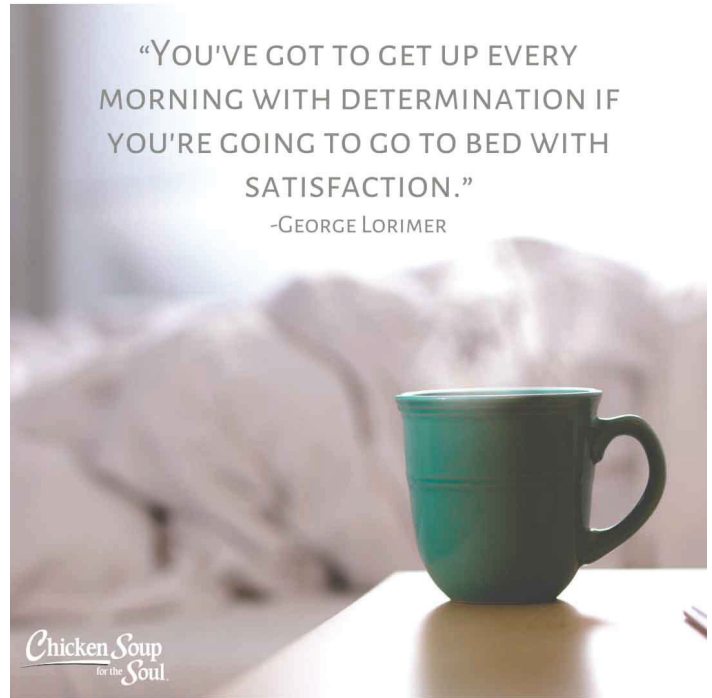


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**Groton Area Football Cheerleaders have started practicing.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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## From The S.D. Dept. of Tourism

I'm sure many of you can hear the rumble of bikes today as Rally-goers are making their way across the state. We are excited to welcome visitors from around the country to experience our Great Faces and Great Places in a safe and responsible manner. We know you will do your part to help keep our guests safe while they are here, and will provide them with the world-class hospitality we're known for. THANK YOU for that!

Here are a few highlights from the latest COVID-19 Weekly Update:

South Dakota ranked 3rd for year-over-year domestic travel bookings last week, outperforming all other states but Wyoming and Montana.

For the week of August 1, travel spending in South Dakota was down -27% compared to the same time last year. That is the best in the region. Travel spending in North Dakota was down -37%, Minnesota was down -50%, and Wyoming was down -28%.

For the week ending August 1, national travel spending inched up 2%, but is still down (-48%) from last year's levels.

National hotel occupancy seems to be leveling off and remains around the 50% mark for most destinations.

Roughly half of all travelers (49%) do have travel planned for the remainder of 2020.

While relatively few (16%) Americans think the situation will improve in the next month, the percentage of those who think the pandemic will get worse dropped from 62% to 54%.

Nearly 70% of survey respondents say COVID-related concerns are important to them when selecting where they plan to visit.

Three in four survey respondents (76%) expect to travel more in the next year after not being able to travel now.

Thank you to our research partners for providing this information: Tourism Economics, Destination Analysts, STR, U.S. Travel Association, Arrivalist, Miles Partnership, MMGY Travel Intelligence, ADARA, and Longwoods International.

We are excited to share some new relocation information we just published on [TravelSouthDakota.com](http://TravelSouthDakota.com). Almost daily over the past few months, we have received emails from people around the country not only wanting to visit, but also seriously considering moving to South Dakota to experience all that our great state has to offer. We want to provide them with pertinent information to help make that decision. We will continue to add new content to these pages in the weeks ahead. Please feel free to share this relocation information with any folks who may be contacting your office or business about moving to our state.

If you haven't already done so, please be sure and fill out the 2021 Governor's Conference on Tourism survey that we sent out to the industry last week. We need your input and thoughts about the conference and how you would like to see it conducted. You can access the survey [here](#). We appreciate your help! The deadline for responding to the survey is Wednesday, August 12th.

Finally, just a reminder to be sure and reference our health and hygiene resource page on [SDVisit.com](http://SDVisit.com) to find great tips and information about keeping your business, your employees, and our guests safe and well while they are in South Dakota.

Take good care! Happy Rally Week!

All our best,

Jim and Team

Jim Hagen

Jim Hagen, Secretary of Tourism

## #166 in a series

### Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Not much has shifted since yesterday or the day before. We're at 4,932,000 cases, so it looks like we might not hit five million this week, after all, but likely on Sunday. Still too many too soon. We added 52,800 new cases today, a 1.1% increase. This is the second consecutive day Indiana has broken its single-day record. Yesterday and today, Illinois has been reporting single-day new case numbers greater than anything they've seen since late May; that's worrisome. Even though we don't have up-to-date testing in Florida yet, we do have the report that at least 53 hospitals have reached ICU capacity and have zero beds available; another 33 have 10% or less capacity available. 15% of ICU beds are available statewide.

Virginia had a big spike in new cases today too, but this was the result of another data reporting problem; many cases came in today which should have been reported over the past couple of days. The overall trend there looks as if it is finally tapering off a bit from the recent surge in the DC area; but they too are having trouble getting testing results back in less than two weeks, a ridiculous situation. (Oh, oh, she's going to say it again, isn't she? Yes, here it comes.) We simply must get our testing in order; this is making all of our efforts at control so very much more challenging when we can't get timely results. A group of states has formed sort of a compact to handle the acquisition and management of tests as a group in hopes of overcoming federal inertia on the issue. I hope it works; maybe it will inspire other states to make similar moves. We take our leadership where we can find it these days.

Here's a clearly-related worry: Testing overall has declined across the country. Last night, I warned you that the slowdown in Florida due to the hurricane and the reporting problems in California were going to skew our results downward; but it appears, according to the Covid Tracking Project, that the problem "is much more widespread, even in places that have large outbreaks and are opening schools, like Mississippi." Their data shows testing declined this week in the following states: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming. Particularly concerning is that four of these 29 states are on a steady upward trajectory for new case reports—not a great time to slow down testing. And there's no telling how many more would be on an upward trajectory if they were testing adequately.

Additionally, test positivity rates are rising, another sign of inadequate testing and growing community spread. There are 38 states with positivity rates above the recommended 5%: Puerto Rico (100%), Mississippi (22.13%), Nevada (20.82%), Alabama (18.37%), Florida (17.81%), Arizona (15.56%), Idaho (15.98%), Texas (15.34%), South Carolina (14.23%), Arkansas (13.58%), Georgia (12.80%), Missouri (12.30%), Kansas (11.98%), Oklahoma (10.20%), Iowa (10.03%), Utah (9.75%), Nebraska (8.76%), Tennessee (8.52%), Indiana (8.35%), Washington (8.05%), Wyoming (7.97%), South Dakota (7.91%), Kentucky (7.65%), North Dakota (7.59%), Louisiana (7.54%), Colorado (7.12%), Oregon (6.92%), Virginia (6.85%), North Carolina (6.28%), Rhode Island (6.15%), Wisconsin (6.14%), Minnesota (5.97%), Maryland (5.94%), Hawaii (5.57%), California (5.54%), Ohio (5.47%), Pennsylvania (5.46%), and Delaware (5.07%).

Dr. Anthony Fauci said in an interview on POLITICO's Pulse Check podcast, "It is very difficult. It's been this way from the very beginning of the issue—of defending things that have to do with testing—when you're given an example like you just gave me about waiting five to seven days. You know, I would be noncredible, and I wouldn't be true to myself, if I say oh that's okay. It's not okay—period. And we need to do better. And I wish we had done better." Our testing troubles never seem to end.

We do have more information on the data reporting problem in California; apparently a computer server failed, which stopped data reporting from one of the largest labs in the state. The problem goes back to July 25, and something like 300,000 test results have not been reported. This probably is going to represent several thousand cases the state says it will be adding to its total as soon as they sort it out. This problem is complicated by massive delays in testing; some are taking more than two weeks to process. Authorities in the state have done some estimating based on data they do have and are still thinking the



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good-sized declines in seven-day average they were seeing are real, if smaller than thought; so there may be better news there at any rate.

There were 1031 new deaths, a 0.6% increase to 160,584. This was our fourth consecutive day with more than 1000 reported deaths. California has breached the 10,000-death mark, which is not happy news; only New York and New Jersey had done that previously. Georgia reported a record number of deaths today.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the university of Washington, home of some very reliable modeling so far, is projecting close to 300,000 deaths in the US by December. They add, however, that "The model doesn't have to come true. The public's behavior had a direct correlation to the transmission of the virus and, in turn, the numbers of deaths." If 95% of us wear face coverings, that number could decrease by some 70,000, and more than 66,000 deaths can be prevented. The CDC projections aren't far behind IHME, and Dr. Fauci adds his prediction that we can still get case levels down before November if we go to work on the problem. I should also point out the model assumes 50% of school districts will have online school in the fall; any significant deviation from that 50% will change outcomes; IHME says it would "incorporate [these] into our future revisions of forecasts." Dr. Deborah Birx pointed out increasing test positivity rates in Chicago, Boston, Detroit and Washington, DC and continuing high rates in Baltimore, Atlanta, Kansas City, Portland, Omaha, and the California Central Valley.

We finally have a study that tracks asymptomatic individuals long enough to establish they are truly asymptomatic, not pre-symptomatic. You may recall that asymptomatic means without symptoms and that applies to everyone who's infected for at least a few days. Researchers have distinguished between the truly asymptomatic, that is, those who never develop symptoms, and the pre-symptomatic, those who just haven't developed symptoms yet. This distinction is important when you consider we'll generally never know about the asymptomatic because we haven't had enough tests to find them and sort them out from the crowd.

New research from South Korea provides this information. In analysis of specimens collected over an almost three-week period from 193 symptomatic and 110 asymptomatic people, they found that about 30% of cases never develop symptoms at all. The sample was young with a median age of 25. By following up these folks, they were able to determine which of those without symptoms stayed that way throughout and that they carry just as much virus in their respiratory tracts as those with symptoms and that they carry it for almost as long. While they did not follow the chain of transmission, it seems reasonable to conclude that this is a significant source of transmission. Because they are not coughing or sneezing, it is possible they will not spread as efficiently as those with respiratory symptoms, but on the other hand, people who feel sick are more likely to stay home where they can't spread virus whereas the healthy are going about their lives, spreading virus hither and yon. The study showed that asymptomatic people became virus-free around Day 17, and those with symptoms took another couple of days to Day 19 or 20. It should be noted that the tests used can detect viral fragments which are not actually infectious, so these indications of duration may not directly translate to real-life risk. Nonetheless, they also indicate that asymptomatic individuals are an excellent source of infection.

We've talked a lot over the past few months about vaccine technology, focusing on the antigen—the substance to which we are trying to elicit an immune response. A month and a half or so ago, we discussed in some detail the different ways folks are incorporating antigens from SARS-CoV-2 into their various vaccines. And we have occasionally mentioned adjuvants, but mostly just in passing as substances that make vaccines work better. A lot of vaccines have them, so tonight I thought it might be interesting to examine just how adjuvants do their work.

The idea here is that we want a good healthy response to our vaccine, one with strong memory. The kind of vaccines that have the best immunogenicity, or ability to provoke a strong response, are attenuated (weakened) live vaccines; this is largely because they can still replicate in the host, which increases and prolongs the antigenic stimulus. (I'll insert the usual caveat here that viruses are never really alive; so what we mean here is that we weaken the virus's virulence, its ability to do damage, without completely inactivating it, or destroying its ability to replicate.) "Live" vaccines have their risks though, among

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them that occasionally the damned things will return to full power and start hurting people again, which makes the whole live vaccine thing tricky. We've seen this sort of thing with the oral polio vaccine, the so-called Sabin vaccine (named after its developer). It was super-effective and especially so because it was ingested, putting the antigenic stimulus—and the first phase of the resulting immunologic response—in the intestines, which is exactly where the virus invades. Problem is that this virus is especially prone to reverting to virulent form. Sometimes it makes the vaccinated person sick, and then it exits that person's body in virulent form, spreading the infection to others as well in a poorly-vaccinated community (which was exactly the original means of spread back before there was any vaccine at all). Back in the day when polio was rampaging across the globe, controlling the infection was deemed worth the risk for this highly effective vaccine; but now that the disease is virtually eradicated, the only places you're going to find oral polio vaccine are the few places where a small number of cases are still popping up because we have to keep throwing the big guns at the problem in those places. The rest of the world has gone back to the less immunogenic, but far safer, inactivated virus vaccine, similar to the original Salk formulation, because we're pretty much at herd immunity (as long as people don't go all stupid and stop having vaccines, that is).

Attenuated virus vaccines generally don't need adjuvants; they do a good job of being immunogenic without any help. But no one's looking seriously at an attenuated Covid-19 vaccine because the risks of reversion to virulence here would be pretty devastating. (Someone is looking at an interesting twist on the principle—I'll save that for another day though. Don't want to muddy the waters any more than necessary here.)

Most other vaccines, however, do need adjuvants; so generally what we're looking for is something that will either prolong the stimulus to the immune system or kick a response into gear. The effects of adjuvants generally are to (1) increase the magnitude of the response, (2) kick up responses in populations that, generally speaking, have poor responses, mostly elderly and infants, (3) facilitate the use of smaller doses of antigen, which can be particularly useful when you have to vaccinate a whole bunch of folks in a hurry (like these days, for example) because your supply of antigen will stretch further, or (4) reduce the number of doses of vaccine required. There can be an additional benefit, and that is to promote types of immunity not effectively generated by nonadjuvanted antigens. This might involve recruiting kinds of cells not generally involved in responding to that particular antigen; increasing the generation of memory (especially when you can get T cells into the act); increasing the speed of the response; or altering the breadth, specificity, or affinity of the response.

For example, adjuvants can act as depots for the antigen, storing it in your tissues and thereby presenting it to the immune system for a longer time. Oil emulsions can do this; Fluad is an influenza vaccine containing the adjuvant MF59, an oil-in-water emulsion of squalene oil (which is also found in a number of cosmetics). This vaccine is specially designed for people 65 years and older to boost what would otherwise be a weaker response; and the results are pretty impressive.

Some adjuvants act as irritants, which increases immunogenicity. The DPT vaccine, for example, includes aluminum hydroxide, an old adjuvant in use for decades, which activates the cells that pick up antigen and present it to other cells which will respond, activates a system of proteins called complement that then initiates responses, and sets cytokines in motion. (I know you're accustomed to thinking of cytokines as scary things because of all the reading you've done about cytokine storms, but it is helpful to remember these chemicals are actually a vital part of immune responses as long as they stay under control.)

More and more, adjuvants target particular parts of the innate response, tweaking it to influence exactly what happens next. Often these are aimed at the first cells a vaccine encounters, dendritic cells. These respond to anything that's foreign and are also known as antigen-presenting cells because that's pretty much what they do: process antigen material and present it on their surface to T cells, which creates a whole cascade of events that culminates in the immune response we're seeking. If you know what you're doing, you can get pretty specific about fine-tuning events to produce just the sort of response you want. There are so many different cells and chemicals involved in the cascade of events involved in producing the various elements in that response that there's a lot to work with here.

A good example of just such a targeted adjuvant is the one in the newest vaccine for shingles, that very

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painful reactivation of the chicken pox virus we see developing primarily in people over 60. It is not an uncommon condition, and its incidence appears to be increasing. The people who need this vaccine, the elderly, are the very people who don't tend to respond very well to vaccines, which is a problem. The first shingles vaccine, Zostavax, a nonadjuvanted "live" vaccine, had about 51% effectiveness in preventing the rash associated with the disease and 67% effectiveness at preventing the post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN) that is responsible for the sometimes months-long episodes of excruciating pain; and its effectiveness gets progressively worse with age, falling way down to 18% over the age of 80. The protection is not particularly long-lived either, dropping by about two-thirds within four years of administration.

This newer vaccine, Shingrix, uses inactivated ("dead") virus, which should theoretically produce a much worse response; and yet, it elicits responses more like what you see with childhood vaccines—remember, children have the strongest immune responses of any age group. This is sort of unprecedented in elderly patients. People in their 50s have 96.8% protection; in their 60s, 97.4%; in their 70s, 97.9%; and in their 80s and older, 97.5%. Three years out, we're still around 90% in all age groups, and work is underway to determine ten-year duration of immunity. The difference is in the adjuvant, AS01B (catchy name, huh?). It enhances an innate response in the first three days after administration that helps maintain durably high levels of the specific antibodies and also boosts specific cell-mediated immunity as well, perhaps 24-fold greater than Zostavax does. Here's an adjuvant that not only produces a larger and more multi-faceted response, but also produces one that lasts longer. And it did it in the hardest-to-protect population, the elderly.

Adjuvants are bound to play an important role in vaccine development against Covid-19 as well, particularly because the population that requires the most protection is that same population that struggles to mount an effective immune response. And there is some thinking that perhaps adjuvants play an even larger role than we've given them credit for, that perhaps adjuvants all by themselves might elicit a sufficient response to be protective. Wouldn't that be something?

An issue is that, now that adjuvants have moved from the world of fairly generic substances with fairly generic kinds of effects and into the world of highly-specific substances that have very targeted effects, and many of them are proprietary, which forecloses use by companies who don't own rights to them. There is some hope among researchers that the urgency of this moment will lead to more sharing of information. I don't know that I feel as hopeful, but that would be something too.

Remdesivir supplies have become dangerously low; hospitals have found it impossible to fill orders. This is the only drug with a FDA emergency use authorization at the moment, so it's the best available. The company that manufactures remdesivir, Gilead Sciences, under pressure from recommendations from state attorneys general urging the federal government to increase the supply and affordability, has announced ramped up production, including licensing agreements with nine generic drug manufacturers to increase the supply; this brings the number of companies producing the drug to 40 across the world.

Two of the governments top health experts weighed in today on wrestling this coronavirus into submission. They sound remarkably alike.

US Surgeon General, Dr. Jerome Adams was with the Baltimore Health Commissioner: "We don't need to wait for a vaccine. We don't need to wait for a miracle therapeutic. New York City and the state of New York have a positivity rate of less than 1% right now. And they've done it with three things—what I call my three Ws, wash your hands, watch your distance, wear a face mask." And Dr. Anthony Fauci, speaking during a webinar with the Brown School of Public Health referred to the "fundamental principles," things every American can do to bring case numbers down, "universal wearing of a mask, physical distancing, avoid crowds, outdoor better than indoor, washing your hands and hand hygiene—and if you're in a situation where it applies to you, stay away from bars." Now where have we heard this before??

This next spoke to me. As anyone who knows me in real life is aware, two things I really love are cooking and teaching, and this story has those, with a side order of kids. Plus empowerment. Pascal Simon is a chef who has for a decade made a living by teaching baking to kids in her home and has a good following in her city, Austin, Texas. She says she has focused mostly on "cute stuff" like cookies and French macarons. In summer, she had sessions of a popular week-long Cupcake Camp.

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The pandemic took care of that. Crowding kids into her kitchen was not really an option, so she had an idea to try online baking classes for kids, figuring some of her former clients might sign up. They started out free, I'm guessing because she's never used Zoom, didn't know what she was doing, and didn't want to charge for that, but she learned. These were popular, but then cupcake fatigue set in: How many cupcakes can a family eat? So she hit on another idea, Dinner Club. Kids signed up, this time for a fee, to cook dinner for their families every night for a week.

They were handling knives, working with hot pans, learning safe food handling—and greeting their parents at the end of the day with a fully prepared dinner. Since Chef Pascal teaches clean-up as you go along, there weren't even stacks of dirty pots to be washed after dinner. It was like a dream come true for harried parents dealing with their own stressors. And these kids aren't making hot dogs with chips and pickles. They were preparing real meals.

I had a look at the Facebook page, and it's fairly startling what eight and nine-year-old kids have been preparing. How about chicken fajitas, tortillas, guacamole, and pico de gallo, all made from scratch by children? Yes, even the tortillas. They were deep-frying falafel and serving them with Greek salad. And producing homemade pizza with homemade pizza sauce. There's tortellini with pesto, and for that the kids are making handmade pasta and forming the tortellini around fillings they've prepared. She is empowering children between 8 and 15 to take care of themselves and their families in a tangible way and to feel satisfaction in so doing. These kids are working hard in each three-hour class. One girl, 10, says, "I did not know that my feet could hurt so much. But if you have a partner and you guys get along, then it can be a lot easier." Her brother, 12, adds, "When your parents actually like the food, the look on their face is enough to keep you wanting to come back. Even if it is hard, even if it is stressful."

Reporter Ben James whose ten-year-old son, Wiley, did dinner club recently, put it like this for NPR: "There's an essential thing that Chef Pascal gets about teaching remotely during a pandemic. It's that kids who are bored or scared or distracted—kids who've had every ritual and routine stripped from their lives—those kids don't need excessive comforting or sympathy. Those kids need a challenge." And that's exactly what she gives them, along with some great dinners. Just as flight attendants have been instructing us for years, in the event of an unexpected occurrence, she managed to get her own oxygen mask on and then proceeded to put them on dozens and dozens of kids around the country. It's working.

Keep yourself healthy. I'll see you tomorrow.



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## Area COVID-19 Cases

	July 29	July 30	July 31	Aug. 01	Aug. 2	Aug. 3	Aug. 4
Minnesota	52,281	52,947	53,692	54,463	55,188	55,947	56,560
Nebraska	25,157	25,422	25,766	26,211	26,391	26,702	26,956
Montana	3,475	3,676	3,814	3,965	4,081	4,193	4,233
Colorado	45,314	45,796	46,204	46,809	47,267	47,727	47,968
Wyoming	2,136	2,172	2,217	2,259	2,297	2,333	2,364
North Dakota	6141	6227	6301	6468	6602	6660	6785
South Dakota	8492	8641*	8685	8764	8867	8955	9020
United States	4,352,304	4,427,493	4,495,224	4,566,275	4,620,502	4,667,957	4,718,249
US Deaths	149,260	150,716	152,075	153,391	154,449	154,860	155,478
Minnesota	+478	+666	+745	+771	+725	+759	+613
Nebraska	+258	+265	+344	+445	+458	+311	+254
Montana	+94	+201	+138	+151	+116	+112	+40
Colorado	+749	+482	+408	+605	+458	+460	+241
Wyoming	+64	+36	+45	+42	+38	+36	+31
North Dakota	+155	+86	+74	+167	+134	+58	+125
South Dakota	48	+149	+44	+80	+103	+88	+65
United States	+57,534	+75,189	+67,731	+71,051	+54,227	+47,455	+50,292
US Deaths	+1,204	+1,456	+1,359	+1,316	+1,058	+411	+618
	Aug. 5	Aug. 6	Aug. 7	Aug. 7			
Minnesota	57,162	57,779	58,640	59,185			
Nebraska	27,178	27,489	27,821	28,104			
Montana	4,314	4,429	4,602	4,757			
Colorado	48,394	48,988	49,436	49,893			
Wyoming	2,392	2,424	2,449	2,490			
North Dakota	6933	7057	7177	7327			
South Dakota	9,079	9168	9273	9371			
United States	4,768,083	4,818,328	4,883,657	4,945,795			
US Deaths	156,753	157,930	160,104	161,456			
Minnesota	+602	+617	+861	+545			
Nebraska	+222	+311	+332	+283			
Montana	+81	+115	+173	+155			
Colorado	+426	+594	+448	+457			
Wyoming	+28	+32	+25	+41			
North Dakota	+148	+124	+120	+150			
South Dakota	+59	+89	+105	+98			
United States	+49,834	+50,235	+65,329	+62,138			
US Deaths	+1,275	+1,177	+2,174	+1,352			

\* The July 29, 2020, daily update includes cases reported to the South Dakota Department between Monday, July 27 at 1 p.m. and Tuesday, July 28 at 7 p.m. due to a delay in the daily data extraction.



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## August 7th COVID-19 UPDATE

### Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

There were three more deaths in South Dakota, one female and two males. One person was in the 20s, another in the 70s and one in the 80+ age group. Two were in Minnehaha County and one in Todd County.

Jones County is back on the fully recovered list, but Sully County has dropped off the list with a new positive case. You will notice a major adjustment between Dewey County and Ziebach County. That's an adjustment, not new cases. According to Derrick Haskins, Communications Director of the South Dakota Department of Health, he told the Independent, "One previously reported Jerauld Co case and 15 previously reported Dewey Co. cases were reassigned to Ziebach County."

Locally, Edmunds County picked up one case, Spink County picked up two and Brown County picked up 6. The active cases in Brown County remains unchanged as there were six people who were considered fully recovered now.

The positivity rate in South Dakota is now at 4.9 percent for the day and in Brown County it's 4.3 percent. The CDI likes to see these numbers below 5 percent.

#### **Brown County:**

Total Positive: +6 (428) 4.3%  
Recovered: +6 (387)  
Active Cases: No Change (38)  
Total Tests: 138 (5580)  
Ever Hospitalized: 0 (20)  
Deaths: 0 (3)  
Percent Recovered: 90.4% (+.2)

#### **South Dakota:**

Positive: +98 (9371 total) 4.9%  
Total Tests: 2,008 (149,344 total)  
Hospitalized: +5 (866 total). 47 currently hospitalized (up 3 from yesterday)  
Deaths: +3 (144 total)  
Recovered: +99 (8244 total)  
Active Cases: -4 (983)  
Percent Recovered: 88.0 +.2  
Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 2% Covid, 46% Non-Covid, 52% Available  
ICU Bed Capacity: 2% Covid, 63% Non-Covid, 34% Available  
Ventilator Capacity: 5% Covid, 12% Non-Covid, 83% Available

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Harding (50)

Fully recovered from positive cases: (Gained Jones, Lost Sully) Bon Homme 13-13, Day 21-21, Jerauld 40-39-1, Jones 2-2, Haakon 1-1, Hand 7-7, Hyde 3-3, Perkins 4-4, Potter 1-1, Stanley 14-14, Tripp 20-20.

The following is the breakdown by all counties. The number in parenthesis right after the county name represents the number of deaths in that county.

Aurora: 2 active case  
Beadle (9): +1 recovered (14 active cases)  
Bennett: 1 active case  
Bon Homme: Fully Recovered  
Brookings (1): +1 positive, +1 recovered (18 active cases)  
Brown (3): +6 positive, +6 recovered (38 active cases)  
Brule: +1 recovered (5 active cases)  
Buffalo (3): +1 recovered (9 active cases)  
Butte (1): +2 recovered (4 active cases)  
Campbell: 2 active cases

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Charles Mix: +1 positive, +1 recovered (8 active cases)  
 Clark: 2 active cases  
 Clay: +1 positive, +1 recovered (17 active cases)  
 Codington (1): +5 positive, +1 recovered (23 active cases)  
 Corson: +2 positive (8 active cases)  
 Custer: +3 positive, +3 recovered (9 active cases)  
 Davison (1): 13 active cases  
 Day: Fully Recovered  
 Deuel: +1 positive (2 active cases)  
 Dewey: -15 positive, -16 recovered (17 active cases)  
 Douglas: +1 positive (3 active cases)  
 Edmunds: +1 positive (4 active cases)  
 Fall River: +2 positive, +1 recovered (6 active cases)  
 Faulk (1): 2 active cases  
 Grant: 5 active cases  
 Gregory: 1 active case  
 Haakon: 1 active case  
 Hamlin: +1 positive (3 active cases)  
 Hand: Fully Recovered  
 Hanson: 5 active cases  
 Harding: No infections reported  
 Hughes (3): +1 recovered (8 active cases)  
 Hutchinson: +2 recovered (3 active cases)  
 Hyde: Fully Recovered  
 Jackson (1): 3 active cases  
 Jerauld (1): Fully Recovered (Adjusted -1 positive, -1 recovered)  
 Jones: +1 recovered FULLY RECOVERED  
 Kingsbury: 3 active cases  
 Lake (2): +1 positive, +2 recovered (14 active cases)  
 Lawrence: +6 positive (20 active cases)

Lincoln (2): +7 positive, +16 recovered (87 active cases)  
 Lyman (2): +1 recovered (9 active cases)  
 Marshall: 1 active case  
 McCook (1): 3 active cases  
 McPherson: 2 active cases  
 Meade (1): +5 positive, +2 recovered (22 active cases)  
 Mellette: +1 positive (1 active case)  
 Miner: +1 recovered (4 active cases)  
 Minnehaha (67): +20 positive, +33 recovered, 2 death (351 active cases)  
 Moody: 5 active cases  
 Oglala Lakota (2): +1 positive, +3 recovered (23 active cases)  
 Pennington (31): +12 positive, +7 recovered (123 active cases)  
 Perkins: 1 active case  
 Potter: Fully Recovered  
 Roberts (1): +2 positive, +2 recovered (10 active cases)  
 Sanborn: Fully Recovered  
 Spink: +2 positive (7 active cases)  
 Stanley: Fully Recovered  
 Sully: +1 positive (1 active case)  
 Todd (5): +1 positive, +1 recovered, +1 death (5 active cases)  
 Tripp: Fully Recovered  
 Turner: +1 positive (11 active cases)  
 Union (3): +1 positive, +8 recovered (30 active cases)  
 Walworth: 1 active case  
 Yankton (2): +6 positive (13 active cases)  
 Ziebach: +23 positive, +17 recovered (9 active cases)

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	1192	0
20-29 years	2036	2
30-39 years	1835	6
40-49 years	1418	7
50-59 years	1390	17
60-69 years	832	25
70-79 years	356	23
80+ years	312	64

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report  
 COVID-19 Daily Report, August 7:

- 5,773 tests (1,982)
- 7,327 positives (+150)
- 6,164 recovered (+215)
- 110 deaths (+1)
- 1,053 active cases (-66)

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased
Aurora	38	36	372	0
Beadle	587	564	1845	9
Bennett	6	5	530	0
Bon Homme	13	13	745	0
Brookings	128	109	2627	1
Brown	428	387	4334	3
Brule	45	40	729	0
Buffalo	109	97	624	3
Butte	14	9	779	1
Campbell	3	1	91	0
Charles Mix	101	93	1229	0
Clark	16	14	382	0
Clay	124	107	1287	0
Codington	129	105	2766	1
Corson	32	24	447	0
Custer	29	20	779	0
Davison	94	80	2306	1
Day	21	21	625	0
Deuel	10	8	395	0
Dewey	50	33	2057	0
Douglas	17	14	392	0
Edmunds	14	10	401	0
Fall River	22	16	960	0
Faulk	26	23	186	1
Grant	24	19	688	0
Gregory	7	6	383	0
Haakon	2	2	287	0
Hamlin	17	14	624	0
Hand	7	7	280	0
Hanson	21	16	195	0
Harding	0	0	50	0
Hughes	88	77	1683	2
Hutchinson	27	24	883	0

## SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	4621	73
Male	4750	71



# Groton Daily Independent

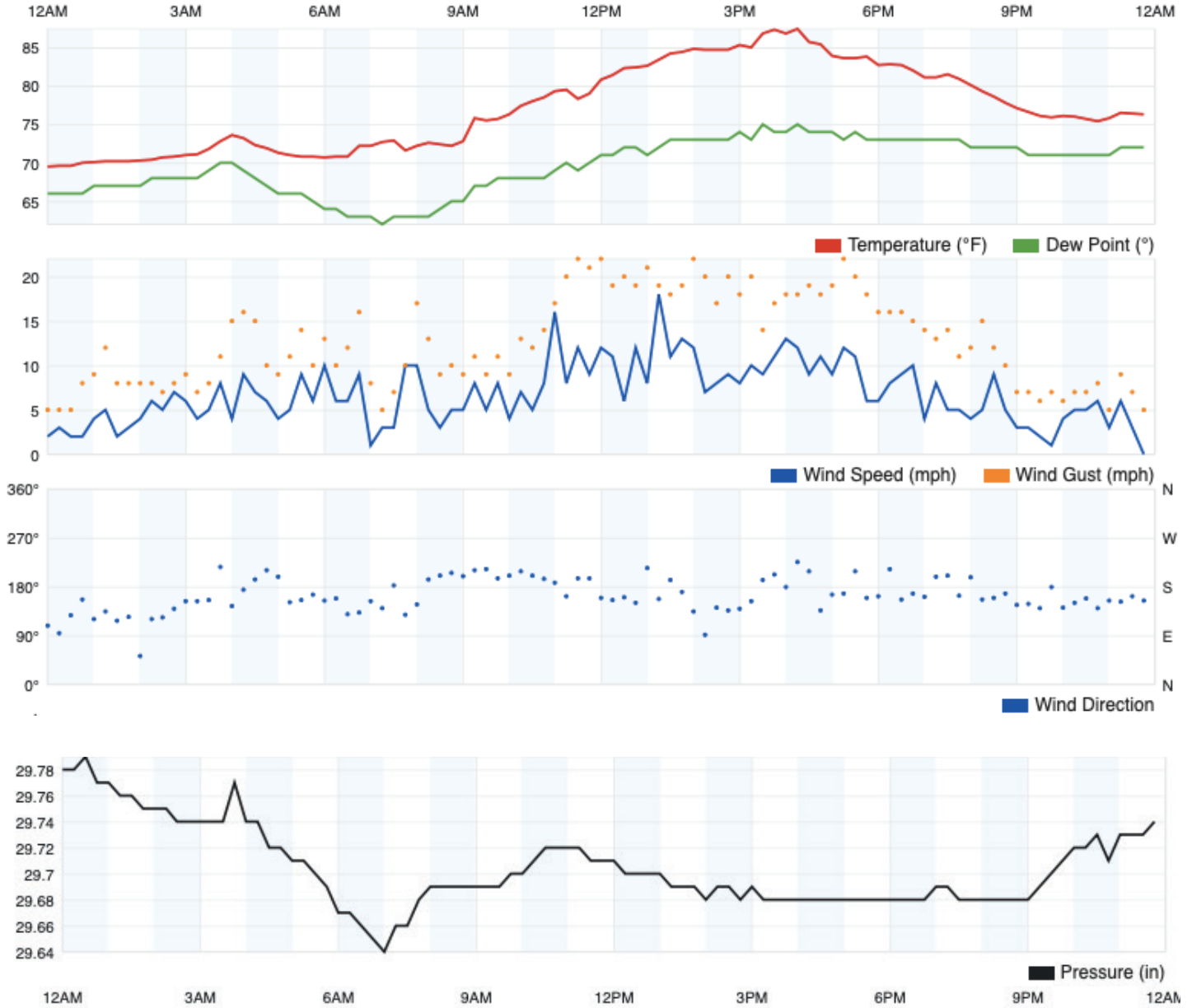
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Hyde	3	3	129	0
Jackson	11	7	454	1
Jerauld	39	38	265	1
Jones	2	2	59	0
Kingsbury	14	11	544	0
Lake	90	74	907	2
Lawrence	46	26	2065	0
Lincoln	609	520	6585	2
Lyman	88	78	933	2
Marshall	8	7	451	0
McCook	26	22	627	1
McPherson	8	6	208	0
Meade	87	64	1935	1
Mellette	24	23	381	0
Miner	15	11	248	0
Minnehaha	4349	3937	26773	67
Moody	32	27	614	0
Oglala Lakota	153	128	2920	2
Pennington	875	721	10717	31
Perkins	6	5	182	0
Potter	1	1	284	0
Roberts	75	64	1757	1
Sanborn	13	13	217	0
Spink	24	17	1127	0
Stanley	14	14	247	0
Sully	2	1	71	0
Todd	68	60	2081	5
Tripp	20	20	601	0
Turner	50	39	894	0
Union	209	175	1858	4
Walworth	18	17	684	0
Yankton	110	95	3015	2
Ziebach	33	24	291	0
Unassigned	0	0	7271	0

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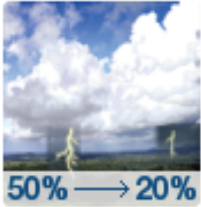
## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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**Today**



Scattered  
T-storms then  
Slight Chance  
T-storms

**High: 86 °F**

**Tonight**



T-storms  
Likely

**Low: 66 °F**

**Sunday**



Slight Chance  
T-storms

**High: 89 °F**

**Sunday  
Night**



Mostly Clear

**Low: 56 °F**

**Monday**



Mostly Sunny

**High: 81 °F**

## SLIGHT RISK of Severe T-Storms

ISSUED: 8:45 AM - Saturday, August 08, 2020

### WHAT

Isolated to Scattered severe thunderstorms possible. These storms could produce **damaging winds, large hail, and one or two tornadoes.**

### WHERE

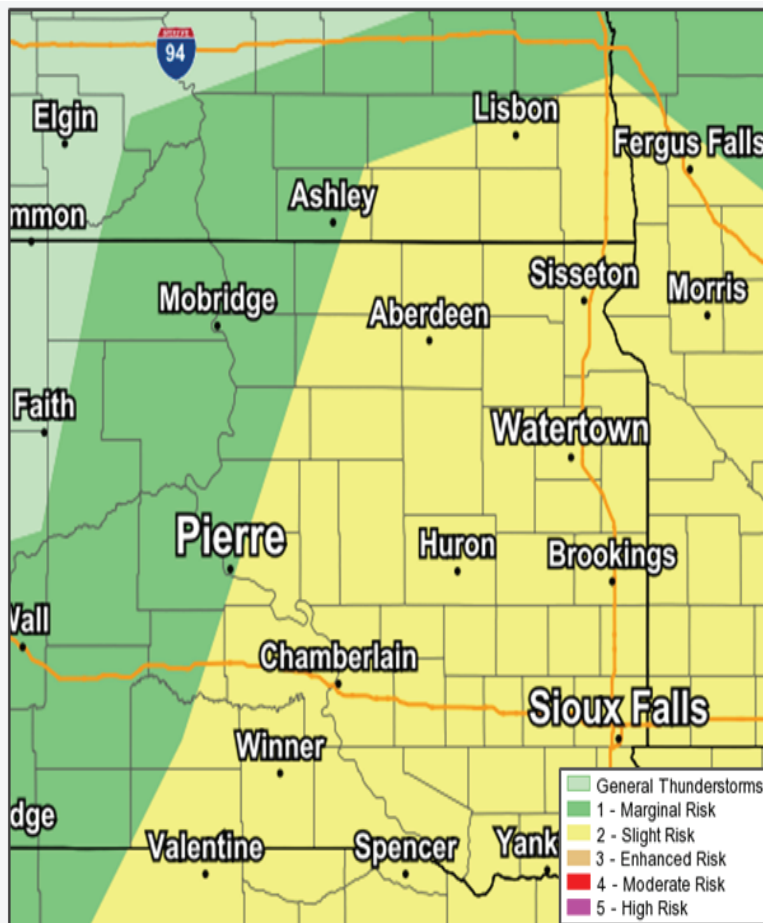
Most of South Dakota, with the best chances in south central and eastern SD.

### WHEN

Isolated storms are possible this morning and afternoon. **The highest risk period for severe will be from 2 pm to 12 am.**

### Impacts

Flying debris from strong winds, large hail, frequent lightning, and isolated tornadoes can lead to personal injury and property damage.



Ongoing storms are pushing across north central and northeast South Dakota this morning. There is potential for isolated storms through the afternoon. This evening, storms become more widespread as a boundary pushes through the region with possible severe storms, especially in south central South Dakota into eastern South Dakota.



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## Today in Weather History

August 8, 2010: Thunderstorms produced damaging winds and flash flooding from heavy rain along and near the Missouri River in southeast South Dakota during the late afternoon. Bon Homme and Yankton Counties were among the hardest hit areas. Avon in Bon Homme County, thunderstorm winds caused widespread damage to trees and power lines. The tree damage included large trees uprooted or blown down, and falling trees destroyed at least two houses. The damage to power lines caused a power outage over the town which lasted about 5 hours. The winds also destroyed a large shed and damaged a camper parked in the shed. In Tyndall, thunderstorm winds of 70 mph caused tree damage, including large trees blown down. The winds also blew down power lines, damaged several small sheds, and tore shingles off roofs. Thunderstorm winds also ripped through Yankton County. Near Napa, winds overturned several campers and caused widespread tree damage, including large trees blown down at a Lewis and Clark Lake campground.

1874: Swarms of Rocky Mountain locust invaded Denver, Colorado. Millions were seen cruising through the air. The insects were picked up by a thunderstorm gust front and carried into the city. The grasshoppers ravaged crops in surrounding counties for the last month. Click [HERE](#) for more information about The Year of the Locust, 1874.

2007: A tornado bounces across Staten Island and Brooklyn, New York, ripping off roofs and damaging dozens of buildings. The EF-2 twister hop-scotched through Brooklyn's Bay Ridge and Sunset Park neighborhoods around 6:30 am.

1878 - The temperature at Denver, CO, soars to an all-time record high of 105 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1881 - A cloudburst and flash flood occurred at Central Springs, CO, and Idaho Springs, CO. (David Ludlum)

1882 - An August snowstorm was reported by a ship on Lake Michigan. A thick cloud reportedly burst on the decks covering them with snow and slush six inches deep. Snow showers were observed at shore points that day. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1983 - The temperature at Big Horn Basin, WY, reached 115 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorm rains in eastern Nebraska sent the Wahoo River and Ithica River above flood stage. Thunderstorm rains in western Iowa sent the Nishnabotna River over flood stage. Up to seven inches of rain deluged the Council Bluffs area Friday evening and Saturday morning. Thunderstorms produced 4.4 inches of rain in three hours Friday evening, along with golf ball size hail. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing along a slow moving cold front produced severe weather from central Kansas to southern Wisconsin late in the day. Thunderstorms in Iowa produced hail three inches in diameter at Vinton, and produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Donohue and near Mount Pleasant. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A total of ninety-nine cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Alpena MI with a reading of 40 degrees. Mount Mitchell NC was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 35 degrees. Early evening thunderstorms around Las Vegas NV produced wind gusts to 116 mph. The high winds damaged or destroyed about eighty- two aircraft at Henderson Sky Harbor Airport and McCarran International Airport, causing fourteen million dollars damage. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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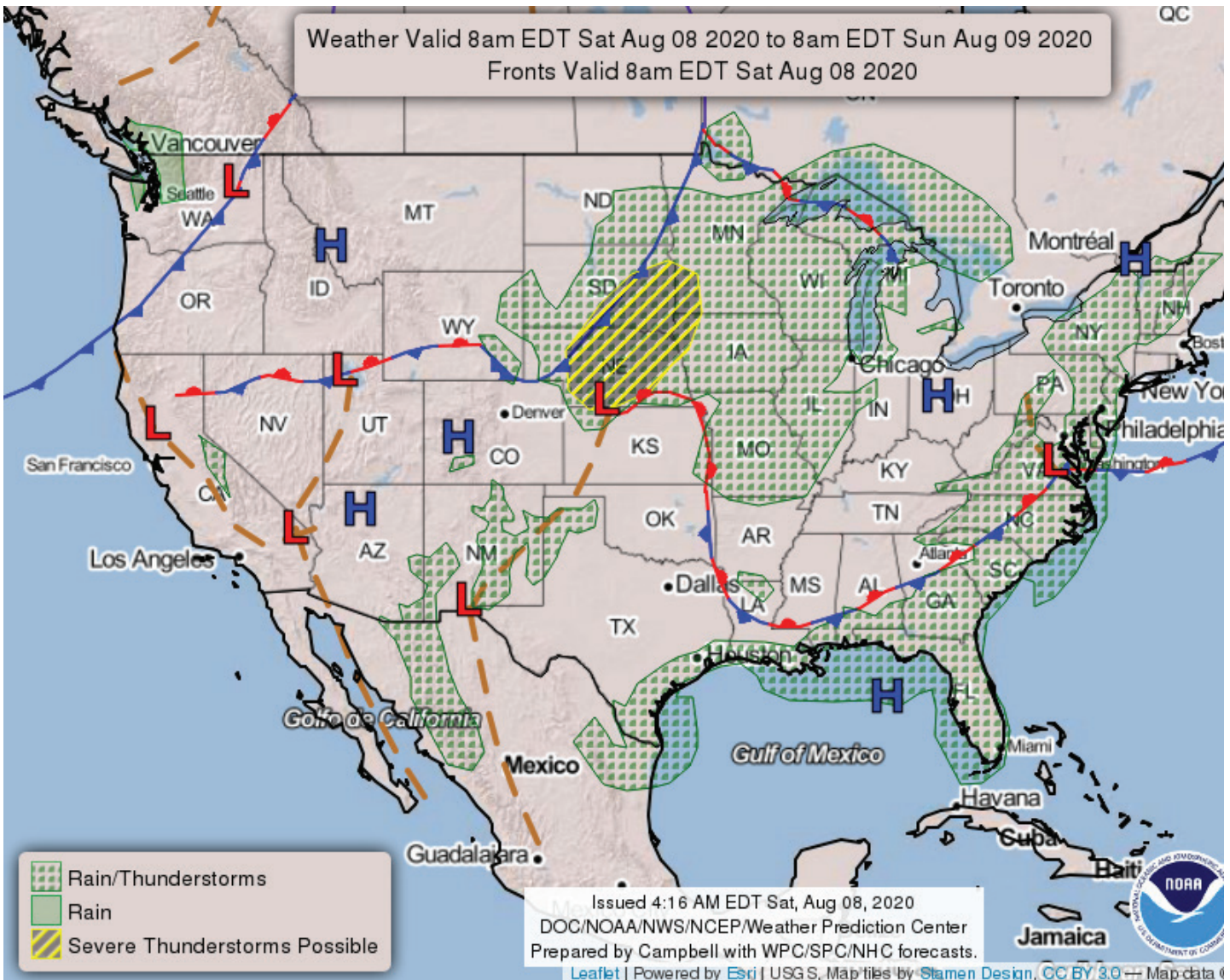
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 88 °F at 3:48 PM**  
**Low Temp: 70 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Wind: 25 mph at 11:46 AM**  
**Precip: .00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 108° in 1936**  
**Record Low: 42° in 1939**  
**Average High: 83°F**  
**Average Low: 58°F**  
**Average Precip in Aug.: 0.55**  
**Precip to date in Aug.: 0.45**  
**Average Precip to date: 14.41**  
**Precip Year to Date: 10.96**  
**Sunset Tonight: 8:51 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:28 a.m.**



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## FAITH OR FEAR?

When Mario Marini, a famous Italian painter and sculptor, was young, he fashioned a series of figures of men on horses. The first one he sculpted appeared young, strong, fierce, formidable, and triumphant: all were expressions of extreme confidence. But, as he continued his series of bronze figures, each rider and horse appear to become less confident and certain of being victorious. The last characters in the series portray a rider and his horse frozen in terror.

When asked about the way his series changed from triumph to terror, he replied, "That is because I believe that we are approaching the time of a sorry end to this world."

How different for the Christian! Rather than fear, we have faith. In place of horror, we have hope. Because of our God, we know that we shall be given eternal life through Christ our Savior and Lord, and we will be with Him throughout eternity.

How blest we are to have the words of the Psalmist: "Even though I will walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I do not need to be possessed by fear, for You, Creator of life, are with me to protect me!"

Our Savior will guide us and guard us and grant us victory when days are dim and dark. But, thankfully, one day, we will also say with the Psalmist, "Your goodness and unending kindness has been with me all of my life, and afterward, I will live with You in Your home - forever!"

Prayer: Grant us, Father, Your peace that passes all understanding, and the assurance that You are the God of all comfort, so that we will not fear the threats of life or death. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23



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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
- 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
- 07/24/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ferney Open Golf Tourney
- 07/25/2020 City-Wide Rummage Sales
- **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

## News from the Associated Press

### Sioux Falls Park and Art pop-up shows blend ballet, music

By PATRICK ANDERSON Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The founder of South Dakota's first professional ballet company wanted to thrust her group into the spotlight this year with a black-tie gala and performances by some of the world's top dancers.

But the light went out on Madeleine Scott's plans. Her group, South Dakota Ballet, has dancers from across the world, and because of the virus they are trapped elsewhere, at home.

So Scott found a creative partner in Madison Elliott, another professionally trained dancer currently living in Sioux Falls.

Together, they found a new kind of spotlight, the Argus Leader reported.

At set dates throughout the summer, Scott and Elliott invite hundreds of people and their cars to an empty parking lot. As the sun sets, a ring of headlights offset the dusk and illuminate a live performance of Sioux Falls dancers and musicians.

It was a way to continue their dedication to dancing — a way to stay motivated creatively as the reality of COVID-19 forced artists and performers, like so many thousands of other workers, to look for alternatives or face joblessness.

"Everyone is in this limbo where they're saying, 'We don't know when the performing arts will be back,'" Scott said. "We just said to heck with that. We're doing it."

A new kind of pop-up show

The pop-up shows put on by Scott and Elliott are part of a summer series called Park and Art.

The two co-founders refer to their rotating venue of parking lots as the Headlights Theater, which only comes to life during the roughly 25 minutes of showtime and fades into the ether as cars exit into the night.

"Once the cars turn their headlights on," Elliott said. "That's what transforms the parking lot into the Headlights Theater."

Starting with the first event at the 8th and Railroad Center parking lot, the shows are sell-outs, Elliott said.

Show time and musical collaborators are announced in advance, but the location is kept secret until an hour before start time by social media and email to registrants. It's recommended that attendees RSVP ahead of time on the Park and Art website at [parkandart.com](http://parkandart.com), and attendance comes with a suggested donation of at least \$15.

The next Park and Art was set for Aug. 7 with musical collaborators the Sioux Falls-based band Hooks.

Hooks' summer slate was wiped out by the coronavirus. With nearly a decade of experience in the local arts scene and Hooks members joking that they're a dad-rock band now, it's been invigorating to partner with Scott and Elliott, said Eli Show, Hooks' lead singer and guitarist.

"It's like the idea of when you're younger, you're more available to put yourself out there," Show said. "It's more about the experience or exploration of art. They're willing to try anything."

Keeping people safe while 'uplifting the arts'

It's a familiar story at this point.

The coronavirus pandemic forced shutdowns, closures and job loss and all but decimated the summer arts season in Sioux Falls.

Like so many performers, traditional venues were no longer an option. Even outdoor stages such as the Levitt Shell were postponing or canceling their seasons.

Elliott graduated in May, a member of what she wryly refers to as the "Class of COVID."

All of her job opportunities were canceled before she finished school. So she came home to Sioux Falls and started brainstorming with Scott.

Both are professional dancers. Both wanted to protect the future of their art and the industry as a whole.

"What can we do to make sure the arts aren't being sacrificed during this time," Elliott said. "Is it possible

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to bring everyone together and keep everyone safe, while also uplifting the arts?"

Like Elliott, Scott grew up in Sioux Falls but moved away at a young age to train in ballet. She moved to Philadelphia at age 13 to train at a dance academy there, and then by age 16 took a position at Ballet West in Salt Lake City, Utah, where she would eventually earn a fine arts degree from the University of Utah.

Scott worked for professional ballet companies across the United States before coming home in 2018 because of an illness in the family.

She started South Dakota Ballet in May of 2019 as a nonprofit dance company, bringing her expertise and love for the art form to her home state.

With her dance company's inaugural season on hiatus, the Park and Art pop-up series has been a creative outlet for both her and Elliott.

But it's also a rare outlet for the other performers with whom they collaborate.

"They just kind of put you out in the center and everybody comes in and turns their headlights on and it was really quite beautiful," said Jeff Zueger.

Zueger plays guitar in the Pale Norse and the Local Support. The band was supposed to have a record release party in May, but the virus uprooted the event. The rehearsal and show was a nice way for the band to come together and play again, Zueger said.

Elliott and Scott have continued to evolve the pop-up show as it grows in popularity. The upcoming show with Hooks will use more lighting techniques and props than in past performances, Elliott said.

"We had no idea that it was going to build the way it has," Elliott said. "It kind of really caught the eye of the community. Now it's a much bigger thing."

## Nurse loses 70 pounds as part of 100-day fitness challenge

By JOE SNEVE Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Anxiety and apprehension were weighing on Mollie Sanchez in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A nurse working with senior citizens by day and tending to mother duties by night, the 29-year Iowa native needed an outlet to relieve the stress of balancing work and family while the world around her became increasingly focused on social distancing, staying home and avoiding coronavirus.

That's when Sanchez saw a call from Mayor Paul TenHaken for Sioux Falls residents to get outside and log 100 miles of walking, biking or running in 100 days. Less than four months later, the mother of three and Avera Prince of Peace healthcare worker is 70 pounds lighter and is the proud new owner of a Trek mountain bike after being named the winner of the mayor's fitness challenge.

"COVID has taken a toll on me mentally as I work with a such a vulnerable population and I worry constantly for my kids, but being able to prioritize exercise and my health has put me in the best shape of my adult life," Sanchez told the Argus Leader.

Since the mayor's challenge officially began April 20, Sanchez has logged more than 240 miles on city sidewalks and bike trails. Since then, she's made running each evening a habit that she doesn't plan to quit.

Sanchez said her motivation for setting aside time for exercise was there prior to the mayor's challenge, wanting to shed weight she put on while pregnant with her third child and get in shape so she could be the best mother she could. But she credits the mayor's fitness initiative for keeping her on task.

"I have to teach my kids healthy habits and I can't do that if I'm not healthy myself," Sanchez said. "The mayor's challenge was really the accountability piece for me, but the motivation really came from my family."

When TenHaken put out his call for the community to get active, Sioux Falls was in the midst of voluntary business closures and mandated patron limits at bars, restaurants and retail stores. He said he could tell the pandemic and the response to it was weighing on the community.

Getting outside in a safe manner and exercising was just one way people could manage social distancing while staying motivated, moving and safe, he said in an April 19 social media post.

Last week, when he announced Sanchez as the winner of his 100-day challenge, he said Sanchez was among countless participants in the challenge who together logged tens of thousands of miles.

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"I'm dang proud of how this community has got out there in recent months, setting aside the noise and focusing on health and wellness," he said.

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

04-44-53-64-70, Mega Ball: 3, Megaplier: 2

(four, forty-four, fifty-three, sixty-four, seventy; Mega Ball: three; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$22 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$158 million

## The Latest: Hawaii schools to open year with remote learning

By The Associated Press undefined

HONOLULU — Hawaii officials say the state's public school students will begin the academic year with remote learning only, after a spike of coronavirus cases.

Gov. David Ige said Friday that all public students will spend the first four weeks of the school year learning online from home.

Officials had originally planned to start the year with a mostly hybrid model in which students would alternate between online and in-person classes. The state will go to the hybrid approach in September if community transmission of the virus is brought under control.

Oahu has seen the majority of new cases in recent weeks, filling up hospital beds and spurring officials to close beaches, parks and hiking trails.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- California tops 10,000 virus deaths, 3rd highest in U.S.
- 7-year-old boy dies of coronavirus in Georgia, youngest in state
- Lebanon's health ministry reports new daily record 279 cases; adds 70 deaths
- Citing New York's low coronavirus numbers, Gov. Cuomo is clearing the way for schools to offer at least some days of in-person classes, alongside remote learning.
- Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's positive-then-negative test results for the coronavirus serve as a reminder that no test is definitive.
- Russia boasts its about to become the first country to approve a coronavirus vaccine, with vaccinations planned as early as October using shots that haven't completed clinical trials.

Follow AP's pandemic coverage at <http://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

MELBOURNE, Australia: -- Australia's Queensland state has closed road access from neighboring New South Wales because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Only essential workers and locals living along the boundary will be allowed to enter Queensland. Police say nearly 150 people had been turned away in the early hours of the shutdown.

Queensland's chief health officer has declared New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, which contains the national capital of Canberra, to be coronavirus hot spots. That led to Queensland closing its southern border for the second time since the coronavirus crisis began.

The Queensland government will review the border closure at the end of August. The state has had few new COVID-19 cases in the past month.



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**PHOENIX** — A judge in Arizona has rejected a request from Gov. Doug Ducey to delay the process for reopening health clubs, which have been kept closed for five weeks because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Judge Timothy Thomason made that decision Friday after ruling earlier in the week that the governor's gym closure order violated the clubs' due process rights. The judge said further that delaying creation of a process for reopening their businesses could further harm their rights as they suffer staggering financial losses.

The judge's ruling Friday came as the daily number of newly confirmed cases statewide continued to decline. Arizona health officials reported 1,406 new confirmed COVID-19 cases and 79 coronavirus-related deaths.

**MEXICO CITY** — Mexico has posted 6,717 newly confirmed coronavirus cases, increasing the country's accumulated total to 469,407.

Officials also said Friday that the number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths rose by 794 to a total of 51,311.

Hopes for a significant decline in cases have been frustrated by continued high infection rates. Assistant Health Secretary Hugo López-Gatell said Friday that "this is going to be a prolonged pandemic."

Mexico was stung Thursday when the United States imposed a Level 4 "do not travel" warning for Mexico, citing COVID-19 rates and disruptions to normal services.

**BATON ROUGE, La.** — The Louisiana health department has persuaded a judge to temporarily shut a barbecue restaurant that refuses to require its workers and customers to obey the statewide mask mandate.

The temporary restraining order issued Friday by state District Judge Brenda Bedsole Ricks prohibits Firehouse BBQ in Livingston Parish from operating, at least until an Aug. 18 hearing.

Gov. John Bel Edwards has called the business' refusal to require face coverings "extremely reckless and irresponsible."

Firehouse BBQ posted on its Facebook site that customers and employees "are given the option to wear a mask or not." The restaurant called the governor's order "an illegal mandate" and continued operating after the state revoked its food permit.

On Thursday, another judge upheld Edward's mask order and other restrictions aimed at curbing the spread of the coronavirus.

**ROME** — Cruise ships can resume operating in Italy starting Aug. 15.

The government on Friday night gave the OK in one of its latest moves to boost Italy's vital tourism industry, which has been pummeled by the coronavirus pandemic.

The approval came despite COVID-19 infections being confirmed in passengers and crew in recently resumed cruises in other European nations. Norway decided to close its ports to cruise ships for two weeks after dozens aboard a cruise liner tested positive for the coronavirus.

With tourism now largely limited to Italians and some other Europeans during the pandemic, many cafes and trattorias risk going out of business.

The government at the Cabinet meeting earmarked some 600 million euros (\$720 million) to shore up the restaurant industry and the farm sector.

**COLUMBIA, S.C.** — Fans can watch September's NASCAR race at Darlington in person and have a four-course meal while watching a medieval jousting tournament in South Carolina thanks to exceptions granted to the state's rule banning gatherings of more than 250 people during the coronavirus pandemic.

The South Carolina Department of Commerce, which reviews the requests, says at least 71 events have been given permission to draw the larger crowds even as COVID-19 cases spread at rates well above the national average.

Those events include some multiday versions of the same event or concerts, a bridal expo in Florence,

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a sporting tournament, the Showstopper Dance Competition and the South Carolina Farm Bureau's annual meeting.

Republican Gov. Henry McMaster lifted the ban on gatherings of up to 250 people on Aug. 3, but allowed anyone who wanted to have more people to ask the state's business agency for an exception. The Commerce Department requires any group with a large gathering to require masks and detail other ways they can keep the crowd safe from COVID-19.

The larger crowds come as South Carolina's COVID-19 outbreak appears to have ended nearly two months of rapid spread. The state health department says the virus hasn't stopped — there were 1,265 newly diagnosed cases Friday.

South Carolina should top 100,000 people infected with the virus in the next two to three days. Health officials report 1,883 people died and the state's seven-day average of more than 39 deaths a day is the sixth highest rate in the country.

**BATON ROUGE, La.** — Gov. John Bel Edwards is questioning why Louisiana must pay a portion of the costs to use the state's National Guard in coronavirus response work if the federal government is picking up the full tab in some other states.

The Democratic governor sent a letter Friday to President Donald Trump asking the federal government to continue to cover all costs of activating the Louisiana National Guard as it did earlier this year.

Edwards says if Louisiana has to pay a 25% cost share, that would cost the state \$2.5 million a month. Louisiana is using 1,100 members of the National Guard to staff virus testing sites, support food bank operations and distribute protective equipment.

Edwards says at least two other states — Texas and Florida — are still receiving full federal funding to cover the costs of their National Guard activation.

More than 128,000 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Louisiana, which has 4.6 million residents. The state health department says 4,089 people have died from the COVID-19 disease caused by the virus.

**STURGIS, S.D.** — Thousands of bikers poured into the small South Dakota town of Sturgis as the 80th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally rumbles to life despite fears it could lead to a massive coronavirus outbreak.

The bike rally is set to become the largest gathering of people since the pandemic began.

Event organizers are expecting 250,000 people from all over the country to make their way through Sturgis during the 10-day rally.

Local residents — and a few bikers — worried it could create a "super-spreader" event. But many who rode their bikes into town expressed defiance of the uncomfortable regulations that have marked life during a pandemic.

**PROVIDENCE, R.I.** — The nation's top infectious disease expert says he's "cautiously optimistic" that a COVID-19 vaccine could be developed soon, but acknowledged the chances it would be highly effective are "not great."

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said in a discussion hosted by Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, that he hopes a coronavirus vaccine could be 75% effective but one that's 50% to 60% effective would also be acceptable.

Fauci also urged states to move quickly to respond to even modest upticks of 1% to 2% in virus cases to prevent broader outbreaks.

**OLYMPIA, Wash.** — Health authorities in Washington on Friday said there are now 11 cases of pediatric inflammatory illness associated with the new coronavirus that have been reported in the state.

Department of Health spokesperson Kristen Maki said the cases occurred between April and July. She said according to the latest information available to state officials most of the children were admitted to intensive care units but have since been discharged home.

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The Department of Health said Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children is defined as a patient under the age of 21 with a fever, laboratory evidence of inflammation and severe illness involving more than two organs that requires hospitalization.

Patients must also have a positive COVID-19 test or exposure to a confirmed case in the four weeks before symptoms began, the department said.

Six of the cases in Washington are children 9 or younger and five are in children 10 or older.

**FARGO, N.D.** — North Dakota Indian Affairs Commissioner Scott Davis says the state's tribes are "back to square one" after recent coronavirus outbreaks linked to July Fourth gatherings.

The primary counties where the state's five federally recognized tribes are located are all ranked in the state's top 20 for virus cases per capita in the last two weeks.

Davis says tribal leaders are taking the virus seriously and that he has warned the pandemic will probably last a long time.

Spirit Lake Nation Chairman Douglas Yankton, whose northeastern North Dakota county leads the state in the number of cases by population in the last two weeks, said the tribe is debating shutting down the casino for a second time and issuing a stay at home order for everybody. But the economic consequences could be devastating.

Some tribes have issued mandatory masks orders and all have ramped up testing. Recent mass COVID-19 screenings at Spirit Lake and at the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation each drew nearly 1,000 people.

**PHOENIX** — Arizona health officials have reported more than 1,400 new confirmed coronavirus cases and 79 more deaths.

The latest figures released Friday by the Department of Health Services increased the state's total confirmed cases to more than 185,000 and the reported death toll to 4,081.

According to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, the seven-day rolling average of daily new cases in Arizona dropped in the past two weeks, going from about 2,600 new cases per day on July 23 to about 1,800 new cases per day on Aug. 6.

**RICHMOND, Va.** — The Virginia Supreme Court has granted a request from Gov. Ralph Northam to suspend judicial proceedings related to evictions for tenants who can't pay rent.

The court ruled 4-3 Friday to grant a moratorium on evictions through Sept. 7 as the state grapples with the coronavirus pandemic.

That will give the General Assembly and governor time to pass a rent relief package in a special session that will start later this month.

**BEIRUT** — Lebanon's health ministry is reporting a new daily record of 279 new coronavirus cases, bringing the total 5,951. An additional 70 deaths were confirmed on Friday.

The surge comes three days after Beirut was hit by a massive chemical explosion that killed 154 people, wounded thousands and damaged large parts of the city. There have been concerns that the crowding at hospitals overwhelmed with the huge casualties from the blast could lead to a surge in COVID-19 cases in the coming weeks.

Virus cases in Lebanon have been increasing since early July, when the country's only international airport reopened and a lockdown was eased.

Firas Abiad, head of the city's Rafik Hariri University Hospital, urged the international community to send medical aid to Lebanon.

He says there is no doubt "our immunity in the country" is less than before the explosion.

## South Dakota reports 3 new COVID deaths, 98 new infections

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials report three new COVID-19 deaths and nearly 100 newly confirmed infections.

The South Dakota Department of Health said Friday the three deaths raise the state's death toll to 144. Two of those who died were men and one was a woman, the Argus Leader reported. Two of the deaths were from Minnehaha County and one from Todd County.

As of Friday, South Dakota reports a total of 9,371 confirmed COVID-19 cases, up 98 from the previous day. A total of 2,008 test results were reported for 1,153 people on Friday. The positivity rate was 8.5%.

South Dakota had 983 active coronavirus cases on Friday, down four from the previous day.

Forty-seven patients were currently hospitalized Friday.

## Harleys everywhere, masks nowhere: Sturgis draws thousands

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — Thousands of bikers poured into the small South Dakota city of Sturgis on Friday as the 80th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally rumbled to life despite fears it could lead to a massive coronavirus outbreak.

The rally could become one of the largest public gatherings since the pandemic began, with organizers expecting 250,000 people from all over the country to make their way through Sturgis during the 10-day event. That would be roughly half the number of previous years, but local residents — and a few bikers — worry that the crowds could create a "super-spreader" event.

Many who rode their bikes into Sturgis on Friday expressed defiance at the rules and restrictions that have marked life in many locales during the pandemic. People rode from across the country to a state that offered a reprieve from coronavirus restrictions, as South Dakota has no special limits on indoor crowds, no mask mandates and a governor who is eager to welcome visitors and the money they bring.

"Screw COVID," read the design on one T-shirt being hawked. "I went to Sturgis."

Bikers rumbled past hundreds of tents filled with motorcycle gear, T-shirts and food. Harley Davidson motorcycles were everywhere but masks were almost nowhere to be seen, with an Associated Press reporter counting fewer than 10 in a crowd of thousands over a period of several hours.

For Stephen Sample, who rode his Harley from Arizona, the event was a break from the routine of the last several months, when he's been mostly homebound or wearing a mask when he went to work as a surveyor.

"I don't want to die, but I don't want to be cooped up all my life either," he said.

Still, Sample, who is 66, feared what could happen if he caught COVID-19 at the rally. He said he was trying to avoid indoor bars and venues, where he felt the risk of infection was greater. But on the opening day of the rally, he said he ate breakfast at an indoor diner.

As Sample weighed the risks of navigating the crowds, the same thrill-seeking that attracted him to riding motorcycles seemed to win out.

"I think we're all willing to take a chance," he said.

Republican Gov. Kristi Noem has taken a largely hands-off approach to the pandemic, avoiding a mask mandate and preaching personal responsibility. She supported holding the Sturgis rally, pointing out that no virus outbreak was documented from the several thousand people who turned out to see President Donald Trump and fireworks at Mount Rushmore last month.

Daily virus cases have been trending upward in South Dakota, but the seven-day average is still only around 84, with fewer than two deaths per day.

The rally attracted crowds of retirees and people in age ranges considered to be at higher risk from the coronavirus. But for many who see the rally as an annual pilgrimage, the camaraderie and atmosphere couldn't be missed.

"I fell in love with the rally. I love the sound of the bikes," said Bill Sudkamp, who was making his 20th consecutive rally appearance.



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He and his wife, who declined to give their ages but said they were at elevated risk for COVID-19, were among the handful of people seen wearing masks in downtown Sturgis, a community of about 7,000 that's roughly 25 miles (40 kilometers) northwest of Rapid City. They were also planning to avoid bars. Sudkamp felt it was inevitable that infections would spread in the packed bars and concert venues.

"It looked like South Dakota was plateauing mostly," Sudkamp said. "It will be interesting to see what it looks like in two weeks."

Marsha Schmid, who owns the Side Hack Saloon in Sturgis, was trying to keep her bar and restaurant from becoming a virus hot spot by spacing out indoor tables and offering plenty of hand sanitizer. She also scaled back the number of bands hired for the rally, hoping the crowds would stay thin but still spend the cash that keeps her business viable for the rest of the year.

She pointed out that many of her employees depend on the rally and the tips they can make.

"You've got people coming from all over the world," she said. "I just hope they are being responsible and if they don't feel good, they stay away."

Several locals said they would spend the rally hunkered down at home. Carol Fellner stocked up on groceries and planned to stay away from any gatherings. Her husband suffers from bouts of pneumonia and kidney problems, and COVID-19 would be a "death sentence" for him, she said.

Fellner felt that the risk of an outbreak would be felt long after the bikers leave. The city plans to mass test residents to try to detect and halt outbreaks, but the area's largest hospital system is already burdened with the influx of tourists and bikers who inevitably need hospital care during this time.

Sample was aware his trip to the rally could end in the hospital, which seemed to weigh on him.

"This is a major experiment," he said. "It could be a major mistake."

## Suspect arrested in Rapid City fatal stabbing

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A suspect has been arrested on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation for a fatal stabbing in Rapid City. Oglala Sioux police said Friday the 29-year-old man is being taken to the Pennington County Jail on a federal warrant.

The Box Elder man is suspected of fatally stabbing a man who was found lying in the grass in Rapid City shortly before 5 a.m. Thursday, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Officers began life-saving measures, and the man was taken to a hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Oglala Sioux tribal chief Robert Ecoffey says Rapid City police told his office that the suspect may be headed toward the Wanblee area so officers and COVID-19 checkpoint workers were alerted.

Ecoffey said police received a tip that the suspect was in a house near Wanblee and he was arrested without incident early Friday morning on a warrant for violating his supervision conditions on an aggravated assault conviction.

The victim of the stabbing has not been identified.

## Thune at odds with Trump on White House acceptance speech

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Republican U.S. Sen. John Thune, of South Dakota, is at odds with President Donald Trump on whether the president's nomination acceptance speech during the Republican National Convention should be delivered from the White House.

The president recently said he was considering the possibility. But using the Rose Garden, the Executive Mansion or even the Oval Office as the backdrop for his speech capping the Aug. 24-27 convention would mark an unprecedented use of federal property for partisan political purposes.

Thune, the No. 2 Republican in the Senate, noted that even though Trump and Vice President Mike Pence are exempt from the Hatch Act which limits partisan activity by federal employees, those employees must refrain from participating in such political activity.

Ethics experts say presidential staffers working to pull off the event would be in jeopardy. Thune says anything done "on federal property would seem to be problematic."

## Mauritius scrambles to counter oil spill from grounded ship

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Anxious residents of the Indian Ocean island nation of Mauritius stuffed fabric sacks with sugar cane leaves Saturday to create makeshift oil spill barriers as tons of fuel leaking from a grounded ship put endangered wildlife in further peril.

The government has declared an environmental emergency and France said it was sending help from its nearby Reunion island. Satellite images showed a dark slick spreading in the turquoise waters near wetlands that the government called "very sensitive."

"When biodiversity is in peril, there is urgency to act," French President Emmanuel Macron tweeted Saturday.

Wildlife workers and volunteers ferried dozens of baby tortoises and rare plants from an island near the spill, Ile aux Aigrettes, to the mainland as fears grew that worsening weather on Sunday could tear the Japanese-owned ship apart along its cracked hull.

A French statement from Reunion on Saturday said a military transport aircraft was carrying pollution control equipment to Mauritius and a navy vessel with additional material would set sail for the island nation.

Residents and environmentalists alike wondered why authorities didn't act more quickly after the ship ran aground July 25 on a reef. Mauritius says the ship, the MV Wakashio, was carrying nearly 4,000 tons of fuel.

"That's the big question," Jean Hugues Gardenne with the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation told The Associated Press. "Why that ship has been sitting for long on that coral reef and nothing being done."

This is the country's first oil spill, he said, adding that perhaps no one expected the ship to break apart. For days, residents peered out at the precariously tilted ship as a salvage team arrived and began to work, but ocean waves kept battering the ship.

"They just hit and hit and hit," Gardenne said.

Cracks in the hull were detected a few days ago and the salvage team was quickly evacuated. Some 400 sea booms were deployed to contain the spill, but they were not enough.

Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth says the spill "represents a danger" for the country of 1.3 million people that relies heavily on tourism and has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Our country doesn't have the skills and expertise to refloat stranded ships," he said Friday. Bad weather has made it impossible to act, and "I worry what could happen Sunday when the weather deteriorates."

Heavy winds are expected to push the oil slick even farther along the mainland's shore. A Mauritius Meteorological Services forecast for Sunday has advised that seas will be rough with swells beyond the reefs and "ventures in the open seas are not advised."

Videos posted online have shown oily waters lapping at the mainland, and a man running a stick across the water's surface then lifting it, dripping black goo. The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation is working to free trapped seabirds and turtles.

Environmental group Greenpeace Africa warned that tons of diesel and oil are leaking into the water. It shared video showing Mauritius residents, to chants of "One, two, three!," shoving the makeshift oil barriers into the sea, while crowds of children and adults hurried to make more.

"Thousands of species around the pristine lagoons of Blue Bay, Pointe d'Esny and Mahebourg are at risk of drowning in a sea of pollution, with dire consequences for Mauritius' economy, food security and health," said Greenpeace's climate and energy manager, Happy Khambule.

The country also has appealed to the United Nations for urgent aid, including experts in containing oil spills and environmental protection.

"We are in a situation of environmental crisis," said country's environment minister, Kavy Ramano.

A police inquiry has been opened into possible negligence.

Online ship trackers showed the Panama-flagged bulk carrier had been en route from China to Brazil.

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The ship's owners are listed as the Japanese companies Okiyo Maritime Corporation and Nagashiki Shipping Co. Ltd.

A statement by the Nagashiki Shipping Co. Ltd. said "due to the bad weather and constant pounding over the past few days, the starboard side bunker tank of the vessel has been breached and an amount of fuel oil has escaped into the sea."

It added: "Nagashiki Shipping takes its environmental responsibilities extremely seriously and will take every effort with partner agencies and contractors to protect the marine environment and prevent further pollution."

The Mauritius Marine Conservation Society and other local groups warned that the cleanup could take much longer than expected.

"The great urge for all of us is to 'get on with it,'" the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation said. "But currently we understand that it may be a waste of time to 'clean up' an area where oil may continue to flow in."

Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed.

## Protests in Beirut amid public fury over massive blast

By SARAH EL DEEB and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Police fired tear gas and clashed with demonstrators in Lebanon's capital on Saturday at the start of a planned protest over this week's massive explosion that devastated large parts of Beirut and killed more than 150 people.

Thousands of people poured into Beirut's main square, where they set up symbolic nooses to hang politicians whose corruption and negligence they blame for Tuesday's explosion at the Port of Beirut.

The huge blast was caused by thousands of tons of ammonium nitrate improperly stored at the port for more than six years, apparently set off by a fire. It was the biggest in Lebanon's history and caused an estimated \$10-15 billion worth of damage, according to Beirut's governor. It also left hundreds of thousands of people homeless.

The protest Saturday was the first significant demonstration since the explosion and organizers planned to hold a symbolic funeral for the dead. As the protest got underway however, small groups of young men began throwing stones at security forces. Near parliament, riot police fired tear gas at protesters who hurled stones and tried to jump over barriers that close the road leading to the legislature. The protesters later set on fire a truck that was fortifying barriers on a road leading to parliament.

The gathering at Martyrs Square and outside the parliament building and government headquarters came amid popular anger against Lebanon's political leadership. The country's ruling class, made up mostly of former civil war-era leaders, is blamed for widespread corruption, incompetence and mismanagement that contributed to Tuesday's explosion.

The army issued a statement reminding the protesters to act peacefully and abstain from closing roads or attacking public or private property. Police also issued a statement after the protests began urging people to act "in a civilized way far away from violence."

The protest came as senior officials from the Middle East and Europe arrived in Lebanon in a show of solidarity with the tiny country that is still in shock suffered after Tuesday's blast.

Lebanon is mired in its worst economic and financial crisis in decades making it difficult for many people who had their properties damaged to fix them.

In a show of anger, the president of the Christian opposition Kataeb party said its three legislators have decided to resign from Parliament over this week's "disaster." Sami Gemayel called on every "honorable" member of parliament to resign and work for the "birth of a new Lebanon."

A senior Kataeb party official was killed in the blast, which claimed at least 154 lives, wounded more than 5,000 people and laid waste to the country's largest port and nearby areas.

Also killed were 43 Syrians, the country's embassy in Beirut said. Lebanon is home to some 1 million Syrian refugees.

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The Dutch foreign ministry said Saturday that Hedwig Waltmans-Molier, the wife of the Netherlands' ambassador to Lebanon, had also died of injuries sustained in Tuesday's blast.

Documents that surfaced after the blast showed that for years officials had been repeatedly warned that the presence of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate at the port posed a grave danger, but no one acted to remove it. Officials have been blaming one another since the explosion and 19 people have been detained including the port's chief, head of Lebanon's customs department and his predecessor.

"We will support Lebanon through all available means," Ahmed Aboul Gheit, the secretary-general of the 22-member Arab League told reporters after meeting President Michel Aoun on Saturday morning. Aboul Gheit said he would take part in a donors conference for Lebanon in France on Sunday and convey Lebanon's demands to the international community.

Later on Saturday the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, arrived in Beirut for a brief visit. Turkey's vice president and the country's foreign minister arrived Saturday morning and met Aoun, saying that Ankara was ready to help rebuild Beirut's port and evacuate some of the wounded from Lebanon to Turkey for treatment.

At the site of the blast in Beirut's port, workers were still searching for dozens of people who have been missing since Tuesday. Bulldozers were also seen removing debris near the giant grain silos that are still partly standing.

International aid has been flowing to Lebanon for days and several field hospitals have been set up around Beirut to help treat the wounded.

President Donald Trump said Friday that he had spoken by telephone with Aoun and French President Emmanuel Macron, who paid a brief visit to Lebanon on Thursday. Trump did not mention the investigation, but noted that medical supplies, food and water were being sent from the United States, along with emergency responders, technicians, doctors and nurses.

The ammonium nitrate, a chemical used in fertilizers and explosives, originated from a cargo ship called MV Rhosus that had been traveling from the country of Georgia to Mozambique in 2013. It made an unscheduled detour to Beirut as the Russian shipowner was struggling with debts and hoped to earn some extra cash in Lebanon. Unable to pay port fees and reportedly leaking, the ship was impounded.

In 2014, the material was moved from the ship and placed in a warehouse at the port where it stayed until the explosion.

## **Virus causing financial pain even for people still working**

By SUDHIN THANAWALA Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Getting her job back should have been a relief for Leesa Huddleston.

A kitchen worker at an Indiana casino, Huddleston returned in June after a three-month furlough caused by the coronavirus. She felt fortunate to no longer be among the roughly 30 million Americans who remain jobless and are now struggling with suddenly reduced unemployment aid.

Yet the return of her job hardly ended Huddleston's financial troubles. Her employer, its revenue shrunken by the loss of customers, cut her schedule to four days a week. That meant a \$300 drop in monthly pay — money that, along with overtime, had allowed Huddleston to afford rent, a car payment and other necessities. Now, she'll have to decide what to stop paying when she runs through her savings.

"I go from day to day," said Huddleston, 59. "I handle it better some days than others."

Huddleston belongs to a category of Americans who are largely overlooked at a time when unemployment is high and a critically important \$600-a-week federal jobless benefit has just expired: People who still have jobs but whose financial struggles have nevertheless escalated in the face of the pandemic.

Some have endured pay cuts or have had their hours slashed. Others have been furloughed temporarily — without pay. Many just feel seized by fear that their job could vanish at any time or that their struggling employer will go out of business.

They are caught in the grip of a pandemic that has pummeled the economy, forcing lockdowns that closed businesses and leaving many people too worried about infection to travel, shop, gather in crowds



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or eat out — or barred from doing so by states or localities. Yet their predicaments, as much as the wave of layoffs the virus triggered, speak to the dire impact the virus has had on the American labor force.

They don't portend good things for the economy, said Elise Gould, a senior economist at the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive think tank, who notes that anxious consumers, whether they hold a job or not, typically cut back on spending, the primary driver of the economy.

"The insecurity of what has happened to people around them may lead people to save as much as possible," she said. "And that could decrease spending in the sense that, 'I don't know what happens next.'"

Consider Ellen Boudreau, a 59-year-old bookkeeper in Manchester, New Hampshire. She's become a self-described "miser" since her work hours were reduced after a six-week layoff and her husband, David, a lab technician, had his schedule cut to four days for several months — and then was furloughed every other week in July.

Her husband wants a new television to replace a projection model at their home. Boudreau, though, has pushed back. She's worried, in part, about other expenses, including the possibility of a costly trip to the veterinarian for their 15-year-old Shih Tzu.

"He really wants the TV," she said. "Normally, I wouldn't have thought about it. We don't have the security anymore of a job."

In Atlanta, Sironorris Mitchell was forced to dip into his savings to pay for diabetes medication after his work hours, too, were reduced. Mitchell had been trying to re-establish his independence with the help of Homes of Light, a homeless services organization connected to United Way. Then the coronavirus eliminated his part-time office job.

Having initially worked full time with a home-and-office cleaning company this spring, Mitchell, 50, now barely gets even a few hours a week.

"When all this junk took off and they started closing businesses down and I couldn't find work like I wanted to, it put a big impact on me," he said. "And then when you got diabetes and stuff, it's hard to deal with everything at once."

The financial pressures of the still-employed come against the backdrop of a catastrophic toll of layoffs. The number of laid-off Americans who have applied for unemployment benefits has topped 1 million for 20 straight weeks. All told, roughly 30 million people are out of work, the government says.

On Friday, the government said the economy added 1.8 million jobs in July, a pullback from the previous two months' gains and evidence that the resurgent coronavirus is weakening hiring and any economic rebound. The hiring of the past three months has regained barely more than 40% of the jobs lost to the pandemic-induced recession.

The number of Americans who have endured wage cuts or reductions in work hours isn't as definitive. But federal data, combined with economic research, puts the figure at around 11 million. In July, more than 7 million Americans reported that they were working part time because their hours had been cut — far more than the 2.8 million who said so in February — the government said.

And from March through June, businesses reduced the pay of an additional 6.8 million workers, economists at the University of Chicago and the Federal Reserve estimated in a study that relied on data from payroll processor ADP.

Overall, about half of Americans in a poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research released in July say they or someone in their household has lost some income since the pandemic struck. That includes 27% who say someone has been laid off, 33% who report someone has endured a reduction in hours, 24% who say someone has taken unpaid time off and 29% who say someone had wages or salaries reduced.

Typically during recessions, employers have avoided cutting pay for fear of further worsening morale. The pay cuts during this downturn underscore the depth of the economic toll.

Gould, the EPI economist, noted that worker pay had risen meaningfully in the couple of years before the pandemic struck as demand for labor rose in a growing economy. Any gains in bargaining power, though, have likely been lost.

"Workers that have their job now are like, 'I'm going to hold onto this job,'" she said. "I'm not going to do anything to rock the boat. I'm not going to ask for a raise. I'm not going to talk about any hardships."

In the meantime, anxiety about job security has reached a higher pitch for some. Since being furloughed in March and then recalled to work, Steve Ward, a mattress salesman at Macy's flagship store in Manhattan, has seen three of his colleagues let go.

Ward, who has worked at Macy's for 35 years, fears that his job could be next because the pandemic has shrunk the number of customers in his department by roughly half.

"I worry about myself, the future," said Ward, 58, who had hoped to retire at 65. "In the back of my mind, I do think about what retail will look like. What's going to happen to Macy's? This is not going away unless there is a cure."

In Shelbyville, Indiana, Huddleston's reduced hours have forced her to become even thriftier. A labor union, UNITE HERE!, helped pay her \$734 monthly rent when she was out of work. To meet her expenses now, she dips into the unemployment aid she had received during her furlough. A food pantry helps with groceries. She tucks away half a sandwich or other leftovers from lunch provided by the casino and often eats macaroni and cheese.

Yet she worries that it won't be enough to keep her solvent indefinitely.

"I just pray to God that he helps me through it," she said.

AP Writer Holly Ramer in Concord, New Hampshire, and AP Retail Writer Anne D'Innocenzio in New York contributed to this report.

## Census Bureau drop-outs complicate door-knocking efforts

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Bob Garick was looking forward to being a field supervisor during the door-knocking phase of the 2020 census, but as the number of new coronavirus cases in Florida shot up last month, he changed his mind.

With widespread home visits for the 2020 census set to begin next week, the Census Bureau is losing workers like Garick to pandemic fears. The attrition could complicate the bureau's plans to ramp up efforts to reach the hardest to count communities, including minorities and immigrants, on a shortened schedule.

"Before, I thought it was my civic duty, to do my part, but now it's like the health concerns are too great," said Garick, 54, a software development director who is between jobs.

Door-knockers started heading out last month in six areas of the country in a test-run of the most labor-intensive part of the 2020 census, and their ranks have increased with each passing week as more locations were added. But next week, the full army of 500,000 census-takers will be in the field for the first time, knocking on the doors of more than a third of U.S. households that haven't yet responded to the once-a-decade head count.

The census helps determine how \$1.5 trillion in federal spending is distributed and how many congressional seats each state gets.

Bureau officials acknowledge that they've had door-knockers, also known as enumerators, come to training but then not show up for work. The door-knockers wear cloth face masks and come equipped with hand sanitizer and cellphones.

"We are seeing folks who are a little hesitant because of the COVID environment," Deborah Stempowski, the Census Bureau's assistant director for decennial programs, told a conference of data users last week.

Other non-COVID factors are also playing a role. Some enumerators are uncomfortable with the technology, as iPhones have replaced the clipboards of censuses past. The pandemic has forced training to be held mostly online and there's less in-person interaction with supervisors should enumerators need help, Stempowski said.

Concerns about attracting door-knockers forced the Census Bureau to raise its hourly wage: Enumerators in the highest-paying cities can now earn \$30 an hour. Based on historical trends, the Census Bureau's

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planning models assume 20% of door-knockers won't show up for training, but the bureau's media office said it's too early to say what attrition rates are this year.

A census taker in Orlando who also was a door-knocker for the 2010 census says the training this time has been quite different. She asked not to be identified for fear of losing her job.

A decade ago, she had 40 hours of training with other census takers in a class where they practiced face-to-face, helping each other develop techniques to persuade reluctant people to answer the census questionnaire.

"We had a lot of practice with each other," she said. "A lot of people whose doors you knock on are reluctant to talk to you, and some people don't want to give any information to the government. If they've never done it before, it's hard to persuade and convince people."

For the 2020 census, her training has been about half that time and primarily online because of the pandemic, though she was required to have an in-person meeting with her supervisor.

Census Bureau director Steven Dillingham said in prepared remarks to a House committee last week that the bureau has 3 million applicants available, and that more than 900,000 job offers have been accepted. But he acknowledged that the number of door-knockers deployed to the field in the test-run was lower than expected, and that offices used for fingerprinting and meeting with census takers have had to close at the last minute because of coronavirus conditions.

"This large number of offers is needed to cover attrition," Dillingham said. "Unlike prior censuses, concern with the pandemic is estimated to increase the number of no shows to training sessions, as well as the number of employees who complete training but decline to show up for work."

The Census Bureau also is recruiting more workers in specific areas of the country, and regional offices are training replacement enumerators on an ongoing basis, he said.

The statistical agency is dealing with a shorter schedule for door-knocking than it anticipated earlier this summer. Facing pandemic-related delays in April, the Census Bureau had asked Congress for delays in handing over data used for redrawing congressional and legislative districts, and it pushed back wrapping up its data collection through door-knocking or self-responses from the end of July to the end of October.

The request passed the Democratic-controlled House, but it's not going anywhere in the Republican-controlled Senate. The inaction coincides with a memorandum President Donald Trump issued last month to try to exclude people living in the U.S. illegally from being part of the process for redrawing congressional districts.

The lack of action is forcing the Census Bureau to turn in numbers used for redrawing congressional districts by the end of the year, instead of by the end of next April as requested. To meet the year-end deadline, the agency announced this week it would finish data collection at the end of September instead of the end of October. Some census officials had previously said they would be unable to meet the end-of-the-year deadline.

When Garick told his supervisors that he was withdrawing from the job, they seemed unfazed, he said. It seemed as if they had heard the same thing many times before.

"I'm a little disappointed that I'm not going to do it, but it didn't seem like a wise move on my part," Garick said.

—  
Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/MikeSchneiderAP>

## **AP FACT CHECK: Trump misleads on mail ballots, virus vaccine**

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was a week of relentless attacks by President Donald Trump and his allies on mail-in voting for the November election, and truth took a beating at every turn.

Fearing a pandemic-induced surge in such voting will work against him, Trump persisted in arguing that fraud is rampant for mail-in ballots yet quite fine and safe for absentee votes, which are also mailed. There is no functional difference between the two, and both have extensive verification systems.

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He and his campaign also tried to cast a new Nevada law as allowing ballots to be "showered" across the state to any living person, regardless of age or citizenship, who would have the ability to vote after Nov. 3 without their identities ever verified. Each of those claims is off the mark.

Meanwhile, on the coronavirus, Trump painted a far rosier picture than his own health experts on when a vaccine could become available. He asserted it could be ready by Election Day.

He also falsely claimed once more that kids are basically immune from the disease, prompting rebukes from both Facebook and Twitter for the misinformation.

A look at the rhetoric and the reality:

## VOTING FRAUD

TRUMP: "You look at some of the corruption having to do with universal mail-in voting. Absentee voting is OK." — Axios interview released Monday.

VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE: "Absentee balloting is perfectly acceptable. You have to apply for an absentee ballot, signatures are checked, it's confirmed, it is a long tradition. ... But this universal mail in voting where you're going to see literally ballots showered all across the state -- it is ripe for fraud." — Fox News interview Monday.

THE FACTS: Trump and his vice president are making a false distinction. Mail-in ballots are cast in the same way as absentee mail ballots, with the same level of scrutiny such as signature verification in many states.

In more than 30 states and the District of Columbia, voters have a right to "no excuse" absentee voting. That means they can use mail-in ballots for any reason, regardless a person is out of town or working. In Florida, the Legislature in 2016 voted to change the wording of such balloting from "absentee" to "vote-by-mail" to make clear a voter can cast such ballots if they wish.

More broadly, voter fraud has proved exceedingly rare. The Brennan Center for Justice in 2017 ranked the risk of ballot fraud at 0.00004% to 0.0009%, based on studies of past elections.

Five states relied on mail-in ballots even before the coronavirus pandemic raised concerns about voting in person.

"Trump is simply wrong about mail-in balloting raising a 'tremendous' potential for fraud," Richard L. Hasen, an elections expert at the University of California, Irvine, School of Law, wrote recently. "While certain pockets of the country have seen their share of absentee-ballot scandals, problems are extremely rare in the five states that rely primarily on vote-by-mail, including the heavily Republican state of Utah."

In an apparent turnabout, Trump later in the week urged voters in Florida to vote by mail despite his rhetoric against the practice, arguing in a tweet that its system is "safe and secure, tried and true." Florida is a must-win state for Trump, where Democratic requests to vote by mail have been surging higher.

STEPHEN MILLER, White House senior adviser: "Here's a shocking thing for your audience to consider. Nobody who mails in a ballot has their identity confirmed. Nobody checks to see if they're even a U.S. citizen. Think about that. Any — any foreign national, talk about foreign election interference, can mail in a ballot and nobody even verifies if they're a citizen of the United States of America." — Fox News interview Monday.

THE FACTS: He's incorrect to assert that measures aren't in place to confirm a voter's identity or prevent fraud with mail ballots.

Ballots typically require voters to provide identifying information such as a birth date or Social Security or driver's license number. In most states, voters also sign the back of the envelope, which is then verified with the signature on their voter registrations.

Many jurisdictions use a bar code on the envelope, which is used to help states identify any duplicate ballots and also let voters know if their ballot was received.

Miller ignores separate built-in safeguards for mail-in ballots. The ballots, for instance, are generally sent to registered voters, who have to provide identifying information at the time of registration, such as an address, birth date and proof of citizenship.



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In Miller's hypothetical scenario of a foreign national improperly casting a vote, that ballot would be flagged and rejected for not having a signature on file or for failing to match one that is. Based on the envelope's bar code, state voting officials also could identify and eliminate any duplicate ballots, whether they were submitted mistakenly or fraudulently.

## FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

TRUMP, on the threat from Russia, China and Iran of meddling in the U.S. presidential election: "The biggest risk that we have is mail-in ballots. ... It's much easier for them to forge ballots and send them in, it's much easier for them to cheat with universal mail-in ballots." — news briefing Friday.

THE FACTS: Mail-in ballots aren't the biggest risk for foreign interference.

Trying to influence a federal election through mail-in ballots would probably mean paying thousands of U.S. citizens, carefully selected in pivotal states, who are willing to conspire with a foreign government and risk detection and prosecution.

Far easier and cheaper would be a social media campaign seeking to discourage certain groups of people from voting, which is something the FBI has warned about. Or a cyberattack on voter registration data that would eliminate certain voters from the rolls. That could cause havoc at polling places or election offices as officials attempt to count ballots from people who are "missing" from their voter databases.

On Friday, William Evanina, director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, warned about foreign interference and said Russia was already trying to undercut Democratic candidate Joe Biden. Evanina cited in part Kremlin-linked figures who are "seeking to boost President Trump's candidacy on social media and Russian television."

Last month, Attorney General Bill Barr raised the possibility that a "foreign country could print up tens of thousands of counterfeit ballots." He argued they would be hard to detect, but that's been disputed by election experts.

Absentee and mail-in ballots are printed on special paper and must be formatted correctly in order to be processed and counted. Ballots are specific to each precinct, often with a long list of local races, and would be identified as fraudulent if everything didn't match precisely.

## NOVEMBER ELECTION

TRUMP: With more mail-in voting, "it's going to be months or years" until a presidential winner is known. — Fox News interview Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Not according to federal law. A presidential outcome will be known one way or another by mid-December.

It's true that state election officials in some states have cautioned it may take more time to count an expected surge of ballots that people send by mail because they don't feel safe showing up to the polls. In an election as close as the one in 2016, a delayed tally in some states could keep the outcome from being quickly known.

But for a presidential election, the Constitution gives Congress the power to set the day when each state's electors, those chosen in November, must cast their electoral votes. Congress set that day for "the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December," or Dec. 14 this year.

Federal law also sets a presidential election for the Tuesday after the first Monday in November, which is Nov. 3 this election cycle. That means each state will have five weeks to report its final election tally, whether its vote count is fully finished or not.

Delayed results are common in a few states where elections are already conducted largely by mail. But a presidential election hasn't been left in limbo since 2000, when ballot irregularities in Florida led to chaos and court fights. Ultimately that dispute was settled by the U.S. Supreme Court, which effectively ended Florida's recount five weeks later on Dec. 12, 2000, saying that time had run out before electors were set to meet.

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TRUMP, on issuing an executive order to address increases in mail-in voting, which he says will lead to more fraud: "I have the right to do it." — news briefing Monday.

THE FACTS: Not according to the Constitution, which expressly gives states the right to run their elections, with oversight from Congress.

There is no precedent or apparent authority for Trump to try to curtail the use of mail-in ballots by executive order. Any such order from the president would certainly face constitutional challenges in court from voting rights groups.

Trump has previously floated a delay to the Nov. 3 election. The date of the presidential election— the Tuesday after the first Monday in November in every fourth year — is enshrined in federal law and would require an act of Congress to change. Democrats, who control the House, will not support Trump on this. It appears Republicans won't, either.

## NEVADA VOTING

TRUMP, on mail ballots: "There's no verification of signatures. So they don't even know who's going to sign this. They have literally a clause that you don't have to verify the signatures — that they don't have to do it." — remarks Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Not true. Nevada's existing law requires signature checks on mail ballots. A new law also spells out a process by which election officials are to check a signature against the one in government records.

In Nevada's June primary, nearly 7,000 ballots were thrown out due to mismatched or missing signatures.

MERCEDES SCHLAPP, Trump campaign senior adviser: "Even come Election Day, you could still cast a ballot three days later if you don't have a postmark, or seven days later if you have a postmark. ... Say you vote for Joe Biden, then you find out in Nevada that President Trump wins. You can go to your family members, you can go to your colleagues and say, 'Guess what, do you still have that mail-in vote? Let's cast it, because you can cast it several days after the election.'" — CNN interview Tuesday.

THE FACTS: It's a distortion for her to assert that Nevada voters could still cast ballots several days after the election.

Under the new law, ballots must be postmarked or "cast" by Election Day to be counted. Election officials are given up to seven days to receive and count those ballots after the election. That additional time for receipt is routine practice in many states for overseas and military voters who submit ballots by mail.

Separately, the law states that if a mail ballot is received up to three days after the election, it can be counted if the date of the postmark is unclear or missing. The aim is to provide enough time for delivery and processing of ballots that are properly mailed on Election Day, though the Trump campaign alleges in a lawsuit filed this past week that the three-day provision would allow some ballots to be improperly mailed after the election and then counted.

That scenario is not the same as granting wide license to cast ballots "several days" after the election, as Schlapp asserts.

The campaign's suit acknowledges that the window for alleged mischief is small because most mail in Nevada already takes at least one or two days to arrive. Some of those ballots may display postmarks showing they were sent late, which would disqualify them.

TRUMP: "What they're going to do is blanket the state, anybody that ever walked, frankly, will get one." — Fox News interview Wednesday.

THE FACTS: His imagery of any living being in Nevada receiving a mail-in ballot, regardless of age or other eligibility factors, is false.

The new law requires that ballots be sent to "active" registered voters. "Active" registered voters are generally those with a current address on file with their local elections office.

There are additional requirements to be registered to vote. In Nevada, a person must be a U.S. citizen and resident of the state, at least 18 years old, not currently in state or federal prison, and not found to be mentally incompetent to vote by a court.

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## NEW YORK VOTING

TRUMP, on two Democratic congressional primaries: "They don't know what happened to them, is there fraud, is there -- it's a disaster." — news briefing Tuesday.

THE FACTS: While there were vote-counting delays, there's no evidence of fraud in the two Democratic congressional primaries in New York City that Trump refers to, which were won by city council member Ritchie Torres and Rep. Carolyn Maloney. Nor did Trump offer any proof of fraud.

New York state decided to allow anyone to vote by mail in the June primary because of the coronavirus pandemic. More than 400,000 people voted by absentee ballot in New York City, a figure that was 10 times the number of absentee ballots cast in the 2016 primary.

Opening and counting those ballots by elections officials took weeks. New York City's Board of Elections ultimately certified the results six weeks after the election.

## CORONAVIRUS

TRUMP, asked if a vaccine for COVID-19 could become available before the election: "I think in some cases, yes possible before, but right around that time. ...I'm rushing it. I am. I'm pushing everybody." — interview Thursday on the Geraldo Rivera radio program.

THE FACTS: He's offering a more ambitious timeline than his health experts and omitting key facts.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious diseases expert, has said he is "cautiously optimistic" that a coronavirus vaccine will be ready by early next year. Even then, Fauci made clear that the vaccine would not be widely available right away.

"Ultimately, within a reasonable period of time, the plans now allow for any American who needs a vaccine to get it within the year 2021," Fauci told Congress last week.

Under White House orders, federal health agencies and the Defense Department are carrying out a plan to deliver 300 million vaccine doses on a compressed timeline. That will happen only after the Food and Drug Administration determines that one or more vaccines are safe and effective. Several candidates are being tested.

The push for a speedy vaccine has drawn concern from some scientists that the White House will pressure U.S. regulators to approve a vaccine before it's ready.

In an op-ed this past week, FDA Commissioner Dr. Stephen Hahn said his agency will not be influenced by any political pressure and will make decisions "based solely on good science and data."

TRUMP: "Children are almost — and I would almost say definitely — but almost immune from this disease, so few. ...They don't have a problem, they just don't have a problem. ... And I've have watched some doctors say they're totally immune." — Fox news interview Wednesday.

THE FACTS: They aren't immune. Although it's true that children are less likely than adults to develop COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has nevertheless counted more than 250,000 infections by the virus in Americans younger than 18, or roughly 7% of all cases.

The number of kids who have been infected but not confirmed is almost certainly far higher than that, experts say, because those with mild or no symptoms are less likely to get tested.

Trump overlooks severe COVID-19 illnesses and some deaths of children in the U.S., even though kids in general tend to get less sick from it than adults do. He also glosses over the fact that kids can spread disease without showing symptoms themselves.

The CDC in April studied the pandemic's effect on different ages in the U.S. and reviewed preliminary research in China, where the coronavirus started. It said social distancing is important for children, too, for their own safety and that of others.

"Whereas most COVID-19 cases in children are not severe, serious COVID-19 illness resulting in hospitalization still occurs in this age group," the CDC study says.

The CDC in May also warned doctors to be on the lookout for a rare but life-threatening inflammatory reaction in some children who've had the coronavirus. The condition had been reported in more than 100

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children in New York, and in some kids in several other states and in Europe, with some deaths.

Trump's claim prompted Facebook to delete his post with a link to the Fox News video because of the misinformation. Twitter temporarily blocked the Trump campaign from tweeting from its account, until it removed a post with the same video.

**TRUMP:** "When you do a lot of testing, you have more cases." — Fox News interview Wednesday.

**THE FACTS:** It's not true that infections are high only because the U.S. diagnostic testing has increased. Trump's public health officials have repeatedly shot down this line of thinking. Infections are rising because people are infecting each other more than they were when most everyone was hunkered down.

Increased testing does contribute to the higher numbers, but there's more to it. Testing in fact has uncovered a worrisome trend: The percentage of tests coming back positive for the virus is on the rise across nearly the entire country.

That's a clear demonstration that sickness is spreading and that the U.S. testing system is falling short.

AP's Election Research and Quality Control Group in New York, and Associated Press writers Nicholas Riccardi in Denver, Michelle L. Price in Las Vegas, Sam Metz in Carson City, Nevada, and Lauran Neergaard, Zeke Miller and Darlene Superville in Washington contributed to this report.

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

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## Asia Today: Australian state records 466 cases, 12 deaths

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — The Australian state of Victoria recorded 466 new cases of COVID-19 and 12 deaths, including another man in his 30s. The figures were released as the city of Melbourne remained in lockdown and under an overnight curfew.

Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews said that six of the deaths were connected to outbreaks at aged care facilities.

On Friday, when the state reported 450 new cases and 11 deaths, the chief health officer said the coronavirus infection rate in the hard-hit state had been "relatively flat" in the past week. That was down from a record 725 infections reported a week earlier.

The deaths announced Saturday took the state's toll to 193 and the figure for COVID-19 deaths in Australia to 278.

Meanwhile, Queensland state's border with New South Wales has officially closed with road access blocked to everyone except essential workers and locals living along the interstate boundary. Police reported that nearly 150 people had been turned away in the early hours of the shutdown.

Queensland Chief Health Officer Jeannette Young declared New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, which contains the national capital Canberra, coronavirus hot spots on Saturday as the southern border closed for the second time since the coronavirus crisis began.

The Queensland government will review the border closure at the end of August. It has had few new COVID-19 cases in the past month.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— India has recorded 933 COVID-19 fatalities in the past 24 hours as fresh infections surged by another 61,537 cases to reach nearly 2.1 million. The Health Ministry says the total deaths touched 42,518, including more than 20,000 in the past 30 days. An average of around 50,000 new cases are reported each day since mid-June. The ministry asked state authorities to test grocery shop workers and street vendors, saying that if undetected they can potentially spread infection to a large number of people. India has the third-highest caseload in the world after the United States and Brazil. It has the fifth-most deaths but its



fatality rate of about 2% is far lower than the top two hardest-hit countries. Even as India has maintained comparatively low mortality rates, the disease has spread widely across the country.

— China has reported 31 new cases of COVID-19 in the latest 24-hour period, mainly in the far west Xinjiang region where an outbreak has infected about 750 people. The National Health Commission said Saturday that 25 new cases had been confirmed in Xinjiang. The other six were people who had arrived from outside mainland China. China largely stopped the domestic spread of the disease in March, but it has had several local outbreaks since then. The current one in Xinjiang, centered on the city of Urumqi, is the largest to date. The latest confirmed cases brought China's cumulative total to 84,596 since the pandemic began. Of those, 4,634 have died. China's case count does not include people who test positive but show no symptoms.

Follow AP's pandemic coverage at <http://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

## Survivors of deadly India crash say plane swayed violently

By SUBRAMONEY IYER and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

KOCHI, India (AP) — The plane swayed violently as it approached a hilltop runway soaked by monsoon rain, and moments later the special return flight for Indians stranded abroad by the pandemic skidded off, nosedived and cracked in two, leaving 18 dead and more than 120 injured.

Among the injured on Friday night, at least 15 were in critical condition, said Abdul Karim, a senior police officer in southern Kerala state. The dead included both pilots of the Air India Express flight, the airline said in a statement, adding that the four cabin crew were safe.

The 2-year-old Boeing 737-800 flew from Dubai to Kozhikode, also called Calicut, in Kerala. There were 174 adult passengers, 10 infants, two pilots and four cabin crew on board.

In a telephone interview from his hospital bed, Renjith Panangad, a plumber who was returning home for the first time in three years after losing his job at a construction company in Dubai, said the plane swayed before the crash and everything went dark.

He said he followed other passengers who crawled their way out of the fuselage through the emergency exit.

"A lot of passengers were bleeding," said Panangad, who escaped without major injuries. "I still can't comprehend what happened. As I am trying to recall what happened, my body is shivering."

He said the pilot made a regular announcement before landing, and moments after the plane hit the runway, it nosedived.

"There was a big noise during the impact and people started screaming," he said.

As the rain stopped Saturday morning, searchers recovered a flight data recorder as the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau started work on the wreckage. Air India Express said its teams also reached Calicut to support and assist families of the victims.

The wreckage of the plane was resting below a flat hilltop, its nose crashed through a wall. The aircraft's fuselage was split in two and cables dangled from the wreckage and luggage and seats were strewn around.

A similar tragedy was narrowly avoided at the same airport a year ago, when an Air India Express flight suffered a tail strike upon landing. None of the 180 passengers on that flight was injured.

Kozhikode's 2,850-meter (9,350-foot) runway is on a flat hilltop with deep gorges on either side ending in a 34-meter (112-foot) drop.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep S. Puri said in a statement that the flight "overshot the runway in rainy conditions and went down" the slope, breaking into two pieces upon impact.

Questions dogging investigators would include not only the aircraft, weather and pilots but also the runway itself. Its end safety area was expanded in 2018 to accommodate wide-body aircraft.

The runway end safety area meets United Nations international civil aviation requirements, but the U.N. agency recommends a buffer that is 150 meters (492 feet) longer than that at Kozhikode airport, accord-

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ing to Harro Ranter, chief executive of the Aviation Safety Network online database.

The Press Trust of India news agency reported that the country's aviation regulator had sought an explanation from the director of the Kozhikode airport in 2019 on finding "various critical safety lapses," which included cracks on the runway, water stagnation and excessive rubber deposits.

Officials from the aviation regulator said it was too early to tell at this point whether the accident was a result of a technical error or human error.

Dubai-based aviation consultant Mark Martin said annual monsoon conditions appeared to be a factor, though it was too early to be certain of the cause.

"Low visibility, wet runway, low cloud base, all leading to very poor braking action is what looks like led to where we are at the moment with this crash," Martin said, calling for the European Aviation Safety Agency and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration to assist with the Indian government's investigation.

Kerala state Health Minister KK Shailaja asked local residents who joined the rescue effort to go into quarantine as a precautionary measure. The survivors were being tested for the virus, officials said.

The Air India Express flight was part of the Indian government's special repatriation mission to bring Indian citizens back to the country, officials said. All of the passengers were returning from the Gulf region, authorities said. Regular commercial flights have been halted in India because of the coronavirus outbreak.

The passenger manifest of the flight, a copy of which was seen by the AP, showed that a large number of passengers were stranded tourists and workers reuniting with their families after months away.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that he was "pained by the plane accident in Kozhikode," and that he had spoken to Kerala's top elected official.

Air India Express is a subsidiary of Air India.

The worst air disaster in India was on Nov. 12, 1996, when a Saudi Arabian Airlines flight collided midair with a Kazakhstan Airlines Flight near Charki Dadri in Haryana state, killing all 349 on board the two planes.

Sheikh Saaliq reported from New Delhi.

## Portland protests persist as some bring flashes of violence

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — More protests are expected in Portland, Oregon, throughout the weekend following violent demonstrations this week that have brought more unrest to the Northwest city.

Since George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis protests have occurred nightly for 70 days. Friday night, Portland police declared an unlawful assembly at the Penumbra Kelly public safety building, ordering everyone in the area to leave. Authorities had previously warned people not to trespass on the property.

Protesters remained for several hours before officers began to rush the crowd away from the building using crowd control munitions early Saturday. Several people were arrested, police said.

The crowd was dispersed because items including rocks, frozen or hard-boiled eggs and commercial-grade fireworks had been thrown or launched toward officers, police said in a statement. Oregon State Police worked with Portland officers to clear the protesters.

Some demonstrators also filled pool noodles with nails and placed them in the road, causing extensive damage to a patrol vehicle, police stated.

Democratic Mayor Ted Wheeler said this week the violent protesters are also serving as political "props" for President Donald Trump in a divisive election season where the president is hammering on a law-and-order message. Trump has tried to portray the protesters as "sick and dangerous anarchists" running wild in the city's streets.

The chaos that started Thursday night and lasted into Friday morning in a residential neighborhood about 6 miles (10 kilometers) from downtown. The demonstrations this week had been noticeably smaller than the crowds of thousands who turned out nightly for about two weeks in July to protest the presence of U.S. agents sent by the Trump administration to protect a federal courthouse that had become a target of nightly violence.

This week's clashes have, however, amped up tensions after an agreement last week between state and federal officials seemed to offer a brief reprieve.

The deal brokered by Democratic Gov. Kate Brown called for agents from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Marshals Service and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to pull back from their defense of the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse starting July 30.

Early Friday, as peaceful demonstrations proceeded elsewhere in the city, a group of people gathered at a park in eastern Portland and marched to the local police precinct, where authorities say they spray-painted the building, popped the tires of police cars, splashed paint on the walls, vandalized security cameras and set a fire in a barrel outside the building. One officer was severely injured by a rock, police said, but no additional details were provided.

Tear gas was used by police on protesters Wednesday for the first time since the U.S. agents pulled back their presence in the city, but officers did not use it Thursday despite declaring the demonstration an unlawful assembly.

Portland police have arrested more than 400 people at protests since late May. U.S. agents arrested at least an additional 94 people during protests at the federal courthouse in July.

## **At least 8 soldiers dead in blast outside Somali army base**

By ABDI GULED Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — A car bomb exploded at the gates of a military base in Somalia's capital Saturday, killing at least eight soldiers and wounding 14 others, with the toll expected to rise, police said.

The al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab extremist group quickly claimed responsibility via its radio arm, Andalus. The group often targets military sites in Mogadishu and controls large parts of southern and central Somalia, with little sign of being hampered by the coronavirus pandemic.

Police Capt. Mohamed Hussein shared the attack's toll with The Associated Press, and Col. Ahmed Muse said the bomber struck the 12th April Army Brigade base near the newly reopened sports stadium in Warta-Nabadda district.

The stadium's reopening had been celebrated by Somalia's president and others as a sign of the Horn of Africa nation's attempts to rebuild from three decades of conflict and chaos — though mortar blasts outside sent fans ducking for cover.

Al-Shabab has been the target of a growing number of U.S. military airstrikes under President Donald Trump's administration, with at least 63 strikes carried out last year alone.

But the Somalia-based extremist group has been resilient, recently improving its ability to build explosives and supporting its deadly work by taxing travelers along major routes in the country and extorting businesses.

While Somalis and returnees from the country's diaspora continue to invest in renewal, the insecurity poses a daily threat and complicates political tensions.

When the prime minister was ousted in a parliament vote of no confidence last month, lack of sufficient progress in improving security was cited — along with disagreements over the timing of a crucial national election set for early next year.

Last month's vote came just days after the president and regional governments, which have had a tense relationship, had agreed to hold a timely election. Somalia had aimed to hold its first one-person-one-vote in 50 years, but that prospect is fading.

How such a vote can be held in areas under the sway of al-Shabab remains unclear.

## **Mauritius declares emergency as stranded ship spills fuel**

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — The Indian Ocean island of Mauritius has declared a "state of environmental emergency" after a Japanese-owned ship that ran aground offshore days ago began spilling tons of fuel.

Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth announced the development late Friday as satellite images showed a

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dark slick spreading in the turquoise waters near environmental areas that the government called "very sensitive."

Mauritius has said the ship was carrying nearly 4,000 tons of fuel and cracks have appeared in its hull.

Jugnauth said his government had appealed to France for help, saying the spill "represents a danger" for the country of some 1.3 million people that relies heavily on tourism and has been hit hard by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Our country doesn't have the skills and expertise to refloat stranded ships," he said. Bad weather has made it impossible to act, and "I worry what could happen Sunday when the weather deteriorates."

Jugnauth shared a photo of the vessel, the MV Wakashio, tilted precariously. "Sea rough beyond the reefs with swells. Ventures in the open seas are not advised," according to the Mauritius Meteorological Services.

Videos posted online showed oily waters lapping at the shore, and a man running a stick across the water's surface and lifting it, dripping black goo.

The French island of Reunion is the closest neighbor to Mauritius, and France's Foreign Ministry says France is Mauritius's "leading foreign investor" and one of its largest trading partners.

"When biodiversity is in peril, there is urgency to act," French President Emmanuel Macron tweeted Saturday. "France is there. Alongside the people of Mauritius. You can count on our support dear Jugnauth."

A separate French statement from Reunion said a military transport aircraft would carry pollution control equipment to Mauritius and a navy vessel with additional material would set sail for the island nation.

"We are in a situation of environmental crisis," the environment minister of Mauritius, Kavy Ramano, has said.

After the cracks in the hull were detected, a salvage team that had been working on the ship was evacuated, Ramano told reporters Thursday. Some 400 sea booms were deployed in an effort to contain the spill.

Government statements in recent days said the ship ran aground July 25 and the National Coast Guard received no distress call. The ship's owners were listed as the Japanese companies Okiyo Maritime Corporation and Nagashiki Shipping Co. Ltd.

A police inquiry has been opened into issues such as possible negligence, one statement said. Online ship trackers showed the Panama-flagged bulk carrier had been en route from China to Brazil.

A statement by Nagashiki Shipping Co. Ltd. said that "due to the bad weather and constant pounding over the past few days, the starboard side bunker tank of the vessel has been breached and an amount of fuel oil has escaped into the sea."

It added: "Nagashiki Shipping takes its environmental responsibilities extremely seriously and will take every effort with partner agencies and contractors to protect the marine environment and prevent further pollution."

Tons of diesel and oil are now leaking into the water, environmental group Greenpeace Africa's climate and energy manager Happy Khambule said in a statement.

"Thousands of species around the pristine lagoons of Blue Bay, Pointe d'Esny and Mahebourg are at risk of drowning in a sea of pollution, with dire consequences for Mauritius' economy, food security and health," Khambule said.

A government environmental outlook released nearly a decade ago said Mauritius had a National Oil Spill Contingency Plan but equipment on hand was "adequate to deal with oil spills of less than 10 metric tonnes."

In case of major spills, it said, assistance could be obtained from other Indian Ocean countries or from international oil spill response organizations.

Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed.

## **Bison, other beasts return life to a former Soviet army base**

By KAREL JANICEK Associated Press

MILOVICE, Czech Republic (AP) — Wild horses, bison and other big-hoofed animals once roamed freely in much of Europe. Now they are transforming a former military base outside the Czech capital in an



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ambitious project to improve biodiversity.

Where occupying Soviet troops once held exercises, massive bovines called tauros and other heavy beasts now munch on the invasive plants that took over the base years ago.

The animals are turning the former Milovice base 35 kilometers (22 miles) northeast of Prague into a miniature version of the steppe that once rolled across the continent.

Wiped out in the wild, the animals now have the chance to live together again in relative freedom. Conservationists deployed them at Milovice five years ago. Now they hope to enlarge the sanctuary by one third to some 360 hectares (890 acres) this year.

The animals' task is to improve biodiversity among local plants by eating invasive ones while saving endangered species, said Dalibor Dostal, the director of European Wildlife, an organization behind the project.

"It's a miraculous change," Dostal said. "Nobody expected that the whole process would go ahead so fast and the area would change so much in just a few years."

He said the large animals are as key in preserving the ecosystem "as trees are for forests."

David Storch, an environment professor at Prague's Charles University who was not involved in the project, agreed.

He said the project is "absolutely unique" because it shows that nature can be preserved not only by protecting it from human activities but also by actively shaping it with the big-hoofed animals.

The selection of the animals was based on the experiences of conservationists in various countries.

Domestic animals such as sheep were ruled out because they would feed on endangered plants as well. Mechanical cutting of the invasive plants is too costly.

While invasive grasses are a delicacy for wild horses, European bisons and tauros prefer bushes, creating an ideal partnership.

The invasive plants began to grow after the Soviet troops who stayed on after the 1968 Soviet-led invasion of then-Czechoslovakia finally withdrew from the base in 1991.

Former military bases are considered places with great biodiversity, the conservationists said, because soldiers' activities simulated the impacts of hoofed animals.

The Czech project includes tauros that were transferred from the Netherlands, where a cross-breeding program aimed at coming close to the original species, the aurochs, started in 2008. That wild ancestor of today's cattle became extinct in the 17th century.

Wild horses were transported from Britain's Exmoor National Park, while European bisons came from several reserves in Poland.

The project now has herds of 27 European bisons, 25 aurochs and some 70 wild horses.

The animals move freely on the pastures on the former military base year-round. With water sources available, they are able to care for themselves, even in winter.

The landscape quickly saw signs of transformation. Flowers started to dot the area as early as the second year of the project as the large herbivores reduced the tall, dense invasive grasses.

Today, the whole area changes its colors over the course of the year, depending on what flowers are in bloom.

The most precious is the star gentian, also known as cross gentian. The blue flower is now flourishing at Milovice, more than anywhere else in the country.

The former base also has become abundant in other animals and insects. The Adonis blue, a butterfly, has been spotted there for the first time since 1967.

"If we give nature a chance, if we give it time and space, it can take care of many things," said Miloslav Jirku, a biologist with the Czech Academy of Sciences who has been involved in the project from the start.

"At the very beginning, I thought that lots of species that used to be here in the 1990s would have to be returned artificially. Today, a number of them are already here without us doing anything about it."

## **Huawei: Smartphone chips running out under US sanctions**

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese tech giant Huawei is running out of processor chips to make smartphones due to U.S. sanctions and will be forced to stop production of its own most advanced chips, a company executive says, in a sign of growing damage to Huawei's business from American pressure.

Huawei Technologies Ltd., one of the biggest producers of smartphones and network equipment, is at the center of U.S.-Chinese tension over technology and security. The feud has spread to include the popular Chinese-owned video app TikTok and China-based messaging service WeChat.

Washington cut off Huawei's access to U.S. components and technology including Google's music and other smartphone services last year. Those penalties were tightened in May when the White House barred vendors worldwide from using U.S. technology to produce components for Huawei.

Production of Kirin chips designed by Huawei's own engineers will stop Sept. 15 because they are made by contractors that need U.S. manufacturing technology, said Richard Yu, president of the company's consumer unit. He said Huawei lacks the ability to make its own chips.

"This is a very big loss for us," Yu said Friday at an industry conference, China Info 100, according to a video recording of his comments posted on multiple websites.

"Unfortunately, in the second round of U.S. sanctions, our chip producers only accepted orders until May 15. Production will close on Sept. 15," Yu said. "This year may be the last generation of Huawei Kirin high-end chips."

More broadly, Huawei's smartphone production has "no chips and no supply," Yu said.

Yu said this year's smartphone sales probably will be lower than 2019's level of 240 million handsets but gave no details. The company didn't immediately respond to questions Saturday.

Huawei, founded in 1987 by a former military engineer, denies accusations it might facilitate Chinese spying. Chinese officials accuse Washington of using national security as an excuse to stop a competitor to U.S. tech industries.

Huawei is a leader among emerging Chinese competitors in telecoms, electric cars, renewable energy and other fields in which the ruling Communist Party hopes China can become a global leader.

Huawei has 180,000 employees and one of the world's biggest research and development budgets at more than \$15 billion a year. But, like most global tech brands, it relies on contractors to manufacture its products.

Earlier, Huawei announced its global sales rose 13.1% over a year ago to 454 billion yuan (\$65 billion) in the first half of 2020. Yu said that was due to strong sales of high-end products but gave no details.

Huawei became the world's top-selling smartphone brand in the three months ending in June, passing rival Samsung for the first time due to strong demand in China, according to Canalys. Sales abroad fell 27% from a year earlier.

Washington also is lobbying European and other allies to exclude Huawei from planned next-generation networks as a security risk.

In other U.S.-Chinese clashes, TikTok's owner, ByteDance Ltd., is under White House pressure to sell the video app. That is due to fears its access to personal information about millions of American users might be a security risk.

On Thursday, President Donald Trump announced a ban on unspecified transactions with TikTok and the Chinese owner of WeChat, a popular messaging service.

## **Belarus' leader faces toughest challenge yet in Sunday vote**

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

MINSK, Belarus (AP) — After 26 years in office, the authoritarian leader of Belarus is facing the toughest challenge yet as he runs for a sixth term.

Discontent over a worsening economy and the government's dismissive response to the coronavirus pandemic has helped fuel the country's largest opposition rallies since Alexander Lukashenko became its

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first and only elected president following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Rumblings among the ruling elite and a bitter rift with Russia, Belarus's main sponsor and ally, compound the reelection challenge facing the 65-year-old former state farm director on Sunday.

Lukashenko, who once acquired the nickname "Europe's last dictator" in the West for his relentless crackdowns on dissent, has made it clear he won't hesitate to again, if necessary, use force to quash any attempt by his opponents to protest the results of the presidential election.

Election officials barred the president's two main prospective rivals from what is now a five-person race. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, a 37-year-old former teacher and the wife of a jailed opposition blogger, has managed to draw strong support, with tens of thousands flocking to her campaign rallies.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Tsikhanouskaya described herself as a "symbol of change" "It was brewing inside for more than 20 years," Tsikhanouskaya said. "We were afraid all that time and no one dared to say a word. Now people vote for a symbol of change."

Tsikhanouskaya has crisscrossed the country, tapping public frustration with Lukashenko's swaggering response to the pandemic and the country's stagnating Soviet-style economy.

The president has dismissed the coronavirus as "psychosis" and refused to introduce any restrictions to stem the outbreak, suggesting that Belarusians protect themselves against the disease with a daily shot of vodka, visits to sauna and hard work in the fields.

"They were telling us that the virus doesn't exist and dismissed it as 'psychosis' while tens of thousands of Belarusians have got sick," said Diana Golubovich, 54, a lawyer who attended Tsikhanouskaya's rally in Brest, a city on the border with Poland. "Suddenly everyone realized that the social-oriented state that Lukashenko was boasting about doesn't exist."

Belarus, a country of 9.5 million people, has reported more than 68,500 confirmed virus cases and 580 deaths in the pandemic. Critics have accused the authorities of manipulating the figures to downplay the death toll.

Lukashenko announced last month that he had been infected with the virus but had no COVID-19 symptoms and recovered quickly, allegedly thanks to doing sports. He defended his handling of the outbreak, saying that a lockdown would have doomed the nation's weakened economy.

Belarus still has sustained a severe economic blow after its leading exports customer, Russia, went into a pandemic-induced recession and other foreign markets shrank. Before the coronavirus, the country's state-controlled economy already had been stalled for years, stoking public frustration.

"Lukashenko lacks a plan to modernize the country. He has taken political freedoms away, and now he is depriving people of a chance for economic growth," said Valery Tsepkalo, a former Belarusian ambassador to the United States who planned to challenge Lukashenko for the presidency but fled to Russia with his children last month to avoid imminent arrest. "That is the main reason behind protests."

When the presidential campaign began, authorities cracked down on the opposition with a renewed vigor. More than 1,300 protest participants have been detained since May, according to the Viasna human rights center. The campaign chief for one of the candidates race was arrested outside a polling station Friday and sentenced to 10 days in jail for allegedly organizing an unauthorized mass gathering.

Standing outside the Minsk Tractor Plant in Belarus's capital, one worker spoke about his low salary, rising prices and "no glimpse of hope" in Belarus.

"No one trusts the government's promises any more," said Anton Rubankevich, 46, who makes the equivalent of \$480 a month. "If this president stays, we will continue falling into a pit."

Political observers say the election campaign also exposed divisions among the Belarusian elite as some of its members entered politics for the first time.

Along with former ambassador Tsepkalo, the head of a major Russia-controlled bank contemplated running against Lukashenko. The well-connected potential rival, Viktor Babariko, was jailed in May on money laundering and tax evasion charges that he rejected as politically driven.

In what the political opposition and many independent observers regarded as an attempt to shore up the incumbent's sagging public support, Belarusian authorities last week arrested 33 Russian military

contractors and charged them with plans to stage “mass riots.”

The arrest of the Russians marked an unprecedented spike in tensions between neighboring Belarus and Russia, which often have acrimonious disputes despite their close ties.

When Russia and Belarus signed a union agreement in 1996, Lukashenko aspired to use it as a vehicle to eventually lead a unified state as the successor to Russia’s ailing president, Boris Yeltsin. The tables turned after Vladimir Putin became Russian president in 2000; the Belarusian leader began resisting what he saw as a Kremlin push for control over Belarus.

Alexander Klaskovsky, an independent political expert based in Minsk, said he thinks the Kremlin hopes the stormy election campaign in Belarus will help erode Lukashenko’s grip on power and make him more receptive to a closer integration of the two countries.

“Moscow is interested not in Lukashenko’s ouster, but his maximal weakening so that he comes out of that campaign with undermined legitimacy, spoiled relations with the West and the economy in a poor shape,” Klaskovsky said. “A weakened and emaciated Lukashenko would be a gift for Moscow.”

While election officials are likely to declare Lukashenko the winner by a landslide, his problems will not end with the vote.

“It will be about 80% of the vote for Lukashenko, so that his entourage doesn’t think that the leader has grown weaker,” he predicted. “The government has enough resources and brute force to keep the power and suppress protests, but it lacks the answer to the main question about the path of Belarus’ development. Lukashenko will undoubtedly win, but it will be a Pyrrhic victory.”

Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed.

## Is France helping Lebanon, or trying to reconquer it?

By ANGELA CHARLTON and SARAH EL-DEEB undefined

PARIS (AP) — It was almost as if Emmanuel Macron forgot that Lebanon is no longer a French protectorate. Visiting explosion-ravaged Beirut this week, France’s leader comforted distraught crowds, promised to rebuild the city and claimed that the blast pierced France’s own heart. “France will never let Lebanon go,” Macron said. “The heart of the French people still beats to the pulse of Beirut.”

His critics denounced the overtures as a neocolonialist foray by a European leader seeking to restore sway over a troubled Middle Eastern land – and distract from mounting problems at home. A meme circulating online dubbed him Macron Bonaparte, a 21st century Emperor Napoleon.

But Macron’s defenders — including desperate Beirut residents who called him “our only hope” — praised him for visiting gutted neighborhoods where Lebanese leaders fear to tread, and for trying to hold Lebanon’s politicians accountable for the corruption and mismanagement blamed for Tuesday’s deadly blast.

Macron’s visit exposed France’s central challenge as it prepares to host an international donors conference for Lebanon on Sunday: how to help a country in crisis, where French economic ties run deep, without interfering in its internal affairs.

“We are walking on the edge of a precipice. We have to aid, support and encourage the Lebanese people, but at the same time not give the impression that we want to establish a new protectorate, which would be completely stupid,” said Jack Lang, a former French government minister who now heads the Arab World Institute in Paris. “We must find new, intelligent solutions to aid the Lebanese.”

France’s ties with Lebanon reach back at least to the 16th century, when the French monarchy negotiated with Ottoman rulers to protect Christians – and secure influence — in the region. By the time of the 1920-1946 French mandate, Lebanon already had a network of French schools and French speakers that survives to this day — along with France’s cozy relationships with Lebanon’s power brokers, including some accused of fueling its political and economic crisis.

A surprising online petition emerged this week asking France to temporarily restore its mandate, saying Lebanon’s leaders have shown “total inability to secure and manage the country.”

It’s widely seen as an absurd idea – Macron himself told Beirut residents Wednesday that “it’s up to you



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to write your history" – but 60,000 people have signed it, including members of France's 250,000-strong Lebanese diaspora and people in Lebanon who said it's a way to express their desperation and distrust of the political class.

Aside from a show of much-needed international support, many in Lebanon viewed Macron's visit as a way to secure financial assistance for a country wracked with debt.

The French leader also managed to bring the divided political class together, if briefly. In a rare scene, the heads of Lebanon's political factions — some of them still bitter enemies from the 1975-1990 civil war — appeared together at the Palais des Pins, the French embassy headquarters in Beirut, and filed out after meeting Macron.

But to many, the visit was seen as patronizing. Some lashed out at the petition and those celebrating "France, the tender mother."

One writer, Samer Frangieh, said Macron gathered the politicians as "schoolchildren," reprimanding them for failing to carry out their duties.

There were other, more subtle jabs against France's show of influence. While Macron was touring neighborhoods torn apart by the explosion, the health minister in the Hezbollah-backed government toured field hospitals donated by Iran and Russia, major power players in the region.

"I get the people who want the mandate. They have no hope," said Leah, an engineering student in Beirut who did not want her last name published out of concern for political repercussions. She spoke out strongly against the idea, and against those who see Macron as Lebanon's "savior."

She said that risks worsening Lebanon's divisions, as Maronite Christians and French-educated Muslims embrace Macron while others lean away. "He hasn't resolved his issues with his country, with his people. How is he giving advice to us?" she asked.

In Paris, Macron's domestic political opponents from the far left to the far right warned the centrist leader against creeping neocolonialism, and extracting political concessions from Lebanon in exchange for aid. "Solidarity with Lebanon should be unconditional," tweeted Julien Bayou, head of the popular Greens party.

Macron himself firmly rejected the idea of reviving the French mandate.

"You can't ask me to substitute for your leaders. It's not possible," he said. "There is no French solution."

But he made a point of noting that he plans to return to Lebanon to verify that promised reforms are being undertaken on Sept. 1, the 100th anniversary of the declaration of Greater Lebanon – and the beginning of French rule.

El Deeb reported from Beirut.

## **A father, a sister, a son: Beirut blast takes a heavy toll**

By SARAH EL DEEB and AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A close twin sister, now separated forever. An attentive and doting husband who sacrificed for his family and promised his wife the moon. A student financing his education by working double shifts at Beirut's busy port.

Tuesday's enormous explosion that killed scores of people, injured thousands and caused widespread destruction across Lebanon's capital touched off widespread mourning for the victims.

Although the city was mired for years in civil war and other regional violence, its beauty and cosmopolitan nature attracted fashion designers, architects and business leaders eager to make their names, as well as migrants seeking to earn money to send back home.

In an instant, thousands of lives were affected by the blast that appeared to have been caused when highly explosive ammonium nitrate being stored at the city's port ignited.

Among those who were lost:

—  
A TWIN SISTER, SEPARATED FOREVER

Jessy Kahwaji Daoud and her twin sister Joyce were seemingly together for all of their 31 years.

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They went to the same schools, took the same classes and saw each other often as adults. They each were raising a young daughter.

Immediately after Tuesday's explosion, Joyce called Jessy, knowing that she was working on the ninth-floor geriatric ward of Saint George Hospital University Medical Center. The hospital is near the port, where the blast occurred.

A man answered the phone instead and said he found it ringing next to the body of a bleeding woman. "I knew immediately that this was my sister," Joyce said.

By the time they could get her to another hospital, Jessy was dead.

Joyce described her sister as "someone who loves life and always had a smile on her face."

"She wasn't supposed to die young," Joyce added. "We were born together. I wish we'd died together."

The last time they saw each other was Sunday, two days before the explosion.

"Now, she's gone. She's gone," Joyce said.

Joyce, who has a 5-year-old daughter, said she plans to raise her sister's 2-year-old daughter, who keeps asking for her mommy.

Joyce said her sister loved her daughter fiercely and showered her with attention.

"She left me her daughter at least. That's what we have left of Jessy," said Joyce.

## A DOTING HUSBAND AND FATHER

Soha Saade and her husband, Jihad Saade, were at Saint George Hospital, caring for their 6-year-old daughter, Gemma, who was being treated for Hodgkin lymphoma. The daughter had one more day of treatments left at the hospital before they were scheduled to leave.

They saw smoke billowing outside and Soha went with nurses to see if there was any reason for worry. Then, "the world exploded," she said.

She returned to her husband of more than 10 years to find him bleeding from his head.

At that moment, she had a choice: Carry out her sick and terrified daughter, who was still connected to IV lines, or focus on helping her bleeding husband.

She decided to focus on her husband, struggling to carry him as she walked barefoot over broken pieces of glass down nine flights of stairs. Strangers helped her until her brother arrived.

Jihad, 44, already was taking his last breaths.

"He didn't even open his eyes. I saw his soul (leave his body)," Soha said.

Jihad was a deeply attentive husband and father to Gemma and their son, Karl, always making sacrifices for his family, Soha said.

"He was carrying a big load. Everyone was counting on him," she said.

He worked as a hotel manager in Lagos, Nigeria, where he was raised. Although they lived apart, he would visit Lebanon every two months, using the money he earned to also help his parents and sister.

"He would tell me every day, 'Don't worry, my love,'" Soha recalled. "If I wanted the moon, he would bring it to me. He would never make me angry."

On Sunday, he gave his wife one final present — a new set of pajamas — and brought Gemma a plate of her favorite tabbouleh salad.

Her chemotherapy treatments over, Gemma is now staying with relatives while Soha recovers from the shock.

The hospital itself was knocked out of service by the blast, and Soha still cannot get over the circumstances of her husband's death.

"You are not supposed to die in a hospital," she said. "This is what is killing me."

## THE PORT WORKER

Once a month, Joe Akiki worked a double shift at huge grain silos at Beirut's port.

He was on that shift when an initial, smaller explosion shook the port right next to the silos on Tuesday. The 23-year-old took out his phone, shot some video and sent it to a friend.

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Then the bigger blast occurred. He never answered his phone again.

"He sent the video of the fire and then disappeared," said Wassim Mhanna, the mayor of Akiki's hometown of Kfardebian, which is a famous ski resort north of Beirut. "We realized something was wrong, but we had hope."

His mother, Nohad, was interviewed earlier this week by a local TV station and said, "My heart tells me he is under the rubble, but I am still waiting."

While she waited, Nohad prayed that somehow he had survived.

Akiki's body was finally recovered Thursday night.

An electrical engineering student, Akiki worked at the silos for three years to finance his studies. He drove to Beirut and back most days while he also took afternoon classes.

He had a dream to improve his parents' and own life. "They went through real hardships raising them," Mhanna said.

His mother, who had lost another child aged 5, discouraged him from emigrating.

"She would tell him, 'No, don't leave. Who would leave the land of cedar trees?'" Mhanna said, referring to Lebanon's famous symbol. "Now we are worried about the (parents)."

Akiki has a younger sister, 16.

—  
Batrawy reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

## US intel: Russia acting against Biden; China opposes Trump

By ERIC TUCKER and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. intelligence officials believe that Russia is using a variety of measures to denigrate Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden ahead of the November election and that individuals linked to the Kremlin are boosting President Donald Trump's reelection bid, the country's counterintelligence chief said in the most specific warning to date about the threat of foreign interference.

U.S. officials also believe China does not want Trump to win a second term and has accelerated its criticism of the White House, expanding its efforts to shape public policy in America and to pressure political figures seen as opposed to Beijing's interests.

The statement Friday from William Evanina is believed to be the most pointed declaration by the U.S. intelligence community linking the Kremlin to efforts to get Trump reelected — a sensitive subject for a president who has rejected intelligence agency assessments that Russia tried to help him in 2016. It also connects Moscow's disapproval of Biden to his role as vice president in shaping Obama administration policies supporting Ukraine, an important U.S. ally, and opposing Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Asked about the intelligence assessment Friday evening in Bedminster, New Jersey, Trump appeared to dispute the idea that Russia was disparaging Biden. "I think the last person Russia wants to see in office is Donald Trump because nobody has been tougher on Russia than I have — ever," he said.

But the president seemed to agree with the intelligence indicating China didn't want him reelected. "If Joe Biden was president, China would own our country," he said.

Evanina's statement, three months before the election, comes amid criticism from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other congressional Democrats that the intelligence community has been withholding from the public specific intelligence information about the threat of foreign interference in American politics.

"The facts are chilling," Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., wrote in an op-ed published Friday evening in The Washington Post. "I believe the American public needs and deserves to know them. The information should be declassified immediately."

The latest intelligence assessment reflects concerns not only about Russia but China and Iran as well, warning that hostile foreign actors may seek to compromise election infrastructure, interfere with the voting process or call into question voting results. Despite those efforts, officials see it as unlikely that anyone could manipulate voting results in any sweeping way, Evanina said.

"Many foreign actors have a preference for who wins the election, which they express through a range

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of overt and private statements; covert influence efforts are rarer," said Evanina, director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center. "We are primarily concerned about the ongoing and potential activity by China, Russia and Iran."

Concerns about election interference are especially acute following a wide-ranging effort by Russia to meddle in the 2016 election on Trump's behalf through both the hacking of Democratic emails and a covert social media campaign aimed at sowing discord among U.S. voters. Trump has routinely resisted the idea that the Kremlin favored him in 2016, but the intelligence assessment released Friday indicates that unnamed Kremlin-linked actors are again working to boost his candidacy on social media and Russian television.

The White House reacted to Friday's news with a statement saying "the United States will not tolerate foreign interference in our electoral processes and will respond to malicious foreign threats that target our democratic institutions."

Tony Blinken, a senior adviser to Biden's campaign, responded that Trump "has publicly and repeatedly invited, emboldened, and even tried to coerce foreign interference in American elections. ... Joe Biden, on the other hand, has led the fight against foreign interference for years."

Democrats in Congress who have participated in recent classified briefings on election interference have expressed alarm at what they have heard. They have urged the U.S. intelligence community to make public some of their concerns in part to avoid a repeat of 2016, when Obama administration officials were seen as slow and overly deliberate in their public discussion of active Russian measures in that year's election.

Pelosi and Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, both California Democrats, said Friday that they were "pleased that Mr. Evanina heeded our call to make additional details public about Russia's malign interference campaign." But they also criticized him for naming Iran and China "as equal threats to our democratic elections."

When it comes to Russia, U.S. officials assess that it is working to "denigrate" Biden and what it sees as an anti-Russia "establishment" among his supporters, Evanina said. U.S. officials believe that tracks Moscow's criticism of Biden when he was vice president for his role in Ukraine policies and his support of opposition to Putin inside Russia.

The U.S. statement called out by name Andrii Derkach, a pro-Russia Ukrainian lawmaker who has been active in leveling unsubstantiated corruption allegations against Biden and his son Hunter, who used to sit on the board of Burisma, an Ukrainian natural gas company. That effort has included publicizing leaked phone calls.

Democrats, including members of the Senate intelligence panel, have voiced concerns that an ongoing Republican probe into Hunter Biden and his work in Ukraine would parallel Russian efforts and amplify Russian disinformation. That investigation is being led by Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, the chairman of Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs committee. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Though U.S. officials allege that China has its own preference, Friday's statement did not directly accuse Beijing of election interference or taking action to prop up Biden.

Instead, the statement said, China views Trump as "unpredictable" and does not want to see him win reelection. China has been expanding its influence efforts ahead of the November election in an effort to shape U.S. policy and pressure political figures it sees as against Beijing.

The Trump administration's relationship with Beijing has taken a starkly more adversarial tone in recent weeks, including the closure of China's consulate in Houston and an executive order Thursday that banned dealings with the Chinese owners of consumer apps TikTok and WeChat,

"Although China will continue to weigh the risks and benefits of aggressive action, its public rhetoric over the past few months has grown increasingly critical of the current Administration's COVID-19 response, closure of China's Houston Consulate, and actions on other issues," the statement said.

The top foreign policy adviser of China's ruling Communist Party, Yang Jiechi, said Friday that "China has no interest in meddling in U.S. domestic politics."



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On Iran, the assessment said Tehran seeks to undermine U.S. democratic institutions as well as Trump and divide America before the election.

"Iran's efforts along these lines probably will focus on online influence, such as spreading disinformation on social media and recirculating anti-U.S. content," Evanina wrote. "Tehran's motivation to conduct such activities is, in part, driven by a perception that President Trump's re-election would result in a continuation of U.S. pressure on Iran in an effort to foment regime change."

During a panel discussion later Friday at the DEF CON hacker convention, federal cybersecurity officials were asked which foreign threat they considered most serious.

"I don't think I would say one is scarier than the other, per se. Certainly some of these adversaries are at little bit more experienced," said the National Security Agency's election lead, David Imbordino.

"I couldn't agree more," said Cynthia Kaiser, the FBI's deputy chief of analysis for national cyber threats. "If if you ask me what the biggest threat is, it's the kind of constant drumbeat or influence campaigns that are going to make people feel like they are less confident in our (elections) system."

Tucker reported from Stonington, Connecticut. Associated Press writers Jonathan Lemire in Bridgewater, New Jersey, and Frank Bajak in Boston contributed to this report.

## **Virus aid talks collapse; no help expected for jobless now**

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A last-ditch effort by Democrats to revive Capitol Hill talks on vital COVID-19 rescue money collapsed in disappointment at week's end, making it increasingly likely that Washington gridlock will mean more hardship for millions of people who are losing enhanced jobless benefits and further damage for an economy pummeled by the still-raging coronavirus.

President Donald Trump said Friday night he was likely to issue more limited executive orders related to COVID, perhaps in the next day or so, if he can't reach a broad agreement with Congress.

The day's negotiations at the Capitol added up to only "a disappointing meeting," declared top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer, saying the White House had rejected an offer by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to curb Democratic demands by about \$1 trillion. He urged the White House to "negotiate with Democrats and meet us in the middle. Don't say it's your way or no way."

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said, "Unfortunately we did not make any progress today." Republicans said Pelosi was relying on budget maneuvers to curb costs and contended she has overplayed her hand.

Often an impasse in Washington is of little consequence for the public — not so this time. It means longer and perhaps permanent expiration of a \$600 per-week bonus pandemic jobless benefit that's kept millions of people from falling into poverty. It denies more than \$100 billion to help schools reopen this fall. It blocks additional funding for virus testing as cases are surging this summer. And it denies billions of dollars to state and local governments considering furloughs as their revenue craters.

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White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said, "This is not a perfect answer — we'll be the first ones to say that — but it is all that we can do, and all the president can do within the confines of his executive power."

Friday's Capitol Hill session followed a combative meeting Thursday evening that for the first time cast

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real doubt on the ability of the Trump administration and Democrats to come together on a fifth COVID-19 response bill. Pelosi summoned Mnuchin and Meadows in hopes of breathing life into the negotiations, which have been characterized by frustration and intransigence on both sides — particularly on top issues such as extending the bonus jobless benefit that expired last week.

Pelosi declared the talks all but dead until Meadows and Mnuchin give ground.

"I've told them 'come back when you are ready to give us a higher number,'" she said.

The breakdown in the negotiations is particularly distressing for schools, which have been counting on billions of dollars from Washington to help with the costs of reopening. But other priorities are also languishing, including a fresh round of \$1,200 direct payments to most people, a cash infusion for the struggling Postal Service and money to help states hold elections in November.

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"We'll go down \$1 trillion, you go up \$1 trillion," Pelosi said. The figures are approximate, but a Pelosi spokesman said the speaker is in general terms seeking a "top line" of perhaps \$2.4 trillion since the House-passed HEROES Act is scored at \$3.45 trillion. Republicans say their starting offer was about \$1 trillion but have offered some concessions on jobless benefits and aid to states, among others, that have brought the White House offer higher.

Mnuchin said renewal of a \$600 per-week pandemic jobless boost and huge demands by Democrats for aid to state and local governments are the key areas where they are stuck.

"There's a lot of areas of compromise," he said after Friday's meeting. "I think if we can reach an agreement on state and local and unemployment, we will reach an overall deal. And if we can't we can't."

Democrats have offered to reduce her almost \$1 trillion demand for state and local governments considerably, but some of Pelosi's proposed cost savings would accrue chiefly because she would shorten the timeframe for benefits like food stamps.

Pelosi and Schumer continue to insist on a huge aid package to address a surge in cases and deaths, double-digit joblessness and the threat of poverty for millions of the newly unemployed.

On Friday, they pointed to the new July jobs report to try to bolster their proposals. The report showed that the U.S. added 1.8 million jobs last month, a much lower increase than in May and June.

"It's clear the economy is losing steam," Schumer said. "That means we need big, bold investments in America to help average folks."

Senate Republicans have been split, with roughly half of Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's rank and file opposed to another rescue bill at all. Four prior coronavirus response bills totaling almost \$3 trillion have won approval on bipartisan votes despite intense wrangling, but conservatives have recoiled at the prospect of another Pelosi-brokered agreement with a whopping deficit-financed cost.

McConnell has kept his distance from the negotiations while coordinating with Mnuchin and Meadows.

In addition to restoring the lapsed \$600-per-week bonus jobless benefit, Pelosi and Schumer have staked out a firm position to extend demanded generous child care assistance and reiterated their insistence on additional funding for food stamps and assistance to renters and homeowners facing eviction or foreclosure.

"This virus is like a freight train coming so fast and they are responding like a convoy going as slow as the slowest ship. It just doesn't work," Pelosi said Friday.

## AP sources: Whitmer met with Biden as he nears VP decision

By DAVID EGGERT Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer traveled to Delaware last weekend to meet with Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee's first known in-person session with a potential running mate as he nears a decision.

Whitmer visited Biden Sunday, according to two high-ranking Michigan Democrats who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly. The first-term governor of the battleground state has long been on his short list of possible running mates.

Flight records show a chartered plane left Lansing's Capital Region International Airport for Delaware

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Coastal Airport at 5:33 p.m. and returned at 11:16 p.m.

The governor's office declined to confirm or deny the trip.

"We don't discuss her personal schedule," spokeswoman Tiffany Brown said.

Biden's campaign declined to comment.

He has spent months weighing who would serve alongside him if he wins in November. Biden has pledged to select a woman and has conducted an expansive search, including Sens. Kamala Harris of California and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, California Rep. Karen Bass and former Obama national security adviser Susan Rice.

Biden is facing calls to select a Black woman to acknowledge their crucial role in Democratic politics and in response to the nation's reckoning with systemic racism.

Whitmer has sought to address racism and racial inequity. In April, she created a task force to address the pandemic's racial disparities and later proposed police reforms in the wake of George Floyd's death. On Wednesday — days after visiting Biden — she declared racism a public health crisis, created an advisory council of Black leaders and required implicit bias training for all state employees.

If Whitmer is chosen to join the ticket and Biden wins, Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II would become the country's only Black governor.

Biden and Whitmer formed a bond after he campaigned for her in the 2018 gubernatorial election. She is a co-chair on his campaign.

Her profile has grown since delivering the Democrats' response to President Donald Trump's State of the Union address and especially amid the pandemic. She has taken aggressive steps to curb the coronavirus in a state that was a hot spot nationally early on and — after she criticized the federal response — has drawn criticism from Trump, who in March urged Vice President Mike Pence not to call "the woman in Michigan."

Follow David Eggert at <https://twitter.com/DavidEggert00>

## **Biden risks alienating young Black voters after race remarks**

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden's controversial remarks about race this week risk alienating young Black voters who despise President Donald Trump but are not inspired by his Democratic rival.

When pressed by Errol Barnett of CBS News on whether he'd taken a cognitive test, Biden responded that the question was akin to asking the Black reporter if he would take a drug test to see if "you're taking cocaine or not? ... Are you a junkie?"

In a later interview with National Public Radio's Lulu Garcia-Navarro, Biden seemed to draw distinctions between Black and Hispanic populations in the U.S. "Unlike the African American community, with notable exceptions, the Latino community is an incredibly diverse community with incredibly different attitudes about different things," he told the Latina reporter.

He later walked back the comment.

Black voters as a whole delivered the Democratic nomination to Biden, powering his commanding win in the South Carolina primary, which rescued his floundering campaign. But that success was heavily dependent on older Black voters. In a general election where Democrats say no vote can be taken for granted, young Black activists and elected officials say this week's missteps could make it harder to get their vote.

"Trump is terrible, and he's a racist, and we have to get racists out of the White House. But then Biden keeps saying racist things," said Mariah Parker, a 28-year-old county commissioner in Athens, Georgia. "It doesn't make me feel much better that we actually will have an improvement for the Black community with one president over the other."

Most Black voters view Trump as someone who exacerbates racial tensions and are unlikely to support his campaign in large numbers. But those who sit out the presidential election could sway the outcome in closely contested states.

AP VoteCast data illustrates the generational divide Biden is confronting.

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Across 17 states where AP VoteCast surveyed Democratic voters during the primary, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders won 60% of voters under 30 overall, to Biden's 19%. And while Biden was strongly supported by African American voters overall, Black voters under age 30 were slightly more likely to support Sanders than Biden, 44% to 38%.

A Washington Post-Ipsos poll conducted in June suggested that while Biden had majority support among Black voters aged 18-39, there was skepticism about Biden himself. Among Black Americans under age 40 that were polled, 32% said they didn't feel he was sympathetic to the problems of Black people. And 24% of respondents under 40 said they felt Biden is "biased" against Black people, in contrast to much lower percentages for middle-aged and senior respondents.

Part of the challenge for Biden, said activist Kristin Fulwylie Thomas, is the perception among young Black voters that he's too moderate to deliver on issues that are important to them. The 31-year-old managing director of Equal Ground, an Orlando-based group working to boost turnout among Black voters across Florida, said she hears this concern from people in her community and voters across the state.

"What I'm seeing and what I'm hearing among young black voters is that Biden was not their first choice, so folks are not excited to vote for him this November," she said.

Every gaffe makes it harder for Biden to generate that excitement.

Michigan State Rep. Jewell Jones, who at 21 was the youngest elected official ever in Michigan, said that he's seen a number of Biden's comments on Black voters, along with his past support for the 1994 Crime Bill that contributed to mass incarceration of Black Americans, pop up on social media and raise questions among his peers.

"Young people are really holding people accountable these days," he said. "Anything that comes up that they think is questionable, they'll challenge."

Jones, who is now 25, said the issue with young Black voters is "not necessarily skepticism about whether or not he's able to do the job."

"Young people today want to know, are politicians' hearts in the right place?" he said.

The Biden campaign says they're working hard to reach out to young Black voters, and point to events hosted by their young voter outreach coalition, League 46, as well as outreach geared specifically towards Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Black sororities, among an array of other events broadly geared toward the Black community nationwide.

Birmingham, Alabama, Mayor Randall Woodfin, who supports Biden, swept aside Biden's comments this week. He noted that Biden, unlike Trump, later clarified his comments.

"I truly believe that he wants to do the right thing moving forward," he said.

Biden has put out an array of proposals focused on Black economic mobility, which include pledges to steer federal money and tax credits to small business and economic development programs for minority-owned firms and disadvantaged neighborhoods. Biden also said he'd encourage home ownership to help close wealth gaps among minority communities, among other policies.

On criminal justice reform, he's called for a federal ban on police chokeholds, national standards for police use of force, mandatory data collection from local law enforcement, a new federal police oversight commission. He's also embraced some progressive proposals that may appeal to younger voters, like forgiving some student loan debt and offering some free college.

But on a number of key issues being pushed by some young Black activists — like defunding or dismantling police forces, Medicare for All, and legalizing marijuana — Biden has thus far declined to embrace the most progressive policies.

As Jones put it: "The younger generation are not just asking for reform or just asking for change. They want a revolution."

But some of the enthusiasm gap has to do with a generational split on voting within the Black community that has little to do with Biden, said Leah Daughtry, a Black operative who has twice served as CEO of the Democratic National Convention.

"For my generation and older, voting was this thing that was this great privilege because we didn't al-



ways have it," she said, noting that at 55, she was part of the first generation of Black women to get the right to vote. For younger Black Americans, "they don't have the lived experience of not being able to."

Still, Daughtry said that she was willing to give Biden "a pass" on his comments after listening to the full interview, but young voters might not be so forgiving.

"It's absolutely a problem, and unfortunately the campaign appears to be having to spend time clarifying and cleaning them up," she said. "For young people — when they see the one quote it would appear to confirm to them, or solidify questions in their mind about the vice president's intent and goals. And the best we can hope for is they will do further research. At worst you have some who will say it adds to their reasons for disillusionment."

## Plane skids off runway in India; 17 killed, including pilots

By ASHOK SHARMA and EMILY SCHMALL Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — At least 17 people were killed and 123 injured when a special return flight for Indians stranded abroad because of the coronavirus skidded off a hilltop runway and cracked in two while landing Friday in heavy rain in the southern state of Kerala, police said.

Among the injured, at least 15 were in critical condition, said Abdul Karim, a senior Kerala state police officer. Rescue operations were over, he said.

The dead included both pilots of the Air India Express flight, the airline said in a statement, adding that the four cabin crew members were safe.

The 2-year-old Boeing 737-800 flew from Dubai to Kozhikode, also called Calicut, in Kerala, India's southernmost state, the airline said. There were 174 adult passengers, 10 infants, two pilots and four cabin crew on board.

Kozhikode's 2,850-meter (9,350-foot) runway is on a flat hilltop with deep gorges on either side ending in a 34-meter (112-foot) drop.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep S. Puri said in a statement that the flight "overshot the runway in rainy conditions and went down" the slope, breaking into two pieces upon impact.

A similar tragedy was narrowly avoided at the same airport a year ago, when an Air India Express flight suffered a tail strike upon landing. None of the 180 passengers of that flight was injured.

An inquiry will be conducted by the ministry's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau.

The airport's runway end safety area was expanded in 2018 to accommodate wide-body aircraft.

The runway end safety area meets United Nations international civil aviation requirements, but the U.N. agency recommends a buffer that is 150 meters (492 feet) longer than what exists at Kozhikode airport, according to Harro Ranter, chief executive of the Aviation Safety Network online database.

Dubai-based aviation consultant Mark Martin said that while it was too early to determine the cause of the crash, annual monsoon conditions appeared to be a factor.

"Low visibility, wet runway, low cloud base, all leading to very poor braking action is what looks like led to where we are at the moment with this crash," Martin said, calling for the European Aviation Safety Agency and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration to assist with the Indian government's investigation.

Kerala state Health Minister KK Shailaja on Saturday asked local residents who joined the rescue effort to go into quarantine as a precautionary measure. The survivors were being tested for the virus, officials said.

The Air India Express flight was part of the Indian government's special repatriation mission to bring Indian citizens back to the country, officials said. All of the passengers were returning from the Gulf region, authorities said. Regular commercial flights have been halted in India because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that he was "pained by the plane accident in Kozhikode," and that he had spoken to Kerala's top elected official.

Air India Express is a subsidiary of Air India.

The worst air disaster in India was on Nov. 12, 1996, when a Saudi Arabian Airlines flight collided midair with a Kazakhstan Airlines Flight near Charki Dadri in Haryana state, killing all 349 on board the two planes.

Associated Press writers Sheikh Saaliq in New Delhi and Aijaz Hussain in Srinagar, India, contributed to this report.

## US intel: Russia acting against Biden; China opposes Trump

By ERIC TUCKER and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. intelligence officials believe that Russia is using a variety of measures to denigrate Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden ahead of the November election and that individuals linked to the Kremlin are boosting President Donald Trump's reelection bid, the country's counterintelligence chief said in the most specific warning to date about the threat of foreign interference.

U.S. officials also believe China does not want Trump to win a second term and has accelerated its criticism of the White House, expanding its efforts to shape public policy in America and to pressure political figures seen as opposed to Beijing's interests.

The statement Friday from William Evanina is believed to be the most pointed declaration by the U.S. intelligence community linking the Kremlin to efforts to get Trump reelected — a sensitive subject for a president who has rejected intelligence agency assessments that Russia tried to help him in 2016. It also connects Moscow's disapproval of Biden to his role as vice president in shaping Obama administration policies supporting Ukraine, an important U.S. ally, and opposing Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Asked about the intelligence assessment Friday evening in Bedminster, New Jersey, Trump appeared to dispute the idea that Russia was disparaging Biden. "I think the last person Russia wants to see in office is Donald Trump because nobody has been tougher on Russia than I have — ever," he said.

But the president seemed to agree with the intelligence indicating China didn't want him reelected. "If Joe Biden was president, China would own our country," he said.

Evanina's statement, three months before the election, comes amid criticism from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other congressional Democrats that the intelligence community has been withholding from the public specific intelligence information about the threat of foreign interference in American politics.

"The facts are chilling," Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., wrote in an op-ed published Friday evening in *The Washington Post*. "I believe the American public needs and deserves to know them. The information should be declassified immediately."

The latest intelligence assessment reflects concerns not only about Russia but China and Iran as well, warning that hostile foreign actors may seek to compromise election infrastructure, interfere with the voting process or call into question voting results. Despite those efforts, officials see it as unlikely that anyone could manipulate voting results in any sweeping way, Evanina said.

"Many foreign actors have a preference for who wins the election, which they express through a range of overt and private statements; covert influence efforts are rarer," said Evanina, director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center. "We are primarily concerned about the ongoing and potential activity by China, Russia and Iran."

Concerns about election interference are especially acute following a wide-ranging effort by Russia to meddle in the 2016 election on Trump's behalf through both the hacking of Democratic emails and a covert social media campaign aimed at sowing discord among U.S. voters. Trump has routinely resisted the idea that the Kremlin favored him in 2016, but the intelligence assessment released Friday indicates that unnamed Kremlin-linked actors are again working to boost his candidacy on social media and Russian television.

The White House reacted to Friday's news with a statement saying "the United States will not tolerate foreign interference in our electoral processes and will respond to malicious foreign threats that target our democratic institutions."

Tony Blinken, a senior adviser to Biden's campaign, responded that Trump "has publicly and repeatedly invited, emboldened, and even tried to coerce foreign interference in American elections. ... Joe Biden, on the other hand, has led the fight against foreign interference for years."

Democrats in Congress who have participated in recent classified briefings on election interference have expressed alarm at what they have heard. They have urged the U.S. intelligence community to make public

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some of their concerns in part to avoid a repeat of 2016, when Obama administration officials were seen as slow and overly deliberate in their public discussion of active Russian measures in that year's election.

Pelosi and Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, both California Democrats, said Friday that they were "pleased that Mr. Evanina heeded our call to make additional details public about Russia's malign interference campaign." But they also criticized him for naming Iran and China "as equal threats to our democratic elections."

When it comes to Russia, U.S. officials assess that it is working to "denigrate" Biden and what it sees as an anti-Russia "establishment" among his supporters, Evanina said. U.S. officials believe that tracks Moscow's criticism of Biden when he was vice president for his role in Ukraine policies and his support of opposition to Putin inside Russia.

The U.S. statement called out by name Andrii Derkach, a pro-Russia Ukrainian lawmaker who has been active in leveling unsubstantiated corruption allegations against Biden and his son Hunter, who used to sit on the board of Burisma, an Ukrainian natural gas company. That effort has included publicizing leaked phone calls.

Democrats, including members of the Senate intelligence panel, have voiced concerns that an ongoing Republican probe into Hunter Biden and his work in Ukraine would parallel Russian efforts and amplify Russian disinformation. That investigation is being led by Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, the chairman of Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs committee. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Though U.S. officials allege that China has its own preference, Friday's statement did not directly accuse Beijing of election interference or taking action to prop up Biden.

Instead, the statement said, China views Trump as "unpredictable" and does not want to see him win reelection. China has been expanding its influence efforts ahead of the November election in an effort to shape U.S. policy and pressure political figures it sees as against Beijing.

The Trump administration's relationship with Beijing has taken a starkly more adversarial tone in recent weeks, including the closure of China's consulate in Houston and an executive order Thursday that banned dealings with the Chinese owners of consumer apps TikTok and WeChat,

"Although China will continue to weigh the risks and benefits of aggressive action, its public rhetoric over the past few months has grown increasingly critical of the current Administration's COVID-19 response, closure of China's Houston Consulate, and actions on other issues," the statement said.

The top foreign policy adviser of China's ruling Communist Party, Yang Jiechi, said Friday that "China has no interest in meddling in U.S. domestic politics."

On Iran, the assessment said Tehran seeks to undermine U.S. democratic institutions as well as Trump and divide America before the election.

"Iran's efforts along these lines probably will focus on online influence, such as spreading disinformation on social media and recirculating anti-U.S. content," Evanina wrote. "Tehran's motivation to conduct such activities is, in part, driven by a perception that President Trump's re-election would result in a continuation of U.S. pressure on Iran in an effort to foment regime change."

During a panel discussion later Friday at the DEF CON hacker convention, federal cybersecurity officials were asked which foreign threat they considered most serious.

"I don't think I would say one is scarier than the other, per se. Certainly some of these adversaries are at little bit more experienced," said the National Security Agency's election lead, David Imbordino.

"I couldn't agree more," said Cynthia Kaiser, the FBI's deputy chief of analysis for national cyber threats. "If if you ask me what the biggest threat is, it's the kind of constant drumbeat or influence campaigns that are going to make people feel like they are less confident in our (elections) system."

Tucker reported from Stonington, Connecticut. Associated Press writers Jonathan Lemire in Bridgewater, New Jersey, and Frank Bajak in Boston contributed to this report.

## Last-ditch virus aid talks collapse; no help for jobless now

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A last-ditch effort by Democrats to revive Capitol Hill talks on vital COVID-19 rescue money collapsed in disappointment Friday, making it increasingly likely that Washington gridlock will mean more hardship for millions of people who are losing enhanced jobless benefits and further damage for an economy pummeled by the still-raging coronavirus.

President Donald Trump said Friday night he was likely to issue more limited executive orders related to COVID, perhaps in the next day or so, if he can't reach a broad agreement with Congress.

The day's negotiations at the Capitol added up to only "a disappointing meeting," declared top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer, saying the White House had rejected an offer by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to curb Democratic demands by about \$1 trillion. He urged the White House to "negotiate with Democrats and meet us in the middle. Don't say it's your way or no way."

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said, "Unfortunately we did not make any progress today." Republicans said Pelosi was relying on budget maneuvers to curb costs and contended she has overplayed her hand.

Often an impasse in Washington is of little consequence for the public — not so this time. It means longer and perhaps permanent expiration of a \$600 per-week bonus pandemic jobless benefit that's kept millions of people from falling into poverty. It denies more than \$100 billion to help schools reopen this fall. It blocks additional funding for virus testing as cases are surging this summer. And it denies billions of dollars to state and local governments considering furloughs as their revenue craters.

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White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said, "This is not a perfect answer — we'll be the first ones to say that — but it is all that we can do, and all the president can do within the confines of his executive power."

Friday's Capitol Hill session followed a combative meeting Thursday evening that for the first time cast real doubt on the ability of the Trump administration and Democrats to come together on a fifth COVID-19 response bill. Pelosi summoned Mnuchin and Meadows in hopes of breathing life into the negotiations, which have been characterized by frustration and intransigence on both sides — particularly on top issues such as extending the bonus jobless benefit that expired last week.

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"I've told them 'come back when you are ready to give us a higher number,'" she said.

The breakdown in the negotiations is particularly distressing for schools, which have been counting on billions of dollars from Washington to help with the costs of reopening. But other priorities are also languishing, including a fresh round of \$1,200 direct payments to most people, a cash infusion for the struggling Postal Service and money to help states hold elections in November.

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On Friday, they pointed to the new July jobs report to try to bolster their proposals. The report showed that the U.S. added 1.8 million jobs last month, a much lower increase than in May and June.

"It's clear the economy is losing steam," Schumer said. "That means we need big, bold investments in America to help average folks."

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"This virus is like a freight train coming so fast and they are responding like a convoy going as slow as the slowest ship. It just doesn't work," Pelosi said Friday.

## Q&A: What's up with Trump's orders on TikTok and WeChat?

By TALIA ARBEL AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump has ordered sweeping but vague ban on dealings with the Chinese owners of popular apps TikTok and WeChat, saying they are a threat to U.S. national security, foreign policy and the economy.

But it's far from clear what the administration intends to actually do when the bans take effect in 45 days, since the orders are currently blank checks waiting to be filled in. Uncertainty also surrounds what effect the orders will have on the apps' users, whether the administration will face legal challenges over its authority to ban consumer apps, and what the companies — or China — will do next. Microsoft is in talks to buy parts of TikTok, in a potential sale that's being forced under Trump's threat of a ban.

Here's what's at stake:

Q: WHAT ARE THESE COMPANIES?

A: TikTok, owned by ByteDance, is an increasingly popular video app with 100 million U.S. users and hundreds of millions globally. It has a fun, goofy reputation, full of people lip-syncing, dancing and pulling pranks, and is exceptionally easy to use. Like other social-media companies, it has raised concerns about the privacy of its users and how it moderates content. It has spawned an influencer culture of its own and nurtured music hits; Facebook and Snapchat see it as a competitive threat.

Tencent's WeChat is a critical communications and payments service in China and with Chinese emigrants abroad, with 1.2 billion users globally. It doesn't break out U.S. users, but mobile research firm Sensor Tower estimates 19 million downloads in the U.S. since 2014.

But Tencent is intertwined with other major U.S. entertainment brands. It owns Riot Games, publisher of hit video game League of Legends, and has a big stake in Epic Games, the company behind video game phenomenon Fortnite. It also has a streaming deal with the NBA.

Q: WHAT WOULD THE ORDERS DO?

A: The first thing they've done is to spread fear, uncertainty and doubt.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo earlier this week said that "we want to see untrusted Chinese apps

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removed from U.S. app stores." The vague wording of the orders, which prohibit "any transaction" under U.S. jurisdiction with either Tencent or ByteDance, could be interpreted to support an app-store ban and other measures, experts said. It's not clear how it would apply to Tencent's other properties and partnerships.

We'll presumably know more in 45 days.

**Q: WHY IS THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION CRACKING DOWN ON TIKTOK AND WECHAT?**

It's driven by concerns over collection of American users' data and longstanding complaints about Chinese business tactics, according to two White House officials not authorized to speak publicly about private deliberations. Trump had long taken aim at TikTok but the move against WeChat was an escalation.

But the picture is more complicated than just that. Trump's frustration over the coronavirus pandemic and China also drove his actions, the officials said. He has blamed the outbreak on Beijing and questioned whether China's leaders purposefully failed to contain it to spread economic disaster to other nations. He also has privately raged against China, blaming the nation for hurting his re-election chances and expressing no desire for a further trade deal.

Trump ignored questions about the executive orders from reporters on the tarmac after deplaning in advance of a three-day weekend at his Bedminster club.

**Q: ARE THE ORDERS LEGAL?**

It would be difficult for the government to stop people from using WeChat and TikTok — there are workarounds even if they're removed from app stores — and it's not clear the president has a legal basis to do so under the powers cited in the orders, experts said. Moreover, civil-rights groups said a ban raises First Amendment concerns.

"Selectively banning entire platforms harms freedom of speech online and does nothing to resolve the broader problem of unjustified government surveillance, including by our own government," said Hina Shamsi, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's National Security Project, in an emailed statement.

TikTok says it will "pursue all remedies" and suggested it would sue to ensure the company and its users are "are treated fairly."

**Q: DO I NEED TO DELETE TIKTOK FROM MY KID'S PHONE?**

A: Not as a result of the Trump administration's actions, though you might want to take a closer look anyway.

TikTok, like most other social networks, collects data about its users and moderates what's posted. It grabs people's locations and messages they send one another, for example, and tracks what people watch in order to know what kinds of videos they like and how best to target ads to them. U.S.-based platforms do much the same thing, so deleting TikTok but leaving Snapchat, for instance, might not change things much.

But the administration and some scholars worry that China can force its companies to help the government gather intelligence. In the case of TikTok, this remains a hypothetical threat, said Samm Sacks, a researcher at Yale Law School's Paul Tsai China Center — but she acknowledges that it could be happening.

TikTok says U.S. user data isn't stored in China and that it wouldn't hand it over. But experts believe said that if the Chinese government wants information, it will get it. The U.S. government has also cracked down on Chinese telecom companies Huawei and ZTE because of this worry. The companies deny that they facilitate spying.

There are also concerns about TikTok censoring videos critical of China, which TikTok denies, and pushing propaganda. Advocates in the U.S. also say the company is violating children's privacy laws.

WeChat, meanwhile, is censored within China. The Citizen Lab internet watchdog group in Toronto says WeChat monitors files and images shared abroad to aid its censorship in China.

**Q: IS THE ALLEGED CHINESE THREAD FROM TIKTOK AND WECHAT UNIQUE?**

A: No. China's economic espionage is a well-known constant, and the Chinese military or groups with ties to it are accused of massive hacks of sensitive information from the credit agency Equifax and the federal Office of Personnel Management.

The U.S. government has also raised user data concerns about Huawei, a maker of smartphones and

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network equipment that is China's first global tech brand. It has moved to cut off access to chips and other technology for Huawei, banned U.S. government funds being used on its equipment and pushed allies not to use it. The government has also blocked China from purchasing several U.S. companies.

But several experts say that the U.S. government is lashing out at Chinese tech companies without taking other significant steps to protect Americans' privacy.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration has been embroiled in a tariff war with Beijing over its technology ambitions. And election-year politics in the U.S. may be raising the stakes. Trump appears to be using friction with China to drum up voter support.

Q: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

A: The U.S. government is effectively forcing ByteDance, TikTok's owner, to sell so it can salvage the app in the U.S., a huge and valuable market. TikTok is in talks with Microsoft, which has said it intends to complete discussions by Sept. 15.

Q: DO U.S. TECH COMPANIES STAND TO BENEFIT FROM PRESSURE ON CHINESE APPS?

A: Could be. Users could step back from TikTok and focus more on Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube or other apps. Facebook rolled out a TikTok clone on its Instagram service this week — interesting timing.

If Microsoft does end up buying some or all of TikTok, it would get a fast-growing app with younger users, a whole new consumer business. But some analysts are skeptical of what Microsoft can do with a product that's so different from its core workplace business.

And there is speculation that Facebook could point to a Microsoft purchase of TikTok to say that there is more social-media competition in the U.S., relieving antitrust pressure on itself.

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AP reporters Jonathan Lemire in Bridgewater, N.J., Barbara Ortutay in Oakland, Calif., Mae Anderson in New York, Frank Bajak in Boston, Joe McDonald in Beijing and Zen Soo in Hong Kong contributed to this article.

## AP sources: Whitmer met with Biden as he nears VP decision

By DAVID EGGERT Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer traveled to Delaware last weekend to meet with Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee's first known in-person session with a potential running mate as he nears a decision.

Whitmer visited Biden Sunday, according to two high-ranking Michigan Democrats who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly. The first-term governor of the battleground state has long been on his short list of possible running mates.

Flight records show a chartered plane left Lansing's Capital Region International Airport for Delaware Coastal Airport at 5:33 p.m. and returned at 11:16 p.m.

The governor's office declined to confirm or deny the trip.

"We don't discuss her personal schedule," spokeswoman Tiffany Brown said.

Biden's campaign declined to comment.

He has spent months weighing who would serve alongside him if he wins in November. Biden has pledged to select a woman and has conducted an expansive search, including Sens. Kamala Harris of California and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, California Rep. Karen Bass and former Obama national security adviser Susan Rice.

Biden is facing calls to select a Black woman to acknowledge their crucial role in Democratic politics and in response to the nation's reckoning with systemic racism.

Whitmer has sought to address racism and racial inequity. In April, she created a task force to address the pandemic's racial disparities and later proposed police reforms in the wake of George Floyd's death. On Wednesday — days after visiting Biden — she declared racism a public health crisis, created an advisory council of Black leaders and required implicit bias training for all state employees.

If Whitmer is chosen to join the ticket and Biden wins, Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II would become the

country's only Black governor.

Biden and Whitmer formed a bond after he campaigned for her in the 2018 gubernatorial election. She is a co-chair on his campaign.

Her profile has grown since delivering the Democrats' response to President Donald Trump's State of the Union address and especially amid the pandemic. She has taken aggressive steps to curb the coronavirus in a state that was a hot spot nationally early on and — after she criticized the federal response — has drawn criticism from Trump, who in March urged Vice President Mike Pence not to call "the woman in Michigan."

Follow David Eggert at <https://twitter.com/DavidEggert00>

## US hiring slows amid signs of longer-lasting economic damage

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. hiring slowed in July as the coronavirus outbreak worsened, and the government's jobs report offered signs Friday that the economic damage from the pandemic could last far longer than many observers originally envisioned.

The United States added 1.8 million jobs in July, a pullback from the previous two months. At any other time, hiring at that level would be seen as a blowout gain. But after employers shed a staggering 22 million jobs in March and April, much larger increases are needed to heal the job market. The hiring of the past three months has recovered 42% of the jobs lost to the pandemic-induced recession, according to the Labor Department's report.

Though the unemployment rate fell last month from 11.1% to 10.2%, that level still exceeds the highest rate during the 2008-2009 Great Recession.

Roughly half the job gains were in the industries hit hardest by the virus: restaurants, retail shops, bars, hotels and entertainment venues such as casinos. Those jobs have been relatively quick to return after the broadest shutdowns ended in May and June.

But economists worry that the next leg of job growth will be harder to achieve, particularly as the virus dampens confidence, leaving much of the country only partially reopened, most travel on hold and millions of employees working from home. The number of people unemployed for longer than 15 weeks jumped in July to more than 6 million, a sign many of the unemployed will have to find work at new companies or even in new occupations, a potentially lengthy process.

Constance Hunter, chief economist at accounting firm KPMG, noted that many jobs in hotels, sports stadiums and the travel industry probably will not return until a vaccine is developed.

"When are you going to be comfortable again being in an air-conditioned room with 400 people?" she asked. "There are whole parts of the economy that will remain unemployed until we have a much tighter control of this virus."

The jobs report emerged as new infections run at about 55,000 a day. While that's down from a peak of well over 70,000 in the second half of July, cases are rising in about half of the states, and deaths are climbing in many of them.

In other virus-related developments Friday:

— New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that schools can bring children back to classrooms for the start of the school year, citing success in battling the virus in the state that once was the U.S. heart of the pandemic. The decision clears the way for schools to offer at least some days of in-person classes, alongside remote learning.

— California has surpassed 10,000 deaths from the coronavirus, making it the U.S. state with the third-highest number of deaths since the beginning of the pandemic. The figure was reported Friday by Johns Hopkins University.

— A small South Dakota town launched a huge 10-day motorcycle rally on Friday despite fears it could lead to a massive coronavirus outbreak. Organizers of the 80th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally said they were expecting 250,000 people from all over the country. South Dakota has no mask mandates, and many who



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arrived on Friday expressed defiance of measures meant to prevent the spread of the virus.

— Russia boasted that it's about to become the first country to approve a COVID-19 vaccine, with mass vaccinations planned as early as October using shots that are yet to complete clinical trials. Scientists worldwide say the rush could backfire if the vaccine is neither effective nor safe.

Back in the spring, the widespread hope was that temporarily shutting down the economy would defeat the virus, after which businesses could quickly reopen and call back laid-off workers. But the resurgence of the virus in much of the country has reversed some reopenings and made it harder for many people to get back to work.

In addition to the rising number of longer-term unemployed, the proportion of Americans who are either working or looking for work slipped last month to 61.4%, down 2 percentage points from February. That suggests that many out of work see little prospect of finding a job.

And the number of Americans who say their job losses are permanent was flat last month despite the rise in hiring.

Cassy Menon, 36, was furloughed March 17 from her job arranging travel for university students, faculty and staff, and was originally told the layoff would last 90 days. She was initially able to keep her health insurance.

"After I stopped crying, I immediately updated my resume," she said, and began looking for work. An additional \$600 in unemployment aid from the federal government helped her and her husband stay on top of bills, and her health insurance helped pay for the anti-depressants she began taking.

But in June, she was told that as of July 1 the job cut would become permanent. After applying for 300 jobs, she has had two interviews, both in mortgage banking. Both would pay much less than her previous job.

Friday's report suggested that high unemployment and shriveled incomes for many households will remain an issue through the November elections and a potential threat to President Donald Trump's reelection prospects.

Trump quickly celebrated the report with a pair of tweets, including one that read "Great Jobs Numbers!" But aides are nervous that the recovery is still fragile. The president remained out of sight Friday, beginning a three-day weekend at his Bedminster, New Jersey, golf club.

His Democratic opponent, Joe Biden, was quick to blame Trump for the potentially faltering recovery.

"It did not have to be this bad. We are in a deeper economic hole than we should be because of Donald Trump's historic failure to respond to the pandemic," Biden said.

Many economists are urging Congress to extend various forms of economic aid to sustain a recovery. A supplemental \$600 weekly federal unemployment payment expired last week. House Democrats want to extend it, while Senate Republicans want to reduce it to \$200. An eviction moratorium for federally subsidized housing has also ended. Both sides have agreed to another \$1,200 stimulus payment but are deadlocked on whether to provide more aid to state and local governments.

The talks between the two sides collapsed on Friday, and Trump said Friday night that he was likely to issue more, limited executive orders related to COVID-19, perhaps in the next day or so, if he can't reach a broad agreement with Congress.

"A lot of households will run out of money in the next few weeks," said Eric Winograd, an economist at AllianceBernstein, an investment firm. "If government does not make up that income, those households will not be able to consume in a way that supports the recovery."

Some companies that are hiring complain that the generous unemployment benefits have made it harder to attract candidates. But several economic studies suggest the benefits have not been a disincentive.

Mike Parra, CEO for the Americas at DHL Express, said his company is seeking to fill 1,700 jobs. But the resurgent virus has slowed applications in California, Texas and Florida, where outbreaks have been particularly large.

In the meantime, some employers are adapting to the pandemic by doing business with fewer workers.

Peter Klamka, owner of the Blind Pig restaurant in Las Vegas, is now concentrating on pickup and delivery orders. His restaurant's revenue plummeted along with tourism. He is operating with just five employees,

down from 25 before the pandemic.

"There certainly isn't sufficient business to bring anyone back," Klamka said.

Associated Press Writer Jonathan Lemire in Bridgewater, New Jersey, contributed to this report.

## Officials long warned of explosive chemicals at Beirut port

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — At least 10 times over the past six years, authorities from Lebanon's customs, military, security agencies and judiciary raised alarm that a massive stockpile of explosive chemicals was being kept with almost no safeguard at the port in the heart of Beirut, newly surfaced documents show.

Yet in a circle of negligence, nothing was done — and on Tuesday, the 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate blew up, obliterating the city's main commercial hub and spreading death and wreckage for miles around.

President Michel Aoun, in office since 2016, said Friday that he was first told of the dangerous stockpile nearly three weeks ago and immediately ordered military and security agencies to do "what was needed." But he suggested his responsibility ended there, saying he had no authority over the port and that previous governments had been told of its presence.

"Do you know how many problems have been accumulating?" Aoun replied when a reporter pressed whether he should have followed up on his order.

The documents surfacing in social media since the blast underscore the corruption, negligence and incompetence of Lebanon's long-ruling political oligarchy, and its failure to provide its people with basic needs, including security.

Investigators probing the blast have focused on personnel at the Port of Beirut, Lebanon's main port, so well known for corruption that its common nickname is Ali Baba's Cave.

So far, at least 16 port employees have been detained and others questioned. On Friday, investigators questioned and then ordered the detention of the head of the port, Hassan Koraytem, the country's customs chief, Badri Daher, and Daher's predecessor.

But many Lebanese say the rot permeates the political system and extends to the country's top leadership.

The explosion of the ammonium nitrate, after apparently being set off by a fire, was the biggest in Lebanon's history. The known death toll reached 154, including bodies recovered from the rubble Friday, and more than 5,000 people were wounded. Billions of dollars in damage was caused across the city, where many are too impoverished by Lebanon's financial crisis to rebuild.

Aoun's comments were the most senior confirmation that top politicians had been aware of the stockpile.

"The material had been there for seven years, since 2013. It has been there, and they said it is dangerous and I am not responsible. I don't know where it was placed. I don't even know the level of danger. I have no authority to deal directly with the port," he told a news conference.

He said that when he was told of the stockpile on July 20, he immediately ordered military and security officials "to do what is needed."

"There are ranks that should know their duties, and they were all informed. ... When you refer a document and say, 'Do what is needed,' isn't that an order?" he added.

He said the explosion may have been caused by negligence, but the investigation would also look at the possibility that it could have been caused by a bomb or other "external intervention." He said he had asked France, which has close ties to its former colony, for satellite images from the time of the blast to see if they showed any planes or missiles.

President Donald Trump said Friday that he had spoken by telephone with Aoun and French President Emmanuel Macron. He did not mention the investigation, but noted that medical supplies, food and water were being sent from the U.S., along with emergency responders, technicians, doctors and nurses.

The ammonium nitrate, a chemical used in fertilizers and explosives, originated from a cargo ship called MV Rhosus that had been traveling from the country of Georgia to Mozambique in 2013. It made an unscheduled detour to Beirut as the Russian shipowner was struggling with debts and hoped to earn some extra cash in Lebanon. Unable to pay port fees and reportedly leaking, the ship was impounded.

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The first known document about it came on Feb. 21, 2014, three months after the ship's arrival. Col. Joseph Skaff, a senior customs official, wrote to the customs authority's anti-smuggling department warning that the material still on board the ship docked at port was "extremely dangerous and endangers public safety."

Col. Skaff died in March 2017 in unclear circumstances. He was found near his house in Beirut after allegedly falling from a big height. Medical reports at the time gave different explanations, one saying it was an accident, the other saying there was unusual bruising on his face.

On June 27, 2014, Jad Maalouf, a judge for urgent matters, wrote to the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation, warning that the ship was carrying dangerous material and could sink. He said the ministry should deal with the ship, remove the ammonium nitrate and "place it in a suitable place that it (the ministry) chooses, and it (the material) should be under its protection."

Soon after that, the shipment was moved into Warehouse 12 at the port, where it remained until it exploded. It is unclear if it was officially under the ministry's control.

Lebanon's LBC TV station reported that in October 2015, the army intervened after learning of delays in dealing with the shipment. Military intelligence sent an expert who tested the material and found that the nitrogen levels were 34.7%, considered a highly explosive level, LBC said.

The army reported to the customs department that the material should be quickly removed, suggesting it be exported. Customs referred the report back to the judge of urgent matters, LBC said.

Three military and security officials did not respond to calls and messages from The Associated Press to comment or confirm the report on LBC.

Daher, the customs department head, told the AP before his detention that between 2014 and 2017, he and his predecessor sent six letters to the judge warning that the stockpile was dangerous and seeking a ruling on a way to remove or sell it.

Daher said it was his duty to alert authorities of the danger but that was the most he could do. He said he never got a reply.

Earlier this year, State Security, after investigating the stockpile, issued a five-page report saying the material must be gotten rid of. It said the ammonium nitrate could explode and warned terrorists could steal it, saying one wall of the warehouse had a hole in it and a gate was open.

Throughout this period, Lebanon had four prime ministers, including the current one — Hassan Diab, who came to office earlier this year — as well as multiple government reshuffles. In 2013, when the ship docked, Michel Suleiman was president, followed by two years without a president as political factions wrangled, before finally electing Aoun in October 2016.

For decades, Lebanon has been dominated by the same political elites, many of them former warlords and militia commanders from the civil war. The ruling factions use public institutions to accumulate wealth and distribute patronage to supporters. A blind eye is often turned to corruption, and little development is put into institutions. As a result, power outages are frequent, trash is often uncollected and tap water is largely undrinkable.

The leader of the Iran-backed militant Hezbollah group, whose allies dominate the government, said in a speech Friday that "negligence, corruption, nepotism" had a role in the explosion and must be dealt with.

Hassan Nasrallah warned that if no one was held accountable, "we are basically saying to the people there is no state." He also said Hezbollah's domestic opponents were trying to use the blast to stir public opinion against it but would fail. He denied any role by Hezbollah in the disaster.

Both Nasrallah and Aoun rejected calls for an international investigation.

Since last October, the Lebanese people have held mass protests denouncing the country's entire ruling elite, including Nasrallah. The demonstrations achieved only a rearranging of the names in the government, and largely faded amid the coronavirus pandemic and Lebanon's financial collapse.

In a sign of how the public has largely come to expect government inaction, thousands of volunteers have cleaned up streets in the neighborhoods worst hit by the blast. They swept broken glass and reopened roads, helped restaurants and shops clear debris, and salvaged merchandise. They separated rubble into piles of broken glass and mangled metal. Others volunteered to go into destroyed homes to look for medicine, valuables and essential documents for the residents who fled in panic.

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French and Russian rescue teams with dogs searched the port area on Friday, pulling more bodies from the rubble. Women cried nearby as they waited for news about missing relatives.

France has sent a team of 22 investigators to help investigate the cause of the blast. Based on information from Lebanon so far, France's No. 2 forensic police official, Dominique Abbenanti, said Friday the explosion "appears to be an accident" but that it's too early to say for sure.

In an interview with the AP, he predicted that the death toll would grow.

## Liberty U's Falwell takes leave after social media uproar

BY SARAH RANKIN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Jerry Falwell Jr. took an indefinite leave of absence Friday as the leader of Liberty University, one of the nation's top evangelical Christian colleges, days after apologizing for a social media post that caused an uproar even among fellow conservatives.

The private university in Lynchburg, Virginia, gave no reason for Falwell's departure in a one-sentence announcement Friday afternoon. But it came after Falwell's apology earlier this week for a since-deleted photo he posted online showing him with his pants unzipped, stomach exposed and his arm around a young woman in a similar pose.

The statement said the executive committee of Liberty's board of trustees, acting on behalf of the full board, met Friday and requested Falwell take leave as president and chancellor, "to which he has agreed, effective immediately."

A high-profile supporter of President Donald Trump, Falwell has served since 2007 as president of the university founded by his evangelist father, the late Rev. Jerry Falwell.

He did not immediately return a call seeking comment. University spokesman Scott Lamb said he had no further comment.

In an interview this week with Lynchburg radio station WLNI, Falwell said the woman in the photo was his wife's assistant and that the picture was taken during a "costume party" while on vacation.

"Lots of good friends visited us on the yacht," the caption of the photo said, in part. "I promise that's just black water in my glass. It was a prop only."

He said the woman — who also had her midriff exposed — was pregnant, couldn't get her pants zipped and he imitated her, saying it was all in "good fun."

"I've apologized to everybody, and I've promised my kids ... I'm going to try to be a good boy from here on out," he told the interviewer.

On Thursday, Republican U.S. Rep. Mark Walker of North Carolina, a pastor who previously taught at Liberty, called Falwell's behavior "appalling" and said he should resign.

Besides Walker, some pastors who graduated from Liberty spoke out this week calling for a change in leadership at the school. Mark Davis, a Texas-based pastor, tweeted that "the name of Christ and the reputation of Liberty will continue to be dishonored" without action against Falwell by the board. Colby Garman, a pastor who has served on the executive board of the Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia, tweeted Monday that it was "bewildering" to see Falwell maintain the board's support. He responded to Friday's news with appreciation.

"How is this Jerry Falwell Jr. photo even real?" tweeted conservative TV personality Meghan McCain, daughter of the late U.S. Sen. John McCain. "Also if you're running the largest Christian university in America maybe don't put photos of yourself on social media with your pants undone on a yacht — with random women in bad wigs. So gross, so hypocritical."

The late Falwell founded Liberty in 1971 with just 154 students. Under the leadership of Falwell Jr., who is an attorney and not a minister, Liberty has grown into a leading evangelical university, with an immaculate campus and a significant endowment. Students must follow a strict code of conduct that includes modest dress and a ban on alcohol consumption.

In recent years, Liberty has served as a regular speaking spot for ambitious Republicans courting the young evangelical vote. U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz kicked off a presidential campaign there in 2015.

Falwell was among the earliest Christian conservatives to endorse Trump's previous election campaign.



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In late 2016 he told The Associated Press that Trump had offered him the job of education secretary but that he turned it down for personal reasons.

The vacation photo was the most recent in a string of controversies dogging Falwell in recent years, in both his role at Liberty and his personal life.

Last year, he settled a federal lawsuit in Florida over a real estate venture that involved a young Miami pool attendant, a case that drew national attention.

He more recently sparred with Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam and local officials in Lynchburg over his handling of coronavirus restrictions. He also faced stinging criticism from a group of Black alumni who said in a letter that he should step down after he mocked Virginia's mask-wearing requirement in a tweet by invoking a blackface scandal that engulfed Northam last year. Several Black Liberty staff members resigned following the tweet, and several high-profile Black student-athletes announced transfer plans.

On Friday, Pastors Chris Williamson, Eric Carroll, and Maina Mwaura, who organized the June letter, issued a statement applauding the board's decision.

"Liberty University deeply impacted us as students and we hope that its leadership can return to a focus of training 'young champions for Christ' with Biblical conviction for the Gospel and justice," the statement said.

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Associated Press writers Alan Suderman and Elana Schor contributed to this report.

## Postal Service loses \$2.2B in 3 months as virus woes persist

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Postal Service says it lost \$2.2 billion in the three months that ended in June as the beleaguered agency — hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic — piles up financial losses that officials warn could top \$20 billion over two years.

But the new postmaster general, Louis DeJoy, disputed reports that his agency is slowing down election mail or any other mail and said it has "ample capacity to deliver all election mail securely and on time" for the November presidential contest, when a significant increase in mail-in ballots is expected.

Still, DeJoy offered a gloomy picture of the 630,000-employee agency Friday in his first public remarks since taking the top job in June.

"Our financial position is dire, stemming from substantial declines in mail volume, a broken business model and a management strategy that has not adequately addressed these issues," DeJoy told the postal board of governors at a meeting Friday.

"Without dramatic change, there is no end in sight," DeJoy said.

While package deliveries to homebound Americans were up more than 50%, that was offset by continued declines in first-class and business mail, even as costs increased significantly to pay for personal protective equipment and replace workers who got sick or chose to stay home in fear of the virus, DeJoy said.

Without an intervention from Congress, the agency faces an impending cash flow crisis, he said. The Postal Service is seeking an infusion of at least \$10 billion to cover operating losses as well as regulatory changes that would undo a congressional requirement that the agency pre-fund billions of dollars in retiree health benefits.

The agency is doing its part, said DeJoy, a Republican fundraiser and former supply chain executive who took command of the agency June 15. DeJoy, 63, of North Carolina, is a major donor to President Donald Trump and the Republican Party. He is the first postmaster general in nearly two decades who is not a career postal employee.

In his first month on the job, DeJoy said, he directed the agency to vigorously "focus on the ingrained inefficiencies in our operations," including by applying strict limits on overtime.

"By running our operations on time and on schedule, and by not incurring unnecessary overtime or other costs, we will enhance our ability to be sustainable and ... continue to provide high-quality, affordable service," DeJoy said.

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While not acknowledging widespread complaints by members of Congress about delivery delays nationwide, DeJoy said the agency will "aggressively monitor and quickly address service issues."

DeJoy's remarks came as lawmakers from both parties called on the Postal Service to immediately reverse operational changes that are causing delays in deliveries across the country just as big volume increases are expected for mail-in election voting.

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said Thursday that changes imposed by DeJoy "threaten the timely delivery of mail — including medicines for seniors, paychecks for workers and absentee ballots for voters — that is essential to millions of Americans."

In his remarks to the postal board of governors, DeJoy called election mail handling "a robust and proven process."

While there will "likely be an unprecedented increase in election mail volume due to the pandemic, the Postal Service has ample capacity to deliver all election mail securely and on time in accordance with our delivery standards, and we will do so," DeJoy said. "However ... we cannot correct the errors of (state and local) election boards if they fail to deploy processes that take our normal processing and delivery standards into account."

Later Friday, DeJoy released another memo detailing changes that reshuffle dozens of officials on his executive leadership team. The former chief operating officer, David Williams, was moved to lead logistics and processing operations, while Kevin McAdams, vice president of delivery and retail operations, was removed from leadership.

DeJoy said the changes — which also include a management hiring freeze — would improve efficiency and "align functions based on core business operations."

Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., chairwoman of the House Oversight Committee, said DeJoy should not be instituting such major changes during "the middle of a once-in-a-century pandemic with a national election around the corner." Maloney, who has called DeJoy to testify before her committee next month, demanded he "halt these changes now."

DeJoy ran into similar resistance at a closed-door meeting Wednesday with Schumer and Pelosi. Schumer called it "a heated discussion" and said Democrats told DeJoy that "elections are sacred." They urged him not to impose cutbacks "at a time when all ballots count," Schumer said.

In separate letters, two Montana Republicans, Sen. Steve Daines and Rep. Greg Gianforte, also urged the Postal Service to reverse the July directive, which eliminates overtime for hundreds of thousands of postal workers and mandates that mail be kept until the next day if distribution centers are running late.

And 84 House members — including four Republicans — signed yet another letter blasting the changes and urging an immediate reversal. "It is vital that the Postal Service does not reduce mail delivery hours, which could harm rural communities, seniors, small businesses and millions of Americans who rely on the mail for critical letters and packages," the House members wrote.

The flurry of letters came as the top Democrat on a Senate panel that oversees the Postal Service launched an investigation into the operational changes. Michigan Sen. Gary Peters, the top Democrat on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, said DeJoy has failed to provide answers about the service delays, despite repeated requests.

Democrats have pushed for \$10 billion for the Postal Service in talks with Republicans on a huge COVID-19 response bill. The figure is down from a \$25 billion plan in a House-passed coronavirus measure. Key Republicans whose rural constituents are especially reliant on the post office support the idea.

Trump, a vocal critic of the Postal Service, contended Wednesday that "the Post Office doesn't have enough time" to handle a significant increase in mail-in ballots. "I mean you're talking about millions of votes. .. It's a catastrophe waiting to happen."

## Endangered Brazilian monkeys get a bridge to themselves

By MARCELO DE SOUSA and MARIO LOBAO Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — The overpass juts from a forest over a four-lane highway in a rural area outside Rio de Janeiro. It's meant for a very special sort of pedestrian: golden lion tamarins, small orange primates that for decades have been at risk of extinction.

The little primate, whose name derives from the shock of orange fur that frames its face like a mane, has watched its habitat shrink over decades — even centuries -- of rampant deforestation. Animal traffickers have also targeted the brightly colored monkeys.

Bowing to pressure from an environmental association — and following a court order — the highway's administrator in late July finished construction of the overpass that's aimed at helping conserve the species.

About 20 meters (65 feet) wide and twice as long, the bridge connects the Poco de Dantas biological reserve in Rio state's Silva Jardim municipality with a farm that the Golden Lion Tamarin Association acquired to transform into an ecological park.

Recently planted trees on the overpass -- only inches tall at present -- are expected within two years to reach heights allowing the monkeys to cross from one swath of Atlantic forest to another.

Some of the monkeys, which weigh about a half kilogram (a pound), can be seen clinging to the trees beyond in the forest beyond.

"Our objective is to consolidate a landscape of conservation for the monkey. The biggest problem is the fragmentation of the forests, which were already very deforested by the expansion of urban centers," said Luiz Paulo Ferraz, a geographer and executive secretary of the association, known by its Portuguese initial as AMLD. Connecting the forests means more space for the primates to roam and reproduce, and so to sustain genetic diversity, he said.

Before colonization, the Atlantic forest biome covered 330 million acres (more than 500,000 square miles) near and along Brazil's coast, of which more than 85% has been cleared, threatening plant and animal species, according to The Nature Conservancy.

More than 70% of Brazil's population lives in areas that are or once were Atlantic forest, according to Rafael Bitante, chief of forest restoration at SOS Atlantic Forest, another environmental organization.

And while few Brazilians have seen a golden lion tamarin in person, virtually all have held one in their hands: It features on Brazil's 20 reais bill (less than \$4). The animal has become a symbol for wildlife preservation in Brazil and beyond.

In the 1970s, when scientists began conservation efforts, there were just 200 individuals of the species remaining, according to the AMLD. Creation of the government's Poco de Dantas reserve in 1974 was the jumping-off point for rebuilding the animal's population and habitat in Rio state's interior. In 2003, its international conservation status was upgraded to "endangered" from "critically endangered."

The number of golden lion tamarins reached 3,400 in 2014, the year of the most recent census by AMLD. A yellow fever outbreak in 2016 and 2017 caused the death of an estimated 900 animals – the biggest blow to the species since the start of conservation efforts.

They require more habitat to boost their numbers, according to Carlos Alvarenga Pereira, the coordinator of AMLD's forest restoration program.

"It's a local challenge, and requires the participation of rural communities, convincing farmers to replace unproductive farmland into recovered forest," Pereira said.

Public prosecutors had to go to court to get a judge's order requiring the highway operator to erect the bridge, which was a condition in the public tender for the highway's concession.

The association's Ferraz said it is a rare example in recent years of an infrastructure project aimed at encouraging conservation in Brazil's Atlantic forest.

## US reports show racial disparities in kids with COVID-19

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Racial disparities in the U.S. coronavirus epidemic extend to children, according to two sobering government reports released Friday.

One of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports looked at children with COVID-19 who needed hospitalization. Hispanic children were hospitalized at a rate eight times higher than white kids, and Black children were hospitalized at a rate five times higher, it found.

The second report examined cases of a rare virus-associated syndrome in kids. It found that nearly three-quarters of the children with the syndrome were either Hispanic or Black, well above their representation in the general population.

The coronavirus has exposed racial fractures in the U.S. health care system, as Black, Hispanic and Native Americans have been hospitalized and killed by COVID-19 at far higher rates than other groups.

Meanwhile, the impact of the virus on children has become a political issue. President Donald Trump and some other administration officials have been pushing schools to re-open, a step that would allow more parents to return to work and the economy to pick up.

On Wednesday, Facebook deleted a post by Trump for violating its policy against spreading misinformation about the coronavirus. The post featured a link to a Fox News video in which Trump says children are “virtually immune” to the virus.

The vast majority of coronavirus cases and deaths have been in adults, and kids are considered less likely to have serious symptoms when they’re infected. Of the nearly 5 million cases reported in the U.S. as of Wednesday, about 265,000 were in children 17 and under — about 5%. Of the more than 156,000 deaths reported at that time, 77 were children — about 0.05%.

But Friday’s CDC reports are a “gut punch” reminder that some children are getting seriously ill and dying, said Carrie Henning-Smith, a University of Minnesota researcher who focuses on health disparities.

“It’s clear from these studies, and from other emerging research, that kids are not immune,” she said. “Kids can pass along COVID, and they can also suffer the effects of it.”

She said studies should give community leaders pause about opening schools. “We need to be really, really careful. We are potentially talking about putting children in unsafe situations,” Henning-Smith said.

Chantel Salas, a Hispanic girl from the farmworking town of Immokalee, Florida, spent more than 50 days hospitalized with COVID-19. The 17-year-old had fallen ill only days after taking a picture with her diploma for her high-school graduation.

At one point, her 41-year-old mother, Erika Juarez, was told to say goodbye to her only daughter.

“It was the scariest thing I have ever had to go through,” said Juarez, who works at a shipping warehouse. “She had no oxygen in her body. This thing affected all the organs in her body.”

Juarez said Salas had no underlying health conditions and she still is not sure how she got infected because no one in her household got ill. The teen eventually was put on a machine that adds oxygen to blood before pumping it back into the body, a last resort effort to save her life. She was discharged about three weeks ago and is now recovering at home.

“They keep saying she is a miracle,” she said. “She recovered fast because she was very motivated.”

The first CDC report released Friday was based on cases from 14 states. The researchers counted 576 hospitalizations of kids from March 1 through July 25. At least 12 were sick enough to need a machine to help them breathe. One died.

The hospitalization rate for Hispanic children was about 16.4 per 100,000. The rate for Black children was 10.5 per 100,000, and for white kids it was 2.1 per 100,000.

As with adults, many of the hospitalized children had existing health problems, including obesity, chronic lung conditions and — in the case of infants — preterm birth.

A number of possible factors could explain the disparities, said Dr. Cyrus Shahpar, who oversees epidemic prevention efforts for a not-for-profit data and advocacy organization called Vital Strategies.

Larger percentages of Hispanic and Black kids may go to hospital emergency rooms when they’re sick,



which could be driven by difficulty getting into — or paying for — doctor's office visits. That lack of access to regular health-care could lead to more severe illness, he suggested.

The second CDC report focused on 570 kids diagnosed with a rare condition, which CDC calls multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, or MIS-C. Ten of them died.

Some children with the syndrome have symptoms resembling Kawasaki disease, another rare childhood condition that can cause swelling and heart problems. Other symptoms include fever, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, neck pain, rash, bloodshot eyes or feeling extra tired.

"The underlying problem that results in MIS-C seems to be a dysfunction of the immune system," said Dr. Ermias Belay, who is leading the CDC team looking into MIS-C cases.

The immune system kicks into overdrive when it sees the virus, releasing chemicals that can damage different organs, he added.

In the study, many of the patients with the condition had severe complications, including inflammation of the heart, shock, and kidney damage. Nearly two-thirds of the cases overall were admitted to intensive care units, and the average ICU stay was five days.

The CDC report covered illnesses that began from mid-February to mid-July. Forty states reported cases.

The report found that 13% of kids with the condition were white, while more than 40% were Hispanic and 33% were Black. Overall, about half of U.S. children are white, around 25% Hispanic and about 14% are Black, according to population estimates.

Scientists are still learning about the condition. Experts say genetics has nothing to do with why some racial and ethnic groups are more likely to be infected by the virus, get seriously sick from it or die from it. But it's not yet clear if genetics play a role in the childhood inflammation condition, Shahpar and Belay said.

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Associated Press writer Adriana Gomez Licon in Miami contributed.

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The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

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This story has been corrected to show that Shahpar is affiliated with Vital Strategies, not Resolve to Save Lives, and that CDC report said 10 children, not eight, died with an inflammatory condition.

## North Carolina to relax 10-person limit for GOP convention

By BRYAN ANDERSON Associated Press/Report for America

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina will ease gathering restrictions for the Republican National Convention in Charlotte this month after a push by the national party for the state to be more accommodating.

But the Aug. 21-24 event culminating in President Donald Trump's nomination will be nothing like conventions of previous years in which prominent politicians and party leaders addressed thousands of enthusiastic supporters.

The RNC has estimated it would have no more than 500 delegates per day at the Charlotte Convention Center and the Westin hotel.

In a letter written to the RNC on Thursday, the state's health director and chief medical officer, Elizabeth Cuervo Tilson, said the Department of Health and Human Services understands more than 10 people may need to assemble indoors to conduct party business.

"In the spirit of accommodating the unique interests and needs of the convention, we have expressed a willingness to flexibly enforce certain otherwise-applicable public health measures imposed by the Governor in response to the COVID-19 emergency," Tilson wrote. "For example, we recognize that convention business may require more than 10 people to be gathered indoors."

On Wednesday, Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper extended an existing executive order that limits mass indoor gatherings at event venues to 10 people. No more than 25 people are allowed to gather outdoors at such venues under Phase 2 of North Carolina's reopening plan.

Though the state said it would ease the restriction, it was adamant that mask-wearing and 6 feet of physical distancing must remain enforced.

The RNC submitted a 42-page safety plan on Monday. In it, the national party said "neither contract security nor security participating in the NSSE (National Special Security Event) will enforce solely requirements for masks or social distancing."

The safety proposal from the party also requires attendees to complete a pre-travel health questionnaire, take a self-administered coronavirus test from their home and agree not to travel to Charlotte if they test positive.

Tilson asked the RNC to provide a list of scheduled events at both the hotel and convention center, the number of attendees attending them, the square footage of the venues and rooms and other information. She told the RNC about 12 people could be gathered together per 1,000-square-foot (93-square-meter) of space.

The back-and-forth between the state and RNC comes amid a months-long battle between Trump and North Carolina's Democratic governor.

In May, Cooper denied Trump's request for a full-capacity convention, prompting Trump to move the site of his nomination acceptance speech from Charlotte to Jacksonville, Florida. But with escalating COVID-19 cases throughout Florida, the president's appearance was called off.

Trump has since said he would speak at the convention in Charlotte, though he did not explicitly say he would attend the convention in person. On Wednesday, Trump told Fox News he would "probably" give his acceptance speech "live from the White House," raising concerns he could run afoul of a 1939 law barring some executive branch workers from participating in certain forms of political activity. While Trump and Pence are exempt from the Hatch Act, others involved in event planning could be at risk of violating the law.

Cooper has often been reluctant to criticize Trump by name, but in a Thursday interview with The Associated Press, the governor insisted he wasn't afraid to express his disagreements with the president, especially about the RNC Convention.

"We had a conversation about the RNC and I had to stand up to him to tell him that we were not gonna let them have a full arena for the RNC," Cooper said. "So I've stood up to him when he takes steps that I think hurt the people of North Carolina, and I'm not afraid to do that. I'm also not afraid to work with him when it's for the good of our state."

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Follow Anderson at <https://twitter.com/BryanRAnderson>

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Anderson is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

## Canada's last intact ice shelf collapses due to warming

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Much of Canada's remaining intact ice shelf has broken apart into hulking iceberg islands thanks to a hot summer and global warming, scientists said.

Canada's 4,000-year-old Milne Ice Shelf on the northwestern edge of Ellesmere Island had been the country's last intact ice shelf until the end of July when ice analyst Adrienne White of the Canadian Ice Service noticed that satellite photos showed that about 43% of it had broken off. She said it happened around July 30 or 31.

Two giant icebergs formed along with lots of smaller ones, and they have already started drifting away, White said. The biggest is nearly the size of Manhattan — 21 square miles (55 square kilometers) and 7 miles long (11.5 kilometers). They are 230 to 260 feet (70 to 80 meters) thick.

"This is a huge, huge block of ice," White said. "If one of these is moving toward an oil rig, there's nothing you can really do aside from move your oil rig."

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The 72-square mile (187 square kilometer) undulating white ice shelf of ridges and troughs dotted with blue meltwater had been larger than the District of Columbia but now is down to 41 square miles (106 square kilometers).

Temperatures from May to early August in the region have been 9 degrees (5 degrees Celsius) warmer than the 1980 to 2010 average, University of Ottawa glaciology professor Luke Copland said. This is on top of an Arctic that already had been warming much faster than the rest of globe, with this region warming even faster.

"Without a doubt, it's climate change," Copland said, noting the ice shelf is melting from both hotter air above and warmer water below.

"The Milne was very special," he added. "It's an amazingly pretty location."

Ice shelves are hundreds to thousands of years old, thicker than long-term sea ice, but not as big and old as glaciers, Copland said.

Canada used to have a large continuous ice shelf across the northern coast of Ellesmere Island in the Canadian territory of Nunavut, but it has been breaking apart over the last decades because of man-made global warming, White said. By 2005 it was down to six remaining ice shelves but "the Milne was really the last complete ice shelf," she said.

"There aren't very many ice shelves around the Arctic anymore," Copland said. "It seems we've lost pretty much all of them from northern Greenland and the Russian Arctic. There may be a few in a few protected fjords."

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Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears .

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## Portland protesters cause mayhem again, police officer hurt

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — About 200 people, some wielding homemade shields, clashed with police early Friday for the third consecutive night as two other Black Lives Matter rallies proceeded peacefully elsewhere in the city, authorities said.

The demonstration with unrest came hours after the city's Democratic mayor pleaded for protesters to stay off the streets, saying those who barricaded the doors to a police precinct the night before and tried to set it ablaze were not demonstrators, but criminals.

Mayor Ted Wheeler said the violent protesters are also serving as political "props" for President Donald Trump in a divisive election-season where the president is hammering on a law-and-order message. Trump has tried to portray the protesters as "sick and dangerous anarchists" running wild in the city's streets.

The chaos that started Thursday night and lasted into Friday morning in a residential neighborhood about six miles (10 kilometers) from downtown marked the 70th night of unrest since May 25, following the George Floyd killing in Minneapolis. Police arrested 12 adults and detained one 17-year-old on suspicion of charges ranging from interfering with a police officer to rioting.

The demonstrations this week are noticeably smaller than the crowds of thousands who turned out nightly for about two weeks in July to protest the presence of U.S. agents sent by the Trump administration to protect a federal courthouse that had become a target of nightly violence.

This week's clashes nevertheless ratcheted up tensions after an agreement last week between state and federal officials seemed to offer a brief reprieve. The deal brokered by Democratic Gov. Kate Brown called for agents from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Marshals Service and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to pull back from their defense of the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse

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starting July 30.

Early Friday, as peaceful demonstrations proceeded elsewhere in the city, a group of people gathered at a park in eastern Portland and marched to the local police precinct, where authorities say they spray-painted the building, popped the tires of police cars, splashed paint on the walls, vandalized security cameras and set a fire in a barrel outside the building. One officer was severely injured by a rock, police said, but no additional details were provided.

An older woman who tried to stop the vandalism was hit with a bucket of white paint and then got into a shouting match with those in the crowd as one protester tried to wrap her in yellow police tape — a conflict caught on video. Another elderly woman using a walker was also captured on video trying to put out a fire with a fire extinguisher while a black-clad protester blocked her way.

Tear gas was used by police on protesters Wednesday for the first time since the U.S. agents left the city, but officers did not use it Thursday despite declaring the demonstration an unlawful assembly.

Wheeler, who was tear-gassed several weeks ago with protesters as he stood with them outside the federal courthouse, warned the demonstrators Thursday that their actions are helping Trump.

“Don’t think for a moment that if you are participating in this activity, you are not being a prop for the reelection campaign of Donald Trump — because you absolutely are,” he said. “If you don’t want to be part of that, then don’t show up.”

The Pacific Northwest Youth Liberation Front, which advertised the rallies Wednesday and Thursday on social media, used Twitter to announce the events with the slogan “No cops. No prisons. Total abolition.”

The group, which described itself as a “decentralized network of autonomous youth collectives dedicated to direct action towards total liberation,” did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Wheeler said the city anticipates more such events through the weekend.

Portland police have arrested more than 400 people at protests since late May. U.S. agents arrested at least an additional 94 people during protests at the federal courthouse in July.

Follow Gillian Flaccus on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>

## AP Explains: 5 key takeaways from the July jobs report

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A resurgence in COVID-19 cases didn’t shut off the American job creation machine last month — but it did slow it down.

Employers added 1.8 million jobs in July, slightly more than had been expected but far fewer than the gains of the previous two months. And while the unemployment rate dropped from 11.1% to 10.2%, it remains worryingly high.

The coronavirus outbreaks and the resulting lockdowns and fear that kept Americans away from restaurants, bars and shops hammered the economy in the spring. Employers slashed tens of millions of jobs as businesses shut their doors to slow the virus’ spread. The economy shrank at a harrowing annual rate of nearly 33% from April through June — by far the worst three months on record.

As businesses began to reopen, the job market came back, recording unprecedented gains in May and June. But a surge in confirmed viral cases as summer began heightened doubts about whether a meaningful recovery can be sustained, especially with Congress deadlocked over proposals to provide further aid to the unemployed and to struggling states and cities.

Here are five takeaways from July’s jobs report:

### JOBS GREW, BUT MORE SLOWLY

Some economists feared that the resurgence in COVID cases would stop the jobs recovery in its tracks. It didn’t. July’s 1.8 million new jobs marked the third-best month of job creation on record. The problem is that hiring was down sharply from May’s 2.7 million added jobs and June’s 4.8 million.

All told, the United States has recovered just 42% of the jobs that were lost in March and April. And the weakening pace of hiring suggests a long slog of a recovery ahead.



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Rising viral cases in the South and West have forced many businesses to delay or reverse plans to re-open. In Texas, for instance, just 26% of bars were closed as of June 21. Two weeks later, the figure had shot up to 74%, though it has since declined slightly, according to the data firm Womply.

Moreover, a tentative economic comeback had been supported by a government relief program that included a crucial \$600-a-week federal add-on to weekly state unemployment benefits. It allowed millions of unemployed people to afford necessities.

But the expanded jobless aid has now expired, and Congress has failed to extend it or provide other financial stimulus to Americans. The loss of that money means that tens of millions of jobless Americans can't spend as much as they formerly did, which, in turn, means a drag on the economy.

"The loss of enhanced unemployment benefits and an inability to pass another stimulus bill will threaten a labor market recovery that already appears to be losing momentum," Scott Anderson, chief economist at Bank of the West, wrote in a research report.

## BLUE-COLLAR JOB GROWTH SLOWED SHARPLY

Hiring by private companies has increasingly narrowed to service businesses, like restaurants and retail shops, in contrast to factories, construction companies, mines and other goods-producing companies. In May, goods producers had added 676,000 jobs (21% of new private sector positions) and then 515,000 (11%) in June before adding far fewer — 39,000 (less than 3% of new positions) — in July.

Among factories, the lone exception last month was automakers, now enjoying an uptick in sales because of falling loan rates and some pent-up demand for cars. Auto companies accounted for all of July's factory hires.

Recent job gains, Anderson noted, mainly reflect businesses that are recalling workers they had let go in the spring when the pandemic suddenly struck hard. By contrast, he wrote, "job growth downshifted sharply last month in manufacturing, construction, information and business services, signaling prolonged labor market weakness just below the surface."

## GOVERNMENT JOB GAINS WERE LIKELY EXAGGERATED

The Labor Department's July figures show that government at all levels added 301,000 jobs last month, up from 54,000 in June. That appeared to be a surprisingly strong performance.

But the government job gains were exaggerated by a technicality: Many local school districts had laid off teachers, bus drivers and school cafeteria workers early this year because of the pandemic lockups — in the spring, instead of in the summer as usual. That change warped the Labor Department's summertime seasonal adjustments and had the effect of inflating its count of government workers in July.

Economists are nervously monitoring government employment. Many have been urging Congress to deliver massive aid to state and local governments that are suffering a loss of tax revenue from the recession and are prevented by balanced-budget requirements from stimulating their economies with stepped-up spending.

But Congress has yet to agree on providing any further help to state or local governments.

## BLACK AND HISPANIC WORKERS GAINED, BUT DISPARITIES PERSIST

Black and Hispanic workers gained jobs at a faster pace than whites in July, but their unemployment rates remain far higher.

The number of Black Americans who were employed grew by 234,000 or 1.4%. And the number of employed Hispanics grew by 174,000 or 0.7%. White employment grew by 688,000 or just 0.6%. African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to occupy the service sector jobs that have been called back to work.

Still, 14.6% of Black and 12.9% of Hispanic adults were unemployed in July, versus 9.2% of whites — the continuation of a longstanding racial disparity in joblessness.

## MANY WERE RELUCTANT TO JUMP INTO THE JOB MARKET

The recent hiring gains haven't managed to draw many more Americans off the sidelines to look for jobs. The labor force — which includes people who either have a job or are looking for one — dipped last month by 62,000, to 61.4% of the adult population from 61.5% in June.

"With coronavirus cases surging and the economic recovery faltering, discouraged and fearful workers were likely more reluctant to rejoin the official ranks of those seeking work," said Lydia Boussour, senior economist at Oxford Economics.

## **AP Exclusive: Woman is 1st in US to get 2nd face transplant**

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — For the second time in a decade, a New Hampshire woman has a new face.

Carmen Blandin Tarleton, whose face was disfigured in an attack by her ex-husband, became the first American and only the second person globally to undergo the procedure after her first transplant began to fail six years after the operation. The transplant from an anonymous donor took place at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital in July.

The 52-year-old former nurse is expected to resume her normal routine, which all but ended when the first transplant failed a year ago.

"I'm elated," Tarleton told The Associated Press, in an exclusive telephone interview from her home in Manchester. She is still healing from the operation so photos are not being made available of her new face.

"The pain I had is gone," she said. "It's a new chapter in my life. I've been waiting for almost a year. I'm really happy. It's what I needed. I got a great match."

More than 40 patients worldwide have received face transplants, including 16 in the United States. None of the American patients had lost their donor faces until Tarleton.

But in 2018, a French man whose immune system rejected his donor face eight years after his first transplant underwent a second. The doctor who did the transplant, Dr. Laurent Lantieri of the Georges Pompidou European Hospital in Paris, said that patient is "doing very well."

Dr. Bohdan Pomahac, who did Tarleton's first face transplant, was hesitant to do another and favored doing reconstruction surgery instead. But his team became convinced of the merits of a second transplant after Tarleton described how much the first one improved her life.

"She really wanted to try one more time," said Pomahac, who led the 20-hour, second surgery. A team of around 45 clinicians removed the failing transplant and then prepared sensory nerves and blood vessels in the neck for the surgical connection. The face was then transplanted and Tarleton will gain sensory and motor function in the coming months.

Unlike her first transplant, the donor this time around was considered a much better tissue match. Because of her previous injuries before the first transplant, 98% of donors were incompatible matches. Even then, the first face led to several cases of acute rejection, in which the body attacks the new face and strong drugs are needed to suppress the immune system.

"Now, I am very optimistic and hopeful that it will last a lot longer than the first transplant," said Pomahac, who has described the match as miraculous. "But, of course, that is wishful thinking, speculation. I don't know. She really got lucky."

Brian Gastman, a plastic surgeon at the Cleveland Clinic who led its last two face transplants, said Tarleton's case illustrates the limitations of these procedures.

"When you look at most organ transplants, there is a shelf life," Gastman said. "We are getting to the point where these face transplantations are hitting against the maximum number of years someone can have one in."

Tarleton was burned on over 80% of her body and blinded in 2007 when her estranged husband, Herbert Rodgers, beat her with a baseball bat and doused her body with lye because he thought she was seeing another man. In 2009, Rodgers pleaded guilty to maiming Tarleton in exchange for a prison sentence of at least 30 years. He died in prison in 2017.

The first transplant transformed Tarleton's life. She got off strong medications for her pain, took up the piano and was able to travel and give inspirational speeches — often talking of how she had forgiven Rodgers. She also became close friends with the daughter of her first donor, a 56-year-old woman who died of a stroke. She also got a synthetic cornea in her left eye.

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But by last year, the face was failing. She began experiencing scarring, tightness and pain because of a loss of blood flow to her face. Black patches appeared on her face. Her eyelids contracted and her lips began disappearing, making it difficult to eat. She was mostly housebound and resumed taking strong pain medications.

"I couldn't do anything," she said. "I was pretty much in pain."

She requested in October to be put the hospital's list for a second face. That process took much longer, in part, because she was taken off the list for two months because of the coronavirus pandemic. She was added back on when the state allowed elective surgeries to resume.

Now that she has her new face, Tarleton is hoping to once again travel and give inspirational speeches — those will be on Zoom until there is a coronavirus vaccine. For now, she is still getting used to her new appearance.

"This face looks very different than my first one and I can appreciate that. It's a different person," she said, adding the new face allows her to "fit in a little better, don't get stared at so easily."

"It is strange. I am not going to lie," she added. "I'll have to get used to it. My sister will have to get used to it. It takes a while for my friends and family to get used to what I look like now."

## Federal suit filed against Saudi crown prince by ex-official

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A former top Saudi counterterrorism official has filed a federal lawsuit in the United States against Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, alleging the royal tried to trap and kill him in the U.S. and Canada.

The lawsuit, filed on Thursday, by Saad Aljabri is the latest effort by the former intelligence official to try and bring about international and public pressure on the crown prince, following years of silence in exile abroad.

Aljabri's lawsuit claims the crown prince has detained two of his children in Saudi Arabia in an attempt to force him back to the kingdom because of the sensitive information he knows regarding the inner workings of the royal court and kingdom's leadership. It also alleges that the prince's efforts to kill him continue to this day.

Attempts by Saudi Arabia to forcibly return certain citizens who reside abroad began attracting global attention after the killing of Saudi critic Jamal Khashoggi, who was killed by Saudi agents who worked for the crown prince. Khashoggi was slain inside the Saudi Consulate in Turkey in an operation the Saudis claim was initially an effort to forcibly bring him back to Saudi Arabia.

The crown prince denies he had any knowledge of the operation, but Western intelligence agencies and the U.S. Senate have declared the prince ultimately responsible for Khashoggi's killing.

Aljabri's lawsuit follows years of silence by the former intelligence official, who left the kingdom quietly around the time his former boss, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, fell from power. Prince Mohammed bin Nayef had been the kingdom's feared interior minister and was crown prince before he was ousted from the line of succession and stripped of his powers in 2017 by Prince Mohammed bin Salman, whose father is king.

The formerly powerful prince was detained in March along with others by bin Salman's forces, but he has yet to face formal charges. That is also when two of Aljabri's children were reportedly detained, after earlier being barred from traveling abroad.

Both Aljabri and his former boss had worked closely with the C.I.A. in counterterrorism operations, and are well-known among intelligence officials in Washington. The two were among Washington's steadiest counterterrorism partners in the Middle East following the 9/11 attacks.

In a press release accompanying details of the lawsuit, it is claimed that Aljabri is also being targeted for suspicion that his close relationship with members of the C.I.A. helped the agency reach its conclusions about Prince Mohammed's alleged involvement in Khashoggi's death.

The Saudi Embassy in Washington and the Royal Court did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Aljabri has also not responded to repeated attempts over the years by The Associated Press

to contact him.

While the Saudi government has not officially commented on Aljabri, it has issued extradition requests and Interpol notices. Saudi officials have also told the Wall Street Journal he is wanted for corruption involving billions of dollars during his time at the interior ministry.

Al-Jabri's lawsuit claims the crown prince deployed operatives into the United States to track him down and that members of a "kill team" were dispatched for him in Canada just two weeks after the same squad killed Khashoggi in October 2018.

The statement claims the effort was thwarted by Canadian border security officials.

Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy, who is among the most senior members in the U.S. Senate, said the lawsuit illustrates "the propensity of the Saudi crown prince to commit the most heinous crimes to silence his critics." The U.S. State Department sent the senator a letter, saying it has called on Saudi Arabia to immediately release Aljabri's children, describing the former Saudi official as someone who responded around the clock to threats against U.S. interests in the kingdom.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court of D.C., names a number of Saudi officials as defendants, including Saud al-Qahtani and Ahmed Assiri, former top advisors to the crown prince who were implicated in the killing of Khashoggi but were found not guilty by a Saudi court. Bader al-Asaker, a close confidante of the crown prince and secretary-general of MiSK, a non-profit founded by Prince Mohammed bin Salman, is also named.

In recent months, Aljabri's son Khalid Aljabri has been speaking to some U.S. media outlets, such as the Washington Post, Wall Street Journal and New York Times, about his father and detained siblings, Sarah and Omar.

"After exhausting every single avenue for a peaceful remedy, we were left with no other choice but to seek justice and accountability in a U.S. federal court," Khalid Aljabri said in a public statement.

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Associated Press diplomatic writer Matthew Lee contributed to this report from Washington.

## **Pro-Russia vaccine misinfo finds home in US Facebook groups**

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A false report claiming five Ukrainians had died after taking an American-made coronavirus vaccine spread in just a matter of days from a small Kremlin-friendly website to an audience of thousands in U.S.-based Facebook groups.

Russian media outlets picked up the claim, and soon social media users in the U.S. were sharing screenshots and links to those articles — all as 30,000 Americans were preparing to roll up their sleeves for shots of an experimental COVID-19 vaccine late last month.

The fast dissemination of a single report from an obscure Ukrainian website to crowds of Facebook users highlights the ease with which pro-Russian websites can feed misinformation into American internet circles. In fact, one of the websites that picked up the report was identified by the U.S. State Department this week as being part of a network of proxy misinformation websites being used by the Russian government.

As various countries race to produce a successful coronavirus vaccine, disinformation experts are bracing for a steady drum of misleading claims and propaganda aimed at undermining competing countries' efforts to develop an antidote. Misinformation could raise distrust and fear around a vaccine, threatening government leaders' hopes of ending the pandemic. And the U.S., which is readying plans to deliver 300 million doses to Americans starting next year, if a successful vaccine is identified, could be a prime target.

The falsehood around the U.S. vaccine fits into a longstanding, pro-Kremlin misinformation strategy, said Bret Schafer, a disinformation fellow at the Alliance for Securing Democracy.

"Anytime it appears the West has taken the lead in something they're going to try to do damage," Schafer said. "As they're close to coming to market with their own vaccine, or start running trials, you create doubt about what everyone else is doing in the hopes that your own citizens look to you for the answers."

Russia is boasting that it will soon become the first country to approve a COVID-19 vaccine. But scientists



are raising serious doubts the country's plans to start mass vaccinations as soon as October.

The unsupported claim that five out of 15 Ukrainians had died during a trial of the U.S. coronavirus vaccine was first published in July on the Lugansk Media Centre, a website affiliated with the separatist rebels in Ukraine's Luhansk region, who are backed by Russia. The false report said eight others also were hospitalized. The vaccine, however, is not currently being tested in Ukraine, according to a global database of vaccine trials kept by both the World Health Organization and U.S. National Institutes of Health.

Lugansk Media Centre did not return a request for comment.

The report was picked up by Russian-friendly site NewsFront and was shared more than 20,000 times in public Facebook groups and pages, including several with large anti-vaccination followings in the U.S.

NewsFront was identified as a "proxy website" for the Russian government in a State Department's report this week that detailed Russia's apparatus of state-funded media, social media accounts and English-language websites used to spread disinformation.

"Vaccines are never safe!" one Facebook user wrote, sharing the NewsFront article in a Florida-based Facebook group called Vaxxed Vaccine Information.

The claim also gained traction in U.S. and French-speaking QAnon Facebook groups, which promote the conspiracy theory that President Donald Trump is waging a secret campaign against enemies in the "deep state" and a child sex trafficking ring.

And it appears to have inspired a new wave of memes aimed at sowing doubt about the vaccine.

"Just curious. Would you take a vaccine with a 33% death rate to feel safe from a virus with a .06% death rate?" asks one meme that has been shared 14,000 times in a single Facebook post.

Facebook did not return a request for comment.

The reach of the misinformation was "definitely a success" for the Lugansk Media Centre, a fringe site that has generated little traction with its articles in the past but has been working to build its profile, said Elise Thomas, a researcher at the International Cyber Policy Centre in Australia.

Thomas said that could encourage fringe and propaganda websites to test out more online falsehoods in the coming months as scientists enter into the final stages of testing vaccine candidates.

"They fully understand that the vaccine is a hot topic," said Thomas, who tracked the claim's origin online. "That's probably what we're going to see in the next coming months."

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Associated Press writer David Klepper in Providence, Rhode Island, contributed to this article.

## Ford, Bush presidential adviser Brent Scowcroft dies at 95

By DOUGLASS K. DANIEL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Brent Scowcroft, who played a prominent role in American foreign policy as national security adviser to Presidents Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush and was a Republican voice against the 2003 invasion of Iraq, has died, a Bush spokesperson said Friday. He was 95.

Scowcroft died Thursday of natural causes at his home in Falls Church, Virginia, spokesperson Jim McGrath said.

Scowcroft was the only person to serve as national security adviser to two different administrations. His appointment by Ford in 1975 came as Scowcroft retired from the Air Force with the rank of lieutenant general. He advised Bush, by then a close friend, during the four years of the Bush administration, 1989-93.

In a study of Scowcroft's career, historian David F. Schmitz noted that Scowcroft had been at the center of numerous post-Vietnam War discussions of American foreign policy. He was part of the presidential administrations that grappled with U.S. responses to the collapse of communism in Europe, the crack-down in China after the Tiananmen Square protests, and Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War.

"The key tenets of his thinking, shaped by the Second World War, were that national security policy had to protect the nation from aggression, provide international stability, control arms while maintaining preparedness, and shape an international environment that was conducive to America's goals and needs,"

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Schmitz wrote.

Described as both gentle and tough, a brilliant coordinator most concerned with results, a tireless worker used to 18-hour days, Scowcroft offered a self-assessment to The Washington Post on the eve of the George H.W. Bush administration: "I don't have a quick, innovative mind. I don't automatically think of good, new ideas. What I do better is pick out good ideas from bad ideas. ... It is comforting to be doing things that make a difference. In the end, it's the job that's more important."

Scowcroft was born March 19, 1925, in Ogden, Utah, where his father owned a wholesale grocery business. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1947 and then joined the Army Air Corps, which soon became the Air Force. Only a few months after completing pilot training, he broke his back in the crash of an F-51, which put him in the hospital for two years.

Refocusing his military career on strategy and planning, Scowcroft earned a master's degree at Columbia University in 1953 and then taught Russian history at West Point. In 1957, he began studying at the Strategic Intelligence School in Washington. Two years later, he was an assistant air attaché in the American Embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, then taught political science at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Scowcroft was assigned to Air Force headquarters and the Defense Department during the 1960s and earned a doctorate in international relations from Columbia in 1967. He was appointed military assistant to President Richard Nixon in 1972. A year later he became deputy assistant for national security under Henry Kissinger, Nixon's national security adviser.

After leaving the White House with the election of Democrat Jimmy Carter in 1976, Scowcroft set up a consulting firm serving international businesses and eventually joined Kissinger in creating Kissinger Associates, a consulting firm with similar goals.

Scowcroft served on Carter's advisory committee on arms control and was chairman of President Ronald Reagan's Commission on Strategic Forces, which focused on the effort to modernize U.S. nuclear weapons. He also served on the three-member Tower Commission, which investigated the arms-for-hostages affair that occurred during the Reagan administration.

Scowcroft had been a close friend of George H.W. Bush since they had served together in the Nixon administration. With Bush's election in 1988, Scowcroft was interested in leading the Pentagon as defense secretary during the Bush administration. He accepted a return engagement as national security adviser when he realized he would be at the president's side instead of running the massive bureaucracy at the Defense Department.

After Bush lost his reelection bid to Democrat Bill Clinton in 1992, Scowcroft returned to consulting. He co-wrote with Bush a book about the Cold War, "A World Transformed," published in 1998, and with Carter national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski the book "America and the World: Conversations on the Future of American Foreign Policy" in 2008.

In 2002, Scowcroft angered the White House of his friend's son, President George W. Bush, when he publicly expressed the view that little evidence tied Saddam Hussein to terrorist organizations and warned that war with Iraq could damage if not destroy U.S. alliances in the region.

In a column for The Wall Street Journal, Scowcroft wrote: "The central point is that any campaign against Iraq, whatever the strategy, cost and risks, is certain to divert us for some indefinite period from our war on terrorism. Worse, there is a virtual consensus in the world against an attack on Iraq at this time. So long as that sentiment persists, it would require the U.S. to pursue a virtual go-it-alone strategy against Iraq, making any military operations correspondingly more difficult and expensive."

Given his relationship with the Bush family, Scowcroft's criticism of the administration carried particular weight. "I thought they were rushing to judgment and making a serious mistake," Scowcroft recalled during an interview with the West Point Center for Oral History. His concerns, made privately before he spoke out publicly, were "pretty much rejected" by the younger Bush's White House, he said.

President George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, said in a statement Friday that they were saddened to learn of Scowcroft's death.

"This patriot had a long career of distinguished service to our country. As a retired Air Force general,

he gave sound and thoughtful advice to several presidents. He was an especially important advisor to my father — and an important friend,” Bush said.

The current national security adviser, Robert O’Brien, said he had long admired Scowcroft and made it his goal to follow the “Scowcroft Model” while serving President Donald Trump.

“General Scowcroft set the standard for effective leadership and defined the modern role of the NSA, acting as an ‘honest broker’ by moving to the President’s desk well-vetted and thoroughly debated policy options and advice for his consideration,” O’Brien said in a statement.

Scowcroft married Marian Horner in 1951; she died in 1995. He is survived by a daughter, Karen, and a granddaughter, Meghan.

## Alpine glacier in Italy threatens valley, forces evacuations

ROME (AP) — Experts were closely monitoring a Mont Blanc glacier on Friday, a day after they evacuated 75 tourists and residents amid fears the glacier could soon break apart and crash into a popular Italian Alpine valley.

Valerio Segor, a glacier expert in Valle d’Aosta, a region in northwestern Italy, told reporters on Friday that the next 72 hours were critical for the Planpincieux Glacier, which lies under a massif on the Italian side of Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in the Alps.

Those forced to evacuate came from homes and holiday lodgings in the Ferret Valley in the shadow of the glacier. Tourists on Friday were barred from entering the scenic valley.

The glacier’s size has been likened to that of a soccer field under a 80-meter (265-foot) high mass of ice. Abrupt shifts in temperature from hot to cold to hot again are being blamed for the precarious state of the glacier, which Segor says has a stream of water running beneath it.

The glacier’s state has been monitored since 2013. Last year saw similar concerns, but the glacier held on to its grip on the mountain at 2,600-2,800 meters (8,500-9,200 feet) of altitude.

Lately, Planpincieux has been creeping downward at the rate of about 80-100 centimeters (32-40 inches) each day, Segor said.

The Corriere della Sera newspaper quoted glacier expert Fabrizio Troilo as saying there is “the danger it could give way in an instant.”

Corriere said an Alpine refuge was still open for climbers who come from the French side of Mont Blanc, which is known in Italy as Monte Bianco.

Follow all AP coverage of climate change issues at <https://apnews.com/Climate>.

## Virus resistant: World’s Longest Yard Sale still lines roads

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

GADSDEN, Ala. (AP) — For decades, thousands of vendors have fanned out along roadsides from Alabama to Michigan each summer to haggle over the prices of old Coca-Cola bottles, clothes, toys, knives and more at The World’s Longest Yard Sale.

And though the coronavirus pandemic has canceled events around the globe, the six-state yard sale is happening this weekend for the 34th straight year.

Beginning Thursday and ending Sunday, thousands of people will mingle, chat and bargain across a 690-mile-long (1,110 kilometer) stretch of Middle America. Organizers say they might not get the usual crowd, estimated at 200,000 people, but they could.

“We feel like there’s a lot of pent-up demand,” said Hugh Stump III, executive director of tourism in Gadsden, at the southernmost end of the sale.

The crowd was predominantly older on the first day in Gadsden, and many people wore face masks and visibly tried to keep away from others. COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus, can be particularly dangerous for the elderly and people with other health problems.

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But many others didn't wear facial coverings, and it wasn't uncommon to see people standing shoulder-to-shoulder as they looked through racks of clothes or tables full of shoes set up outside.

Promoters considered canceling the event because of the pandemic, which has killed more than 160,000 Americans and infected nearly 5 million more, but they decided to go ahead with precautions including reminders about masks, social distancing and hand-washing.

"The fact that it's a mostly outdoor event was a large determining factor in going forward. There's plenty of space for social distancing and the other guidelines can be followed as well. In addition, because this event is critical to many people's livelihood it's very important," sale spokesman Josh Randall said in an email.

Vendors set up days early at Cumberland Mountain General Store in Clarkrange, Tennessee, where as many as 100 booths will be open though the weekend.

"It's usually packed here," store clerk June Walker said.

Other places opted out this year because of the virus. The Darke County Steam Threshers Association in Ansonia, Ohio, decided against allowing vendors on its 30 acres (12 hectares) of land, President Jo Stuck said.

"To keep up with all the health mandates ... we just do not have the volunteers to do it this year," she said. "The two of us who can be there all the time have compromised immune systems, and that puts our health at risk plus the health of our visitors and our vendors."

The loss of rental income will hurt the group, which stages events featuring old farm machines, but members didn't want to be put in the position of dealing with people who willfully defy Ohio's mandatory mask rule, Stuck said.

"There are a lot of people around here that have an issue with it and don't want to follow it," she said. "It's a big problem."

The yard sale began in 1987 as a way to lure visitors off interstate highways to a small town in Tennessee. No one owns the event, Randall said, but it's promoted on a website that includes tips for vendors, maps and, for 2020, pandemic health guidelines.

Also known as the 127 Yard Sale, the event follows U.S. 127 from near Addison, Michigan, to Chattanooga, Tennessee, through Ohio and Kentucky. From there, it meanders through northwest Georgia to Noccoalula Falls, a 250-acre (100-hectare) public park in Gadsden.

Patricia Gurley piled into a car with two friends and drove about 170 miles (275 kilometers) miles to the Gadsden end of the sale from her home in Corinth, Mississippi. With a yellow mask pulled down under her chin, she was excited about visiting the sale for the first time and wasn't concerned about the pandemic.

"I don't worry about that. If you're gonna get it, you're gonna get it," she said.

Nicole Gerle came even further: She drove 2,075 miles (3,340 kilometers) from her home in San Diego and planned to travel the route at least to Ohio, maybe even all the way to Michigan.

Wearing a mask, Gerle said she wasn't fretting over the coronavirus: "If other people aren't going to be smart, I'm going to be smart on my side." But Gerle was worried about getting good deals on items including a metal basket she planned to take home, repurpose into other goods and sell.

"The purchasing is livelihood for me and the selling is livelihood for them," she said, pointing toward sales tables. "People make their income; they count on this."

Vendor Ann Sullins has set up shop at the past five sales and was thankful this year's wasn't called off. But realistically, she said, the yard sale is just too big to cancel.

"People are going to do just like they do," said Sullins, who wasn't wearing a mask but tried to keep her distance from others and had hand sanitizer. "When something like this comes up, they're going to go out and do it just because it gives them a break from home."

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Follow AP coverage of the pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>.



## Job losses, fear of virus complicate Latino voter hopes

By ASTRID GALVAN and ACACIA CORONADO The Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Every day, 29-year-old Maico Olivares tries to call about 25 people, mostly within the Latino community, to persuade them to register to vote.

Some calls go well, but increasingly, they have become frustrating: Many of the people Olivares reaches are out of work or have lost wages because of coronavirus-related business restrictions and closures. These days, they're more focused on feeding their family than getting ready for the November election.

Olivares shares concerns with Latino advocates around the country who worry that the virus' effect on Latinos, who have seen high rates of infection and unemployment, will keep them from the polls this year.

"Their main concern is money and food. Their main concern isn't voting right now," said Olivares, lead voter registration organizer for Central Arizonans for a Sustainable Economy, a grassroots organization focused on civic engagement and social justice.

His group is registering a fraction of the people it was before the pandemic, when it could set up outside grocery stores and public events. Its goal was to collect 40,000 voter registration forms this year, but so far has collected just 7,000 — most of them before the pandemic. That's compared to over 30,000 in 2018 and 20,000 in 2016.

Olivares said he has to get personal when he pleads with people to register, telling them about his own upbringing as a first-generation American and a father.

"It can be very emotional at times because you're dealing with people who are hit the hardest right now," Olivares said.

Data compiled by the The Center for Election Innovation and Research in early June shows overall voter registration in April was about 70% lower in 11 states and the District of Columbia than it was four years before, during the last presidential election.

While Latinos are a sought-after voting group for both major political parties, they have become increasingly important to the Democratic Party as their population and political influence have grown. Across the country, they represent just over 13% of eligible voters, but that is much higher in states such as Arizona and Florida, both of which are key to this year's presidential race. Latinos account for nearly a quarter of registered voters in Arizona and a fifth in Florida.

Voting and community groups had high hopes for Latino turnout this year, especially after 11.7 million Latinos voted in the 2018 midterms, up from 6.8 million in 2014.

But two years ago, there was no worldwide pandemic and massive loss of jobs weighing on the electorate. While Blacks have the highest COVID-19 mortality rate of any racial group in the U.S., Latinos die from the virus at a rate that is nearly 3 times that of whites when adjusted by age, according to the APM Research Lab, which is tracking mortality from the disease. The unemployment rate for Latinos in June was 14.5%, more than 3 percentage points higher than the national rate, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The coronavirus has forced voter engagement groups to get creative. Some have partnered with food banks to register people at drives or helped people apply for unemployment benefits. Others have established aid programs to help those who have lost work, and some have created hotlines to be a source of reliable information for non-native English speakers.

Andrea Mercado and her team at New Florida Majority have sent \$200 gift cards to families who don't have enough food. Before the pandemic, the group had more than 200 organizers on the streets trying to sign up new voters. Now they're working the phones, although progress is slow. So far, they have made contact with 60,000 of the 1 million Floridians they have called, she said.

In place of public events, New Florida Majority has meetings over Zoom that can draw thousands of people and include musical performances. Still, in Florida, a state with a history of close elections, the pandemic's potential effect on voter turnout is concerning.

"When you have family that is sick, that's in the ICU, people who you love have passed away or your family's experiencing financial hardship, I think that is a concern — that people won't take time to vote," Mercado said.

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Other activists hope for the opposite — that more people will be driven to vote by the poor government response to the virus outbreak and the political awakening around racial justice following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

In Texas, the Latino civic engagement organization Jolt has been finding success after abandoning its plans to register voters at quinceañeras, a traditional rite of passage for girls when they turn 15. It turned to text messages, Twitter and setting up at food banks. The group also has been present at racial justice demonstrations and at one held on behalf of Vanessa Guillen, a soldier who was killed at Fort Hood.

“Normally when we go to an event, we are going to the people,” said Carmen Ayala, cultural and events manager. “But there, even in the midst of a pandemic, the people were coming to us.”

Heightened interest in social change among younger people is giving voting rights groups hope that the lackluster registration numbers so far could turn around as the November election draws closer.

Arianna Reyes, a 19-year-old college student who lives in the Phoenix suburbs with her parents and grandparents, voted for the first time earlier this year. She felt empowered to make change and said she is noticing that her friends and family also seem determined to vote.

“Before, I felt like I was the only one on my Instagram page promoting voting,” said Reyes, a fellow at Living United for Change in Arizona, a group that advocates for racial, social and economic justice.

Despite the health and financial challenges from the coronavirus, she said, “I think it’s really beautiful that people are realizing that they do have power.”

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Coronado reported from Austin, Texas. She is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

## **VIRUS DIARY: We eloped, just not the way we’d planned**

By CEDAR ATTANASIO Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — The plan was to elope in April in New York City, where my fiancée, Julie Trolle, lived.

When the coronavirus hit, I canceled my flight from El Paso, where I was covering immigration. Julie, a doctoral candidate in biology at New York University, walked to her lab each day passing rows of refrigerator trucks.

We are fortunate. We don’t have underlying health conditions. Our jobs are secure and allow remote work. But as countries closed borders, we feared increasingly that we could be separated.

Julie is Danish. I am American.

On March 14, Denmark closed its borders to foreigners, including boyfriends like me. In July, the White House threatened to expel certain student visa-holders from the United States. Headlines from both continents made us check fine print to see if we’d be prevented from living in the same country.

The global shutdown followed a century-long expansion of travel and intercultural exchange that had shaped our families’ lives.

Julie was born in Hong Kong, where her Chinese mother and Danish father lived until she was 7. She mostly grew up in Denmark, and left as a teenager to go to boarding school in New Mexico.

My Italian grandfather, a widower, met his second wife “online” in the 1960s. They were both Spanish-speaking phone operators; Giuseppe connected calls in Rome, Ruth in Manhattan. By 1967, my 12-year-old father was brought over and started to learn English and stickball.

In 2016, globalization also brought Julie and me together, also in Manhattan.

We met in a bar at an alumni happy hour. She attended the United World College of the American West, in my hometown of Las Vegas, New Mexico. I went to another branch of the same school — in Hong Kong.

New York City brought us together, but it couldn’t marry us. In May, after the pandemic hit, I scheduled another trip, heartened by the announcement of “Project Cupid,” in which the city promised to marry couples remotely via video chat. But “launch” was just an appointment signup, and the appointments

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went fast. I didn't hear back until a few weeks later when a kind, overwhelmed clerk called to apologize. I was already back in El Paso.

Last month, we tried again — this time in New Mexico, where I had been assigned to cover education and where my family lives.

I rented a Mustang convertible and picked Julie up at the airport. Driving through the pine forests of the high desert we heard about the "love is essential" movement.

As we were sorting out our own marriage that would ensure Julie could stay in the U.S., and I would be able to enter Denmark, couples around the world were successfully lobbying for essential status. Denmark had carved out an exception for foreign partners, even the unmarried. A few days after Julie landed, the Trump administration abandoned its proposal to revoke visas for students who weren't attending in-person classes.

I studied geography for six years. In textbooks, migration is often simplified as the tension between "push factors" like civil war or boredom, and "pull factors" like good schools or job opportunities.

Love is probably the most underrated.

The coronavirus has killed over 150,000 people in my country and more than 600 in Julie's. In April, Ruth died in a care facility from COVID-19 complications. Because of the virus, our family couldn't be by her side.

But the virus has not stopped love.

On July 23, Julie and I were married in my mother's backyard with two witnesses, my best man-slash-photographer and our minister: my AP colleague Russell Contreras. Shortly after, Julie returned to New York.

Now, every night, Julie and I chat via video, watch our favorite shows together and play video games. We are together enough for now. Julie is chatting on the phone with her parents across an ocean. And I am with my last living grandparent, a 89-year-old Minnesotan, on Zoom calls and in emails.

Things could be better. But from where we stand, love is winning.

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Virus Diary, an occasional feature, showcases the coronavirus pandemic through the eyes of AP journalists around the world. Cedar Attanasio is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues. Follow Attanasio on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/viaCedar>

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## President's virus swagger fuels anger ahead of Belarus vote

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

MINSK, Belarus (AP) — As Kseniya Milya's grandfather lay dying of COVID-19 at a hospital in Belarus' capital of Minsk, the country's authoritarian leader was blithely dismissing the pandemic as "psychosis," and recommending an unusual remedy: Have a regular shot of vodka and work hard in the fields.

Like many other Belarusians angry with the government's cavalier approach to the pandemic, Milya joined large opposition protests ahead of Sunday's presidential vote in which President Alexander Lukashenko is seeking a sixth term. The outpouring of public discontent poses the most serious challenge yet to Lukashenko after 26 years in office.

Milya said her 86-year-old grandfather, Ivan Shelesny, believed Lukashenko and took no precautions as the pandemic swept through the ex-Soviet nation.

"(He) trusted Lukashenko and TV, who said that COVID-19 doesn't exist, and he died," said Milya, a



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26-year-old movie producer. "That was a result of the government's policy."

"He was attending veterans' meetings and visiting street markets," she added. "And he was greatly surprised when he tested positive."

Milya's grandfather died of coronavirus-induced pneumonia at a hospital in March, after a week on a ventilator.

"On the day they called me from intensive care to say that my granddad has died of confirmed COVID-19, I switched on the TV and saw the president saying that no one has died of the virus in Belarus," Milya told The Associated Press.

It wasn't until April that the government reported the country's first COVID-19 deaths.

Milya and her family were all infected, and couldn't attend the funeral. Her 46-year-old father spent a month on a ventilator and barely survived, and her mother-in-law has remained in intensive care since April.

"The government was refusing to recognize the virus' existence or provide assistance, wasting time," she said.

She said when her father was hospitalized, no one bothered to test him for COVID-19. Only after a week did authorities do a CT scan and put him on a ventilator for 31 days.

As the pandemic engulfed the world, Lukashenko ignored the World Health Organization's call for a lockdown.

Instead, the 65-year-old former state farm director advised Belarusians to "kill the virus with vodka," go to saunas and work in the fields to avoid infection. "Tractors will cure everybody!" he proclaimed.

Lukashenko has refused to impose any restrictions, making Belarus the only country in Europe to keep holding professional soccer games with fans in the stands while the outbreak was in full swing. Religious services and other mass gatherings continued unimpeded, and a massive military parade was held in May to mark the 75th anniversary of the Nazi defeat in World War II.

Last month, Lukashenko abruptly announced that he got the virus himself but had no symptoms and allegedly recovered quickly thanks to doing sports. He has staunchly defended the government response, claiming that extensive testing helped prevent the uncontrolled spread of the disease and arguing that a lockdown would have been deadly for the economy.

His approach, combined with a painful economic fallout from the global pandemic, has helped swell the opposition ranks ahead of the vote.

Previously apolitical, Milya was among the tens of thousands who flocked to campaign rallies for Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, a 37-year-old former teacher and the wife of a jailed opposition blogger who is challenging Lukashenko in Sunday's vote.

"The offer to use tractors and vodka was like spitting in people's faces," Tsikhanouskaya told the AP in an interview. "That disrespectful, disdainful attitude ... had a strong impact at a time when people badly needed help amid the pandemic. And all they got was that boorishness."

The country of 9.5 million has reported more than 68,500 confirmed infections and 580 deaths. Critics have accused authorities of manipulating the figures.

"No one, even the authorities themselves, trusts Belarus' official statistics," said Pavel Paleichik, an ambulance doctor from the western city of Lida who was handed a seven-day jail term and lost his job after complaining — at an opposition rally — about the lack of protective gear.

Paleichik claimed that authorities urged doctors to attribute COVID-19 deaths to other reasons.

"The situation is horrible. We lack protective gear, people have to wait for an ambulance for 3-4 hours," Paleichik told the AP. "I didn't want to tolerate that and keep silent like others. And I faced harsh reprisals from the authorities because of that."

While the authorities have sat back, a broad volunteer movement has spread across the country to collect money for doctors and to help expand public awareness of the pandemic.

"The outbreak has shown that the Belarusians are capable of strong solidarity," said Andrei Tkachev, a coordinator for the BYCOVID-19 volunteer group that has collected money and protective gear for medical workers.

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The volunteers have collected \$350,000 for the hospitals and provided medical workers with 450,000 respirators, hazmat suits and other protective gear.

"Everybody is equal in the face of the coronavirus, we have offered protective means to the military and police as well," Tkachev said.

Authorities in Belarus have seen the volunteer movement as a challenge. Andrei Strizhak, one of the leaders of BYCOVID-19, had to flee to Ukraine with his family after receiving threats.

"The coronavirus has become an impulse that triggered massive discontent with the government, and specifically with Lukashenko," Tkachev said. "Many people have grown tired of being afraid and keeping silent."

Although Belarus didn't impose a lockdown, its economy has still been badly battered by the global pandemic.

Russia, which buys the bulk of Belarus' exports, is in recession, and other export markets also have shrunk. Amid economic disputes, Moscow this year withdrew a steep discount on its oil supplies, depriving Lukashenko's government of an estimated \$700 million in annual revenues from exporting oil products made of cheap Russian crude.

Speaking outside the Minsk Tractor Plant where he works, 24-year-old Kirill Egotin lamented stagnant wages and mounting consumer prices.

"I have grown up under Lukashenko, but increasing poverty, stagnation and helplessness in the fight against the coronavirus have undermined trust in his government," said Egotin, who makes the equivalent of \$415 a month. "Everybody has got sick of him."

Follow AP's pandemic coverage at <http://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

## India surpasses 2 million cases as health volunteers strike

By EMILY SCHMALL Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — As India hit another grim milestone in the coronavirus pandemic on Friday, crossing 2 million confirmed cases and more than 41,000 deaths, community health volunteers went on strike complaining they were ill-equipped to respond to the wave of infection in rural areas.

Even as India has maintained comparatively low mortality rates, the disease has spread widely across the country, with the burden shifting in recent weeks from cities with robust health systems to rural areas, where resources are scarce or nonexistent.

The Health Ministry reported 62,538 cases in the past 24 hours, raising the nation's confirmed total to 2,027,074. It said 886 more people had died, for a total of 41,585.

But the ministry said that recoveries were growing. India has the third-highest caseload in the world after the United States and Brazil. It has the fifth-most deaths but its fatality rate of about 2% is far lower than the top two hardest-hit countries. The rate in the U.S. is 3.3%, and in Brazil 3.4%, Johns Hopkins University figures show.

The caseload in the country of 1.3 billion has quickly expanded since the government began lifting a months-long lockdown hoping to jump-start a moribund economy. India is projecting an economic contraction in 2020.

Life cautiously returned to the streets of the capital of New Delhi and the financial hub Mumbai, which appear to have passed their peaks.

In Mayur Vihar, a neighborhood in east Delhi, shopkeeper and pharmacist Rajiv Singhal described the daily phone calls he received when he tested positive for COVID-19 from officials within the Delhi state government, the Delhi police and the federal government to check on his condition.

"Despite our huge population and rampant illiteracy, if we have only 2 million cases so far, it shows that the government has played a big role in reducing the spread," he said.

But authorities elsewhere in India were reimposing lockdowns after sharp spikes in cases, including in

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Uttar Pradesh, a state of 220 million residents where infections in every district are weighing heavily on the fragile health system. After fully reopening in June, the state reimposed a weekend lockdown in July.

Shachindra Sharma, a 60-year-old graphic designer in the state capital of Lucknow, only leaves his house for a weekly grocery shop.

"I do not fear the disease but I do fear the government system, which has crumbled," he said.

Around 900,000 members of an all-female community health force began a two-day strike on Friday, protesting that they were being roped in to help with contact tracing, personal hygiene drives and in quarantine centers, but weren't given personal protective equipment or additional pay, according to organizer A.R. Sindhu.

The health workers, known as Accredited Social Health Activists, or ASHA, which means 'hope' in several Indian languages, have been deployed in each village on behalf of the Health Ministry. Their work ranges from escorting children to immunization clinics to counseling women on childbirth.

But while their regular work hasn't reduced, they are increasingly being involved by state governments in the fight against the pandemic, said Sindhu.

"But ASHA workers don't have masks or PPEs or even sanitizers," she said.

She added that although the work has increased and become more dangerous, their salaries remain static at roughly 2,000 rupees (\$27) per month. And the families of at least a dozen women who she said died from the virus didn't receive compensation from India's federal insurance for front-line health care workers because their deaths were not recorded as COVID-19 deaths.

Manisha Verma, a spokesperson for the Health Ministry, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In Mumbai, the capital of central Maharashtra state, cases had plateaued after months of steady growth. But rural parts were seeing an opposite trend.

Dr. S.P. Kalantri, the director of a hospital in the village of Sevagram in Maharashtra, about 74 kilometers (46 miles) from the city of Nagpur, said that younger people were cavalier about social distancing and masks. Fatigue and increased familiarity with the disease, which has been most fatal to Indians above the age of 60 with comorbidities, had resulted in people not being as vigilant, he said.

"Everyone thinks it won't be them," he said.

Like in much of the rest of the world, many Indians appeared to be counting on a therapeutic treatment or a vaccine to contain the spread of the disease.

India has launched two of the world's dozen and a half prospective vaccines into human trials, with vaccine-maker Zydus Cadila announcing it had completed phase 1 trials of its DNA-based vaccine on Thursday.

The country will be vital to global vaccination efforts, regardless of whether its own attempts work. The world's largest vaccine maker, the Serum Institute in the central city of Pune, has ramped up capacity to manufacture as many as a billion doses in development by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford, which is in phase 2 trials in India and England, and phase 3 trials in Brazil and South Africa.

Researchers are hoping to launch the Oxford vaccine for emergency use by October.

The Serum Institute said Friday that with financial help from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, it will be able to provide vaccines to India and other low- and middle-income countries for a maximum \$3 per dose.

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Associated Press writers Rishabh R. Jain and Aniruddha Ghosal in New Delhi and Biswajeet Banerjee in Lucknow, India, contributed to this report.

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## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Aug. 8, the 221st day of 2020. There are 145 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 8, 1974, President Richard Nixon, facing damaging new revelations in the Watergate scandal, announced he would resign the following day.

On this date:

In 1814, during the War of 1812, peace talks between the United States and Britain began in Ghent, Belgium.

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte set sail for St. Helena to spend the remainder of his days in exile.

In 1911, President William Howard Taft signed a measure raising the number of U.S. representatives from 391 to 433, effective with the next Congress, with a proviso to add two more when New Mexico and Arizona became states.

In 1942, during World War II, six Nazi saboteurs who were captured after landing in the U.S. were executed in Washington, D.C.; two others who cooperated with authorities were spared.

In 1945, President Harry S. Truman signed the U.S. instrument of ratification for the United Nations Charter. The Soviet Union declared war against Japan during World War II.

In 1973, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew branded as "damned lies" reports he had taken kickbacks from government contracts in Maryland, and vowed not to resign — which he ended up doing.

In 1994, Israel and Jordan opened the first road link between the two once-warring countries.

In 2000, the wreckage of the Confederate submarine H.L. Hunley, which sank in 1864 after attacking the Union ship Housatonic, was recovered off the South Carolina coast and returned to port.

In 2003, the Boston Roman Catholic archdiocese offered \$55 million to settle more than 500 lawsuits stemming from alleged sex abuse by priests. (The archdiocese later settled for \$85 million.)

In 2006, Roger Goodell was chosen as the NFL's next commissioner.

In 2008, China opened the Summer Olympic Games with an extravaganza of fireworks and pageantry.

In 2009, Sonia Sotomayor was sworn in as the U.S. Supreme Court's first Hispanic and third female justice.

Ten years ago: Flooding in Gansu province in China resulted in mudslides that killed more than 1,400 people. Academy Award-winning film star Patricia Neal died in Edgartown, Massachusetts, at 84.

Five years ago: Several rivals of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump criticized his treatment of a debate moderator; Trump refused to apologize for saying on CNN that Megyn Kelly, who had aggressively questioned him during the primary debate on Fox News, had "blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever" when she asked him about his incendiary comments toward women.

One year ago: Just days after a shooting at a Texas Walmart killed 22 people, a man carrying a rifle and wearing body armor walked around a Walmart in Springfield, Missouri, causing panicked shoppers to flee; police said the man told them he was testing whether Walmart would honor his right to bear arms. (Dmitriy Andreychenko later pleaded guilty to making a false report after initially being charged with a more serious terrorism-related felony.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Nita Talbot is 90. Actor Dustin Hoffman is 83. Actor Connie Stevens is 82. Country singer Phil Balsley (The Statler Brothers) is 81. Actor Larry Wilcox is 73. Actor Keith Carradine is 71. Movie director Martin Brest is 69. Radio-TV personality Robin Quivers is 68. Percussionist Anton Fig is 67. Actor Donny Most is 67. Rock musician Dennis Drew (10,000 Maniacs) is 63. TV personality Deborah Norville is 62. Former actor Harry Crosby is 62. Rock musician The Edge (U2) is 59. Rock musician Rikki Rockett (Poison) is 59. Rapper Kool Moe Dee is 58. Rock musician Ralph Rieckermann is 58. Middle distance runner Suzy Favor Hamilton is 52. Rock singer Scott Stapp is 47. Country singer Mark Wills is 47. Actor Kohl Sudduth is 46. Rock musician Tom Linton (Jimmy Eat World) is 45. Singer JC Chasez ('N Sync) is 44. Actor Tawny Cypress is 44. Rhythm-and-blues singer Drew Lachey (lah-SHAY') (98 Degrees) is 44. Rhythm-and-blues singer Marsha Ambrosius is 43. Actor Lindsay Sloane is 43. Actor Countess Vaughn is



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42. Actor Michael Urie is 40. Tennis player Roger Federer is 39. Actor Meagan Good is 39. Rock musician Eric Howk (Portugal. The Man) is 39. Actor Jackie Cruz (TV: "Orange is the New Black") is 36. Britain's Princess Beatrice of York is 32. Actor Ken Baumann is 31. Chicago Cubs first baseman Anthony Rizzo is 31. Pop singer Shawn Mendes is 22. Actor Bebe Wood (TV: "The Real O'Neals") is 19.