

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 1 of 74

- [1- Groton Community Transit Ad](#)
- [2- Groton Transit Fundraiser Ad](#)
- [3- Groton American Legion Post #39 featured](#)
- [4- Groton Area Faculty Spotlight: Transportation](#)
- [5- That's Life by Tony Bender](#)
- [6- Truss Pros/Precision Wall Systems Hiring Ad](#)
- [7- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [8- Weather Pages](#)
- [11- Daily Devotional](#)
- [12- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [13- News from the Associated Press](#)



Groton Community Transit will be taking the bus to out of Town Legion Baseball games on 5/26 to Lake Norden



**6/1 to Sisseton
6/5 Milbank
6/6 Milbank
6/9 to Clark
7/6 to Northville
7/14 to Redfield.**



If anyone is interested on riding or for more information, please call Groton Transit at 397-8661



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

Groton Transit

FUNDRAISER

**Thursday, June 17, 2021
4 p.m. to 7 p.m.**

**Groton Community Transit
Downtown Groton**

*Tables will be set up outside
as in previous years!*

**We will be offering DRIVE-THRU
Service again on the
south side of the transit.**

*Please join us and help
support Groton Transit!*

FREE WILL OFFERING!

*** Food * Fun * Door Prizes ***

Groton Service Organizations A continuing series by Dorene Nelson

Groton American Legion Post #39

Groton Post #39 of the American Legion was organized on July 29, 1919. The post had several different "homes" before purchasing the current site and constructing the building located on the south end of Groton's Main Street.

In 1947 Post #39 purchased the post office building, which was the first home that Post #39 owned. The ground floor was rented to the U. S. Government for the post office, and the second floor was used by the Legion.

In 1971 Post #39 bought the Dietz Drug store building and moved into this new location with the start of the Legion Lounge. Later the post purchased the building next door, completely remodeled it, and moved the lounge into that area. The former drug store building was kept as the Post home and used for Bingo every Thursday evening.

In 1995 Post members voted to build a new building at the present location on the south end of

Groton's Main Street. This building included a spacious bar and lounge, the largest meeting room in the city, and a kitchen facility adequate for most types of planned activities. Post #39 Honor Squad provides military honors for service veterans at burial, including the folding of the American flag, which is presented to the family of the deceased veteran, and followed by rifle volleys and "Taps."

The current officers of the American Legion Post #39 are as follows: Robert Wegner, Commander; Bruce Babcock, Vice Commander; Doug Hamilton, Adjutant and Finance Officer; and Ron Falk, Americanism Officer.

The main mission of the Legion post is to provide aid and assistance to area veterans. There are 55 members at this time.

The monthly meetings are held in the Post Home at 12 S. Main Street. They start at 6:30 p.m. and are held on the 2nd Monday of each month September. through May.

Several fundraisers are held each year. On the closest Saturday to Veterans' Day, Post #39 hosts a Turkey Party. There is also have a Spring Fundraiser in March, on the closest Sunday to St. Patrick's Day.

These two fundraisers are used to support the Post #39 Legion Baseball team.

In addition to these fundraisers, the Legion Post also works with other service organizations in support of their fundraising projects.

The annual dues are \$35.00 a year for any qualifying veteran. Those who served in any one of the seven branches of the military and were honorably discharged between December 7, 1941, to the current date are eligible to join.



Pictured are Bruce Babcock, Doug Hamilton, Bob Voss, David McGannon and Dale Wolter. (Courtesy Photo)

Groton Area Faculty Spotlight

Groton Area Transportation

by Ben Higgins

For any bustling metropolis, public transportation is an obligatory measure. Whether it be the union of taxi drivers in New York City, the street-cars of San Francisco, or the ever-present public buses that can be found in most cities across the country. Public transportation is an important part of any city's infrastructure because it provides ways for citizens to get to work or other destinations, which is a priority for those who do not have their own cars or motorized vehicles.

For the students of the Groton Area School District, being able to ride the school bus is an important prerequisite for attending school. Sometimes, students overlook the importance of having transportation to and from school, especially when a student's home may be located in a rural area outside of town. The bus drivers of Groton are employees who are vital to the daily operations of the school. Here are just a few of the wonderful individuals who spend their time ferrying students back and forth.

Loren Bahr is the Transportation Supervisor for the Groton Area School District. He has worked in this position for a total of sixteen years and worked as a farmer for seventeen years before that. His duties are mostly made up of coordinating routes for buses to take and caring for the vehicles themselves. With certain students not attending school due to the pandemic, some routes had to be changed for the sake of efficiency. When he is not working, he enjoys hunting and fishing.

Deb Tietz works as both a Bus Driver and an Assistant Cook at the school. She has been working as a Bus Driver for forty-three years. She has been dedicated to her work for quite a long time! Before she started driving the school bus, she worked at a nursing home for eight years. Deb started working as an Assistant Cook in the school kitchen four years ago.

Linda McInerney has worked as a Bus Driver for Groton for quite a while. Before coming to Groton, Linda worked as a school bus driver in Wisconsin. Her current work in Groton has her ferrying kids on routes that can go over eighty miles each way!

And these are just three of the many people involved with the transportation sector of Groton. While being a bus driver may seem like a fairly simple job upon first glance, the work involved with plotting routes and managing unruly children can be intense at times. And yet, the Bus Drivers of Groton Area just keep on trucking.

Editor's Note: This is a continuing series compiled by Benjamin Higgins. Higgins who is working for the Groton Independent through the Project Skills program.

Bob Dylan can't be eighty

I woke up this morning and Bob Dylan was 80. Eighty! Although he was kicking around Fargo when I was just a toddler, Bob Dylan getting older makes me feel old.

Another one of my childhood heroes, Brooks Robinson, the greatest third baseman ever, turned 84 this month. I still remember watching him make impossible plays on a 26" black and white Zenith with my father during the World Series. Lord, I saw Barry Larkin play in the minors for the Denver Bears and he's been in the Baseball Hall of Fame for nearly a decade! Somehow we don't expect our heroes to age. But they can be timeless.

I named my son after Bob Dylan and Dylan Thomas, epic poets, both.

I recently got Bob Dylan's much-acclaimed new recording (from my son) but I haven't listened to it yet. It's on vinyl, and there's a ritual involved with records. Cleaning the record, the stylus... It's a ceremony, a prayer, to be paused every 20 minutes or so when you flip the record. There's purpose involved. It's not just background music. And when it comes to Dylan, the enigmatic phantom of modern music, you're obliged to show reverence.

I remember hearing a story from someone about standing on a street corner in New Orleans, I think it was, and a guy walked up and asked him for a light, so he and Bob Dylan stood there and smoked. I remain insanely jealous. I suppose we all have our brushes with greatness. I once spent 20 minutes leaning over the railing of a riverboat with Smokin' Joe Frazier, and we didn't talk one second about boxing, just about how beautiful the Missouri River was. Neither of us had any cigarettes.

I've brushed up against memories of Bob Dylan, though. During an interview with Bobby Vee a thousand years ago, he cheerfully recounted Dylan's abbreviated tenure with the band as a piano player who could only play in the key of C. "He called himself Elston Gunn—with three "N's!" Vee laughed. And he told me about a bus tour with the Beatles and how John and Paul had fistfights in the aisle.

Though Dylan and Vee established a lifelong friendship, they lost track of each other in the Sixties. By then the music had died and reincarnated in Moorhead in the guise of Bobby Vee and a hundred others. Bobby's real last name was Velline. He changed it at Dylan's urging.

When we talked, Vee remembered the rumblings about this new voice of a generation, a poet with volumes to share about war and peace and the human condition, and one night, when Vee and the boys were in New York with the night off, they went to see this new prophet. The lights went down except for a lone spotlight, and a slight, curly-headed troubadour shambled on stage. Vee and the boys gleefully elbowed each other. "Hey, it's Zimmerman!"

No, I never got to smoke a cigarette with Bob Dylan, but I got to hear the joy in Bobby Vee's voice his memory inspired.

Dylan returned to Minnesota in 2013, and during a spoken intro to Bobby Vee's first big hit, said, "I used to live here, and then I left. I've played with everybody, from Mick Jagger to Madonna ... but the most meaningful person I've ever been on stage with is a man who's here tonight, who used to sing a song called 'Suzie Baby.'"

It was a eulogy of sorts, the best kind of eulogy, one delivered while the deceased is still breathing. Bobby Vee was gone three years later.

Alzheimer's.

It was a hundred years ago when I saw Bob Dylan in concert in Bismarck. The reviews of the tour had been ragged, and sure enough, it sometimes took me minutes to recognize a song that had been so elec-



That's Life

by Tony Bender

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 6 of 74

trified and bastardized it had become a puzzle. Was he bored? Indifferent? I don't know, but at one point he dropped his harmonica, and he and guitarist G. E. Smith of Saturday Night Live fame, cracked up, and the show took on new energy.

It wasn't a great performance, but that wasn't the point, was it? Icons and prophets have off days; after all, the pedestal is in our minds, in our expectations.

He'd given enough. He arrived and left as a mystery. But it was worth it just to see him laugh.

© Tony Bender, 2021



**Competitive starting wage
with monthly tier increases!
Full benefit package!**

**To apply:
www.uslbm.com/careers or
call Diane at 605-448-2929**

Britton

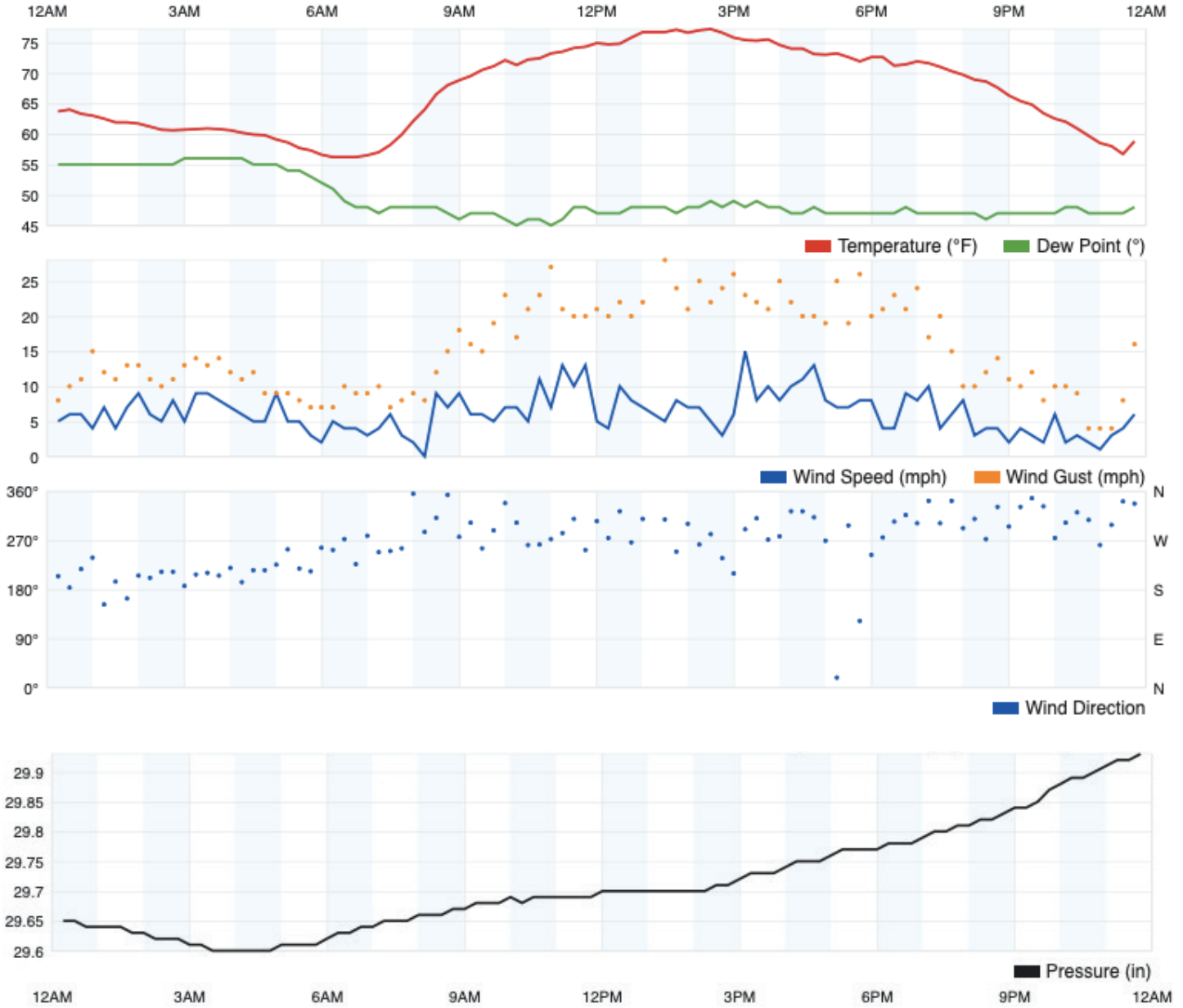
Day shift
and night
shift
assemblers!



Groton Daily Independent

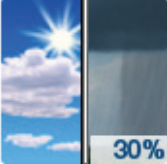
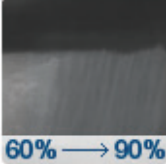
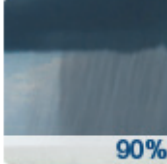


Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 7 of 74


Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs




Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 8 of 74

Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
Mostly Sunny then Chance Showers	Showers Likely then Showers	Showers and Patchy Fog	Slight Chance Showers	Patchy Frost then Mostly Sunny
High: 60 °F	Low: 42 °F	High: 47 °F	Low: 37 °F	High: 61 °F



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



weather.gov/abr

Highs in the low to mid 60s

Light Showers west of the Missouri River, spreading across the rest of the area this afternoon, and increasing in coverage overnight

Light rain showers will be moving into the counties west of the Missouri River this morning, and spread across much of eastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota later this afternoon. Expect showers to increase in coverage and intensity overnight into Thursday morning. A few thunderstorms are expected, mainly over central South Dakota. Patchy fog will develop overnight and linger into Thursday morning.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 9 of 74

Today in Weather History

May 26, 1983: Unofficial rainfall of up to 5 inches caused widespread flooding of basements and streets in and near Aberdeen. Only 1.72 inches of rain was reported at the Aberdeen airport.

May 26, 1985: Hail of unknown diameter was five inches deep, 1 mile north of Rosholt. Some hail remained on the ground until the following morning.

May 26, 1992: A widespread frost and hard freeze hit most of South Dakota except portions of the south-east causing up to \$14 million in potential crop losses to growing corn, soybeans, wheat, and other crops. Some low temperatures include; 23 degrees 12 miles SSW of Harrold; 26 at one mile west of Highmore and 23 north of Highmore; 27 in Kennebec; and 28 degrees 1 NW of Faulkton and at Redfield.

1771: Thomas Jefferson recorded the greatest flood ever known in Virginia. The great Virginia flood occurred as torrential rains in the mountains brought all rivers in the state to record high levels.

1917: A major tornadic thunderstorm took a 293-mile track across parts of central Illinois and Indiana. Once believed to be a single tornado, the later study indicated it was likely at least eight separate tornadoes. The first touchdown was about 50 miles south-southeast of Quincy, Illinois. The tornadic storm tracked due east, before beginning a northeast curve near Charleston; separate tornadic storms then curved southeast from Charleston. The towns of Mattoon and Charleston bore the brunt of the tornado. Damage from this severe tornado in Mattoon was about 2.5 blocks wide and 2.5 miles long, with over 700 houses destroyed, while the Charleston portion was 600 yards wide and 1.5 miles long, with 220 homes damaged. Dozens of farms were hit along the path, and at least three farm homes were swept away between Manhattan and Monee. Another estimated F4 tornado touched down 6 miles south of Crown Point and devastated a dozen farms. A total of 7 people died, and 120 were injured. 53 people were killed in Mattoon, and 38 were killed in Charleston. Overall, 101 people in Illinois were killed during the tornado outbreak, with 638 injured.

2003: A BMI Airbus bound for Cyprus from Manchester, England encountered a violent thunderstorm over Germany. The plane bounced and twisted violently as it ran into severe turbulence with huge hailstones pounding the exterior. A football-sized hole was punched in the aircraft's surface. None of the 213 passengers or eight crew members was seriously hurt.

2009: Northeast of Anchorage, Alaska, two hikers climbed a ridge to see a developing storm better. Lightning knocked the couple unconscious. Regaining consciousness, they called emergency services as the woman was unable to walk. The man's shoes looked as though they had melted.

1984 - Thunderstorms during the late evening and early morning hours produced 6 to 13 inches of rain at Tulsa OK in six hours (8.63 inches at the airport). Flooding claimed fourteen lives and caused 90 million dollars property damage. 4600 cars, 743 houses, and 387 apartments were destroyed or severely damage in the flood. (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in southwest Iowa spawned five tornadoes and produced up to ten inches of rain. Seven inches of rain at Red Oak forced evacuation of nearly 100 persons from the town. Record flooding took place in southwest Iowa the last twelve days of May as up to 17 inches of rain drenched the area. Total damage to crops and property was estimated at 16 million dollars. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - There was "frost on the roses" in the Upper Ohio Valley and the Central Appalachian Mountain Region. Thirteen cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Youngstown OH with a reading of 30 degrees. Evening thunderstorms in North Dakota produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Jamestown. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms in produced large hail in eastern Oklahoma during the pre-dawn hours, and again during the evening and night. Hail two inches in diameter was reported near Prague, and thunderstorm winds gusted to 70 mph near Kenefic. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Colorado to western Arkansas and north-eastern Texas. Severe thunderstorms spawned three tornadoes, and there were eighty-eight reports of large hail or damaging winnds. Evening thunderstorms over central Oklahoma spawned strong tornadoes east of Hinton and east of Binger, produced hail three inches in diameter at Minco, and produced wind gusts to 85 mph at Blanchard. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

Groton Daily Independent

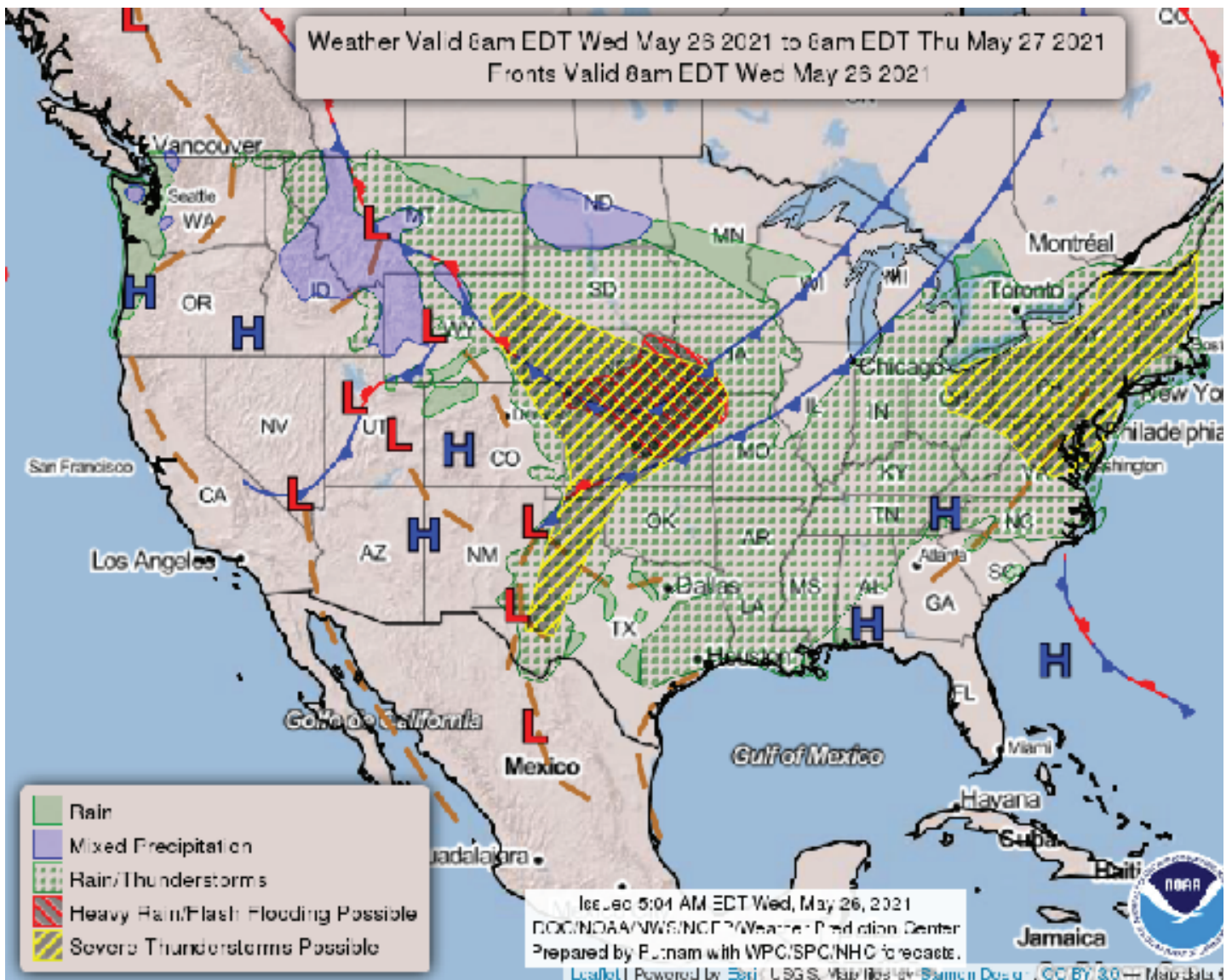
Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 10 of 74

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 77 °F at 2:08 PM
Low Temp: 56 °F at 6:24 AM
Wind: 30 mph at 2:16 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 97° in 2018
Record Low: 30° in 1992
Average High: 74°F
Average Low: 49°F
Average Precip in May.: 2.70
Precip to date in May.: 0.31
Average Precip to date: 6.67
Precip Year to Date: 3.08
Sunset Tonight: 9:10 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:52 a.m.





FACING OUR FEARS

Fear is a gift from God. It is one of God's greatest gifts. It alerts us to dangers that may be lurking in dark alleys. It awakens us at night when we hear strange sounds that make no sense. It causes us to take precautions to avoid accidents. It summons our senses when things are out of "the ordinary." It is God's "early warning system" that notifies us that something unusual or unique is about to happen. Fear is necessary for us to survive.

Some fears are helpful, some are harmful. Dr. Samuel Johnson, for example, would never step into a room with his left foot. He sincerely believed that something terrible would happen to him in that room if he "stuck" his left foot in first. Julius Caesar was terrified by the sound of thunder and would hide. Even Peter the Great, with all his power, cried out in fear when he was forced to cross a bridge. Those, we might say, are abnormal fears.

David also had his fears. His friends forsook him, his confidants betrayed him, and his family was not loyal to him. But he overcame all his fears by his faith in the faithfulness of God. "When I am afraid," he said, "I will trust in You – In my God, whose Word I praise." He was not fear free. He was faith focused.

When doubts surfaced and threats surrounded him, when times were uncertain and days filled with dangers, he always turned to God in faith knowing from the past faithfulness of God that He always had His hands over him and His arms around him.

Prayer: Remove our unfounded fears, Father. May we learn to trust in You as our protector and defender. May we recognize Your faithfulness in the past as a fact that You are with us now! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: When I am afraid I will trust in You – In my God, whose Word I praise. Psalm 56:3-4a

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 12 of 74

2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
- 03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS
- 06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.
- 06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
- 06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament
- 06/19/2021 Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
- 06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament
- 06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament
- 07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
- 07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
- 08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
- 09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
- 12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

News from the Associated Press

Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined
Yankton Press & Dakotan. May 24, 2021.
Editorial: YSD Makes It To The Finish Line

When the Yankton School District ended its 2020-2021 school year last Thursday afternoon, it felt like a major milestone. And perhaps it was.

The district made it through nine months of the COVID-19 pandemic — including what has proven so far to be the worst two months of the crisis last fall — without having to close down the schools and shift to online learning. Given that the pandemic wiped out the entire fourth quarter of the last school year and online learning remained an option for students for the 2020-21 term, making it to the finish line was really an accomplishment.

This was noted in a special school board meeting held at noon last Thursday to discuss, among other things, the district's masking policy. This also happened to be the last day of school, and board Chairperson Sarah Carda mentioned that the district had made it that far with only a couple of hours to go before classes dismissed for the summer. That remark seemed telling, reflecting the touch-and-go aspect of the school's scheduling at times this past year.

From the outside looking in, it appears the school district did a good job in dealing with the pandemic. In particular, the masking mandate that was in place for school facilities likely played a huge factor in seeing the district through the year relatively unscathed. Also, the voucher system for activities, which was a point of contention with some people at times, seemed to do what it was designed to do.

The district's decision last week to alter the masking policy for indoors during the summer months aligns it with the recent change in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. School facilities are still busy places in the summer months, and those who are vaccinated will have the freedom to go without masking.

How it works this summer will tell the school board a lot about how it will proceed in the fall. Being vaccinated will make a big difference, and hopefully, people are up front about it and understand its importance.

But for this moment, the school year is done and Yankton made it through. There were lessons learned with every step of this unprecedented situation, and they should serve the district well in the future.

END

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined
PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:

Mega Millions

14-21-31-34-54, Mega Ball: 11, Megaplier: 3

(fourteen, twenty-one, thirty-one, thirty-four, fifty-four; Mega Ball: eleven; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$20 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$236 million

Noem's new PAC paves way to fundraise, spread influence

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem has formed a federal political action committee, indicating her growing fundraising prowess and national ambitions.

The Republican has insisted she is focused on getting reelected as governor next year, but her nationwide

fundraising network has fueled speculation she could be eyeing a 2024 presidential bid. Last week, her campaign registered a PAC called Noem Victory Fund with the Federal Elections Commission. The move means the PAC can distribute funds into elections beyond South Dakota as well as create a pot of money that could be put into a future campaign for federal office, campaign finance experts said.

Given Noem's ascendant profile among conservatives, the federal PAC registration is "a pretty strong signal that she probably has national aspirations," Edwin Bender, the head of The National Institute on Money in State Politics, said.

The PAC's registration document says it's intended to collect fundraising contributions for a host of political organizations, including the reelection campaigns for Noem and Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden, the South Dakota GOP, a new state PAC created by Noem's campaign chairman and a separate federal PAC linked to Noem that has remained mostly dormant while she has been governor.

The treasurer for the PAC, Kevin Broghamer, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The governor has already benefitted from frequent trips to attend fundraisers across the country, raising nearly \$1 million in the last quarter of 2020. Roughly 80% of donors listed on the most recent report for her gubernatorial campaign were from outside South Dakota.

Andrew Mayersohn, a researcher with the Center for Responsive Politics, noted that former Republican governors such as Sen. Mitt Romney and Mike Huckabee, have registered federal PACs to cast their influence beyond their home states.

Noem pushes to bar 'critical race theory' from universities

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's public universities shouldn't be teaching certain concepts of race and racism, Gov. Kristi Noem said Tuesday, in line with a nationwide GOP movement to keep critical race theory out of classrooms.

In a letter to the Board of Regents that oversees the state's six public universities, the Republican governor targeted critical race theory and the Pulitzer Prize-winning "1619 Project," describing them as misleading "students into believing the country is evil or was founded upon evil."

Noem's letter — released on the anniversary of George Floyd's death in Minneapolis — comes amid a national reckoning on the influence of race and racism on policing and other realms of American life.

Conservatives across the country have decried critical race theory as an attempt to pit racial groups against each other and teach that certain groups are responsible for the injustices of the past. Others say the theory is simply a way to look at how race and racism have undoubtedly shaped the nation. The New York Times' 1619 project focuses on the legacy of slavery throughout the nation's founding and history.

"It is critical that our classrooms remain a place of learning, not indoctrination," Noem said in the letter.

However, David Burrow, the Chair of the History Department at the University of South Dakota, said the current conservative ire aimed at critical race theory is "searching for a solution to a problem that doesn't really exist." The goal of the history department is teaching students to investigate historical records to form their own interpretations, he said, not indoctrinating them into a particular view.

It's important within academia to "be open to non-dominant perspectives — experiences of people who are not in the mainstream," he said.

The Board of Regents has a policy of protecting freedom of expression as "the right to discuss and present scholarly opinions and conclusions on all matters both in and outside the classroom without Board or institutional discipline or restraint."

But Noem called for the Board to set a policy "to preserve honest, patriotic education," defining that as cultivating "both a profound love of our country and a realistic picture of its virtues and challenges."

That kind of rhetoric is worrisome to faculty members, Burrow said, because defining what is taught in classrooms could result in restrictions being placed on academic freedom.

Noem did not cite specific instances of anything currently being taught that she found objectionable. But she asked the Board of Regents to look into whether state funds were being used for such teachings on

race and whether diversity offices had gone beyond the bounds of “their original mission.”

The Board of Regents did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Conservative lawmakers have worked in recent years to gain more control of the state’s public universities and rein in what they see as a stifling of conservative thought on university campuses. The Board of Regents, along with the Legislature, is currently reviewing the administrative structure of the universities. A report on a possible restructuring is due in November.

Burrow said he did not anticipate any immediate changes to how history and race are taught at universities, casting Noem’s letter as the latest episode in a long tradition of politicians attacking academia to score points with their base.

“She seems to envision a version where the United States is always right,” he said. “That’s just not what history demonstrates.”

Ex-Salvation Army leader pleads not guilty to child porn

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A former leader of the Salvation Army in the Black Hills has pleaded not guilty to federal charges of receiving and possessing child pornography.

Investigators seized 46 electronic items during a search this month at the Salvation Army’s Black Hills Camp, officials said. The Salvation Army says it has fired Moreno and is cooperating with the investigation.

Moreno was a captain and the Black Hills Area coordinator and lived at the camp in Rapid City.

The federal indictment comes after Moreno was charged May 11 by Pennington County prosecutors with one count of possessing, creating or distributing child pornography, the Rapid City Journal reported.

He was arrested after law enforcement executed a search warrant at the camp on May 13 and found child pornography on an account tied to Moreno, the Pennington County Sheriff’s Office said.

Moreno is scheduled for a preliminary hearing on the state charge May 28. He’s being held at the Pennington County Jail without the chance to post bond on his state charge.

A federal magistrate judge also ordered that Moreno be detained until a formal detention hearing is held.

Belarusian leader defends diversion of flight that drew fury

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Belarus’ authoritarian president defended Wednesday his decision to tell a passenger jet to land in his country and accused European leaders of waging a “hybrid war” to “strangle” his nation by ordering up new sanctions for diverting the flight and arresting an opposition journalist who was aboard.

Speaking before lawmakers and top officials, President Alexander Lukashenko maintained his contention that there was a bomb threat against the Ryanair flight and called it an “absolute lie” that a fighter jet he scrambled was forcing the passenger plane to land in Minsk. The carrier has said its crew was instructed to land. The plane was searched once on the ground, and no bomb was found — but Raman Pratasevich, a 26-year-old journalist and activist, and his Russian girlfriend were detained.

“I acted in a lawful way, protecting people in line with international rules,” said 66-year-old Lukashenko, who has ruled the ex-Soviet nation with an iron fist for more than a quarter-century, relentlessly stifling dissent.

He doubled down on the idea that there was a grave security risk, saying the plane was flying not far away from the Astravets nuclear power plant and adding that he ordered air defense systems on high alert. “I had to protect people, I was thinking about the country’s security,” he said.

But European Union leaders have denounced the move to divert the plane — which was traveling between two EU countries and being operated by an airline based in a third — as an act of piracy. They quickly agreed to ban Belarusian airlines from using the airspace and airports of the 27-nation bloc and urged European airlines to avoid Belarus’ airspace. They agreed to draft more sanctions on officials linked to the diversion and ones targeting businesses that are the main cash earners for Lukashenko’s regime.

Lukashenko derided that response.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 16 of 74

"Our ill-wishers outside and inside the country have changed their methods of attacking the state," Lukashenko said. "That's why they switched from organizing riots to trying to strangle us."

He added: "It's no longer just an information war, it's a modern hybrid war and we need to do everything to prevent it from spilling into a hot conflict."

Lukashenko has faced unprecedented pressure at home with months of protests triggered by his re-election to a sixth term in an August 2020 vote that the opposition rejected as rigged. But he has only doubled down on repression, and more than 35,000 people have been arrested since the protests began, with thousands beaten.

Pratasevich, who left Belarus in 2019, has become a top foe of Lukashenko with a popular messaging app he ran playing a key role in helping organize the huge protests. After his detention, the journalist was seen in a brief video clip on Belarusian state television late Monday, speaking rapidly to say that he was confessing to some of the charges authorities have leveled against him. A U.N. official expressed concern for his welfare, saying his appearance likely was not voluntary and there seemed to be bruising to his face.

On Wednesday, Lukashenko threatened that Belarus would retaliate against the EU by weakening its border controls halting Western-bound illegal migration and drug trafficking.

"We were stopping migrants and drugs — now you will catch them and eat them yourself," he said.

Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko also warned that the country could halt Western cargo shipments via Belarus.

"Our measures would be quite painful for the countries that have taken an openly hostile stance — from import bans to restrictions on transit," he said. "Still, we hope that those who rush to pass the point of no return to sober up and think twice before entering a slippery path of economic war in which there will be no winners."

Pratasevich had been charged in absentia with staging mass riots and fanning social hatred. Those carry a prison sentence of up to 15 years, and some fear Pratasevich could face more serious charges, including some that carry the death penalty.

Lukashenko alleged Wednesday that Pratasevich and his associates were working in cahoots with foreign spy agencies to "organize a massacre and a bloody rebellion in Belarus."

___ Associated Press writer Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report.

GOP senators ready \$1T infrastructure counteroffer to Biden

By LISA MASCARO and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans revived negotiations over President Joe Biden's sweeping investment plan, preparing a \$1 trillion infrastructure proposal that would be funded with COVID-19 relief money as a counteroffer to the White House ahead of a Memorial Day deadline toward a bipartisan deal.

The Republicans said Tuesday they would disclose details of the new offer by Thursday, sounding upbeat after both sides had panned other offers.

At the White House, press secretary Jen Psaki declined to address the new plan but said: "We expect this week to be a week of progress."

Talks over the infrastructure investment are at a crossroads as Biden reaches for a top legislative priority. The White House is assessing whether the president can strike a bipartisan deal with Republicans on his American Jobs Plan or whether he will try to go it alone with Democrats if no progress is made in the days ahead.

Yet the administration and the GOP senators remain far apart over the size and scope of the investment needed to reboot the nation's roads, bridges and broadband — but also, as Biden sees it, the child care centers and green energy investments needed for a 21st-century economy. They also can't agree on how to pay for it.

Biden had dropped his \$2.3 trillion opening bid to \$1.7 trillion, and Republicans had nudged their initial \$568 billion offer up by about \$50 billion late last week, but talks teetered as both sides complained the movement was insufficient.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 17 of 74

The Republicans have uniformly rejected Biden's plan to pay for the investments by raising the corporate tax rate, from 21% to 28%. Instead, the GOP senators want to shift unspent COVID-19 relief funds to infrastructure, which may be a nonstarter for Democrats. Republicans also want to rely on gas taxes, tolls and other fees charged to drivers to pay for the highways and other infrastructure.

The Republicans said their new proposal would be aligned with what they discussed with Biden in their first Oval Office meeting almost two weeks ago.

"We are anxious to have a bipartisan agreement," said Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., who is leading the group of GOP negotiators.

A GOP aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private talks said the price tag would be \$1 trillion over eight years, paid for by tapping funds that have been allocated as part of COVID-19 relief but not yet spent. The aide said about \$700 billion remains in unspent virus aid.

Psaki declined to comment on the forthcoming GOP proposal, but Democrats on Capitol Hill were quick to rebuff dipping into coronavirus relief funds, particularly money that had been sent to the states and local governments that now seems less urgent as some jurisdictions reported better-than-expected balance sheets.

The White House is expecting the Republican counteroffer by Thursday and doesn't want to prejudge what's in there. But a GOP plan to tap into rescue funds, aides believe, doesn't work because much of that money has already been exhausted, and it could also diminish the COVID-19 response.

"My view is that we gave that to the cities and states and counties with the understanding that it may take a little time for them to spend it," said Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., a longtime congressional budget expert. "I think it'd be a big mistake to try to claw that back."

As talks hit a stalemate late last week, it's unclear if this latest GOP offer will be enough to put negotiations back on track.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, who tapped Capito to lead the GOP effort, gave a nod to the latest offer, saying the idea of repurposing the COVID-19 funds was "good advice" from Larry Summers, a Harvard professor and Clinton-era treasury secretary. Summers suggested as much in a recent op-ed as some economists warn of rising inflation with the government spending.

But Republicans and the White House are eyeing each other warily in a high-stakes negotiation with far-reaching political ramifications whether they succeed or fail. "We are now very far apart," said Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming, a member of GOP leadership.

The Republican senators and aides have made no secret of their displeasure with the White House staff in this and other negotiations.

Publicly and privately, the Republicans say that while Biden appears willing to negotiate with the senators, his staff often changes course. They point to a similar dynamic during coronavirus aid talks when Biden seemed to agree with a group of GOP senators, only to have staff behind him shaking their heads no.

The Republicans are eager to publicly disclose Biden's comments to them as they make the case for their new offer ahead of the Memorial Day deadline.

Among Democrats, it's not lost on them that McConnell has said repeatedly that "100% of my focus" is on stopping Biden's agenda.

Adding to the mix, a bipartisan group that includes Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, is quietly working on other proposals, as a "backup," he said.

"This is going to feel like a tightrope walk all the way until it gets to Biden's desk," said Jim Kessler, executive vice president of Third Way, a centrist think tank.

The administration is signaling that it's important not just whether Biden can push his infrastructure and other proposals into law, but also how he does it. By this reasoning, voters — and some moderate Democratic lawmakers — are more likely to be on board if Biden at least tries for bipartisanship.

The West Wing believes its bargaining position is strong. Aides point to Biden's high poll numbers and the popularity of his proposals, all while believing that they have the option of muscling the infrastructure plan to passage under special budget reconciliation rules that require only a party-line vote.

But there is a growing sense of urgency within the White House and among Democrats. After a burst of legislative accomplishments, including the COVID-19 relief bill, the pace has slowed dramatically. And the future may hinge on a few select senators.

Psaki insisted no decisions had been made on whether the administration will go it alone as it awaits a counteroffer from Republicans. "We're not quite there yet," she said.

Blinken arrives in Egypt to shore up Gaza cease-fire efforts

By SAMY MAGDY and JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Egypt on Wednesday as he pressed ahead with a diplomatic mission aimed at shoring up a cease-fire that ended an 11-day war between Israel and the Gaza Strip's ruling Hamas militant group.

Blinken landed in Cairo a day after holding intensive talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. In Egypt, he was meeting with President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi and other top officials, before traveling to Jordan to meet with King Abdullah II.

Blinken has vowed to "rally international support" to rebuild the destruction in hard-hit Gaza while promising to make sure that none of the aid destined for the territory reaches Hamas. He is instead trying to bolster Hamas' rival, the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority.

Blinken described Egypt and Jordan as central players in trying to bring calm to the region. Both countries are key U.S. allies that have peace agreements with Israel and frequently serve as mediators between Israel and the Palestinians.

"Egypt played a critical role in helping to broker the cease-fire and Jordan has long been a voice for peace and stability in the region," he told reporters late Tuesday.

Blinken has set modest goals for the trip, his first official visit to the Middle East as secretary of state. During talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders on Tuesday, he made clear that the U.S. has no immediate plans to pursue peace talks between the sides, though he expressed hope for creating a "better environment" that might lead to negotiations.

That could begin with the Gaza reconstruction effort. The 11-day war killed more than 250 people, mostly Palestinians, and caused heavy destruction in the impoverished coastal territory. Preliminary estimates have put the damage in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Ahmed Aboul Gheit, secretary-general of the Arab League, said U.S. commitment is critical for the region. Before the Gaza war, the Biden administration had kept its distance, preferring to focus on higher foreign policy priorities like China and Iran.

"The two parties of the conflict are unable, on their own, to sit on a negotiating table, and the gap between them has widened more than ever," Aboul Gheit, a former Egyptian foreign minister, wrote in the Saudi daily Asharq Al-Awsat. "In the absence of an effective role for the U.S., we should expect nothing but more cycles of violence and bloodshed of innocent people."

One of the U.S. goals is to ensure that any assistance be kept out of the hands of Hamas, which opposes Israel's right to exist and which Israel and the U.S. consider a terrorist group.

In Gaza, Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar told journalists Wednesday that the group welcomed international reconstruction aid, as long as it did not come from Israel. He promised that "not one penny" would go to Hamas or its military wing.

But he also lashed out at Blinken for trying to strengthen the Palestinian Authority at Hamas' expense. "They are trying to fuel Palestinian division," Sinwar said.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab was in Israel on Wednesday to build on the momentum of Blinken's visit.

Echoing Blinken's message, Raab said the U.K. supported Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas rocket fire and would seek to prevent aid money from reaching Hamas. But he also expressed hope that cease-fire efforts would lead to a broader regional peace effort.

"We want to support Israel but we also want the Palestinians to find a track towards an enduring peace,"

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 19 of 74

he said.

Blinken said the U.S. is trying to bolster the rival government of President Mahmoud Abbas, whose forces were ousted from Gaza by Hamas in 2007. Abbas' Palestinian Authority now administers autonomous areas in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Abbas. He has been largely sidelined by recent events, is deeply unpopular at home and has little influence in Gaza.

Abbas hopes to establish an independent state in all of the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem — areas captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war.

In a gesture to the Palestinians, Blinken on Tuesday announced plans to reopen the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem — an office that historically handled diplomatic outreach to the Palestinians.

President Donald Trump downgraded the consulate and placed its operations under his ambassador to Israel when he moved the American Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv in 2018. The Jerusalem move infuriated the Palestinians, who claim Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem as their capital, and prompted them to sever most ties with the U.S.

Blinken also announced nearly \$40 million in additional aid to the Palestinians. In all, the Biden administration has pledged some \$360 million to the Palestinians, restoring badly needed aid that the Trump administration had cut off.

At a meeting with Abbas in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Blinken made clear on Tuesday that Biden will pursue a more even-handed approach than Trump, who sided overwhelmingly with Israel in its dealings with the Palestinians.

The truce that ended the Gaza war on Friday has so far held, but it did not address any of the deeper issues plaguing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"We know that to prevent a return to violence, we have to use the space created to address a larger set of underlying issues and challenges," Blinken said after meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Those challenges include a hawkish Israeli leadership that seems unwilling to make major concessions, Palestinian divisions, years of mistrust and deeply rooted tensions surrounding Jerusalem and its holy sites.

The war was triggered by weeks of clashes in Jerusalem between Israeli police and Palestinian protesters in and around the Al-Aqsa Mosque, built on a hilltop compound revered by Jews and Muslims that has seen several outbreaks of Israeli-Palestinian violence over the years. The protests were directed at Israel's policing of the area during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers.

The truce remains tenuous since tensions are still high in Jerusalem and the fate of the Palestinian families is not yet resolved.

In his remarks after his meeting with Blinken, Netanyahu hardly mentioned the Palestinians, warning of a "very powerful" response if Hamas breaks the cease-fire.

Blinken repeatedly affirmed what he said was Israel's right to defend itself and said the U.S. would assist Israel in replenishing its Iron Dome rocket-interception system.

But he also called on leaders of all sides to chart a "better course" in hopes of laying the groundwork for peace talks aimed at establishing an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. The Biden administration, like most of the international community, believes the "two-state solution" is the only way to resolve the conflict.

Blinken expressed hope that a successful international approach in Gaza would be an important first step and could "undermine" Hamas' grip on power.

Ex-Johnson aide says UK government failed public over COVID

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's former chief aide said Wednesday that the government "failed" the British people and "fell disastrously short" in handling the coronavirus pandemic.

Dominic Cummings made a blistering attack on the government he once served, telling lawmakers investigating Britain's pandemic response that ministers and officials went on vacation as the virus swept toward

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 20 of 74

the U.K. in early 2020 and describing scenes of chaos in government as "like an out-of-control movie."

He said the government "was not operating on a war footing on this in February in any way, shape or form. Lots of people were literally skiing."

Cummings said Johnson initially regarded the pandemic as "just a scare story. He described it as the new swine flu,"

"The truth is that senior ministers, senior officials, senior advisers like me, disastrously short of the standards that the public has a right to expect of its government in a crisis like this," Cummings said.

"When the public needed us most, the government failed," he said, adding that people "died unnecessarily" as a result.

The U.K. has recorded almost 128,000 coronavirus deaths, the highest toll in Europe. Lockdowns shut down most of the economy, and the country experienced one of the world's deepest recessions

A mass vaccination campaign that started in December has brought infections and fatalities down sharply, but the government acknowledges it will have to answer serious questions about its handling of the virus at a future public inquiry.

Cummings' testimony to Parliament's science and health committees gave a taste of what might come out. Parliamentary committee sessions are often dry affairs, but Cummings' was broadcast live on television.

He delivered excoriating allegations of bad decisions and false assumptions within government in early 2020, saying "the whole thing just seemed like an out-of-control movie."

It was "like a scene from 'Independence Day' with Jeff Goldblum saying 'The aliens are here and your whole plan is broken,'" Cummings said.

Cummings is a self-styled political disruptor who has long expressed contempt for the civil service, many politicians and much of the media. One of the architects of the successful campaign to take Britain out of the European Union, Cummings was appointed a top adviser when Johnson became prime minister in 2019.

Cummings was thrust from the shadows into the spotlight in May 2020, when newspapers revealed he had driven 250 miles (400 kilometers) across the country after contracting COVID-19, despite a nationwide stay-at-home order. His defense — that he was seeking childcare help from relatives in case he got sick — rang hollow to many Britons who had made sacrifices and endured isolation to follow the rules.

Johnson resisted calls to fire Cummings for flouting rules the government had imposed on the rest of the country. He left his job in November amid a power struggle inside the prime minister's office.

In recent days, Cummings has used Twitter to direct a torrent of criticism at his former employer, accusing Johnson of overseeing a chaotic government whose failure to act quickly against the coronavirus caused thousands of unnecessary deaths.

Cummings accuses the government of sticking with a policy of "herd immunity" — allowing the virus to spread through the population while protecting the most vulnerable — until it was too late to prevent draconian lockdowns and many deaths.

He said the government believed -- wrongly, it turned out -- that the British public would never accept strict lockdown measures, and that locking down would simply lead to a later, steeper peak in deaths.

The government denies that "herd immunity" was ever its policy, and critics accuse Cummings of glossing over the fact that he was one of the most powerful people in the government when key decisions were being made.

"I'll leave others to determine how reliable a witness to all this he is," Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said. "He was there at the time — what his motives would be I will leave to others."

Cummings said he began "ringing alarm bells" in early March 2020, and apologized for not doing more to change the government's strategy.

"I'm terribly sorry that I didn't do it earlier," he said.

He reflected that "it was completely crazy that I should have been in such a senior position."

Cyclone lashes India, Bangladesh after 1.1M evacuated

By ASHOK SHARMA and JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 21 of 74

NEW DELHI (AP) — Heavy rain and a high tide lashed parts of eastern India and neighboring Bangladesh as a cyclone pushed ashore Wednesday in an area where more than 1.1 million people have evacuated during a devastating coronavirus surge.

Cyclone Yaas already had caused two deaths and damaged homes as heavy rains pounded Odisha and West Bengal states before the storm began making landfall in the late morning.

The “very severe cyclonic storm” is packing sustained winds of 130-140 kilometers (up to 87 miles) per hour and gusts up to 155 kph (97 mph), the India Meteorological Department said. With the storm now almost fully on land, winds are expected to weaken by Wednesday evening.

In Bangladesh, thousands of people in 200 villages were marooned as their homes, shops and farms were flooded by tidal surges.

In southern Patuakhali district, more than 20 villages in Rangabali went underwater after two river embankments were washed away, said Mashfaqr Rahman, the area’s top administrator. He said at least 15,000 people had taken refuge in cyclone shelters.

In India, television images showed knee-deep water flooding the beachfront and other areas of Digha, a resort town in West Bengal. Wind gusts whipped palm trees back and forth, and overflowing water breached several river banks.

West Bengal state’s top elected official, Mamata Banerjee, told reporters that 20,000 mud huts and temporary shelters for the poor have been damaged along the coast.

On Tuesday, a tornado snapped electricity lines that electrocuted two people and damaged 40 houses, Banerjee said.

More than 17 centimeters (6.5 inches) of rain fell in Chandabali and Paradip regions of Odisha state since Tuesday, the meteorological department said. Tidal waves of up to 4 meters (13 feet) were forecast.

Kolkata and Bhubaneshwar airports were shut and train services canceled. Fishing trawlers and boats were told to take shelter.

The cyclone, coming amid a coronavirus surge, complicates India’s efforts to deal with both after another storm, Cyclone Tauktae, hit India’s west coast last week and killed more than 140 people.

Odisha’s chief minister, Naveen Patnaik, appealed to people in shelters to wear double masks and maintain social distancing. “We have to face both the challenges simultaneously,” Patnaik said.

Thousands of emergency personnel have been deployed to help with evacuations and rescue operations, said S.N. Pradhan, director of India’s National Disaster Response Force. The air force and navy were also on standby.

A year ago, the most powerful cyclone in more than a decade hit eastern India and killed nearly 100 people.

“We haven’t been able to fix the damage to our home from the last cyclone. Now another cyclone is coming, how will we stay here?” said Samitri, who uses only one name.

Some of the deadliest tropical cyclones on record have occurred in the Bay of Bengal. A 1999 super cyclone killed around 10,000 people and devastated large parts of Odisha. Due to improved forecasts and better relief coordination, the death toll from Cyclone Phailin, an equally intense storm in 2013, was less than 50, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

American on trial in Japan gets support from ex-boss Ghosn

By YURI KAGEYAMA and JEFFREY SCHAEFFER Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn has backed his former colleague American lawyer Greg Kelly’s insistence he is innocent of any wrongdoing.

Ghosn said in an interview with The Associated Press in Beirut, Lebanon, on Tuesday that Kelly, a former Nissan executive vice president, had sought only legal methods to arrange post-retirement compensation for his boss.

Kelly was arrested at the same time as Ghosn in Tokyo in November 2018 and is charged with falsifying

securities reports. If convicted, he faces up to 15 years in prison. Ghosn fled Japan in late 2019.

Testimony and documents presented at Kelly's trial have shown that he sought ways to beef up compensation for Ghosn after he agreed to a pay cut at Nissan in 2010, when Japan began requiring disclosures of high executive pay. Ghosn insisted Tuesday that no additional compensation agreements were approved by the board.

"Obviously he (Kelly) is innocent," Ghosn said.

"Greg is probably the person, from all the teams I had, one of the most professional. Highest integrity person I know. That's one of the reasons I trusted him," Ghosn said.

At his trial, which began in September, Kelly has answered questions from his chief defense lawyer Yoichi Kitamura about discussions and documents related to Ghosn's income.

Kelly has stressed his role was to ensure payments to Ghosn were legal.

Ghosn backed that view in the AP interview. That is significant because Ghosn's voice has been absent in Kelly's trial, though the defense team has had prosecutors' records of their interrogations of Ghosn read aloud in the courtroom, a rare procedure in a Japanese trial.

"Nothing was decided. It was only brainstorming. And frankly to the end, nothing was decided," Ghosn said in the interview this week.

"There was nothing illegal in this. This is the object of the trial of Greg Kelly."

Ghosn, a superstar executive at Nissan Motor Co. for two decades, voluntarily took a pay cut of about 1 billion yen (\$10 million) per year, roughly halving his income beginning in 2010.

Kelly has emphasized that one of the main aims of the discussions about Ghosn's compensation was to ensure he would not leave Nissan for a rival company. At the time of his arrest, Ghosn was chairman of the Nissan-Renault-Mitsubishi alliance.

In the interview with AP, Ghosn said he had been offered a job at General Motors Co. but was reluctant to leave Nissan, and Japan, after the blows from the global financial crisis and then triple disasters of a huge earthquake, a tsunami and nuclear meltdowns in March 2011.

Ghosn said GM turned down his proposal that it join the Nissan-Renault alliance.

In a hearing in Tokyo District Court on Wednesday, Kelly said that post-retirement payments were common at Nissan and often involved a "non-compete" clause barring the employee from working for a rival. In the case of Nissan North America that was a lifetime requirement.

Such agreements are rare in Japan, however, because of the loyalty engendered by the country's "lifetime employment system," he said.

Ghosn and Kelly were the only Nissan officials arrested in the case.

Hiroto Saikawa, Nissan chief executive from 2017 until his 2019 resignation, was not charged, although his signature is on the same documents on Ghosn's post-retirement pay along with Kelly's.

"Greg Kelly is facing trial, while Saikawa is free. You know, what's the big difference?" Ghosn told the AP.

5 key takeaways from AP's interview with Carlos Ghosn

The Associated Press undefined

In a wide-ranging interview with The Associated Press, former star auto executive Carlos Ghosn shared his frustrations surrounding his stunning downfall and delved into his legal troubles in Japan, France and the Netherlands, his brazen escape from Japan and his new life trapped in Lebanon.

Here are five key takeaways from the encounter:

CLEARING HIS NAME

Ghosn says he is ready to be questioned by French investigative judges in Beirut next week. He is anxious to tell his side of the story and sees it as an opportunity to go on the record for the first time since his arrest in November 2018. The investigators intend to question him about payments he made as the head of Renault SA and other probes of alleged financial misconduct, and could hand him preliminary charges. The voluntary meetings are expected to take place at the Justice Palace in Beirut over a period of one week. Ghosn says he has prepared thoroughly with his lawyers and intends to submit supporting documents.

"COLLATERAL DAMAGE"

In the interview, Ghosn strongly defended former Nissan executive Greg Kelly, who was arrested with him and is now standing trial in Japan on charges of under-reporting Ghosn's compensation. He described him, as well as two Americans who allegedly helped him escape and are now in a Japanese jail awaiting trial, as "collateral damage" in what he insists was an organized plot against him. Ghosn said he was not responsible for that. Kelly is "obviously innocent," Ghosn said.

DUTCH DEFEAT

Ghosn said he will appeal a Dutch court's decision ordering him to repay nearly 5 million euros (\$6 million) in salary he received from an Amsterdam-based joint venture between Nissan and Mitsubishi Motors Corp. in 2018. The ruling came in a case in which Ghosn sought to have his 2018 sacking from Nissan-Mitsubishi B.V. overturned and demanded 15 million euros (\$16.5 million) in compensation. Ghosn said he was shocked by the court's judgment which he said was made on a technicality. "Obviously it's an upset," Ghosn said.

THE ESCAPE

Ghosn recalled details of his Hollywood-style dramatic escape in late 2019 from Japan to Lebanon. He told the AP how the details of the plan were hatched, including choosing to execute it in December less people were likely to recognize him under a hat and heavy clothes and when a lot of people would be travelling in and out. "It was very bold, but because it was bold, I thought it may be successful," he said. Ghosn refused to confirm that he escaped from Japan in a musical instrument box, saying he didn't want to say anything that could be used against people accused of assisting in his escape.

LIFE IN LEBANON

Ghosn said he is adapting to the reality of life in Lebanon, where he grew up and is regarded as a hero, and says he feels safe and "free" here. He says he spends his days poring over documents with lawyers preparing legal defense, teaching at a university, helping start-ups and working on his books and documentaries. It is a slower pace than the one he was used to, with the advantage of having time to enjoy coffee with his wife and talking extensively with his children. His new reality includes being stuck in a deeply unstable country in the grips of an unprecedented economic crisis and a banking collapse. He says he spent six months repairing his Beirut home after it was damaged in the massive explosion at Beirut port last summer.

Turkish teams on mission to persuade the vaccine-reluctant

By MEHMET GUZEL Associated Press

MARDIN, Turkey (AP) — In the medieval Turkish city of Mardin, Medine Erelı calls out to a team of medical workers walking along the town's cobblestoned main street. Her 59-year old husband refuses to get vaccinated, she tells the doctor and nurse, before leading them to Enver Erelı, who's on the job as a municipal sanitation worker.

The masked health care duo is part of Turkey's "vaccination persuasion" teams, a recent initiative that aims to promote inoculation against the coronavirus among the country's most vulnerable population.

Their job is to persuade people who fall in the age groups eligible for the vaccine, but who have so far been reluctant to get their shots.

At the start of the inoculation program, some elderly people mistrusted the vaccine amid rumors that it was part of a plot to kill off the older population, said Dr. Aysegul Duyan, who is out on the road with nurse Meltem Gulcan.

"They soon saw that that was not the case," she said. "Nowadays, they are mostly worried due to rumors that it could cause paralysis."

The mobile door-to-door units — equipped with coolers carrying vaccine vials — have been operational in several Turkish provinces since April. At local health offices, more government workers reach people by phone in an attempt to change their minds.

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca says 84% of the population age 65 and above who are eligible to be vaccinated have so far received COVID-19 shots. The government aims to bring that figure above 90%.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 24 of 74

In Mardin, the team talked Erelı into getting his shot and the nurse administered the first jab while he sat down on a nearby ledge.

"I was afraid of getting sick and of being paralyzed. But then the medical teams told me it was for my benefit and I believed them and got vaccinated," Erelı said.

It was the team's first successful effort of the day as an Associated Press camera accompanied them around Mardin, a culturally and historically diverse region in Turkey's south, overlooking Mesopotamia and bordering Syria.

In Mardin alone, their efforts have resulted in the vaccination of nearly 8,000 people, according to the provincial health director.

"Village by village, hamlet by hamlet, wherever they are, we went and talked to them either face to face or by phone and persuaded them," Dr. Saffet Yavuz said.

Sare Oncel, a 75-year-old resident of the village of Gokce, about 30 kilometers (20 miles) from Mardin was also among those nudged into getting the shot.

"Everyone kept telling me that I'd be paralyzed and die if I got the vaccine. So I refused and didn't get it," she said. "But the government sent us the doctors and they talked us into it and I got vaccinated."

Turkey has fully vaccinated around 14% of its population of 83 million. Around 16 million people have received their first jab.

Last week, the number of daily COVID-19 infections in Turkey dropped to below 10,000 for the first time since March 1, after reaching a record-high of more than 63,000 daily cases in mid-April.

On Tuesday, the Health Ministry posted 9,375 new cases and 175 deaths in the past 24 hours. The total death toll in the country stands at 46,621, with more than 5.2 million infections since the start of the outbreak.

Rallies, moments of silence honor George Floyd a year later

By MOHAMED IBRAHIM and DOUG GLASS Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A family-friendly street festival, musical performances and moments of silence were held Tuesday to honor George Floyd and mark the year since he died at the hands of Minneapolis police, a death captured on wrenching bystander video that galvanized the racial justice movement and continues to bring calls for change.

Floyd's sister Bridgett and other family members held a moment of silence at a "Celebration of Life" event at a downtown Minneapolis park that included music, food trucks, an inflatable bouncy house and a vaccination stand. A few miles away, at the site of the intersection where Floyd died, dozens of people kneeled around a steel fist sculpture for several minutes — symbolizing the 9 minutes, 29 seconds during which Floyd was pinned down.

"It's been a troubling year, a long year," Bridgett Floyd told the crowd downtown. "But we made it. ... The love is here. George is here."

Other members of Floyd's family met in Washington with President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, who urged Congress to quickly pass a law in Floyd's name that would bring changes to policing. A moment of silence to honor Floyd was also held in New York and a rally was held in Los Angeles. Globally, a rally took place in Germany and Floyd's death was marked by U.S. embassies in Greece and Spain.

Hours before the Minneapolis festivities, the intersection where Floyd died was disrupted by gunfire.

Associated Press video from 38th Street and Chicago Avenue — informally known as George Floyd Square — showed people running for cover as shots rang out. Police said a man, who they believe was injured in the shooting, went to a nearby hospital with a gunshot wound. Police said he was in critical condition but was expected to survive. There were no immediate arrests.

Philip Crowther, a reporter working for AP Global Media Services, which provides live video coverage, reported hearing as many as 30 gunshots about a block from the intersection. Crowther said a storefront window appeared to have been broken by gunshots.

"Very quickly things got back to normal," Crowther said. "People here who spend a significant amount

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 25 of 74

of time, the organizers, were running around asking, 'Does anyone need a medic?'"

Like other major cities, Minneapolis has been struggling with rising gun violence, a problem made worse, in part, by many officers leaving the embattled force since Floyd's death. A 6-year-old girl was fatally shot and two other children wounded in recent weeks. Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey last week unveiled sweeping public safety proposals aimed at fixing the problem. Other groups are pursuing a more radical remaking of the police department.

The intersection of 38th and Chicago has been barricaded since soon after Floyd's death. It quickly turned into a memorial — and also a challenging spot for the city, with police officers not always welcome.

The square was transformed Tuesday into an outdoor festival, with food, children's activities and music. At times, people danced in the street. Artwork and signs from protests after Floyd's death also were on display. One group hosted an open mic next to a greenhouse that community members constructed earlier this year to house flowers left by mourners. Nearby, a brass band played for passersby.

The celebration also included a candlelight vigil, capping several days of marches, rallies and panel discussions about his death and confronting racial discrimination.

Xavier Simmons, 24, from Racine, Wisconsin, chanted "Say his name!" as people kneeled. Simmons said he hopes people taking part in the festivities will both honor Floyd's life and legacy and continue to "uplift and empower this movement."

"We got the verdict that we needed, but it's never going to change until we make a change," he said.

"Y'all keep doing the work, because ya'll changing the world," Common, an award-winning rapper, actor and activist told the crowd of hundreds during a musical performance Tuesday night prior to the vigil.

After Common left the stage and day turned to night in George Floyd Square, people placed candles in every conceivable corner, lighting up the area.

Floyd, 46, who was Black, died May 25, 2020, after then-Officer Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck, pinning him to the ground for about 9 1/2 minutes. Chauvin, who is white, was convicted last month of murder and faces sentencing June 25. Three other fired officers still face trial.

Earl Vaughn, 20, of Minneapolis, attended the downtown event and said despite its celebratory atmosphere: "For all this a Black man had to die, so that's really unfortunate."

In New York City, elected officials, including Mayor Bill de Blasio and U.S. Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, joined the Rev. Al Sharpton in kneeling for 9 minutes, 29 seconds. "As we took a knee, imagine how long that was on a human being's neck," Sharpton said. "Never switched knees, just dug in. It's time we correct policing in this country."

On Tuesday evening, activists and demonstrators gathered with some families of people who had died in interactions with the New York Police Department at Barclays Center in Brooklyn. They called for defunding the police, holding officers accountable and removing police officers from schools. Following the rally, they set off on a march through Brooklyn streets.

Several Floyd family members, including his young daughter Gianna, met with Biden and Harris earlier Tuesday. Biden, who previously pledged to continue fighting for racial justice, said he hopes the Senate can quickly pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and get it to his desk.

"We have to act," he said of the legislation that would ban chokeholds and no-knock police raids and create a national registry for officers disciplined for serious misconduct.

Floyd's brother Philonise told CNN he thinks about George "all the time."

"My sister called me at 12 o'clock last night and said 'This is the day our brother left us,'" he said, adding: "I think things have changed. I think it is moving slowly but we are making progress."

Also Tuesday, the U.S. Senate voted to confirm Kristen Clarke as assistant attorney general for civil rights, the first Black woman to hold the position. In the last few weeks, the Justice Department under Biden has announced sweeping investigations into the police in Minneapolis and Louisville and brought federal civil rights charges against the officers involved in Floyd's death.

Separately, the Floyd family announced the launch of a fund that will make grants to businesses and community organizations in the neighborhood, as well as broader grants "encouraging the success and

growth of Black citizens and community harmony." The money comes from \$500,000 earmarked as part of the city's \$27 million civil settlement for the Floyd family.

Many wait uneasily as Biden unwinds key Trump asylum policy

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — In March of 2020, Estela Lazo appeared before Immigration Judge Lee O'Connor with her two children, her muscles tensed and a lump in her throat. Would they receive asylum?

O'Connor's answer: No — he wasn't even ready to consider the question.

But he issued a ruling that seemed promising: It was illegal to force the Honduran family to wait in Mexico, under then-President Donald Trump's cornerstone policy to deter asylum-seekers. O'Connor said he was dismissing their case due to government missteps and scheduled another hearing in his San Diego courtroom in a month.

Paradoxically and typically, the family was sent back to Mexico to await its next day in court.

But when Lazo, her 10-year-old son and 6-year-old daughter appeared at a Tijuana border crossing for the follow-up hearing, U.S. authorities denied them entry because their case had been closed.

Lazo's inability to have her claim even considered on its merits is one of many anomalies of the policy known as "Remain in Mexico," an effort so unusual that it often ran afoul of fundamental principles of justice -- such as the right to a day in court.

As President Joe Biden undoes Trump immigration policies that he considers inhumane, he faces a major question: How far should he go to right his predecessor's perceived wrongs?

Biden halted "Remain in Mexico" his first day in office and soon announced that an estimated 26,000 asylum-seekers with active cases could wait in the United States, a process that could take several years in backlogged courts. More than 10,000 have been admitted to the U.S. so far.

But that leaves out more than 30,000 asylum-seekers whose claims were denied or dismissed under the policy, known officially as "Migrant Protection Protocols." Advocates are pressing for them to get another chance.

Many asylum-seekers whose claims were denied for failure to appear in court say they were kidnapped in Mexico. Others were too sick or afraid to travel to a border crossing in a dangerous city with appointments as early as 4:30 a.m. Human Rights First, an advocacy group, tallied more than 1,500 publicly reported attacks against people subject to the policy.

Difficulty finding attorneys from Mexico meant few had legal representation, contributing to a measly 1.6% grant rate among cases that were decided. U.S. authorities gave asylum-seekers a list of low- or no-cost attorneys but phones rang unanswered and messages were unreturned.

Then there are about 6,700 asylum-seekers like Lazo whose cases were dismissed, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse. It was usually after judges found the government erred applying the policy. Many were returned to Mexico indefinitely, some after U.S. authorities filled out forms with fake court dates to make sure Mexico took them back.

"They never had a first chance -- a meaningful first chance," said Melissa Crow, an attorney for the Southern Poverty Law Center, which has sued over the policy.

Immigration has bedeviled Biden as it has many presidents before him. He backs a path to citizenship for an estimated 11 million people in the country illegally, has halted border wall construction and has repealed other hardline policies. But he wavered on lifting Trump's all-time low cap on resettling refugees and has no quick answers to large numbers of asylum-seekers on the Mexican border and backlogged courts. In March, authorities encountered the highest number of unaccompanied children at the border on record, and April was second highest.

The administration has yet to say if asylum-seekers whose cases were denied or dismissed under "Remain in Mexico" will have another shot. When asked, aides have emphasized Biden's promise of a "humane" asylum system to be unveiled soon.

"We will continue to prioritize the most vulnerable populations who have been waiting the longest period

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 27 of 74

of time," Andrea Flores, immigration expert on the National Security Council, told reporters in April. "We will continue to sort of build out eligibility based on vulnerability."

In San Diego more than 5,600 cases were dismissed, many by only two judges -- Scott Simpson, a former attorney for the Navy and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and O'Connor, a former immigrant advocate who occasionally erupted in anger while overseeing "Return to Mexico" cases.

When a Homeland Security attorney challenged O'Connor at a hearing in October 2019, he thundered that he took an oath to uphold U.S. laws, "not to acquiesce when they are flagrantly violated."

For Lizeth -- who spoke to The Associated Press on condition that her full name not be published due to safety concerns -- an O'Connor ruling led to a Kafkaesque nightmare.

Lizeth said she fled Santa Ana, El Salvador, in January 2019, on the run from a police officer who demanded sexual acts. Then 31, she never said goodbye to her five children -- ages 5 to 12 -- fearing the officer would discover where they lived.

Her freedom was short lived. She said she was kidnapped near Mexico's border with Guatemala, and her captors drove her in a minivan to Ciudad Juarez, across the border from El Paso, and forced her into prostitution. They threatened others who were held in a large warehouse-style room with having their organs removed and sold. She escaped four months later and entered the U.S. illegally at San Diego.

When O'Connor dropped Lizeth's case in October 2019, saying she was illegally returned to Mexico, U.S. Customs and Border Protection gave her slip of paper to appear for court on Dec. 16 -- even though no hearing was scheduled. Asked about the fake court dates that she and other asylum-seekers received, CBP said at the time that they were intended as check-ins for updates on the status of their cases, but the notice didn't say that and updates are done over the phone or online.

Sent back to Mexico to wait, Lizeth was stuck in Tijuana. She confined herself to her cousin's sparsely furnished one-bedroom home of concrete slabs and plywood walls, too scared to leave. The neighborhood is blighted with empty, half-built homes occupied by drug addicts and squatters; she said she was beaten when she got there.

"The judge's decision was not respected," she said.

The Justice Department's Executive Office for Immigration Review, which oversees immigration courts, said it does not comment on judges' rulings.

Judith, who identifies herself as LGBT and fled Honduras amid threats over her sexual orientation, arrived late for her second hearing in November 2019; she overlooked instructions in her court packet to arrive at the border crossing in Tijuana at 4:30 a.m. Judith, who spoke on condition that her last name not be published due to fears for her safety, says U.S. authorities detained her and her daughter, now 10, for four days before giving them written instructions to return to court in three months.

When she appeared at the border in February 2020, she was told her case had been dismissed.

"I presented myself and they told that I wasn't in the system," said Judith, who reports being threatened by kidnappers in Tijuana. "I was speechless. There was nothing I could do."

Robyn Barnard, an attorney for Human Rights First who represented asylum-seekers with dismissed cases, said while she agreed with the judges that the policy was illegally applied, their "judicial activism" ended up harming asylum-seekers.

"The outcome is that they terminated these cases and (the Department of Homeland Security) would still remove the people back to Mexico and then they were stuck in Mexico with no case, no ability to file an application" for asylum, she said.

It is unclear how often CBP issued "tear sheets" with fake court dates to get asylum-seekers with dismissed cases back to Mexico, but anecdotal evidence suggests it was common for some time. San Diego attorney Bashir Ghazialam has about a dozen clients who got fake court dates in late 2019 after their cases were dismissed and knows about three dozen more from other lawyers.

After the Biden administration announced in February that people with active cases could return to the U.S., Jewish Family Service of San Diego, which provides temporary shelter to asylum-seekers, heard from 27 asylum-seekers who had been returned to Mexico with fake court dates. Their cases were terminated

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 28 of 74

and they couldn't return.

Carlos Gonzalez Gutierrez, Mexico's consul general in San Diego, said he learned about the fake court dates from news reports and non-governmental organizations in late 2019, leading Mexican immigration authorities to more closely examine documents of asylum-seekers being returned to wait. The practice appears to have lasted about three months.

A footnote in O'Connor's written opinions highlights what is seen as one of policy's biggest deficiencies: Asylum-seekers generally don't have regular addresses in Mexico and the court system relies on mail. Court filings often say they live at "domicilio conocido," or "known address" in English.

O'Connor wrote that "domicilio conocido" is used in small Mexican villages where postal workers know where everyone lives but it is "completely inadequate" in a city the size of Tijuana, with about 2 million people. Without any fixed address, phone or Internet access in Mexico, advocates say asylum-seekers had no way to stay up to date on their cases and were being deprived of their rights.

The core reason for dismissing cases was technical: Only "arriving aliens" should be eligible for "Remain in Mexico," or anyone who appears at an official port of entry like a land crossing. People crossing the border illegally -- who made up about 90% of those subject to the policy -- are not "arriving aliens" as defined by law.

Faced with having their cases dismissed, the Border Patrol regularly left blank a place in charging documents that asks how asylum-seekers entered the country. When they reported for their first court dates, U.S. authorities amended their complaints to say -- falsely -- that they first sought to gain entry at an official crossing, making them "arriving aliens."

"We are a country governed by Law," O'Connor wrote, saying people who crossed the border illegally were returned to Mexico "extrajudicially and without any legal authorization."

O'Connor rejected 95% of asylum claims from 2015 to 2020, one of the highest denial rates in the country, which surprised and disappointed some of his old colleagues in the advocacy world. Before becoming a judge in 2010, he was an attorney at Indiana Legal Services' Immigrants & Language Rights Center for 10 years and at Legal Aid Society of San Diego for five years.

Amy Maldonado, an attorney who knew O'Connor as an immigrant advocate, credits him for ruling the policy was applied illegally, but the losers were asylum-seekers who were returned to Mexico.

"His ruling was 100% on the law," said Maldonado, whose clients included Guatemalan man and his 17-year-old daughter who lost their claim because they missed a hearing while kidnapped in Mexico. "I don't think he was concerned about what happened to the people whose cases he was terminating. I think he was angry at the government for doing all this illegal stuff."

Defiant Ghosn pins hopes on French probes to clear his name

By JEFFREY SCHAEFFER and ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Auto magnate-turned-fugitive Carlos Ghosn is campaigning to clear his name, and hopes a visit by French investigators to his home in exile in Lebanon will be his first real opportunity to defend himself since the bombshell arrest that transformed him from a visionary to a prisoner overnight.

In an interview with The Associated Press, the embattled former chairman of the Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi alliance dissected his legal troubles in Japan, France and the Netherlands, detailed how he plotted his brazen escape from Osaka, and reflected on his new reality in crisis-hit Lebanon, where he is stuck for the foreseeable future.

Mending his reputation will be an arduous task. Ghosn was arrested in Japan in November 2018 on accusations of financial misconduct and fled to Lebanon a year later. He now faces multiple legal challenges in France after the Japanese accusations triggered scrutiny of his activities there. Meanwhile, several associates are in jail or on trial in Japan and Turkey, in cases related to his financial activities or escape.

"There has been a lot of collateral damage . . . but I don't think I'm responsible for that. The people responsible for that are the people who organized the plot" to bring him down, Ghosn said Tuesday.

Ghosn has denied accusations of underreporting his compensation and misusing company funds, contend-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 29 of 74

ing he was the victim of a corporate coup linked to a decline in Nissan Motor Co.'s financial performance as the Japanese automaker resisted losing autonomy to French partner Renault.

He said he voluntarily agreed to undergo days of questioning in Beirut next week by French magistrates investigating allegations of financial misconduct in France that led to the seizure of millions of euros of his assets. The outcome could result in preliminary charges being handed to him or in the cases being dropped.

The French investigators are looking into the financing of lavish parties Ghosn threw at the Versailles chateau — complete with period costumes and copious Champagne — as well as 11 million euros in spending on private planes and events arranged by a Dutch holding company, and subsidies to a car dealership in Oman. Ghosn denies any wrongdoing.

"In Japan, you had a Japanese person interrogating me, writing in Japanese and wanting me to sign things in Japanese that I don't understand," he said. "Now I will be speaking in French, and I'll have my lawyers present. Of course, I have much more confidence in the French legal system than in the Japanese system."

Ghosn was kept in solitary confinement in Japan for months without being allowed to speak with his wife. He has said he fled the country after it became clear he would have "zero" chances of a fair trial. His arrest drew international scrutiny and criticism of Japan's legal system and its 99% conviction rate.

In late 2019, Ghosn fled Japan after jumping \$14 million bail in a Hollywood-style caper. The improbable escape — hidden in a box stashed in the hold of a Turkey-bound private jet, according to Japanese officials — embarrassed Japanese authorities and has allowed him to evade trial there.

Now an international fugitive on Interpol's most-wanted list, the 67-year-old Ghosn lives in self-imposed exile in his native Lebanon, where he teaches a weekly university business course and is fighting other legal fires.

He told the AP he was "shocked" after a Dutch court last week rejected his wrongful dismissal claim against an Amsterdam-based alliance between Nissan and Mitsubishi, and ordered him to repay the nearly 5 million euros (\$6 million) salary he received in 2018. The ruling came in a case in which Ghosn sought to have his 2018 sacking from Nissan-Mitsubishi B.V. overturned and demanded 15 million euros (\$16.5 million) in compensation.

Ghosn has vowed to appeal.

Ghosn, who has French, Brazilian and Lebanese citizenship, contended he was the victim of a character assassination campaign led by Nissan with the complicity of the Japanese government, aided by accomplices in France.

In the AP interview, he mounted a robust defense of a former Nissan executive, American Greg Kelly, who was arrested the same day as Ghosn and is standing trial in a Tokyo District court on charges of underreporting Ghosn's compensation. He would not talk about two other Americans who allegedly helped him escape, Michael Taylor and his son, Peter. They are in a Japanese jail awaiting trial after their extradition from the U.S.

Asked whether their legal troubles weighed on his conscience, Ghosn said: "I feel empathy and compassion for them, because I was in the same situation."

Testimony and documents presented at Kelly's trial have shown that he sought ways to beef up compensation for Ghosn after he agreed to a pay cut at Nissan in 2010, because Japan began requiring disclosures of high executive pay. Ghosn insisted Tuesday that no additional compensation agreements were approved by the board.

"Obviously he (Kelly) is innocent," Ghosn said.

Recalling details of his escape, Ghosn told the AP how the plan was hatched, including choosing to execute it in December when he would be less likely to be recognized under a hat and heavy clothes.

"It was very bold, but because it was bold, I thought it may be successful," he said. Ghosn refused to confirm reports he escaped in a musical instrument box, saying he didn't want to say anything that could be used against people being prosecuted for assisting him.

Arriving in a black Nissan SUV accompanied by a bodyguard, the former high-flying executive seemed to have lost none of his swagger despite his colossal fall. He said he spends his days in Beirut preparing

his legal defense, teaching, helping startups and working on his books and documentaries.

As a fugitive living in the Mediterranean country where he grew up, he said he was enjoying a slower pace devoid of jet lag, enjoying having coffee with his wife and extensive talks with his children.

That includes living in a deeply unstable country in the grips of a historic financial and economic unraveling. Ghosn said he spent six months repairing his home after it was damaged in the massive explosion at a Beirut port last summer. And like other Lebanese, he said he has a substantial amount of money stuck in the banks after authorities clamped down on dollar currency withdrawals and transfers in October 2019.

Reflecting on his downfall, he said, "It's like you have, you know, I don't know, a heart attack somewhere, or you've been hit by a bus. You change your life."

"All of a sudden, you are in a completely different reality and you have to adapt to this reality."

Key events in arrest, flight of ex-Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn

The Associated Press undefined

A timeline of key events that began with Carlos Ghosn's assignment to Japanese automaker Nissan Motor Co. by its French alliance partner, Renault SA:

June 1999 — Renault sends Ghosn to be chief operating officer of Nissan.

June 2001 — Ghosn becomes CEO of Nissan after becoming its president a year earlier.

May 2005 — Ghosn becomes CEO of Renault.

October 2016 — Ghosn takes helm at Mitsubishi Motors Corp. after Nissan steps in to salvage the troubled smaller automaker.

June 2017 — Ghosn becomes chairman at Nissan, handing CEO post to Hiroto Saikawa.

Nov. 19, 2018 — Japanese police arrest Ghosn and a Nissan vice president, American lawyer Greg Kelly.

November 2018 — Ghosn is fired from his positions at Nissan and Mitsubishi.

Jan. 8, 2019 — Ghosn appears in a Tokyo court and declares his innocence.

January 2019 — Ghosn retires from his positions at Renault.

Feb. 19, 2019 — French prosecutors open judicial inquiry into alleged money laundering, fraud and misuse of company assets during Ghosn's time at the helm of the Renault-Nissan alliance.

March 2019 — French prosecutors open preliminary investigation into the financing of a party held by Ghosn at the Versailles chateau.

March 4, 2019 — Ghosn is released from Tokyo detention after posting \$9 million bail.

April 4, 2019 — Japanese police detain Ghosn again.

April 25, 2019 — Ghosn is released again, posting \$4.5 million bail.

Dec. 29-31, 2019 — Ghosn jumps bail and flees Japan, escaping to Lebanon via Turkey. An American man and his son, Michael and Peter Taylor, are alleged to have helped him sneak out of the country.

Sept. 15, 2020 — Kelly goes on trial at the Tokyo District Court, accused of conspiring with Ghosn to underreport his pay. Trial is ongoing.

Feb. 24, 2021 — Two pilots and a Turkish official are sentenced to four years in prison in Turkey for helping Ghosn escape.

March 2-3, 2021 — Michael and Peter Taylor are extradited from the U.S. to Japan.

May 20, 2021 — Dutch court rejects lawsuit by Ghosn against Nissan-Mitsubishi claiming wrongful dismissal and back pay. Ghosn plans to appeal.

May 31, 2021 — French investigators are expected in Lebanon to question Ghosn.

Vaccine inequality in India sends many falling through gaps

By NEHA MEHROTRA and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — As the coronavirus tears through India, night watchman Sagar Kumar thinks constantly about getting vaccines for himself and his family of five amid critical shortages of shots in the country. But even if he knew how to get one, it wouldn't be easy.

The main way is to register through a government website. But it is in English — a language the 25-year-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 31 of 74

old Kumar and nearly 90% of Indians can't speak, read or write — and his family has a single smartphone, with spotty internet service.

And even though his state of Uttar Pradesh gives free shots to those under 45, there is no vaccination site in his village, with the nearest hospital an hour away.

"All I can do now is hope for the best," Kumar said.

The pandemic's disparities already were stark in India, where access to health care is as stratified and unequal as many other parts of society. Now wealth and technology is further widening those chasms, and millions are falling through the gaps.

That worries health experts, who say vaccine inequality could hamper India's already difficult fight against a virus that has been killing more than 4,000 people a day in recent weeks.

"Inequitable vaccination risks prolonging the pandemic in India," said Krishna Udayakumar, founding director of the Duke Global Health Innovation Center at Duke University in North Carolina. "Reducing barriers for the most vulnerable populations should be a priority."

India's vaccination campaign began in January with a goal of inoculating 300 million of its nearly 1.4 billion people by August. So far, however, it has fully vaccinated a little over 42 million people, or barely 3% of its population.

The government didn't reserve enough shots for the campaign and it was slow to scale up vaccine production. Then, with the country recording hundreds of thousands of new infections daily, the government on May 1 opened up vaccination to all adults.

That made an already bad shortage even worse.

Amid those challenges, the federal government also changed its policy on who can get vaccines and who must pay for them. It allotted itself half of the shots in the country and said it would give free shots to front-line workers and those 45 and older.

Individual states and private hospitals could then negotiate deals with the country's vaccine-makers for the other half of the shots, the government said. That effectively put the burden for inoculating everyone under 45 on states and the private sector, who often ask members of the public to pay as much as \$20 for a shot.

The disparities already are showing in rich states where private hospitals tend to be concentrated.

The capital of New Delhi has given first shots to 20% of its residents, while Bihar state, one of the poorest, has only given shots to about 7.6% of its population. And even states that are providing free shots often can't keep them in stock — both because of the shortage and competition with the private sector.

Many experts say the federal policy is a mistake, and it will hit the poorest the hardest.

"Vaccinating people is the national duty of the government and they need to vaccinate everyone for free," said K Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India. "Nobody should be denied a vaccine because they are unable to afford it or register for it."

Vaccine disparity is "not just a question of inequality but also inefficiency," said developmental economist Jean Dreze.

If people get sick, Dreze said, they will not be able to work. That in turn could push many more into poverty.

Already, the poor have to miss work, forgo the day's wages and travel long distances to get vaccinated.

"We should not just make vaccines free but also give people incentives to get vaccinated," Dreze said.

The national government is seeking to address some of the concerns. It has said the website to register for shots will soon be available in Hindi and other regional languages. Still, experts point out half the population lacks internet access, so the better solution would be easier, walk-in registrations for all.

The government also has said it will alleviate the vaccine shortages, insisting there will be about 2 billion doses available between June and December. Experts, however, say the government will likely miss that goal.

India's health ministry did not respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press.

Kavita Singh, 29, was making the equivalent of \$250 a month working as a domestic helper in a wealthy

part of the capital. But as cases began to surge in April, she lost her job.

"They were scared I would spread the virus and told me to come back only after I am vaccinated," Singh said.

She could not afford paying for a shot, so Singh and her three daughters returned to her village in Bihar state. There's no vaccination center nearby, and Singh said she doesn't know if she'll ever be able to return to New Delhi.

"We barely manage to earn enough for our daily means," Singh said. "If we use that money for vaccines, then what will we eat?"

Car-free San Francisco streets: Residents debate reopening

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — For Vanessa Gregson, the four-lane highway that borders the beach along San Francisco's Pacific Ocean is now an automobile-free sanctuary where she can blissfully ride her bicycle and enjoy the quiet.

"You hear the beach. You hear the waves," said Gregson. "You feel like you're in nature, and you're in San Francisco."

Like cities from Paris to New York that shut roads to motorists when the coronavirus hit, environmentally friendly San Francisco closed miles of streets to automobiles so people could exercise and socialize safely.

Now, pedestrian advocates want to keep some of San Francisco's most prominent streets off-limits, like the main road into Golden Gate Park. Others are pushing back, saying they need to drive to work, drop off kids and get around.

The debate has been marked by dueling rallies and strident arguments over safety and climate change in the densely packed city. On social media, customers threatened to boycott a bakery whose owner expressed support for reopening the main oceanside thoroughfare known as the Great Highway to cars; others came to her defense.

Shamann Walton, president of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors, was mocked for likening the closure of John F. Kennedy Drive in Golden Gate Park to the Jim Crow South, including by fellow African Americans who call his accusations of segregation silly. Walton says he worries that closing the street and its free parking will affect low-income families that can't easily bike or take transit to the park.

For Tim Boyle, who lives near the four-lane beachside highway, life has been anything but peaceful. Unable to use the main road, massive delivery trucks, gangs of motor bikes and impatient drivers now hurtle through his once-sleepy neighborhood.

Boyle, whose son has cerebral palsy, says taking out their wheelchair-equipped van has become a nightmare. "Essentially I'm stopping traffic on any given day, four to 10 cars backed up on each side just so I can pull my own car into my driveway," he said.

San Francisco officials started turning streets into pedestrian-friendly promenades in April 2020 after the mayor declared an emergency. Officials closed more than 45 miles (72 kilometers) of neighborhood corridors and are studying which ones could be permanent.

They also sealed off a 1.5-mile (2.4-kilometer) portion of JFK Drive, the main thoroughfare through Golden Gate Park, which sees more than 24 million visitors a year, and a 2-mile (3.2-kilometer) stretch of the Great Highway — now renamed by some as the Great Walkway — that carried more than 18,000 vehicles a day before the pandemic.

San Francisco's streets are scheduled to reopen 120 days after Mayor London Breed lifts the COVID-19 emergency declaration, which could come next month. Various agencies are navigating the public debate before deciding whether to fully reopen the Great Highway and JFK Drive, open them in part or keep them closed to vehicles. The Board of Supervisors will have the final say, said Tamara Aparton, a city parks spokeswoman.

Seattle and New York are also among U.S. cities looking to make temporary auto-free streets permanent. In Europe, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo announced plans to ban most vehicular through-traffic in the city's

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 33 of 74

center, with exceptions for public transit, delivery trucks and residents.

Pedestrian advocates say there are options to ensure that people who can't easily bike or walk can still visit Golden Gate Park, including designated drop-off sites and programs for low-income families. They also want more so-called street calming measures to slow traffic and improve safety on affected neighborhood roads.

San Francisco is no stranger to shedding auto infrastructure for green spaces. Leaders chose not to replace the Embarcadero freeway after it was damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, replacing it with a boulevard that now doubles as a popular tourist destination.

Despite the testy debate, most people are probably in the silent middle, wanting both open space and clear transportation routes, said Connie Chan, a supervisor whose district is affected by the closures along the beach and in Golden Gate Park. "They just want to be able to go where they need to go, and not be stuck in traffic," she said.

Katharine Lusk, co-director of the Boston University Initiative on Cities, said more than 90% of 130 U.S. mayors in 38 states surveyed last summer reported they created more space for outdoor dining by using parking spots or closing streets. Nearly half closed some streets to through-traffic; a smaller portion shut streets entirely to autos. While only 6% said they plan to make those changes permanent, Lusk wonders if that might change with rising demand.

On a recent sunny weekday, a few dozen people organized by Walk San Francisco toasted the one-year anniversary of the street closure in Golden Gate Park. Charles Oppenheimer said his daughter Olivia, 11, once feared riding through the third most-visited city park in the United States.

"There's cars double-parked and rage drivers through the park, honking at kids, and now that it's shut down, it's so much better," he said.

Near the west end of Golden Gate Park, more than 100 people gathered before blockades on the highway earlier this month, waving signs calling to reopen the road. Passing drivers honked in support as a musician blew tunes on a bright pink sousaphone.

The highway runs two lanes each way, with sandy beach and the Pacific Ocean on one side and a protected pedestrian path edged by succulents on the other. A parallel two-lane street has homes on one side, many with placards pleading to "Open the Great Highway."

Since the neighboring streets began absorbing displaced traffic, Judi Gorski has documented numerous crashes. The car fumes, speeding, noise and near-wrecks make her feel trapped in her home of four decades, where she says "the traffic goes on all night long."

For photographer Steve Rhodes, who walked one recent day along the nearly empty Great Highway after visiting the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park, it is liberating to have the space to move around.

"The intersections with the cars are just a nightmare," he said. "There should be more streets closed and it's going to have to happen, because people are going to have to rely less on cars."

AP Investigation: Myanmar's junta using bodies to terrorize

By ROBIN McDOWELL and MARGIE MASON Associated Press

Two black pickups speed down an empty city street in Myanmar before coming to a sudden stop. Security forces standing in the back of the trucks begin firing at an oncoming motorbike carrying three young men.

The bike swerves, crashing into a gate. More shots are fired as two of the passengers run away, while the third, Kyaw Min Latt, remains on the ground. Moans are heard as officers grab the wounded 17-year-old from the pavement, throwing his limp body into a truck bed before driving off.

The incident lasted just over a minute and was captured on a CCTV camera. It is part of a growing trove of photos and videos shared on social media that's helping expose a brutal crackdown carried out by the junta since the military's Feb. 1 takeover of the Southeast Asian nation.

An analysis by The Associated Press and the Human Rights Center Investigations Lab at the University of California, Berkeley, looked at cases where bodies of those targeted indiscriminately by police and the military are being used as tools of terror. The findings are based on more than 2,000 tweets and online

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 34 of 74

images, in addition to interviews with family members, witness accounts, and local media reports.

The AP and HRC Lab identified more than 130 instances where security forces appeared to be using corpses and the bodies of the wounded to create anxiety, uncertainty, and strike fear in the civilian population. Over two-thirds of those cases analyzed were confirmed or categorized as having moderate or high credibility, and often involved tracking down the original source of the content or interviewing observers.

Since the military takeover, more than 825 people have been killed — well over two times the government tally — according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a watchdog organization that monitors arrests and deaths. The junta did not respond to written questions submitted by AP.

The HRC Lab examined hours of footage posted online over a two-month period showing dead bodies being snatched off the streets and dragged like sacks of rice before being thrown into vehicles and driven to unknown destinations. Some people have been disappeared or arrested one day and returned dead the next, their corpses mutilated with signs of torture, witnesses confirmed to AP.

Autopsies have been carried out without the permission of families. And some death certificates blame heart attacks or falls after violent attacks, contradicting witness accounts and images captured by protesters, journalists, or residents, including some who have been stealthily recording incidents with mobile phones through windows or from rooftops.

Cremations and exhumations of the deceased have been secretly conducted in the middle of the night by authorities. Other times, grieving families have been forced to pay military hospitals to release their loved ones' remains, relatives and eyewitnesses told the AP.

Though the incidents may seem random and unprovoked — including kids being shot while playing outside their homes — they are actually deliberate and systematic with the goal of demobilizing people and wearing them down, said Nick Cheesman, a researcher at Australian National University, who specializes in the politics of law and policing in Myanmar.

"That," he said, "is exactly the characteristic of state terror."

Taking a page from the army's historical playbook, experts say the violence also appears aimed at keeping the death toll artificially low and concealing evidence. But unlike past violence, the attacks are being captured on smartphones and surveillance cameras in real-time and could one day be used against the regime before international criminal courts, as has happened elsewhere in the world.

"It has always been the military's strategy to hide the mass crackdown there, the mass killing of the protesters," said Van Tran, a Cornell University researcher who studied the bloody 1988 and 2007 uprisings in Myanmar. "There are always large-scale operations in order to either cremate the bodies of people that were shot down or ... bulldoze and bury those bodies. So a lot of the time, families do not know where their children went."

Almost a quarter of the recent cases with known locations analyzed by the HRC Lab involved injured people or dead bodies snatched by security forces in the country's biggest city, Yangon, followed by Mandalay and Bago.

The largest number of those incidents, documented through posts on social media, was reported on March 27. Celebrated annually as Armed Forces Day, it commemorates the start of the military's resistance to Japanese occupation during World War II after more than a century of British colonial rule.

This year protesters dubbed it "Anti-Fascist-Resistance Day," and came out in large numbers in a stand against the military takeover.

It was on that day that motorbike rider Kyaw Min Latt was shot, though his family told AP the young carpenter had not been to a demonstration but was instead heading home from the job site to grab an early lunch with two friends.

Using satellite visuals, reverse image searches, and a sun-shadow calculator, the HRC Lab was able to verify that the shooting took place at 10:38 a.m. in front of a high school on Azarni Road in the southern town of Dawei. In the footage, two shots are heard and Kyaw Min Latt, who was sitting between the driver and a fellow passenger, is seen grabbing his head and falling sideways. Officers chased after the two other riders with guns raised. Another bang is then heard.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 35 of 74

Sixteen minutes later, a passerby posted a picture on Facebook of blood-soaked concrete and flip flops near the white motorbike that security forces had carefully propped back up before taking Kyaw Min Latt's body.

Within two hours, the CCTV footage was also being shared widely across social media platforms.

That's how the teen's father received the news. He told AP he later learned his son had been taken to a military hospital. He rushed there to see him that afternoon and said the teen was still alive, but unconscious.

"He was badly wounded," Soe Soe Latt said. "He opened his eyes when we were at the hospital, but could not say any words."

The boy died soon after, and his father said army doctors wanted to perform an autopsy. The family fought against it, but said the hospital would only release the body if they signed a paper saying their son died of head injuries from falling off the motorbike.

A photo published online before Kyaw Min Latt's funeral by Dawei Watch, a local news outlet, told a different story: There was a gaping wound in the teen's neck.

Myanmar has a long, tumultuous history of coups, military control, and ethnic conflicts.

A junta seized power in 1962, ending 14 years of civilian rule. That began five decades of censorship, mass arrests, disappearances, and dark isolation, resulting in harsh international sanctions that placed it roughly on par with North Korea.

Then in 2011, the country became the darling of the Obama administration and other Western governments when it started moving toward quasi-civilian rule and implementing political reforms as part of its long-promised "roadmap to democracy."

But, despite the newfound freedoms and political reforms in the past decade — from the first ATMs and KFC restaurants to high-speed Internet and smartphones — the military never really relinquished control.

A quarter of the seats in parliament were reserved for those in uniform, and the armed forces held onto key ministries. Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, now chairman of the junta's State Administrative Council, also had the power to impose a state of emergency if he felt national security was at risk.

But after the party headed by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi won a landslide election last November, the military, known as the Tatmadaw, cried voter fraud. That triggered the February takeover and an emergency declaration, transferring all power to the top commander, on the morning the new parliament was set to begin.

Suu Kyi — who earlier supported security forces during their violent crackdown on ethnic Rohingya Muslims — and other leaders of her National League for Democracy party were put under house arrest. Hundreds of thousands of people from all walks of life poured into the streets nationwide in protest.

Soon after, other NLD members were hauled in for questioning. Some of them would never return alive. Party officials said that family members were prohibited from collecting the body of one man who died at an interrogation center. Two other NLD members were returned as corpses to relatives the next day, drawing a sharp rebuke from the U.S. State Department.

Photos and videos posted on social media from several locations, and analyzed by the HRC Lab, show they appear to have been tortured, with the skin partially peeled from one man's face. Another had dried blood on his head and bruises covering his body.

"Just tell people he had a heart attack and died," a man who attended the cleaning of one victim's body told AP, recalling what doctors told family members.

Despite the attacks on NLD members, the anti-military demonstrations continued. Ordinary citizens soon found themselves targets of soldiers and police.

This month, relatives of one man in Bago Region's Pyay Township said security forces arrived at their home with guns drawn.

After beating 33-year-old Aung Khaing Myit, his sister told AP they took him away for questioning about his suspected involvement in a bomb blast. She said the officers swore nothing would happen to him, but he was heard screaming in a nearby room before falling silent.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 36 of 74

The next day, the family was taken to a military hospital. They were told Aung Khaing Myit died while trying to jump out of a transport vehicle and that he was already placed inside a coffin. His sister said they were allowed to look at his bruised face, but not his entire body, and then authorities took him away for cremation over their objections.

"We knew they beat him to death," she said. "But they tried to lie to us."

And even if bodies are returned to families, it doesn't mean they will be buried and left to rest in peace.

Nineteen-year-old Kyal Sin, better known as Angel, became a high-profile case after being shot in the head March 3 during a protest in Mandalay, galvanizing supporters to wear T-shirts and banners bearing her image. Thousands, outraged by her death, gathered for her funeral the next day.

But later that night, the flowers were removed from her grave and MRTV state television said her body had been exhumed by authorities so an official autopsy could be carried out, exonerating the police. All that remained at the site afterward was a bloody latex glove and other strewn debris.

Authorities later released a death certificate saying the bullet that killed her didn't match the caliber used by police, and that it came from the wrong direction for security forces to be responsible.

Shootings by soldiers and police were the reason Ye Yint Naing's mother had forbidden him to join a protest in northern Shan State. But that didn't stop the 15-year-old — he simply skipped breakfast that morning and snuck out while she was busy washing clothes in the back of the house.

He quickly met up with friends and headed to the rally, but an hour later tensions began to explode. After activists set a car on fire, Myanmar security forces responded by shooting into the crowd.

Ye Yint Naing was hit and fell to the ground. As he lay bleeding and calling for help, his friends watched paralyzed for two hours, unable to reach him because they feared they would be shot by a sniper standing watch, his brother told AP.

When the gunfire finally stopped, Ye Yint Naing's motionless body was loaded into an ambulance and driven away. Social media posts provided the first clues for family members about what happened to him.

A picture posted on Facebook by a sympathetic worker at a local cemetery showed them where the body was ultimately taken. Once there, Ye Yint Naing was cremated — which goes against Muslim burial customs — following an order by police.

"They actually wanted to hide the dead body," his brother said, adding he was able to get a bag with ashes and bits of bone to bury. "I have to say, 'Thank you,' to the person who cremated the body and took the photo. If not, it would have been hard for our family to find my younger brother because we would not know where he was taken."

Other secret cremations were confirmed in a mountainous trading town in the same state. Military trucks carrying soldiers and police rumbled into Aungban to stamp out a protest early on March 19th, firing off tear gas and bullets that left at least eight people dead, a witness told the AP.

Images from the scene posted on social media, showed one bloodied body lying next to a curb, and video captured men dressed in black uniforms kicking debris and randomly shooting their guns.

Security forces brought most of the corpses to the local cemetery that night and days later. They broke locks on the crematorium and used car tires to burn several bodies, witnesses said, until "all that remained was ash."

Terrified that their loved ones will not receive proper burials, some family members have started hiding bodies, racing to get them buried before security forces can claim them.

That was the case with 13-year-old Htoo Myat Win. He was hit in the chest by a stray bullet while sitting inside his home in the central town of Shwebo, Sagaing Region.

Video posted online showed security forces shooting while walking through the street, and a neighbor who witnessed the boy's death confirmed to AP that they were "spraying bullets" at houses.

Authorities came to ask the family for the boy's body, but they refused to hand it over and instead hid it at a local temple, the neighbor said, declining to give his name fearing retribution. "They cremated him the next day."

Junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun said there is a clear legal procedure in place when people die. Families

are informed and autopsies are carried out.

"We never hide this number," he said at a press conference earlier this month.

However, the military has put the total killed nationwide at about 300, stressing that nearly 50 police have also died in the violence. Earlier, state-run TV called the more widely used figures from AAPP "fake" news, even though the highly regarded Thailand-based monitoring group often includes the victims' names, ages and photographs. It also details how and where they died as part of its tally, helping bolster the credibility of those numbers.

Ko Bo Kyi, the group's co-founder, noted the junta also claimed hundreds — instead of thousands — died during some of the country's biggest pro-democracy protests in 1988. He added that, just as in the past, their goal now is to maintain a climate of fear and uncertainty that immobilizes people and breaks their will.

"They believe if they kill, torture, and arrest the protesters, they can stop the demonstrations," he said.

But access to technology and social media since the recent military takeover could eventually be used to help build an international criminal case against the junta, while also making it difficult for foreign donors and developed nations to turn a blind eye to what could one day be classified as crimes against humanity.

"It's a whole new ballgame in terms of evidence in a way that will make prosecution possible many years from now if need be," said Richard Dicker, International Justice director at the nonprofit Human Rights Watch, noting that video footage from smartphones has also been used in other uprisings and conflicts, including crimes committed in Syria. "That wouldn't have been viable (in the past) because the evidence would have disappeared."

Still, despite the fact that security forces are aware their actions are being filmed, posted online, and seen around the world, they have continued their attacks on civilians unabated. Dicker said authoritarian governments have long silenced their opponents.

Normally, he added, these kinds of atrocities occur at night in the shadows. "What's new is that it is taking place on the streets and in public view."

Senators try to salvage legislation on Jan. 6 commission

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senators labored to find a path forward for legislation creating a commission on the Jan. 6 insurrection, debating potential changes in a long-shot attempt to overcome growing GOP opposition.

Republican Sen. Susan Collins and Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin were leading the informal talks Tuesday, according to two people familiar with the effort. The talks were focusing on two issues that Republican senators have cited for their opposition to the House-passed legislation to create the commission — ensuring that the panel's staff is evenly split between the parties and that its work does not spill over into the midterm election year.

Collins and Manchin have traded potential changes to the bill and have consulted with other senators as part of the effort, according to the two people and another person with knowledge of the negotiations. The three people spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private talks.

The House bill already attempts to address those two issues, requiring the Democratic-appointed chair to consult with Republicans when hiring staff, and setting an end date of Dec. 31, 2021, for the commission to issue its findings. And the commissioners would be evenly split between the parties, with five Democrats and five Republicans. But many Republicans have still said they don't trust it will be a bipartisan effort, threatening the chances of a truly independent look at the violent attack on the Capitol by a mob of former President Donald Trump's supporters.

Absent an agreement on changes, Republicans are expected to block the bill whenever Democrats bring it up for a vote, potentially as soon as this week. Only a handful of GOP senators have indicated they will vote for it, and Democrats appear to be far short of the 10 Republicans they need to pass the legislation.

In a statement with Arizona Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, a fellow moderate Democrat, Manchin said that the attack was "horrific" and that the bipartisan commission is a "critical step."

"We implore our Senate Republican colleagues to work with us to find a path forward on a commission

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 38 of 74

to examine the events of January 6th," the two senators said.

Some of the Republican senators who have indicated support, even without the changes, have said they would like to see tweaks just to try to bring more of their colleagues on board.

"I know it's going to take a little bit of evolution, so I'd like to see what that evolution looks like," said Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, who said last week that he's inclined to support the House bill. "I think we could address concerns and make it a lot easier for folks to support it."

North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis said that he had received text of a proposal from Collins, but that he was still "unlikely" to support the the bill. He said he believes the year-end deadline is unrealistic.

It's unclear if Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., who has said he will hold a vote on the House bill "soon," would be open to changing the legislation. He has repeatedly said that the vote will show "where every member stands" on the insurrection, during which rioters beat police, broke through windows and doors and sent lawmakers running for their lives.

Schumer said Tuesday that "obviously we'll look at any proposal, but it can't just undo the commission." He said he had heard of one proposal that suggested a separate Republican staff, but "you can't have a commission with two warring staffs."

Congress "is not going to just sweep Jan. 6 under the rug," Schumer said, even if it is bad politics for Republicans in the 2022 elections.

The talks come as Republicans have struggled over whether to support the bill — and with how to respond to the insurrection in general as many in their party have remained loyal to Trump. The former president told his supporters the morning of Jan. 6 to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat and has repeatedly said the election was stolen, even though his claims have been refuted by courts and election officials across the country.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell voted in February to acquit Trump of inciting the insurrection after the House impeached him, but gave a speech immediately after that vote saying that the former president was "practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of that day." And he said last week that he was "open" to the House bill that would form a commission, but he came out the next day against it.

McConnell said Tuesday that the House bill, which received 35 Republican votes, was a "purely political exercise." And he pointed to his party's political future as loyalty to Trump has become a test for many voters.

Democrats would like to litigate the former president's actions and "continue to debate things that have been done in the past," McConnell said.

Republicans have also pointed to a bipartisan Senate report that is expected to be released next month, saying that will be sufficient to fix security problems in the Capitol. The report by the Senate Rules Committee and the Senate Homeland and Governmental Affairs Committee is expected to focus on the mistakes made by law enforcement and the security command at the Capitol, which was overwhelmed as hundreds of Trump's supporters broke in.

Senate Homeland Chair Gary Peters, D-Mich., said that his panel's report will be important but that it was intended to identify ways to quickly secure the Capitol. There is more work to do, he said.

A commission "would be able to do a deeper dive into what led up to the attack on the Capitol, and be able to really spend the kind of time necessary to do a very thorough evaluation," Peters said.

AP FACT CHECK: House GOP falsely blames Biden for gas prices

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Heading into the Memorial Day travel weekend, House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy and other members of his party are falsely blaming President Joe Biden for higher gasoline and lumber costs.

Gas prices have risen in recent weeks because a key pipeline was forced to close after a cyberattack. And lumber shortages — which existed during former President Donald Trump's administration — were

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 39 of 74

worsened by an unexpected housing boom.

Shortages have bedeviled the economy this spring, but most economists attribute the bulk of them to the difficulties of restarting the U.S. and global economies.

A look at the claims and reality:

MCCARTHY: "Despite gas prices being at historic lows this time last year, the average price for a gallon of gas is currently an astounding \$3.10. That's the highest it's been since 2014, the last time Joe Biden was in the White House." — blog post on Monday.

REPUBLICANS on the HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE: "Biden's policies have led to the highest gas prices in six years." — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: Biden's policies aren't behind the price increases. Gas prices are up because of a rapid and unexpected bounce-back in demand, and because of lingering problems from the forced shutdown early this month of the Colonial Pipeline, which provides 45% of the fuel consumed on the East Coast.

McCarthy's comparison to a year ago is also misleading. Gasoline prices didn't fall at the time because of the Trump administration, as Trump often claims; they plunged because of the coronavirus forcing people to abandon their offices, schools, business trips and vacations. Underscoring the connection to the pandemic shutdown, U.S. gas prices were at their lowest in April 2020 when people were staying home most but have mostly risen since then, according to U.S. Energy Information Administration, even when Trump was still in office.

In recent weeks, the biggest factor has been the cyberattack on the Colonial Pipeline. Even though it has been back in operation for nearly two weeks, many states, mostly in the South, still haven't fully recovered.

Roughly one-quarter of gas stations in North and South Carolina and Georgia are without gas, according to GasBuddy.com, which tracks gas prices nationwide. In Florida, 9% of stations have run out and in Tennessee, it's 14%. Overall, more than 6,000 stations have run out, Gas Buddy's Patrick DeHaan says.

Prices have also increased because the economy has reopened much more quickly than most analysts expected. Stimulus payments to American households, including \$1,400 checks that were distributed in March, have helped Americans ramp up spending.

Also noteworthy is while gas prices are at their highest level in six years, oil prices are still slightly below where they were in 2018. That suggests oil supplies are adequate and the refining and distribution of gasoline — through such networks as the Colonial Pipeline — are the problem.

RONNA MCDANIEL, head of the Republican National Committee: "... Lumber prices have increased 400%. We have real problems ... (House Speaker Nancy) Pelosi will do anything not to talk about the Biden failures." — tweet May 20.

THE FACTS: She's also wrong to link rising lumber prices to Biden "failures." This spike as well is related to rising demand and a sharp economic rebound.

At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, sawmills actually cut their output of lumber, anticipating that sales of new homes would slow, according to economists at TD Bank. Instead, Americans — and families in other countries — sought more room during the quarantine and bought new homes or sought to renovate. That pushed up demand for lumber, even as supply was reduced, sending lumber prices higher.

The National Association of Homebuilders has pointed to insufficient domestic production dating back to Trump for the increases.

"When prices began their historic rise in August 2020, NAHB reached out extensively to the Trump administration, members of Congress and to lumber mills calling for prompt action to address supply shortages that were harming small businesses, home builders and ultimately, the overall economy" and is continuing to do so under the Biden administration, according to the group's website.

Some of the price gains in lumber and other commodities reflect strong consumer demand for goods like housing and cars, which is actually a good sign for the economy. Most officials at the Federal Reserve, the agency charged with keeping inflation in check, have repeatedly said that inflation will tick up as the country reopens, but the increases will likely be temporary, as supply bottlenecks are worked out.

Countries eager to reopen to travel as pandemic recedes

By DAVID KOENIG and MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS Associated Press

Countries reliant on tourism are racing to reopen borders and revive economies decimated by the pandemic.

The World Travel & Tourism Council estimates that the sector lost nearly \$4.5 trillion and 62 million jobs last year. Airlines alone lost \$126 billion last year and are on track to lose another \$48 billion this year, according to their largest trade group.

The rollout of vaccines against COVID-19 is giving government officials in many countries new confidence to welcome visitors. But time is critical.

"Summer is a strong season for most markets, particularly Europe and the U.K. We really hope to see restrictions ease," said Virginia Messina, interim leader of the World Travel & Tourism Council.

The patchwork of rules around the globe can be hard to follow for anyone planning a trip. Cyprus, for instance, has restrictions in place for countries deemed as higher risk, requiring arriving passengers to have a negative PCR test that's valid 72 hours prior to their departure and to undergo a new test upon arrival. They also have to self-isolate in Cyprus until their test results are issued.

Constantinos Victoras, general manager of NissiBlu Hotel, situated near Ayia Napa's famed white-sand beach, says even though the infection rate in Cyprus has dropped significantly in the last two weeks, it won't be until late June when things will be clear enough for tour operators and airlines to ramp up bookings.

"Uncertainty is too great right now," Victoras said.

Agatha and Simon Godurkiewicz of Sweden, said they chose to holiday on the island out of fatigue with the pandemic, and that people simply want to get on with their lives and return to some semblance of normality.

"We're tired of the virus situation," said Agatha Godurkiewicz. "It was panic at the start of the pandemic but it's become too much now."

Here's how different regions are trying to reopen to travel:

EUROPE

Europe has been opening slowly, testing the patience of Mediterranean countries that rely heavily on tourism, including Greece, Spain, and Turkey. That is changing now, as European Union ambassadors agreed last week to allow in visitors who are fully vaccinated or are from a now-expanded list of countries whose citizens are deemed to be safe.

EU member countries still have to approve the changes, and it's not clear exactly when they would take effect.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said Friday that Spain will let British and Japanese visitors enter the country starting Monday if they have been vaccinated and people from other countries, including the United States, on June 7.

Tourists are already beginning to show up in Greece after authorities there decided this month to accept vaccination and test certificates from the European Union and 21 other countries.

On the Greek island of Naxos, business owners began pulling tables and chairs out of storage, power-washing wooden decks and reopening once-jammed seaside tavernas.

"People here are optimistic and, indeed, there have been many bookings in the last two weeks," Naxos Mayor Dimitris Lianos said. "There could be a significant comeback of the tourist season even in the latter half of the year. I dare to say it."

Croatia has also reopened — one of the few spots in Europe that's easy for Americans to visit. Delta Air Lines and United Airlines have announced direct flights from New York to Dubrovnik this summer.

ASIA

The virus is surging again across parts of Asia, causing several nations to halt cautious steps they had been taking to reopen.

Hong Kong and Singapore postponed a quarantine-free "travel bubble" for a second time after a new

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 41 of 74

outbreak, and Hong Kong lengthened mandatory quarantines for many unvaccinated visitors. China set up checkpoints at toll booths, airports and train stations in Liaoning province, site of new cases this month — travelers must show proof of a recent negative test for the virus.

Thailand, which closed its borders and managed to keep outbreaks under control for most of last year, gradually began allowing entry to some foreign visitors in the fall under strict controls. But the country reversed course when it became overwhelmed by its worst outbreak in late March.

Bangkok closed entertainment venues and parks, ordered more people to work from home, and banned outdoor dining. Streets in the capital and many of Thailand's resorts are nearly deserted, and people who have lost tourism-related jobs are second-guessing the authorities.

"I am very angry with the government. They should have done better," said Narong, a worker in a Bangkok bar who declined to give his surname for fear of getting in trouble.

MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

At the height of the pandemic last year, the United Arab Emirates closed its borders and shuttered airports to travelers. The capital, Abu Dhabi, still has strict measures including mandatory quarantines even for fully vaccinated residents returning from certain countries. But the UAE's biggest city, Dubai, has opened its doors to travelers since last July with few restrictions beyond a negative COVID-19 test.

Dubai — home to the world's busiest airport for international travel — is courting visitors fleeing lockdowns in Europe with open beaches, bars, hotel pools, restaurants, movie theaters, theme parks and spas. Social distancing and mask mandates are in place.

Meanwhile, the Gulf's largest country of Saudi Arabia is not permitting tourists into the country. Saudi citizens, who have largely been banned from travel since March 2020, are allowed to travel abroad starting this month if they have been vaccinated or recently recovered from the virus.

Egypt is trying to draw more foreign tourists even as it deals with a new wave of infections. It exempted beaches, cafes and restaurants tied to tourist hotels from new restrictions, like an earlier curfew and the closure of public beaches and parks during the Eid holiday. It even lowered the cost of tourist visas, although it still requires a negative COVID-19 test before entering the country.

LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN

Visitors to the tourism-dependent Caribbean tumbled by two-thirds last year to levels not seen since the 1980s. Bermuda was among the hardest hit, suffering an 84% drop.

A handful of islands, including Bonaire, Martinique and Montserrat, still ban travel from most countries. Elsewhere, tourists are trickling back under requirements that include electronic monitoring. Some islands, including St. Vincent and the Grenadines, have created "bubble resorts" to take tourists. Cruise lines are planning to shift ships from the U.S. to Caribbean ports this summer.

The U.S. Virgin Islands have been the region's success story this year, with arrivals down a modest 27% from January through March — much of that due to Americans who are forbidden in other places and can visit the U.S. territory without a passport if they avoid going through another country on the way.

Mexico has no flight restrictions, no requirements for visitors to pass a test or quarantine upon arrival. That has kept a reduced but steady flow of tourists, especially to beach destinations.

Mexico's laid-back approach, however, could be creating a backlash in the Caribbean coast state of Quintana Roo, which includes Cancún and Cozumel and where tourism accounts for 87% of the economy. Infection and hospitalization rates are rising, and stricter capacity limits have been imposed in public places.

"If nothing is done right now in reducing activities in public, this trend will grow and grow and grow and grow," the federal government's point man on the pandemic, Assistant Health Secretary Hugo López-Gatell, warned this month.

U.S. AND CANADA

The U.S. continues to bar most visitors from Europe, China, India, Brazil and other places. Inbound international travelers, including American citizens, must pass a COVID-19 test before boarding flights. The State Department discourages foreign trips, labeling most of the world's countries high-risk.

The border between the U.S. and Canada remains closed to nonessential travel through June 21.

Domestic air travel in the U.S. is nearly back to 2019 levels, but travel-industry groups are growing impatient with what they see as an overly timid response by the Biden administration to allowing more international visitors.

"As we continue to see vaccination rates increase and infection rates decrease, it's absolutely critical from an economic standpoint to reopen international travel," said Tori Emerson Barnes, executive vice president of the U.S. Travel Association.

Mexico: Builders bulldozing outskirts of Teotihuacan ruins

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The Mexican government said Tuesday that a private building project is destroying part of the outskirts of the pre-Hispanic ruin site of Teotihuacán, just north of Mexico City.

The Culture Department said it has repeatedly issued stop-work orders since March but the building crews have ignored them. The department estimated at least 25 ancient structures on the site are threatened, and it has filed a criminal complaint against those responsible.

Apparently, owners of farm plots are trying to turn the land into some sort of amusement park. The area is just outside and across a road from the site's famous boulevard and pyramid complex.

The U.N. international council on monuments and sites said bulldozers threaten to raze as many as 15 acres (7 hectares) at the site, which is a protected area. The council also said looting of artifacts had been detected.

"Teotihuacán is an emblematic site declared as World Heritage by the UNESCO, that represents the highest expression of the identity of the people of Mexico," the U.N. council said in a statement.

Mexico has long been unable to enforce building codes and zoning laws or stop illegal construction, in part because of the country's unwieldy, antiquated legal system.

The destruction so close to the capital raises questions about Mexico's ability to protect its ancient heritage sites. Teotihuacan is the country's most visited archaeological site, with over 2.6 million visitors per year, and it has hundreds of smaller, more remote and often unexplored sites.

Teotihuacan is best known for its twin Temples of the Sun and Moon, but it was actually a large city that housed over 100,000 inhabitants and covered around 8 square miles (20 sq. kilometers).

The still mysterious city was one of the largest in the world at its apex between 100 B.C. and A.D. 750. But it was abandoned before the rise of the Aztecs in the 14th century.

Even its true name remains unclear. Its current name was given to it by the Aztecs.

But the Aztecs may have in fact called the city "Teohuacan" — literally "the city of the sun" — rather than Teotihuacan, which means "city of the gods" or "place where men become gods."

The Pyramids of the Sun or Moon used to draw tens of thousands of visitors for the spring and fall equinoxes each year, before the coronavirus pandemic hit.

New grand jury seated for next stage of Trump investigation

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York prosecutors have convened a special grand jury to consider evidence in a criminal investigation into former President Donald Trump's business dealings, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The development signals that the Manhattan district attorney's office was moving toward seeking charges as a result of its two-year investigation, which included a lengthy legal battle to obtain Trump's tax records.

The person familiar with the matter was not authorized to speak publicly and did so on condition of anonymity. The news was first reported by The Washington Post.

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. is conducting a wide-ranging investigation into a variety of matters such as hush-money payments paid to women on Trump's behalf, property valuations and employee compensation.

The Democratic prosecutor has been using an investigative grand jury through the course of his probe to issue subpoenas and obtain documents. That panel kept working while other grand juries and court

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 43 of 74

activities were shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The investigation includes scrutiny of Trump's relationship with his lenders; a land donation he made to qualify for an income tax deduction; and tax write-offs his company claimed on millions of dollars in consulting fees it paid.

The new grand jury could eventually be asked to consider returning indictments. While working on that case, it also will be hearing other matters. The Post reported that the grand jury will meet three days a week for six months.

Trump contends the investigation is a "witch hunt."

"This is purely political, and an affront to the almost 75 million voters who supported me in the Presidential Election, and it's being driven by highly partisan Democrat prosecutors," Trump said in a statement.

Vance's office declined to comment.

The new grand jury is the latest sign of increasing momentum in the criminal investigation into the Republican ex-president and his company, the Trump Organization.

Attorney General Letitia James said last week that she assigned two lawyers to work with Vance's office on the probe after her civil investigation into Trump evolved into a criminal matter.

James, a Democrat, said her office also is continuing its civil investigation into Trump. She did not say what prompted her office to expand its investigation into a criminal probe.

In recent months, Vance hired former mafia prosecutor Mark Pomerantz to help run the investigation and has been interviewing witnesses, including Trump's former personal lawyer, Michael Cohen.

Vance declined to run for reelection and will leave office at the end of the year, meaning the Trump case is likely to pass to his successor in some form. An election next month is all but certain to determine who that will be.

Trump said in a statement last week that he's being "unfairly attacked and abused by a corrupt political system." He contends the investigations are part of a Democratic plot to silence his voters and block him from running for president again.

In February, the U.S. Supreme Court buoyed Vance's investigation by clearing the way for the prosecutor to enforce a subpoena on Trump's accounting firm and obtain eight years of tax returns and related documents for the former president, the Trump Organization and other Trump entities.

The documents are protected by grand jury secrecy rules and are not expected to be made public.

Vance's investigation has appeared to focus in recent weeks on Trump's longtime finance chief, Allen Weisselberg. His former daughter-in-law, Jen Weisselberg, is cooperating with both inquiries.

She's given investigators reams of tax records and other documents as they look into whether some Trump employees were given off-the-books compensation, such as apartments or school tuition.

Allen Weisselberg was subpoenaed in James' civil investigation and testified twice last year. His lawyer declined to comment when asked Tuesday if he had been subpoenaed to testify before the new grand jury.

A message seeking comment was left with Jen Weisselberg's lawyer.

Jolie says judge in Pitt divorce won't let children testify

By ANDREW DALTON and JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Angelina Jolie criticized a judge who is deciding on child custody in her divorce with Brad Pitt, saying in a court filing that the judge refused to allow their children to testify.

Jolie, who has sought to disqualify Judge John Ouderkirk from the divorce case, said in the filing Monday that he declined to hear evidence she says is relevant to the children's safety and well-being before issuing a tentative ruling. The documents don't elaborate on what that evidence may be.

"Judge Ouderkirk denied Ms. Jolie a fair trial, improperly excluding her evidence relevant to the children's health, safety, and welfare, evidence critical to making her case," according to the filing in California's Second District Court of Appeal.

The actress also said the judge "has failed to adequately consider" a section of the California courts code, which says it is detrimental to the best interest of the child if custody is awarded to a person with a

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 44 of 74

history of domestic violence. Her filing did not give details about what it was referring to, but her lawyers submitted a document under seal in March that purportedly offers additional information.

Jolie sought a divorce in 2016, days after a disagreement broke out on private flight ferrying the actors and their children from France to Los Angeles. Pitt was accused of being abusive toward his then-15-year-old son during the flight, but investigations by child welfare officials and the FBI were closed with no charges being filed against the actor. Jolie's attorney said at the time that she sought a divorce "for the health of the family."

Her new filing says the judge has "refused to hear the minor teenagers' input as to their experiences, needs, or wishes as to their custody fate," citing a California code that says a child 14 or over should be allowed to testify if they want to.

Three of Jolie and Pitt's six children are teenagers, 17-year-old Pax, 16-year-old Zahara, and 14-year-old Shiloh. The oldest, Maddox, is 19 and not subject to the custody decision. They also have 12-year-old twins, Vivienne and Knox.

In response to Jolie's filing, Pitt's attorneys said, "Ouderkirk has conducted an extensive proceeding over the past six months in a thorough, fair manner and reached a tentative ruling and order after hearing from experts and percipient witnesses."

Pitt's filing said the judge found Jolie's testimony "lacked credibility in many important areas, and the existing custody order between the parties must be modified, per Mr. Pitt's request, in the best interests of the children."

It says Jolie's objections and further delays in reaching an arrangement would "work grave harm upon the children, who will be further denied permanence and stability."

It's not clear what the current custody arrangement is because the court seals most files. When the divorce process began, Pitt sought joint custody and Jolie sought primary physical custody — meaning the children would live more than half the time with her. But changes have been made that have not been made public.

Peter Harvey, a lawyer for Jolie who is close to the case but not directly involved, said the actress "supports joint custody" but the situation is complicated and he can't go into detail because the court proceedings are under seal.

Divorce lawyers for both sides declined to comment on the new filings.

Harvey told The Associated Press that Jolie's family struggles have prompted her to take a more active role in changing the law's approach to custody issues.

"Ms. Jolie has been working privately for four and a half years to both heal her family and to fight for improvements to the system to ensure that other families do not experience what hers has endured," said Harvey, a former attorney general of New Jersey who has been working with Jolie on policy issues.

Jolie has sought to disqualify Ouderkirk, a private judge she and Pitt chose to maintain their privacy, arguing that he has an improper business relationship with one of Pitt's attorneys.

She said in Monday's filing that if the tentative custody decision is made final by Ouderkirk, she will appeal it.

Jolie, 45, and Pitt, 57, were among Hollywood's most prominent couples for 12 years. They had been married for two years when Jolie filed for divorce. They were declared divorced in April 2019, after their lawyers asked for a judgment that allowed a married couple to be declared single while other issues remained, including finances and child custody.

Grief, smiles 1 year after Floyd death as family meets Biden

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — They mourned together and laughed together in the Oval Office — and spoke of what President Joe Biden called "the hard reality that racism has long torn us apart."

The first anniversary of George Floyd's death was supposed to be a milestone moment in Washington, a time to mark the passage of a policing law to make criminal justice more just. Instead, Floyd's family

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 45 of 74

met with Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris at the White House on Tuesday to commemorate their loss and continue to push for legislation.

"It was a remembrance of what happened to my brother," Philonise Floyd said of the meeting with Biden, calling the president "a genuine guy."

Biden told them "he just wants the bill to be meaningful and that it holds George's legacy intact," said George Floyd's nephew Brandon Williams. Williams said Biden showed "genuine concern" for how the family is doing.

Biden took time during the meeting to play with George Floyd's young daughter Gianna, who enjoyed some ice cream and Cheetos, the president said, after she told him she was hungry.

Later, she stood before the cameras outside the White House and softly called out, "say his name." Family members chanted in return, "George Floyd."

A sister, Bridgett Floyd, stayed away, aiming to come to Washington only when there is a bill to be signed into law.

"That's when I will make my way to D.C.," she said from Minnesota.

She and several other family members joined Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and others marking the anniversary in the city where George Floyd died, and other events took place in New York, Los Angeles and other cities in the U.S. and abroad.

Speaking to reporters at the end of the day, Biden said he had spoken with congressional negotiators and was "hopeful that sometime after Memorial Day we'll have an agreement."

With the proposed George Floyd Justice in Policing Act still pending, his family began the day meeting with legislators and headed back to Capitol Hill later from the White House.

They met Tuesday morning with Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Rep. Karen Bass, D-Calif., who ushered the bill through the House. The Floyds met late in the day with Democrat Cory Booker of New Jersey and Republican Tim Scott of South Carolina, the Senate's lead negotiators on the bill. The family then visited Black Lives Matter Plaza, the site near the White House where protesters gathered throughout last summer.

"I was pleasantly surprised and encouraged by their thoughts," Scott said of the family. "I wish I was negotiating with them," he said, though he also repeated the line of the day that progress was being made.

Earlier at the Capitol alongside Pelosi and other lawmakers, Philonise Floyd declared of his brother: "Today is the day that he set the world in a rage."

"We need to be working together to make sure that people do not live in fear in America any more," he said.

The Floyd family's meetings with some of Washington's most powerful officials produced plenty of comments about optimism and moving forward. Nonetheless, the lack of a final deal contrasted sharply with advocates' high hopes just last month, when former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin's conviction for Floyd's killing and then Biden's nationally televised speech to Congress calling for action by May 25 gave supporters a sense of momentum.

The current standoff underscores the political complexities of an issue that's a top concern for many of both parties' voters — Democrats' progressives and voters of color, and Republicans' law-and-order conservatives.

Floyd died May 25, 2020, after police officer Chauvin knelt on his neck for more than nine minutes while arresting him. His death sparked months of nationwide racial protests, a worldwide global reckoning over racism and a renewed debate over police reform. Chauvin was convicted last month of multiple charges.

Though a legislative response has been elusive, negotiators have displayed a steady solidarity that's unusual for such talks, never publicly sniping at each other.

It's a high-profile legislative fight in which Biden has notably taken a back seat, preferring to leave the work of crafting a compromise to lawmakers on Capitol Hill, in contrast to his fevered advocacy, both public and private, for his infrastructure bill and COVID-19 relief package.

"We have been respecting the space needed for negotiators to have these discussions," White House

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 46 of 74

press secretary Jen Psaki said Tuesday.

She and congressional negotiators declined to offer a new deadline for reaching an agreement. Bass, the top House Democratic bargainer, said talks would continue "until we get the job done." Republican Scott said negotiations "have a long way to go still, but it's starting to take form."

The Democratic-controlled House approved a sweeping bill in March that would make it easier for individual police officers to be sued and charged with crimes. It would also ban chokeholds, limit no-knock warrants and create a national database of officers with histories of complaints and disciplinary problems.

That bill has gone nowhere in the Senate, where the 50 Democrats will need support from at least 10 Republicans to overcome a bill-killing filibuster.

GOP lawmakers have preferred more modest changes.

Floyd family lawyer Ben Crump said Biden told them "he doesn't want to sign a bill that doesn't have substance and meaning.

"So he is going to be patient, to make sure it's the right bill, not a rushed bill," Crump said.

White House advisers say Biden and his team have been in frequent touch with Capitol Hill negotiators over the legislation, but they believe this is an issue in which a high-profile public campaign by the president may do more harm than good.

But some activists say they'd like to see the president be more outspoken in advocating for the bill.

"President Biden has left it to members of Congress, and it's in their hands right now. But the president will need to step up to make sure we get it across the finish line," said Judith Browne Dianis, executive director of the Advancement Project, a racial justice organization.

The chief stumbling block has been "qualified immunity," which generally shields individual officers from civil lawsuits. Democrats have wanted to eliminate that protection while Republican Senate negotiator Scott has proposed retaining immunity for officers but allowing lawsuits against police departments.

While progressives and many criminal justice reform advocates are insistent that the bill eliminate protections for individual officers, some Democrats, most notably House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn of South Carolina and Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin of Illinois, have said they could see a compromise on the issue. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky has said he wouldn't support any bill that ended qualified immunity.

While the president is waiting for the bill to hit his desk, Biden's aides have said the administration is doing what it can to deal with the incidents of police misconduct.

The Biden administration has signaled that the Justice Department will shift its focus to prioritize civil rights and policing reform after a tumultuous four years under President Donald Trump. In the past few weeks, the department has announced sweeping investigations into the police in Minneapolis and Louisville and brought federal civil rights charges against the officers involved in Floyd's death, including Chauvin.

On Tuesday, as Floyd's family was preparing to meet with Biden, the Senate voted to confirm Kristen Clarke as assistant attorney general for civil rights, the first Black woman to hold the position.

Face to face: June summit for Biden, Putin as tensions rise

By AAMER MADHANI, JONATHAN LEMIRE and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden and Russia's Vladimir Putin agreed Tuesday to meet next month in Geneva, a face-to-face encounter the White House hopes will help bring some predictability to a fraught relationship that's only worsened in the first months of the Democratic administration.

The June 16 summit is being tacked on to the end of Biden's first international trip as president: He'll also visit Britain for a meeting of Group of Seven world leaders and attend a NATO summit in Brussels.

The agenda is expected to include discussion of Russian action in neighboring Ukraine, this week's forced diversion of a Lithuania-bound flight by Russian-ally Belarus, efforts by both nations to stem the coronavirus pandemic and more. White House press secretary Jen Psaki said no preconditions were set for the meeting.

The White House is setting low expectations for the meeting. It isn't expected to lead to any major

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 47 of 74

breakthroughs — let alone the sort of reset of U.S.-Russian relations pursued by Biden's old boss, Barack Obama, or the curious bonhomie of the Donald Trump-Putin relationship.

Instead, officials say Biden — who as a candidate and early in his presidency has warned that he expects the relationship to remain complicated — is looking to find some common ground with his adversary on the path forward.

The Kremlin, for its part, said the presidents will discuss "the current state and prospects of Russian-U.S. relations, strategic stability issues and the acute problems on the international agenda, including interaction in dealing with the coronavirus pandemic and settlement of regional conflicts."

Biden first proposed the summit in a call with Putin in April as his administration prepared to levy a second round of sanctions against Russian officials during his young presidency. And the U.S. levied more sanctions last week on Russian companies and ships for their work on a European natural gas pipeline called Nord Stream 2. U.S. officials say the pipeline threatens European energy security, heightens Russia's influence and poses risks to Ukraine and Poland in bypassing both countries.

The White House has repeatedly said it is seeking a "stable and predictable" relationship with the Russians. At the same time, it has called out Putin on allegations that the Russians interfered in last year's U.S. presidential election and that the Kremlin was behind the SolarWinds hacking campaign in which Russian hackers infected widely used software with malicious code, enabling them to access the networks of at least nine U.S. agencies.

The Biden administration has also criticized Russia for the arrest and jailing of opposition leader Alexei Navalny and publicly acknowledged that it has low to moderate confidence that Russian agents were offering bounties to the Taliban to attack U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

Geneva with its bucolic vistas of the Mont Blanc peak — the highest in Western Europe — and a reputation as both a hub for international institutions and an icon of Switzerland's much ballyhooed neutrality offers an intriguing backdrop for the summit.

The city last hosted American and Russian leaders in 1985, when President Ronald Reagan met Mikhail Gorbachev — a summit considered short on substance but critical in fostering what would become mostly friendly relations between the two men through their tenures.

The Biden administration announced sanctions in March against several mid-level and senior Russian officials, along with more than a dozen businesses and other entities, over a nearly fatal nerve-agent attack on Navalny in August 2020 and his subsequent jailing. Navalny returned to Russia days before Biden's Jan. 20 inauguration and was quickly arrested.

Last month, the administration announced it was expelling 10 Russian diplomats and sanctioning dozens of Russia companies and individuals in response to the SolarWinds and election interference allegations.

But even as Biden moved forward with the latest round of sanctions, he acknowledged that he held back on taking tougher action — an attempt to send the message to Putin that he still held hope that the U.S. and Russia could come to an understanding for the rules of the game in their adversarial relationship.

Sen. Ben Sasse, a Nebraska Republican, criticized Biden's decision to meet with Putin as "weak." He raised concerns about Russia's treatment of Navalny and tepid response to Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, a Putin ally whose country this week ordered the diversion of a Greece-to-Lithuania commercial flight in order to arrest a dissident journalist.

The senator also criticized Biden for sparing ally Germany sanctions over Nord Stream 2, adamantly opposed by U.S. lawmakers on both sides of the aisle.

"We're rewarding Putin with a summit?" Sasse said. "Instead of treating Putin like a gangster who fears his own people, we're giving him his treasured Nord Stream 2 pipeline and legitimizing his actions with a summit."

Biden in a brief exchange with reporters Tuesday afternoon defended the decision to waive sanctions against Germany for the pipeline. He noted that it is nearly complete and that punishing an ally would have been "counterproductive."

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Angela Merkel welcomed news of the summit. "Diplomacy only has a

chance if you talk to each other," Merkel said.

During his campaign for the White House, Biden described Russia as the "biggest threat" to U.S. security and alliances, and he disparaged Trump for his cozy relationship with Putin.

Trump avoided direct confrontation with Putin and often sought to play down the Russian leader's malign actions. Their sole summit, held in July 2018 in Helsinki, was marked by Trump's refusal to side with U.S. intelligence agencies over Putin's denials of Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Weeks into his presidency, Biden said in an address before State Department employees that he told Putin in their first call "that the days of the United States rolling over in the face of Russia's aggressive actions...are over."

In March, Biden in an ABC News interview responded affirmatively when asked by interviewer George Stephanopoulos whether he thought Putin was "a killer."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Biden's comment demonstrated he "definitely does not want to improve relations" with Russia.

GOP senators ready \$1T infrastructure counteroffer to Biden

By LISA MASCARO and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans revived negotiations Tuesday over President Joe Biden's sweeping investment plan, preparing a \$1 trillion infrastructure proposal that would be funded with COVID-19 relief money as a counteroffer to the White House ahead of a Memorial Day deadline toward a bipartisan deal.

The Republicans said they would disclose details of the new offer by Thursday, sounding upbeat after both sides had panned other offers.

At the White House, press secretary Jen Psaki declined to address the new plan, but said: "We expect this week to be a week of progress."

Talks over the infrastructure investment are at a crossroads as Biden reaches for a top legislative priority. The White House is assessing whether the president can strike a bipartisan deal with Republicans on his American Jobs Plan or whether he will try to go it alone with Democrats if no progress is made in the days ahead.

Yet the administration and the GOP senators remain far apart over the size and scope of the investment needed to reboot the nation's roads, bridges and broadband — but also, as Biden sees it, the child care centers and green energy investments needed for a 21st-century economy. They also can't agree on how to pay for it.

Biden had dropped his \$2.3 trillion opening bid to \$1.7 trillion, and Republicans had nudged their initial \$568 billion offer up by about \$50 billion late last week, but talks teetered as both sides complained the movement was insufficient.

The Republicans have uniformly rejected Biden's plan to pay for the investments by raising the corporate tax rate, from 21% to 28%. Instead, the GOP senators want to shift unspent COVID-19 relief funds to infrastructure, which may be a nonstarter for Democrats. Republicans also want to rely on gas taxes, tolls and other fees charged to drivers to pay for the highways and other infrastructure.

The Republicans said their new proposal would be aligned with what they discussed with Biden in their first Oval Office meeting almost two weeks ago.

"We are anxious to have a bipartisan agreement," said Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., who is leading the group of GOP negotiators.

A GOP aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private talks said the price tag would be \$1 trillion over eight years, paid for by tapping funds that have been allocated as part of COVID-19 relief but not yet spent. The aide said about \$700 billion remains in unspent virus aid.

Psaki declined to comment on the forthcoming GOP proposal, but Democrats on Capitol Hill were quick to rebuff dipping into coronavirus relief funds, particularly money that had been sent to the states and local governments that now seems less urgent as some jurisdictions reported better-than-expected balance sheets.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 49 of 74

The White House is expecting the Republican counteroffer by Thursday and doesn't want to prejudge what's in there. But a GOP plan to tap into rescue funds, aides believe, doesn't work because much of that money has already been exhausted, and it could also diminish the COVID-19 response.

"My view is that we gave that to the cities and states and counties with the understanding that it may take a little time for them to spend it," said Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., a longtime congressional budget expert. "I think it'd be a big mistake to try to claw that back."

As talks hit a stalemate late last week, it's unclear if this latest GOP offer will be enough to put negotiations back on track.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, who tapped Capito to lead the GOP effort, gave a nod to the latest offer, saying the idea of repurposing the COVID-19 funds was "good advice" from Larry Summers, a Harvard professor and Clinton-era treasury secretary. Summers suggested as much in a recent op-ed as some economists warn of rising inflation with the government spending.

But Republicans and the White House are eyeing each other warily in a high-stakes negotiation with far-reaching political ramifications whether they succeed or fail. "We are now very far apart," said Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming, a member of GOP leadership.

The Republican senators and aides have made no secret of their displeasure with the White House staff in this and other negotiations.

Publicly and privately, the Republicans say that while Biden appears willing to negotiate with the senators, his staff often changes course. They point to a similar dynamic during coronavirus aid talks when Biden seemed to agree with a group of GOP senators, only to have staff behind him shaking their heads no.

The Republicans are eager to publicly disclose Biden's comments to them as they make the case for their new offer ahead of the Memorial Day deadline.

Among Democrats, it's not lost on them that McConnell has said repeatedly that "100% of my focus" is on stopping Biden's agenda.

Adding to the mix, a bipartisan group that includes Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, is quietly working on other proposals, as a "backup," he said.

"This is going to feel like a tightrope walk all the way until it gets to Biden's desk," said Jim Kessler, executive vice president of Third Way, a centrist think tank.

The administration is signaling that it's important not just whether Biden can push his infrastructure and other proposals into law, but also how he does it. By this reasoning, voters — and some moderate Democratic lawmakers — are more likely to be on board if Biden at least tries for bipartisanship.

The West Wing believes its bargaining position is strong. Aides point to Biden's high poll numbers and the popularity of his proposals, all while believing that they have the option of muscling the infrastructure plan to passage under special budget reconciliation rules that require only a party-line vote.

But there is a growing sense of urgency within the White House and among Democrats. After a burst of legislative accomplishments, including the COVID-19 relief bill, the pace has slowed dramatically. And the future may hinge on a few select senators.

Psaki insisted no decisions had been made on whether the administration will go it alone as it awaits a counteroffer from Republicans. "We're not quite there yet," she said.

100 years after Tulsa Race Massacre, the damage remains

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — On a recent Sunday, Ernestine Alpha Gibbs returned to Vernon African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Not her body. She had left this Earth 18 years ago, at age 100. But on this day, three generations of her family brought Ernestine's keepsakes back to this place which meant so much to her. A place that was, like their matriarch, a survivor of a long-ago atrocity.

Albums containing black-and-white photos of the grocery business that has employed generations of Gibbsses. VHS cassette tapes of Ernestine reflecting on her life. Ernestine's high school and college diplomas, displayed in not-so-well-aged leather covers.

Trotton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 50 of 74

The diplomas were a point of pride. After her community was leveled by white rioters in 1921 -- after the gunfire, the arson, the pillaging -- the high school sophomore temporarily fled Tulsa with her family. "I thought I would never, ever, ever come back," she said in a 1994 home video.

But she did, and somehow found a happy ending.

"Even though the riot took away a lot, we still graduated," she said, a smile spreading across her face. "So, we must have stayed here and we must have done all right after that."

Not that the Gibbs family had it easy. And not that Black Tulsa ever really recovered from the devastation that took place 100 years ago, when nearly every structure in Greenwood, the fabled Black Wall Street, was flattened -- aside from Vernon AME.

The Tulsa Race Massacre is just one of the starkest examples of how Black wealth has been sapped, again and again, by racism and racist violence -- forcing generation after generation to start from scratch while shouldering the burdens of being Black in America.

All in the shadow of a Black paradise lost.

"Greenwood proved that if you had assets, you could accumulate wealth," said Jim Goodwin, publisher of the Oklahoma Eagle, the local Black newspaper established in Tulsa a year after the massacre.

"It was not a matter of intelligence, that the Black man was inferior to white men. It disproved the whole idea that racial superiority was a fact of life."

Prior to the massacre, only a couple of generations removed from slavery, unfettered Black prosperity in America was urban legend. But Tulsa's Greenwood district was far from a myth.

Many Black residents took jobs working for families on the white side of Tulsa, and some lived in detached servant quarters on weekdays. Others were shoeshine boys, chauffeurs, doormen, bellhops or maids at high-rise hotels, banks and office towers in downtown Tulsa, where white men who amassed wealth in the oil industry were kings.

But down on Black Wall Street -- derided by whites as "Little Africa" or "N-----town" -- Black workers spent their earnings in a bustling, booming city within a city. Black-owned grocery stores, soda fountains, cafés, barbershops, a movie theater, music venues, cigar and billiard parlors, tailors and dry cleaners, rooming houses and rental properties: Greenwood had it.

According to a 2001 report of the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, the Greenwood district also had 15 doctors, a chiropractor, two dentists, three lawyers, a library, two schools, a hospital, and two Black publishers printing newspapers for north Tulsans.

Tensions between Tulsa's Black and white populations inflamed when, on May 31, 1921, the white-owned Tulsa Tribune published a sensationalized report describing an alleged assault on Sarah Page, a 17-year-old white girl working as an elevator operator, by Dick Rowland, a 19-year-old Black shoeshine.

"Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in Elevator," read the Tribune's headline. The paper's editor, Richard Lloyd Jones, had previously run a story extolling the Ku Klux Klan for hewing to the principle of "supremacy of the white race in social, political and governmental affairs of the nation."

Rowland was arrested. A white mob gathered outside of the jail. Word that some in the mob intended to kidnap and lynch Rowland made it to Greenwood, where two dozen Black men had armed themselves and arrived at the jail to aid the sheriff in protecting the prisoner.

Their offer was rebuffed and they were sent away. But following a separate deadly clash between the lynch mob and the Greenwood men, white Tulsans took the sight of angry, armed Black men as evidence of an imminent Black uprising.

There were those who said that what followed was not as spontaneous as it seemed -- that the mob intended to drive Black people out of the city entirely, or at least to drive them further away from the city's white enclaves.

Over 18 hours, between May 31 and June 1, whites vastly outnumbering the Black militia carried out a scorched-earth campaign against Greenwood. Some witnesses claimed they saw and heard airplanes overhead firebombing and shooting at businesses, homes and people in the Black district.

Greton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 51 of 74

More than 35 city blocks were leveled, an estimated 191 businesses were destroyed, and roughly 10,000 Black residents were displaced from the neighborhood where they'd lived, learned, played, worked and prospered.

Although the state declared the massacre death toll to be only 36 people, most historians and experts who have studied the event estimate the death toll to be between 75 and 300. Victims were buried in unmarked graves that, to this day, are being sought for proper burial.

The toll on the Black middle class and Black merchants is clear. According to massacre survivor Mary Jones Parrish's 1922 book, R. T. Bridgewater, a Black doctor, returned to his home to find his high-end furniture piled in the street.

"My safe had been broken open, all of the money stolen," Bridgewater said. "I lost 17 houses that paid me an average of over \$425 per month."

Tulsa Star publisher Andrew J. Smitherman lost everything, except for the metal printing presses that didn't melt in the fires at his newspaper's offices. Today, some of his descendants wonder what could have been, if the mob had never destroyed the Smitherman family business.

"We'd be like the Murdochs or the Johnson family, you know, Bob Johnson who had BET," said Raven Majia Williams, a descendant of Smitherman's, who is writing a book about his influence on Black Democratic politics of his time.

"My great-grandfather was in a perfect position to become a media mogul," Williams said. "Black businesses were able to exist because they could advertise in his newspaper."

Smitherman moved on to Buffalo, New York, where he opened another newspaper. It was a struggle; eventually, after his death in 1961, the Empire Star went under.

"It wasn't a very large office, so I'd often see the bills," said his grandson, William Dozier, who worked there as a boy. "Many of them were marked past due. We didn't make a lot of money. He wasn't able to pass any money down to his daughters, although he loved them dearly."

After the fires in Greenwood were extinguished, the bodies buried in unmarked mass graves, and the survivors scattered, insurance companies denied most Black victims' loss claims totaling an estimated \$1.8 million. That's \$27.3 million in today's currency.

Over the years, the effects of the massacre took different shapes. Rebuilding in Greenwood began as soon as 1922 and continued through 1925, briefly bringing back some of Black Wall Street.

Then, urban renewal in the 1950s forced many Black businesses to relocate further into north Tulsa. Next came racial desegregation that allowed Black customers to shop for goods and services beyond the Black community, financially harming the existing Black-owned business base. That was followed by economic downturns, and the construction of a noisy highway that cuts right through the middle of historic Greenwood.

Chief Egunwale Amusan, president of the African Ancestral Society in Tulsa, regularly gives tours around what's left. Greenwood was much more than what people hear in casual stories about it, he recently told a small tour group as they turned onto Greenwood Avenue in the direction of Archer Avenue.

Interstate 244 dissects the neighborhood like a Berlin wall. But it is easy for visitors to miss the engraved metal markers at their feet, indicating the location of a business destroyed in the massacre and whether it had ever reopened.

"H. Johnson Rooms, 314 North Greenwood, Destroyed 1921, Reopened," reads one marker.

"I've read every book, every document, every court record that you can possibly think of that tells the story of what happened in 1921," Amusan told the tour group in mid-April. "But none of them did real justice. This is sacred land, but it's also a crime scene."

No white person has ever been imprisoned for taking part in the massacre, and no Black survivor or descendant has been justly compensated for who and what they lost.

"What happened in Tulsa wasn't just unique to Tulsa," said the Rev. Robert Turner, the pastor of Vernon AME Church. "This happened all over the country. It was just that Tulsa was the largest. It damaged our

Tulsa Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 52 of 74

community. And we haven't rebounded since. I think it's past time that justice be done to atone for that."

Some Black-owned businesses operate today at Greenwood and Archer avenues. But it's indeed a shadow of what has been described in books and seen in century-old photographs of Greenwood in its heyday.

A \$30 million history center and museum, Greenwood Rising, will honor the legacy of Black Wall Street with exhibits depicting the district before and after the massacre, according to the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission. But critics have said the museum falls far short of delivering justice or paying reparations to living survivors and their descendants.

Tulsa's 1921 Black population of 10,000 grew to roughly 70,500 in 2019, according to a U.S. Census Bureau estimate; the median household income for Tulsa's Black households was an estimated \$30,955 in 2019, compared to \$55,278 for white households. In a city of an estimated 401,760 people, close to a third of Tulsans living below the poverty line in 2019 were Black, while 12% were white.

The disparities are no coincidence, local elected leaders often acknowledge. The inequalities also show up in business ownership demographics and educational attainment.

Attempts to force Tulsa and the state of Oklahoma to take some accountability for their role in the massacre suffered a major blow in 2005, when the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear survivors' and victim descendants' appeal of a lower federal court ruling. The courts had tossed out a civil lawsuit because, justices held, the plaintiffs had waited too long after the massacre to file it.

Now, a few living massacre survivors —106-year-old Lessie Benningfield Randle, 107-year-old Viola Fletcher, and 100-year-old Hughes Van Ellis — along with other victims' descendants are suing for reparations. The defendants include the local chamber of commerce, the city development authority and the county sheriff's department.

"Every time I think about the men and women that we've worked with, and knowing that they died without justice, it just crushes me," said Damario Solomon-Simmons, a native Tulsan who is a lead attorney on the lawsuit and founder of the Justice for Greenwood Foundation.

"They all believed that once the conspiracy of silence was pierced, and the world found out about the destruction, the death, the looting, the raping, the maiming, (and) the wealth that was stolen ... that they would get justice, that they would have gotten reparations." Solomon-Simmons said.

The lawsuit, which is brought under Oklahoma's public nuisance statute, seeks to establish a victims' compensation fund paid for by the defendants. It also demands payment of outstanding insurance policy claims that date back to the massacre.

Republican Mayor G.T. Bynum, who is white (Tulsa has never had a Black mayor), does not support paying reparations to massacre survivors and victims' descendants. Bynum said such a use of taxpayers' money would be unfair to Tulsans today.

"You'd be financially punishing this generation of Tulsans for something that criminals did a hundred years ago," Bynum said. "There are a lot of other areas of focus, when you talk about reparations. People talk about acknowledging the disparity that exists, and recognizing that there is work to do in addressing those disparities and making this city one of greater equality."

State Sen. Kevin Matthews, who is Black and chairs the massacre centennial commission, said no discussion of reparations can happen without reconciliation and healing. He believes the Greenwood Rising history center, planned for his legislative district, is a start.

"We talked to people in the community," Matthews said. "We wanted the story told first. So this is my first step, and I do agree that reparations should happen. Part of reparations is to repair the damage of even how the story was told."

Among the treasured keepsakes that came home to Vernon AME was a certificate of recent vintage that recognized Ernestine Gibbs as a survivor of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

But for Ernestine and her family, the real pride is not in survival. It is in surmounting disaster, and in carrying on a legacy of Black entrepreneurial spirit that their ancestors exemplified before and after the massacre.

After graduating from Langston University, Ernestine married LeRoy Gibbs. Even as she taught in the

Tulsa school system for 40 years, Ernestine and her husband opened a poultry and fish market in the rebuilt Greenwood in the 1940s. They sold turkeys to order during the holidays.

Carolyn Roberts, Ernestine's daughter, said although her parents lived with the trauma of the massacre, it never hindered their work ethic: "They survived the whole thing and bounced back."

Urban renewal in the late 1950s forced LeRoy and Ernestine to move Gibbs Fish & Poultry Market further into north Tulsa. The family purchased a shopping center, expanded the grocery market and operated other businesses there until they could no longer sustain it.

The shopping center briefly left family hands, but it fell into disrepair under a new owner, who later lost it to foreclosure. Grandson LeRoy Gibbs II and his wife, Tracy, repurchased the center in 2015 and revived it as the Gibbs Next Generation Center. The hope is that the following generation -- including LeRoy "Tripp" Gibbs III, now 12 -- will carry it on.

LeRoy II credits his grandmother, who not only built wealth and passed it on, but also showed succeeding generations how it was done. It was a lesson that few descendants of the victims of the race massacre had an opportunity to learn.

"The perseverance of it is what she tried to pass on to me," said LeRoy Gibbs II. "We were fortunate that we had Ernestine and LeRoy. ... They built their business."

Senators try to salvage legislation on Jan. 6 commission

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senators labored Tuesday to find a path forward for legislation creating a commission on the Jan. 6 insurrection, debating potential changes in a long-shot attempt to overcome growing GOP opposition.

Republican Sen. Susan Collins and Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin are leading the informal talks, according to two people familiar with the effort. The talks are, for now, focused on two issues that Republican senators have cited for their opposition to the House-passed legislation to create the commission — ensuring that the panel's staff is evenly split between the parties and making sure the commission's work does not spill over into the midterm election year.

Collins and Manchin have traded potential changes to the bill and have consulted with other senators as part of the effort, according to the two people and another person with knowledge of the negotiations. The three people spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private talks.

The House bill already attempts to address those two issues, requiring the Democratic-appointed chair to consult with Republicans when hiring staff, and setting an end date of Dec. 31, 2021, for the commission to issue its findings. And the commissioners would be evenly split between the parties, with five Democrats and five Republicans. But many Republicans have still said they don't trust it will be a bipartisan effort, threatening the chances of a truly independent look at the violent attack on the Capitol by a mob of former President Donald Trump's supporters.

Absent an agreement on changes, Republicans are expected to block the bill whenever Democrats bring it up for a vote, potentially as soon as this week. Only a handful of GOP senators have indicated they will vote for it, and Democrats appear to be far short of the 10 Republicans they need to pass the legislation.

In a statement with Arizona Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, a fellow moderate Democrat, Manchin said that the attack was "horrific" and that the bipartisan commission is a "critical step."

"We implore our Senate Republican colleagues to work with us to find a path forward on a commission to examine the events of January 6th," the two senators said.

Some of the Republican senators who have indicated support, even without the changes, have said they would like to see tweaks just to try to bring more of their colleagues on board.

"I know it's going to take a little bit of evolution, so I'd like to see what that evolution looks like," said Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, who said last week that he's inclined to support the House bill. "I think we could address concerns and make it a lot easier for folks to support it."

North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis said that he had received text of a proposal from Collins, but that he was

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 54 of 74

still “unlikely” to support the the bill. He said he believes the year-end deadline is unrealistic.

It’s unclear if Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., who has said he will hold a vote on the House bill “soon,” would be open to changing the legislation. He has repeatedly said that the vote will show “where every member stands” on the insurrection, during which rioters beat police, broke through windows and doors and sent lawmakers running for their lives.

Schumer said Tuesday that “obviously we’ll look at any proposal, but it can’t just undo the commission.” He said he had heard of one proposal that suggested a separate Republican staff, but “you can’t have a commission with two warring staffs.”

Congress “is not going to just sweep Jan. 6 under the rug,” Schumer said, even if it is bad politics for Republicans in the 2022 elections.

The talks come as Republicans have struggled over whether to support the bill — and with how to respond to the insurrection in general as many in their party have remained loyal to Trump. The former president told his supporters the morning of Jan. 6 to “fight like hell” to overturn his defeat and has repeatedly said the election was stolen, even though his claims have been refuted by courts and election officials across the country.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell voted in February to acquit Trump of inciting the insurrection after the House impeached him, but gave a speech immediately after that vote saying that the former president was “practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of that day.” And he said last week that he was “open” to the House bill that would form a commission, but he came out the next day against it.

McConnell said Tuesday that the House bill, which received 35 Republican votes, was a “purely political exercise.” And he pointed to his party’s political future as loyalty to Trump has become a test for many voters.

Democrats would like to litigate the former president’s actions and “continue to debate things that have been done in the past,” McConnell said.

Republicans have also pointed to a bipartisan Senate report that is expected to be released next month, saying that will be sufficient to fix security problems in the Capitol. The report by the Senate Rules Committee and the Senate Homeland and Governmental Affairs Committee is expected to focus on the mistakes made by law enforcement and the security command at the Capitol, which was overwhelmed as hundreds of Trump’s supporters broke in.

Senate Homeland Chair Gary Peters, D-Mich., said that his panel’s report will be important but that it was intended to identify ways to quickly secure the Capitol. There is more work to do, he said.

A commission “would be able to do a deeper dive into what led up to the attack on the Capitol, and be able to really spend the kind of time necessary to do a very thorough evaluation,” Peters said.

Belarus’ isolation grows after journalist’s dramatic arrest

By YURAS KARMANAU and RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Belarus’ isolation deepened Tuesday as commercial jets avoided its airspace, the European Union worked up new sanctions, and officials expressed concern for the welfare of an opposition journalist who was arrested after being pulled off a plane that was diverted to Minsk in what the West called a state-sponsored hijacking.

The dramatic developments put a spotlight on Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko’s iron-fisted rule and suppression of dissent — but it was not clear what effect more sanctions or other measures would have.

“Additional sanctions? Will this be sufficient? I absolutely can’t say today,” said French President Emmanuel Macron. But, he added: “The unacceptable character of what happened ... justifies them.”

After his detention, opposition journalist Raman Pratasevich was seen in a brief video clip on Belarusian state television late Monday, speaking rapidly to say that he was confessing to some of the charges authorities have leveled against him.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 55 of 74

The spokesperson for the U.N.'s human rights office, Rupert Colville, said Pratasevich's appearance likely was not voluntary and that he seemed to have bruising to his face, although it was difficult to tell from the video.

Asked about the video, German Chancellor Angela Merkel agreed with Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson that it was "worrying and disturbing" and makes the EU demand for his release "all the more urgent." "And we will use all channels at our disposal to do this," she added.

The 26-year-old journalist and activist was arrested Sunday after Belarusian flight controllers ordered the Ryanair jetliner he was aboard to land, telling the crew that there was a bomb threat against the flight. A Belarusian fighter jet was scrambled to escort the plane to Minsk, just before it was to land in Vilnius, Lithuania, from Athens, Greece.

In an unusually swift response to the arrest and flight diversion, EU leaders agreed Monday to ban Belarusian airlines from using the airspace and airports of the 27-nation bloc and impose sanctions on officials linked to the diversion.

"The measures of restricting flights in particular ... are extremely biting on the Belarus system," Macron said.

The EU demanded Pratasevich's release and urged the International Civil Aviation Organization to investigate the diversion, while recommending European carriers avoid Belarus' airspace. Polish carrier LOT and Baltic airlines began bypassing the country, while Air France, KLM, Lufthansa and others said they will follow suit.

Belarus has defended its actions. Its Transport Ministry said Tuesday it has invited international aviation, U.S. and EU authorities to investigate the diversion.

In the wake of the brazen move, Belarus' first post-Soviet leader, Stanislav Shushkevich, urged the West to introduce even tougher sanctions.

"Belarus has become a 'black hole' of Europe with repressions reaching a catastrophic scale and its dictator scrambling fighter jets and threatening the entire world," Shushkevich told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. "The West must understand that only increasing pressure and really tough sanctions could impact Lukashenko and limit repressions."

EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said the bloc will introduce more sanctions targeting "businesses and economic entities that are financing this regime."

Added Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte: "We know that in this country, the major state companies make the money. This is going to hit them and everything is targeted towards making them feel the sting."

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said Lukashenko's action "is hard to beat in terms of perfidy."

"The lives of more than 170 passengers were endangered here to arrest a journalist. It's a threefold attack -- an attack on the safety of air traffic, on press freedom and the European citizens on board," he said.

Lukashenko has faced unprecedented pressure at home with months of protests triggered by his reelection to a sixth term in an August 2020 vote that the opposition rejected as rigged. But he has only doubled down on repression, and more than 35,000 people have been arrested since the protests began, with thousands beaten.

Some say more sanctions will do little to alleviate the situation and will only push Belarus even closer to its main sponsor and ally, Russia, and reduce the influence of the EU and others.

"Lukashenko will become an increasingly easy prey for the Kremlin," said Alexander Klaskouski, an independent Minsk-based political analyst. "As a pariah country, Belarus will find it much more difficult to fend off the Kremlin demands for the introduction of a single currency, the deployment of air bases and access to lucrative Belarusian economic assets."

Even as the West condemned Belarus, the crackdown continued Tuesday. Pavel Seviarynets, the leader of the opposition Christian-Democratic Party, was sentenced to seven years in prison on charges of organizing mass riots.

"Most leaders of Belarus' political parties have been either jailed or forced to flee the country," said Ales Bialiatski, head of the Viasna human rights center. "Belarus is facing an acute human rights crisis ... amid

unprecedented political repressions.”

Pratasevich, who left Belarus in 2019, has become a top foe of Lukashenko with a popular messaging app he ran playing a key role in helping organize the huge protests, and authorities have increasingly tried to limit his influence.

The Telegram app’s Nexta channel that he co-founded has been labeled “extremist” by Belarusian authorities. Stsiapan Putsila, another co-founder of Nexta, told AP that he and his colleagues have received “thousands of threats” in the past to blow up their office in Warsaw.

Pratasevich had been charged in absentia with staging mass riots and fanning social hatred. Those carry a prison sentence of up to 15 years, and some fear Pratasevich could face more serious charges, including some that carry the death penalty.

Colville, the U.N. human rights official, said Pratasevich’s appearance on Belarus state TV “was not reassuring, given the apparent bruising to his face, and the strong likelihood that his appearance was not voluntary and his ‘confession’ to serious crimes was forced.”

Pratasevich’s 23-year-old Russian girlfriend, Sofia Sapega, who also was removed from the flight and detained, spoke in a video from custody shown on state TV. In it, she said she had been working as the editor of a Telegram channel that revealed personal data about Belarus’ security officers amid the protests. Her lawyers had said earlier in the day that she has been jailed for two months, pending an investigation.

The main opposition candidate in the last election, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who left the country immediately after the vote under official pressure, said she urged the U.S. to move to suspend Belarus’ membership in the ICAO and Interpol.

Tsikhanouskaya also pushed for the G-7 to invite a Belarusian opposition delegation to its summit in London next month and thanked Macron for supporting her bid. But Max Blain, a spokesman for the British prime minister, said “the invite list for G-7 is already set” and wasn’t aware of any request from Macron to invite the opposition.

The France-based media watchdog group Reporters Without Borders filed a complaint with the prosecutor general’s office in Vilnius against Lukashenko “and any other persons the investigation would identify as liable for instigating or committing the crime.” It noted that under Lithuanian law, the use of force against a civilian aircraft to force it to change its route “under the false pretext of a bomb threat” constitutes the crime of hijacking.

Schools try pep-rally tactics to get students vaccinated

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A growing number of public schools are using mascots, food trucks and prize giveaways to create a pep-rally atmosphere aimed at encouraging students to get vaccinated against the coronavirus before summer vacation.

Districts from California to Michigan are offering free prom tickets and deploying mobile vaccination teams to schools to inoculate students 12 and up so everyone can return to classrooms in the fall. They are also enlisting students who have gotten shots to press their friends to do the same.

Officials are concerned that once school lets out, it will be even tougher to get enough teens vaccinated in time to guarantee widespread immunity on campuses.

The massive effort has just gotten underway because it was only two weeks ago that federal regulators authorized the Pfizer vaccine for children 12 to 15. Moderna said Tuesday that its COVID-19 vaccine strongly protects kids as young as 12, a step that could put it on track to become the second option for that age group in the U.S. Younger children are not yet eligible.

So far, about 14% of the nation’s 15 million kids ages 12 to 15 have received their first shot, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Among 7.5 million teens ages 16 and 17, that number goes up to 34%, and about 22% have had both shots, according to the latest figures released Monday. The doses are scheduled about three weeks apart.

There are many challenges.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 57 of 74

Depending on the state and even county, minors may be required to have a parent present to get the shot. Some parents may not be able to get away from work to do that. Others are unsure about allowing their kids to get a vaccine that only was approved for emergency use.

Protests have popped up outside schools offering the vaccine, discouraging kids who may already be nervous.

Mission Bay High School in San Diego provides an example of the mixed reaction among students.

"I'm not getting it," said Tatum Merrill, 14, standing with friends outside a mobile vaccine clinic at the school. "It was developed too fast and is kind of sketchy. And I feel like the number of COVID cases is dying down so if everybody else has it, there may not be a need for me to have it."

Her friend Brandon Cheeks, 15, said he wants the vaccine, but his mother is unsure. In the meantime, another 15-year-old, Laura Pilger, said she feels safer being back in school knowing that she and everyone she knows is vaccinated.

"A woman showed up and was passing out flyers that said 'your body, your choice' but the message was not very welcomed," Pilger said. "Why wouldn't you want to get the vaccine?"

While hundreds of colleges across the country are requiring students to have proof of vaccination to return to campus, it's unlikely that K-12 public schools will do the same this fall. It's unclear whether schools can legally require a vaccine approved under an emergency-use authorization to immediately address the pandemic.

Instead, public schools are trying to entice students to get the shots by making the experience festive while sending flyers home to families to address the vaccine's safety.

In suburban Detroit, students in the Southfield district who show proof of vaccination will get a free ticket to the senior prom worth \$80. The incentive drew protesters who said awarding the vaccinated could lead to harassment of students who haven't gotten shots.

"We are not separating or segregating students who choose not to receive the vaccine or do receive the vaccine," Southfield Superintendent Jennifer Green said. "We simply want to provide our students an opportunity to celebrate this milestone in their life."

The idea won applause from Dr. Howard Taras, a University of California San Diego pediatrician who consults with districts about health safety. He is also the in-house physician for the San Diego Unified School District, the second-largest in California with about 120,000 students. It has been hosting vaccine clinics at schools in communities with low vaccination rates.

The district also took part in a public service announcement with local teens who say, "We'll be getting the vaccine, now it's your turn."

"I think anything that is creating buzz helps," Taras said, explaining that vaccinating at schools has the added benefit of generating peer pressure.

The virus has spread more rapidly among teens than younger children. "But with a large portion immunized, there is much less chance of it spreading in the classrooms, on buses," Taras said.

And more students may want to return to classrooms as a result.

While most California public schools reopened in April, fewer than half of students resumed in-person learning, according to an analysis by the nonprofit EdSource.

Many continued with online learning, while some dropped out altogether or went to private schools. Public school enrollment dropped steeply in the nation's most populous state, falling by more than 160,000 this school year, according to the California Department of Education.

The Los Angeles Unified School District, the largest in California with about 600,000 students, plans to have a mobile vaccination team visit every middle and high school campus at least once before the school year ends June 11. The events will feature food trucks and music.

Superintendent Austin Beutner recently appeared with Wilson High School's "Mighty Mule" mascot to encourage students to roll up their sleeves. He said the district is offering paid leave for district employees to get their children inoculated. Schools where more than 30% of students are vaccinated will each receive \$5,000 for projects, and students can decide how the money is used.

The school-based clinics also help administer shots to hard-to-reach populations who feel more comfort-

able going to their neighborhood school instead of mass vaccination sites.

Maisha Cosby was motivated by a drive-thru clinic at the Washington School for Girls in Washington, D.C. She held her 12-year-old daughter Maya's hand as she got her shot. Then Cosby got hers.

"All my friends have gotten it and they're fine, and I'm ready for her to go back to school," Cosby said.

Board fight at Exxon intensifies spotlight on climate change

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — ExxonMobil is facing a major challenge from a group of investors in one of the biggest fights a corporate boardroom has endured over its stance on climate change, an issue of rising urgency for many shareholders.

The investor group is pushing to replace four of the oil giant's board members with executives they say are better suited to both strengthen the company's finances and lead it through the transition to cleaner energy. The fight represents a moment of reckoning for major publicly traded companies to address a global crisis.

Engine No. 1, the name of the hedge fund that has mounted the challenge, owns just a sliver of Exxon's shares. But the dissident slate of board members it has put forward commands the backing of some of the country's most powerful institutional investors, including the largest public pension funds.

Regardless of the outcome of the shareholder vote, to be announced after the annual shareholder meeting Wednesday, the challenge reflects momentum among consumers, investors and government leaders around the globe to pivot away from fossil fuels and invest in a future where energy needs are increasingly met using renewable sources. To that end, President Joe Biden has set the ambitious goal of slashing America's greenhouse gas emissions in half by the end of the decade.

"We're at a tipping point," said Aisha Mastagni, portfolio manager at the California State Teachers' Retirement System, known as CalSTRS, one of the nation's largest pension funds and among the major institutional investors that backed the alternative group of directors. "You're seeing investors from all around the world that are wanting to see better disclosure around climate change risk, you're seeing shareholder proposals that are passing with increased shareholder support, and now we have this monumental vote at ExxonMobil."

Engine No. 1 wants Exxon to refresh its board with directors who have a track record of managing change in the energy sector. The group asserts that Exxon has under-performed compared with its peers, having lost market value even when demand for oil and gas was growing. It also argues that the company lacks a credible strategy to create value in a de-carbonizing world and that its board lacks people with experience in successfully revamping an energy giant.

In opposing the challenge, Exxon counters that it has continually refreshed its board with directors who have expertise in energy, capital allocation and transitions. It contends that the company has been investing in low-carbon solutions, including a recent proposal to transform the Houston Ship Channel into a hub for carbon capture and sequestration. That technology, still under development, involves pulling carbon dioxide out of the air and storing it underground off shore.

In that proposal, Exxon called on government and industry to together invest \$100 billion. Exxon has said it would spend \$3 billion through 2025 on carbon capture and other low-carbon initiatives.

Those efforts have fallen short of the demands of Exxon's dissident investor groups. Other major oil companies, from British Petroleum and Shell to Conoco Phillips and Chevron, have done more to satisfy shareholders. Investors want more corporate disclosures of climate-damaging emissions, and they expect energy companies to diversify their portfolios to include more renewable sources, said Anne Simpson, managing investment director for board governance and sustainability at the California Public Employees' Retirement System — known as CalPERS — America's largest pension fund.

"What we're finding with other oil companies," Simpson said, "is we're making progress, and Exxon needs to catch up. Exxon is still saying one thing and doing another."

CalPERS, a heavyweight in the investing community, voted for Engine No. 1's slate of candidates. The

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 59 of 74

pension fund asserts that through its engagement and proxy voting, it has compelled hundreds of companies to add new directors to their boards.

"Usually what happens is, we have a collaborative approach where we work with companies," Simpson said. "I would say it's in rare circumstances that investors feel the need to actually put their own candidates forward. But that is because the nominating committee hasn't been able to fulfill investors' expectations. Exxon has had several years attempting to address this issue."

Support for shareholder proposals that focus on climate change is rapidly growing. In 2015, Glass Lewis, a firm that advises institutional investors, reviewed 14 shareholder proposals that requested additional disclosures on climate-related issues, such as the companies' levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

By 2017, there were 21 such shareholder proposals that went to a vote; three of them received over 50% approval. Before then, none had received majority support, according to Glass Lewis.

This year, 25 climate-related shareholder proposals have made it onto ballots, and those that have been voted on so far have received support from 59% of shareholders on average, according to the Institute for Shareholder Services.

The International Energy Agency this month warned that immediate action was needed to reshape the world's energy sector, and it recommended ending investments in new oil and gas wells and coal mines.

"Even if you love fossil fuels, you have to acknowledge that they're not making any more of them, and any company that wants to be sustainable over the long term has got to figure out what their next step is going to be," said Nell Minow, vice chair of ValueEdge Advisors, an influential figure in corporate governance who voted in support of Engine No. 1. "There's a massive demographic shift. I think the millennial generation and the generation that follow are much, much more sensitive on these issues as employees, as consumers and as investors, than the generations that have gone before."

The nation's most influential proxy advisory firms, including Institutional Shareholder Services, Glass Lewis and Egan Jones, also backed most or all of the candidates proposed by Engine No. 1. The proxy advisory firms conduct research and advise institutional shareholders on how to vote on such matters.

Also backing the alternate slate of directors was the New York State Common Retirement Fund, which argued that Exxon has failed to properly manage its exposure to climate risks.

Some experts say the pressure from Engine No. 1 and other shareholders appears to be making a difference at Exxon. The company's carbon sequestration proposal was not a major part of the conversation at Exxon a few years ago, but now management is talking about committing \$3 billion to low-carbon ventures, said Stewart Glickman, energy equity analyst at CFRA.

"Climate change and carbon is capturing more dollars tied to that than anything else," Glickman said. "So the writing is on the wall that more money is shifting in this direction."

A year later, Krasinski's 'Quiet Place' ready to make noise

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — John Krasinski, whose "A Quiet Place Part II" is one of the biggest studio releases to open exclusively in theaters this year, recently returned to the movies, himself.

Krasinski screened the film for his in-laws in London, and the experience of being back in a theater was unexpectedly moving.

"It's a sanctuary to begin with for me. It's one of my favorite places. Emily and I go on movie dates pretty much every week," Krasinski says, referring to Emily Blunt, his wife. "But going back this time had a lot more weight to it. Seeing my movie up there felt more emotional because of all we've been waiting for."

The wait for "A Quiet Place Part II" has been as long as the pandemic. Last March, its release was imminent just as COVID-19 shut down U.S. theaters. A premiere was held in New York on March 8, 2020. Buzz was strong. Opening-weekend box office was expected to exceed \$50 million.

But one delay followed another as Paramount Pictures and "A Quiet Place Part II" awaited the chance to return to the big screen. While many other films were sold off to streaming services (including Paramount's own "Coming 2 America" and "The Trial of the Chicago 7"), holding out for theaters was essential for Krasinski. His movie is predicated not just on science-fiction spectacle but an immersive and chilling

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 60 of 74

sound design.

"For me, it was non-negotiable. We designed this movie to be for theaters, specifically," Krasinski said in a recent interview by Zoom from his home in Brooklyn during a break from shooting the Amazon series "Jack Ryan." "I said I really wanted to wait for theaters and they supported it from the very beginning. Even more so, I give them so much credit for going with me on being this early."

"A Quiet Place Part II," which opens in theaters Friday, is an intensely realized nightmare that will try, with jolts and jump scares, to awaken moviegoing from its pandemic slumber. As the Memorial Day weekend kickoff to Hollywood's delayed summer season, it will pose a much-watched stress test for the industry's theatrical future. It's a high-pressure position that Krasinski meets with a mixture of pride and anxiety.

"It's definitely thrilling and nerve-wracking and all those things at the same time," he says. "But that's what our movie is."

"A Quiet Place," written and directed by Krasinski, followed the Abbott family (played by Krasinski, Blunt, Millicent Simmonds, Noah Jupe and an infant) in an upstate New York dystopia where creatures with hypersensitive hearing stalk the land, ruthlessly hunting by sound. It was a hit, grossing \$340 million globally on a \$17 million budget. Pressure for a sequel, naturally, grew.

"I was like, no, just preserve it," Blunt said in an interview last year. "Paramount said we're going to make one, whether we were a part of it or not. I think that was what they wanted. But John just then came up with the most undeniable idea."

Krasinski's idea: Make Simmonds' character the lead. In "Part II," the surviving Abbotts are forced to leave their home and, on barefoot tiptoes, search beyond for any remaining humans, and maybe some sanctuary. The scope and scale of "A Quiet Place" enlarges, while the story remains focused on family.

"If the first one was a love letter to my kids, this one's a letter to my kids about what I hope they are going forward in their lives, which is brave and courageous not only for their own happiness but also to make real change," says Krasinski.

In the first "A Quiet Place," Simmonds' character, Regan, figures out a way to defeat the creatures by using her hearing aid to create feedback intolerable to their ears. In the second film, she grows even bolder with her unique power.

"I knew that she could carry the entire franchise," says Krasinski. "She's one of the most stunning actors I've ever worked with. She's so incredibly talented but also so emotional intelligent."

Before Krasinski had even shared his script with Blunt, he contacted Simmonds by Facetime to tell her she would be the sequel's lead.

"She immediately covered her mouth and was shocked," says Krasinski. "She turned to her mom and then this look came back that was as heroic as her character. She looked at the camera and said, 'I'll do it.'"

Simmonds, the 18-year-old who starred in Todd Haynes' "Wonderstruck," was surprised by the opportunity but resolved to do her best in a role that simultaneously drew from her own strength and encouraged greater confidence in herself.

"As a person, I'm a little bit more shy. I might fade into the background a little more than Regan," Simmonds says through an interpreter by Zoom. "But playing Regan really helped me because Regan was very confident in herself, and that really affected me. In the first film, she wasn't as confident. She was highly self-critical and blamed herself for a lot of the things that happened to the family. That's something that I experienced personally. I thought to myself: What if I wasn't deaf? What if I was a quote-unquote 'normal person?'"

"But when Regan became this powerhouse in the second film, I realized that she was using what she had — all of her deficits, if you will — as strengths," says Simmonds. That gave me a new perspective on myself. I was able to look at myself and say: I'm not broken. I'm unique. I have something to offer and I can take that and use it as an advantage."

The two "A Quiet Place" films, where sign language is a life-saver, are part of a surge of recent films that authentically and dynamically represent characters with hearing impairment, including last year's "Sound of Metal" and the upcoming "CODA." Simmons, who during the pandemic helped create transparent face masks to aid in lip-reading, believes the movie industry is progressing in the right direction — and that

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 61 of 74

people like herself shouldn't be shocked at fronting a summer blockbuster.

"We need to start asking ourselves: Why not me?" says Simmonds.

After "A Quiet Place Part II," Krasinski will pass writing and directing a third installment to Jeff Nichols ("Mud," "Take Shelter"), who Krasinski says just turned in his script. More films beyond that, he grants, are also possible.

Like most upcoming films, "A Quiet Place Part II" will have a shorter, 45-day run in theaters before streaming, on Paramount+. But in the week before release, Krasinski is traveling nationwide to surprise moviegoers and rekindle some of the communal excitement of going to the movies. "Finally," he told a crowd in Cleveland, "I'm all dressed up with somewhere to go."

AP Source: Biden to name Tom Nides ambassador to Israel

By MIKE BALSAMO and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is expected to name former senior State Department official Tom Nides to serve as ambassador to Israel, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Nides is currently the managing director and vice chairman of Morgan Stanley. He previously served as deputy secretary of state for management and resources under Hillary Clinton from 2011 to 2013. The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the yet-to-be announced pick, said Nides has already been formally offered the position.

The president is expected to soon announce the pick, though exact timing remains unclear, according to a second person familiar with the deliberations. The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly, added that Biden had made his choice for the Israel ambassadorship and vetting was underway.

The White House declined to comment on Nides' forthcoming nomination.

Robert Wexler, a former Democratic congressman from Florida, was also receiving serious consideration for the high-profile post, officials said.

Getting an ambassador in place in Israel has become a high priority for the administration after this month's 11-day war between Israel and Hamas that killed more than 250 people —mostly Palestinians — and displaced tens of thousands from the Gaza Strip. The fighting marked the most significant clashes between Israel and Hamas since 2014.

Israelis complained in the weeks following Biden's inauguration in January that he was slow to name his envoy and to reach out to Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Some Israeli officials worried that the relative early silence forecast a chillier relationship between the two close allies after former President Donald Trump's warm embrace.

Biden, who spoke to Netanyahu for the first time about four weeks after his swearing in, had put off his first call with Netanyahu, in part, because he first wanted to speak with key European allies as he weighed his steps on reviving the Iran nuclear deal hatched during the Obama administration and shelved by the Trump White House. Netanyahu strongly opposes the deal.

But the official said that the Biden administration's diplomatic efforts with Israel even before this month's fighting had been complicated by Israel's own chaotic politics in the leadup to the fourth round of elections there in March.

Nides launched his Washington career in 2006 working for Rep. Tony Coelho, the Democratic majority whip. He also worked for Democratic House Speaker Tom Foley early in his career. During the Clinton administration, he served as chief of staff to the United States Trade Representative Mickey Kantor. Barack Obama nominated him in 2010 to serve as deputy secretary of state for management and resources.

In addition to his work at Morgan Stanley, Nides has also done stints as a top executive at Fannie Mae, Credit Suisse First Boston, Zurich-based Credit Suisse Group, and the global public relations firm Burson-Marsteller.

Dictator or 'Dad'? Belarus leader suppresses all dissent

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 62 of 74

MOSCOW (AP) — When Alexander Lukashenko became its president in 1994, Belarus was an obscure country that had not even existed for three years. Over the next quarter-century, he brought it to the world's notice through dramatic repression, erratic behavior and colorful threats.

Sunday's forced diversion of a commercial airliner and arrest of an opposition figure who was aboard epitomized his rule.

His disdain for democratic norms and country's dismal human rights record has made Belarus a pariah in the West, bringing him the sobriquet of "Europe's last dictator."

The 66-year-old Lukashenko prefers to be styled as "Batka" — "Father" or "Dad" — a stern but wise patriarch leading a country out of infancy.

Although he has made occasional moves toward rapprochement with the West, Lukashenko abandoned conciliation after massive demonstrations rose up against him in 2020 following an election to a sixth term as president. The opposition, and many in the West, rejected the outcome as rigged.

Tens of thousands of protesters were arrested, many of them beaten by police; main opposition figures either fled the country or were jailed; foreign journalists were driven out of the country; and ordinary citizens reportedly were arrested for so-called "unauthorized mass gatherings" such as birthday parties and bicycle races. "

By suppressing opposition through harsh police actions and arbitrary arrests, along with keeping much of the economy under state control, Lukashenko made Belarus into a neo-Soviet outlier, wary of its thriving NATO and European Union neighbors. He alternately quarreled with and cozied up to Russia.

He's noted for mercurial actions and provocative statements, which a leaked U.S. diplomatic cable assessed as outright "bizarre."

In a famously bellicose moment in 2006, he threatened protesters by saying he would "wring their necks like a duck." He also attracted uneasy note this year during a Christmas season TV interview in his kitchen when he let his little fluffy dog walk among the festive dishes on the table.

The apogee of his draconian dramatics came on Sunday, when he ordered a fighter jet to intercept a commercial airliner bound for Lithuania and carrying one of his self-exiled opponents, journalist Raman Pratasevich. Belarusian authorities said the action was taken after a bomb threat was made against the plane, but Western officials dismissed that as a preposterous attempt to disguise an act of piracy.

A strapping figure, Lukashenko presents a tough-guy image by frequently playing ice hockey, including a spring 2020 outing where he dismissed the coronavirus by asking a TV reporter if she saw any viruses "flying around" in the arena.

Once well-regarded by his countrymen as an anti-corruption leader, Lukashenko lost their trust through decades of jailing opponents, stifling independent media and holding elections that gave him term after term in power.

Protests had broken out after some elections, but not sizable or sustained enough to long withstand club-swinging police and mass detentions. Only after the 2020 vote did his opponents seem to harness the discontent: The country's economic deterioration and Lukashenko's cavalier refusal to act against the coronavirus added to their long-term dismay over repression.

The protests lasted for months, petering out only when winter set in. But authorities didn't let up, reportedly arresting people for no obvious cause or on pretenses such as wearing clothing in the red-and-white colors of the opposition.

Lukashenko was born in a Belarusian village and followed a conventional path for an ambitious provincial Soviet. After graduating from an agricultural academy, he became a political instructor in the border guard service and eventually rose to director of a collective farm. In 1990, he became a member of the Belarusian Supreme Soviet, the republic's parliament.

He was its only member in 1991 to vote against the dissolution of the Soviet Union. When he won the new country's first presidential election three years later, he appeared in many ways to be a man stuck in time, keeping Belarus as an eerie and dysfunctional Soviet vestige.

While neighboring ex-Soviet republics adapted to capitalism, Lukashenko kept much of the Belarusian economy under state control. That strategy initially won him support because Belarusians did not suffer

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 63 of 74

the confusions and deprivations of "shock therapy" economic restructuring.

But ossified state control of industries could not keep up with market economies' energy and flexibility; the Belarusian ruble was forced into repeated devaluations, and as of 2020, the average monthly wage was a paltry \$480.

Under Lukashenko, the country's main security agency retained its symbolically baleful acronym of KGB. He also pushed a referendum that made the new national flag nearly identical to the flag Belarus used as a Soviet republic.

Belarus also continues to carry out capital punishment, unlike every other country in Europe, and in a macabre manner echoing Soviet show-trial executions. According to reports, the prisoner is brought to a room and told that all appeals have been rejected. Then the condemned is forced to kneel and shot in the back of the head, a process lasting about two minutes from beginning to end.

When Lukashenko became president, Belarus had little experience of being an independent country; prior to its years as a Soviet republic, it had been a piece of other empires with only a brief attempt at sovereignty in the wake of World War I. Sandwiched between Russia to the east and reformist, Western-looking Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, Belarus was in a strategic position.

Lukashenko leaned strongly east. In 1997, he signed an agreement with Russia on forming a "union state" of close economic, military and political ties, but stopping short of full merger.

The agreement propped up Belarus' economy, which depended heavily on Russian oil at below-market prices. But Lukashenko harbored beliefs that Russia aimed to eventually take over Belarus entirely, and he was increasingly vocal about them.

Russia apparently became disenchanted with Lukashenko and suspicions persist that Moscow wanted him out of the way and worked to undermine him in 2020. The former head of a bank owned by Russian state gas monopoly Gazprom was seen as a main electoral challenger before he was jailed and kept off the ballot. Belarus, meanwhile, alleged that Russia had sent in private military contractors to undermine the election.

Lukashenko's years of repression and brutality had all but burned his bridges with the West. Faced with massive protests, he had nowhere to turn for help but Moscow.

Russian President Vladimir Putin had said he was prepared to send police to help stabilize the situation if demonstrations turned violent, but he never made the move.

1 killed as protesters scuffle with Iraqi security forces

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Clashes between security forces and protesters left one person dead and over a dozen injured Tuesday after hundreds of Iraqis took to the streets in Baghdad to protest a rise in targeted killings of prominent activists and journalists.

Violence erupted near Tahrir Square in the early evening following a largely peaceful demonstration. Iraqi security forces fired tear gas and live rounds to disperse the crowds and demonstrators hurled stones at riot police, witnesses and Iraqi security officials said.

One protester was shot and died in a hospital and over a dozen were injured, a security official and the semi-official High Commission for Human Rights said.

The security officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The shooting began after security forces first used tear gas to disperse the crowds. The demonstrators responded by throwing stones, and on some occasions bricks at police, according to an Associated Press videographer on the scene.

Earlier, demonstrators gathered in the square amid heavy security, among them protesters from southern provinces including Dhi Qar and Karbala. Tensions there have mounted in recent weeks over the increasingly frequent targeted killings.

"Today's protests took place because the weak government did not keep its promises to bring the murderers to justice," said activist Kamal Jaban at Tahrir Square.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 64 of 74

Many waved Iraqi flags and raised portraits of Ehab Wazni, a prominent activist assassinated in Karbala, among three targeted killings this month alone. Protesters had given the government two weeks to hold his killers responsible.

"The government did not deliver, we had to march," said Jaban.

The High Commission for Human Rights reported nearly 35 activists have been killed in Iraq since an anti-government protest movement swept Iraq in October 2019. There have been nearly 82 attempted killings since then.

In the last year alone, 15 Iraqis were killed and there were 30 attempted killings recorded by the commission, said spokesman Ali al-Bayati.

Protesters expressed outrage that despite launching several investigations into the killings, Iraqi authorities have not named any perpetrators. They widely believe the killers to be linked to Iran-backed militia groups and that the government is powerless and unwilling to identify them.

"Impunity comes from the failure of state institutions to bring the perpetrators to account," said al-Bayati. "This gives them the green light to continue."

Many expect the killings to continue as Iraq plans to hold early elections in October, which had been a key demand of anti-government protesters.

Now, some of those same protesters are calling for the elections to be canceled as the death toll from targeted killings rises, saying they have no faith in the current system.

"We will not delay the elections if we get fair and safe chances to participate in them," said Jaban. "We will boycott the elections unless there are positive changes."

A recent Human Rights Watch report raised concerns that without justice the killings could prevent Iraqis from participating in the election.

"If the authorities are not able to take urgent steps to stop these extrajudicial killings the palpable climate of fear they have created will severely limit the ability of Iraqis who have been calling for change to participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections," wrote senior researcher Belkis Wille.

Heavy security deployments were seen in central Baghdad ahead of the Tuesday protest.

Iraqi security forces arrested four "infiltrators" near Tahrir Square in the morning, according to an Iraqi military statement. The individuals were reportedly carrying weapons and sought to incite violence.

Tens of thousands of protesters, most of them Iraqi youth, took to the streets in October 2019 to decry corruption, poor services and unemployment. Demonstrators camped out in Tahrir Square for months.

But the movement petered out by February last year owing to the government's heavy handed response and the coronavirus pandemic. Over 500 people died because security forces used live ammunition and tear canisters to disperse crowds.

Though protests have waned, targeted assassinations against civil society groups and outspoken activists continue to create a climate of fear. Many activists have left Baghdad to seek refuge in the Kurdish-controlled northern region, or sought asylum in Turkey.

In New Orleans, documenting history of iconic Black street

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — New Orleans resident Raynard Sanders can detail the many ways Black businesses and culture thrived under the canopy of oak trees along Claiborne Avenue: the Black insurance companies, the corner lot home to the Black musicians union, the church that held a funeral to bury slavery. And the Mardi Gras gatherings where families watched the Baby Dolls, the Batiste brothers and the Zulu parade.

"This was THE street. This is where everything happened. And this is where African Americans were welcomed and wanted," Sanders said. "New Orleans was segregated. And they were not welcome and wanted in other parts of the city like they were here on Claiborne Avenue."

As he spoke, cars and trucks roared overhead on the elevated freeway that was built directly on top of the avenue in the late 1960s — ripping up the oak trees and tearing apart a street sometimes called the "Main Street of Black New Orleans."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 65 of 74

Sanders and documentary filmmaker Katherine Cecil head the Claiborne Avenue History Project, a multimedia project started in 2014 that aims to document and publicize the history of a street that has become notorious as an example of how highway projects often sliced through Black neighborhoods — a practice sometimes referred to as “white roads through Black bedrooms.”

The street and its history gained renewed attention with President Joe Biden’s recently announced infrastructure proposal. Biden’s plan includes a \$20 billion program to “reconnect neighborhoods cut off by historic investments” and specifically mentions Claiborne as such an example, although it doesn’t say specifically that money will go to tearing down the New Orleans freeway.

In an interview with The Grio last month, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg noted the history of road projects disrupting communities of color. “There is racism physically built into some of our highways,” he said.

The Claiborne Avenue History Project focuses on a 22-block stretch of Claiborne Avenue that goes through the Treme neighborhood — one of the oldest Black communities in America.

Using fire insurance maps and records from the city archives, they are trying to figure out who owned all the lots on the block and researching the property owners through newspaper archives, wills and other historical documents. They’ve also recorded oral history interviews with people connected to the avenue, such as the late chef and civil rights activist Leah Chase.

Greg Beaman, the collaborative’s director of research, said they aim to digitally recreate the neighborhood and get a sense of the “vibrancy of that 1940s, ‘50s, ‘60s, Black New Orleans social life.” The ultimate goal is to build a website where visitors can click an address and get a deep perspective on the decades of residents or businesses there.

Beaman said documenting the history and vibrancy of the street before the expressway rose above it is important because it highlights the scope of the injustice that was done. The number of registered businesses along the street went from a high of 132 in 1960 to just 35 in 2000, according to a 2010 report.

The avenue’s significance in the city’s musical history through things like Houston’s School of Music and the numerous music clubs that used to be there make it even more important to remember, Beaman said.

Through their research, Beaman said they’ve come across some stories largely forgotten such as the tale of a church on Claiborne where participants held a service to bury slavery in 1865. The lot later became the Acme Life Insurance Co. — one of the major Black-owned insurance companies along Claiborne.

They have tracked down information that some of the oak trees removed from Claiborne when the freeway went up were replanted in another area of town and Beaman is trying to find information on how the land — specifically the on- and off-ramps — was expropriated.

Clifford Ellis, professor emeritus at Clemson University who co-wrote the book “Changing Lanes: Visions and Histories of Urban Freeways,” said that when these freeway projects went up in the ‘50s and ‘60s they were often portrayed as clearing slums or blighted areas and that it was acceptable to sacrifice African American neighborhoods for what was viewed as a larger public benefit. The roads also facilitated white residents’ move into the suburbs, where they could commute into the city for jobs — often spreading pollution through African American neighborhoods as they drove.

Amy Stelly lives a block and a half from the expressway and has seen the pollution first hand — soot from the cars that sticks to houses, the constant noise and vibrations from the heavy trucks. As one of the founders of the Claiborne Avenue Alliance, she’s been pushing to remove the expressway in large part because of the environmental havoc it has wrought.

And she points out that the expressway, as with many other major infrastructure projects of that era, is at the end of its lifespan and would need huge investment to keep it operational.

“I think we’re going to have to remove it,” she said, adding that, with the president specifically naming the project in his infrastructure plans, she feels momentum is on her side.

The Claiborne Avenue History Project isn’t taking a formal stand on whether to remove the elevated highway although personally Sanders, who calls it the “villainous monstrosity,” would like it gone.

Whatever happens to the expressway, Sanders and Cecil want the Black community’s place there re-

spected and included — something they hope their history project can facilitate.

"I think that this initiative by Biden will result in a good community conversation, an authentic community conversation that really lets the community ... address the question of taking it down or not," Sanders said.

Who's an astronaut as private spaceflight picks up speed?

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — As more companies start selling tickets to space, a question looms: Who gets to call themselves an astronaut?

It's already a complicated issue and about to get more so as the wealthy snap up spacecraft seats and even entire flights for themselves and their entourages.

Astronauts? Amateur astronauts? Space tourists? Space sightseers? Rocket riders? Or as the Russians have said for decades, spaceflight participants?

NASA's new boss Bill Nelson doesn't consider himself an astronaut even though he spent six days orbiting Earth in 1986 aboard space shuttle Columbia — as a congressman.

"I reserve that term for my professional colleagues," Nelson recently told The Associated Press.

Computer game developer Richard Garriott — who paid his way to the International Space Station in 2008 with the Russians — hates the space tourist label. "I am an astronaut," he declared in an email, explaining that he trained for two years for the mission.

"If you go to space, you're an astronaut," said Axiom Space's Michael Lopez-Alegria, a former NASA astronaut who will accompany three businessmen to the space station in January, flying SpaceX. His \$55 million-a-seat clients plan to conduct research up there, he stressed, and do not consider themselves space tourists.

On Tuesday, Axiom Space announced a second flight for next year that will be led by the company's Peggy Whitson, a retired NASA astronaut who's spent 665 days in space, more than any other American. Her No. 2 will be businessman-turned-race car driver John Shoffner, of Knoxville, Tennessee, who's also paying around \$55 million. "I've asked Peggy to throw the book at me in training. Make me an astronaut," he said.

There's something enchanting about the word: Astronaut comes from the Greek words for star and sailor. And swashbuckling images of "The Right Stuff" and NASA's original Mercury 7 astronauts make for great marketing.

Jeff Bezos' rocket company, Blue Origin, is already calling its future clients "astronauts." It's auctioning off one seat on its first spaceflight with people on board, targeted for July. NASA even has a new acronym: PAM for Private Astronaut Mission.

Retired NASA astronaut Mike Mullane didn't consider himself an astronaut until his first space shuttle flight in 1984, six years after his selection by NASA.

"It doesn't matter if you buy a ride or you're assigned to a ride," said Mullane, whose 2006 autobiography is titled "Riding Rockets." Until you strap into a rocket and reach a certain altitude, "you're not an astronaut."

It remains a coveted assignment. More than 12,000 applied for NASA's upcoming class of astronauts; a lucky dozen or so will be selected in December.

But what about passengers who are along for the ride, like the Russian actress and movie director who will fly to the space station in October? Or Japan's moonstruck billionaire who will follow them from Kazakhstan in December with his production assistant tagging along to document everything? In each case, a professional cosmonaut will be in charge of the Soyuz capsule.

SpaceX's high tech capsules are completely automated, as are Blue Origin's. So should rich riders and their guests be called astronauts even if they learn the ropes in case they need to intervene in an emergency?

Perhaps even more important, where does space begin?

The Federal Aviation Administration limits its commercial astronaut wings to flight crews. The minimum altitude is 50 miles (80 kilometers). It's awarded seven so far; recipients include the two pilots for Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic who made another test flight of the company's rocket ship Saturday.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 67 of 74

Others define space as beginning at an even 100 kilometers, or 62 miles above sea level.

Blue Origin's capsules are designed to reach that threshold and provide a few minutes of weightlessness before returning to Earth. By contrast, it takes 1 1/2 hours to circle the world. The Association of Space Explorers requires at least one orbit of Earth — in a spacecraft — for membership.

The Astronauts Memorial Foundation honors all those who sacrificed their lives for the U.S. space program even if they never reached space, like Challenger schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe and the test pilot killed in a 2014 Virgin Galactic crash. Also on the Space Mirror Memorial at NASA's Kennedy Space Center: X-15 and F-104 Air Force pilots who were part of a military space program that never got off the ground.

The astronaut debate has been around since the 1960s, according to Garriott. His late father, Owen Garriott, was among the first so-called scientist-astronauts hired by NASA; the test pilots in the office resented sharing the job title.

It might be necessary to retire the term altogether once hundreds if not thousands reach space, noted Fordham University history professor Asif Siddiqi, the author of several space books. "Are we going to call each and every one of them astronauts?"

Mullane, the three-time space shuttle flier, suggests using astronaut first class, second class, third class, "depending on what your involvement is, whether you pull out a wallet and write a check."

While a military-style pecking order might work, former NASA historian Roger Launius warned: "This gets really complicated really quickly."

In the end, Mullane noted, "Astronaut is not a copyrighted word. So anybody who wants to call themselves an astronaut can call themselves an astronaut, whether they've been in space or not."

American Jews take stock of internal divisions, antisemitism

By MARIAM FAM and LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

As fighting between Israel and Gaza's militant Hamas rulers raged before last week's cease-fire, U.S. rabbinical student Max Buchdahl wanted to be considerate of those in his community who are emotionally connected to Israel — but he also wanted to support Palestinians.

Buchdahl, 25, joined dozens of rabbinical and cantorial students who signed a letter expressing solidarity with Palestinians and appealing to U.S. Jews to demand change from Israel, which it accused of abuses.

Pushback came swiftly from Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, the dean of Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at American Jewish University, which trains a new generation of Conservative rabbis including a small number of the letter's signatories.

He penned a response saying he admired highlighting the suffering of Palestinians but disapproved of what he saw as a lack of solidarity with Israel and Israeli Jews, and silence on their suffering and on the "murderous tyranny" of Hamas.

Both letters were published in the Forward, a media nonprofit targeting a Jewish American audience, part of a larger debate playing out nationwide among many U.S. Jews who are divided over how to respond to the violence and over the disputed boundaries for acceptable criticism of Israeli policies.

"I do see us wrestling with degrees of culpability, degrees of responsibility," Artson said in an interview. "The areas of disagreement might be to what degree is Israel alone responsible for the occupation? To what degree is the occupation also the responsibility of Hamas" and other regional powers?

Jonathan D. Sarna, director of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies at Brandeis University, said American Jews' perceptions can vary greatly by generation.

To many who are old enough to remember the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation and later Arab-Israeli wars, "Israel is fragile, under attack, and its enemies want to destroy it," Sarna said. "Younger Jews have been more influenced by a kind of David and Goliath narrative: To their mind, Israel has been stronger throughout their life. ... They are concerned more about what they see as disproportionality."

In a recently released survey of U.S. Jews by the Pew Research Center, 82% percent of respondents said caring about Israel is either an "essential" or "important" part of their Jewish identity. But the poll, conducted well before the latest fighting, also found deep skepticism toward authorities on both sides of

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 68 of 74

the conflict, with just a third saying the Israeli government sincerely seeks peace and just 12% saying that about Palestinian leaders.

"There is a growing sense of alienation from the rigid, defensive script on Israel that fails to address Palestinian suffering and offer a path to peace," said Rabbi Sharon Brous, co-founder of IKAR, a Jewish community in Los Angeles. The national racial reckoning has fueled an urgency among many U.S. Jews to help realize "a more just and equitable reality for Israelis and Palestinians," she added.

"It breaks my heart that some in our Jewish community seem to believe that it is impossible, or at least unacceptable, to hold compassion, empathy and concern for the well-being of Palestinians along with compassion for our Israeli family," Brous said.

The conversations sparked by the conflict have unfolded against the backdrop of reports of rising anti-semitic incidents since the fighting. Preliminary data compiled by the Anti-Defamation League shows an increase in violent attacks, vandalism and harassment in the U.S. and around the world, as well as online, the group said before the cease-fire took effect.

"With anti-Semitism on the rise ... there is an urgency for U.S. Jewry to find a common ground with each other across different denominations and age groups," said Jay Ruderman, president of the Ruderman Family Foundation, a Boston-based philanthropical organization that works in both Israel and the United States.

"It also provides an opportunity for the American Jewish community and Israel to come together in a time when both groups need each other more than ever," Ruderman added.

Brous said faith leaders should decry hate and affirm to their flocks that criticism of Israeli policies must not spill into antisemitism. At the same time, "criticism of Israel is not necessarily antisemitic," she said.

Elliot Steinmetz, the men's basketball coach at the Jewish Orthodox Yeshiva University in New York City, found himself enraged by the reports of antisemitic attacks and mounting criticism of Israel on social media.

On May 12 he posted on Instagram accusing some people of masking antisemitism behind political arguments. He challenged critics to be honest "instead of hiding behind Arab children," saying "that's what the terrorists do."

"What prompted that was seeing some of our politicians — and it ultimately became celebrities and athletes as well — who like to chime in on issues they're not educated on," Steinmetz said in an interview.

"All of a sudden there's attacks against Jewish people, and there's nobody standing up," he added. "Nobody."

Steinmetz's defense of Israel is a sentiment shared by former Yeshiva player Simcha Halpert, who moved to Tel Aviv in September to play professional basketball and has woken up several times in the middle of the night to rush to a bomb shelter. He defended Israel and accused Hamas of endangering innocents on both sides. Israel accuses Palestinian militants of causing civilian casualties by launching attacks from residential areas; many of Israel's critics, meanwhile, accuse it of disproportionate use of force.

Halpert is also concerned about things back home — his father recently told his brothers in Los Angeles to avoid wearing in some areas the skullcap that identifies them as Jewish.

"It's just a little crazy that we have to be worried," Halpert said.

Buchdahl, the student who co-signed the letter published by the Forward, stressed that even as he supports solidarity with Palestinians, of course he opposes Hamas rockets being fired at Israeli civilians.

"I want people to see critiques of Israel as critiques of a nation-state," Buchdahl said. "I want you to understand that I am critiquing policy, I am not critiquing your identity."

Likewise, Artson, who penned the response, said he grieves innocent Palestinian casualties just as he does rockets that are "intended to create a massacre."

"My heart has been ripped apart on multiple incompatible jagged edges," Artson said.

An educator, he ultimately views the episode of the opposing letters as a learning opportunity.

"Two of the people who signed that letter came to my home, celebrated the holiday (of Shavuot) with me," Artson said. "They hugged coming in, they hugged going out. And we even talked about the letter."

Iran approves 7 for presidential vote, bars Rouhani allies

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran named the hard-line cleric running its judiciary and six others Tuesday as approved candidates in its June 18 presidential election, barring prominent candidates allied with its current president amid tensions with the West over its tattered nuclear deal.

The announcement carried by state television puts judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi, who is linked to mass executions in 1988, in the dominant position for the upcoming vote. He's the most-known candidate of the seven hopefuls, with opinion polling previously showing his anti-corruption campaign drew Iranian support. He's also believed to be a favorite of Iran's 82-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

But perhaps most notable was who Iran's Guardian Council barred from running. Chief among them was former parliament speaker Ali Larijani, a conservative who allied with Rouhani in recent years. Larijani had been positioning himself as a pragmatic candidate who would back Rouhani's signature 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Diplomats in Vienna are now trying to negotiate a return of both Iran and the U.S. to the agreement.

Larijani seemingly signaled he wouldn't fight the decision.

"I have done my duty before God and the dear nation, and I am satisfied," Larijani wrote on Twitter. "Thank you to all those who expressed their gratitude and I hope you will participate in the elections for the promotion of an Islamic Iran."

Ali Motahari, Larijani's brother-in-law and a former lawmaker, separately wrote on Twitter that the Guardian Council rejected him because his daughter lives in the U.S.

Within Iran, candidates exist on a political spectrum that broadly includes hard-liners who want to expand Iran's nuclear program and confront the world, moderates who hold onto the status quo and reformists who want to change the theocracy from within. Those calling for radical change find themselves blocked from even running for office by the Guardian Council, which also refuses to allow women to run, citing Iran's constitution.

Also barred Tuesday was former hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Ahmadinejad ignored a warning from Khamenei in 2017 and registered, only to be rejected then as well by the Guardian Council, a 12-member panel under Khamenei. Ahmadinejad maintains a following in Iran due to his populist policies and has threatened to boycott the election if he wasn't allowed to run.

During an earlier session of parliament Tuesday, lawmaker Ahmad Alirezabeigi described Ahmadinejad's home as being "under siege" by security forces since the day before. He also warned that the decision would suppress turnout. Iran's theocracy since its 1979 Islamic Revolution has based its legitimacy in part on turnout in elections.

Rouhani's senior Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri, the most prominent reformist to run, similarly found himself disqualified.

"I consider the disqualification by the elites is a serious threat to widespread participation and fair competition by all political parties, especially reformists," Jahangiri wrote on Instagram.

State TV earlier quoted Abbas Ali Kadkhodaei, the spokesman of the Guardian Council, as saying "only seven" had been approved out of some 590 who registered by the panel of clerics and jurists overseen by Khamenei. In 2017, 1,630 hopefuls registered to run.

Raisi wrote on Twitter — a service technically banned by Iran since the 2009 unrest that surrounded Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election — that he wanted authorities to reconsider the decision to bar some of the candidates.

"I have made contacts and I am holding consultations to make the election scene more competitive and participatory," he said, though the disqualifications Tuesday only boosted the likelihood of him taking the presidency.

As the head of the judiciary, Raisi oversees a justice system in Iran that remains one of the world's top executioners. United Nations experts and others have criticized Iran for detaining dual nationals and those with ties abroad to be used as bargaining chips in negotiations with the West.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 70 of 74

Then there's the 1988 mass executions that came at the end of Iran's long war with Iraq. After Iran's then-Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini accepted a U.N.-brokered cease-fire, members of the Iranian opposition group Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, heavily armed by Saddam Hussein, stormed across the Iranian border in a surprise attack.

Iran ultimately blunted their assault, but the attack set the stage for the sham retrials of political prisoners, militants and others that would become known as "death commissions." Some who appeared were asked to identify themselves. Those who responded "mujahedeen" were sent to their deaths, while others were questioned about their willingness to "clear minefields for the army of the Islamic Republic," according to a 1990 Amnesty International report.

International rights groups estimate that as many as 5,000 people were executed, while the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq puts the number at 30,000. Iran has never fully acknowledged the executions, apparently carried out on Khomeini's orders, though some argue that other top officials were effectively in charge in the months before his 1989 death.

Raisi, then a deputy prosecutor in Tehran, took part in some of the panels at Evin and Gohardasht prisons. A tape of a meeting of Raisi and his boss meeting prominent Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri leaked out in 2016, with Montazeri describing the executions as "the biggest crime in the history of the Islamic Republic."

Raisi never publicly acknowledged his role in the executions while campaigning for president in 2017. After his loss, Khamenei appointed him as head of the judiciary in 2019.

Others named as candidates Tuesday include Saeed Jalili, a former nuclear negotiator; Mohsen Rezaei, a former Revolutionary Guard commander; Ali Reza Zakani, a former lawmaker; Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh, a current lawmaker; Mohsen Mehralizadeh, a former provincial governor; and Abdolnasser Hemmati, the current head of Iran's Central Bank.

Families separated at Mexico border build new American life

By CLAUDIA TORRENS Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — In a cramped house with mice in the kitchen and music booming from cars outside, Keldy Mabel Gonzales Brebe lays bare her three-year journey from Honduras to the United States and all that lies ahead to adapt to life as an immigrant.

She fled the Central American nation with her family and a price on her head to seek asylum at the U.S. border. Instead, U.S. officials separated her from her children, jailed and deported her under President Trump's "zero-tolerance" policy to prosecute adults entering the country illegally. While the boys were allowed to live with relatives in Philadelphia, their mother struggled to join them from Mexico.

Keldy missed celebrating birthdays and holidays together. She watched from afar as her teenagers filled out and grew facial hair.

"There were times I thought I would never see them again," she said.

Three years later, America has jettisoned many of Trump's hardline immigration policies.

Keldy was one of four parents who returned to the United States during the first week of May with temporary legal status to join their children in what Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said was "just the beginning" of a broader effort to reunify families separated during Trump's presidency — more than 5,500 children. Her family's ups and downs illustrate what many parents and children encounter as they try to make up for lost time.

Keldy counts her blessings to be together as a family, free from death threats in Honduras and the pain of separation.

Yet now they face new difficulties. Keldy's son, Mino, dropped out of school to help pay rent on the house that six of them share. Keldy sleeps on the living room sofa. She wants to get a job, but is caring for her 7-year-old autistic niece and an unsteady 75-year-old mother, along with cooking and cleaning for the family. She sees drug use on the streets of the Kensington section of Philadelphia where they live.

"I hear gunshots sometimes. With my sister, when we run a quick errand, I look around to see whether

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 71 of 74

someone was killed," Keldy said. "La Ceiba, where I grew up, was like that."

Honduras, a mountainous nation located between Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, is beautiful but broken, Keldy says.

She and her family lived on the north Caribbean shore, in a tourist area. Her husband was a guide, taking American tourists to a region of tropical rainforest, pine savannah and marsh called La Mosquitia, or whitewater rafting on the Cangrejal River.

Keldy described herself as middle-class housewife. She would cook for the tourists on the expeditions.

Drug trafficking gangs controlled some areas and required payments from businesses and people for protection. For those who didn't pay, the penalty was death.

Hit men killed one of her brothers in 2006, she said. He was a bus driver.

"He had no money. The owner of the bus was the one who was supposed to pay, not him. He was just the bus driver. But they killed him," she said.

In 2011, her family and other families decided to try to buy some parcels of land to live on and grow crops. Gangs, however, did not agree with the purchase and threatened one her brothers, then killed him after he reported the threats to authorities. He was one of four siblings killed by gangs.

Keldy testified in open court against the killers. She received numerous threats and was told there was a price on her head.

The whole family fled to Mexico in 2013 but were deported by the Mexican government right away.

Back in Honduras, they fled to a rural mountainous area called El Naranjo in attempt to hide from the gangs. But in 2017, neighbors told her there were people asking about her schedule: When did she usually leave the house and when did she usually get back? The fear returned, and the family left for the United States.

She crossed the border with her youngest son Erick, now 17, and her middle child Mino, now 19, in the fall of 2017.

The family planned to apply for asylum, so Keldy flagged down a Border Patrol cruiser in the New Mexico desert. She and her sons were taken together to a cell in a detention center in Deming, New Mexico, 35 miles north of the border. They thought they'd be released at some point, and would meet up with her oldest son, who crossed the same day in Arizona, and other family in Philadelphia.

But unknown to them, President Trump had imposed extraordinary measures to limit asylum, criminally prosecuting everyone who entered the United States illegally from Mexico and resulting in the separation of thousands of children from their parents. The government was unable to reunify them after criminal cases ended because its tracking systems failed to link parents to their children.

Less than two days after the family had arrived in the U.S., Keldy was handcuffed and separated from the boys.

"I felt helpless, like there was nothing I could do. And then I blamed myself because I brought my kids to uncertainty, into a situation in which they were taken from me, they were taken from my arms and I couldn't do anything," she said.

The kids were frightened to be separated from their mother.

"We started crying, my brother and I, because we were left alone in there. And it was very cold. They only gave us a small blanket," recalled Erick, who was 13 then. His brother Mino was 15.

The boys were moved to a shelter for minors.

Mino, who wears glasses and smiles often, said he did not want to do anything at the time, just cry. He felt lost at the shelter, with the other unaccompanied minors.

"They did not feel what I was going through because they had come alone. They did not come with their mother. They did not feel the pain I felt when I was separated from her," he said.

The children were both soon released, and family members paid for their flight to Philadelphia. Their older brother, Alex, now 21, eventually became the legal guardian of his brothers and cared for them while they went to school, working construction.

But Keldy was not released. She was kept in an Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facility

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 72 of 74

in El Paso, Texas, for a year and a half and then deported to San Pedro Sula, Honduras, in January 2019. She immediately traveled back north and settled in Tapachula, Ascensión and then Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, waiting for a chance to enter the United States.

In Mexico, Keldy got by with money sent to her by her kids, her sisters and her husband, who crossed the border five years ago and lives in Texas. She video chatted with her boys, and remembers with pain of missing graduations and other big moments: This January, Erick did not want to come out of his room on his 17th birthday.

"He felt alone," Keldy said. "I wasn't there".

Online learning during the pandemic was a problem for both boys, who say they no longer understand classes. Mino dropped out in December. They say they can read English but they don't speak it.

In Ciudad Juarez, Keldy walked each morning toward the border, where she could see the bridges heading toward El Paso, Texas, and prayed.

Known to others as "la pastora", she delivered sermons and benedictions to other migrants and at migrant shelters, listening to others who were in pain, like her.

"I would tell others in my prayers to believe, to never doubt, answers were going to come to our lives," she said.

The answer she'd been waiting for arrived last month. Linda Corchado, director of legal services at the non-profit Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, contacted her: Biden's task force was working to reunite families separated at the border. Keldy needed to get passport photos.

Corchado had been trying to obtain a humanitarian parole for Keldy, and finally found success.

"I realized then these were the final steps the attorney was doing to get me in," she said. "Later she told me I would probably enter on May 4 at 8 am. I kept asking God for it to be true."

It was.

She entered on May 4, with Corchado, through the Bridge of The Americas.

The Honduran mother took a plane to Dallas and then another one to Philadelphia. While flying, all she thought about were the first words she would tell her kids.

"They ended up being 'I love you'. Those are the words I wanted to tell my kids, that I loved them," she said.

A video shows the family reunion on May 4 in the Philadelphia home of a niece, with Keldy crying while her kids hug her. "Hola mi amor, amor mio ("Hello my love, my love")," the video shows her saying, her face buried in the arms of her sons.

They are together, yet life still isn't easy.

Since her arrival, the Honduran mother has been inside the home, cleaning and cooking. When she speaks there is relief but also anxiety in her voice. She wonders about the sturdiness of the house, the stairs that feel unstable.

She doesn't venture out much. Opioid use has taken root in Kensington, which has been singled out, nationwide, as an example of the effects of underinvestment, crime and drug use.

She misses small-town life south of the border; the close buildings of Kensington make her feel trapped.

Keldy is thinking about finding a job, but she worries about leaving her mother, who forgot she was cooking the other day until there was fire in the stove. Keldy burned her hand putting it out, leaving marks on her skin.

"I don't know what I am going to do. I would like to work but who is going to take care of my mother and Dana?" she said of the niece she adopted as a baby.

Las Americas has connected them to mental health specialists who will speak online with Keldy and her sons to help them cope with the trauma of separation.

Corchado, the attorney, said Keldy has been granted humanitarian parole for three years but she hopes the Task Force puts her on a pathway for citizenship before that. She is also trying to make sure she is all right.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 73 of 74

"We don't just want the door open for Keldy. We want her to be successful in the United States," Corchado said. "She shouldn't be sleeping on a couch after all the horrible experiences she went through."

But for Keldy, it's enough, now, to be with her children. She knows that's more than many of her fellow migrants have.

"Everyday I pray to God for other mothers to be able to come in. They cry for their kids," she said. "They ask me 'do you know anything new?' and I tell them to have patience. And I tell them they will succeed."

Moderna says its COVID-19 shot works in kids as young as 12

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Moderna said Tuesday its COVID-19 vaccine strongly protects kids as young as 12, a step that could put the shot on track to become the second option for that age group in the U.S.

With global vaccine supplies still tight, much of the world is struggling to vaccinate adults in the quest to end the pandemic. But earlier this month, the U.S. and Canada authorized another vaccine — the shot made by Pfizer and BioNTech — to be used starting at age 12.

Moderna aims to be next in line, saying it will submit its teen data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and other global regulators early next month.

The company studied more than 3,700 12- to 17-year-olds. Preliminary findings showed the vaccine triggered the same signs of immune protection in kids as it does in adults, and the same kind of temporary side effects such as sore arms, headache and fatigue.

There were no COVID-19 diagnoses in those given two doses of the Moderna vaccine compared with four cases among kids given dummy shots. In a press release, the company also said the vaccine appeared 93% effective two weeks after the first dose.

While children are far less likely than adults to get seriously ill from COVID-19, they represent about 14% of the nation's coronavirus cases. At least 316 have died in the U.S. alone, according to a tally by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

With plenty of vaccine supply in the U.S., younger teens flocked to get Pfizer's shot in the days after FDA opened it to them, part of a push to get as many kids vaccinated as possible before the next school year.

Both Pfizer and Moderna have begun testing in even younger children, from age 11 down to 6-month-old babies. This testing is more complex: Teens receive the same dose as adults, but researchers are testing smaller doses in younger children. Experts hope to see some results in the fall.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, May 26, the 146th day of 2021. There are 219 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 26, 1940, Operation Dynamo, the evacuation of some 338,000 Allied troops from Dunkirk, France, began during World War II.

On this date:

In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln signed a measure creating the Montana Territory.

In 1938, the House Un-American Activities Committee was established by Congress.

In 1954, explosions rocked the aircraft carrier USS Bennington off Rhode Island, killing 103 sailors. (The initial blast was blamed on leaking catapult fluid ignited by the flames of a jet.)

In 1972, President Richard M. Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in Moscow. (The U.S. withdrew from the treaty in 2002.)

In 1977, George Willig scaled the outside of the South Tower of New York's World Trade Center; he was arrested at the top of the 110-story building.

In 1981, 14 people were killed when a Marine jet crashed onto the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 323 ~ 74 of 74

Nimitz off Florida.

In 1994, Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley were married in the Dominican Republic. (The marriage ended in 1996.)

In 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court made it far more difficult for police to be sued by people hurt during high-speed chases. The Supreme Court also ruled that Ellis Island, historic gateway for millions of immigrants, was mainly in New Jersey, not New York.

In 2004, nearly a decade after the Oklahoma City bombing, Terry Nichols was found guilty of 161 state murder charges for helping carry out the attack. (Nichols later received 161 consecutive life sentences.)

In 2005, President George W. Bush received Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas at the White House; Bush called Abbas a courageous democratic reformer and bolstered his standing at home with \$50 million in assistance.

In 2009, President Barack Obama nominated federal appeals judge Sonia Sotomayor to the U.S. Supreme Court. California's Supreme Court upheld the Proposition 8 gay marriage ban but said the 18,000 same-sex weddings that had taken place before the prohibition passed were still valid.

In 2015, challenging Hillary Rodham Clinton from the left, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders formally kicked off his Democratic presidential bid in Burlington, Vermont, with a pitch to liberals to join him in a "political revolution" to transform the nation's economy and politics.

Ten years ago: Congress passed a four-year extension of post-Sept. 11 powers contained in the Patriot Act to search records and conduct roving wiretaps in pursuit of terrorists; President Barack Obama, in France, signed the measure using an autopen machine minutes before the provisions were set to expire at midnight. Ratko Mladic (RAHT'-koh MLAH'-dich), the brutal Bosnian Serb general suspected of leading the massacre of 8,000 Muslim men and boys, was arrested after a 16-year manhunt. (Mladic was extradited to face trial in The Hague, Netherlands.)

Five years ago: President Barack Obama, visiting Japan, said foreign leaders were "rattled" by Donald Trump and had good reason to feel that way, as he accused the presumptive Republican presidential nominee of ignorance about world affairs. First lady Michelle Obama told graduates at a Native American high school in Santa Fe, New Mexico, to take pride in their history and cultures at a time when she said the "loudest voices in the national conversation" suggested turning away from the tribal values that were part of their education.

One year ago: Minneapolis police issued a statement saying George Floyd had died after a "medical incident," and that he physically resisted officers and appeared to be in medical distress; minutes after the statement was released, bystander video was posted online. Protests over Floyd's death began, with tense skirmishes developing between protesters and Minneapolis police. Four police officers who were involved in Floyd's arrest were fired.

Today's Birthdays: Sportscaster Brent Musberger is 82. Rock musician Garry Peterson (Guess Who) is 76. Singer Stevie Nicks is 73. Actor Pam Grier is 72. Actor Philip Michael Thomas is 72. Country singer Hank Williams Jr. is 72. Former British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn is 72. Actor Margaret Colin is 63. Country singer-songwriter Dave Robbins is 62. Actor Doug Hutchison is 61. Actor Genie Francis is 59. Comedian Bobcat Goldthwait is 59. Singer-actor Lenny Kravitz is 57. Actor Helena Bonham Carter is 55. Distance runner Zola Budd is 55. Rock musician Phillip Rhodes is 53. Actor Joseph Fiennes (FYNZ) is 51. Singer Joey Kibble (Take 6) is 50. Actor-producer-writer Matt Stone is 50. Singer Lauryn Hill is 46. Contemporary Christian musician Nathan Cochran is 43. Actor Elisabeth Harnois is 42. Actor Hrach Titizian is 42.