I get people that lie all time," DiCaro said. "I try to get as much information from the beginning but it's just not always the case. And time is one of those things you can't take back when you are trying to prevent and you know do these contact tracing investigations."

Each call is an exercise in good cop, bad cop. She needs people to cooperate, but no one is legally required to answer the questions. Usually kindness works better than strong words.

Some people lie because they're scared, or they forget an outing. Construction workers, housekeepers and others without paid sick time may gloss over symptoms so they can get back to work. Some immigrants without documentation brush off testing because they fear it could lead to deportation.

"People sometimes think contact tracing is black and white but there is a lot of gray that goes into it," said Bray, who often thinks about her parents and 97-year-old grandmother as she works to help stop the spread of the virus. "Our worst fear is that we push too hard and we lose someone. It's not just their health on the line, it's the people around them."

No matter the tension, Bray and DiCaro give frequent reminders of why it all matters: "Thank you for

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what you're doing. You're helping the community," DiCaro says during one call.

She knows that on the other end of the line, the first call from a tracer can be jarring. Sometimes, DiCaro and Bray have to break the news that someone was exposed or tested positive.

"It's normal to talk to like your doctor, but you don't ever expect the health department to call you and be like, 'You were exposed to a serious disease,'" said Anissa Archuleta.

The 23-year-old got a call from DiCaro after she, her sister and her mother took a rare break from hunkering down to help organize a drive-by birthday party for a young cousin. They dropped off a present, then caved and accepted an impromptu invitation to go inside to grab some food.

What they didn't know: the father of the birthday boy had the coronavirus, and unknowingly exposed more than a dozen people at the gathering.

After that first call, DiCaro checked in every day for two weeks. The fear slowly faded after their tests came back negative and they began building a rapport with DiCaro. She asked about their symptoms and how they were feeling each day and learned about how Ortega lost her voice to fibromyalgia. Archuleta would pass along messages her mother whispered in her ear.

And after a while, Archuleta began asking DiCaro about her life and how she was holding up.

About a week in to their calls, on the daily check-in, Archuleta thanked DiCaro for caring about them and checking in every day. Tears welled up in DiCaro's eyes.

"Ah thanks," she said as she grabbed a Kleenex to wipe her eyes.

After she hung up, she leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes for a few seconds.

"When you do this like 10-12 hours a day ... It's nice to get those positive reactions from people that are very grateful who do see the purpose of what we are doing," said DiCaro. "It's nice to be appreciated."

## Investigators build a case for IS crimes against Yazidis

By SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

QASR AL-MIHRAB, Iraq (AP) — He was burly, with piercing blue eyes, and it was clear he was in charge when he entered the Galaxy, a wedding hall-turned-slave pen in the Iraqi city of Mosul. Dozens of Yazidi women and girls huddled on the floor, newly abducted by Islamic State group militants.

He walked among them, beating them at the slightest sign of resistance. At one point, he dragged a girl out of the hall by her hair, clearly picking her for himself, a Yazidi woman — who was 14 when the incident occurred in 2014 — recounted to The Associated Press.

This was Hajji Abdullah, a religious judge at the time and labeled one of the architects of the militant group's enslavement of Iraq's Yazidi religious minority, who rose to become deputy to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He's believed to be the late al-Baghdadi's successor, identified only by the pseudonym Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi.

A group of investigators with the Commission for International Justice and Accountability is amassing evidence, hoping to prosecute IS figures for crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide -- including Hajji Abdullah.

Hajji Abdullah was previously accused of involvement in the slave trade, most notably in a wanted poster circulated by the U.S. setting a \$5 million bounty on his head. But his prominence in the creation and oversight of the slave trade has never been spotlighted.

"IS fighters didn't take it upon themselves to rape these women and girls. There was a carefully executed plan to enslave, sell, and rape Yazidi women presided over by the highest levels of the IS leadership," said Bill Wiley, executive director and founder of CIJA. "And in doing so, they were going to eradicate the Yazidi group by ensuring there were no more Yazidi children born."

CIJA shared some of its findings with The Associated Press. The group, through IS documents and interviews with survivors and insiders, identified 49 prominent IS figures who built and managed the slave trade, as well as nearly 170 slave owners, including Western, Asian, African and Arab fighters. These also include top financiers, military commanders, local governors and women traders, many of them from the region neighboring the Yazidi community's villages.



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The AP also put together findings from IS's own literature, along with interviews with IS members, former slaves and rescuers, to establish how slavery was strictly mapped out from the earliest days, devolving into a free-for-all with fighters enriching themselves by selling Yazidi women as the group's power began to disintegrate.

CIJA's focus now is to build cases that courts can use to try IS members for crimes against humanity or genocide. Countries can prosecute militants for individual rapes or torture or for membership in a terrorist group. But to prove higher charges, they would need the contextual evidence that CIJA provides, showing the crimes were part of a greater structure.

"Practically every Daesh prosecution that has ever happened anywhere in the world is a material support case, a membership case," Wiley said, using an Arabic name for the group. "Prosecuting high crimes could serve as a counter-radicalization tool for IS supporters."

In the first prosecution on charges of genocide against the Yazidis last month, a German court brought an Iraqi national to trial for enslaving a Yazidi woman and her 5-year-old, who was chained and left to die of thirst. Meanwhile, a U.N. investigative team said it has collected evidence from Iraq, including 2 million call records, that can strengthen cases of prosecution for crimes against the Yazidis.

CIJA is sharing its findings from Iraq with the U.N. team and is pursuing more evidence from Syria, where IS made its last stand. The Syrian Kurdish authority holds perhaps the largest trove of material from the group, as well as some 10,000 of its members, including 2,000 foreign fighters, in detention.

Investigators' steep challenge: documenting crimes committed over the course of four years against millions of people in different countries, while many IS members remain at large.

In the Iraqi city of Mosul, for instance, the crimes took place among a population of nearly 2 million people over three years, including enslavement, attacks on dissidents, destruction of cultural and religious sites and training children in jihad.

The Islamic State group's narrative is that slavery is a justifiable consequence of battle during its brutal capture of Sinjar, a region west of Mosul, as part of its attempt to establish a so-called caliphate.

But the AP determined, based on CIJA's investigation and its own reporting, that the highest levels of leadership were directly involved in organizing an enslavement machine that became central to the group's structure and identity. Governing institutions were enlisted, from the IS "cabinet" that constructed the slave system, the security agencies that enforced it, the bureaucrats and Islamic courts that supervised it, and propaganda arms that justified it.

Even as their caliphate collapsed around them, the militants made keeping their grip on slaves a priority. When slave markets proliferated out of the leadership's reach, internal documents show IS officials struggled to impose control with a stream of edicts that were widely ignored.

## A SYSTEM OF SLAVERY

IS launched its attack on the heartland of the Yazidi community at the foot of Sinjar Mountain in August 2014. It's unclear if Sinjar was attacked for its strategic location between IS holdings in Iraq and in Syria or with the specific aim of subjugating the Yazidis, an ancient sect considered heretics by the militants.

In any case, the results were devastating: During the week-long assault, IS killed hundreds of Yazidis and abducted 6,417, more than half of them women and girls. Most of the captured adult men were likely eventually killed. Hajji Abdullah, an ethnic Turkman from Tal Afar, an area near Sinjar, was believed to be the highest IS judicial official in the area and so stepped in to play a key role in distributing slaves.

The women and children — their husbands and fathers butchered or missing — had to learn to navigate the perverse rules of a world where they were considered commodities for rape and servitude.

"For five years I lived with them. They beat me and sold me and did everything to me," said the woman who witnessed Hajji Abdullah's casual cruelty in the Galaxy wedding hall. She dug her nails into her arms as she spoke, her skinny frame carrying more memories than her years are meant to handle. The AP is not identifying her because she was a victim of rape.

Now 19, she said she was raped by nearly a dozen owners, including al-Baghdadi, who owned her for months before he "gifted" her to one of his aides. The woman was rescued in a U.S.-led operation in May

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2019. She spoke to the AP in a northern Iraqi town full of Yazidi refugees, including freed women and girls who underwent similar horrors.

When Yazidis were seized, top IS commanders registered them, photographed the women and children and categorized them into married, unmarried and girls.

Initially, the thousands of captured women and children were handed out as gifts to fighters who took part in the Sinjar offensive, in line with the group's policy on the "spoils of war." Under early IS rules, war booty was distributed equally among the soldiers after the state took 20%, known as the "khums."

According to survivors and CIJA, some fighters came to detention centers with pieces of paper signed by Hajji Abdullah confirming their participation in the Sinjar attack and entitling them to a slave. Women and girls also would be picked out to be raped by fighters, then returned to detention.

By early 2015, the remaining women were transferred to the Syrian city of Raqqa, the caliphate's capital, and then distributed across IS-controlled areas, CIJA and survivors of slavery accounts showed.

The IS propaganda machine was mobilized to justify its revival of slavery. Articles, sermons and fatwas interpreting Islamic law were issued outlining how taking slaves was in accordance with Islam.

Islamic Shariah law traditionally allowed and regulated slavery, just as many societies did throughout history, but almost all Muslim clerics now say slavery is no longer permissible.

IS operated centralized slave markets in Mosul, Raqqa and other cities. At the market in the Syrian city of Palmyra, women walked a runway for IS members to bid on. Others, like the one in al-Shadadi, distributed women to militants by lottery.

A June 2015 notification reviewed by the AP called on IS fighters in Syria's Homs province to register for an upcoming slave market, or "Souk al-Nakhassa," giving those on the front lines a 10 day-notice to attend. Participants were told to enter bids in a sealed envelope.

The Soldiers' Department, or Diwan al-Jund, recorded fighters who owned slaves, usually referred to by the Arabic word "sabaya." For a time, IS paid fighters a stipend of about \$50 per slave and \$35 per child — equivalent to the stipend for a wife. The stipend eventually stopped, apparently because military defeats hurt revenues and because owning a sabaya became a sign of wealth and privilege.

Managing the robust system turned out to be more complicated than the leadership planned. And chaos abounded.

Slaves meant to be a reward to fighters were resold for personal profit, and some IS members made tens of thousands of dollars ransoming captives back to their families. Violence and abuse by owners led to rising reports of suicides and escapes among captives.

That prompted a flurry of regulations on ownership and sales, uncovered by CIJA and Syria expert and independent researcher Aymenn Tamimi.

As early as March 2015, IS officials in Syria's Aleppo province banned posting pictures of Yazidi women on social media, trying to crack down on electronic markets that rescuers and smugglers often infiltrated to extract captives.

The CIJA archive contains a copy of an edict by the Department of War Spoils that banned separating enslaved women from their children, with a handwritten note ordering it distributed to all departments and provinces — a signal that earlier decrees had failed to stop the practice.

In July 2015, the Delegated Committee — effectively the cabinet — ordered all slave sales to be registered by Islamic courts, seeking to end sales among fighters. It also required the finance minister of each IS province to keep track of women between transactions.

The rules got only tighter as the leadership's frustration over violations grew.

One directive set punishments for selling Yazidis to "commoners" -- anyone not a fighter or senior IS official -- and for ransoming them to their families. CIJA documented cases of senior officials dismissed from their jobs or punished with lashes for making exorbitant sums by flouting the rules.

Another document explained that only al-Baghdadi was in charge of setting policy on slaves and their distribution. A February 2016 edict required the Delegated Committee's approval for any senior figure to own slaves — a suggestion that even top officials were abusing the sales process.

Captured IS militants offered a glimpse into the resistance the leadership faced in enforcing its rules. In

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the eyes of some in the rank-and-file, what they saw as their right under Islamic law could not be restricted.

Abu Hareth, an Iraqi IS preacher held in a Baghdad prison, told the AP that many fighters didn't feel compelled to register sales in courts. "You have a product and you are allowed to trade in it," he said.

Abdul-Rahman al-Shmary, a 24-year old Saudi who traded in slaves and is held in a Syrian Kurdish-run prison, dismissed the rules as rooted not in Islamic law but in the leadership's need for control.

"It was about power and not for God's sake," he said.

Abu Adel al-Jazrawi, a Saudi who worked in the group's War Spoils department and is now imprisoned in eastern Syria, put it bluntly: "Slaves were just the means for high officials to get rich."

## TALOO'S JOURNEY

Laila Taloo's 2 1/2-year ordeal in captivity underscores how IS members continually ignored the rules.

"They explained everything as permissible. They called it Islamic law. They raped women, even young girls," said the 33-year old Taloo, who was owned by eight men, all of whom raped her. She asked that her name be used because she is publicly campaigning for justice for Yazidis.

After Taloo, her husband, young son and newborn daughter were abducted in 2014 and she and her husband were forced to convert to Islam, which should have spared them from being enslaved or killed.

But conversion meant nothing. "What is this all for? They never had a second thought about killing or slaughtering or taking women," Taloo said.

The family was taken to the Iraqi village of Qasr Mihrab, along with nearly 2,000 other converted Yazidis. At one point, the militants gathered all the adult men and took them away. Their bodies were never found but are believed to have been thrown into a nearby sinkhole, where bones still can be seen. CIJA found that Hajji Abdullah was among the senior IS officials involved in the execution of the men.

Taloo was first sold to an Iraqi doctor, who three days later gifted her to a friend. Despite the rules mandating sales through courts, she was thrown into a world of informal slave markets run out of homes.

Her third owner, an Iraqi surgeon, woke her one night and had her dress and put on makeup so four Saudi men could inspect her. One didn't like her ankles; another, a member of the IS religious police, paid nearly \$6,000 for her.

That owner posted pictures of his slaves online and, every day, they were paraded before potential buyers. "It was like a fashion show. We would walk up and down a room filled with men who are checking us out," Taloo said.

With each owner, she fought to keep her children safe. One man took photos of her then-2-year-old daughter, threatening to sell her to an Iraqi woman who couldn't have children. IS was known to separate children from their mothers, using them as household slaves or child soldiers, changing their names and forcing them to convert to Islam.

One owner forced Taloo to have a baby then changed his mind and forced her to have an abortion. He also forced her to remove a tattoo she engraved on her skin carrying her husband's name. Another owner forced her to use contraceptives. A third owner got her pregnant and she forced her own abortion.

Eventually, to free a relative, Taloo married a militant who turned out to be a senior IS operative. His long stints on the battlefield enabled her to escape: She paid a smuggler \$19,500 she got from her family for passage out of IS-held territory with her children and sister-in-law.

Today, Taloo still visits the sinkhole where her husband is believed to be buried, and for the first time last year she visited the house in Qasr al-Mihrab, where her family was held captive. The house owners, who had fled the IS takeover, have now returned, unknowingly living among Taloo's cherished memories of her family that was.

## THE RESCUERS

As their territory steadily diminished and defeat loomed, IS continued to crack down on members who, desperate for money, sought to sell slaves back to their families for large sums. Some fighters who did so were reportedly killed, survivors of IS slavery said.

Some 3,500 slaves have been freed from IS' clutches in recent years, most of them ransomed by their families. But more than 2,900 Yazidis remain unaccounted for, including some 1,300 women and children,

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according to the Yazidi abductees office in Iraq's Kurdish autonomous region.

Most are believed dead, but hundreds of women and children likely remain held by militants, said Bahzad Farhan and Ali Khanasouri, two Yazidis who work as rescuers tracking down the enslaved.

For years, the two have followed slave markets on social media, contacting smugglers and searching out IS militants willing to ransom their captives to their families. Working separately, they have secured freedom for dozens of women and children.

Sitting under the shade of a tree at Lalish, the holiest Yazidi shrine in Iraq's Dohuk province, Khanasouri recounted how he managed to escape after being among about 250 people kidnapped by IS in his hometown five years ago.

With the help of a Tunisian IS member he encountered in captivity, he has developed a network of insiders and confederates in his quest to rescue as many fellow Yazidis as possible.

As IS crumbled, the rescue business was brisk as captors scrambled for money, "looking for buyers," Khanasouri said. Now, with militants scattered — some hiding in deserts and caves or in sleeper cells — finding sellers is harder.

Wielding his phone, Khanasouri shows maps of likely locations of IS safehouses in Iraq's western deserts, where he is certain surviving women are still held.

Other women are hiding, either by choice or coercion, among IS families housed at the al-Hol camp in Syria, run by Syrian Kurdish fighters.

Some captives have accepted their new identities, particularly Yazidi children who grew up under IS, Farhan said. Some women with children born to IS fathers don't want to return home because their Yazidi community has shunned the newborns.

Khanasouri and Farhan have extended their search beyond the areas that IS once controlled, finding traces of women and children smuggled out by their captors who fled as far afield as Iran and Turkey. A Yazidi freed slave lost custody in a Turkish court of her nephew and niece who were found in an orphanage in Turkey.

At times, they said, Syrian opposition fighters have refused to return enslaved girls they come across in their territory.

One Yazidi girl, forced to convert to Islam and six months pregnant, was found in the northwest Syrian town of Azaz when fighters captured a Saudi IS militant transporting her. One of Farhan's contacts, an opposition fighter, offered to bring the girl back to her family. But his commanders stopped the transfer.

"They said, 'She is now a Muslim girl, why are you sending her back to the infidels?'" Farhan said.

## **'We're expendable': Russian doctors face hostility, mistrust**

**By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press**

MOSCOW (AP) — There are no daily public displays of gratitude for Russian doctors and nurses during the coronavirus crisis like there are in the West. Instead of applause, they face mistrust, low pay and even open hostility.

Residents near the National Medical Research Center for Endocrinology, a Moscow hospital now treating virus patients, complained when they saw medical workers walking out of the building in full protective gear, fearing the workers would spread contagion.

"Maybe once the disease knocks on the door of every family, then the attitude to medics will change," said Dr. Alexander Gadzyra, a surgeon who works exhausting shifts.

The outbreak has put enormous pressure on Russia's medical community. While state media hails some of them as heroes, doctors and nurses interviewed by The Associated Press say they are fighting both the virus and a system that fails to support them.

They have decried shortages of protective equipment, and many say they have been threatened with dismissal or even prosecution for going public with their complaints. Some have quit and a few are suspected to have killed themselves.

Government officials insist the shortages are isolated and not widespread.

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Antipathy toward the medical profession is widespread in Russia, said social anthropologist Alexandra Arkhipova, who studies social media posts peddling virus conspiracy theories. More than 100 theories she studied say doctors diagnose COVID-19 cases so they can get more money; others say they help the government cover up the outbreak.

"It's a crisis of trust that the epidemic underscored," she said. "I haven't seen this attitude anywhere else."

Trust in government institutions has always been low in Russia, according to opinion polls, and most of its hospitals are state-run.

Russia is struggling in the pandemic, with over 300,000 infections and 2,972 deaths. The government has disputed critics who have questioned the relatively low number of fatalities.

Official statements and news reports in more than 70 Russian regions show that at least 9,479 medical workers have been infected with the virus in the past month, and more than 70 have died. Health care workers believe the death toll to be much higher and they have compiled a list of more than 250.

Dr. Irina Vaskyanina said at least 40 workers are infected at a hospital in Reutov, outside Moscow, where she headed a department handling blood transfusions.

She also said insults and threats from superiors became common after she complained about working conditions to her bosses, to law enforcement and even to President Vladimir Putin.

"I handed in my notice," Vaskyanina said. "They're not letting me do my job. I love my job and I want to keep doing it, but I can't go on like this."

She said 13 of her 14 colleagues have also quit.

Dr. Tatyana Revva, an intensive care specialist in the town of Kalach-on-Don, was summoned by police for questioning and slapped with disciplinary action after recording a video about equipment shortages. The hospital's head reported her to a prosecutor for "spreading false information" — an offense punishable by fines of up to \$25,000 or a prison term.

"I am one reprimand away from being fired," Revva told AP.

Dr. Oleg Kumeiko, head of Revva's hospital, rejected the claims. He told the AP there were no shortages of protective equipment in the hospital, and said he had no intention of firing Revva. Disciplinary action against her was justified, he said, and "had nothing to do with her public activity."

"I don't understand why they treat us like we're expendable," said Nina Rogova, a nurse in the Vladimir region 200 kilometers (120 miles) east of Moscow. She is recovering from the virus after getting it at work and she says she is being threatened with dismissal after she told local media about a lack of protective gear.

Doctors in the southern region of Chechnya who complained about equipment shortages later had to retract their statements as a "mistake" and apologize on TV. The predominantly Muslim region's leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, has a reputation for stifling dissent, and he has demanded they be fired.

Adding to the frustration is pay. Health workers say they haven't gotten bonuses the government promised them for working with coronavirus patients. In early April, Putin personally promised generous bonuses to monthly salaries — about \$1,100 for doctors, \$680 for nurses and paramedics, and \$340 for orderlies.

A month later, social media was filled with photos of pay slips reflecting bonuses from 10 to 100 times smaller than promised. Dr. Yevgeniya Bogatyryova, a Moscow-area paramedic, told AP the April bonuses varied from \$2 to \$120. "They're calculating the time ambulance doctors spend with a coronavirus patient and pay by the hour, apparently," Bogatyryova said.

More than 110,000 people signed an online petition demanding the government keep its promise. Dozens of paramedics protested in the Nizhny Novgorod region 400 kilometers (240 miles) east of Moscow, and scores more from Siberia to southern Russia made videos demanding the bonuses.

"Whoever we ask in our management, our superiors, they say, 'Putin promised you (bonuses), so Putin should pay you,'" Natalia Salomatova, an orderly at a hospital in the Siberian city of Chita, told the AP. April bonuses for her colleagues ranged from the equivalent of 41 cents to \$6.86. Salomatova herself didn't receive any.

Only after Putin went on TV twice last week and angrily demanded that officials pay what was promised

did medical workers in some regions start getting the payments.

"Makes you wonder: Who should we protect the medics from, the infection or the administrators?" said Arkhipova, the social anthropologist.

Russia's Health Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Reports of health care workers resigning are surfacing. Over 300 quit in the western Kaliningrad region two weeks ago, dozens of paramedics reportedly resigned in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk in May and 40 workers gave notice at a hospital in the Vladimir region.

That could further cripple Russia's health care system, already impaired by a widely criticized reform that closed half of its 10,000 hospitals in 20 years, with thousands of layoffs. In December, Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova called the reform "horrible" and said it significantly affected the quality and the accessibility of health care.

"Now we're facing the threat of a complete destruction of the medical community," said Semyon Galperin, head of the Doctors Defense League rights group.

## Woman, dying sister reunite after Australia exempts travel

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — A woman has tearfully embraced her dying sister in Australia after weeks of bureaucracy wrangling over pandemic travel restrictions.

Australia had rejected Christine Archer's request for permission to fly from New Zealand four times before her story attracted media attention.

Her only sister Gail Baker was diagnosed with incurable ovarian cancer in late March after both countries stopped international travel. Baker has perhaps weeks to live.

Archer was eventually allowed to fly to Sydney and spent only a week in hotel quarantine before testing negative for the coronavirus. International travelers are usually quarantined for two weeks.

Family friends drove the retired nurse 490 kilometers (300 miles) from Sydney to the New South Wales state coastal town of Bowraville.

Archer finally hugged her younger sibling in the front yard of Baker's home on Wednesday. It was their first reunion in six years.

"Words can't explain how I feel, to be honest." Archer told Australian Broadcasting Corp. in an interview aired on Thursday.

"I'm just so happy that I finally got to be here and be with her. The last two weeks have been the hardest or the longest two weeks of my life," Archer said.

Archer was surprised that her persistence paid off. But she is adamant that Australia made the right decision in allowing her to remain with her sister in her final days.

"I wondered whether the Australian government had any compassion at all with their rejections," Archer said.

"I honestly don't know what they were thinking. I know it's an awful time at the moment with the virus ... but, I mean, there are some things you've got to be a bit lenient on and I felt this was one of them," she said.

"I didn't think I was ever going to see Gail again. That would've been the worst thing in the world if that had happened," she added.

Australia's Department of Home Affairs relented on Archer's travel application after it allowed the New Zealand Warriors rugby league team to relocate from Auckland in preparation for the Australian football competition restarting next week.

The department declined to explain its change of heart on the sisters' reunion, saying in a statement it did not comment on individual cases.

New Zealand has largely succeeded in its goal of eliminating the virus. It has reported no new infections over the past four days and most of the people who contracted the virus have recovered. About 1,500 people have been reported as having the virus including 21 who died.

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Australia has had similar success in slowing the virus spread although New South Wales remains the worst-affected state. Australia expects New Zealand will become the first international destination with which regular passenger travel will resume because of the low risk of infection.

Australia has recorded 7,079 virus cases and 100 deaths. Australia's population is five times larger than New Zealand's.

How should I clean and store my face mask?

How should I clean and store my face mask? The Associated Press

How should I clean and store my face mask?

Cloth face masks worn during the coronavirus pandemic should be washed regularly, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Public health experts recommend wearing a mask made from cotton fabric, such as T-shirts, or scarves and bandannas, when you are outside and unable to maintain social distancing from others.

The covering should be washed daily after use, says Penni Watts, an assistant professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham's School of Nursing.

It is best to clean your mask in a washing machine or with soap and hot water. The mask should be dried completely. Dry it in a hot dryer, if possible.

Watts advises storing the clean, dry mask in a new paper bag to keep it safe from germs.

The CDC has urged people to use washable cloth coverings to ensure there are enough surgical and N95 masks for medical workers.

## Sikh kitchens feed New Delhi's masses in virus lockdown

By EMILY SCHMALL Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — At first, the kitchen at the Bangla Sahib Gurdwara cooked 40,000 meals each day for the hungry who live on the streets of India's capital city, or who have lost their livelihoods to the coronavirus lockdown.

But the need was greater than that. So workers at the golden-domed temple in central New Delhi made 80,000 meals daily. Then 100,000. Soon, they expect to be making 300,000 -- all provided free to the growing ranks of the unfortunate.

For centuries the faithful have flocked to the temple for its healing waters and a free meal at the community kitchen, the symbol of equality found at every Sikh temple complex and open to all visitors.

The Bangla Sahib Gurdwara has remained open through wars and plagues, serving millions of people simple vegetarian food on the cool marble floor of its enormous dining hall. But during India's ongoing lockdown -- among the world's most stringent -- religious congregations are banned.

Bangla Sahib has kept its kitchen open, with the help of about four dozen men who sleep at the temple's guesthouse. To save time commuting to and from the temple and avoid the risk of infecting loved ones, they haven't seen their families since the lockdown began March 25.

In colorful turbans and cloth bandanas tied over their noses and mouths, they work in the industrial kitchen in 18-hours shifts.

Head cook Balbir Singh stirs an enormous ladle through a potato and soybean stew, simmering with ghee and coriander in a giant cook pot. A machine that every hour makes 5,000 chapati -- thin, unleavened bread -- whirs long before the sun rises and after it sets.

Singh, 44, lights the flames at 3 a.m. so that 35,000 lunches are ready for pickup by 9 a.m.

"If we serve at this time, God will give us more. It's a give and take system," Singh said.

Bangla Sahib is the largest of New Delhi's 10 gurdwaras, whose kitchens together form a vital part of the city's strategy to feed the poor during the pandemic.

The city government approached the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee just after India's nationwide lockdown began in late March, according to the committee president, Manjinder Singh Sirsa.

Bangla Sahib, which usually prepares around half a million meals per week using donated ingredients and equipment, is quickly ramping up to produce six times that many.

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The government sends trucks to pick up the meals each day and distribute them to a network of shelters and drop-off points, but pays nothing for the food.

Singh Sirsa struggles to protect his workers and collect donations to keep the enterprise going. "This is the biggest challenge for me in my entire life," he said.

Anticipating many months of hardship ahead, he appears nightly on the Bangla Sahib's own TV channel to appeal for more donations.

A man from Montreal recently pledged \$10,000, another from London offered \$100,000, he said. The dining hall heaves with sacks of rice, flour and lentils and cans of oil -- six months of supplies, said Jagpreet Singh, a 27-year-old temple clerk.

"We believe in God. He's giving us this power, so we provide," he said.

## Deliberative Senate declines to debate more coronavirus aid

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — As Americans confront a crisis unlike any in modern times, the world's greatest deliberative body is doing almost anything but deliberate the coronavirus.

It's as though the challenge has split the U.S. Senate into two.

On one side is a Senate clamoring for a quick response to the virus outbreak at its door. On the other is the wait-and-see Senate hitting pause on swift action and carrying on with non-pandemic business.

"Every aspect of American society has been changed by this crisis — except, perhaps, the Republican Senate," said Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer in the chamber Wednesday.

The split screen at the Capitol provides a study in contrasts and priorities, one that reflects the partisan differences between Republicans and Democrats, and is defining both ahead of the 2020 election.

As the House works remotely, the lights-on Senate has the legislative stage to itself. But despite a virus death toll nearing 100,000 and more than 30 million unemployed, the slow-moving Senate is proving even a pandemic won't quicken its pace. Senators are prepared to leave town for a weeklong Memorial Day break without having acted on any new relief.

At least one Republican, Sen. Cory Gardner of Colorado, vowed to try to prevent the Senate from recessing Thursday unless it votes on more aid to states and cities facing layoffs.

"Now is not the time for the Senate to go home," tweeted Gardner, who is among the most politically endangered GOP senators running for reelection in the fall. He told reporters at the Capitol that he had called President Donald Trump at the White House with his concerns.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell defends the output, arguing that his side of the Capitol led passage of an earlier major aid package that cost \$2 trillion. Better to assess how that money is being spent, he said, before approving more. He rejects the new \$3 trillion package approved by the Democratic-led House last week as a "liberal wish list."

McConnell portrayed the Capitol, where senators in masks are showing up most days while the House works from home, as its own "tale of two chambers."

"Over here in the United States Senate, the lights are on, the doors are open, and we are working for the American people," said McConnell, R-Ky. "And across the rotunda, in the House? Crickets."

Yet it's the split on display throughout the Senate's side of the Capitol complex — in the Senate chamber, its committee rooms, even its private caucus meetings.

The floor action this week revolved around votes on Trump's nominees for judicial and executive branch positions. Senators confirmed a new Federal Election Commission member and is on track to confirm four federal judges. Trump's nominee for director of national intelligence, John Ratcliffe, could be confirmed as soon as Thursday.

Across the street in the committee rooms, the split screen was coming into even sharper focus.

Two marquee hearings focused on investigations of the Obama administration stemming from the probe of Russian interference in the 2016 election.

The Homeland Security Committee on Wednesday voted to issue a subpoena for its investigation into



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presumed Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden's son Hunter, though there's no evidence of wrongdoing by either of the Bidens. On Thursday, the Judiciary Committee is set to consider issuing a subpoena in the investigation into Trump's former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

"This pandemic is the biggest crisis our country has faced since this committee was created," said Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., a former presidential hopeful, addressing the panel's chairman, Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis. "You made the decision to force a vote on a purely political matter that will do absolutely nothing for those at risk of contracting COVID-19."

Ahead of the meeting, Johnson released a long list of coronavirus-related actions his committee had taken since the start of the year.

Even behind closed doors, the differences can be seen and heard.

Trump arrived on Capitol Hill for an impromptu visit to the Senate Republican lunch Tuesday that quickly turned to politics. The president touted his own poll numbers and implored his allies to "be tough" as they fight for their jobs this fall. Democrats are seeking to gain the majority and flip control.

In contrast, Democratic senators, who no longer meet for lunch but convene by conference call, heard Wednesday from economist Mark Zandi, who warned them of the risks of inaction.

Zandi said "Job No. 1" for Congress was sending money "quickly" to state and local governments, according to a Democrat who wasn't authorized to publicly discuss the private call and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The economist told them state and local governments are "really teetering on financial edge," the Democrat said. Without aid, hundreds of thousands of more jobs could be lost, he said.

Republicans are hopeful that as states reopen, the economy will improve, lessening the need for more federal funds.

But polling shows Americans are concerned about a second wave of the virus as shops and workplaces reopen. An AP-NORC poll found 83% of Americans are at least somewhat concerned that lifting restrictions in their area will lead to additional infections, with 54% saying they are very or extremely concerned.

## Lives Lost: Pakistani immigrant helped others in Jersey City

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

JERSEY CITY, N.J. (AP) — When a friend of the Khan family got a job working for a New Jersey politician, family patriarch Shafqat Khan was a regular sight at the politician's office, frequently dropping by to seek help for people in need.

It was natural for Khan, a longtime Jersey City resident grateful that he managed to immigrate with his family to the U.S. in the 1980s from Pakistan via Libya. Family members say he spent much of the last two decades finding ways to help other Pakistani immigrants who joined his community just across the Hudson River from New York City.

Khan, who assisted recent immigrants with how to apply for driver's licenses and hosted events for people of different faiths and cultures to understand each other better after the Sept. 11 attacks, died of COVID-19 on April 14 at age 76. He left behind his wife, three children, seven grandchildren and a legacy of connections.

"He had a very clear sense of what was right and wrong and he could not sit aside if he saw someone struggling, if he could help them he would," said his daughter, Sabila Khan.

It's something Sabila Khan said she is trying to emulate by starting a social media group for those mourning loved ones lost to the coronavirus so they can connect with each other.

"I really want to believe that I'm carrying on his legacy as best as I can," she said, choking back tears. "I'm trying to be constructive in how I'm grieving and I think my father would be proud."

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is part of an ongoing series of stories remembering people who have died from coronavirus around the world.

Khan and his wife always wanted to leave Pakistan for a better life in the U.S. but had relatives in Libya so they headed there first in 1974, where he worked in an administrative job for a pharmaceutical company.

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That stay ended up lasting longer than the couple had planned and Sabila Khan, the couple's youngest child, was born in Libya before the family of five moved to the U.S. in 1982 and settled in Jersey City.

Khan enrolled in a computer course that was supposed to lead to a job that would allow the family to gain legal U.S. residency. The job never materialized, said Sabila Khan, leading to a difficult period of several years when the family lived illegally and precariously in the country.

"It was hard, my parents tried to shield us a lot from the troubles they had to deal with, we didn't have health insurance ... money was always an issue for them, they struggled a lot," she said.

But Sabila Khan said her father was convinced that the best opportunities for his children were in the U.S. and not in Libya or Pakistan. He landed a job as the general manager of a convenience store with a pharmacy in Brooklyn owned by a person he had tutored years earlier in Pakistan.

That job led to Khan getting sponsorship for himself and his family for legal U.S. residency in the early 1990s and they became U.S. citizens later that decade.

Khan's daughter said she remembered him constantly working six days a week, leaving home in the morning and returning home at night. Khan eventually eased off his heavy work schedule but was always an avid follower of politics and decided to get more involved with Jersey City's large Pakistani immigrant community.

Just before the Sept. 11 attacks, he started a group called Pakistanis for America, aiming to educate Pakistani immigrants about the U.S. political process while helping register them to vote.

But after the attacks, the group shifted its focus to holding events where leaders "from various religious and cultural backgrounds engaged in honest, open dialogue about the state of things post 9/11, including the stigma that Muslims faced," Sabila Khan said.

Paraphrasing her father, she said he often said that "at the end of the day, we're all working towards the same goals. We want to keep food on the table for our families and we want opportunities for our kids."

Khan was eventually diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, the illness that leads to people having problems with walking and balance.

He spent the last year or so at a Jersey City rehabilitation facility and hoped to return home soon, but the rehab center closed its doors to visitors on March 11 as the coronavirus spread.

That was the last time Khan saw any of his direct family — his wife and one of his sons.

Family members called him regularly over the next several weeks but started hearing from him less after being told he had fever.

In early April, a nurse said Khan was suffering from congestion and by April 6 he had been taken to a hospital emergency room, where Sabila Khan said he had to wait three days to get a regular bed.

Family members using FaceTime told he was loved but saw him with his eyes closed. A nurse told Sabila Khan that he later opened his eyes after that last call.

Since Khan's death, family members have been gratified to hear from people telling them how he helped them adapt to U.S. life.

"This was his life's work and he made it his mission and he helped people every step of the way," Sabila Khan said.

## Trump tests whether incumbent leader can tap outsider anger

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is running against himself.

With his cries to "Reopen our country!" and his rebukes of the federal bureaucracy and health regulations amid the coronavirus pandemic, Trump has tried to tap into the same populist, anti-Washington anger he rode to victory in 2016. The difference: He is now, by definition, the face of government.

Positioning himself as the outsider despite being the incumbent, Trump has feuded with governors, pushed back against government restrictions and, this week, said he was taking an unproven anti-malarial drug against the coronavirus despite warnings from his own health experts.

Aiming to energize his base less than six months before he stands for reelection, the president has drawn

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a cultural link between the disaffected who voted for him four years ago and those who want to quickly restart the nation's economy. Amplified by conservative media commentators, Trump has leaned into the pandemic's partisan divide and urged states to reopen regardless of whether they meet the benchmarks set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"They want to get out there, and they want to get back," Trump said recently of those agitating to restart the nation's economy. "That's what they want. They want their country back, and they're getting it back."

On Monday, he was even more direct, tweeting in capital letters: "REOPEN OUR COUNTRY!"

The president's political advisers contend that, even after four years in the White House, Trump will always be an outsider compared to his likely general election opponent, Democrat Joe Biden, who spent more than four decades in Washington.

Trump has also worked to cultivate that image throughout the coronavirus crisis.

He has encouraged right-wing protests against states' stringent social distancing orders, unleashing a series of tweets calling to "Liberate!" Michigan, Minnesota and Virginia. Many who attended the rallies sported Trump campaign apparel and "Make America Great Again" hats and signs, drawing the president's support, though the protests were small and received widespread condemnation for potentially spreading the virus.

But the president's praise echoed across the internet and on cable television by conservative pundits and conspiracy theorists, stoking a fury that in its anti-government rhetoric echoed the birth of the tea party movement a decade ago.

Especially after the virus reached the United States, grabbing the mantle of the outsider was a natural play for Trump. Over the last century, history has favored incumbents seeking reelection — except for those in times of fundamental anxiety.

"If Trump runs as an outsider, he will, as ever, be playing for base turnout rather than seeking votes in the tiny but still real middle," said presidential historian Jon Meacham. "Can he convincingly run as an insurgent against his own government? I fear the answer is yes, and his people will thrill to it. The question will come down to whether voters choose the evidence of the last four years or Trump's addled version of those four years."

Trump has turned his wrath against a number of Democratic governors, including those who lead battleground states like Pennsylvania and Michigan, declaring they were ungrateful for the federal government's assistance and insinuating they were moving slowly to reopen in order to perpetuate a damaged economy that would wound Trump's electoral chances.

Biden has pushed back, putting the failures of the nation's pandemic response squarely on Trump, whom he blames for missing early warning signs and being slow to ramp up national programs for testing and treatment. Democrats believe that Trump's strategy will have limited appeal.

"The sliver of voters who will ultimately decide this election — independents and moderate Republicans — see Trump as the ultimate Washington insider, someone who uses the power of the executive branch to benefit himself, his cronies and his business interests," said Adrienne Elrod, former senior adviser to Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign.

Showing no hesitation in making the pandemic a partisan battle, the president's advisers have tried to move the focus away from the coronavirus public health crisis — more than 90,000 Americans have died — in order to emphasize the need for an urgent economic recovery.

"The first step in getting our economy booming again is to begin to reopen," said Trump campaign spokeswoman Sarah Matthews. "Americans know the economy reached unprecedented heights under President Trump's leadership before it was artificially interrupted by the coronavirus, and he will build it back up a second time."

The president has also repeatedly rebelled against the health guidelines set by his own administration, refusing to wear a mask or maintain proper social distancing. He pushed the use of hydroxychloroquine despite the cautionary advice of the government's top medical experts — and then said he had begun to use it himself — as he argued that his own instinct was better than their expertise.

His administration silenced public health professionals so that Trump himself would serve as the face of the response to the virus and has been outspoken in criticism of experts at the CDC for bungling early COVID-19 testing. White House officials complained of "rogue" CDC experts who leaked drafts of detailed, restrictive guidelines for businesses and other institutions reopening that the White House wanted eased to account for economic considerations.

The approach is reminiscent of Trump's longtime complaints about an alleged "deep state" of established government officials that he has claimed is working to undermine him. But COVID-19 and its demands for management expertise have thrown a wrench into the campaign's plans to fully paint Biden as an insider.

Trump's scattered approach to the coronavirus pandemic largely followed his efforts to balance the incongruous roles of wartime president and insurgent populist.

Early on, he dismissed the dire warnings of experts, intent on talking up a booming economy that he viewed as vital to his reelection. But when the pandemic became too large to ignore, he began using wartime powers like the Defense Production Act to try to marshal the government's response even as he tried to rewrite the Washington playbook by deferring to the states.

## Hamlin scores 2nd win of season at rain-shortened Darlington

DARLINGTON, S.C. (AP) — Denny Hamlin won NASCAR's first Wednesday race since 1984 when rain stopped the event with 20 laps remaining at Darlington Raceway.

The Daytona 500 winner was out front but out of fresh tires and trying to hang on when he got unintended help from Joe Gibbs Racing teammate Kyle Busch. The reigning Cup champion caused Chase Elliott to crash eight laps earlier to bring out the caution.

A furious Elliott waited for Busch on the apron of the track and flipped Busch the middle finger as he passed. As NASCAR cleaned the track, it started to rain and the cars were called to pit road under red-flag.

It was an already active evening at "The Track Too Tough To Tame" as drivers were racing against the field and the weather. As the drivers sat in their cars waiting for NASCAR to pull the plug, a handful of Elliott's crew members sat on the pit wall staring down Busch.

One of Busch's crew members sat between them on the wall and NASCAR eventually ordered everyone back over the wall. Eight minutes later, the race was called and Busch was greeted by Alan Gustafson, Elliott's crew chief and Busch's former crew chief when he drove for Hendrick Motorsports, for a conversation between two masked competitors.

Busch immediately copped to the error.

"There's no question I made a mistake and just misjudged the gap," Busch said. "They're upset, they're mad. I'm not just going to fix and we're going to go have ice cream tomorrow. They're going to dwell on it and I'm sure there are repercussions of it I'm going to have down the road."

Meanwhile, a fox was scampering across the deserted track and Hamlin, wearing a mask that depicted his actual smile, was having a muted celebration in the rain.

He walked to victory lane under a large black umbrella. It was a 1-2 finish for Joe Gibbs Racing and Toyota. Hamlin has won three times at Darlington and has two wins this season.

"I got my happy face on. Made sure I brought it with me," Hamlin said of his mask. He said he also had masks made with a "sad face" but only brought the smiling masks to a track he counts among his favorite.

Hamlin thought he was in good shape when he made his last pit stop but a caution by Clint Bowyer, who won the first two stages of the race, jumbled the strategy with 34 laps remaining.

Hamlin had no choice but to stay out on the track, and his crew chief Chris Gabehart told him over the radio, "you ain't going to like it, but we're going to have to eat our vegetables here."

Hamlin, the leader because he didn't pit on the restart with 29 to go, only had to hold off traffic for one lap before the Busch and Elliott collision. The rain then came and Hamlin earned the trophy.

"It's a driver's race track," he said. "You can do different things to make (the car) handle. We got it right."

The race marked the first time in NASCAR history that the Cup Series had two points-paying races at the same track in one week.

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The start of NASCAR's second race back during the coronavirus pandemic was moved up an hour because of poor weather, but that was then delayed nearly 90 minutes because it rained most of the day.

When the action finally began, the 310-mile affair was spirited from start to finish because drivers were unsure if they were racing to the halfway point — the mark a race becomes official — or the distance.

NASCAR returned to action Sunday at Darlington after a 10 weeks off by using a strict health protocol and limiting those in attendance to only the most essential for conducting a race.

Health screenings were required to enter the track and each of the 40 cars were allowed just 16 team members.

Fox Sports again broadcast the race primarily from a studio in Charlotte, North Carolina, with just one pit reporter at Darlington. For its prerace show, drivers used varying technology to make brief appearances while sitting alone in their motorhomes.

Drivers had to travel to the track alone, pass through a health screening and then isolate before the race. They are required to wear face masks.

NASCAR has an ambitious return plan of 20 races spanning its three national series between Sunday's return and June 21. Spectators are not expected to be permitted to any of the events in this span.

Rain disrupted the schedule Tuesday night when the Xfinity Series was washed out. That race is now scheduled to be held Thursday afternoon.

## Ex-Green Beret nabbed in exec's escape has lived on the edge

By ADAM GELLER AP National Writer

Decades before a security camera caught Michael Taylor coming off a jet that was carrying one of the world's most-wanted fugitives, the former Green Beret had a hard-earned reputation for taking on dicey assignments.

Over the years, Taylor had been hired by parents to rescue abducted children. He went undercover for the FBI to sting a Massachusetts drug gang. And he worked as a military contractor in Iraq and Afghanistan, an assignment that landed him in a Utah jail in a federal fraud case.

So when Taylor was linked to the December escape of former Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn from Japan, where the executive awaited trial on financial misconduct charges, some in U.S. military and legal circles immediately recognized the name.

Taylor has "gotten himself involved in situations that most people would never even think of, dangerous situations, but for all the right reasons," Paul Kelly, a former federal prosecutor in Boston who has known the security consultant since the early 1990s, said earlier this year.

"Was I surprised when I read the story that he may have been involved in what took place in Japan? No, not at all."

Wednesday, after months as fugitives, the 59-year-old Taylor and his 27-year-old son, Peter, were arrested in Massachusetts on charges accusing them of hiding Ghosn in a shipping case drilled with air holes and smuggling him out of Japan on a chartered jet. Investigators were still seeking George-Antoine Zayek, a Lebanese-born colleague of Taylor.

Kelly, now serving as the attorney for the Taylors, said they plan to challenge Japan's extradition request "on several legal and factual grounds."

"Michael Taylor is a distinguished veteran and patriot, and both he and his son deserve a full and fair hearing regarding these issues," Kelly said in an email.

Some of those who know Taylor say he is a character of questionable judgment, with a history of legal troubles dating back well before the Utah case. But others praise him as a patriot, mentor and devoted family man, who regularly put himself at risk for his clients, including some with little ability to pay.

"He is the most all-American man I know," Taylor's assistant, Barbara Auterio, wrote to a federal judge before his sentencing in 2015. "His favorite song is the national anthem."

In 1993, a Massachusetts state trooper investigated Taylor for drug running and sued his supervisor after being told to stop scrutinizing the prized FBI informant. In 1998, Taylor was granted immunity in

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exchange for testifying against a Teamsters official accused of extortion. In 1999, he pleaded guilty to planting marijuana in the car of a client's estranged wife, leading to her arrest, according to a 2001 report in the Boston Herald.

Taylor also made headlines in 2011 when he resigned as football coach at a Massachusetts prep school, Lawrence Academy, which was stripped of two titles. Taylor was accused of inappropriate donations, including covering tuition for members of a team that included seven Division I recruits.

"It wasn't pleasant what he was yelling at us across the field. He was calling us out for not being man enough to kick the ball," said John Mackay, who opposed Taylor as coach of St. George's School in Rhode Island. "His zeal, probably like he does everything in life, is to the Nth degree."

The security business that Taylor and a partner set up decades ago was initially focused on private investigations but their caseload grew through corporate work and unofficial referrals from the State Department and FBI, including parents whose children had been taken overseas by former spouses.

"Michael Taylor was the only person in this great country that was able to help me, and he did," a California woman whose son was taken to Beirut, wrote to the sentencing judge in the Utah military contracting case. "Michael Taylor brought my son back."

In 2012, federal prosecutors alleged that Taylor won a U.S. military contract to train Afghan soldiers by using secret information passed along from an American officer. The prosecutors said that when Taylor learned the contract was being investigated, he asked an FBI agent and friend to intervene.

The government seized \$5 million from the bank account of Taylor's company and he spent 14 months in jail before agreeing to plead guilty to two counts. The government agreed to return \$2 million to the company as well as confiscated vehicles.

The plot to free Ghosn apparently began last fall, when operatives began scouting Japanese terminals reserved for private jets. Tokyo has two airports within easy reach of Ghosn's home. But the group settled on the private terminal at Osaka's Kansai International Airport, where machines used to X-ray baggage could not accommodate large boxes.

On the day of the escape, Michael Taylor and Zayek flew into Japan on a chartered jet with two large black boxes, claiming to be musicians carrying audio equipment, according to court papers.

Around 2:30 that afternoon, Ghosn, free on hefty bail, left his house on a leafy street in Tokyo's Roppongi neighborhood and walked to the nearby Grand Hyatt Hotel, going to a room there and departing two hours later to board a bullet train for Osaka.

That evening, his rescuers wheeled shipping boxes through the Osaka private jet terminal known as Premium Gate Tamayura — "fleeting moment" in Japanese. Terminal employees let the men pass without inspecting their cargo.

At 11:10 p.m., the chartered Bombardier, its windows fitted with pleated shades, lifted off. The flight went first to Turkey, then to Lebanon, where Ghosn has citizenship, but which has no extradition treaty with Japan.

"I didn't run from justice," Ghosn told reporters after he resurfaced. "I left Japan because I wanted justice."

## Trump threatens funds for states easing voting in pandemic

By **NICHOLAS RICCARDI** and **ZEKE MILLER** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday threatened to hold up federal funds for two election battleground states that are trying to make it easier and safer to vote during the coronavirus pandemic. He backed away from that threat but stuck with his unsupported claim that widespread voting by mail promotes "a lot of illegality."

The president targeted Michigan with an inaccurate tweet on its voting plans and also went after Nevada in the latest — and the most confused — episode in his campaign against mail-in voting.

As states have shifted to remote voting, following health officials recommendations on safety, Trump has denigrated the practice and sought to limit access. He has said repeatedly, without evidence, that

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mailed ballots allow widespread fraud and has worried publicly that wide availability could lead so many people to vote that Republicans would lose in November. His GOP allies, meanwhile, have fought changes to voting in court and opposed funding to expand mail-in voting in Congress.

Wednesday marked the first time Trump has tried to use federal aid money to beat it back.

Trump began by going after Michigan, misstating Democratic Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson's announcement that she would send applications for absentee ballots to every voter in the state. Though Republican secretaries of state have taken this step elsewhere, Trump pounced on the move in a state key to his reelection hopes.

"Michigan sends absentee ballots to 7.7 million people ahead of Primaries and the General Election," Trump tweeted Wednesday morning. That brought strong criticism from Democrats in Michigan and elsewhere, pointing out that the state was sending applications, not actual ballots, an error the president corrected in a subsequent tweet six hours later. He stuck with the rest of his tweet: "This was done illegally and without authorization by a rogue Secretary of State. I will ask to hold up funding to Michigan if they want to go down this Voter Fraud path!"

Trump later tweeted a similar threat to pull back funds from Nevada, which has sent ballots to voters for its June 9 state primary. A federal judge recently cleared Nevada's decision to mail ballots, which were sent by the Republican secretary of state.

It was not clear exactly what funds Trump was referencing, but the states are paying for the voting changes with federal aid intended to support elections during the pandemic. By Wednesday evening, Trump told reporters he had spoken with Democratic Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and did not think funding would have to be cut.

"I don't think it's going to be necessary," he said, adding that he stood by his opposition to mail voting. "Voting is an honor. It shouldn't be something where they send you a pile of stuff and you send it back."

Trump himself has requested an absentee ballot to vote in Florida.

Trump's tweets and statements came the day before he is slated to visit Michigan to tour Ford's ventilator assembly plant in Ypsilanti. The state is one of three Rust Belt states that helped deliver his 2016 victory. In recent months, it has become a national hot spot for the coronavirus and watched its economy collapse, both factors contributing to what Trump's advisers see as a shift toward Democrats.

The president's comments appeared to reflect growing GOP concerns that Democrats' swift embrace of mail-in voting will give them an edge in November. Some key Democratic areas have moved to make it easier for voters to request ballots, while Republican areas have not. And even though Trump's campaign encourages absentee voting, along with several state Republican Party officials, GOP voters, like Trump, have expressed growing skepticism.

Democrats noted Trump seems more concerned about mail-in voting in battleground states and has not threatened Republican-dominated states that are doing the same thing as Michigan. West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice, an ally of the president, noted Wednesday he's concerned about Trump's threats even though his administration approved mailing absentee ballot applications to all registered voters in the state.

"I can't imagine that the president is going to withhold funding in any way to West Virginia; that's not going to happen," Justice told reporters.

On Monday, before Trump's Twitter threat, the Republican National Committee sought to clarify its position on vote by mail, arguing that the party opposes mailing ballots to every voter, as Nevada has done, but does not oppose mailing applications, as Michigan did.

"I don't really have an issue with absentee requests forms being sent to voters," RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel said.

On Wednesday, Trump's threats scrambled that distinction.

Republicans' claims that mailing ballots to all voters creates widespread fraud is not backed up by evidence from the five states that use this method. None has had significant voter fraud cases.

The White House referred questions about the president's tweets to Trump's reelection campaign. Trump campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh asserted "there is no statutory authority for the secretary of state

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in Michigan to send absentee ballot applications to all voters" — an argument some Michigan Republicans have also made. Murtaugh did not address whether Republican secretaries of state elsewhere were similarly constrained.

The GOP-controlled U.S. Senate has so far stopped Democrats from mandating expanded mail and early voting as part of coronavirus relief bills, arguing that states should make decisions on their own election systems. The battle has largely moved to the courts, with Democrats filing at least 17 lawsuits to force states to expand their programs.

Hours after Trump tweeted Wednesday, he sent another message to Michigan. The state is grappling with severe flooding in one county after two dams failed, forcing thousands to evacuate.

Three hours after threatening to hold up federal funding to the state, Trump tweeted: "My team is closely monitoring the flooding in Central Michigan — Stay SAFE and listen to local officials. Our brave First Responders are once again stepping up to serve their fellow citizens, THANK YOU!"

## Michigan dam had repeated safety violations before flooding

By JOHN FLESHER AP Environmental Writer

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) — A hydroelectric dam that failed to hold back floodwaters this week in Michigan was the target of lengthy investigations by federal regulators, who revoked the facility's license over safety violations two years before the flooding that forced 10,000 people to evacuate their homes.

Boyce Hydro Power's history of violations lasted throughout the 14 years the company was authorized to run the nearly century-old Edenville dam, according to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which said it repeatedly raised concerns about the dam's ability to prevent flooding during extreme conditions because of its inadequate spillway capacity.

The dam on the Tobacco and Tittabawassee rivers, about 140 miles (225 kilometers) north of Detroit, was among several barriers overtaken Tuesday by floodwaters that chased people from communities in central Michigan. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer warned that Dow Chemical Co.'s hometown of Midland could end up under 9 feet of water. She said the state will investigate the dam operators.

The commission ordered Boyce Hydro to form an independent team to investigate three other dams it owns on the rivers that were vulnerable to a "cascading failure scenario." Among them was the Sanford Dam, which also was damaged.

The commission planned to send a staff engineer to the site to assist with the investigation as soon as it could be done safely, Chairman Neil Chatterjee said in a statement.

The governor said the state was "reviewing every possible legal recourse."

Lee Mueller, architect and co-member manager of the company, did not return calls for comment Wednesday from The Associated Press.

The Edenville dam, in Michigan's Gladwin and Midland counties, includes a series of earthen embankments totaling about 6,600 feet (2,012 meters) long, with a maximum height of nearly 55 feet (16.8 meters). It forms a 2,600-acre reservoir known as Wixom Lake, a popular boating and fishing spot.

The dam has two reinforced concrete spillways to carry away excess water when reservoir levels get too high.

In its 2018 order revoking Boyce Hydro's license, the commission said its primary concern about the dam was its inability to handle "the probable maximum flood" — the type of event that could be expected from "the most severe combination of critical meteorologic and hydrologic conditions that is reasonably possible" in the area.

Commission guidelines require that dams be able to withstand such a flood or have enough spillway capacity to prevent reservoirs from rising dangerously high. The Edenville dam's spillway capacity was only about 50 percent of the probable maximum flood, the commission said.

Inadequate spillway capacity is a common problem for U.S. dams, an Associated Press investigation found in 2019.

The commission said it warned the dam's previous owners of the need for improvements in early 1999,



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but no changes were made before the license was transferred to Boyce Hydro in 2004.

Boyce Hydro said it planned to build an auxiliary spillway on the Tittabawassee River that year and was studying the need for another on the Tobacco River, the commission said.

But the company failed to complete either project, repeatedly seeking extensions and missing deadlines, the agency said. Among its other violations: performing unauthorized dam repairs and earth-moving and failing to file an adequate public safety plan, maintain recreation facilities or monitor water quality.

For more than a decade, Boyce Hydro "knowingly and willfully refused to comply with major aspects of its license ... with the result that public safety has been put at risk, and the public has been denied the benefits, particularly project recreation, to which it is entitled," the commission's order said.

"The record demonstrates that there is no reason to believe that Boyce Hydro will come into compliance," the commission added. The company "has displayed a history of obfuscation and outright disregard of its obligations."

The company twice lowered Wixom Lake's level without permission after the federal license was revoked, said Nick Assendelft, spokesman for the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, which has overseen the Edenville barrier since its federal license was withdrawn.

The department was pursuing enforcement action for the violation and resulting damage to natural resources when the dam gave way, Assendelft said. A lawsuit filed April 30 says the lengthy drawdowns in 2018 and 2019 killed "thousands, if not millions" of freshwater mussels, many listed as endangered species.

The Four Lakes Task Force, an authority formed by the two counties and area property owners, agreed to buy all four dams on the rivers from Boyce Hydro last December and was planning to close the deal within the next couple of months, spokeswoman Stacey Trapani said.

The group planned to raise \$32 million for the purchase and for major upgrades and maintenance, she said.

Now, the status of the deal is unclear.

"We're still in emergency mode at the moment," Trapani said. "As soon as we are able, we'll start assessments so we can determine a path forward."

## Meatpacking safety recommendations are largely unenforceable

By AMY FORLITI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Federal recommendations meant to keep meatpacking workers safe as they return to plants that were shuttered by the coronavirus have little enforcement muscle behind them, fueling anxiety that working conditions could put employees' lives at risk.

Extensive guidance issued last month by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that meatpacking companies erect physical barriers, enforce social distancing and install more hand-sanitizing stations, among other steps. But the guidance is not mandatory.

"It's like, 'Here's what we'd like you to do. But if you don't want to do it, you don't have to,'" said Mark Lauritsen, international vice president and director of the food processing and meatpacking division for the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union.

The pandemic is "the most massive workers' safety crisis in many decades, and OSHA is in the closet. OSHA is hiding," said David Michaels, an epidemiologist who was the agency's assistant secretary of labor under President Barack Obama. Michaels called on OSHA to make the guidelines mandatory and enforceable, which would include the threat of fines.

OSHA's general guidance plainly says the recommendations are advisory and "not a standard or regulation," and they create "no new legal obligations."

But the guidance also says employers must follow a law known as the general duty clause, which requires companies to provide a workplace free of recognized hazards. Critics say that rule is unlikely to be enforced, especially after President Donald Trump signed an executive order in April aimed at keeping meat plants open.

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Already, examples have emerged of questionable enforcement efforts and pressure to keeping plants running:

— Shortly before Trump's order, state regulators in Iowa declined to inspect a Tyson Foods pork plant despite a complaint alleging workers had been exposed to the virus in crowded conditions. Documents obtained by The Associated Press show it took the Iowa division of OSHA nine days to seek a response from Tyson and eight more to get a reply. The state agency ultimately found Tyson's voluntary efforts to improve social distancing at the Perry plant were "satisfactory" and closed the case without an inspection. A week later, 730 workers — almost 60% of the workforce — had tested positive.

— In Kansas, the state softened its quarantine guidelines after industry executives pushed to allow potentially exposed employees to continue going to work, according to emails and text messages obtained by The Kansas City Star and The Wichita Eagle. The state had previously advised such employees to quarantine for two weeks, before conforming to the more lenient CDC guideline, which allows employees to continue working if they have no symptoms and use precautions. The move came after Tyson raised a concern with the state of rising worker absenteeism.

After Trump's executive order — developed with input from the industry — the Labor Department and OSHA said OSHA would use discretion and consider "good faith attempts" to follow safety recommendations. Employers would be given a chance to explain if some are not met. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue made clear in letters earlier this month that the Department of Agriculture expected state and local officials to work with meat plants to keep them running. And he said any closed plants without a timetable to reopen had to submit protocols to the USDA.

The USDA did not respond to repeated requests to provide those company plans to the AP. When asked how guidelines would be enforced, a USDA spokesperson said enforcement was up to OSHA.

Major meatpackers JBS, Smithfield and Tyson have said worker safety is their highest priority. They provided the AP with summaries of their efforts to improve safety, but the plans themselves have not been made public. Tyson said because the temporary suspension of its operations was voluntary and the company was already meeting or exceeding federal guidance, it was not required to submit a reopening plan to the USDA.

One plan obtained by the AP, for the reopening of a JBS pork plant in Worthington, Minnesota, details multiple safety improvements, including installing physical barriers, increasing spacing between workers and requiring protective equipment. The plan includes photos. It says employees will be screened for health issues, but it makes no mention of requiring testing.

JBS spokesman Cameron Bruett said the plan "demonstrates the extraordinary measures" the plant has taken "to keep our team members safe as they provide food for the country."

In an emailed response to questions about how guidance would be enforced and what role OSHA would play in protecting workers, the Department of Labor said OSHA received 55 complaints in the animal-processing industry and opened 22 inspections since Feb. 1.

Echoing language from the general duty clause, the agency also noted longstanding rules that require employers to provide a safe workplace.

"OSHA's standards remain in place and enforceable, and they will continue to be as workers return to their workplaces," a labor spokesperson said.

Michaels, the former OSHA official, said the clause has no preventive effect and is generally enforced only after a worker is injured. He said it's effective only in cases in which OSHA conducts an inspection and issues citations and the employer agrees to fix the problem — so any impact is felt months or years later.

Michaels said OSHA will not issue citations if employers are doing their best to eliminate a hazard but find it's not feasible.

Jeffrey Lancaster, founder and CEO of Lancaster Safety Consulting in Wexford, Pennsylvania, said violations of the general duty clause can get expensive, especially if companies are found to be repeat violators, have a willful violation, or fail to fix an issue.

"The laws have been in place," he said. "It's just a new ballgame — a new hazard."

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Minnesota is one of 22 states or territories with worker-protection agencies that cover private and government workers, and the state OSHA has the power to enforce the CDC and state Department of Health's COVID-19 safety guidelines under the general duty clause, spokesman James Honerman said.

The agency has two open investigations into the meatpacking businesses — one at a JBS plant in Worthington and one at a Pilgrim's Pride plant in Cold Spring, said Honerman, who could not discuss the investigations because they are pending.

Lauritsen, with the food workers' union, said OSHA has not done enough to hold employers accountable. The union is advocating for access to daily testing for all meat-production workers, personal protective equipment if necessary and paid sick leave.

"By and large, if our members are healthy enough, if they are not sick or on quarantine, they are going to show up to do their job," Lauritsen said. "But that doesn't mean that they're not anxious or not nervous."

## Back to business, but not business as usual as nations open

By DAVID CRARY, DAVE COLLINS and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — This is what "normal" will look like for the foreseeable future.

In Connecticut, restaurants are reopening with outdoor-only dining and tables 6 feet (2 meters) apart. In Beverly Hills, California, the rich and glamorous are doing their shopping from the curb along Rodeo Drive. And preschools around the U.S. plan to turn social distancing into an arts-and-crafts project by teaching kids how to "create their own space" with things like yarn and masking tape.

As the U.S. and other countries loosen their coronavirus restrictions, it's back to business, but not business as usual. In fact, it is becoming all too clear that without a vaccine against the scourge, the disruptions could be long-lasting and the economy won't be bouncing right back.

In Italy, where good food is an essential part of life, once-packed restaurants and cafes are facing a huge financial hit as they reopen with strict social distancing rules after a 10-week shutdown.

Experts warned that as many as one-third of the country's restaurants and bars could go out of business, up to 300,000 jobs in the sector could vanish and losses could reach 30 billion euros (\$32 billion) this year.

"We have to turn upside down all the activity that we did before," lamented chef Raffaele di Cristo, who must wear a mask and latex gloves as he prepares food at the popular Corsi Trattoria in Rome. "Everything is changed."

Corsi reopened this week with half its tables removed to ensure the mandated 1-meter (3-foot) spacing. Hand sanitizing gel was placed at the entrance, and a new ordering system was installed so that customers could read the menu on their phones instead of listening to waitresses recite the specials.

In Connecticut, restaurants that reopened Wednesday for outdoor dining are required to rearrange workstations so that employees don't face one another, and stagger shifts and break times to minimize contact among them. Markers must be installed to encourage customers to keep their distance from one another.

In Glastonbury, Connecticut, the Max Fish restaurant opened for lunch with 16 tables on outdoor patios. Customers filled about half the tables in the early afternoon, and all the tables were reserved for dinner, general manager Brian Costa said.

Friends and retirees Debbie Lawrence and Jill Perry, who often ate out together before the outbreak, enjoyed a meal at Max Fish.

"It was terrific. It's just wonderful to be outside," Lawrence said. "But I'm still a little leery of going to any stores."

At the Crab Shell Restaurant on the waterfront in Stamford, co-owner James Clifford held up a roughly 6-foot-long (2-meter-long) stick he said he used to make sure chairs weren't too close together.

"I just hope the outdoor people don't get greedy and they don't overstep their bounds," he said. "Because if you can't get it right outdoors, how can you get it indoors?"

In Fredericksburg, Virginia, one restaurant that recently reopened its patio has taken an extra step to reassure diners. The Colonial Tavern is taking staff members' temperatures at the start of their shifts and posting the results for customers to see.

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Some of new rules for dining out echo reopening guidelines released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They are intended for child care centers, schools, day camps, mass transit systems, restaurants, bars and other businesses and organizations.

For example, the CDC suggests mass transit systems close every other row of seats and limit how many riders can be on a bus or train.

Amid the wave of reopenings, many Americans remain wary, according to a new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The poll says 83% of Americans are at least somewhat concerned that lifting restrictions in their area will lead to additional infections.

The poll also exposed a widening partisan divide on the topic, with Democrats more cautious and Republicans less anxious as President Donald Trump urges states to "open up our country." Only about a third of Republicans say they are very or extremely concerned about additional infections, compared with three-quarters of Democrats.

About 5 million people worldwide have been confirmed infected, and over 328,000 deaths have been recorded, including over 93,000 in the U.S. and around 165,000 in Europe, according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University, based on government data. Experts believe the true toll is significantly higher.

With the virus far from vanquished, the reopenings could prove to be a stop-and-start, two-steps-forward-one-step-back process.

Ford temporarily halted production at two of its assembly plants Tuesday and Wednesday in Chicago and Dearborn, Michigan, after three autoworkers tested positive for the virus. Work was stopped to sanitize equipment and isolate those who were in contact with the infected employees.

Detroit's Big Three automakers restarted their U.S. factories on Monday after a two-month shutdown.

Education, too, is facing radical changes.

Cambridge became the first university in Britain to cancel all face-to-face lectures for the upcoming school year, saying they will be held virtually and streamed online until the summer of 2021.

Other institutions have taken different tacks. The University of Notre Dame in Indiana will bring students back to campus but redesigned its calendar to start the semester early in August and end before Thanksgiving.

In South Korea, hundreds of thousands of high school seniors had their temperatures checked and used hand sanitizer as they returned Wednesday, many for the first time since late last year. Students and teachers were required to wear masks, and some schools installed plastic partitions around desks.

France is limiting spaces in its primary schools, giving priority to the children of essential workers and those in need. Some younger students even go on alternating days, while high schools remain closed.

People's gratitude at being able to shop or eat out again is mingling with worries about job security.

Business was slow at a Paris farmer's market with a mixed mood among the masked, gloved vendors. A man selling peonies and petunias said he was glad to get out and see shoppers again, while a woman selling asparagus and tomatoes behind a makeshift plastic screen grumbled that her customers were buying less than usual.

British aircraft engine maker Rolls-Royce announced plans to cut 9,000 workers as it grapples with the collapse in air travel. In general, those jobs come with good pay and benefits, and losing them is a sharp blow to local communities.

## Mayor says Mexico City will begin gradual reopening June 1

By CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Even as Mexico saw its largest one-day death toll, Mexico City announced Wednesday it will begin a gradual reopening June 1.

The nationwide death toll rose by 424 on Wednesday to 6,090, well above last week's record of 353 deaths reported in one day. Total confirmed infections nationwide grew to 56,594, though the real number is probably several times higher because Mexico performs so little testing.

With about 9 million residents, the capital is one of the world's largest cities. Authorities predicted the

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pandemic is nearing its peak in Mexico City, but hospitals in the capital are already about three-quarters full. As of Tuesday night, Mexico City reported more than 15,000 confirmed coronavirus infections and nearly 1,500 deaths.

Despite it all, Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said Mexico City will begin a gradual reopening June 1, when some sectors of the economy would be allowed to resume operations.

While Sheinbaum called on residents to continue taking social distancing measures through June 15, impatience with being shut up at home, household financial demands and a lack of any enforcement already drew more and more people back into the streets in recent weeks.

More customers clustered at the city's famous street food stands and traffic has picked up. The city never shut down its subway system, which millions depend on for transportation.

Sheinbaum's reopening plan included some of the industries that the federal government already approved to return to work like construction, but also adds bicycle sales and beer production.

The mayor said bike shops are being exempted because she wants to promote bicycle use as a way to help improve the health of city residents. As elsewhere around the world, Mexico's COVID-19 dead have included a high percentage of people suffering from ailments such as diabetes and obesity.

Some businesses never shut down in the city, but did implement social distancing measures. At an office goods store in a central neighborhood Wednesday, a dozen people lined up in the parking lot outside. A security guard with a mask and bottle of hand sanitizer let customers enter one at a time only when an employee was available to escort them and after a squirt of gel on their hands.

Sheinbaum has acknowledged that the real number of deaths in Mexico City is surely higher, but says an independent panel will have to review suspected cases and make a determination. City death records reported by an anti-corruption watchdog group suggested the death toll could be three times as high in the capital.

The city's graduated reopening will be based on its hospital occupancy, which currently stands at 76%.

"The trend continues increasing, but we hope this trend will decrease in the coming weeks," Sheinbaum said.

The rest of the city's economic activity won't be allowed to resume until hospital occupancy drops below 59%. Even then, restaurants, hotels and churches will be limited to 30% of their capacity.

Sports are to resume without fans. But in professional soccer, Mexico's most popular sport that has been shut down since March 15, club owners are still debating whether to restart their season or just call it off.

Fanny Alejandra Manriquez Ezquivel, a city employee who has continued working and not quarantined at home, said Wednesday that she thinks it is time for the city to return to some semblance of normality.

"Sooner or later we're all going to get infected and you've got to return to normalcy," Manriquez said. "They're the ones who know and have the certainty of how to manage the city."

## Watchdog cites persistent infection lapses in nursing homes

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Before COVID-19 killed thousands of nursing home residents, about 4 in 10 homes inspected were cited for infection control problems, according to a government watchdog report Wednesday that finds a "persistent" pattern of lapses.

In light of the pandemic, seemingly minor cutting of corners such as an employee caring for residents while battling a cold has taken on new significance.

"Warning signs were ignored and nursing homes were unprepared to face a pandemic," said Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, the top Democrat on a committee that oversees Medicare and Medicaid. "There need to be big changes in the way nursing homes care for seniors."

The report from the Government Accountability Office found that state inspectors who help enforce federal nursing home standards classified the overwhelming majority of violations as not severe, generally meaning there was no actual harm to residents. The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicare Services carried out enforcement actions for 1% of violations classified as not severe from 2013-2017, the report said.

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Nursing homes ended up bearing the brunt of the coronavirus outbreak. About 1.4 million people live in some 15,500 facilities in the United States. Most of those people were already at higher risk due to age and medical history, and they also shared dining rooms, recreation areas, bathrooms and sleeping quarters.

An ongoing tally by The Associated Press has found over 34,000 coronavirus-related deaths at nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, more than one-third of all COVID-19 deaths in the country.

The GAO report found that about 40% of the nursing homes inspected in each of the past two years were cited for problems with infection control and prevention.

Looking deeper into federal data for 2013-2017, investigators found a recurring pattern of problems. Data for that five-year period showed that 82% of nursing homes inspected, or 13,299, had at least one deficiency related to infection control and prevention. About half of the facilities had an infection-related deficiency in multiple consecutive years.

"This is an indicator of persistent problems," the GAO's nonpartisan investigators said. The agency carries out oversight for Congress.

The types of problems involved such issues as failing to properly wash hands and not isolating sick residents during outbreaks. "Many of these practices can be critical to preventing the spread of infectious diseases, including COVID-19," investigators wrote.

Among the incidents cited in the report:

—A nursing assistant at a California facility had been sick for at least two days with fever, diarrhea, cough and a runny nose but kept working. Seven employees had not been screened for tuberculosis before they were hired. Workers who hadn't had their flu shots were working without masks. No enforcement action was taken against the facility.

—A New York nursing home was in the throes of a respiratory infection outbreak that had sickened 38 residents. But it lacked a complete and accurate list of the sick, and it failed to isolate them from those who were symptom-free. Likewise, staff helping the sick patients were not isolate. Residents continued to share the dining hall. The federal CMS took action, requiring the nursing home to retrain staff and submit a plan for corrective action to state inspectors.

—A nursing assistant at an Arkansas facility was seen helping an incontinent resident after a bowel movement. Then, without removing her soiled gloves, the assistant helped get the patient comfortable in bed, fixed the pillows, and replenished supplies in the bedside drawer. A glucose meter for measuring blood sugar was not properly disinfected before being used on several different residents. No enforcement action was taken against the nursing home.

The nursing homes cited in the report were not identified.

Seema Verma, head of the federal Medicare and Medicaid agency, said this week that governors should exercise "extreme caution" before allowing nursing homes to reopen to visitors. Verma has announced that CMS plans to name a commission to examine the nursing home response to coronavirus and make recommendations. The GAO said it plans other reports to independently examine how CMS responded to the outbreak as well as the agency's oversight of infection control in nursing homes.

The head of the nursing home trade group, the American Health Care Association, has flagged infection control as a priority for the industry. "We are absolutely committed to a renewed emphasis on infection control," Mark Parkinson said in a recent interview.

While about 40% of nursing homes nationwide were cited for infection control problems, the GAO found wide differences among states. In 2017, nearly 61% of the inspected facilities in California had a deficiency, while in Rhode Island it was less than 4%.

The report also found that nonprofit nursing homes were somewhat less likely to be cited for persistent infection control problems.

## AP-NORC poll: Americans harbor strong fear of new infections

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Strong concern about a second wave of coronavirus infections is reinforcing widespread opposition among Americans to reopening public places, a new poll finds, even as many state leaders step up efforts to return to life before the pandemic.

Yet support for public health restrictions imposed to control the virus's spread is no longer overwhelming. It has been eroded over the past month by a widening partisan divide, with Democrats more cautious and Republicans less anxious as President Donald Trump urges states to "open up our country," according to the new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The poll finds that 83% of Americans are at least somewhat concerned that lifting restrictions in their area will lead to additional infections, with 54% saying they are very or extremely concerned that such steps will result in a spike of COVID-19 cases.

"Oh, I'd like to get my hair and nails done. It's one of those little pleasures you take for granted," said Kathy Bishop, a 59-year-old billing specialist who had pneumonia two years ago. "But I'm just going to suck it up. It's not worth the risk."

Bishop lives in the western suburbs of Columbus, Ohio, a state where Republican Gov. Mike DeWine is among the state chief executives leading a gradual reopening of businesses such as salons, barbershops, restaurants and bars. But even after nine weeks spent at home, Bishop is among the solid majority of Americans who support rigorous criteria for economic reopening that goes beyond wearing masks in public places and continued social distancing.

About 8 in 10 Americans say that it's essential to reopening for people to return to self-quarantine if they are exposed to the virus. Roughly 6 in 10 also say having widespread testing for the coronavirus in their area is essential to reestablishing public activities, along with requiring people to keep 6 feet (1.8 meters) apart in most places and to wear face masks when they're near others outside their homes.

Nearly as telling as the public's appetite for rigorous precaution: Close to half say it is essential that a vaccine be available before public life resumes. A third say that's important but not essential.

Taken together, the findings suggest that while some Americans are anxious to get back to business as usual, most don't see the country returning anytime soon to what once was considered normal. Instead, Americans largely envision a protracted period of physical distancing, covered faces and intermittent quarantines ahead, perhaps until a vaccine is available.

Joe Yeskewicz, of Middleboro, Massachusetts, said he believes a vaccine is a must for his town of 23,000 south of Boston to fully reopen. He's among the nearly 8 in 10 Americans who don't expect one to be ready before the end of the year.

"It is so novel, so unpredictable and so terribly, terribly contagious," the 76-year-old retired teacher and college professor said of the virus. "The vaccine predictably could take years because it has to undergo a vigorous testing program for it to be effective and safe. Regardless of the optimism, this is going to take a while."

The latest AP-NORC survey was conducted over this past weekend, before Monday's news of positive results in a clinical trial of a potential vaccine. It found that a solid majority of about 6 in 10 Americans are in favor of requiring people to stay in their homes except for essential errands, with about a third of the country strongly behind that approach.

While still resolute, support for such measures to contain the coronavirus has slipped in the past month — 80% were in favor of stay-at-home orders in April. The new survey found that 69% now favor restricting gatherings to 10 people or fewer, down from 82% in April.

Those declines are largely driven by changes in attitudes among Republicans, as Trump and several GOP governors have aggressively pressed for and moved ahead with reopening businesses and public places. Some people in Wisconsin headed straight for the local tavern last week after the conservative-controlled state Supreme Court upheld the GOP-controlled legislature's appeal of Democratic Gov. Tony Evers' stay-at-home order.

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Just 45% of Republicans now say they favor stay-at-home orders, while about as many are opposed. A month ago, 70% of Republicans backed them. Among Democrats, 78% favor stay-at-home orders, down from 91% in April.

Only about a third of Republicans say they are very or extremely concerned about the possibility of additional infections if restrictions are lifted, compared to three-quarters of Democrats.

Peggy Dullum, a 65-year-old Republican and retired state health care worker from suburban Sacramento, California, said she once supported strict lockdown measures to contain the virus. But she now thinks they have outlived their purpose.

"If they'd have opened all retail, it would have spread out social activity rather than congesting it in those few retail locations where people crowded without masks," Dullum said. "Make everybody wear a mask, instead of making it voluntary, and we probably could have kept the economy moving at a solid pace during the second month."

But Yeskewicz, the Democratic-leaning independent from Massachusetts, shakes his head — including at the small but vocal pockets of protesters, at times armed and brandishing Confederate flags, who complain that leaders who back continued safety measures are doing so out of anything but concern for public health.

"We can't just arbitrarily restore privileges simply because people are so desperate they can't stand it any more," Yeskewicz said. "It's not about people's rights being violated. They are trying to keep you alive, you bozos!"

## Trump considering hosting G-7 summit in US after all

By ZEKE MILLER and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Wednesday that he's considering holding a meeting in the U.S. with the leaders of the world's major economies after all because it would be a "great sign to all" of things returning to normal during the coronavirus pandemic.

The announcement was the latest effort by Trump to signal to the nation that the U.S. economy is humming again after months-long shutdowns meant to slow the spread of COVID-19 are beginning to be lifted across the country.

Trump had scheduled the Group of Seven summit for June 10-12 at Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland. But in March, he announced he was canceling the annual meeting because of the pandemic and that the leaders would confer by video conference instead.

"Now that our Country is 'Transitioning back to Greatness', I am considering rescheduling the G-7, on the same or similar date, in Washington, D.C., at the legendary Camp David," Trump tweeted. "The other members are also beginning their COMEBACK. It would be a great sign to all - normalization!"

The G-7 optimism came as Trump met with Democratic Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly and Republican Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson to discuss reopening plans in their states. The pair praised the administration's efforts to expand testing to critical industries, including meatpacking, in their states.

Separately, Vice President Mike Pence was in Florida for a meeting with tourism industry executives and a meal at a business recently reopened to dine-in patrons.

Formal White House preparations for the meeting were halted two months ago when the summit was called off. And the Trump administration has maintained travel restrictions and quarantine requirements for travelers from Europe, home to four of the G-7 nations. And earlier this week the U.S. and Canada agreed to keep their shared border closed to nonessential travel through June 21.

The District of Columbia remains under stay-at-home orders at least through June 8, though Maryland began relaxing the restrictions last week. At the same time, leaders of the G-7 member nations are in some cases still grappling with the virus in their own countries or in various states of reopening their economies.

A senior White House official said Trump was seriously considering rescheduling the summit for some point in June, likely toward the end of the month, at either the White House or Camp David. The subject was discussed on a call between Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday morning,



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the official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany was asked whether it would be appropriate to hold the G-7 while ordinary citizens cannot travel to the U.S. from Europe.

"America is reopening. The world is reopening and what a show of strength and optimism to have all the leaders of these countries come together at the White House and pursue business as usual as we move forward through this pandemic," McEnany said.

If the summit happens, the U.S. would request that delegations be pared back to minimum personnel and would curtail nonessential events like the spousal program. A final decision would be needed in the coming days to ensure adequate time to prepare for the high-level meeting, the official said.

Macron's office said in a statement that "given the importance of the G7 in the response to the crisis, the President is willing to go to Camp David, if the health conditions allow it."

"Whatever form the G-7 meeting takes, whether it's a video conference or otherwise, I will definitely fight for multi-lateralism, that's very clear, both in the G-7 and the G-20," said German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Pressed by AP on whether she would consider an actual trip to the U.S., Merkel said: "I chose my words with care."

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called it an interesting idea, but said leaders need a lot more details. He said it's important G-7 leaders meet in June so they can discuss the pandemic and restoring economic activity.

"We need to keep meeting as leaders. Whether that's virtual or in person we will certainly take a look at what the U.S. is proposing as host of the G-7 to see what kind of measures will be in place to keep people safe, what kind of recommendations the experts are giving in terms of how that might function," Trudeau said.

"There are a lot of discussions to come, but we look forward to having those discussions with the American hosts."

The U.S. holds the G-7's rotating presidency this year and gets to determine where the meeting is held and set the agenda. Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan are the other members.

Trump originally planned to hold the annual summit at his private golf course near Miami. But he switched the venue to Camp David, which he visited last weekend and which is run by the U.S. military, after a public outcry over holding it at one of his money-making properties.

## Largest yet: \$1.3 billion contract for border wall awarded

By JAMES MacPHERSON and ASTRID GALVAN Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A North Dakota construction company favored by President Donald Trump has received the largest contract to date to build a section of Trump's signature wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Republican U.S. Sen. Kevin Cramer of North Dakota confirmed the \$1.3 billion contract for building the 42-mile section of wall through "really tough terrain in the mountains" in Arizona. That's about \$30 million per mile.

Cramer said Fisher Sand and Gravel Co. offered the lowest price for the project. He did not know how many companies bid.

Trump has promised to build 450 miles of wall along the border with Mexico by the end of the year. So far, the government has awarded millions of dollars in contracts for construction of 30-foot-tall barriers, along with new lighting, technology and infrastructure. The Trump administration says it has already built 187 miles of wall. Some of it is new, but most is replacing old, much shorter barriers that officials say were not sufficient.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said Wednesday that there was no set date to start or complete construction on the latest award. Construction will take place near Nogales, Arizona, and Sasabe, Arizona.

Cramer said the fence will be painted black because "that's what the president wanted, plain and simple," Cramer said.

The idea is that the black wall would absorb heat making it more difficult for someone to scale, he said.

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"That's the president's theory," Cramer said. "Plus, it won't be an ugly, rusty thing that everyone is putting up now."

The Army Corps of Engineers, which awards contracts, said Fisher was one of several companies chosen in May 2019 to partake in building \$5 billion worth of border wall. This month's contract to Fisher was part of that award.

Asked if there were any additional bidders for this latest contract, a spokesman said the agency couldn't provide that information because of "procurement sensitivities."

The Arizona Daily Star first reported news of the contract.

Cramer did not know if the Trump administration's recent move to waive federal contracting laws to speed construction of the wall helped the project or sped it up. He said he didn't know if the project fell under those rules.

In the 2018 election cycle, company owner Tommy Fisher and his wife donated \$10,800 to Cramer, who championed the company's ability to build the wall and made Fisher his guest at Trump's 2018 State of the Union address.

Democratic members of Congress raised concerns in December after Fisher was awarded a \$400 million contract for border wall construction. Within two weeks, the defense department's inspector general had launched an investigation, which is ongoing, according to Democratic U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, a critic who questioned whether the contract had been properly awarded.

"If the administration cared about anything besides political optics and maximizing miles of fence in the run up to an election, they wouldn't have awarded this contract," Thompson said in a statement on Wednesday.

Environmentalists have also long criticized the border wall, saying it cuts off protected wildlife and destroys important ecosystems. They've filed lawsuits against the wall and the use of defense money to build it.

"Trump's wanton destruction of the borderlands is made even worse by this sleazy contract with a big supporter," said Laiken Jordahl, borderlands campaigner at the Center for Biological Diversity.

Cramer said he has personally pitched Fisher's company to the president and others in Washington.

"It will be a cold day in hell when I apologize for advocating for a North Dakota business," Cramer said.

## Brazil expands use of unproven drug as virus toll rises

By DIANE JEANTET Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — President Jair Bolsonaro unveiled rules Wednesday expanding the prescription of chloroquine, the predecessor of an anti-malaria drug promoted by U.S. President Donald Trump, for coronavirus patients despite a lack of clinical proof that it is effective.

Chloroquine was already being used in Brazil for COVID-19 patients who are hospitalized in serious condition, and under the new regulations, it can be given to people with lighter symptoms such as abdominal pain, cough or fever, according to the Health Ministry.

"There is still no scientific evidence, but it is being monitored and used in Brazil and worldwide," Bolsonaro, who has likened the virus to a "little flu" and feuded with local governments over their stay-at-home measures, said via his official Facebook page. "We are at war: 'Worse than being defeated is the shame of not having fought.'"

More than 291,000 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Brazil, the third most in the world after the United States and Russia, and the announcement came a day after the country's single-day death toll from the virus hit a new high of more than 1,100. Officials said Wednesday that 888 more died in the subsequent 24 hours.

Trump has promoted treating COVID-19 with hydroxychloroquine, a variant considered less toxic and more effective than chloroquine, and he announced Monday that he was taking the drug as a precaution. No large, rigorous studies have found either drug safe or effective for preventing or treating the virus.

Bolsonaro, a conservative populist and nationalist, has long expressed admiration for Trump and enthusiasm for chloroquine. Brazil's new guidelines were approved by interim Health Minister Gen. Eduardo

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Pazuello, who had no health experience prior to becoming the ministry's No. 2 official in April.

Pazuello's appointment to the top job came after then-Health Minister Luiz Henrique Mandetta was fired last month for publicly supporting state governors who shut down nonessential businesses and adopted other measures against the virus, and after Mandetta's replacement, Nelson Teich, resigned last week. Teich did not explain why he left, but he had publicly disagreed with Bolsonaro over chloroquine.

Speaking to a group of street cleaners in the capital, Brasilia, Bolsonaro suggested Wednesday that he has no plans to replace Pazuello: "This one is going to stay for a long time."

Officials say nearly 19,000 people have died of the coronavirus in Brazil so far, and experts warn that low testing rates mean the true number of cases is likely far higher.

Health systems in various states have gone over capacity, with overwhelmed intensive care units unable to take in new COVID-19 patients, and experts say rising numbers of people are dying at home.

Cemeteries are using backhoes to dig hundreds of graves at a time, and Manaus in the heart of the Amazon rainforest is burying the dead in mass graves.

Gen. Pazuello appointed nine more military officers to the Health Ministry on Tuesday, Folha de S. Paulo reported, including his No. 2, Col. Antonio Elcio Franco Filho.

Also Wednesday, Bolsonaro announced the resignation of Culture Secretary Regina Duarte, a former soap opera star who was recently criticized by many in the opposition and the arts community for downplaying torture during the 1964-1985 dictatorship and who had warned against the dangers of "unbearable morbidity" around the virus.

Bolsonaro continues to oppose governors and mayors who are renewing stay-at-home recommendations or introducing stricter measures.

The former army captain has argued in favor of restarting the economy, even though experts say Brazil has yet to reach the peak of the pandemic. He believes that containment measures are too painful in a country where tens of millions of workers depend on low-paid jobs in the informal sector.

Several large observational studies, including one in U.S. hospitals for veterans, have not found benefit from hydroxychloroquine for treating COVID-19. Earlier this year scientists in Brazil stopped part of a study of chloroquine after seeing heart rhythm problems among patients taking a higher of two doses being compared.

## **AP source: Ex-Trump lawyer Cohen to be released from prison**

**By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's longtime personal lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen will be released from federal prison Thursday and is expected to serve the remainder of his sentence at home, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

Cohen has been serving a federal prison sentence at FCI Otisville in New York after pleading guilty to numerous charges, including campaign finance fraud and lying to Congress.

He will be released on furlough with the expectation that he will transition to home confinement to serve the remainder of his sentence at home, the person said. Cohen, 53, began serving his sentence last May and was scheduled to be released from prison in November 2021.

The person could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Prison advocates and congressional leaders have been pressing the Justice Department for weeks to release at-risk inmates ahead of a potential outbreak, arguing that the public health guidance to stay 6 feet (1.8 meters) away from other people is nearly impossible behind bars.

Attorney General William Barr ordered the Bureau of Prisons in March and April to increase the use of home confinement and expedite the release of eligible high-risk inmates, beginning at three prisons identified as coronavirus hot spots. Otisville is not one of those facilities.

Cohen was told last month he would be released to serve the rest of his three-year sentence at home in response to concerns about coronavirus. He had told associates he was expecting to be released earlier

this month.

The Bureau of Prisons has placed him on furlough as it continues to process a move to home confinement, the person familiar with the matter said. The agency has the authority to release inmates on furlough for up to 30 days and has been doing so to make sure suitable inmates, who are expected to transition to home confinement, can be moved out of correctional facilities sooner, the person said.

A federal judge had denied Cohen's attempt for an early release to home confinement after serving 10 months in prison and said in a ruling earlier this month that it "appears to be just another effort to inject himself into the news cycle." But the Bureau of Prisons can take action to move him to home confinement without a judicial order.

The Bureau of Prisons said last week that more than 2,400 inmates had been moved to home confinement since Barr first issued his memo on home confinement in late March, and 1,200 others had been approved and were expected to be released in the coming weeks.

Other high-profile inmates have also been released as the number of coronavirus cases soars in the federal prison system. Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort was released on home confinement last week. Michael Avenatti, the attorney who rose to fame representing porn star Stormy Daniels in lawsuits against Trump, was temporarily freed from a federal jail in New York City and is staying at a friend's house in Los Angeles.

Former New York state Senate leader Dean Skelos, 72, who was also serving a sentence at Otisville, was released on home confinement after testing positive for the coronavirus.

## **A pastor fights for flock in war against an invisible enemy**

**By JOHN MINCHILLO Associated Press**

NEW YORK (AP) — Fabian Arias arrived in New York City from his native Argentina for what was supposed to be a six-month trip. But the hardships of the Latino immigrant communities he encountered overwhelmed him, and inspired a life-long mission.

"I was young and upset and I listened to God's voice, and he said that this is my place in this moment in my life," Arias said.

Eighteen years later, he's an ordained Lutheran pastor of Saint Peter's Church in Manhattan. And he reflects on the pressures of consoling the living and performing funeral rites for the dead during a pandemic that has disproportionately affected the city's Hispanic community.

"It's very difficult for me to take a normal life and I can't sleep," said Arias, 56.

"I don't know why but I feel more strength, as if God put it there in me, when I see people in a bad situation."

The COVID-19 pandemic has sent shock waves through New York's social strata, bringing into sharp relief the inequalities burdening families that are the backbone of the city's essential workforce.

As businesses remain shuttered, many have begun to rely on makeshift food donation programs such as the one Arias operates six days a week with the help of a small legion of volunteers fanning out across the boroughs.

As loved ones die in isolation, their grieving families struggle to provide services such as those that Arias delivers in their homes. He's aware of the risk but he knows they need an alternative to busy funeral homes that have become prohibitively expensive during the virus outbreak.

The death toll has neared 40 people among the roughly 400 parishioners of his church's Spanish-language services.

On a recent Sunday, he offered services from his spartan apartment in the Bronx via live stream. It included a reading of the painfully long list of the recently deceased from his congregation.

Arias also printed funeral Mass cards for a service in the Queens apartment of Graciela Ruiz, who died of complications from the virus.

A day earlier, he prayed in the streets in several boroughs before he handed out food to hundreds of masked and weary New Yorkers, imploring them to remain vigilant and protect themselves from exposure.

There are no breaks. There are few pauses. Food must be purchased, sorted, and delivered. There are endless phone calls from crying, grieving families and their sick, sometimes coughing into the receiver and begging for prayers. Prayers and funeral rites must be given.

Arias' tenacity is of no surprise to those who know him well.

"I see him as the leader of the immigrants," said Hermes Espinoza, 28, of Mexico, who was just turning 18-years old when Arias became his legal guardian, the first of many who consider him a second father figure.

"He's a hero to the people and he is just doing his job," Espinoza said. "He's a humble person and a beautiful person, inside and out."

## NYC seniors find lighter side of pandemic in comedy class

By MATT SEDENSKY AP National Writer

Their city is under siege, their age group at particular risk and their lives increasingly isolated. But every Monday morning, one group of older New Yorkers is finding plenty to laugh about.

In a raucous hourlong kickoff to each week, the moment's gloomy news disappears into a staccato of jokes, impressions and asides at a senior center's comedy workshop. Time and again, they look for humor in the realities of masked faces, shut-in existences and worries about infection.

"It releases a valve," says Jo Firestone, a 33-year-old professional comedian, former "Tonight Show" writer and frequent TV presence who volunteered to lead the class for Greenwich House, a community organization that runs four senior centers in lower Manhattan. "Maybe they're nervous laughs, maybe they're release laughs, but it seems like it's a healthy thing to joke about it."

The class started in person a few weeks before the lockdown and has met online since. About 20 seniors veer from an anthropomorphized pizza slice's soliloquy to a one-liner on memory loss.

And, then, a range of impressions: Little Miss Muffet brags of her youthfulness bringing perceived virus immunity. A hungry street dog, craving a fix, demands Alpo. Don Rickles delivers a lathered-up response to President Donald Trump's comments on the curative promise of disinfectants.

Later, they go through a string of rapid-fire prompts, including worst online exercise classes ("Trampoline for arthritics," one woman says) to ideas for late-night celebrity sketches ("Beer pong with Lesley Stahl," one man offers). A week later, when students are asked to come up with ill-considered "life hacks," all seem ready with a pandemic-perfect line.

"Have class face-to-face in a small room!"

"Use your mask as your G-string!"

"Have someone cough in your face!"

Interspersed are technological foibles — connection problems, and cameras that catch a senior retreating to bed or fixed on a shot, inexplicably, of a fitted sheet.

Firestone is unfailingly encouraging through it all, and classmates deliver laugh after laugh.

Tequila Minsky, who joined the class after her work as a freelance photographer and writer dried up in the lockdown, remembers students avoiding pandemic jokes at the start. But a shift occurred along the way and the virus is frequently the subtext, even if not explicit.

"It all is coronavirus. You don't even have to say it," says Minsky, who holds her age close to her vest.

As class ends, several students declare it the highlight of their week, an assessment Firestone shares.

Al DiRaffaele is one of those fans who lauds the workshop's "brilliant timing." The 74-year-old retired advertising firm partner logged on to class from a darkened room after a tough weekend in which he learned of a friend's death. He feels the weight of the moment, just as he did when he survived the Vietnam War and an HIV diagnosis and kidney cancer. But he sees no reason to stop looking for laughs.

"I can still smile and look at life on the bright side," he says, "and find the good in the negative."

## Fabled 'Snyder Cut' of 'Justice League' to be released

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For several years, the slogan "Release the Snyder cut" has reverberated online as a rallying cry both genuine and ironic — a "Vive la revolution" for comic book movie fans. On Wednesday, they finally got their wish.

Warner Bros. Pictures announced that a director's cut of Zack Snyder's 2017's DC Comics film "Justice League" will next year debut on the streaming service HBO Max. Snyder first announced the news himself in a live video conference commentary for his Superman film "Man of Steel."

The so-called #ReleaseTheSnyderCut movement began around the release of "Justice League," a movie that Snyder directed but was replaced in post-production by Joss Whedon. The "Avengers" director, who was credited as co-writer, oversaw extensive reshoots, editing and visual effects.

By then, Snyder's stewardship of the DC Comics films had drawn much criticism; his previous film "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice" rated 28% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes. But some fans remained loyal, even as Warner Bros. reshuffled their approach to DC films.

At the time of his departure, Warner Bros. said Snyder was stepping away to be with his family following the death of his 20-year-old daughter.

Snyder remained the sole credited director of "Justice League" and it was likewise panned by critics (40% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) and considered a disappointment by most fans. But some have maintained that Snyder's vision of the film would have been better. In November, even the film's stars Ben Affleck and Gal Gadot added to the chorus on Twitter.

"Since I got here 14 months ago, the chant to #ReleaseTheSnyderCut has been a daily drumbeat in our offices and inboxes. Well, the fans have asked, and we are thrilled to finally deliver," said Robert Greenblatt, chairman of Warner Media Entertainment, in a statement.

It's unclear if another "Snyder cut" ever existed before the director's departure. Speaking to fans during the "Man of Steel" watch party, Snyder said he still had work to do on it.

"I want to thank HBO Max and Warner Brothers for this brave gesture of supporting artists and allowing their true visions to be realized," Snyder said in a statement. "Also a special thank you to all of those involved in the SnyderCut movement for making this a reality."

## In Brazil Amazon, help a flight away for many virus patients

By RENATA BRITO Associated Press

SANTO ANTONIO DO ICA, Brazil (AP) — Residents of Santo Antonio do Ica hid from the sun under umbrellas as they waited anxiously for the twin turboprop plane to land in their town in the farthest reaches of the Brazilian Amazon.

Aboard the aircraft, doctor Daniel Siqueira and nurse Janete Vieira prepared for the day's mission: the evacuation of two patients from the municipality of some 22,000 people. Because COVID-19 has slammed its small population, with almost 500 cases, the town has the highest incidence per capita of any Brazilian municipality, according to a compilation of official data by the G1 news portal.

The lives of 89-year-old Sildomar Castelo Branco and the town's mayor, Abraão Lasmar, would be in the health workers' hands until they landed in state capital of Manaus, some 550 miles (880 kilometers) away.

The sparsely populated but vast rainforest region is among Brazil's hardest hit, with scattered riverside towns completely unprepared to cope with the virus that crept upriver from Manaus. Some towns can't get oxygen tanks refilled or don't have breathing machines, forcing nurses to manually pump air into lungs. When they do have machines, power cuts frequently shut them down.

Many patients need higher level care — so they must wait for the puddlejumper to take them to Manaus, the only place in the state of 4 million people that has full intensive care units. While they wait, their conditions worsen.

"They managed to isolate the remote areas for a bit, but now (the virus) has invaded the remote areas,

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and there are a lot of patients getting worse who need to be brought to the capital," said Siqueira. "If we leave them there, they would die."

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Flying to Manaus is a gamble. The altitude and pressure during the trip can strain already damaged lungs, and a patient's condition can deteriorate in a matter of minutes. The day before this trip, Siqueira lost a COVID-19 patient just 35 minutes after taking off. But there's no alternative.

"In the interior of the state, we don't have human resources, we don't have doctors, we don't have enough people to operate intensive-care unit machines," Gov. Wilson Lima said in an interview in Manaus.

To reach Santo Antonio do Ica, near the border with Colombia, takes several days by boat on the Solimoes River, and there is only so much equipment small aircraft can bring in. Each turboprop can only bring out one critically ill patient at a time because of the demands on the accompanying medics; it can carry an additional less sick patient in a pinch.

Most medical personnel in Amazonas state are concentrated in the swamped hospitals of its capital. There was only one doctor working in Santo Antonio do Ica until Anancy Lasmar, the mayor's niece, returned to her hometown to help. The town has only one ventilator.

"It's hard not to get emotional. I was brought up here and when I got to the front line I saw everyone who I know," Lasmar said. She has lost two uncles and 20 patients.

A federal judge ruled this week that the situation is so critical in the region, which is home to countless indigenous people who are particularly vulnerable, that authorities must urgently expand capacity at a military hospital in the area.

Amazonas, almost as big as Alaska, has the fourth highest number of confirmed coronavirus cases among Brazil's states — despite a small population and insufficient testing. Brazil has confirmed over 271,000 cases and nearly 18,000 deaths; the daily increases to its death toll have been growing.

On Tuesday, state health authorities reported for the first time fewer infections in Manaus — home to nearly half of the state's population — than in the rest of Amazonas. The numbers are reflected in the waiting list of patients requesting medical evacuations that has tripled in recent days, Siqueira said.

In Santo Antonio do Ica, he and his colleague had to jump into action even before their patients boarded. Castelo Branco, the octogenarian, urgently needed a breathing tube inserted — right on the runway. Sweating under his protective suit in the humid air, Siqueira performed the procedure.

"My dad never got sick. Even the flu couldn't bring him down," Castelo Branco's daughter Telma Maria lamented. "But this damn virus brought him down."

Mayor Lasmar, 53, always one to chat and joke with locals like a natural politician, smiled and waved at well-wishers who had gathered at the airport as he boarded the plane. But he couldn't muster a complete sentence as he struggled to breathe.

Residents and relatives watched and prayed as the plane took off. They were unsure whether they'd see them again. For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms. But for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness and lead to death.

For the next three hours, doctors did everything they could to keep Castelo Branco alive, while the mayor, whose condition required less medical attention but was rapidly worsening, coughed nearby.

Minutes into the flight, Castelo Branco's heart rate skyrocketed, forcing Siqueira to inject a cocktail of drugs. The loss of a patient on the prior day's flight was fresh in his memory, and he didn't want a repeat.

But just after his heart rate stabilized, Castelo Branco's blood pressure plummeted. The medical team injected a second round of drugs.

Two ambulances were waiting at Manaus' airport when the plane touched down. Its back hatch opened and Castelo Branco — along with a network of tubes, cables and machines — was pulled from the plane.

He still had a pulse.

"Now he's no longer mine," Siqueira said, breathing a sigh of relief that he had done his part.

As Lasmar climbed into the other ambulance, he gave a thumbs up and managed through strained breath to utter the words: "Thank you."

Hundreds of miles upriver in Santo Antonio do Ica, five more people were waiting for airlifts that might not arrive in time.

## Democrats decry 'pandemic of pollution' under Trump's EPA

By **MATTHEW DALY** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats on Wednesday blasted the Trump administration's moves to roll back environmental regulations during the coronavirus crisis, with one senator saying a "pandemic of pollution" has been released.

The Environmental Protection Agency has weakened regulations dealing with fuel efficiency and mercury emissions and has waived enforcement on a range of public health and environmental mandates, saying industries could have trouble complying with them during the coronavirus pandemic. The rollbacks are among dozens of actions by the EPA to ease requirements on industry to monitor, report and reduce toxic pollutants, heavy metals and climate-damaging fossil fuel emissions.

Administrator Andrew Wheeler said the EPA remains "open for business" and "at work meeting our mission of protecting human health and the environment."

Wheeler told the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee that the EPA has approved hundreds of virus-killing disinfectants in recent weeks — more than 400 now, compared with 60 on March 5.

Wheeler cited a series of actions the agency has taken, including a revised rule that lifts protections for some of the millions of miles of streams, creeks and wetlands in the United States. The long-sought rule change to the Clean Water Act provides much needed regulatory certainty and predictability for American farmers, landowners and businesses, Wheeler said.

Similarly, he defended new rules that relax fuel efficiency standards imposed by the Obama administration and roll back President Barack Obama's signature environmental achievement, a plan to curb climate-changing greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants.

The EPA issued 18 deregulatory actions last year and is developing 45 more now, saving businesses billions of dollars in regulatory costs, Wheeler said. The actions do not come at the cost of enforcing environmental laws, he added, but are aimed at "modernizing decades-old regulations and bring them up to date."

Democrats scoffed at that claim.

A staff report released by Delaware Sen. Tom Carper, the committee's senior Democrat, said the EPA under Republican Trump "has continued its relentless march to weaken or repeal rules that were designed to remove greenhouse gas, soot, mercury and other pollution from our air."

It said that since March 1, the EPA has proposed or finalized several rules that will result in increased air pollution and could cause tens of thousands of premature deaths.

"While the rest of the country works around the clock to combat and overcome this deadly respiratory pandemic, the Trump EPA has been spearheading a pandemic of pollution," Carper said.

The EPA's actions have removed "critical protections for public health under the guise of industry relief and economic growth," Carper added. "Under normal circumstances, these rollbacks would be cause for grave concern. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they are profoundly irresponsible and cause for alarm."

An EPA spokeswoman disputed Democrats' claims that the temporary enforcement waiver allows companies to openly exceed pollution limits. The agency will not seek penalties for noncompliance with routine requirements on a case-by-case basis, if the EPA agrees it was caused by the pandemic.

Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., accused Wheeler of acting to benefit industry at the expense of millions of Americans, especially the poor and vulnerable who are disproportionately harmed by increased air and water pollution.

"You have turned EPA into Every Polluters' Ally," Markey said. "Shame on you. Your decisions make this pandemic worse."



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Wheeler shot back: "Sir, your facts are not correct," adding that air quality in the United States is "healthier today than it was three years ago" when Trump took office.

The EPA cited preliminary data showing a decline in 2019 in emissions of nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, carbon dioxide and mercury from power plants in the lower 48 states.

But according to federal data, air quality had slipped during the first two years of the Trump administration. Anecdotal data from this year shows dramatic improvements in air quality worldwide because of lockdowns during the pandemic.

Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., the committee chairman, said the EPA under Wheeler and Trump "has replaced punishing regulations that harmed the coal industry, farmers and ranchers and many small businesses" in Wyoming and elsewhere. He said that Trump's EPA has saved U.S. businesses more than \$5 billion in regulatory costs.

Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, asserted that the Obama administration's EPA was run by "lawless public servants" and that actions undertaken by then-Administrator Gina McCarthy "really, really hurt my state."

McCarthy, now president and CEO of the Natural Resources Defense Council, a leading environmental group, could not be reached immediately. But a spokeswoman said Sullivan's claim of lawlessness was aimed at the wrong administration.

The organization has filed 112 lawsuits against the Trump administration since 2017 and has won 90% (65 of 72) of the cases resolved so far, said spokeswoman Jenny Powers.

## Body of WWE's Shad Gaspard found after suspected drowning

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The body of former World Wrestling Entertainment pro Shad Gaspard was found early Wednesday on Los Angeles' Venice Beach, after he was caught in a rip current last weekend, police said.

Patrol officers were flagged down around 1:25 a.m. by a person reporting that a body had washed ashore, a Police Department statement said.

He was identified as Gaspard and his family was notified, police said. Gaspard went missing last Sunday after he went swimming with his 10-year-old son, Aryeh.

The boy was rescued and several other swimmers made it out of the water safely.

Gaspard, 39, gained prominence in the WWE as one half of the tag-team group Cryme Tyme, along with his partner, JTG. After retiring in 2010, Gaspard has had small roles on TV and in movies, including the 2015 Kevin Hart comedy "Get Hard."

He was about 50 yards (46 meters) from shore when he was last spotted by a lifeguard, police said. A wave crashed over him and he was swept out to sea.

His wife, Siliana Gaspard, issued a statement Tuesday thanking authorities and fans.

"We would like to express our gratitude to the first responders who rescued Aryeh and to the lifeguards, coast guard, divers, fire and police departments for their continued efforts to help find our beloved Shad," the statement said.

## 20 years after withdrawal, Israel, Hezbollah brace for war

By **BASSEM MROUE** and **JOSEF FEDERMAN** Associated Press

KFAR CHOUBA, Lebanon (AP) — Twenty years after Hezbollah guerrillas pushed Israel's last troops from southern Lebanon, both sides are gearing up for a possible war that neither seems to want.

Israeli troops are striking Hezbollah targets in neighboring Syria and drilling for what could be an invasion of Lebanon. The militant Hezbollah group is beefing up its own forces and threatening to invade Israel if provoked. The bitter enemies routinely exchange warnings and threats.

"We are preparing seriously for the next war. We're not taking any shortcuts because we understand we have to be extremely strong to defeat the enemy," said Col. Israel Friedler, an Israeli commander who has been overseeing a weeks-long exercise simulating war with Hezbollah at a base in northern Israel.

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Hezbollah emerged as a ragtag guerrilla group in the 1980s, funded by Iran to battle Israeli troops occupying southern Lebanon. A protracted guerrilla war, characterized by roadside bombs and sniper attacks, eventually forced Israel to withdraw in May 2000. With the exception of an inconclusive, monthlong war in 2006, the volatile frontier has largely remained calm.

Since then, Hezbollah has evolved into the most powerful military and political entity in Lebanon. The party and its allies dominate Lebanon's parliament and are the main power behind Prime Minister Hassan Diab's government.

"Domestically, Hezbollah has emerged to become the preponderant force in Lebanon," said Hilal Khashan, a political science professor at the American University of Beirut. But regionally, he said, "the position of Hezbollah is precarious" due to Israeli pressure, domestic turmoil and problems for its Iranian benefactors.

The group can ill afford another massive clash with Israel. The Lebanese economy is in shambles, around half the population is now estimated to live in poverty — including in Hezbollah strongholds — and the group's finances are suffering because of U.S. sanctions imposed on it and Iran. The group also suffered heavy losses in the Syrian civil war, losing some 2,000 fighters while battling alongside the forces of Syria's President Bashar Assad. Once seen as a liberation movement, Hezbollah is now seen by many in Lebanon and the region as an Iranian pawn.

Qassim Qassir, an expert on Hezbollah, says the group has no interest in going to war but has been preparing for battle for a long time. "The battle will not be a battle of missiles only," he said, a reference that Hezbollah might try to invade parts of northern Israel.

In a region filled with adversaries, Israel considers Hezbollah to be its toughest and most immediate threat.

During the 2006 war, the group launched some 4,000 rockets into Israel, most of them unguided projectiles with limited ranges. Today, Israeli officials say Hezbollah possesses some 130,000 rockets and missiles capable of striking virtually anywhere in Israel. They say it has sophisticated anti-tank missiles, night-vision equipment and cyber warfare capabilities.

Hezbollah operates along the border, in violation of the U.N. cease-fire that ended the 2006 war. It also has established a presence in southern Syria, near the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights, providing an additional front in a future war. Most critically, Israel believes Hezbollah is trying to develop and build precision-guided missiles.

Sheikh Ali Daamouh, a top Hezbollah official, claimed the Israelis are afraid of Hezbollah's missile program. "The Israelis should be worried and scared because the resistance now has the will, intention, capabilities and force to make Israel face a great defeat in any coming confrontation," he said.

That confrontation may come sooner than anticipated. Israel has acknowledged carrying out scores of airstrikes in neighboring Syria in recent years, most of them believed to have been aimed at stopping Iranian arms shipments or missile technology for Hezbollah.

Syria has accused Israel of carrying out at least seven airstrikes in the past two months alone, believed to have targeted Iranian and proxy interests.

Israeli officials say that neither Iran's troubles — including the coronavirus crisis, plunging oil prices and U.S. sanctions — nor Lebanon's domestic problems have changed Hezbollah's behavior. They point to a recent attempt by Hezbollah to fly a drone into Israeli airspace and an incident last month in which alleged Hezbollah operatives damaged a fence along the Israeli-Lebanese frontier.

The Lebanese border town of Kfar Chouba, overseen by three Israeli positions, was quiet Wednesday, three days after Israeli troops shot and wounded a Syrian shepherd who had crossed into Israeli-held territory. The area is a disputed enclave along the frontier between Israel, Syria and Lebanon.

In the nearby Kham plain, dozens of farmers were planting watermelon seeds in an orchard just a few meters (yards) from a fence marking the border. On the other side, residents of the town of Metulla were seen driving through streets decorated with blue and white Israeli flags placed on electric poles as farmers worked in nearby fields and trucks entered and left a factory.

U.N. peacekeepers patrolled the border areas while Lebanese troops kept a close eye from posts throughout the region.

In recent weeks, tens of thousands of Israeli troops have been participating in a massive exercise at

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the Elyakim military base. On a recent day, four Israeli tanks rumbled up to the edge of a ridge and fired powerful 120-millimeter shells streaking across the valley, scoring direct hits on targets several kilometers (miles) away. Ground troops maneuvered through a mock Lebanese village. Air force, navy and cyber units joined the drill.

Friedler, the Israeli commander, said if there is another war, Israel will have no choice but to cross the border to halt Hezbollah fire. He said battling an enemy entrenched in civilian areas is like "fighting with handcuffs on," but insisted that his troops are ready.

Hezbollah has also vowed to cross into Israel in any future war. In late 2018, Israel uncovered and later destroyed what it said was a network of cross-border tunnels.

Despite these tensions, residents along Israel's northern border say life has greatly improved since Israel withdrew from its self-declared "security zone" two decades ago.

Nisim Shtern, a farmer in the northern Israeli border town of Kerem Ben Zimar, spent time in southern Lebanon as a soldier in the mid-1980s and remembers times when Katyusha rockets rained down on the area.

Shtern, who grows pomegranates and wine grapes, says day-to-day life is good, but some residents still get jittery. He said he trusts the army to take quick and decisive action whenever needed.

"We need to strike them hard and get out," he said. "If there's a problem, take care of it with maximum force."

In Kfar Chouba, grocer Mohammed Ali Yahya, 62, said in the past people were scared of the Israeli military, but that is no longer the case.

"They will not dare invade again," he said.

## Cyclone batters India and Bangladesh coasts, millions flee

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL and JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — A powerful cyclone plowed inland on Wednesday after crashing into the coasts of India and Bangladesh, where more than 2.6 million people fled to shelters in a frantic evacuation made more challenging by the coronavirus pandemic.

Cyclone Amphan, the equivalent of a category 3 hurricane, was packing sustained winds of up to 170 kilometers (105 miles) per hour with maximum gusts of 190 kph (118 mph).

Although the cyclone was expected to weaken as it moved towards Bangladesh, authorities warned of extensive damage to flimsy houses and storm surges pushing seawater 25 kilometers (15 miles) inland, flooding cities including Kolkata.

The cyclone washed away bridges connecting Indian islands to the mainland and left many areas without electricity or phone service, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee told reporters Wednesday evening. She said that while a clearer picture of the devastation would emerge by Thursday, there had been at least 7 deaths.

"We are facing three crises: the coronavirus, the thousands of migrants who are returning home and now the cyclone," said Banerjee, who is an opposition leader and one of the fiercest critics of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The southern districts of the state were worst affected, officials said, adding the crisis was far from over, with strong winds likely to continue until early Thursday morning. Heavy rainfall was forecast for many parts of the state in the coming week.

As the cyclone hit the coast, coconut trees swayed wildly, electric poles lay scattered on the roads of Kolkata, rain pounded fishing villages and rivers surged. Thousands of homes were damaged and river embankments were washed away.

"The next 24 hours are very crucial. This is a long haul," said M. Mohapatra, India's meteorological chief.

The region, with 58 million people in the two bordering countries, has some of the most vulnerable communities in South Asia. They include poor fishing communities in the Sunderbans and more than 1 million Rohingya refugees living in crowded camps in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh.

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A woman crushed by a tree and a 13-year-old girl killed near Kolkata were among the first deaths reported in India. In southern Bangladesh, a volunteer in a cyclone preparedness team drowned when a boat capsized in a canal.

The cyclone could endanger India's fight against the coronavirus, with supply lines cut, roads destroyed and lockdown measures slowing relief work, said T. Sundaramanan, a health systems consultant in Pondicherry in southeast India.

Tuhin Ghosh, director of the School of Oceanographic Studies at Jadavpur University, said the pandemic's lockdown has already sapped people's resilience.

"Because they are economically down, they are not getting enough food. ... When another disaster comes, then it's a double impact," he said.

The cyclone made landfall between the seaside resort of Digha in West Bengal and Bangladesh's Hatiya Island. The eye of the storm was likely to pass through the Sunderbans, one of the largest mangrove forests in the world, India's meteorological department said.

The forests could act as a vital line of defense by dissipating some energy from waves that would otherwise slam the coastline, said K.J. Ramesh, the department's former chief.

People living in isolated mangrove forest communities were vulnerable. Ghosh said their houses could be inundated and that mud homes had already washed away.

Bangladesh has evacuated around 2.4 million people to safety. India's West Bengal state moved nearly 300,000 and Odisha state another 148,486, officials said.

In refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, where the first 10 coronavirus cases were confirmed last week, authorities and U.N. workers prepared 50 shelters and assigned 256 volunteer units.

Areas at risk of landslides were stabilized with bamboo and concrete walls. But the combination of the virus and cyclone could lead to a "new humanitarian crisis" said Manuel Pereira, deputy chief of mission for the International Organization for Migration in Bangladesh.

"We know that if people are forced to seek communal shelter, they'll be unable to maintain physical distancing and run the risk of contracting or transmitting the virus," Pereira said.

Masks and hand sanitizers were hastily added to emergency items in the shelters. Authorities in Bangladesh had assigned medical teams for each shelter, said Bangladesh's Junior Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Enamur Rahman.

Sobrato Das, a fisherman on Mousuni Island in India, close to the Sunderbans, described the shelters as crowded and said few people had masks.

Children were crying and women desperately tried to cover their faces with their saris while trying to maintain some distance from each other, Das said.

Some cyclone shelters in West Bengal were being used to quarantine virus patients and migrant workers returning to their homes. The state government asked for trains transporting migrants to be suspended, Banerjee said.

Some in the cyclone's path saw a choice between the virus and the storm.

Many people in Digha feared going to the shelters, fisherman Debasis Shyamal said: "They have been home for weeks, and are afraid of going into a crowd where they could get infected."

The densely populated city of Kolkata, which has nearly 1,500 coronavirus cases, was likely to experience flooding and officials warned that some centuries-old buildings could collapse due to the strong winds. Ghosh, whose home in the city's south was being lashed by heavy rain and winds, said that Kolkata had "probably never witnessed this kind of cyclone."

The cyclone is bearing down during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, and some Bangladeshis who fasted during the day reportedly waited until the early morning hours Wednesday before heading for the shelters.

The region is no stranger to devastating cyclones. Ramesh, the former chief of India's weather agency, said it wasn't the frequency of cyclones but their intensity that has increased due to changing climate patterns.

He said this was caused by the temperature of the sea's surface. Warm ocean water is where storms get

their energy, and the amount of heat trapped in the top 700 meters (2,300 feet) of the seas has increased. "As a result, cyclones are intensifying faster than before," he said.

## Pompeo denies retaliation but won't explain watchdog ouster

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday adamantly denied that he recommended firing the State Department's independent watchdog in retaliation for investigations into Pompeo's conduct as America's top diplomat. But Pompeo again declined to provide specific reasons for Steve Linick's dismissal as inspector general.

Pompeo took an unusually harsh shot at the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, New Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez. Pompeo accused the senator's office of being behind allegations that Linick's ouster was motivated by revenge. Pompeo said he would not take ethics lessons from Menendez, who was once prosecuted by the Justice Department on corruption charges, but his trial ended in a hung jury and prosecutors decided in early 2018 not to retry him.

"I don't get my ethics advice from Sen. Menendez," he said.

Menendez responded by saying Pompeo's use of "diversion tactics by attempting to smear me is as predictable as it is shameful."

He said in a statement that Pompeo faced an investigation "into this improper firing and into his attempt to cover up his inappropriate and possibly illegal actions," and that it was no surprise Pompeo was lashing out against lawmakers for their congressional oversight.

Pompeo told reporters that he was unaware of any investigation into allegations that he may have mistreated staffers by instructing them to run personal errands for him and his wife such as walking his dog and picking up dry cleaning and takeout food. Thus, Pompeo said, it would have been impossible for retaliation to have been the motive behind his recommendation to President Donald Trump to dismiss Linick.

"It's patently false," he said. "I have no sense of what investigations were taking place inside the inspector general's office. I couldn't possibly have retaliated for all the things. I've seen the various stories that like, someone was walking my dog to sell arms to my dry cleaner. I mean, it's all just crazy. It's all crazy stuff."

Pompeo did acknowledge that he was aware of an investigation into his decision last year to bypass congressional objections to approve a multibillion-dollar arms sale to Saudi Arabia because he had answered written questions about it posed by Linick's office, But Pompeo maintained he did not know the scope or scale of the investigation.

Trump fired Linick late on Friday in what congressional aides have suggested was a move to preempt investigations into Pompeo's personal conduct or possible impropriety in the Saudi arms sale. Pompeo, who previously told The Washington Post that Linick had been "undermining" the State Department's work, said he had recommended Linick's removal, but refused to cite specific reasons.

Pompeo said he had been concerned about the inspector general's work for some time and that he regretted not calling for his dismissal earlier. "I recommended to the president that Steve Linick be terminated," he said. "I frankly should have done it some time ago."

Linick is one of several inspectors general that Trump has removed from office, sparking outrage among Democrats who say the administration is waging war on accountability. Democrats and some Republicans have questioned the firings, saying the watchdogs can only be removed for cause and that Trump's explanation that he has lost confidence in them is not enough.

Linick was an Obama administration appointee whose office was critical of what it saw as political bias in the State Department's current management but had also taken issue with Democratic appointees. He also played a minor role in the Ukraine impeachment investigation into Trump.

In October, Linick turned over documents to House investigators that he had received from a State Department counselor, T. Ulrich Brechbuhl, a close Pompeo associate. The material contained information from debunked conspiracy theories about Ukraine's role in the 2016 U.S. election.

Menendez and Democratic Rep. Eliot Engel of New York, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Commit-

tee, have initiated an investigation into Linick's firing. They demanded that administration officials preserve and turn over all records related to Linick's dismissal and provide them to the committees by Friday.

Pompeo did not respond to a question about whether the State Department would comply with the demand, an omission that Engel lamented in a statement.

"It's disappointing that Secretary Pompeo didn't seize the opportunity to clear up the questions surrounding his recommendation to fire Inspector General Linick, or to commit to fulfilling the records request I made with Senator Menendez," Engel said. "Our investigation will go forward and we still hope for the Secretary's cooperation."

## **GOP fronts 'pro-Trump' doctors to prescribe rapid reopening**

**By MICHAEL BIESECKER and JASON DEAREN Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican political operatives are recruiting "extremely pro-Trump" doctors to go on television to prescribe reviving the U.S. economy as quickly as possible, without waiting to meet safety benchmarks proposed by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to slow the spread of the new coronavirus.

The plan was discussed in a May 11 conference call with a senior staffer for the Trump reelection campaign organized by CNP Action, an affiliate of the GOP-aligned Council for National Policy. A leaked recording of the hourlong call was provided to The Associated Press by the Center for Media and Democracy, a progressive watchdog group.

CNP Action is part of the Save Our Country Coalition, an alliance of conservative think tanks and political committees formed in late April to end state lockdowns implemented in response to the pandemic. Other members of the coalition include the FreedomWorks Foundation, the American Legislative Exchange Council and Tea Party Patriots.

A resurgent economy is seen as critical to boosting President Donald Trump's reelection hopes and has become a growing focus of the White House coronavirus task force led by Vice President Mike Pence.

Tim Murtaugh, the Trump campaign communications director, confirmed to AP that an effort to recruit doctors to publicly support the president is underway, but declined to say when the initiative would be rolled out.

"Anybody who joins one of our coalitions is vetted," Murtaugh said Monday. "And so quite obviously, all of our coalitions espouse policies and say things that are, of course, exactly simpatico with what the president believes. ... The president has been outspoken about the fact that he wants to get the country back open as soon as possible."

During an emergency such as the current pandemic, it's important that the government provide consistent science-based information to the public, said Dr. Wafaa El-Sadr, an epidemiology professor at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert and a member of the White House's coronavirus task force, has been among the most visible government experts warning that lifting lockdowns too quickly could lead to a spike in deaths.

El-Sadr said having doctors relay contradictory information on behalf of the president is "quite alarming."

"I find it totally irresponsible to have physicians who are touting some information that's not anchored in evidence and not anchored in science," El-Sadr said. "What often creates confusion is the many voices that are out there, and many of those voices do have a political interest, which is the hugely dangerous situation we are at now."

Murtaugh said the campaign is not concerned about contradicting government experts.

"Our job at the campaign is to reflect President Trump's point of view," Murtaugh said. "We are his campaign. There is no difference between us and him."

On the May 11 call, Nancy Schulze, a GOP activist who is married to former Rep. Dick Schulze, R-Pa., said she had given the campaign a list of 27 doctors prepared to defend Trump's reopening push.

"There is a coalition of doctors who are extremely pro-Trump that have been preparing and coming together for the war ahead in the campaign on health care," Schulze said on the call. "And we have doctors

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that are ... in the trenches, that are saying 'It's time to reopen.'"

The idea quickly gained support from Mercedes Schlapp, a Trump campaign senior adviser who previously served two years as the president's director of strategic communications.

"Those are the types of guys that we should want to get out on TV and radio to help push out the message," Schlapp said on the call.

"They've already been vetted. But they need to be put on the screens," Schulze replied.

Schlapp's husband agreed the president is getting criticized for not appearing to follow the advice of public health experts. Matt Schlapp is chairman of the American Conservative Union, which hosts the annual Conservative Political Action Conference attended by conservative luminaries.

"The president's going to get tagged by the fake news media as being irresponsible and not listening to doctors," Matt Schlapp said on the call. "And so we have to gird his loins with a lot of other people. So I think what Nancy's talking about ... this is the critical juncture that we highlight them."

Matt Schlapp told AP on Monday that he stood behind what he said on the leaked call.

"There is a big dynamic in the national media that will not give President Trump any credit," he said. "It's important to get the message out there that most people recover from corona. Most people are not in mortal danger with corona and that we can safely open up the economy."

As several Republican governors moved last week to lift their state lockdowns, the National Ensemble Forecast used by the CDC to predict COVID-19 infections and deaths saw a corresponding increase. The CDC now forecasts the U.S. will exceed 100,000 deaths by June 1, a grim milestone that previously was not predicted to occur until late in the summer.

As of Tuesday, more than 1.5 million Americans had tested positive for COVID-19, with more than 91,000 deaths reported nationwide.

Experts, including Fauci, have said that is likely an undercount, with the true number being much higher. Meanwhile, Trump has suggested, without providing evidence, that the official death toll from the virus is being inflated.

Schulze, who was working to organize the pro-Trump doctors, did not respond to messages from AP seeking comment. But after the AP contacted the Trump campaign seeking comment for this story, a Washington public relations firm that frequently works for conservative groups distributed an open letter to Trump signed by more than 400 doctors calling the state coronavirus lockdowns a "mass casualty event" causing "millions of casualties" from alcoholism, homelessness, suicide and other causes.

"It is impossible to overstate the short, medium, and long-term harm to people's health with a continued shutdown," the letter said. "Losing a job is one of life's most stressful events, and the effect on a person's health is not lessened because it also has happened to 30 million other people. Keeping schools and universities closed is incalculably detrimental for children, teenagers, and young adults for decades to come."

The first signature on the letter was Dr. Simone Gold, an emergency medicine specialist in Los Angeles who is listed as a member of the Save Our Country Coalition on the group's website. She has recently appeared on conservative talk radio and podcast programs to advocate for the use of hydroxychloroquine, an anti-malaria drug that Trump says he is taking because he believes it can prevent COVID-19 even though his own administration has warned it can have deadly side effects. Gold said she has prescribed the drug to two of her patients with good results.

The Food and Drug Administration warned health professionals last month that the drug should not be used to treat COVID-19 outside of hospital or research settings due to sometimes fatal side effects.

Gold told AP on Tuesday she started speaking out against shelter-in-place and other infection control measures because there was "no scientific basis that the average American should be concerned" about COVID-19. Like the president, she is advocating for a fast reopening, and argues that because the majority of deaths so far have been the elderly and people with preexisting conditions, younger people should be working.

Gold denied she was coordinating her efforts with Trump's reelection campaign.

"But put this in there: I'm honored to be considered," she said.

## Sept. 11 convict now says he renounces terrorism, bin Laden

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) — The only man ever convicted in a U.S. court for a role in the Sept. 11 attacks now says he is renouncing terrorism, al-Qaida and the Islamic State.

Zacarias Moussaoui is serving a life sentence at a federal prison in Colorado after narrowly escaping the death penalty at his 2006 trial.

He was sometimes referred to as the missing 20th hijacker, and while he was clearly a member of al-Qaida there is scant evidence to suggest he was slated to hijack a plane on Sept. 11, 2001. Instead, prosecutors pinned responsibility on Moussaoui because they said he could have prevented the attacks if he had not lied to the FBI about his knowledge of al-Qaida and its efforts to attack the U.S. when he was arrested in August 2001.

In a handwritten court motion Moussaoui filed with the federal court in Alexandria last month, Moussaoui wrote, "I denounce, repudiate Usama bin Laden as a useful idiot of the CIA/Saudi. I also proclaim unequivocally my opposition to any terrorist action, attack, propaganda against the U.S."

He also said he wants "to warn young Muslim against the deception and the manipulation of these fake Jihadis."

His remarks are a far cry from his 2006 trial, when he taunted victims and flashed a victory sign after a jury opted to send him to prison for life rather than execute him. At his final sentencing hearing, he told the judge "God save Osama bin Laden you will never get him."

Bin Laden was killed in a raid by U.S. forces on a compound in Pakistan in 2011.

Moussaoui made his renunciation in a petition seeking relaxation of the special administrative measures under which he serves his sentence. In particular, he says he wants either Rudy Giuliani or Alan Dershowitz to represent him as a lawyer, so he can testify in a civil trial filed by victims of the Sept. 11 attacks. Prison documents filed with his motion indicate he received a response of some kind to a letter he wrote to the American Civil Liberties Union but was not allowed to see it because it was marked as privileged legal communication, and he is only allowed to receive the mail if the prison can open and read it.

Moussaoui has a long history of writing letters to the court — indeed he served as his own lawyer for several years leading up to his trial and regularly wrote legal motions referring to himself as "Slave of Allah," a name he continues to use.

He has written numerous letters seeking to testify at the 9/11 civil trial, and at the military trials of al-Qaida members including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. But those requests have not included the explicit renunciation of terrorism that he includes in his most recent letter. As recently as 2018, he continued to refer to himself as a "natural born terrorist" in court papers. In another handwritten motion that year, he concluded his motion with "God Curse Ugly Satan of Abomination" in huge letters.

Katherine Donahue, an anthropology professor at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire, who wrote a book about Moussaoui called "Slave of Allah" after attending his 2006 trial, said she was unaware of any other instance in which Moussaoui had renounced terrorism or bin Laden. She said she expects he is being truthful, even though he admitted at his trial that he lied to the FBI after his arrest.

"He's been there 14 years. It's a long time to think about what you've done," she said. "I don't see him lying. ... There were so many ways he could have helped himself before by lying" but he didn't.

Terry Strada, whose husband died in the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center and is one of the plaintiffs suing Saudi Arabia for its alleged complicity in the attacks, was more skeptical.

"I don't trust him, that he's reformed himself in prison," she said. "I wouldn't trust him around anybody's youth."

Lawyers representing the 9/11 plaintiffs did not return calls and emails seeking comment, nor did Giuliani or Dershowitz.

U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema, who presided over Moussaoui's trial and was regularly subjected to Moussaoui's insults in court papers, denied his request and said any grievance he has about the treatment he's receiving in prison should be filed in Colorado where he resides.



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"Raising these issues with this Court is an act of futility," Brinkema wrote.

Moussaoui has appealed her denial to the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia.

## **VIRUS DIARY: In Hong Kong lockdown, watched by a wristband**

**By ZEN SOO AP Business Writer**

HONG KONG (AP) — It took only a few seconds. Shortly after I stepped off a flight from Singapore, an official at the Hong Kong immigration counter gestured for me to extend my arm, then strapped a bulky plastic box to my wrist.

And just like that, I had a new companion for the next 14 days of self-isolation — a government quarantine tracker.

In online pictures, the trackers were inconspicuous devices almost like a concert wristband. Those didn't look so bad. What I got, though, was a gadget about the size of a deck of cards that I had to pair with a government quarantine app. After that, if I left my home or stepped more than 30 feet from my phone for a prolonged period of time, the app would alert authorities that I may have broken quarantine.

The bulky tracker turned out to be a new version released after Hong Kong admitted that only a third of the first-generation wristbands actually worked. The rest simply never activated.

On the taxi ride home, I examined it closely. The tracker hardly looked like a high-tech device meant to keep tabs on me. It was so light that I wondered if maybe it was an empty shell, a cheap fake to trick me into staying put.

I wasn't about to take it off to find out, even though having a tracker branded me as a potential risk to society, at least for two weeks. I found myself trying to hide it when I arrived at my apartment building, afraid others might see and shun me.

Over the next two weeks, I wore the tracker in the shower, while exercising, and of course to sleep. Sometimes I'd forget about it entirely. At other moments, the constant presence on my wrist was all I could feel, a perpetual reminder that I was a virtual prisoner in my home.

It did make a handy conversation starter. When I showed it off at a friend's Zoom birthday party, many giggled at the size of it. One attendee called it my ankle monitor.

Despite the jokes, I was keenly aware that I was privileged to be in comfortable quarters, unlike some who had to quarantine in Hong Kong's infamous cage homes — regular apartments effectively subdivided into tiny cells.

But being in quarantine also frustrated me. I had to rely on the goodwill of my flatmate to help me buy groceries and the like, and I used food delivery services for most of my meals to avoid having to trouble her.

Sometimes, I'd forget which day of the week it was. When I needed fresh air, I'd stick my head out of the one window in my living room that wasn't grilled shut, envying people walking freely outside.

Since neither tracker nor app did much to attract attention, it was easy to forget I was under surveillance — at least, until an alert popped up on my iPhone to remind me the app was watching. On the third day of my quarantine, a government official called to check if I was at home. On the 10th day, two uniformed officers came knocking, asking me to show identification to prove I hadn't gone anywhere.

When the clock struck midnight on Sunday, my quarantine was over. Immediately, I snipped off the tracker and tapped the "Finish the quarantine" button in the app before uninstalling it. What a relief.

Just to be sure, though, I got out a hammer and a screwdriver and cracked the tracker open, then removed the small circuit board inside and pulled out its battery. Free at last.

## **Oprah Winfrey gives grants to 'home' cities during pandemic**

**By MESFIN FEKADU AP Entertainment Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — Oprah Winfrey is giving grants to the cities she's called home through her \$12 million coronavirus relief fund.

She announced Wednesday that her Oprah Winfrey Charitable Foundation will donate money to organizations dedicated to helping underserved communities in Chicago; Baltimore; Nashville, Tennessee;

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Milwaukee; and Kosciusko, Mississippi, where she was born.

"The reason I'm talking about it is because there is going to be a need for people of means to step up," Winfrey said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I mean, this thing is not going away. Even when the virus is gone, the devastation left by people not being able to work for months who were holding on paycheck to paycheck, who have used up their savings — people are going to be in need. So my thing is, look in your own neighborhood, in your own backyard to see how you can serve and where your service is most essential. That is the real essential work, I think, for people of means."

After speaking with Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot and other leaders, Winfrey decided to give \$5 million to Live Healthy Chicago, which provides immediate support to seniors and high-risk residents affected by the coronavirus.

In Nashville, where Winfrey lived with her father and started her media career, she is giving \$2 million to NashvilleNurtures, a collaboration with Mount Zion Baptist Church and Tennessee State University, Winfrey's alma mater. They plan to feed 10,000 families in and around the city.

In Milwaukee, where she lived with her mother, Winfrey is assisting those in need of housing and mental health care with a \$100,000 donation to SaintA and The Nia Imani Family, Inc.

In Baltimore, where Winfrey also built her media career, she's donating money to Living Classrooms Foundation and Center for Urban Families.

She will also give \$115,000 to the Boys and Girls Club of East Mississippi.

"I'm not opposed to big organizations dispersing money, but I always like to do the on-the-ground grass-roots stuff myself," she said. "Look, I want to be able to reach people who have been incarcerated and are coming out of prison. I want to reach mothers of domestic violence. I want to reach people. I want to feed people. I want to help people get access to testing."

Winfrey said she's been homebound since March 11, four days after she wrapped her nine-city wellness tour that visited arenas like Barclays Center in Brooklyn and the Forum in Inglewood, California.

She announced her COVID-19 Relief Fund last month, initially giving \$1 million to America's Food Fund. She said Wednesday that she will also give grants to advocacy organization Global Citizen, New Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago and Minnie's Food Pantry in Plano, Texas, among other organizations.

Before giving out millions to others, Winfrey said she first helped the people closest to her.

"The first thing I did was start in my own family, people I knew who were going to be touched and were not going to have jobs. Then I moved out to people who I've worked with and known who maybe would be out of work. I started literally here, working my way out, and then into the community. So people who I hadn't spoken to in years ended up getting checks from me like, 'What is this?'" she said.

"All the cousins and some aunties — try to help your own family first," she added. "I didn't want an announcement about, 'I'm going out into the world trying to help other people' and then your own family saying, 'Hey, I can't pay my light bill. I can't pay my rent.'"

Last week, Winfrey gave a commencement speech during Facebook's virtual "Graduation 2020" event, and asked the graduates, "What will your essential service be?" She said she's asked herself the same question.

"What this pandemic has done is made me think about giving differently. How I give and who's on the receiving end of that, and how do you do that in such a way that sustains people? I've ultimately always believed that you teach people to fish ... but sometimes people just need fish and a piece of bread," she said. "Sometimes you need some fish, OK? Sometimes you don't have time to learn to fish. I just need some fish today!"

## Quest for 'super-duper' missiles pits US against key rivals

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — They fly at speeds of a mile a second or faster and maneuver in ways that make them extra difficult to detect and destroy in flight.

President Donald Trump calls them "super-duper" missiles though they're better known as hypersonic

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weapons. And they are at the heart of Trump administration worries about China and Russia.

For decades the United States has searched for ways to get ultra-fast flight right. But it has done so in fits and starts. Now, with China and Russia arguably ahead in this chase, the Trump administration is pouring billions of dollars a year into hypersonic offense and defense.

The Pentagon makes no bones about their purpose.

"Our ultimate goal is, simply, we want to dominate future battlefields," Mark Lewis, the Pentagon's director of defense research and engineering for modernization, told reporters in March.

Critics argue that hypersonic weapons would add little to the United States' ability to deter war. Some think they could ignite a new, destabilizing arms race.

A look at hypersonic weapons:

## WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT HYPERSONIC?

Two things make these weapons special: speed and maneuverability. Speed brings surprise, and maneuverability creates elusiveness. Together, those qualities could mean trouble for missile defenses.

By generally agreed definition, a hypersonic weapon is one that flies at speeds in excess of Mach 5, or five times the speed of sound. Most American missiles, such as those launched from aircraft to hit other aircraft or ground targets, travel between Mach 1 and Mach 5.

Trump occasionally mentions his interest in hypersonic weapons, sometimes without using the term. In February he told governors visiting the White House: "We have the super-fast missiles — tremendous number of the super-fast. We call them 'super-fast,' where they're four, five, six and even seven times faster than an ordinary missile. We need that because, again, Russia has some."

And last Friday, Trump told reporters, "We have no choice, we have to do it, with the adversaries we have out there," mentioning China and Russia. He added, "I call it the super-duper missile." He said he "heard" it travels 17 times faster than any other U.S. missile. "It just got the go-ahead," he added, although the Pentagon would not comment on that.

## HOW THEY WORK

The Pentagon is pursuing two main types of hypersonic weapons. One, called a hypersonic glide vehicle, is launched from a rocket. It then glides to a target, maneuvering at high speed to evade interception. The other is sometimes referred to as a hypersonic cruise missile. Capable of being launched from a fighter jet or bomber, it would be powered by a supersonic combustion ramjet, or scramjet, enabling the missile to fly and maneuver at lower altitudes.

On March 19, the Pentagon flight-tested a hypersonic glide vehicle at its Pacific Missile Range Facility in Kauai, Hawaii. It deemed the test a success and "a major milestone towards the department's goal of fielding hypersonic warfighting capabilities in the early- to mid-2020s."

Unlike Russia, the United States says it is not developing hypersonic weapons for use with a nuclear warhead. As a result, a U.S. hypersonic weapon will need to be more accurate, posing additional technical challenges.

As recently as 2017, the Pentagon was spending about \$800 million on hypersonic weapon programs. That nearly doubled the following year, then rose to \$2.4 billion a year later and hit \$3.4 billion this year. The administration's 2021 budget request, which has yet to be approved by Congress, requests \$3.6 billion.

Although this is a priority for Pentagon spending, it could become limited by the budgetary pressures that are expected as a result of multitrillion-dollar federal spending to counter the coronavirus pandemic.

## WHY THEY MATTER

Top Pentagon officials say it's about Russia and, even more so, China.

"By almost any metric that I can construct, China is certainly moving out ahead of us," Lewis, the Pentagon research and engineering official, said Tuesday. "In large measure, that's because we did their homework for them." Basic research in this field was published by the U.S. years ago, "and then we kind of took our foot off the gas," although the Pentagon is now on a path to catch up and surpass China, he added.

China is pushing for hypersonic weapon breakthroughs. It has conducted a number of successful tests of the DF-17, a medium-range ballistic missile designed to launch hypersonic glide vehicles. According to a

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Congressional Research Service report in March, U.S. intelligence analysts assess that the DF-17 missile has a range of approximately 1,000 to 1,500 miles (1,600 to 2,400 kilometers) and could be deployed this year.

Russia last December said its first hypersonic missile unit had become operational. It is the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle, which Moscow says can fly at Mach 27, or 27 times faster than the speed of sound, and could make sharp maneuvers to bypass missile defenses. It has been fitted to existing Soviet-built intercontinental ballistic missiles and in the future could be fitted to the more powerful Sarmat ICBM, which is still in development.

**BUT ARE THEY NECESSARY?**

As with other strategic arms, like nuclear weapons and naval fleets, for example, hypersonic weapons are seen by the Trump administration as a must-have if peer competitors have them.

But critics see hypersonic weapons as overkill and potentially an extension of the arms race that led to an excessive nuclear buildup by the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

There also is worry about these technologies spreading beyond the U.S., Russia and China.

"Their proliferation beyond these three nations could result in lesser powers setting their strategic forces on hair-trigger states of readiness and more credibly being able to threaten attacks on major powers," the RAND Corp., a federally funded research organization, said in a 2017 report.

## Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, May 21, the 142nd day of 2020. There are 224 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 21, 1927, Charles A. Lindbergh landed his Spirit of St. Louis monoplane near Paris, completing the first solo airplane flight across the Atlantic Ocean in 33 1/2 hours.

On this date:

In 1471, King Henry VI of England died in the Tower of London at age 49.

In 1542, Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto died while searching for gold along the Mississippi River.

In 1868, Ulysses S. Grant was nominated for president by the Republican national convention in Chicago.

In 1881, Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross.

In 1892, the opera "Pagliacci," by Ruggero Leoncavallo, premiered in Milan, Italy.

In 1910, a year-old Jewish settlement near the port city of Jaffa adopted the name Tel Aviv (Hebrew for "Hill of Spring").

In 1932, Amelia Earhart became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean as she landed in Northern Ireland, about 15 hours after leaving Newfoundland.

In 1941, a German U-boat sank the American merchant steamship SS Robin Moor in the South Atlantic after the ship's passengers and crew were allowed to board lifeboats.

In 1972, Michelangelo's Pieta, on display at the Vatican, was damaged by a hammer-wielding man who shouted he was Jesus Christ.

In 1979, former San Francisco City Supervisor Dan White was convicted of voluntary manslaughter in the slayings of Mayor George Moscone (mahs-KOH'-nee) and openly gay Supervisor Harvey Milk; outrage over the verdict sparked rioting. (White was sentenced to seven years and eight months in prison; he ended up serving five years and took his own life in 1985.)

In 1991, former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated during national elections by a suicide bomber.

In 2018, Syria's military captured an enclave in southern Damascus from Islamic State militants after a monthlong battle, bringing the entire capital and its suburbs under full government control for the first time since the civil war began in 2011.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama directed the government to set the first-ever mileage and pollution limits for big trucks and to tighten rules for future cars and SUVs. Citing overwhelming evidence

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that North Korea had sunk a South Korean warship, the Cheonan, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton warned the reclusive communist state of consequences.

Five years ago: Four Malaysian navy ships began searching for stranded boat people in the first official rescue operation since desperate migrants started washing up on Southeast Asia's shores. The Family Research Council said it had accepted the resignation of Josh Duggar in the wake of the reality TV star's apology for unspecified bad behavior as a young teen. (Duggar later admitted molesting five underage girls as a teenager, including two of his sisters, cheating on his wife and being addicted to pornography; those revelations led to the cancellation of the TLC show "19 Kids and Counting.")

One year ago: As directed by President Donald Trump, former White House Counsel Donald McGahn defied a subpoena from the House Judiciary Committee to testify; McGahn had been a key figure in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation, describing ways in which the president sought to curtail the probe. Angered by the empty chair in the hearing room, a growing number of House Democrats pushed for impeachment proceedings against Trump. Sherpa mountaineer Kami Rita extended his record for successful climbs of Mount Everest, ascending the world's highest peak for a 24th time.

Today's Birthdays: Rhythm-and-blues singer Ron Isley (The Isley Brothers) is 79. Rock musician Hilton Valentine (The Animals) is 77. Musician Bill Champlin is 73. Singer Leo Sayer is 72. Actress Carol Potter is 72. Former Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., is 69. Actor Mr. T is 68. Music producer Stan Lynch is 65. Actor Judge Reinhold is 63. Actor-director Nick Cassavetes is 61. Actress Lisa Edelstein is 54. Actress Fairuza Balk is 46. Rock singer-musician Mikel Jollett (Airborne Toxic Event) is 46. Rapper Havoc (Mobb Deep) is 46. Rock musician Tony LoGerfo (Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real) is 37. Actor Sunkrish Bala is 36. Actor David Ajala is 34. Actress Ashlie Brillault is 33. Country singer Cody Johnson is 33. Actor Scott Leavenworth is 30. Actress Sarah Ramos is 29.

Thought for Today: "Being frustrated is disagreeable, but the real disasters of life begin when you get what you want." — Irving Kristol, American writer (1920-2009).

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