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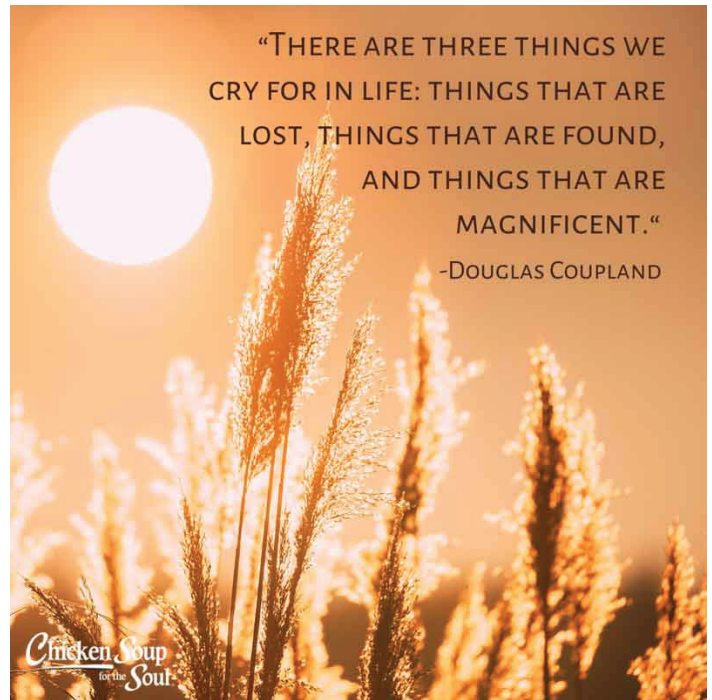
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Bristol student receives MSU Moorhead scholarship

Moorhead, Minn., June 10, 2021— Whitney Voss, Bristol, S.D., has received a FM Sertoma Club Scholarship from Minnesota State University Moorhead where she is majoring in speech language pathology. Whitney is a graduate of Groton Area High School. Her parents are Chad and Joy Voss.

The FM Sertoma Club Scholarship is for fulltime undergraduate students that are enrolled in the speech language and hearing sciences program that are also active in their Collegiate Sertoma Club.

Minnesota State University Moorhead is a comprehensive regional university offering 150 majors, emphases and options, 12-professional programs, 31 areas of teacher licensure, 40 certificate programs and 15 graduate degrees. MSU Moorhead is a member of the Minnesota State system.



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Late Score Costs Groton Legion Post #39 Against Redfield

Groton Legion Post #39 lost the lead late in an 8-2 defeat to Redfield on Thursday. The game was tied at two with Redfield batting in the top of the fifth when Keaton Rohlf's doubled on a 1-2 count, scoring two runs.

The Groton Legion Post #39 struggled to put runs on the board and had a tough time defensively containing Redfield, giving up eight runs.

Rohlf's earned the win for Redfield. The pitcher surrendered two runs on eight hits over six and a third innings, striking out seven. Owen Osborn threw two-thirds of an inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Alex Morris took the loss for Groton Legion Post #39. The pitcher lasted five innings, allowing six hits and four runs while striking out nine.

Groton Legion Post #39 racked up nine hits on the day. Morris, Chandler Larson, and Jonathan Doeden all managed multiple hits for Groton Legion Post #39. Morris led Groton Legion Post #39 with three hits in three at bats.

Redfield tallied nine hits. Camden Osborn, Osborn, and Seth Siebrecht all managed multiple hits for Redfield.

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Pitching By Ryan Shuts Out Redfield, Groton Jr Legion Takes The Win

Ryan G threw a gem on Thursday for Groton Jr Legion, allowing zero runs and besting Redfield by a score of 11-0

Groton Jr Legion put up five runs in the third inning. Jordan B, Cole S, Kaleb H, and Dillon A each drove in runs during the inning.

One bright spot for Redfield was a single by O O in the first inning.

Ryan was the winning pitcher for Groton Jr Legion. The bulldog allowed two hits and zero runs over five innings, striking out five.

S S took the loss for Redfield. The hurler surrendered 11 runs on nine hits over four innings, striking out one.

Groton Jr Legion totaled nine hits. Cole, Jordan, and Andrew M each managed multiple hits for Groton Jr Legion. Andrew, Jordan, and Cole each collected two hits to lead Groton Jr Legion. Groton Jr Legion didn't commit a single error in the field. Cade L had the most chances in the field with six.

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Groton Area Fourth Quarter Honor Roll

Seniors

4.0 GPA: Isaac Smith, Hailey Monson, Alexis Hanten, Tanae Lipp, Erin Unzen, Tessa Erdmann, Brooklyn Gilbert, Sage Mortenson, Eh Tha You Say, Grace Wambach

3.99-3.50: Samantha Pappas, Grace Wiedrick, Trey Gengerke, Alex Morris, Jasmine Gengerke, Austin Anderson, Braden Freeman, Regan Leicht, Lucas Simon, Alexa Herr, Chandler Larson, Dragr Monson, Kale Pharis, Connor Lehman, Alyssa Fordham, Tiara DeHoet, Jaimen Farrell, Lee Iverson, Tucker Carda, Steven Paulson

3.49-3.00: Kaden Carda, Dylan Krueger, Taryn Taylor, Douglas Heminger, Chloe Daly

Juniors

4.0 GPA: Allyssa Locke, Travis Townsend, Madeline Flihs, Trista Keith, Seth Johnson, Alyssa Thaler

3.99-3.50: Jordan Bjerke, Kansas Kroll, Julianna Kosel, Lane Krueger, Madisen Bjerke, Kennedy Anderson, Favian Sanchez-Gonzalez, Megan Flihs, Hannah Gustafson, Pierce Kettering, Kaden Kurtz, Stella Meier

3.49-3.00: Landon Kokales, Jace Kroll, Jackson Cogley, Brayden Hansen, Ryder Daly, Cassaundra Scultz

Sophomores

4.0 GPA: Jackson Dinger, Caleb Hanten, Jacob Lewandowski, Andrew Marzahn, Cole Simon, Elliana Weismantel

3.99-3.50: Ethan Clark, Carter Barse, Cole Bisbee, Kaleb Antonsen, Cadence Tullis, Brooke Gengerke, Shaylee Peterson, Aspen Johnson, Jacelynne Gleason, Tate Larson, Gracie Traphagen, Cade Larson, Porter Johnson

3.49-3.00: Sierra Ehresmann, Shallyn Foertsch, KayLynn Overacker, Breena Carda, Nathalia Garcia

Freshmen

4.0 GPA: Claire Heinrich, Hannah Monson

3.99-3.50: Camryn Kurtz, Lydia Meier, Dillon Abeln, Emily Clark, Kyleigh Englund, Holden Sippel, Ashlyn Sperry, Abigail Jensen, Anna Fjeldheim, Lexi Osterman, Sara Menzia, Shea Jandel, Jaycie Lier, Sydney Leicht, Emma Schinkel

3.49-3.00: Bradin Althoff, Colby Dunker, Cadence Feist, Faith Flihs, Jackson Garstecki, Bryson Wambach, Lane Tietz, Logan Ringgenberg, Anna Bisse, Karsyn Jangula, Ava Wienk, Elijah Lich

Eighth Graders

4.0 GPA: Gretchen Dinger

3.99-3.50: Payton Mitchell, Axel Warrington, Elizabeth Flihs, Faith Traphagen, Blake Pauli, Corbin Weismantel, Blake Dennert, Karrah-Jo Johnson, Aiden Heathcote, Brooklyn Hansen, Emma Kutter, Jeslyn Kosel

3.49-3.00: Carter Simon, Laila Roberts, Easten Ekern, Kennedy Hansen, Kaden Kampa, Brevin Flihs, Korbin Kucker, Quintyn Bedford, Ashlyn Feser, Kayla Lehr, Logan Pearson, Rebecca Poor, Christian Ehresmann, Kellen Antonsen, Turner Thompson

Seventh Graders

4.0 GPA: Jerica Locke, Jaedyn Penning, Nathan Unzen, Talli Wright

3.99-3.50: Carly Gilbert, Natalia Warrington, Ryder Johnson, Logan Warrington, Benjamin Hoeft, Gage Sippel, Mia Crank, Lucas Carda, De Eh Tha Say, Karter Moody

3.49-3.00: Lincoln Krause, Raelee Lilly, London Bahr, Hannah Sandness, Jayden Schwan, Calli Tollifson, Keegen Tracy, Garrett Schultz, Rylee Dunker, Olivia Stiegelmeier, Nicholas Groeblichhoff

Sixth Graders

4.0 GPA: Teagan Hanten

3.99-3.50: Kira Clocksene, Carlee Johnson, Ashlynn Warrington, Brody Lord, Liby Althoff, Emerlee Jones, Colt Williamson, Halee Harder

3.49-3.00: Aiden Strom, Avery Crank, Blake Lord, Gavin Kroll, Brenna Imrie, Claire Schuelke, McKenna Tietz, Zander Harry, Addison Hoffman Wipf, ReAnn Dennert, Walker Zoellner, Hailey Pauli

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 ***



Day shift
and night
shift
assemblers!

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

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

Britton



Help Wanted at Groton Area

The Groton Area School District is seeking qualified and motivated individuals for the following position for the 2021-2022 school year.

Transportation Director. The Groton Area School District has an opening for the position of Transportation Director. This position is full-time year round with a comprehensive benefits package and salary dependent on education and experience. Criminal background check and pre-employment drug test required. Applicant must hold valid South Dakota Commercial Driver License with School Bus and Passengers endorsements and clean driving record. Interested parties should complete and submit the auxiliary staff application form. Open until filled.

Elementary Special Education Paraprofessional. The Groton Area School District is seeking applicants for the position of Special Education Paraprofessional. Starting salary is \$12.10/hour and position includes comprehensive benefits package. Criminal background check required. Interested parties should complete and submit the auxiliary staff application form. Open until filled.

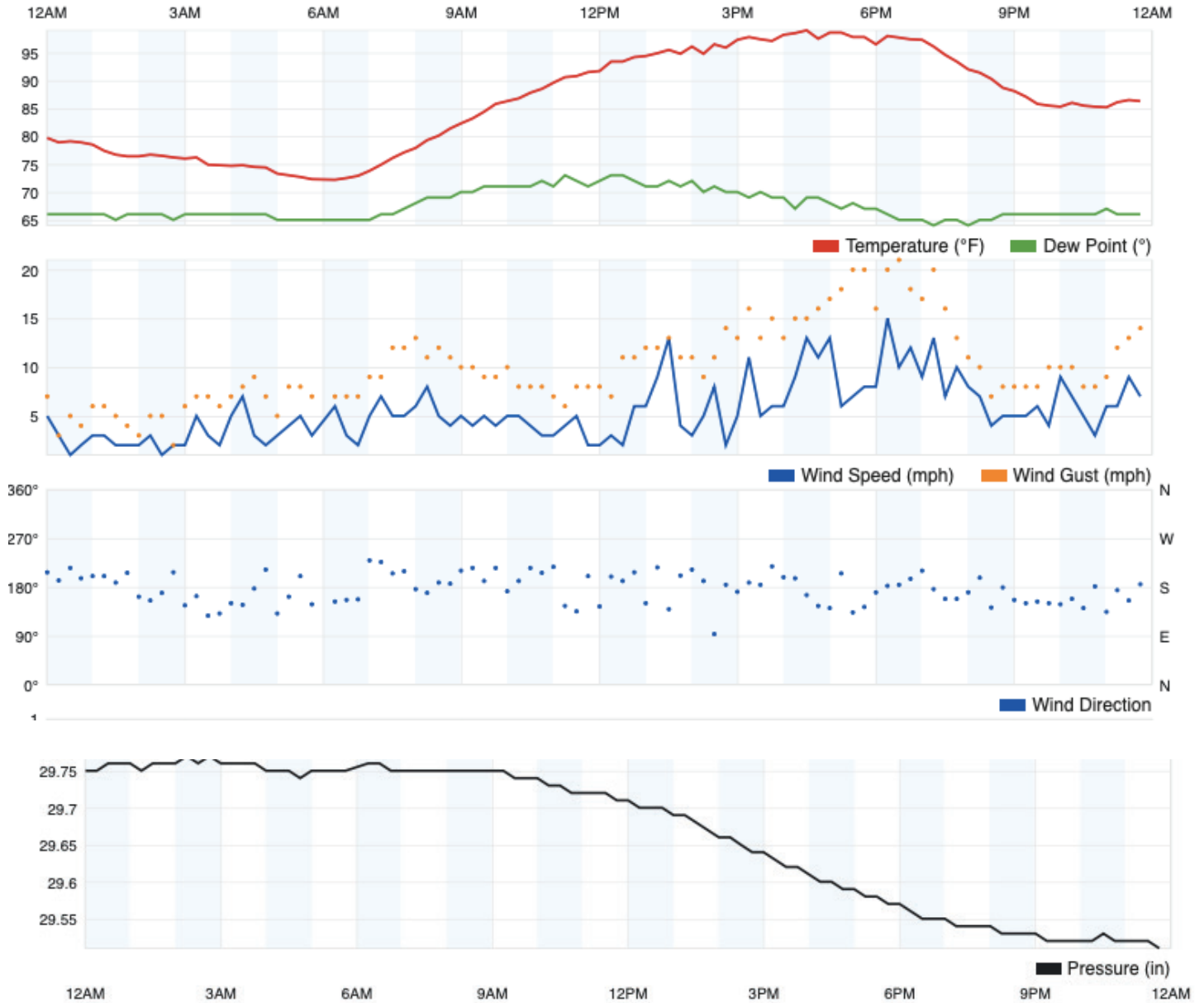
MS/HS Special Education Paraprofessional. The Groton Area School District is seeking applicants for the position of Special Education Paraprofessional. Starting salary is \$12.10/hour and position includes comprehensive benefits package. Criminal background check required. Interested parties should complete and submit the auxiliary staff application form. Open until filled.

Applications are available at www.grotonarea.com or at the district office – 502 N 2nd Street, Groton.

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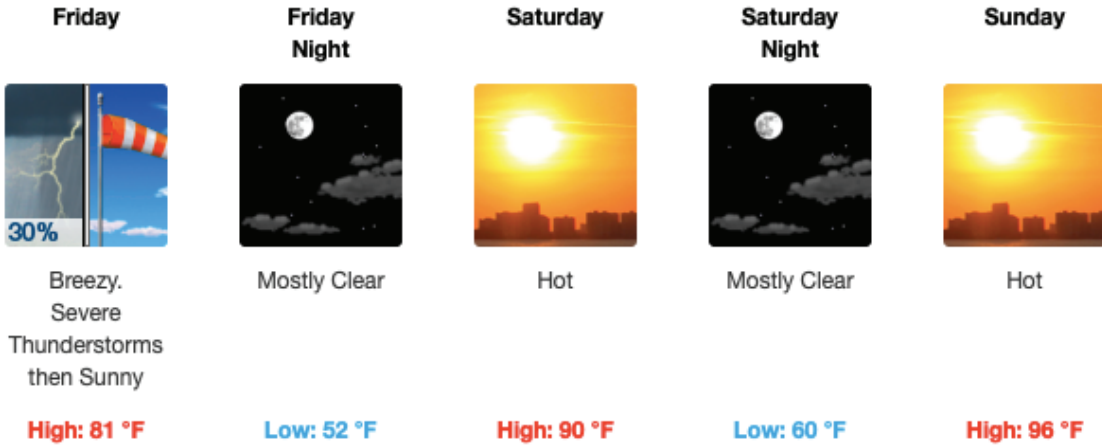
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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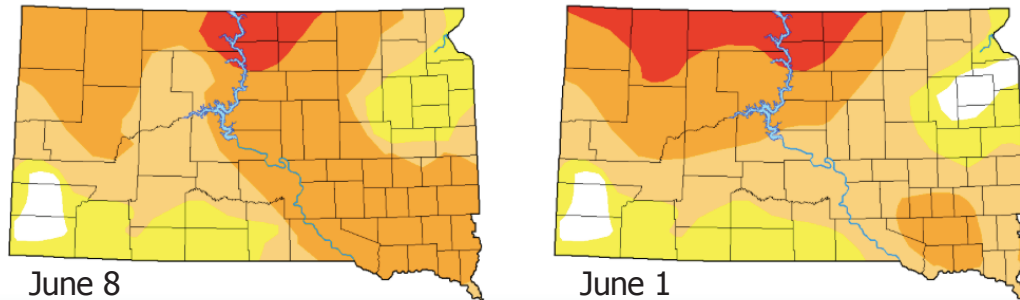
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Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



High Plains

A mostly dry week for the region, with some late precipitation in the period over North Dakota that will be addressed next week when the full extent of the rains can be taken into account. Some areas of Colorado had above-normal precipitation for the week. Temperatures were well above normal in the Dakotas where widespread areas of 12-15 degrees above normal were observed, with several places over 100 degrees F. Farther south in the region, the temperatures across Kansas were below normal. Portions of southwest North Dakota and northwest South Dakota were reassessed this week to take into account the wetter pattern lately. Improvements to the severe and extreme drought conditions were made based upon this reanalysis of data. In Nebraska, moderate drought and abnormally dry conditions spread over the northeast to central portions of the state, with some severe drought being introduced in the far northern counties. Southeast South Dakota had drought expand and intensify, with more moderate and severe drought being introduced. The plains of Colorado remained wet and further improvements were made to the abnormally dry and moderate drought conditions in the central portion of the state. Degradation took place in Wyoming where extreme drought was introduced in the northeast and moderate and severe drought expanded in the central and southwest portions of the state, with just a small pocket improved in the southwest.

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Today in Weather History

June 11, 1982: Golf ball size hail fell in Hayti, in Hamlin County, creating three-foot drifts of hail.

June 11, 1990: Hail, up to golf ball size, cut a swath 1.5 miles wide and 50 miles in length from the Missouri River east of the Hyde County line. Thunderstorm winds destroyed a granary roof and downed numerous trees. Damage from large hail was considerable to crops with entire fields being wiped out. The County Agent placed crop damage estimates at 1.8 million dollars in Sully County. Hail also produced window damage to cars and homes.

June 11, 2008: A strong inflow of moist and unstable air into and over a warm surface front resulted in training thunderstorms and very heavy rain across parts of northeast South Dakota. Rainfall amounts of 2 to 6 inches occurred across much of the area resulting in widespread flash flooding. The flooding damaged many roads, bridges, and cropland. In Milbank, many basements were flooded and received sewer backup.

June 11, 2010: Thunderstorms produced damaging winds over a large part of southeast South Dakota beginning just before midnight on June 10th and continuing well into the predawn hours of June 11th. The storms also produced heavy rain, which caused flash flooding at several locations. Heavy rainfall of at least 3 inches caused Enemy Creek to overflow and flood nearby roads. The expensive also caused flooding of roads and basements in Mitchell. A motorcycle business was flooded, resulting in damage to merchandise, although little damage to the motorcycles was reported. Thunderstorm winds caused widespread damage in the Sioux Falls area. Wood and siding were blown off a new house, and a nearby fence was blown over. The winds caused tree damage, including 2 to 3-foot diameter trees blown down. Debris from the tree damage blocked several roads. Garages were blown off three homes which were next to each other, and other nearby homes suffered significant damage in an area on West Eli Court which was subjected to the strongest winds, estimated at 100 mph. Windows were blown out in several of these homes, and a large camper was overturned in the same area. A wind gust of 74 mph was measured elsewhere in the city. The winds blew down out power lines in parts of the city. Heavy rain caused flash flooding of several streets in the southern part of Sioux Falls, with water up to two feet deep. Basement flooding was also reported.

1842: A late-season snowstorm struck New England. Snow fell during the morning and early afternoon, accumulating to a depth of ten to twelve inches at Irasburg, Vermont. Berlin, New Hampshire was blanketed with eleven inches of snow during the day. Snow whitened the higher peaks of the Appalachians as far south as Maryland. The latest date for the occurrence of a general snowstorm in our period over northern New England and northern New York came in 1842 on the morning of 11 June. Zadock Thompson, a professor of natural history and the Queen City's longtime weatherman, commented: "Snow during the forenoon's boards whitened and the mountains as white as in winter."

1990: One of the most expensive hailstorms in U.S. history occurred as \$625 million of damage was caused along the Colorado Front Range from Colorado Springs to Estes Park. Golf to baseball sized hail fell along with heavy rain. 60 people were injured in the storm.

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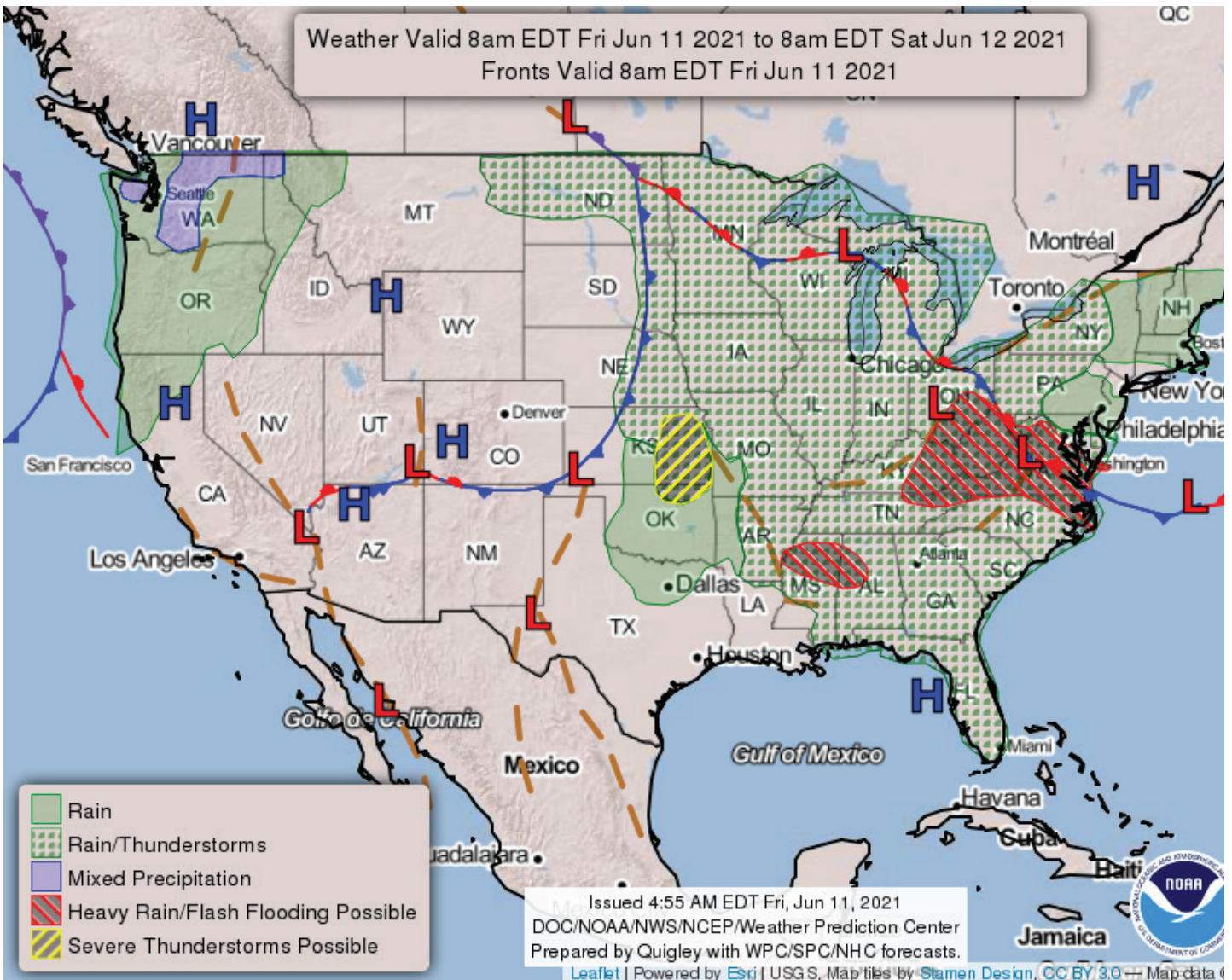
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 99 °F at 4:29 PM
Low Temp: 72 °F at 5:50 AM
Wind: 22 mph at 6:16 PM
Precip: .53 this morning

Today's Info

Record High: 104° in 1893
Record Low: 31° in 1938
Average High: 79°F
Average Low: 54°F
Average Precip in June.: 1.15
Precip to date in June.: 0.53
Average Precip to date: 8.40
Precip Year to Date: 4.50
Sunset Tonight: 9:22 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:45 a.m.



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OVERCOMING THE OVERWHELMING

David was hunted, haunted and harassed. Often he was forced into a crevice and had little room to move or stretch. But in his moments of oppression, he did not seem to suffer from depression. He felt free to sing a song of hope that God planted in his heart. He found a source of strength that came to him from his dearest friend and constant companion – God!

“I will sing of Your strength, in the morning I will sing of Your love; for You are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble!” wrote David as he reflected on the troubled times of his life. And he was not the only one who found themselves in life-threatening and even life-ending situations.

Do you remember what Paul and Silas did when they were thrown into prison for serving the Lord? At midnight they were praying and singing hymns of praise to the Lord while the other prisoners listened to them in awe. God joined in the celebration, sent an earthquake that caused so much shaking that the prisoners’ chains fell off and their doors flew open. The confines and chains of being in prison could not silence them.

Josephus, the historian, wrote of the Christians awaiting death in the Coliseum. Waiting on the lions to maul and mangle them, they sang songs of joy so loudly that their voices were heard above the roar of the lions and the cheers of the crowd. As they faced the lions that would devour them, God put His song in their mouths, His peace in their hearts, and His angels to comfort them.

Prayer: Lord, when we face the confinement of a cell or the threat of being devoured by foes that would destroy us, quiet our heart with Your peace. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. Psalm 59:16

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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

Fight over Canadian oil rages on after pipeline's demise

By MATTHEW BROWN, JOHN FLESHER AND MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — The Keystone XL is dead after a 12-year attempt to build the oil pipeline, yet the fight over Canadian crude rages on as emboldened environmentalists target other projects and pressure President Joe Biden to intervene — all while oil imports from the north keep rising.

Biden dealt the fatal blow to the partially built \$9 billion Keystone XL in January when he revoked its border-crossing permit issued by former President Donald Trump. On Wednesday, sponsors TC Energy and the province of Alberta gave up and declared the line “terminated.”

Activists and many scientists had warned that the pipeline would open a new spigot on Canada’s oil sands crude — and that burning the heavily polluting fuel would lock in climate change. As the fight escalated into a national debate over fossil fuels, Canadian crude exports to the U.S. steadily increased, driven largely by production from Alberta’s oil sands region.

Even before the cancellation, environmentalists had turned their attention to other projects, including Enbridge Energy’s proposal to expand and rebuild its Line 3 pipeline in Minnesota, the target of protests this week that led to the arrest of some 250 activists.

“Don’t expect these fights to go away anytime soon,” said Daniel Raimi, a fellow at Resources for the Future, an energy and environmental think tank in Washington. “This is going to encourage environmental advocates to do more of the same.”

Bill McKibben, an author who was arrested outside the White House while protesting the Keystone XL in 2011, said its defeat provides a template to kill other pipelines, including Line 3 and the Dakota Access Pipeline from North Dakota’s Bakken oil field.

Describing Keystone XL as “a carbon bomb,” McKibben said Line 3 is the same size and “carries the same stuff. How on earth could anyone with a straight face say Line 3 passes the climate test?”

Enbridge said the cancellation of Keystone XL will not affect its projects, describing them as “designed to meet current energy demand safely and in ways that better protect the environment.”

A second TC Energy pipeline network, known simply as Keystone, has been delivering crude from Canada’s oil sands region since 2010. The company says the line that runs from Alberta to Illinois, Oklahoma and the Gulf Coast has moved more than 3 billion barrels of oil.

Canada is by far the biggest foreign crude supplier to the U.S., which imported about 3.5 million barrels a day from its neighbor in 2020 — 61% of all U.S. oil imports.

The flow dropped slightly during the coronavirus pandemic but has largely rebounded. Import volumes have almost doubled since the Keystone XL was first proposed in 2008, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers said Thursday that it expects no immediate effect on production from Keystone XL’s cancellation, but the group predicted more oil would be moved to the U.S. by rail.

A series of fiery accidents occurred in the U.S. and Canada after rail shipments of crude increased during an oil boom on the Northern Plains, including a 2013 incident in which 47 people were killed after a runaway train derailed in the Quebec town of Lac-Mégantic.

The dispute over Keystone XL and other lines raised diplomatic tensions between the two countries, but Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau adopted a conciliatory tone with Biden, who canceled the pipeline on his first day in the White House.

Canada uses much less oil than it produces, making it a huge exporter, and 98% of those exports go to the U.S., according to the Natural Resources Canada.

Trudeau raised Keystone XL as a top priority with Biden while acknowledging that the president had promised in his campaign to cancel the line.

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Both leaders have taken heat at home over Keystone, with Republicans slamming Biden for shutting it down while construction was underway, costing hundreds of jobs. The project was meant to expand oil exports for Canada, which has the third-largest oil reserves in the world, and provincial officials in Alberta wanted Trudeau to do more to save it.

The White House declined to comment on the cancellation. Spokesman Vedant Patel declined to say if Biden plans to address increased crude exports from Canada or intervene in other pipeline disputes.

His action on Keystone "signals at least some appetite to get involved," but pipelines that have operated for years would be tougher targets, Raimi said.

Winona LaDuke, executive director of the Indigenous-based environmental group Honor the Earth, called on Biden to withdraw an Army Corps of Engineers permit for Line 3 and to order a new study.

"He could stop the project," she said. "Don't ask us to be nice to Enbridge. They're all over our land. They're hurting us."

The Biden administration has been "disturbingly quiet" on Line 3 and the Dakota Access line, said Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club. He urged the administration to declare both unacceptable.

Fiercely opposed by Native Americans, the Dakota Access pipeline was the impetus for protests that were quashed by law enforcement. The Biden administration has not sought to stop the line, and it's still in court after a judge revoked its permit but allowed oil to keep flowing.

Alberta sank more than \$1 billion into Keystone XL last year to kick-start construction. Officials in the province are considering a trade action against the U.S. to seek compensation.

Keystone XL's price tag ballooned as the project languished, increasing from \$5.4 billion to \$9 billion.

Another question: What to do with pipe already in place at the U.S.-Canada border and other infrastructure along its route.

Jane Kleeb, a pipeline opponent in Nebraska, said state regulators should revoke the permit they approved for a route through the state. Otherwise, she said, TC Energy might try to sell the easements to another company.

Until the state acts, farmers and ranchers will continue to face TC Energy attorneys in court, "protecting their property from an eminent domain land grab by a foreign corporation," she said.

Dead man found on Rapid Creek island

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Police are investigating the death of a man found on an island in Rapid City.

KELO radio reports that police were dispatched to a small island within Rapid Creek Wednesday evening.

Police said in a statement that officers found a man who was "obviously deceased." They identified him as 56-year-old Keith Dubray Sr. Police spokesman Brendyn Medina told the Rapid City Journal in an email that Dubray is associated with the city's homeless population.

Investigators found no signs of trauma or foul play, Medina said. An autopsy is pending to determine the cause and manner of death.

Authorities investigating discovery of 2 bodies in semi

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Authorities are investigating the discovery of two bodies found in a semi-trailer along Interstate 29 in southeastern South Dakota.

The semi was found on Tuesday in the southbound lane of the interstate in Union County, according to the state Division of Criminal Investigation. There were two dead adults in the cab of the truck.

Investigators are not looking for suspects and say there is no threat to the public. No further information has been released.

Noem: State-inspected meat processors can sell out of state

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem announced Wednesday that small state-

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licensed meat processors will be able to ship meat over state lines under a state agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

South Dakota and the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service have entered into an agreement that allows state-licensed facilities to ship meat as if they were federally inspected. The Republican governor has tried to bolster the state's smaller meat processors in an industry dominated by major companies.

"For too long, meat producers have been shortchanged due to anticompetitive practices in the meat-packing industry," Noem said in a statement. "These new opportunities will expand their options and allow them to ship South Dakota meat across state lines."

In recent weeks, she has also touted a grant program for small meat processors and called on the Department of Justice to investigate major meatpackers that she claims hold an outsized control over the industry.

In South Dakota, where there are roughly five beef cattle for every person, the livestock industry makes up a huge chunk of the economy. According to the North American Meat Institute, a meat processors trade association, South Dakota slaughterhouses sold over \$5.6 billion in meat during 2019, the most recent year data was available.

Before the agreement with the USDA, known as a Cooperative Interstate Shipping agreement, state-inspected facilities were only allowed to sell meat within the state. Eight other states currently participate in the agreement program — Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

The president of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association, Eric Jennings, said the agreement might help local producers, but that the effects would not be immediate because local meat processors are already busy fulfilling demand from within the state.

"They have just about all the business they can handle," he said.

He added that it would be difficult for small meat lockers to compete with the large producers because there is a massive difference in the number of animals they can slaughter. But as the price of meat rises in supermarkets, there is a growing demand for local products.

There are currently 34 meat processing facilities licensed by the state. Jennings said there is a growing interest in opening small butchering facilities and the new agreement would help them stay viable if they can market to other states. It is only open to facilities with fewer than 25 employees.

"Having access to larger markets will help them survive," he said.

South Dakota pork plant, labor union reach 4-year agreement

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The union that had threatened a strike at a Smithfield pork processing plant in South Dakota says it has reached a tentative agreement with the company on a four-year contract.

The Sioux Falls chapter of the United Food and Commercial Workers had negotiated with Virginia-based Smithfield Foods for two days after union members rejected a previous contract proposal and authorized a strike. Union leaders said its members will vote on the proposed contract next week.

The agreement appeared to assuage the possibility of a strike at the plant, which produces nearly 5% of the nation's pork every day.

UFCW said in a statement late Wednesday that the company dropped plans to take away a 15-minute break and "the parties have reached an agreement on wages."

The union had pressed for Smithfield to boost pay from a proposed base wage of \$18 an hour, as well as keep a break during the second half of worker shifts. Smithfield has said its initial proposal would have still ensured two 15-minute breaks for employees who work eight-hour shifts and that the company's offer was "in full alignment" with agreements that the UFCW accepted at other locations.

But workers were emboldened after a virus outbreak at the plant last year killed four workers and infected nearly 1,300. They also argued Smithfield should match the wages offered at a JBS pork processing plant 70 miles (113 kilometers) away in Worthington, Minnesota.

Noem gets new rifle at GOP gathering in Arkansas

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SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem traveled to Arkansas for a Republican gathering and came home with a new rifle.

KELO radio reported Wednesday that Noem traveled to Arkansas on Friday to give the keynote address at the annual Reagan-Rockefeller Day gathering. She received a .44 Magnum Henry Big Boy lever-action rifle as the keynote speaker. The rifle came with the Arkansas Republican Party logo on the stock.

Henry Repeating Rifles presents the gathering's keynote speaker with a rifle every year. The company said in a news release that Noem is an avid outdoorswoman and a possible presidential candidate in 2024.

Noem last year posted an Instagram photo of herself wielding a flamethrower.

For Cornwall, G7 summit brings mix of disruption and hope

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

Falmouth, ENGLAND (AP) — Towering steel fences, masses of police, protests on the beach: The Cornish seaside's turquoise waters and white sandy beaches are looking decidedly less idyllic this week as leaders of the Group of Seven wealthy democracies descend for a summit.

U.S. President Joe Biden and leaders from Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan are arriving for three days of talks starting Friday at the tiny village of Carbis Bay, near St. Ives in Cornwall. The region is a popular holiday destination in the southwestern tip of England known for its long, picturesque coastline, its mild climate — and a savory pastry called the Cornish Pasty.

Locals may be used to crowds and traffic jams during the peak summer tourist season, but the disruptions caused by the summit are on another level. A naval frigate dominates the coastline, armed soldiers guard the main sites and some 5,000 extra police officers have been deployed to the area. Authorities have even hired a cruise ship with a capacity of 3,000, moored offshore, to accommodate some of the extra officers.

A main road is closed for the whole week, and local train lines and bus services have been shut down. A 3-meter (10-foot) tall metal fence nicknamed the "ring of steel" has been erected around Treganna Castle in Carbis Bay, where world leaders will stay. Security is also tight in the nearby town of Falmouth, the main base for international media covering the summit.

"This is just a totally surreal experience, the amount of police presence is phenomenal. It's got to be the safest place in the country to be at the moment," said Sue Bates, 64, who was relaxing on the beach Wednesday. Her husband, John, said they felt their holiday cottage shake when helicopters flew over.

"I feel sorry for the consequences that it is having on locals, I understand that some of the restaurant staff can't get in to work during the period of the G-7, which is pretty unfortunate," she said.

Still, Bates and others said they believed the long-term benefits of promoting tourism and local businesses to the world will be worth the hassle.

Britain's government hopes the summit will bring 26 million pounds (\$37 million) in tourism growth to Cornwall, one of the poorest regions in the country — and the whole of western Europe. Despite its upmarket restaurants and luxury holiday cottages, some neighborhoods are among the poorest 10% in England. Wages are below the national average and child poverty is high in areas not far from St. Ives' waterfront.

The summit has been a boon for local hotels and guesthouses, which have just recently been allowed to reopen after months of forced closure under the U.K.'s COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. All rooms were booked up months in advance by visiting media and officials.

For a small business like The St. Ives Co., which has been chosen to supply gift hampers for some of the world's most powerful leaders, it's a dream opportunity.

"When we're like, Joe Biden's going to be using our toiletries, you almost have to keep saying to yourself -- it's happening, we are doing this," said co-owner Tegen Mackay.

Others aren't so happy. A local fisherman, Ian Jepson, told British media he was turned back by a warship and told he couldn't fish in the waters because of an "exclusion zone." And Andrew Narbett, who operates tourist boat trips on his boat Tiger Lilly, said many bookings had been canceled and he will not bother operating during the summit.

"We were fully booked yesterday and throughout the day we had a lot of cancellations where people

were travelling down the A30 (main route) and seeing signs saying 'major disruptions,'" he said.

Some see the summit as a chance to promote Cornwall's emerging sectors, especially its green businesses. Climate change is among the top issues on the summit's agenda, and Britain's government has said Cornwall was chosen as the host venue partly because it is "already a powerhouse for green innovation."

Glen Caplin-Grey, who heads the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership, said he's keen to showcase the region's low-carbon businesses like offshore wind farms and lithium mining. Lithium is a key component in batteries for electric vehicles.

"What the last year has shown, in terms of the pandemic, is that there's an over-reliance on tourism here," he said. "It's great that people want to come and visit, but it's really important to look at other higher wage sectors as well."

In Tigray, food is often a weapon of war as famine looms

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

ABI ADI, Ethiopia (AP) — First the Eritrean soldiers stole the pregnant woman's food as she hid in the bush. Then they turned her away from a checkpoint when she was on the verge of labor.

So she had the baby at home and walked 12 days to get the famished child to a clinic in the northern Ethiopian region of Tigray. At 20 days old, baby Tigsti still had shriveled legs and a lifeless gaze — signs of what the United Nations' top humanitarian official calls the world's worst famine conditions in a decade.

"She survived because I held her close to my womb and kept hiding during the exhausting journey," said Abeba Gebru, 37, a quiet woman from Getskimilesley with an amulet usually worn for luck around her left wrist.

Here, in war-torn Tigray, more than 350,000 people already face famine, according to the U.N. and other humanitarian groups. It is not just that people are starving; it is that many are being starved, The Associated Press found. In farming areas in Tigray to which the AP got rare access, farmers, aid workers and local officials confirmed that food had been turned into a weapon of war.

This story was funded by a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers are blocking food aid and even stealing it, they said, and an AP team saw convoys with food and medical aid turned back by Ethiopian military officials as fighting resumed in the town of Hawzen. The soldiers also are accused of stopping farmers from harvesting or plowing, stealing the seeds for planting, killing livestock and looting farm equipment.

More than 2 million of Tigray's 6 million people have already fled, unable to harvest their crops. And those who stayed often cannot plant new crops or till the land because they fear for their lives.

"If things don't change soon, mass starvation is inevitable," said a humanitarian worker in the region, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to escape retaliation from armed groups. "This is a man-made disaster."

The full extent of the hunger is hard to pin down because officials — and food aid — still cannot get into the remotest parts of a region known for its rugged inaccessibility even in the best of times. The U.N. World Food Program on Thursday said it had gotten aid to 1.4 million people in Tigray, "barely half of the number we should be reaching," in part because armed groups were blocking the way.

For every mother like Abeba who makes it out, hundreds, possibly thousands, are trapped behind the front lines or military roadblocks in rural areas.

"Most of the malnourished children, they die there," said Dr. Kibrom Gebreselassie, chief medical director of Ayder Hospital in Mekele. "This is a tip of the iceberg."

The grinding war in Tigray started in early November, shortly before the harvest season, as an attempt by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to disarm the region's rebellious leaders.

On one side are guerrillas loyal to the ousted and now-fugitive leaders of Tigray. On the other are Ethiopian government troops, allied troops from neighboring Eritrea and militias from the Amhara ethnic group.

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Trapped in the middle are the civilians of Tigray.

The war has spawned massacres, gang rapes and the widespread expulsion of people from their homes, and the United States has declared "ethnic cleansing" in western Tigray. Now, on top of those atrocities, Tigrayans face another urgent problem: hunger and starvation.

The deputy CEO of the region, Abebe Gebrehiwot, echoed the assessment of "ethnic cleansing" and said combatants are blocking food aid from reaching those who need it. He said the region's interim administration, appointed by Abiy, is desperately trying to forestall a famine, including in the areas where Eritrean forces remain in charge.

"There are some players who don't want us to...plow the land," he said in a recent interview. "There are some players who (prevent) us from distributing the seeds."

Ethiopia's government strongly disputes that starvation is being used as a weapon of war. Mitiku Kassa, an official with the National Disaster Risk Management Commission, said Wednesday that the U.N. and nonprofit groups have "unfettered access" to Tigray, and that food aid worth about \$135 million has been distributed.

"We don't have any food shortage," he declared.

That's not what the AP found out on the ground.

Teklemariam Gebremichael and his neighbors said he and his neighbors were no longer allowed to farm. When Eritrean soldiers came upon him looking after his cattle and harvesting crops, they shot both him and his cows, he said.

He survived. The cows didn't. With food in short supply, his wound is slow to heal.

"I call on the world has to take immediate action to help Tigray, because we can't live on our own land anymore," he pleaded.

Another farmer, Gebremariam Hadush, and his five children said they were taking their chances anyway, racing against time as the wet season approached.

"We should be tilling this land for the second or third time," he said. "But we couldn't till at all until now because we haven't had peace. So now all we can do is just scrape the surface."

Hunger is particularly sensitive for Ethiopia, where images of starving children with wasting limbs and glassy eyes in the 1980s led to a global outcry. Drought, conflict and government denial all played a part in that famine, which killed an estimated 1 million people.

The situation now is also drawing concern from the world — although not enough of it, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S. ambassador to the U.N., said Thursday. She called for the U.N. Security Council to hold a meeting on Tigray.

"Famine may already be happening in certain areas. ... It's unconscionable especially in the very place that woke the world up to the scourge of hunger," she said. "I ask those who refuse to address this issue publicly, do African lives not matter?"

In Hawzen, where artillery shelling sporadically sends people running for the hills, teacher Gebremichael Welay said he still has memories of the bombing raids that destroyed food silos when he was a little boy.

"(The Ethiopian military) bombed us," he said. "They are doing it again."

Farming has not stopped entirely in Tigray, but it has become a dangerous act of resistance. On the road to Abi Adi, a town about 100 kilometers west of Mekele, the AP saw a few farmers out plowing or taking their cattle to pasture in the distant hills. Craters from recent fighting were visible, and bombed military trucks languished by the roadside.

"If they (Eritrean soldiers) see us plowing, they beat us," said 20-year-old farmer from Melbe, southwest of Mekele, who gave only his first name of Kibrom. "We only plow when we are sure they are not around."

Besides preventing plowing, the soldiers took other measures to destroy food, witnesses said. Eritrean soldiers are known to contaminate food silos, sometimes mixing grain with sand and soil, according to an official with an aid group based in Mekele. And the looting by both Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers included farm equipment, farmers said.

"All our farm tools, including plows, were looted and taken away on trucks," said Birhanu Tsegay, 24-year-old farmer from Neksege town. "They left nothing there."

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An AP team saw a honey processing plant in the town of Agula stripped bare, allegedly by Eritrean soldiers. Aid worker Tekeste Gebrekidan picked up a soiled flyer of the farmers' union that once exported the region's prized honey and noted ruefully that its leaders are missing, presumed dead or displaced.

"Demand for food in the villages is very high," said Tekeste, who serves as the coordinator of the Relief Society of Tigray in the Tsirae Womberta district. The level of need, he said, is "beyond our capacity."

Sometimes food aid makes it through despite all the challenges, but it still falls short. Early in May a large crowd gathered under a scorching sun in Agula to share food bought with U.S. money.

The food they gave out that afternoon — 15 kilograms of wheat, half a kilogram of peas and some cooking oil per person, to last a month — was earmarked only for the most vulnerable. That included pregnant mothers and elderly people such as 60-year-old Letebrhan Belay, who walked for four hours to get there.

Her family had 10 members, she said. She had received food for only five. But she insisted that she was still faring better than others.

"There will be people dying of hunger," she said, feeling the little sack that held her meager rations.

Some of the more fortunate, like nursing mother Abeba, make it past the many roadblocks to reach medical help in Abi Adi and Mekele, but they are few. Four women and their babies were admitted in the makeshift ward for malnourished babies in Abi Adi when the AP was there.

At least two children brought to the center since February did not live, said Birhanu Gebremedhin, health coordinator for the district of Abi Adi. He said many malnourished children in the villages could not make it out.

"This malnutrition is caused by the conflict," Birhanu said. "They've stolen their food, their equipment, and some were killed by the troops even. So they are not able to feed their children."

Birhan Etsana, a 27-year-old mother from Dengelat, was still hanging onto the lone survivor of her triplets, a baby admitted with complications stemming from severe acute malnutrition, including heart failure. The baby, Mebrhit, was 17 months old but weighed just 5.2 kilograms (11lbs 7oz). And that's after a week in intensive care, where she squeaked out of danger with a tube carrying formula through her nostrils.

"Even when we were in the field and I gave her the breast, she couldn't drink anything," Birhan said. "It's because of lack of food."

Another baby admitted to Ayder Hospital with severe acute malnutrition died, said head nurse Tkleab Gebremariam. The mother fled during fighting, leaving the child with his helpless grandmother for seven days. They were reunited after 10 days, but they got to the hospital too late.

As he spoke, Tkleab gingerly felt the bed sores on the scalp of one who had beaten the odds, Amanuel Mulu.

Mulu's mother had spent too much time hiding from soldiers and scavenging for food to look after her child. As the soldiers got closer, she had to escape into the bush. Her baby suffered.

The child was unconscious when he was first admitted in April, severely malnourished and anemic after losing half his body weight. Two weeks in intensive care saved his life. At almost two years old, he still weighed only 6.7kg (14lbs 12oz).

"This baby is very lucky to get well after coming here," Tkleab said. "There are many who didn't get this opportunity."

EXPLAINER: What will change under Israel's new government?

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — If all goes according to plan, Israel will swear in a new government on Sunday, ending Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's record 12-year rule and a political crisis that inflicted four elections on the country in less than two years.

The next government, which will be led by the ultranationalist Naftali Bennett, has vowed to chart a new course aimed at healing the country's divisions and restoring a sense of normalcy.

Anything more ambitious would be courting disaster.

The coalition consists of eight parties from across Israel's political spectrum, including a small Arab party

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that has made history by joining a government for the first time. If even one party bolts, the government would be at serious risk of collapse, and Netanyahu, who intends to stay on as opposition leader, is waiting in the wings.

Here's a look at what to expect:

A FRAGILE COALITION

The coalition holds only a slight majority in the 120-member Knesset and includes parties from the right, left and center. The only things they agree on are that Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption, should leave office, and that the country cannot endure another election.

They are expected to adopt a modest agenda acceptable to Israelis from across the ideological divide that steers clear of hot-button issues. Their first big challenge will be to agree on a budget, the first since 2019. Economic reforms and infrastructure spending may follow.

Bennett will serve as prime minister for the first two years, followed by the centrist Yair Lapid, a former journalist who was the driving force behind the coalition. But that's only if the government survives that long.

MANAGING THE CONFLICT

Bennett is a religious ultranationalist who supports settlement expansion and is opposed to a Palestinian state. But he risks losing his job if he alienates his dovish coalition partners.

That will likely mean a continuation of Netanyahu's approach of managing the decades-old conflict without trying to end it. Annexing the occupied West Bank and invading Gaza are probably off the table, but so are any major concessions to the Palestinians.

Every Israeli government has expanded Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem, which Israel captured in the 1967 war and which the Palestinians want for their future state. This government is expected to do so in a subdued way that avoids angering the Biden administration, which is pushing for restraint and an eventual revival of peace talks.

The new government is expected to maintain Netanyahu's hard-line stance on Iran and oppose President Joe Biden's efforts to revive its international nuclear deal. But senior officials have already vowed to do so behind closed doors rather than bringing the rift out into the open, as Netanyahu did during the Obama years.

The new government will also likely work with Biden to strengthen ties with Arab states.

HEALING DIVISIONS

The biggest change will likely be felt domestically, as the government struggles to heal the divisions in Israeli society that opened up during the Netanyahu years, between Jews and Arabs and between ultra-Orthodox and secular Israelis.

"If our political culture is based on lies and threats and hatred of Arabs, and hatred of left-wingers, and hatred of right-wingers who don't hate Arabs and left-wingers enough, then yes, we need change," Lapid said this week. "We've brought about change and we're proud of it."

The United Arab List, a small party with Islamist roots led by Mansour Abbas, is the first Arab party to sit in a coalition. In return for helping to oust Netanyahu, he is expected to secure large budgets for housing, infrastructure and law enforcement in Arab communities.

Israel's Arab citizens make up 20% of the population and face widespread discrimination. They have close familial ties to the Palestinians and largely identify with their cause, leading many Jewish Israelis to view them with suspicion. Tensions boiled over during last month's Gaza war, when Jews and Arabs fought in the streets of Israel's mixed cities.

The new government already faces hostility from Israel's ultra-Orthodox community — staunch supporters of Netanyahu. Earlier this week, ultra-Orthodox leaders condemned it in harsh terms, with one demanding Bennett remove his kippa, the skullcap worn by observant Jews.

RETURN OF THE KING?

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After a quarter-century at the highest levels of Israeli politics, no one expects the 71-year-old Netanyahu, dubbed the "King of Israel" by his supporters, to quietly retire to his private home in the seaside town of Caesarea.

As opposition leader and the head of the largest party in parliament, Netanyahu is expected to continue doing everything in his power to bring down the government. His best hope for avoiding conviction on serious corruption charges is to battle them from the prime minister's office, with a governing coalition that could potentially grant him immunity.

But his domineering presence could continue to bind his opponents together. Bennett, already branded a traitor by much of the right-wing base he shares with Netanyahu, heads a tiny party and is unlikely to get another shot at the top job.

Netanyahu could meanwhile face a challenge from within his defeated Likud party, which includes a number of would-be successors. They know that without the polarization around Netanyahu, the Likud would be able to assemble a strong, stable, right-wing government. But Netanyahu retains a strong hold on the party's institutions and its base, and senior members are unlikely to challenge him unless his downfall is assured.

G-7 nations gather to pledge 1B vaccine doses for world

By ZEKE MILLER, AAMER MADHANI and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

CARBIS BAY, England (AP) — World leaders from the Group of Seven industrialized nations are set to commit at their summit to share at least 1 billion coronavirus shots with struggling countries around the world — half the doses coming from the U.S. and 100 million from the U.K.

Vaccine sharing commitments from President Joe Biden and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson set the stage for the G-7 leaders' meeting in southwest England, where leaders will pivot Friday from opening greetings and a "family photo" directly into a session on "Building Back Better From COVID-19."

"We're going to help lead the world out of this pandemic working alongside our global partners," Biden said, adding that the G-7 nations would join the U.S. in outlining their vaccine donation commitments at the three-day summit. The G-7 also includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan.

The leaders meeting in the resort of Carbis Bay hope to energize the global economy as well. On Friday they are set to formally embrace a global minimum tax of at least 15% on corporations, seconding an agreement reached a week ago at a meeting of their finance ministers. The minimum is meant to stop companies from using tax havens and other tools to avoid taxes.

It represents a potential win for the Biden administration, which has proposed a global minimum tax as a way to pay for infrastructure projects, in addition to creating an alternative that could remove some European countries' digital services taxes that largely hit U.S. tech firms.

For Johnson, the first G-7 summit in two years — last year's was scuttled by the pandemic — is a chance to set out his vision of a post-Brexit "Global Britain" as a midsized country with an outsized role in international problem-solving.

It's also an opportunity to underscore the U.K-U.S. bond, an alliance often called the "special relationship."

After a meeting with Biden that both sides hailed as a success, Johnson said he prefers the term "indestructible relationship."

The official summit business starts Friday, with the customary formal greeting and a socially distanced group photo. Later the leaders will meet Queen Elizabeth II and other senior royals at the Eden Project, a lush, domed eco-tourism site built in a former quarry pit

The G-7 leaders have faced mounting pressure to outline their global vaccine-sharing plans, especially as inequities in supply around the world have become more pronounced. In the U.S., there is a large vaccine stockpile and the demand for shots has dropped precipitously in recent weeks.

Biden said the U.S. will donate 500 million COVID-19 vaccine doses and previewed a coordinated effort by the advanced economies to make vaccination widely and speedily available everywhere. The commit-

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ment was on top of 80 million doses Biden has already pledged to donate by the end of June.

Johnson, for his part, said the first 5 million U.K. doses would be shared in the coming weeks, with the remainder coming over the next year. He said he expected the G-7 to commit to 1 billion doses in all.

"At the G-7 Summit I hope my fellow leaders will make similar pledges so that, together, we can vaccinate the world by the end of next year and build back better from coronavirus," Johnson said in a statement, referencing a slogan that he and Biden have both used.

French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed the U.S. commitment and said Europe should do the same. He said France would share at least 30 million doses globally by year's end.

At a news conference, he said time was of the essence.

"It's almost more important to say how many (doses) we deliver the next month than making promises to be fulfilled in 18 months from now," he said.

Biden predicted the U.S. doses and the overall G-7 commitment would "supercharge" the global vaccination campaign, adding that the U.S. doses come with no strings attached.

"Our vaccine donations don't include pressure for favors or potential concessions," Biden said. "We're doing this to save lives, to end this pandemic, that's it."

He added: "Our values call on us to do everything that we can to vaccinate the world against COVID-19."

The U.S. commitment is to buy and donate 500 million Pfizer doses for distribution through the global COVAX alliance to 92 lower-income countries and the African Union, bringing the first steady supply of mRNA vaccine to the countries that need it most.

The Pfizer agreement came together with some urgency in the last four weeks at Biden's direction, said a senior White House official, both to meet critical needs overseas and to be ready for announcement at the G-7. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal plans, added that the Biden administration was to apply the same wartime posture applied to the vaccine rollout in the U.S. to its effort to share vaccines globally.

Biden said the 500 million U.S.-manufactured vaccines will be shipped starting in August, with the goal of distributing 200 million by the end of the year. The remaining 300 million doses would be shipped in the first half of 2022. A price tag for the doses was not released, but the U.S. is now set to be COVAX's largest vaccine donor in addition to its single largest funder with a \$4 billion commitment.

The well-funded global alliance has faced a slow start to its vaccination campaign, as richer nations have locked up billions of doses through contracts directly with drug manufacturers. Biden's move, officials said, was meant to ensure a substantial amount of manufacturing capacity remains open to the wealthy nations. Just last month, the European Commission signed an agreement to purchase as many as 1.8 billion Pfizer doses in the next two years, a significant share of the company's upcoming production — though the bloc reserved the right to donate some of its doses to COVAX.

COVAX has distributed just 81 million doses globally and parts of the world, particularly in Africa, remain vaccine deserts.

White House officials said the ramped-up distribution program fits a theme Biden plans to hit frequently during his week in Europe: that Western democracies, and not authoritarian states, can deliver the most good for the world.

Biden, in his remarks, harked back to the Detroit-area workers who 80 years ago built tanks and planes "that helped defeat the threat of global fascism in World War II."

"They built what became known as the arsenal of democracy," Biden said. "Now a new generation of American men and women, working with today's latest technology, is going to build a new arsenal to defeat the current enemy of world peace, health and stability: COVID-19."

China and Russia have shared their domestically produced vaccines with some needy countries, often with hidden strings attached. Sullivan said Biden "does want to show — rallying the rest of the world's democracies — that democracies are the countries that can best deliver solutions for people everywhere."

Dreams of Hazara children snuffed out in attack on school

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By KATHY GANNON and TAMEEM AKHGAR Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — For the past four years, since she was 14, the notebook was always within her reach. Shukria Ahmadi titled it “Beautiful Sentences” and put everything in it. Poetry that she liked — sometimes a single line, sometimes long verses. Her drawings, like one of a delicate pink rose. Her attempts at calligraphy in swooping Persian letters.

Now the notebook is torn and scorched. It was with Shukria the day that three bombings in quick succession hit her school in the Afghan capital Kabul. The May 8 explosions killed nearly 100 people, all of them members of the Hazara ethnic minority and most of them young girls just leaving class.

Shukria has been missing since the blast. “She took this notebook everywhere with her,” her father Abdullah Ahmadi said. “I don’t remember seeing her without it. She would even use it to shield her eyes from the sun. Everything she loved is in here.”

The attack on the Syed Al-Shahada School was gut-wrenching for Afghanistan’s Hazaras, even after so many attacks against them over the years. It showed yet again how Islamic State group militants who hate them for their ethnicity or their religion — they are Shiite Muslim — were willing to kill the most vulnerable among them.

The school, which covers grades 1-12, has boys’ classes in the morning and girls in the afternoon. The attackers waited until the girls were all crowding out the exits as their day ended.

Zahra Hassani, 13, recounted how she was thrown off her feet by the first explosion.

“I saw bodies burning, everyone was screaming,” she said. She saw another student raising her hand calling for help. “I was going to help her, and then the second explosion happened, and I ran and ran,” Zahra said.

Speaking in the mostly empty school, Zahra choked back tears and clutched the hand of a friend, Maryam Ahmadi. “What is our sin? That we are Hazara? That we are Shias?” said Maryam, who is not related to Shukriya. “Is our sin that we are studying?”

Dasht-e-Barchi, the Kabul neighborhood where the school is located, was built by Hazaras’ hopes. It had long been the main Hazara district in the capital, and after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, impoverished Hazaras poured in from their strongholds in central Afghanistan in search of jobs. Dasht-e-Barchi swelled into a giant sprawl.

Murals at Syed Al-Shahada school promise students that education and hard work will unlock the future. “Your dreams are limited only by your imagination,” proclaims one slogan emblazoned large and bright across a wall.

But the explosions erased the dreams of dozens of Hazara children there. Here are a few of them:

Nekbakht Alizada, 17, dreamed of being a doctor. “I want to help my family and I want to help poor people, like us,” her father Abdul Aziz said she told him.

Noria Yousufi, 14, wanted to become an engineer, her father Mehdi said. The best word to describe her, he said: “Kind.”

Ameena Razawi, 17, always had a smile on her face, said her father, Naseem Razawi. She hoped to become a surgeon.

Arefa Hussaini, 14, had a slogan she lived by: “Where there is a will there is a way.” She vowed that one day she would be a lawyer, but even as she studied, she worked as a tailor to help support her family, her uncle Mohammad Salim said.

Freshta Alizada, 15, shone in her classes and twice had skipped a grade, her Aunt Sabera boasted. Freshta was always telling her family that one day she would become a journalist.

Hadisa Ahmadi, 16, was a math genius and dreamed of becoming a mathematician, her older sister Fatima said. She would always solve Fatima’s math problems and tease her that even though she was older, she just didn’t get it. Hadisa wove carpets to earn money for her poor family and to pay for additional math tutoring.

Farzana Fazili, 13, was the jokester in her family, said her brother Hamidullah. She too wove carpets in her spare time to earn money for her family. When she wasn’t teasing her younger brother, she would

help him with his homework.

Safia Sajadi, 14, made clothes to earn money to pay for her English-language lessons, said her father Ali. Weeping, he boasted how his daughter always had the highest marks.

Hassina Haideri, 13, was forever in the kitchen helping her mother, says her father, Alidad. She loved to cook, but she dreamed of becoming a doctor. She sold clothes she made in a nearby shop to earn extra money for her family.

Mohammad Amin Hussaini said his 16-year-old daughter Aquila loved him better than anyone. She would read him poetry and hoped to become a doctor.

At the Syed-Al-Sahada School, students who survived cried and held each other. Some were angry.

Maryam said Hazaras have no hope in the government, which she said has done nothing to prevent attacks.

"Only God can have mercy on us," she said. "From others, we expect nothing."

Ex-Mossad chief signals Israel behind Iran nuclear attacks

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The outgoing chief of Israel's Mossad intelligence service has offered the closest acknowledgment yet his country was behind recent attacks targeting Iran's nuclear program and a military scientist.

The comments by Yossi Cohen, speaking to Israel's Channel 12 investigative program "Uvda" in a segment aired Thursday night, offered an extraordinary debriefing by the head of the typically secretive agency in what appears to be the final days of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rule.

It also gave a clear warning to other scientists in Iran's nuclear program that they too could become targets for assassination even as diplomats in Vienna try to negotiate terms to try to salvage its atomic accord with world powers.

"If the scientist is willing to change career and will not hurt us anymore, than yes, sometimes we offer them" a way out, Cohen said.

Among the major attacks to target Iran, none have struck deeper than two explosions over the last year at its Natanz nuclear facility. There, centrifuges enrich uranium from an underground hall designed to protect them from airstrikes.

In July 2020, a mysterious explosion tore apart Natanz's advanced centrifuge assembly, which Iran later blamed on Israel. Then in April of this year, another blast tore apart one of its underground enrichment halls.

Discussing Natanz, the interviewer asked Cohen where he'd take them if they could travel there, he said "to the cellar" where "the centrifuges used to spin."

"It doesn't look like it used to look," he added.

Cohen did not directly claim the attacks, but his specificity offered the closest acknowledgement yet of an Israeli hand in the attacks. The interviewer, journalist Ilana Dayan, also seemingly offered a detailed description in a voiceover of how Israel snuck the explosives into Natanz's underground halls.

"The man who was responsible for these explosions, it becomes clear, made sure to supply to the Iranians the marble foundation on which the centrifuges are placed," Dayan said. "As they install this foundation within the Natanz facility, they have no idea that it already includes an enormous amount of explosives."

They also discussed the November killing of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, an Iranian scientist who began Tehran's military nuclear program decades ago. U.S. intelligence agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency believe Iran abandoned that organized effort at seeking a nuclear weapon in 2003. Iran long has maintained its program is peaceful.

While Cohen on camera doesn't claim the killing, Dayan in the segment described Cohen as having "personally signed off on the entire campaign." Dayan also described how a remotely operated machine gun fixed to a pickup truck killed Fakhrizadeh and later self-destructed.

Cohen described an Israeli effort to dissuade Iranian scientists from taking part in the program, which

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had seen some abandon their work after being warned, even indirectly, by Israel. Asked by the interviewer if the scientists understood the implications if they didn't stop, Cohen said: "They see their friends."

They also talked about Israel's operation seizing archival documents from Iran's military nuclear program. Dayan said 20 agents, none Israelis, seized material from 32 safes, then scanned and transmitted a large portion of the documents. Cohen confirmed that the Mossad received most of the material before it was physically taken out of Iran.

Cohen defended Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to go public with the results of the operation, going against a long-standing practice of secrecy involving Mossad activities.

"It was important to us that the world will see this, but this thing should also resonate with the Iranian leadership, to tell them, 'Dear friends: One, you have been infiltrated. Two, we see you.. Three, the era of ... lies is over,'" Cohen said.

Media in Israel operate under a decades-old policy that requires journalists to clear stories involving security matters through military censors. That Cohen's remarks apparently cleared the censors suggests Israel wanted to issue a new warning to Iran amid the Vienna nuclear negotiations.

Iran has repeatedly complained about Israel's attacks, with Iran's ambassador to the IAEA Kazem Gharibabadi warning as recently as Thursday that the incidents "not only will be responded to decisively, but also certainly leave no option for Iran but to reconsider its transparency measures and cooperation policy."

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment over the comments by Cohen, who was replaced by former operative David Barnea. Cohen in the interview acknowledged he might one day seek the prime minister's office himself.

Afghan Hazaras being killed at school, play, even at birth

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Just running errands in the mainly Hazara neighborhoods of west Kabul can be dangerous. One day last week, Adila Khiari and her two daughters went out to buy new curtains. Soon after, her son heard that a minibus had been bombed — the fourth to be blown up in just 48 hours.

When his mother didn't answer her phone, he frantically searched hospitals in the Afghan capital. He found his sister, Hosnia in critical condition with burns over 50% of her body. Then he found his mother and other sister, Mina, both dead. Three days later, on Sunday, Hosnia died as well.

In all, 18 people were killed in the two-day string of bombings against minivans in Kabul's Dasht-e-Barchi district. It was the latest in a vicious campaign of violence targeting Afghanistan's minority Hazara community — one that Hazaras fear will only get worse after the final withdrawal of American and NATO troops this summer.

Hundreds of Afghans are killed or injured every month in violence connected to the country's constant war. But Hazaras, who make up around 9% of the population of 36 million people, stand alone in being intentionally targeted because of their ethnicity — distinct from the other ethnic groups, such as Tajik and Uzbek and the Pashtun majority — and their religion. Most Hazaras are Shiite Muslims, despised by Sunni Muslim radicals like the Islamic State group, and discriminated against by many in the Sunni majority country.

After the collapse of the Taliban 20 years ago, the Hazaras embraced hopes for a new democracy in Afghanistan. Long the country's poorest community, they began to improve their lot, advancing in various fields, including education and sports.

Now many Hazaras are moving to take up arms to protect themselves in what they expect will be a war for control among Afghanistan's many factions.

Inside the Nabi Rasool Akram Mosque compound, protected by sandbags stacked against its ornate doors and 10-foot high walls, Qatradullah Broman was among the Hazaras attending the funeral of Adila and Mina this week.

The government doesn't care about Hazaras and has failed to protect them, he said. "Anyone who can

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afford to leave, they are leaving. Those who can't are staying here to die," said Broman. "I see a very dark future for our people."

There is plenty for Hazaras to fear.

Since it emerged in 2014 and 2015, a vicious Islamic State group affiliate has declared war on Afghanistan's Shiites and has claimed responsibility for many of the recent attacks on the Hazaras.

But Hazaras are also deeply suspicious of the government for not protecting them. Some worry that government-linked warlords, who also demonize their community, are behind some of the attacks.

Former government adviser Torek Farhadi told the Associated Press that within the political leadership, "from the top down," there is a "sorry culture" of discrimination against Hazaras. "The government, in a cynical calculation, has decided Hazara lives are cheap," he said.

Since 2015, attacks have killed at least 1,200 Hazaras and injured another 2,300, according to Wadood Pedram, executive director of the Kabul-based Human Rights and Eradication of Violence Organization.

Hazaras have been preyed on at schools, weddings, mosques, sports clubs, even at birth.

Last year, gunmen attacked a maternity hospital in the mainly Hazara districts of west Kabul. When the shooting ended, 24 people were dead, including newborns and their mothers. Last month, a triple bombing at the Syed Al-Shahada school in the same area killed nearly 100 people, mostly Hazara schoolgirls. This week, when militants attacked a compound of de-mining workers, shooting at least 10 to death, witnesses said they tried to pick Hazaras out of the workers to kill.

Some of these attacks, deliberately targeting civilians, hospitals and children, could rise to the level of war crimes, said Patricia Gossman, Associate Director of the Asia Program of Human Rights Watch.

Pedram's organization has petitioned the U.N. Human Rights Commission to investigate the killing of Hazaras as genocide or a crime against humanity. It and other rights groups also helped the International Criminal Court in 2019 compile suspected war crimes cases in Afghanistan.

"The world doesn't speak about our deaths. The world is silent. Are we not human?" said Mustafa Waheed, an elderly Hazara weeping at the burial of Mina and her mother.

A black velvet cloth inscribed in gold with Quranic verses was draped over the two bodies. Family and friends carried them on wooden beds, then placed them inside the graves. Mina's father fell to the ground crying.

"The U.S. can go into space, but they can't find out who is doing this?" Waheed said. "They can see an ant move from space, but they can't see who is killing Hazaras?"

In the face of the killings, talk has turned to arming Hazara youth to defend the community, particularly in the districts that the community dominates in western Kabul. Some Hazaras say the May 8 attack on the Syed al-Shahada school was a turning point.

It is a significant reversal for a community that showed such hope in a new Afghanistan. After the fall of the Taliban, many Hazara militias gave up their weapons under a government disarmament program, even as other factions were reluctant.

"We used to think the pen and the book were our greatest weapon, but now we realize it is the gun we need," said Ghulam Reza Berati, a prominent Hazara religious leader. Fathers of the girls killed in the school attack are being told to invest in weapons, said Berati, who helped bury many of the girls.

Sitting on the carpets of west Kabul's Wali Asar Mosque, Berati said Hazaras are disappointed in the democracy brought by the U.S.-led coalition. Hazaras have largely been excluded from positions of prominence, he said.

Hazaras worry about continuing Islamic State group attacks and about the potential return of the Taliban to power after the American withdrawal. But they also worry about the many heavily armed warlords who are part of the government. Some of them carried out violence against Hazaras in the past, and Hazaras fear they will do so again if post-withdrawal Afghanistan slides into a repeat of the brutal inter-factional civil war of the early 1990s.

One warlord who is still prominent in Kabul, Abdul Rasool Sayyaf, led a Pashtun militia that massacred Hazara civilians during a ferocious 1993 battle with Hazara militias in Kabul's mainly Hazara neighborhood of Afshar.

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Rajab Ali Urzgani became a sort of folk hero in his community as one of the youngest Hazara commanders during the Battle of Afshar — only 14 at the time.

Now 41 and still known by his nom de guerre, Mangol, he returned to Afshar earlier this month with the AP to visit the site. He stopped to give a prayer for the dead at a mass grave where nearly 80 men, women and children killed in the bloodshed are buried. A black Shiite banner flies at the entrance.

Mangol held out little hope for peace in Afghanistan following the withdrawal.

"When the foreigners withdraw, the war will happen 1000%," he said. "The war will happen like in the past with the different groups, and we will defend our family and our dignity."

Israel's Netanyahu lashes out as end of his era draws near

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — In what appear to be the final days of his historic 12-year rule, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is not leaving the political stage quietly.

The longtime leader is accusing his opponents of betraying their voters, and some have needed special security protection.

Netanyahu says he is the victim of a "deep state" conspiracy. He speaks in apocalyptic terms when talking about the country without his leadership.

"They are uprooting the good and replacing it with the bad and dangerous," Netanyahu told the conservative Channel 20 TV station this week. "I fear for the destiny of the nation."

Such language has made for tense days as Netanyahu and his loyalists make a final desperate push to try to prevent a new government from taking office on Sunday. With his options running out, it has also provided a preview of Netanyahu as opposition leader.

For those who have watched Netanyahu dominate Israeli politics for much of the past quarter century, his recent behavior is familiar.

He frequently describes threats both large and small in stark terms. He has belittled his rivals and thrived by using divide-and-conquer tactics. He paints his Jewish opponents as weak, self-hating "leftists," and Arab politicians as a potential fifth column of terrorist sympathizers. He routinely presents himself in grandiose terms as the only person capable of leading the country through its never-ending security challenges.

"Under his term, identity politics are at an all-time high," said Yohanan Plesner, president of the Israel Democracy Institute, a non-partisan think tank.

It is a formula that has served Netanyahu well. He has led the right-wing Likud party with an iron fist for over 15 years, racking up a string of electoral victories that earned him the nickname, "King Bibi."

He fended off pressure by President Barack Obama to make concessions to the Palestinians and publicly defied him in 2015 by delivering a speech in Congress against the U.S.-led nuclear agreement with Iran.

Although Netanyahu was unable to block the deal, he was richly rewarded by President Donald Trump, who recognized contested Jerusalem as Israel's capital, pulled out of the nuclear agreement and helped broker historic diplomatic pacts between Israel and four Arab nations.

Netanyahu has waged what appears to be a highly successful shadow war against Iran while keeping Israel's longstanding conflict with the Palestinians at a slow boil, with the exception of three brief wars with Gaza's militant Hamas rulers.

The situation with the Palestinians today is "remarkably the same" as when Netanyahu took office, Plesner said. "No major changes in either direction, no annexation and no diplomatic breakthroughs."

But some of Netanyahu's tactics now appear to be coming back to haunt him. The new Biden administration has been cool to the Israeli leader, while Netanyahu's close relationship with Trump has alienated large segments of the Democratic Party.

At home, Netanyahu's magic also has dissipated — in large part due to his trial on corruption charges. He has lashed out at an ever-growing list of perceived enemies: the media, the judiciary, police, centrists, leftists and even hard-line nationalists who were once close allies.

In four consecutive elections since 2019, the once-invincible Netanyahu was unable to secure a parlia-

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mentary majority. Facing the unappealing possibility of a fifth consecutive election, eight parties managed to assemble a majority coalition that is set to take office on Sunday.

Israeli politics are usually split between dovish, left-wing parties that seek a negotiated agreement with the Palestinians, and religious and nationalist parties — long led by Netanyahu — that oppose Palestinian independence. If any of the recent elections had centered on the conflict, then right-wing parties alone would have formed a strong, stable majority.

But the Palestinians hardly came up — another legacy of Netanyahu, who has pushed the issue to the sidelines.

Instead, all anyone seemed to talk about was Netanyahu's personality and his legal troubles, which proved to be deeply polarizing. The incoming government includes three small parties led by former Netanyahu aides who had bitter breakups with him, including the presumed prime minister, Naftali Bennett.

Bennett and his right-wing partners even broke a longstanding taboo on allying with Arab parties. A small Islamist party, which Netanyahu had also courted, is to be the first to join a ruling coalition.

Netanyahu and his followers in Likud have grown increasingly desperate. Initially, Netanyahu tried to lure some "defectors" from his former allies to prevent them from securing a parliamentary majority.

When that failed, he resorted to language similar to that of his friend and benefactor Trump.

"We are witnesses to the greatest election fraud in the history of the country," Netanyahu claimed at a Likud meeting this week. He has long dismissed the corruption trial as a "witch hunt" fueled by "fake news," and in the TV interview he said he was being hounded by the "deep state."

His supporters have held threatening rallies outside the homes of lawmakers joining the new government. Some of the parliamentarians say they and their families have received death threats, and one said she was recently followed by a mysterious car.

Netanyahu's ultra-Orthodox partners have meanwhile cast Bennett as a threat to their religion, with one even calling on him to remove his kippa, the skullcap worn by observant Jews.

Online incitement by Netanyahu's followers has grown so bad that several members of the incoming government were assigned bodyguards or even moved to secret locations.

Some Israelis have drawn comparisons to the tensions that led to the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol in January, while others have pointed to the incitement ahead of the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995.

In a rare public statement, Nadav Argaman, the head of the Shin Bet internal security agency, recently warned of a "serious rise and radicalization in violent and inciting discourse" on social media that he said could lead to violence.

Netanyahu has condemned the incitement while noting that he too has been a target.

Late Thursday, Netanyahu's Likud Party issued a statement on Twitter in English saying his fraud comments were not directed at the vote counting process and that he has "full confidence" in it. "There is also no question about the peaceful transition of power," it said.

Gayil Talshir, a political scientist at Hebrew University, said she expects the coming months to remain volatile.

"We're going to see a very assertive and aggressive head of the opposition, meaning Netanyahu, determined to make sure that this coalition of change would be a short-lived one and that we will have another election as soon as possible," she added.

"We don't have even a memory of what normal politics looks like," Talshir said.

China's children may be next in line for COVID-19 vaccines

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — If China is to meet its tentative goal of vaccinating 80% of its population against the coronavirus by the end of the year, tens of millions of children may have to start rolling up their sleeves.

Regulators took the first step last week by approving the use of the country's Sinovac vaccine for children aged 3 to 17, though no announcement has been made about when the shots will start.

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Children have been largely spared the worst of the pandemic, becoming infected less easily than adults and generally showing less severe symptoms when they do catch the virus. But experts say children can still transmit the virus to others and some note that if countries are going to achieve herd immunity through their vaccination campaigns, inoculating children should be part of the plan.

"Vaccinating children is an important step forward," said Jin Dong-yan, a virologist at the University of Hong Kong's medical school.

Doing so, however, may be easier said than done for reasons ranging from vaccine hesitancy to vaccine availability.

Even in countries with enough vaccines to go around, some governments are having problems convincing adults that the shots are safe and necessary despite studies demonstrating they are. Such concerns can be amplified when dealing with society's youngest.

There's also the issue of approval. Few regulators around the world have evaluated the safety of COVID-19 shots in kids, with the majority of shots approved only for adults right now. But the approvals are starting. The United States, Canada, Singapore and Hong Kong are all allowing the use of the Pfizer vaccine in children as young as 12.

The Sinovac announcement could open the way for the vaccine, already in use in dozens of countries from Brazil to Indonesia, to be given to children across the world.

In Thailand, where Sinovac makes up the bulk of the country's vaccine supply, Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul welcomed the news that China had approved emergency use for children.

"Once it gets approved, we are ready to provide the vaccine to cover all ages," Anutin said Monday.

Other vaccine makers are also working to expand access to younger people. Moderna is seeking permission to use its shot in children as young as 12, like Pfizer. Both companies have studies underway in even younger children, down to age 6 months.

Another obstacle to vaccinating children is that many countries are still struggling to get enough doses to inoculate their higher-risk adult populations. Thailand, for example, has vaccinated only 4% of its population so far and adult demand for vaccines far outweighs supply.

"Right now given the shortages of vaccines, any available vaccine should be placed in age-based prioritization and risk-based prioritization," said Jerome Kim, head of the International Vaccine Institute in Seoul. "It's really important to get this vaccine out in the places it's needed now."

In many places there are also concerns among the public about the efficacy of the Sinovac vaccine versus Western rivals. While efficacy rates cannot be compared directly, owing to the trials being conducted under different conditions, the Western vaccines have shown to be very effective in preventing infection in real world tests. Sinovac's shot has been shown to be effective in preventing severe disease and hospitalization.

The World Health Organization last week approved the Sinovac vaccine for emergency use in adults aged 18 and older, paving the way for its use in global programs aiming to distribute vaccines to low- and middle-income countries. The WHO has given no indication of when it might approve it for those younger.

Vaccines are often approved separately for adults and children because younger immune systems may react differently to the doses. Experts say inactivated vaccines are generally considered safe for children, as the technology has been in use for a long time, such as in mandatory childhood immunization programs, and have shown low risk.

Nikolai Petrovsky, a vaccine expert at Flinders University in Australia, said that while it is reasonable to assume the vaccines would be safe for children, he questioned the necessity of vaccinating them against a virus they are relatively protected from using a vaccine that has yet to show it blocks transmission.

"As far as I am aware there is no data to suggest the Sinovac vaccine will block transmission in children," he wrote in an email. "Without such evidence we need to ask why we are immunising the children."

China has a population of 1.4 billion, meaning it needs to inoculate 560 million people to reach its goal of 40% vaccination by June and 1.12 billion people to get to the 80% goal. It will be hard to do the latter without vaccinating many of its 254 million children who are younger than 14.

When China starts inoculating children will be determined by the government's National Health Commission in accordance with the epidemic situation, Sinovac CEO Yin Weidong told state broadcaster CCTV

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last week.

A spokesperson for Sinovac did not respond to a call requesting comment. China's National Health Commission directed the AP to a news report that summarized Yin's comments.

China's state-owned Sinopharm, which has two inactivated vaccines in wide use for adults, said it also has submitted data to regulators on clinical trials for kids aged 3 to 17.

Photos show Chinese rover on dusty, rocky Martian surface

BEIJING (AP) — The dusty, rocky Martian surface and a Chinese rover and lander bearing small national flags were seen in photos released Friday that the rover took on the red planet.

The four pictures released by the China National Space Administration also show the upper stage of the Zhurong rover and the view from the rover before it rolled off its platform.

Zhurong placed a remote camera about 10 meters (33 feet) from the landing platform, then withdrew to take a group portrait, the CNSA said.

China landed the Tianwen-1 spacecraft carrying the rover on Mars last month after it spent about three months orbiting the red planet. China is the second country to land and operate a spacecraft on Mars, after the United States.

The orbiter and lander both display small Chinese flags and the lander has outlines of the mascots for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics.

The six-wheeled rover is surveying an area known as Utopia Planitia, especially searching for signs of water or ice that could lend clues as to whether Mars ever sustained life.

At 1.85 meters (6 feet) in height, Zhurong is significantly smaller than the U.S.'s Perseverance rover which is exploring the planet with a tiny helicopter. NASA expects its rover to collect its first sample in July for return to Earth as early as 2031.

In addition to the Mars mission, China's ambitious space program plans to send the first crew to its new space station next week. The three crew members plan to stay for three months on the Tianhe, or Heavenly Harmony, station, far exceeding the length of any previous Chinese mission. They will perform spacewalks, construction and maintenance work and carry out science experiments.

Subsequent launches are planned to expand the station, send up supplies and exchange crews. China has also brought back lunar samples, the first by any country's space program since the 1970s, landed a probe and rover on the moon's less explored far side.

Lucky number: Biden is 13th US president set to meet queen

By DANICA KIRKA and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Imagine trying to make an impression on someone who's met, well, almost everyone. Such is the challenge for President Joe Biden, who is set to sip tea with Queen Elizabeth II on Sunday at Windsor Castle after a Group of Seven leaders' summit in southwestern England.

Biden will be the 13th president to sit with the now-95-year-old monarch. The White House said he previously met the queen in 1982, when he was a U.S. senator.

Before the two meet again, the leaders are to attend a reception Friday with the queen, her son Prince Charles and his wife, Camilla, and Charles' son Prince William and his wife, Kate.

The queen has met every American president since Dwight Eisenhower during her nearly 70-year reign, except for Lyndon Johnson, who didn't visit Britain while he was in office.

She was a 25-year-old princess when she came to Washington in 1951 and stayed with President Harry S. Truman and his family at Blair House, where Truman lived while the White House underwent a major renovation. She met Herbert Hoover in 1957, more than 20 years after he left office.

Her personal ties to U.S. leaders underscore the importance of the United States to the United Kingdom and to the queen. She came of age during World War II and understands the central role the trans-Atlantic alliance has played in modern British history, said Robert Hardman, author of "Queen of the World," which examines her role representing Britain on the world stage.

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"She grew up with that sort of sense of the USA is almost a sort of salvation that came along and rescued Europe in the darkest days of the war," Hardman told The Associated Press.

Here are highlights of some of her meetings, on both sides of the pond, with past American presidents: DONALD TRUMP

Trump and the queen met in July 2018 at Windsor Castle during a visit to Britain that drew large anti-Trump protests in downtown London, including the hoisting of a balloon that depicted Trump in a diaper.

He was criticized for breaking protocol by briefly walking in front of the queen — instead of alongside her — and turning his back on her as they reviewed an honor guard.

Trump later said he thought of his late mother, Mary Anne, who was born in Scotland and who loved the royal family, when he and his wife, Melania, sipped tea with the queen.

Trump's subsequent comment that the queen told him that Brexit — Britain's break from the European Union — was complex also created a stir. Most heads of state keep private their private conversations with the queen. She also doesn't discuss political matters.

The Trumps and the royals met again during the D-Day commemoration in 2019.

BARACK OBAMA

Obama and the queen had their first of three meetings in April 2009 at a reception for world leaders attending the Group of 20 nations summit in London.

It was there that first lady Michelle Obama broke protocol by briefly putting an arm around the queen's back as they commiserated about their achy feet. It's generally a no-no to touch the queen, but she returned Mrs. Obama's gesture.

The queen invited the Obamas for a state visit in 2011 that included a two-night stay at Buckingham Palace and a lavish banquet in the president's honor.

As Obama delivered a toast to the queen, he didn't miss a beat when the band assumed that a pause in his remarks meant he had concluded and launched into a rendition of "God Save the Queen." Obama kept talking over the music until the band quieted down.

The couples saw each other again in 2016 when Obama visited the queen at Windsor Castle a day after her 90th birthday during another swing through Europe.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Bush detested stuffy, formal affairs, but he donned a white tie-and-tails tuxedo after the queen pulled out all the stops for a state dinner in his honor at Buckingham Palace in November 2003.

A few years later, Bush's slip of the tongue generated ripples of laughter at a White House welcoming ceremony for the queen, who was touring the U.S. in May 2007.

Stumbling on a line in his speech, Bush said the queen had dined with several of his predecessors and had helped the United States "celebrate its bicentennial in 17- ..." Bush caught himself and corrected the date to 1976, and paused to see if she had taken offense.

"She gave me a look that only a mother could give a child," Bush said with a smile.

The queen later turned the tables on Bush with her toast at a dinner she hosted for the president at the British Embassy in Washington.

"I wondered whether I should start this toast by saying, 'When I was here in 1776,'" she said to laughter.

BILL CLINTON

The queen hosted Clinton and his wife, Hillary, aboard her royal yacht, Britannia, in June 1994.

The ship, 412 feet (125 meters) long and 55 feet (17 meters) wide, was docked at the Portsmouth Naval Base and was home base for the Clintons as they attended the queen's dinner at Guildhall for leaders of Allied nations whose troops participated in the D-Day invasion of Normandy 50 years earlier.

The Clintons spent one night aboard the boat. The next day, the Britannia ferried Clinton to the USS George Washington aircraft carrier as it prepared to sail across the English Channel, from Portsmouth to Normandy, for D-Day anniversary celebrations.

GEORGE H.W. BUSH

One of the more memorable images from the monarch's third state visit to the U.S. came in 1991 when

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only her white-striped purple hat could be seen above the microphones when she spoke at an arrival ceremony on the White House grounds.

Someone forgot to adjust the lectern after the much taller Bush spoke.

The queen stayed strong and carried on, later making light of the incident as she opened an address to a joint meeting of Congress.

"I do hope you can see me today from where you are," she deadpanned. Bush later apologized and said he felt badly for not pulling out a step for her to stand on.

RONALD REAGAN

Reagan and the queen bonded over their mutual love of horseback riding.

They rode side by side on an 8-mile (13-kilometer), hourlong tour on the grounds of Windsor Castle when Reagan visited her there in June 1982. Reagan was the first president to sleep over at the British royal family's historic home, an 11th-century estate overlook the River Thames.

While in the U.S. in 1983, the monarch and Philip stayed with the president and first lady Nancy Reagan at their ranch in Santa Barbara, California. She wanted to ride horses again, but a rainstorm wouldn't allow it. The Reagans served a lunch of regional staples, including enchiladas, chiles rellenos, refried beans, tacos, rice and guacamole.

They also hosted a state dinner for the queen in San Francisco at the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum.

JIMMY CARTER

The queen hosted Carter in May 1977 on his first overseas trip at a dinner for NATO leaders at Buckingham Palace. At one point, as Carter stood with the queen and other guests, he noticed the arrival of the queen mother.

Ever the Southern gentleman, Carter broke away, took her by the hand and escorted her to the assembled line of guests.

The no-frills Georgia peanut farmer-turned-president ate chicken mousse off a gold plate and seemed excited by his dinner seating between the queen and her sister, Princess Margaret, and across from her son, Prince Charles, Prince Philip and the queen mother.

GERALD FORD

Ford threw a gala state dinner for the Brits in 1976 to mark the bicentennial of the American Revolution. The queen was resplendent in a diamond-studded tiara that sparkled for a crowd that included diplomats, star athletes and celebrities such as Cary Grant and Julie Harris.

The mood evaporated when Ford led the queen to the dance floor while the song "The Lady Is a Tramp" echoed throughout the State Dining Room.

Prison break: 29 inmates escape federal lockups in 18 months

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Over the past 18 months, 29 prisoners have escaped from federal lockups across the U.S. — and nearly half still have not been caught. At some of the institutions, doors are left unlocked, security cameras are broken and officials sometimes don't notice an inmate is missing for hours.

At one Texas lockup, security is so lax that local law enforcement officials privately joke about its seemingly "open-door policy."

Prisoners have broken out at lockups in nearly every region of the country. Twelve of the inmates who escaped in 2020 — from prisons in Florida, California, Louisiana, Texas and Colorado — remain at large. Two others who escaped since January this year have also not yet been caught. Their crimes include racketeering, wire fraud, bank robbery, possession of methamphetamine and possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine and other drugs.

All of the escapes happened at minimum-security federal prison camps, some of which don't even have fences, and house inmates the Bureau of Prisons considers to be the lowest security risk.

"Anybody can escape from any camp any minute of any day," said Jack Donson, a prison consultant and former case manager at a federal prison in Otisville, New York. "They're not secure facilities. They have

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no fence, no metal detectors.”

The numbers raise serious concerns that the agency long besieged by chronic mismanagement, misconduct and a severe staffing crisis is failing at performing its most basic function: keeping prisoners in prison. While a Justice Department budget report submitted to Congress said the Bureau of Prisons had no escapes from secure facilities, it does not count those who escape from minimum-security prisons or camps.

Federal officials often refer to them as “walk-aways,” though it is still an escape from federal prison under the law and law enforcement officials say there is still a risk to the community when an inmate absconds.

Federal prison camps were originally designed with low security to make operations easier and to allow inmates tasked with performing work at the prison, like landscaping and maintenance, to avoid repeatedly checking in and out of a main prison facility. But the lax security has now not only opened a gateway for contraband but is also the source of most of the prison system’s escapes.

Aside from Texas escapees, law enforcement officials have also routinely learned of inmates at the prison just walking off the grounds to retrieve drugs and other contraband that is dropped off in the woods and then bringing the illegal items back inside with them.

It has become routine at FCI Beaumont for cars to drop drugs, cellphones and other contraband in the woods, leaving them for inmates to break out of the prison at night and pick up the items before sneaking back inside, according to a law enforcement official familiar with the matter. The official could not discuss the investigations publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The Texas escapes, at least, have attracted the attention of the Justice Department’s inspector general. The office issued a memorandum this week highlighting glaring security gaps at Beaumont and other federal prison camps.

In one case, four inmates sneaked out and went undetected for more than 12 hours even though prison officials conducted three inmate counts overnight during the 12-hour period, according to an inspector general’s report. The inmates put dummies in their beds to trick the officers, the report said.

“These are very small, unsecure facilities,” said Cameron Lindsay, a retired Bureau of Prisons warden who now testifies as an expert witness on prison matters. Because of their size and the generally low risk the inmates pose, federal prison camps often have the lowest levels of staffing in the Bureau of Prisons’ system, sometimes with just one officer working to supervise inmates during a shift, he said.

In a statement, the Bureau of Prisons said that it strives to ensure safety and security at every one of its prisons and that when an inmate “walks away” from a prison, officials will notify other law enforcement agencies and the media. The agency stressed that the inmates who are placed at the minimum-security camps are the lowest risk offenders who “pose minimal risk to the community” and generally are allowed to participate in outdoor work programs and other initiatives.

“The BOP remains vigilant in its efforts to maintain safe and secure institutions at all times,” the agency said. Officials said a review is conducted following every escape to determine “if any security weakness exists and if warranted, corrective actions are taken.”

In Beaumont, officials said they were building a fence around the prison, repairing the broken door alarms, adding and upgrading video cameras and putting up additional lights. The agency said it was also considering adding additional staff members at some of the prison camps.

“We take seriously our duty to protect the individuals entrusted in our custody, as well as maintaining the safety of correctional staff and the community,” agency officials said in the statement.

The Bureau of Prisons has been plagued by chronic violence, significant security issues and persistent staffing shortages for years. The AP reported last month that nearly one-third of federal correctional officer jobs in the United States are vacant, forcing prisons to use cooks, teachers, nurses and other workers to guard inmates.

The expanded use of that practice, known as augmentation, has been raising questions about whether the agency can carry out its required duties to ensure the safety of prisoners and staff members while putting in place programs and classes required under the law.

The Bureau of Prisons insists its latest hiring initiative is bringing on additional personnel to close the gaps.

At El Salvador's Bitcoin Beach, a glimpse of crypto economy

By MARCOS ALEMAN Associated Press

EL ZONTE, El Salvador (AP) — After El Salvador's congress made the bitcoin legal tender this week, eyes turned to this rural fishing village on the Pacific coast. Known to surfers for its pounding waves, El Zonte has had the cryptocurrency in its economy for the past year.

Some 500 fishing and farming families use bitcoin to buy groceries and pay utilities, something the government envisions for the country at large. Bitcoin already was legal to use in El Salvador but its acceptance was voluntary, so the legislation passed late Tuesday now requires all businesses — except those without the technology — to accept payment in bitcoin.

El Zonte's mini bitcoin economy 26 miles (43 kilometers) from the capital came about through an anonymous donor who started working through a local nonprofit group in 2019. Supporters of the financial change point to it as a demonstration case for how digital currency could help in a country where 70% of the people don't have bank accounts.

President Nayib Bukele, who pushed through the bitcoin law, touts it both as a way to help those many Salvadorans without access to traditional banking services and as a path to attract foreigners with bitcoin holdings to invest in El Salvador, which is the first nation to make the cryptocurrency legal tender.

Experts are trying to figure out why Bukele is pushing bitcoin. They say it is unclear how the highly volatile cryptocurrency will be a good option for the unbanked and only time will tell if the new system translates into real investment in El Salvador.

Bitcoin, intended as an alternative to government-backed money, is based largely on complex math, data-scrambling cryptography — thus the term "cryptocurrency" — lots of processing power and a distributed global ledger called the blockchain, which records all transactions. No central bank or other institution has any say in its value, which is set entirely by people trading bitcoin and its value has moved wildly over time.

In El Zonte this week, construction worker Hilario Gálvez walked into Tienda María to buy a soda and snacks to share with his friends. Instead of reaching for his wallet, he paid through an app on his phone.

The store's namesake, María del Carmen Avilés, said she is now expert in bitcoin transactions.

"When a customer comes I ask him if he's going to pay with the application or in cash. The majority pay with the application Bitcoin Beach. I look for it on my cell to charge them."

It doesn't take more than two minutes.

"It's easier than paying with bills," Gálvez said. "I can buy from my house, do the transaction with the application Bitcoin Beach, and I just come to pick up what I need."

Avilés notes that the volatility of the bitcoin can be a problem.

"People ask me if I recommend bitcoin, I tell them I've won, but I've also lost," Avilés said. "When bitcoin hit \$60,000, I won and I bought this refrigerated room for the store, but then it went down and I lost."

Román Martínez was a pioneer in using bitcoin in El Zonte. He said the anonymous U.S. donor heard about community projects through the nonprofit Hope House where he works and began working through another American who lives in El Zonte. Hope House shares a building with Strike, a Chicago-based start-up that has been working with Bukele's government on the nationwide bitcoin launch.

A request by The Associated Press to interview Strike CEO Jack Mallers was not granted. In an email, the company said, "Strike's app is meant to empower people in all countries, broaden the financial system to include those who have been excluded, and increase economic opportunity around the world, and that is at the heart of this effort."

El Salvador has used the U.S. dollar as its official currency since 2001, and Strike said that adopting bitcoin "as legal tender will help reduce its dependence on the decisions of a foreign central bank."

Martinez said El Zonte residents did not have bank accounts, had no access to credit and were forced to handle all transactions in cash. "Now they are small investors whose lives have been changed by bitcoin," he said.

Some question just how much can be learned from the Bitcoin Beach experiment.

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David Gerard, author of "Attack of the 50 Foot Blockchain," said El Zonte is an artificial demonstration. At Bitcoin Beach, he said, "the bitcoins are traded inside Strike. They don't actually move on the bitcoin blockchain or anything."

Gerard said it appears to work because the bitcoin donor keeps pumping bitcoin into the village's system. "That's not a proof of concept that works. That shows that you can trade this stuff if you're not trading actual bitcoins and someone massively subsidizes it."

Adoption had been slow in El Zonte, but took off during the coronavirus pandemic when strict lockdown measures kept most people from leaving home.

"Our donor made three deliveries of \$40, converted to bitcoin, for each of the community's 500 families, and they were trained to use the application and now it's normal to buy with bitcoin," Martínez said.

El Zonte even has a Bitcoin ATM, which gives dollars in exchange for bitcoin or takes dollars and gives credit in bitcoin.

Edgar Magaña was in town from San Salvador to convert \$50 to bitcoin. He inserted the dollars into the machine and was surprised to see only \$47 in bitcoin fractions credited to his account on his phone.

"They took three dollars commission," Magaña said, adding that he had understood there was no commission. "This is like in the banks."

To spur national adoption, Bukele said the government would create a \$150 million fund to allow people receiving payments in bitcoin to immediately convert them to dollars, reducing the risk of holding the fluctuating digital currency.

Jessica Velis, who runs the El Zonte business where the ATM is located, said some people here are already receiving remittances from abroad in bitcoin.

Salvadorans received some \$6 billion in remittances last year from relatives living abroad, mostly in the United States. Bukele has said adopting bitcoin could save on the costs of sending that money home.

Not everyone in El Zonte is sold on the idea.

At Olas Permanentes, one of the town's most popular restaurants, customers have been able to pay using bitcoin. But when the waitstaff was asked if they use it, they all said no. Some said they didn't have higher-end cellphones needed to download the app, while others said they had doubts about how it worked.

"They pay me in dollars and in cash," said one waitress, who declined to give her name.

Walking through town, a woman who only gave her name as Teresita, was asked if she used bitcoin. "Not me, I prefer to have the bills," she said.

Trump DOJ seized data from House Democrats in leaks probe

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department under former President Donald Trump seized data from the accounts of at least two members of the House Intelligence Committee in 2018 as part of an aggressive crackdown on leaks related to the Russia investigation and other national security matters, according to a committee official and two people familiar with the investigation.

Prosecutors from Trump's Justice Department subpoenaed Apple for the data, according to the people, who were granted anonymity to discuss the secret seizures first reported by The New York Times.

The records of at least twelve people connected to the intelligence panel were eventually shared, including Chairman Adam Schiff, who was then the top Democrat on the committee. California Rep. Eric Swalwell was the second member, according to spokeswoman Natalie Edelstein. The records of aides, former aides and family members were also seized, including one who was a minor, according to the committee official.

Apple informed the committee last month that their records had been shared, but did not give extensive detail. The committee is aware, though, that metadata from the accounts was turned over, the official said. The records do not contain any other content from the devices, like photos, messages or emails, one of the other people said. The third person said that Apple complied with the subpoena, providing the information to the Justice Department, and did not immediately notify the members of Congress or the committee about the disclosure.

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While the Justice Department routinely conducts investigations of leaked information, including classified intelligence, opening such an investigation into members of Congress is extraordinarily rare.

The Trump administration's attempt to secretly gain access to data of individual members of Congress and others connected to the panel came as the president was fuming publicly and privately over investigations — in Congress and by then-special counsel Robert Mueller — into his campaign's ties to Russia. Trump called the probes a "witch hunt," regularly criticized Schiff and other Democrats on Twitter and repeatedly dismissed as "fake news" leaks he found personally harmful to his agenda. As the investigations swirled around him, he demanded loyalty from a Justice Department he often regarded as his personal law firm.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said in a statement that "these actions appear to be yet another egregious assault on our democracy" waged by the former president.

"The news about the politicization of the Trump Administration Justice Department is harrowing," she said.

Schiff, now the panel's chair, confirmed in a statement Thursday evening that the Justice Department had informed the committee in May that the investigation was closed. Still, he said, "I believe more answers are needed, which is why I believe the Inspector General should investigate this and other cases that suggest the weaponization of law enforcement by a corrupt president."

The Justice Department told the intelligence panel then that the matter had not transferred to any other entity or investigative body, the committee official said, and the department confirmed that to the committee again on Thursday.

The panel has continued to seek additional information, but the Justice Department has not been forthcoming in a timely manner, including on questions such as whether the investigation was properly predicated and whether it only targeted Democrats, the committee official said.

It is unclear why Trump's Justice Department would have targeted a minor as part of the probe. Swalwell, confirming that he was told his records were seized, told CNN Thursday evening that he was aware a minor was involved and "I believe they were targeted punitively and not for any reason in law."

Another Democrat on the intelligence panel, Illinois Rep. Mike Quigley, said he did not find it even "remotely surprising" that Trump went after committee members' records during the Russia probe.

"From my first days as part of the Russia investigation, I expected that eventually, someone would attempt this — I just wasn't sure if it would be a hostile government or my own," Quigley said.

There's no indication that the Justice Department used the records to prosecute anyone. After some of the information was declassified and made public during the later years of the Trump administration, there was concern among some of the prosecutors that even if they could bring a leak case, trying it would be difficult and a conviction would be unlikely, one of the people said. Federal agents questioned at least one former committee staff member in 2020, the person said, and ultimately, prosecutors weren't able to substantiate a case.

The news follows revelations that the Justice Department had secretly seized phone records belonging to reporters at The New York Times, The Washington Post and CNN as part of criminal leak investigations. Following an outcry from press freedom organizations, the Justice Department announced last week that it would cease the practice of going after journalists' sourcing information.

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Message in a jacket: Jill Biden offers 'love' during UK trip

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

CARBIS BAY, England (AP) — Jill Biden is sending a sartorial message of "love" as she accompanies her husband President Joe Biden overseas.

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The first lady wore a black jacket with the word "love" outlined on the back in silver beading as she and the president met with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his wife Thursday. She wore the same jacket more than two years ago to kick off Biden's presidential campaign.

"We're bringing love from America," she told reporters, explaining her fashion choice.

"This is a global conference and we are trying to bring unity across the globe and I think it's needed right now, that people feel a sense of unity from all the countries and feel a sense hope after this year of the pandemic."

Biden is known for her sartorial choices, often donning bright pastels or eye-catching patterns for her outings on behalf of the Biden administration. She is rarely seen without a kitten heel or stiletto boot, adding height to her petite frame.

And this isn't the first time she's sent a direct message with her clothes: During a campaign trip to Iowa late last year, Biden wore black skinny jeans bearing the word "VOTE" down each calf.

Biden's jacket and pants come in contrast to the last first lady to offer a message with her clothes: Melania Trump wore a jacket that read "I Really Don't Care, Do U?" during a trip to a detention center for migrant children in 2018. She wore a different jacket at the shelter.

The first lady is accompanying her husband during the U.K. leg of his foreign trip, where she'll participate in spouses' activities at the Group of Seven summit, and a couple of events focused on military veterans and their families. She joined Johnson's wife, Carrie Johnson, for tea Thursday and tweeted a photo of the two and Johnson's son, Wilfred, on the shore.

On Friday, Jill Biden, a community college English professor, and Kate Middleton, the Duchess of Cambridge, and mother of three young children, plan to appear together at a preschool in Cornwall and participate in a roundtable discussion on early childhood education, the White House said.

Joe Biden is on his first overseas visit as president. Along with his participation in the G-7 summit and a NATO summit in Brussels, he will meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Jill Biden said her husband had been "studying for weeks" for the trip and joked that he is "overprepared." "Joe loves foreign policy. This is his forte," she said.

The Bidens are set to meet with Queen Elizabeth II on Sunday at Windsor Castle. The first lady told reporters "that's an exciting part of the visit for us."

Schembechler son, players say Michigan coach knew of abuse

By COREY WILLIAMS and MIKE HOUSEHOLDER Associated Press

NOVI, Mich. (AP) — One of late University of Michigan football coach Bo Schembechler's sons and two of his former players described in detail Thursday how they were molested by the team's longtime doctor and how Schembechler turned a blind eye when they told him about the abuse, telling one to "toughen up" and punching his son in anger.

Matt Schembechler, 62, and former Wolverines players Daniel Kwiatkowski and Gilvanni Johnson told similar stories about how Dr. Robert E. Anderson, who died in 2008, molested and digitally penetrated them during physical exams decades ago. They also talked about how Bo Schembechler, a Michigan icon whose statue stands outside a university building that bears his name, refused to protect them and allowed Anderson to continue abusing players and other patients for years.

Anderson "was supported by a culture that placed the reputation of the university above the health and safety of the students," Matt Schembechler said during a news conference in the Detroit suburb of Novi. "That is the culture that made my father a legend and placed his statue in front of Schembechler Hall."

"Dr. Anderson was part of the University of Michigan team," he continued. "He was part of Bo's team, therefore, he was more important than any man. It's very clear that Bo and the university always put themselves before any student-athlete or son, just to support the brand."

The three are among hundreds of men who were allegedly abused by Anderson during his nearly four decades working for the university — a period in which he also treated staffers, their families and other patients. And their assertion that Bo Schembechler, who died in 2006, knew about the abuse and allowed

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it to continue calls into question his legacy at the university.

Kwiatkowski and Johnson said it was common knowledge among their teammates that Anderson abused players during the physicals they had to get from him, which Johnson said players jokingly referred to as "seeing Dr. Anal." Both players said Bo Schembechler broke a promise to protect them that he made while recruiting them to the school.

"Bo promised them that if I attended the University of Michigan and played football that Bo would be a father to me and look after me like I was family," Kwiatkowski said, referring to his parents. "We were a poor, working-class family and my parents were very worried about my future and being able to pay for medical bills. Bo promised my family that he would keep me safe, make sure I got the best medical treatment. We were sold."

Kwiatkowski, an offensive lineman from 1977-79, said Anderson abused him on four occasions. He said that during his first mandatory physical his freshman year, Anderson groped his genitals and inserted fingers in his rectum. The former player said he approached Schembechler after one practice and told him about the physical.

"Bo looked at me and said 'Toughen up,'" Kwiatkowski said.

Matt Schembechler said Anderson abused him during a 1969 physical that he needed to get in order to play youth football. He said when he told his father, who was then in his first year of his iconic run with the Wolverines, his father punched him in the chest.

"This was the beginning of the end of the relationship with him," Matt Schembechler said Thursday about his father. "I hoped my father would protect me, but he didn't."

He said his mother Millie, a registered nurse, "didn't give up," inviting the athletic director at the time, Don Canham, to their home so he could describe the abuse.

"It was my understanding Mr. Canham terminated Dr. Anderson, but shortly thereafter, Bo had him reinstated," Matt Schembechler said. Canham died in 2005, one year before Bo Schembechler.

A report commissioned by the university and released last month found that Bo Schembechler and other officials were aware of complaints about Anderson but he was allowed to remain at the school for decades.

Asked why they decided to come forward about the abuse, Johnson said it was important to put faces to the allegations and to make sure there could be no doubt that Bo Schembechler was aware of the sexual abuse. He also talked about how the abuse has affected his life.

"Because of my experience at Michigan, I did not trust doctors," Johnson said, adding that he "had trust issues, relationship issues and intimacy issues" and that he "lost two marriages" because of the abuse.

Johnson, who broke down at one point, said he has "always been too promiscuous in an effort to prove to myself and to others that I was a man."

The university said in a statement Thursday that it is committed to resolving claims made by Anderson's victims and is continuing confidential mediation ordered by a judge.

"Our sympathy for all of Anderson's victims is deep and unwavering, and we thank them for their bravery in coming forward. We condemn and apologize for the tragic misconduct of the late Dr. Robert Anderson, who left the University 17 years ago and died 13 years ago," the school said in its statement, which didn't mention Bo Schembechler once.

Michigan's current football coach, Jim Harbaugh, who played quarterback for Schembechler in the 1980s after growing up in Ann Arbor as the son of an assistant coach, was asked last week how the university should treat Schembechler's legacy in light of recent reports related to Anderson.

"There was nothing that I saw in the times that I was a kid here, my dad was on the staff or when I played here," Harbaugh told reporters. "He never sat on anything. He never procrastinated on anything. He took care of it before the sun went down. That's the Bo Schembechler that I know."

Harbaugh wasn't available to speak Thursday about the latest revelations.

Bo Schembechler led the Wolverines from 1969-89 and had 194 wins at college football's winningest school. His career record was 234-65-8, including six seasons at Miami of Ohio.

Another of his sons, Glenn "Shemy" Schembechler, told ESPN he did not believe what his brother, Matt,

said to reporters. While Glenn "Shemy" Schembechler could not refute the stories shared by former players, he does not think his father was aware that Anderson was doing anything unacceptable in a physical exam.

"None of us were in that room when those players were talking to Bo," Glenn Schembechler said to ESPN. "The Bo I knew would have taken care of it and found another doctor. It would be that easy."

Senators eye \$579B in new infrastructure spending, \$1T plan

By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bipartisan group of senators is eyeing an infrastructure deal with \$579 billion in new spending as negotiators try to strike a nearly \$1 trillion deal on President Joe Biden's top priority, according to those briefed on the plan.

The 10 senators have been huddling behind closed doors, encouraged by Biden to keep working on the effort after he walked away from a Republican-only proposal this week unable to resolve differences. The senators are briefing their colleagues privately and cautioned changes could still be made.

"Our group — comprised of 10 Senators, 5 from each party — has worked in good faith and reached a bipartisan agreement on a realistic, compromise framework to modernize our nation's infrastructure and energy technologies," the senators said in a joint statement.

"This investment would be fully paid for and not include tax increases," they added. "We are discussing our approach with our respective colleagues, and the White House, and remain optimistic that this can lay the groundwork to garner broad support from both parties and meet America's infrastructure needs."

The White House said Democratic senators briefed the administration on the emerging plan but questions remain.

"The President appreciates the Senators' work to advance critical investments we need to create good jobs, prepare for our clean energy future, and compete in the global economy," said deputy press secretary Andrew Bates. "Questions need to be addressed, particularly around the details of both policy and pay-fors, among other matters."

The president and Congress have been straining to reach an agreement on his ideas for an infrastructure investment, stuck over the scope of the package of road, highway and other projects and how to pay for it. Lawmakers say the group's tentative agreement represents important progress in fashioning a bill that can pass such an evenly divided Congress this year, but they are also aware that it could easily unravel.

A person familiar with the negotiations but unauthorized to discuss them publicly said the cost would be \$974 billion over five years, as is standard for highway spending, or \$1.2 trillion if spread over eight as Biden proposes. At that size, the new package would be more than the previous Republican-only effort of \$330 billion in new spending in a \$928 billion package, but still short of the \$1.7 trillion over eight years Biden is seeking.

It appears the group is running into the same problems that Biden and lead Republican negotiator Sen. Shelley Moore Capito confronted in agreeing on how to pay for it.

Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., a lead negotiator, would not disclose the final tab. Asked if the new spending was at \$600 billion, he said "the president said that was his goal. So I don't think anybody felt like they had to exceed his goal."

Another member of the group, Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., said they are "fairly close" on a topline amount, but are still debating how to pay for it. One option is to include potential revenue from uncollected income taxes, he said.

"We still have to talk," Tester said.

One Republican not in the group, Sen. Mike Braun of Indiana, said he was told the package would provide nearly \$1 trillion — including \$579 billion in new spending over the baseline for transportation projects.

Braun also said parts of it would be paid for with untapped COVID-19 relief funds, which has been a nonstarter for the White House.

"They have come up with similar to what I think Capito was working on, but my understanding is it would be a little more money," he said.

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Biden tasked the senators to keep working as he set out for his first overseas trip after talks collapsed this week with Capito and the GOP senators.

The president is seeking a sweeping investment in not just roads, highways and bridges but also broadband, electric vehicle charging stations and other aspects of what he views as the new economy, paid for with a hike in the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%.

Republicans prefer a more narrow focus on fixing existing transportation systems, with more modest investments elsewhere. They oppose tax hikes to pay for the new spending, and while the 10 lawmakers said the package would not include tax increases, Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said the package does propose that the gas tax be indexed to rise at the rate of inflation. The federal gas tax, now at 18.4 cents per gallon, has not increased since 1993.

The White House has made clear that indexing the gas tax for inflation or imposing an electric vehicle mileage tax would be nonstarters. They would violate the president's red line against raising taxes on Americans who earn less than \$400,000 a year.

With the Senate narrowly split, 50-50, and most legislation requiring 60 votes to advance past a filibuster, Biden is seeking a bipartisan agreement to ensure passage. At the same time, he is also instructing Democrats who control the House and Senate to prepare to pass portions of the package on their own, under special budget rules that enable approval with 51 votes in the Senate.

In the evenly-divided Senate, Vice President Kamala Harris serves as a tie-breaking vote.

Meanwhile, a House panel advanced legislation early Thursday that serves as an important building block for that chamber's infrastructure efforts. The bill aims to boost federal spending on roads, bridges, transit and rail. The \$547 billion package passed mostly along party lines by a vote of 38-26 and will likely be considered by the full House later this month.

Secret recordings show Southern Baptist dispute on sex abuse

By PETER SMITH and TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Releases of leaked letters and secret recordings from within the Southern Baptist Convention intensified Thursday as critics sought to show top leaders were slow to address sexual abuse in the nation's largest Protestant denomination and worried more about its reputation and donations than about victims.

A former executive of the denomination's ethics agency posted audio clips he clandestinely recorded in internal meetings to bolster claims that leaders of the SBC's Executive Committee sought to slow or block policies responding to abuse by ministers and other church leaders, and that they tried to intimidate those seeking a more robust response.

The committee members defended their actions, saying the recordings reflect the normal give-and-take of trying to develop the best policies.

The timing comes less than a week before the SBC's annual meeting, which is expected to draw its highest attendance in more than 25 years, amid tensions over abuse, race and other issues and growing calls for an independent investigation of the Executive Committee's response.

Phillip Bethancourt, a Texas pastor and former executive vice president of the denomination's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, posted the audio online in an open letter to Ronnie Floyd, president of the Executive Committee, and Mike Stone, then-chairman of the committee and now a candidate for convention president.

"Southern Baptists deserve to hear you in your own words," Bethancourt wrote.

One set of clips came from a meeting following a Caring Well conference on sexual abuse sponsored in 2019 by the ethics commission.

In the recording, Floyd questions Russell Moore — who was president of the commission until his resignation last month — about one of the speakers, Rachael Denhollander, an attorney and prominent advocate for fellow abuse survivors.

Denhollander had publicly criticized the Executive Committee for its handling of an abuse case. The de-

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nominal news agency, overseen by the Executive Committee, had reported on the case in a way that implied consent by the victim, who was then publicly vilified in social media. The agency later apologized.

Floyd asks Moore in the recording: "What do I say ... to the Executive Committee when Rachael's come after them?"

Moore replies, "We didn't script anybody in terms of what they could say," and says the best response is to "not do stupid stuff again."

In another recording, Floyd tells Moore he "wanted to preserve the base," which Bethancourt interprets as putting a priority on maintaining funding from churches.

Bethancourt also released audio from an earlier meeting showing resistance to the proposed creation of a credentials committee to investigate churches' handling of abuse cases.

In a statement Thursday, Floyd said he put his staff to work immediately after that meeting in laying the groundwork for the credentials committee before its approval by the full convention.

"The convention was — and still is — divided over methods of response to sexual abuse," he said. "However, the SBC is not divided on the priority of caring for abuse survivors and protecting the vulnerable in our churches."

He said his questioning about the Caring Well conference was to get answers he could provide to churches. "However, I apologize for any offense that may have resulted from my remarks," he said.

Jennifer Lyell, whose case was cited in Denhollander's criticism of the Executive Committee, disputed Floyd's characterization, tweeting that he "was not a poor middleman" trying to get answers to others' questions but rather "one of THEM" on the Executive Committee.

"They weren't attacked," Lyell said. "They were exposed."

Stone told The Associated Press that as a survivor of sexual abuse himself, it's "outrageous" to say he would block efforts to respond to such misconduct.

He said his debates with Moore were over process and that he "felt that we did not have enough time to do this credentials committee properly" in 2019.

Stone added that the SBC can't dictate policies to its self-governing churches the way a hierarchical denomination can, and said a "heavy-handed" approach could prompt churches to leave the convention, with no improvement in children's safety. He said he favored equipping and training churches to respond to abuse.

The release of the recordings followed a series of leaks that have stoked debate in recent weeks among Southern Baptists, including lengthy letters Moore penned in 2020 and last month to denominational colleagues.

In them he said he received "undiluted rage" from Executive Committee leaders as they debated how to respond to abuse, which Moore called a "crisis in the Southern Baptist Convention."

A 2019 investigation by the Houston Chronicle and San Antonio Express-News revealed that about 380 Southern Baptist church leaders and volunteers had faced allegations of sexual misconduct, involving several hundred victims. These and subsequent reports told of cases of offenders returning to ministry and even as victims were blamed.

Those revelations galvanized efforts to do more. At its 2019 annual meeting, the SBC stated that congregations could be expelled for mishandling abuse cases and created the credentials committee to review such cases.

Floyd said the Executive Committee is now talking with a "highly credible outside firm" to investigate its handling of the controversy.

But two Southern Baptist pastors are preparing a competing proposal for next week's annual meeting that would have the next SBC president create a task force to pick the investigator.

Denhollander said the newly public recordings corroborate her own experiences in advocating for victims of abuse within the SBC, and that she has offered to help many times but her offers have been rejected.

"Hopefully over the last two weeks, Southern Baptist messengers (voting representatives) have begun to ask very important questions," she said. Among them is how church officials could "misreport a case

of violent abuse as an affair and nobody would care? ... Because they had done it in the past.”

Denhollander said there will be two resolutions addressing abuse at the upcoming meeting and they are being carefully worded to take into account Southern Baptist theology and polity. And she disputed Stone’s contention that the SBC’s structure makes it difficult to take certain actions against sexual abuse.

“It’s actually very easy to do in a way that is legally sound and respects Southern Baptist autonomy,” Denhollander said.

College Football Playoff considering expansion to 12 teams

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

There was a time not so long ago, 2012 to be exact, when the big news in college football was conference commissioners simply using the word playoff when talking about the future of the sports’ postseason format.

Less than 10 years later, and eight years into College Football Playoff era, the number of teams that will have a chance to win a national title in the postseason is poised to triple.

The College Football Playoff announced Thursday it will consider expanding from four to 12 teams to settle the championship, with six spots reserved for the highest-ranked conference champions and the other six going to at-large selections.

“This proposal, at its heart, was created to provide more participation,” CFP Executive Director Bill Hancock said.

Notre Dame athletic director Jack Swarbrick, part of the group that has been working on an expansion plan, noted that only about 4% of major college football teams reach the playoff. In most other NCAA sports, more than 20% of the competing schools participate in the championship event.

The playoff’s popularity seems to have waned as only a few teams have grabbed the majority of the spots since 2014. Alabama and Clemson have each made the playoff six times in seven years. Ohio State and Oklahoma have each been selected four times. That’s 71% of the playoff spots to just four of the 130 FBS teams.

There was concern that down the stretch of the season, the pool of teams with a legitimate chance to make the four-team playoff had become too small.

“This (proposed model) creates energy in October and November. The practical effect will be that with four to five weeks to go in the season, there will be 25-30 team with a legitimate chance,” Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby said.

The CFP’s surprising announcement outlined a detailed plan, but there are still steps to be taken and time for discussion and possible tweaks.

If the format is adopted — no earlier than this fall — there was no indication in the proposal about when an expanded playoff could be in place. The soonest would seem to be for the 2023 season. Implementation could also be as far off the 2026 season.

A selection committee would still be involved, and the proposed 12-team playoff would not limit how many teams can come from any one conference. The four highest-ranked conference champions would receive first-round byes and teams 5-12 would face each other in four games played on campus sometime during the two-week period following conference championship weekend, typically early December.

Quarterfinals would be hosted by bowl games on New Year’s Day — unless that falls on a Sunday, in which case those games will be played Jan. 2 — and an adjacent day.

The semifinals would also be hosted by bowl games, as is the case now. The plan calls for no re-seeding of the bracket as teams advance.

Mountain West Commissioner Craig Thompson cited the history of the bowls in college football and the desire to keep them “relevant.”

He also added: “All these points are going to have an opportunity to be discussed these are the recommendations of four people. There are seven other commissioners that will get to weigh in next week in Chicago.”

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A 12-team field with six spots reserved for conference champions would guarantee at least one team from outside the Power Five conferences would be in the playoff each season. The Group of Five — which includes the Mountain West, American Athletic, Sun Belt, Mid-American Conference and Conference USA — has never had a team crack the field of four or been particularly close.

Southeastern Conference Commissioner Greg Sankey said the large jump from four to 12 made it more palatable to create automatic access points for conference champions.

“That doesn’t work if you are reducing opportunities for those highly ranked,” Sankey said.

The proposal will be considered by the full CFP management committee during an in-person meeting at the Big Ten’s offices outside Chicago on June 17-18. The subcommittee comprised of Swarbrick, Bowlsby, Thompson and Sankey presented the proposal to the rest of conference commissioners in a Zoom meeting Thursday, but got no feedback.

The groups has been working on an expansion plan for two years. It might have been put forth sooner if not for the pandemic.

The proposal includes no dates for semifinals and the championship game to be played, but did indicate the semifinals would not be played as a doubleheader on a single day.

Currently six bowl games have a three-year rotation for hosting the semifinals and the championship game site is open to bidders, similar to the what the NFL does with the Super Bowl. The current semifinal bowl rotation includes the Rose, Sugar, Orange, Fiesta, Cotton and Peach bowls, not they are not guaranteed to be hosts in the proposed expansion plan.

“The process for selecting the six bowls that would rotate as hosts of the quarterfinals and semifinals (is) still to be determined,” the CFP plan said.

The full management committee will determine next week whether it will recommend expansion to university presidents who make up the CFP oversight committee. The presidents are scheduled to meet with the management committee in Dallas on June 22.

If the presidents sign off, the next step is determining over the summer whether the plan can be implemented and when. Final approval would likely come in September.

The CFP is entering year eight of a 12-year agreement with ESPN. The deal doesn’t lock in a format but an assumption has been that any changes would come after that deal expires following the 2025 season. Hancock has said no changes to the format could be made this season or in 2022.

The four-team playoff was implemented in 2014, a natural progression from the Bowl Championship Series, which matched No. 1 vs. No. 2 in the title game from 1998-2013.

Before the BCS, and its predecessor the Bowl Alliance, college football used bowls and polls for decades to determine a champion. There were some playoff proponents, but detractors warned it would ruin the drama and high-stakes of the regular season.

Now, college sports leaders have not only embraced the playoff, but they’re banking on a big one to enhance the regular season.

“Twelve keeps September important but also keeps November important,” Hancock said.

Celebrations (and questions) greet US vaccine donation plan

By GERALD IMRAY and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — U.S. plans to donate 500 million more COVID-19 vaccines to developing countries were met Thursday with both celebration and hesitation amid questions over whether the effort will be enough to help poor regions desperate for doses.

Some health officials and experts expressed hope that the pledge would encourage more donations to ease the inequities in vaccine supplies that have become pronounced in recent months. Other observers stressed that the doses needed to roll out quickly.

“Saving lives requires shots in arms now. Not at the end of 2021, not in 2022, but now,” said Kate Elder, senior vaccines policy advisor to the Doctors Without Borders organization. The donated vaccines “better come in sufficient volumes and urgently.”

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Hours after the U.S. President Joe Biden's administration committed to the donation, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that the Group of Seven nations were set to share at least 1 billion coronavirus shots with the world, with half coming from the U.S. and 100 million from the U.K. The announcement on the eve of the G-7 summit in England previewed a coordinated effort by the world's advanced economies to make vaccination available everywhere.

The first 200 million doses from the U.S. will start to arrive in countries in August, the White House and manufacturer Pfizer said, with the rest following in the first half of 2022.

Inoculation campaigns in several richer countries have surged ahead while efforts have barely begun in many poorer nations. The recent surge in cases in India offered a searing reminder of how COVID-19 can devastate entire countries when vaccines are scarce or nonexistent.

"We've seen that the virus is not over. It might feel like it's nearly over for some of us living in countries where we're lucky enough to have been vaccinated. But in other parts of the world, the virus is still absolutely raging out of control," said Lily Caprani, head of vaccines advocacy for UNICEF.

The Biden administration's decision to donate Pfizer vaccines raised doubts about whether the doses would reach the poorest of the poor because those doses need to be stored in ultra-cold conditions. Many low-income countries with limited infrastructure will probably be unable to take them to their most remote areas.

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said it would advise its countries to use the Pfizer shots in major cities.

Still, the administration's promise was "clearly a cause for celebration," said Dr. John Nkengasong, director of the Africa CDC, particularly at a time when infections are increasing on the continent of 1.3 billion people, and some countries still have not administered a single dose.

"Absolutely, it's going to be a big help," Nkengasong said.

The donation of the Pfizer shots is crucial because the global disparity in vaccination has become a multidimensional threat: a human catastrophe, a \$5 trillion economic loss for advanced economies and a contributor to the generation of mutant viruses, said Jerome Kim, head of the International Vaccine Institute, a nonprofit dedicated to making vaccines available to developing countries.

The U.S. will work with the global COVAX vaccine alliance to deliver the shots.

The G-7 summit might also give an indication of whether and how far other nations in the elite club are willing to follow the U.S. and the U.K. on vaccine sharing. Richer countries have been the focus of widespread criticism that they have fallen woefully short of lofty promises of fairness when the vaccines were being developed. Germany and France have each promised to donate 30 million doses by the end of the year.

The gaps in vaccine access are clear: The U.S. and Britain have fully vaccinated more than 40% of their populations, according to a global tracker kept by Johns Hopkins University. Countries like Haiti, on America's doorstep, Burundi and many others have vaccinated few, if any, of their people.

"So far, 77% of all the vaccines administered have gone into the arms of people in 10 countries," said COVAX Co-Chair Jane Halton. "Now that has got to change."

The inequality is not just a matter of fairness. There is also increasing concern over virus variants emerging from areas with consistently high COVID-19 circulation. At least three variants are circulating in Africa, the African CDC said, and driving infections. Even countries like Britain, with high rates of vaccination, have cited variants as an ongoing concern.

"While Biden's plan is welcome, it is a small piece of the puzzle, and it doesn't help countries that are struggling now," said Fifi Rahman, who is a civil society representative on a World Health Organization body focused on increasing access to COVID-19 vaccines.

She cited the East African nation of Uganda as an example, saying the country's intensive care units are already full, and it has only small numbers of vaccines left.

Biden's announcement is also tangled up in geopolitics. He hopes to put the U.S. and its allies at the forefront of the global virus fight in the face of a growing supply of Chinese and Russian vaccines.

China has exported 350 million doses of its vaccines to dozens of nations, according to its Foreign Min-

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istry. While those vaccines have faced scrutiny because of a lack of transparency in the sharing of clinical trial data, many poorer nations were eager to receive anything at all.

The shots promised by the Biden administration will go to 92 lower income countries and the African Union. Pfizer said the doses are part of a previous pledge, with its partner BioNTech, to provide 2 billion doses to developing countries over the next 18 months.

The White House had earlier announced separate plans to share 80 million doses globally by the end of June, most through COVAX.

Some experts said donations alone will not be enough to close the huge gaps in supplies and called for allowing qualified companies around the world to manufacture vaccines without intellectual property constraints.

The U.S. has expressed support for suspending IP protections on vaccines, and some other countries have agreed it should be explored. But in an indication of the disjointed response from the G-7 nations, Germany on Thursday repeated its opposition to such a waiver.

G-7 nations expected to pledge 1B vaccine doses for world

By ZEKE MILLER, AAMER MADHANI and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

ST. IVES, England (AP) — The Group of Seven nations are set to commit to sharing at least 1 billion coronavirus shots with the world, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced Thursday, with half coming from the U.S. and 100 million from the U.K. as President Joe Biden urged allies to join in speeding the pandemic's end and bolstering the strategic position of the world's wealthiest democracies.

Johnson's announcement on the eve of the G-7 leaders' summit in England came hours after Biden committed to donating 500 million COVID-19 vaccine doses and previewed a coordinated effort by the advanced economies to make vaccination widely and speedily available everywhere.

"We're going to help lead the world out of this pandemic working alongside our global partners," Biden said, adding that on Friday the G-7 nations would join the U.S. in outlining their vaccine donation commitments. The G-7 also includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan.

The prime minister's office said the first 5 million U.K. doses would be shared in the coming weeks, with the remainder coming over the next year. Biden's own commitment was on top of the 80 million doses he has already pledged to donate by the end of June.

"At the G7 Summit I hope my fellow leaders will make similar pledges so that, together, we can vaccinate the world by the end of next year and build back better from coronavirus," Johnson said in a statement referencing the U.S. president's campaign slogan.

Earlier Thursday, French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed the U.S. commitment and said Europe should do the same. He said France would share at least 30 million doses globally by year's end.

"I think the European Union needs to have at least the same level of ambition as the United States," he said at a news conference. He added that time was of the essence, saying, "It's almost more important to say how many (doses) we deliver the next month than making promises to be fulfilled in 18 months from now."

The G-7 leaders have faced mounting pressure to outline their global vaccine sharing plans, especially as inequities in supply around the world have become more pronounced. In the U.S., there is a large vaccine stockpile and the demand for shots has dropped precipitously in recent weeks.

Biden predicted the U.S. doses and the overall G-7 commitment would "supercharge" the global vaccination campaign, adding that the U.S. doses come with no strings attached.

"Our vaccine donations don't include pressure for favors or potential concessions," Biden said. "We're doing this to save lives, to end this pandemic, that's it."

He added: "Our values call on us to do everything that we can to vaccinate the world against COVID-19."

The U.S. commitment is to buy and donate 500 million Pfizer doses for distribution through the global COVAX alliance to 92 lower-income countries and the African Union, bringing the first steady supply of mRNA vaccine to the countries that need it most.

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The Pfizer agreement came together with some urgency in the last four weeks at Biden's direction, said a senior White House official, both to meet critical needs overseas and to be ready for announcement at the G-7. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal plans, added that the Biden administration was to apply the same wartime posture applied to the vaccine rollout in the U.S. to its effort to share vaccines globally.

Biden said the 500 million U.S.-manufactured vaccines will be shipped starting in August, with the goal of distributing 200 million by the end of the year. The remaining 300 million doses would be shipped in the first half of 2022. A price tag for the doses was not released, but the U.S. is now set to be COVAX's largest vaccine donor in addition to its single largest funder with a \$4 billion commitment.

The well-funded global alliance has faced a slow start to its vaccination campaign, as richer nations have locked up billions of doses through contracts directly with drug manufacturers. Biden's move, officials said, was meant to ensure a substantial amount of manufacturing capacity remains open to the wealthy nations. Just last month, the European Commission signed an agreement to purchase as many as 1.8 billion Pfizer doses in the next two years, a significant share of the company's upcoming production — though the bloc reserved the right to donate some of its doses to COVAX.

COVAX has distributed just 81 million doses globally and parts of the world, particularly in Africa, remain vaccine deserts.

White House officials said the ramped-up distribution program fits a theme Biden plans to hit frequently during his week in Europe: that Western democracies, and not authoritarian states, can deliver the most good for the world.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters Wednesday that G-7 leaders are "converging" around the idea that vaccine supply can be increased in several ways, including by countries sharing more of their own doses, helping to increase global manufacturing capacity and doing more across the "chain of custody" from when the vaccine is produced to when it is injected into someone in the developing world.

Biden, in his remarks, harked back to the Detroit-area workers who 80 years ago built tanks and planes "that helped defeat the threat of global fascism in World War II."

"They built what became known as the arsenal of democracy," Biden said. "Now a new generation of American men and women, working with today's latest technology, is going to build a new arsenal to defeat the current enemy of world peace, health and stability: COVID-19."

He noted that Pfizer's main COVID-19 vaccine plant in Kalamazoo, Michigan, is not far from Detroit.

Last week, the White House unveiled plans to donate an initial allotment of 25 million doses of surplus vaccine overseas, mostly through the World Health Organization-backed COVAX program, promising infusions for South and Central America, Asia, Africa and others.

Officials say a quarter of that excess will be kept in reserve for emergencies and for the U.S. to share directly with allies and partners, including South Korea, Taiwan and Ukraine. Johnson said the U.K. would follow a similar model with its doses, holding 20% in reserve for bilateral agreements but sending the vast majority to COVAX.

China and Russia have shared their domestically produced vaccines with some needy countries, often with hidden strings attached. Sullivan said Biden "does want to show — rallying the rest of the world's democracies — that democracies are the countries that can best deliver solutions for people everywhere."

The U.S.-produced mRNA vaccines have also proven to be more effective against both the original strain and more dangerous variants of COVID-19 than the more conventional vaccines produced by China and Russia. Some countries that have had success in deploying those conventional vaccines have nonetheless seen cases spike.

UN: Don't forget to save species while fixing global warming

By SETH BORENSTEIN and CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writers

To save the planet, the world needs to tackle the crises of climate change and species loss together,

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taking measures that fix both and not just one, United Nations scientists said.

A joint report Thursday by separate U.N. scientific bodies that look at climate change and biodiversity loss found there are ways to simultaneously attack the two global problems, but some fixes to warming could accelerate extinctions of plants and animals.

For example, measures such as expansion of bioenergy crops like corn, or efforts to pull carbon dioxide from the air and bury it, could use so much land — twice the size of India — that the impact would be “fairly catastrophic on biodiversity,” said co-author and biologist Almut Arneith at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology in Germany.

Policy responses to climate change and biodiversity loss have long been siloed, with different government agencies responsible for each, said co-author Pamela McElwee, a human ecologist at Rutgers University.

The problems worsen each other, are intertwined and in the end hurt people, scientists said.

“Climate change and biodiversity loss are threatening human well-being as well as society,” said report co-chair Hans-Otto Portner, a German biologist who helps oversee the impacts group of the U.N.’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Earth’s naturally changing climate shaped what life developed, including humans, but once people in the industrialized world started pumping fossil fuels into the air, that triggered cascading problems, Portner said.

“It’s a high time to fix what we got wrong,” he said. “The climate system is off-track and the biodiversity is suffering.”

There are many measures that can address both problems at once, the report said.

“Protecting and restoring high-carbon ecosystems,” such as tropical forests and peatlands, should be high priority, said co-author Pete Smith, a plant and soil scientist at the University of Aberdeen.

While some climate solutions can increase species loss, scientists said efforts to curb extinctions don’t really harm the climate.

Yunne Shin, director of research at French National Research Institute, said the bulk of measures taken to protect biodiversity will also help curb climate change. While she applauded growing interest in nature-based solutions, she said, conservation measures “must be accompanied by clear cuts in emissions.”

“This report is an important milestone,” said Simon Lewis, chairman of global change science at University College London, who was not part of the report.

“Finally the world’s bodies that synthesize scientific information on two of the most profound 21st century crises are working together,” he said. “Halting biodiversity loss is even harder than phasing out fossil fuel use.”

Mystery over claim world’s 1st ‘decuplets’ born in S. Africa

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — South Africa has been gripped by the mystery of whether a woman has, as has been claimed, actually given birth to 10 babies, in what would then be the world’s first recorded case of decuplets.

Gosiame Thamara Sithole from the Tembisa township near Johannesburg gave birth to the babies on Monday, according to the Pretoria News newspaper which quoted the parents. The babies — seven boys and three girls — have not made a public appearance or been captured on camera, although they were born prematurely, the newspaper reported.

The South African government said it is still trying to verify the claim.

That’s led to South Africans obsessing on social media over whether the story of the “Tembisa 10” is indeed true.

The father, Teboho Tsotetsi, told the paper his wife had given birth in a hospital in the capital Pretoria. He said it was a big surprise for the parents after doctors only detected eight babies in pre-natal scans.

“It’s seven boys and three girls. She was seven months and seven days pregnant. I am happy. I am emotional,” the newspaper quoted Tsotetsi as saying.

The couple already have 6-year-old twins, which would make the total an even dozen kids, if the claim

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is true.

South Africans are eagerly waiting for proof of what would be a world record. Relatives and neighbors of the couple have insisted the news is true.

"For her to receive 10 blessings at one given time, we thank God for that," Wilson Machaya, a neighbor of the family in Tembisa, told The Associated Press. "And because we are neighbors we will have to assist in any way possible."

A Malian woman gave birth to nine babies only last month in Morocco, in what was hailed as the world's first case of nonuplets.

The Department of Social Development in South Africa's Gauteng province confirmed tracing Sithole and spokeswoman Feziwe Ndwayana said they would make an announcement after meeting with the family. Another local government department said earlier this week that it had no record of the babies' births in any of the province's hospitals.

The Pretoria News initially broke the story with an interview with Sithole and her husband Tsotetsi at their home, which was conducted nearly a month ago and when they thought they were having eight babies. They requested that the story only be published after the babies were born for safety and cultural reasons, the newspaper said.

According to the report, Sithole went on leave earlier than expected from her job as a retail store manager because she could no longer cope. Tsotetsi is unemployed.

One organization has given \$70,000 to the couple to help and other South Africans are being encouraged to donate.

Alongside #Tembisa10, the term #NationalBabyShower has been trending on Twitter.

Florida bans 'critical race theory' from its classrooms

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Florida's state Board of Education banned "critical race theory" from public school classrooms Thursday, adopting new rules it said would shield schoolchildren from curricula that could "distort historical events."

Florida's move was widely expected as a national debate intensifies about how race should be used as a lens in classrooms to examine the country's tumultuous history.

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis appeared by video at the top of the board's meeting, urging its members, many of whom he appointed, to adopt the new measures he asserted would serve students with the facts rather than "trying to indoctrinate them with ideology."

The Black Lives Matter movement has helped bring contentious discussions about race to the forefront of American discourse, and classrooms have become a battleground. Supporters contend that federal law has preserved the unequal treatment of people on the basis of race and that the country was founded on the theft of land and labor.

Opponents of critical race theory say schoolchildren should not be taught that America is fundamentally racist. Governors and legislatures in Republican-led states around the country are considering or have signed into law bills that would limit how teachers can frame American history.

Both sides accuse the other of politicizing classroom instruction and violating the free speech rights of countless people by limiting the allowable points of view.

Florida law already requires schools to provide instruction on a host of fundamentals, including the Declaration of Independence, the Holocaust and African American history, but the topics have often been muddled. Current events, including the killings of Black people by police, have intensified debates.

Some have called for a "faithful" interpretation of U.S. history that honors the founding of the country — as a rebellion against oppressive British rule. But some Americans — particularly Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans — argue that dissenting perspectives are often missing from text books and classroom discussions.

The new rules say classroom instruction "must be factual and objective, and may not suppress or distort significant historical events." It goes on to mention the Holocaust, slavery and the Civil War, as well as the

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civil rights movement and the contributions of Blacks, Hispanics and women to the country.

But it also makes specific mention of "theories that distort historical events" that are inconsistent with board policy, including any teaching that denies the Holocaust or espouses critical race theory, which the new rules say asserts "that racism is not merely the product of prejudice, but that racism is embedded in American society and its legal systems in order to uphold the supremacy of white persons."

During his brief appearance Thursday, DeSantis called it "outrageous" how some instructors are deviating from what he and others consider the fundamentals of history.

"Some of this stuff is, I think, really toxic," DeSantis told the school board. "I think it's going to cause a lot of divisions. I think it'll cause people to think of themselves more as a member of particular race based on skin color, rather than based on the content of their character and based on their hard work and what they're trying to accomplish in life."

The Florida Education Association had called on the board to reject the proposal.

The association, which represents teachers across Florida, called on the board to strip away inflammatory language from the proposed rules. A particular sore point was the use of "indoctrinate" in the rule, which the union says presents an overly negative view of classroom instruction. That word, however, remained in the rules adopted by the board.

"The job of educators is to challenge students with facts and allow them to question and think critically about information, and that's the antithesis of indoctrination," Cathy Boehme, a public policy advocate for the association, told the board. "No matter our color, background or ZIP Code, we want our kids to have an education that imparts honesty about who we are, integrity and how we treat others, and courage to do what's right."

More than two dozen members of the public spoke on the matter, their opinions divided and impassioned. The board meeting, held at a state college in Jacksonville, was briefly recessed when one speaker went over his time limit and began chanting in support of teachers.

One woman implored the board to reject the new rules, saying it was important for children to learn about how the legacies of slavery, segregation and Jim Crow still "created an uneven playing field for Black people."

Others spoke about how an individual's interpretation of history could reflect personal agendas and biases that could lead to the proselytization of children.

The new rules also forbids use of the 1619 Project, a classroom program spawned by a New York Times project that focuses on teaching about slavery and African American history. The project's name refers to the year popularly believed to be when slaves were first brought to colonial America.

The unanswered 'Jeopardy!' question: Who's the new host?

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Jeopardy!" needed a host, and Lucille Ball had an enthusiastic suggestion for creator Merv Griffin: The smooth-voiced, debonair emcee of the "High Rollers" game show.

That was 1984. Decades later, filling the void left by the late Alex Trebek involves sophisticated research and a parade of guest hosts doing their best to impress viewers and the studio that's expected to make the call before the new season begins taping later this summer.

Think of Sony Pictures Television as clutching the rose, and Mayim Bialik, Anderson Cooper, Katie Couric and "Jeopardy!" champs Ken Jennings and Buzzy Cohen among the suitors so far, with more to come including Robin Roberts, Dr. Sanjay Gupta and LeVar Burton.

Sony has "the most robust team of people I have ever seen looking at this and analyzing it in a very cerebral way," said executive producer Mike Richards. "It's a real change from the way casting has traditionally been done on television."

"It's usually been a gut instinct of the head executive: 'How about that person?'" Richards said.

That was producer-entertainer Griffin's approach when he brought a syndicated version of "Jeopardy!" to TV, five years after the quiz show's last network iteration wrapped in 1979 on NBC. A word from Ball,

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of "I Love Lucy" fame, and Trebek's skill and experience sealed his hire.

Audience and critical regard for the Canadian-born Trebek grew over the years, which makes finding a worthy replacement both a gesture of respect for the late host and the means to protect a corporate asset. While ratings have shifted under the guest hosts, "Jeopardy!" remains among the top-ranked syndicated programs in viewership.

Trebek helped build the show's "display of excellence with his own excellence. And it's tremendously difficult to find somebody to replace him, not only because of the status that he had in the American imagination," said Deepak Sarma, a Case Western Reserve University professor and Netflix cultural consultant. "Anyone who is going to take his position will be judged in the end against this model of perfection."

Game show hosts of Trebek's era were usually radio and TV broadcasting veterans steeped in the genre, and almost invariably white men. Among the "Jeopardy!" subs are men and women of color and prospects from a variety of fields, including NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers.

The approach makes sense to Louis Virtel, a longtime fan whose vantage point is informed by writing for a game show ("Match Game") and competing on "Jeopardy!" in 2015.

"It's great to see all these different fill-ins. I'm open to suggestions, and I think most people are," said Virtel, a "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" writer and co-host of the "Keep It" podcast. "Jeopardy!" is a one-of-a-kind show, and the replacement should be tailored to the game."

What makes for a good "Jeopardy!" host?

"I think establishing a sense of comfort (so) the audience just eases into the game," Virtel said. "Also a sense of stakes, that a real tough game is being played. It's called 'Jeopardy!' for a reason. The host is there to make sure we're all on our toes."

The try-outs are an unusually public form of auditioning, one that could cause flop sweat even for veteran emcees. For actor Bialik of "Blossom," "The Big Bang Theory" and "Call Me Kat," any nerves were crowded out by the demands of the job — and she's a neuroscientist.

"There is very little room for not being 100% dialed in to the job of hosting when you are on that stage," Bialik said in an email. It proved the most "joyful, challenging, transcendent act I have undertaken — second only to giving birth to my second son on the floor of my living room."

Back in the day, there were only a handful of pioneers like Betty White, the first female game show host to win a Daytime Emmy (for 1983's "Just Men!"), and Adam Wade, a Black singer who hosted the 1975 game show "Musical Chairs." Wayne Brady, Steve Harvey and Meredith Vieira are among those who made further inroads, with pressure only growing on the entertainment industry to reflect America more broadly on screen.

But taking over for an authority figure like Trebek is harder on women and others not typically seen in such roles, said Sarma.

"The sorts of expectations placed on a person of color in a leadership position are usually higher than those placed on a white person in position of power," he said, and any error or "slight movement against the norm is jumped upon ... as some tremendous mistake."

There could be backlash from those resentful that Trebek isn't replaced like-for-like, which Sarma said isn't far-fetched in this period of social discord.

"Sony is in a pickle," he said.

Series producer Richards, the second temporary host after Trebek's pancreatic cancer death last November at age 80, holds an optimistic view despite the prospect of online trolls and whatever their gripes about the newbie may be.

"My hope is that whoever is chosen will be given a chance to prove why they were chosen, without too much static," he said. "Ultimately, we are trying to put out the best product for our fans. That tends to narrow your focus to a pretty nice North Star, as opposed to, 'What's the internet going to say?'"

Food allergies complicate hungry Americans' search for meals

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

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SACRAMENTO, California (AP) — When Emily Brown, a Kansas City mother, couldn't find foods that her 2-year-old with multiple food allergies could eat at a local food pantry, she mustered up the courage to ask about gluten-free foods or dairy alternatives.

The response: "You got something."

The only things her daughter could eat were potatoes and salsa.

"It took, really, all of my strength to make it to the car," she said. "I cried in the car and then I just thought to myself, 'We cannot be the only family, I cannot be the only mother, struggling with this.'"

For the millions of Americans newly experiencing food insecurity during the pandemic, a particular crisis is hitting those with food allergies and intolerances: Most charitable and government food programs offer limited options.

While some pantries maintain gluten-free shelves or post allergen information, most were forced to limit clients' choices last year, instead turning to contactless models where clients drive up and take a pre-made bag of food.

"Everybody deserves an equal opportunity to select their own foods," said Carla Carter, director of outreach and programming at the National Celiac Association. But, she said, "COVID drastically changed that into: 'Here's a box of food, good luck.'"

Those signing up for government assistance face similar problems. The program for women, infants and children - known as WIC - offers a substitute for peanut butter: It's beans, not exactly useful for making sandwiches. Soy milk is a substitute for cow's milk, but some people, like Brown's child, can't have either.

Food stamps, or SNAP, let families choose what to buy, but specialized foods - like gluten free bread or sunflower seed butter - are often far more expensive. In some stores, the latter costs triple the cost of store-brand peanut butter, gluten free flour costs four times a standard bag, and even the cheapest dairy milk alternatives are often double the price.

Feeding America, the nation's largest anti-hunger organization, hasn't gathered data on the overlap between hunger and food allergies or intolerance. But it's likely millions of Americans who are food insecure face some limits on what they can eat. An estimated 32 million people have a food allergy, and 85 million people live in a household where someone has a food allergy or intolerance, according to Food Allergy Research & Education, which advocates for people with allergies. About 1% of people are diagnosed with Celiac disease, which means they can't consume gluten, and about 6% of people have a non-Celiac gluten sensitivity Carter said.

Eight years after her food pantry experience, Brown is now one of the few people running a program dedicated to helping people with allergies and intolerance access safe foods.

Brown's nonprofit, the Food Equality Initiative, serves about 200 families with Celiac or food allergies, providing them \$150 per month to use in an online marketplace with allergy-friendly foods. Some of her clients use the benefit to supplement government assistance programs.

Dietician Kate Scarlata is among advocates trying to change the conversation around food insecurity by promoting what she calls a more dignified approach. She specializes in irritable bowel syndrome, which can cause stomach pain, diarrhea and constipation when people consume certain foods including garlic and onion, ingredients found in many shelf-stable products like sauces and soups.

She launched a tour of food pantries in April to raise awareness, and she found many of those she visited weren't asking people if they had intolerances or special dietary needs.

Charitable food programs can start with a few simple questions she said: "Are you on a special diet? Are there any foods that bother you?"

Brown, meanwhile, is working with Drs. Ruchi Gupta and Lucy Bilaver at the Center for Food Allergy & Asthma Research at Northwestern University to gather better information on how many people with allergies are food insecure, because no comprehensive data exists.

"The challenge we have is that the way we address food insecurity and food programming here in the U.S. is just so general," Brown said.

As the pandemic risks wane, advocates hope to see a return to client choice programs. That's the model Claudia Montenegro uses at her San Diego pantry, Porchlight Community Services, which is dedicated to

serving people with food allergies.

In 2016, Montenegro was struggling to afford allergy friendly foods to meet her gluten and dairy intolerances.

She and some friends decided to pool their money so they could buy in bulk and look for sales. Word of mouth grew, and she was soon distributing food from her porch.

Today, Porchlight's grown to a full-fledged, volunteer-run food pantry serving people allergic to nuts, dairy, gluten and wheat, shellfish, egg and soy, and those who are diabetic.

Clients are asked to chip in \$35 per week if they can, but those who can't pay are still welcome. Volunteers buy all the food themselves, and shoppers can choose items like coconut-based yogurts, nut butters, lactose-free milk and gluten-free flour.

Elizabeth Shoemaker turned to Porchlight during the pandemic, after a hip replacement caused her to lose her job, her relationship and her place to live. At one point, her food assistance payments decreased from \$200 to \$20. She developed a gluten intolerance but struggled to afford gluten-free products until she found Porchlight, provides those and caters well to her mainly vegetable-based diet.

She can't afford the fee, so she volunteers at the pantry.

"I know now I can depend on them the next week, so I don't have to hoard food," she said.

Another jump in prices tightens the squeeze on US consumers

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — American consumers absorbed another surge in prices in May — a 0.6% increase over April and 5% over the past year, the biggest 12-month inflation spike since 2008.

The May rise in consumer prices that the Labor Department reported Thursday reflected a range of goods and services now in growing demand as people increasingly shop, travel, dine out and attend entertainment events in a rapidly reopening economy.

The increased consumer appetite is bumping up against a shortage of components, from lumber and steel to chemicals and semiconductors, that supply such key products as autos and computer equipment, all of which has forced up prices. And as consumers increasingly venture away from home, demand has spread from manufactured goods to services — airline fares, for example, along with restaurant meals and hotel prices — raising inflation in those areas, too.

In its report Thursday, the government said that core inflation, which excludes volatile energy and food costs, rose 0.7% in May after an even bigger 0.9% increase in April, and has risen 3.8% over the past year. That is the sharpest 12-month jump in core inflation since 1992. And it is far above the Federal Reserve's 2% target for annual price increases.

Among specific items in May, prices for used vehicles, which had surged by a record 10% in April, shot up an additional 7.3% and accounted for one-third of May's overall price jump. The price of new cars, too, rose 1.6% — the largest one-month increase since 2009.

The jump in new and used vehicle prices reflects supply chain problems that have caused a shortage of semiconductors. The lack of computer chips has limited production of new cars, which, in turn, has reduced the supply of used cars. As demand for vehicles has risen, prices have followed.

But higher prices were evident in a wide variety of categories in May, including household furnishings, which rose 0.9%, driven by a record jump in the price of floor coverings. Airline fares rose 7% after having increased 10.2% in April. Food prices rose 0.4%, with beef prices jumping 2.3%. Energy costs, though unchanged in May, are still up 56.2% in the past year.

From the cereal maker General Mills to Chipotle Mexican Grill to the paint maker Sherwin-Williams, a range of companies have been raising prices or plan to do so, in some cases to make up for higher wages they're now paying to keep or attract workers. This week, for example, Chipotle Mexican Grill announced it was boosting menu prices by roughly 4% to cover the cost of raising its workers' wages. In May, Chipotle had said that it would raise wages for its restaurant workers to reach an average of \$15 an hour by the end of June.

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Andrew Hunter, a senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics, noted that the price category that covers restaurant meals jumped 0.6% last month. He took that as evidence that labor shortages at restaurants, hotels and other service sector companies are beginning to fuel wage and price increases.

The inflation pressures are not only squeezing consumers but also posing a risk to the economy's recovery from the pandemic recession. One risk is that the Fed will eventually respond to intensifying inflation by raising interest rates too aggressively and derail the economic recovery.

The central bank, led by Chair Jerome Powell, has repeatedly expressed its belief that inflation will prove temporary as supply bottlenecks are unclogged and parts and goods flow normally again. But some economists have expressed concern that as the economic recovery accelerates, fueled by rising demand from consumers spending freely again, so will inflation.

The question is, for how long?

"The price spikes could be bigger and more prolonged because the pandemic has been so disruptive to supply chains," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics. But "by the fall or end of the year," Zandi suggested, "prices will be coming back to earth."

That would be none too soon for consumers like Carmela Romanello Schaden, a real estate agent in Rockville Centre, New York. Schaden said she's having to pay more for a range of items at her hair salon. But she is feeling the most pain in the food aisle. Her weekly food bill, she said, is now \$200 to \$250 for herself and her 25-year-old son — up from \$175 earlier in the year.

A package of strip steak that Schaden had normally bought for \$28 to \$32 jumped to \$45. She noticed the increase right before Memorial Day but bought it anyway because it was for a family picnic. But she won't buy it again at that price, she said, and is trading down to pork and chicken.

"I've always been selective," Schaden said. "When something goes up, I will switch into something else."

So far, Fed officials haven't deviated from their view that higher inflation is a temporary consequence of the economy's rapid reopening, with its accelerating consumer demand, and the lack of enough supplies and workers to keep pace with it. Eventually, they say, supply will rise to match demand.

Officials also note that year-over-year gauges of inflation now look especially large because they are being measured against the early months of the pandemic, when inflation tumbled as the economy all but shut down. In coming months, the year-over-year inflation figures will likely look smaller.

Kathy Bostjancic, an economist at Oxford Economics, a consulting firm, suggested that that the effect of these so-called "base effects" will start to recede next month and that year-over-year measures of inflation should, too.

"This will be the peak in the annual rate of inflation," Bostjancic said in a research note. "While we share the Fed's view that this isn't the start of an upward inflationary spiral, we look for inflation to remain persistently above 2% through 2022."

Indeed, the government's month-to-month readings of inflation, which aren't subject to distortions from the pandemic, have also been rising since the year began. Some economists say they fear that if prices accelerate too much and stay high too long, expectations of further price increases will take hold. That, in turn, could intensify demands for higher pay, potentially triggering the kind of wage-price spiral that bedeviled the economy in the 1970s.

Investors so far appear unfazed by the risks of higher inflation. On Thursday, yields in the bond market declined in the hours after the government reported the surge in consumer prices. And stock prices rose.

"Investors were encouraged that drivers of this month's inflation advance came from factors that indeed are likely to be transitory, such as used auto prices and airline travel," said Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist at CFRA.

For now, though, rising commodity costs are forcing Americans to pay more for items from meat to gasoline. Prices for corn, grain and soybeans are at their highest levels since 2012. The price of lumber to build homes is at an all-time high. More expensive commodities, such as polyethylene and wood pulp, have translated into higher consumer prices for toilet paper, diapers and most products sold in plastic containers.

General Mills has said it's considering raises prices on its products because grain, sugar and other ingredients have become costlier. Hormel Foods has already increased prices for Skippy peanut butter. Coca-Cola

has said it expects to raise prices to offset higher costs.

Kimberly-Clark, which makes Kleenex and Scott toilet paper, said it will be raising prices on about 60% of its products. Proctor & Gamble has said it will raise prices for its baby, feminine and adult care products.

"There is stronger demand for hotel rooms, air travel, restaurant dining," said Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial. "Many businesses are also facing upward pressure on their costs such as higher wages."

EXPLAINER: Chauvin's lawyer asks to probe alleged jury bias

By AMY FORLITI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The defense attorney for the former Minneapolis police officer convicted of murder in the death of George Floyd is seeking not only a new trial but also a hearing to "impeach the verdict" by investigating potential juror misconduct.

Eric Nelson's request for a new trial for Derek Chauvin is fairly routine, but the request to investigate the jury is not. Prosecutors have until Wednesday to submit written arguments in response to Nelson's requests. It's not clear when the judge will rule.

Here's a look at some of the issues Nelson raised.

NEW TRIAL REQUEST

Chauvin was convicted in April of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and manslaughter in the May 25, 2020, death of Floyd, a Black man who was pinned to the ground for about 9 1/2 minutes as he said he couldn't breathe. Chauvin will be sentenced June 25.

Nelson's request for a new trial covers everything from the extensive publicity of the case to allegations of prosecutorial misconduct, arguing the state "belittled" Nelson's defense by calling his arguments "stories."

He takes issue with the fact that records weren't made of sidebar discussions between attorneys and the judge, and he says the court abused its discretion by not allowing a man who was with Floyd on the day he died to testify. He also takes issue with the addition of a third-degree murder charge and with the state's cumulative evidence about the use of force.

Nelson alleges all of these factors deprived Chauvin of his right to a fair trial.

"It's almost as if Eric is sort of repackaging all of the major objections he made throughout the trial into one brief and putting them back in front of (Judge Peter) Cahill one more time and asking him to reconsider," said Brock Hunter, a Minneapolis defense attorney who has followed the case.

It's unlikely a new trial will be granted. Since Cahill already ruled on most of these issues, Hunter and other experts said he probably won't overturn himself. Still, experts say, Nelson has to try. He also has to present these issues in the trial court, if he wants to raise them on appeal.

"He's zealously representing his client, as we are ethically bound to do," Hunter said.

PRETRIAL PUBLICITY

Nelson said intense publicity — both before the trial and due to events during it — tainted the jury pool and prejudiced the jury against his client.

There were reports in February that Chauvin had been prepared to plead guilty to third-degree murder, an announcement during jury selection that Minneapolis reached a \$27 million settlement with Floyd's family, and the fatal shooting of Daunte Wright by a police officer in nearby Brooklyn Center, which happened during Chauvin's trial and sparked days of protests.

Nelson said Cahill abused his discretion when he denied earlier requests to move the trial out of Hennepin County, postpone the trial and sequester the jury.

Ryan Pacyga, another Minneapolis defense attorney following the case, called the developments that came up during Chauvin's trial a "perfect storm" and said the cumulative impact is worth noting. He said Nelson's strongest argument may be that the case should have been delayed.

"If I were to think about any of those things happening in a case where I was defending somebody, I would be going crazy and have serious concerns about the impact -- either perceived or real -- on a fair trial," Pacyga said.

REQUEST TO IMPEACH THE VERDICT

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The term "impeach" in this context means to call into question the integrity or validity of a jury's verdict. Under Minnesota's Rules of Criminal Procedure, a defendant can ask the court for a hearing to investigate possible juror misconduct. The hearing, known as a Schwartz hearing, gets its name from a 1960 Minnesota Supreme Court case that set up a procedure for examining jurors when their impartiality is questioned.

The case, *Schwartz v. Minneapolis Suburban Bus Co.*, stemmed from an automobile accident. One of the jurors said during jury questioning that he could be fair and impartial, without disclosing that his daughter had been in an accident. According to text of the ruling published on casetext.com, there was dispute about whether he was asked a question about that during jury selection.

After the trial, an investigator for the defendant bus company interviewed the juror and learned about the accident; the juror told the investigator it influenced him to somewhat favor the plaintiffs.

To avoid having attorneys or investigators "harass" jurors by interrogating them, the Minnesota Supreme Court said if a juror's untruthful answers to questions could prevent someone from getting a fair trial, it's best to bring the matter before the trial judge. The juror may be summoned to court to answer questions.

ARE SCHWARTZ HEARINGS COMMON?

No. Pacyga said that's mainly because the judge and attorneys don't usually know about issues like this unless they're disclosed somehow. He said the defense has a high bar to overcome to get a Schwartz hearing, and prevailing in one is even tougher.

In Chauvin's case, Nelson alleges an alternate juror, who did not deliberate, made public comments after the trial indicating she felt pressured to render a guilty verdict.

He also alleged that a juror who did deliberate, Brandon Mitchell, didn't follow jury instructions and was not candid during jury selection because he didn't mention his participation in an Aug. 28 march in Washington, D.C., to honor Martin Luther King Jr. Nelson also alleged Mitchell made comments indicating he based his verdict on outside influence.

Hunter said he expects the state will say Mitchell wasn't untruthful and that the march wasn't specifically about police brutality. Hunter noted Mitchell said during jury selection that he supported the Black Lives Matter concept.

"He wasn't really trying to be evasive or hide the ball about where his viewpoints were during jury selection," Hunter said.

No audience, new venue, but Westminster dog show barks on

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — There will be plenty of tradition, pup and circumstance at the Westminster Kennel Club dog show this weekend.

But for the first time in its 145-year history, the storied canine competition is trading the buzz of the Big Apple for the airy grounds of a suburban riverfront estate, one of many changes prompted by pandemic precautions.

The show was rescheduled from its usual February dates and isn't allowing in-person spectators. Human participants must be vaccinated or newly tested. Dogs will compete as usual on green carpet for televised parts of the competition, but some other rounds will happen on an even more traditional green carpet — the lawn at the Lyndhurst estate in Tarrytown, New York.

And the sought-after best in show trophy will be awarded under a tent outside Lyndhurst's Gothic-castlelike mansion, not in the sports palace of Manhattan's Madison Square Garden.

"It's a heartbreak because that's definitely part of the prestige of going, and the nostalgia," says handler Renee Rosamilla of Ocala, Florida. "But I'm just, honestly, thrilled that they were able to let us have Westminster this year."

The show kicks off with an agility competition Friday, followed by weekend events including the traditional breed judging that leads to the best in show title. It will be conferred Sunday night during a live broadcast on Fox. (Earlier rounds also are being televised or streamed.)

Some off-the-beaten-path breeds are in the hunt for the big prize this year. Dog cognoscenti are keeping

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an eye on high-ranking hopefuls including a lagotto Romagnolo — an Italian truffle-hunting breed that first appeared at Westminster only five years ago — and a Dandie Dinmont terrier, the 15th-rarest U.S. breed, by the American Kennel Club's count. The Dandie, named for a character in Sir Walter Scott's 1815 novel "Guy Mannering," is considered to be at risk of disappearing even in its homeland, the United Kingdom.

The show also is due to feature four breeds that are eligible to compete for the first time — the barbet, the dogo Argentino, the Belgian Laekenois, and the Biewer terrier.

Despite pandemic uncertainties and changes, Westminster filled its usual number of entry slots and even expanded the agility roster a bit, organizers said.

Still, with many dog shows canceled over the last 15 months, it was tough or impossible for some dogs to get the points needed to qualify for Westminster. There were 545 AKC-sanctioned dog shows nationwide last year, down more than 60% from 2019.

Tracy and Peter Rousseau have repeatedly made the trip to Westminster from their cattle ranch in Franktown, Colorado, to help ensure that their breed — the Norwegian lundehund, rarest of all in the AKC rankings — is represented. But none of their current dogs qualified, and the couple felt hesitant, anyway, because of virus concerns and other issues.

"We really do love showing our dogs, love educating people about this quirky little breed," said Peter Rousseau, a civilian military employee and retired Air Force sergeant. "With all the pandemic craziness and everything, it just didn't work out this year. We're looking forward to getting back to it."

The last Westminster show concluded Feb. 11, 2020, when there were only 13 confirmed coronavirus cases nationwide, though the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has since concluded the virus was already more prevalent. Within about a month, holding a public event was unthinkable.

Westminster spokesperson Gail Miller Bisher said organizers spitballed various scenarios for 2021. A virtual show? An event with archival footage? Fans-via-video, like at NBA games last summer? Something outside New York? And outdoors?

"We felt we owed it to the dog community and to the sports community to put this up," club President Charlton "Chat" Reynders III said. "We just wanted to be sure that we created a venue where the person that might be most nervous about COVID, or health, would feel safe."

By last fall, the club decided on June at the 67-acre (27-hectare) Lyndhurst, about 25 miles (40 km) north of Manhattan. The estate hosted a smaller dog show for decades, and former owner and Gilded Age railroad magnate/financier Jay Gould's sons had dogs that won prizes at Westminster.

The show returns to the Garden in January 2022.

In the meantime, this year's move is requiring some adjustments for handlers such as Rosamilla, who's scheduled to show a harrier named Joker, a flat-coated retriever called Tildy and a Plott hound that goes by Fritz.

Unfamiliar with the area around Lyndhurst, Rosamilla initially booked at three different hotels before settling on one. Then she had to plan how to prep the dogs without the usual "benching" area where handlers have cheek-by-jowl berths — and a power supply — for grooming. This time, there will be a grooming tent, but competitors who need blow dryers or other electric accoutrements will have to wield them in their vehicles, homes or hotels.

"It's definitely going to have challenges, but I always look forward to going to Westminster. We'll just make do with whatever it throws at us," Rosamilla said.

And, she said, "I'm sure the dogs are absolutely going to love it."

Culture of Corruption: ex-UAW leader gets 28-month sentence

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — He plotted to steal up to \$1.5 million in union dues, and the money he diverted was spent on golf clubs, vacation homes, booze and lavish meals, fostering a culture of corruption within the United Auto Workers union.

Now former UAW president Gary Jones will have to spend 28 months in a federal prison and repay thousands of dollars for his crimes.

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Jones, 64, was sentenced Thursday by U.S. District Judge Paul Borman in Detroit after pleading guilty to two counts of conspiracy last year. Borman ordered that Jones surrender for his term in 90 days and recommended a low-security federal prison in Seagoville, Texas, so he would be close to his wife who now lives near Dallas.

Before sentencing, Jones choked up in the courtroom as he apologized to his family and union members for his actions. "I failed them. I failed the UAW that elected me as president," he told Borman. "All I can say is I'm sorry I let them down, I let my family down."

Federal sentencing guidelines called for Jones to get 46 to 57 months in prison due to his high position in the union. But prosecutors asked for 28 months because Jones accepted responsibility and cooperated as the government went after his cohorts in a wide-ranging probe of union corruption.

"He was willing to assist in any way," Assistant U.S. Attorney David Gardey told the court. "And he was truthful."

Gardey said that in many ways, Jones is a good man who worked in a "culture of corruption," following the crowd of other union leaders who thought they were "entitled to get ours." He said Jones helped with prosecution of Dennis Williams, who preceded Jones as president.

But Gardey also said Jones' crimes were serious and have scarred the union and destroyed members' confidence in their leaders. He recommended that Borman issue a sentence that would let labor unions know that this behavior won't be tolerated.

Eleven union officials and a late official's spouse have pleaded guilty in the corruption probe since 2017, although not all the crimes were connected. The first wave of convictions, which included some Fiat Chrysler employees, involved money from a Fiat Chrysler-UAW training center in Detroit.

But the union was able to hold off a possible government takeover by agreeing to spending controls, a court-appointed monitor to oversee operations for six years, and an election for members to decide if they want to vote directly for union leaders rather than choosing delegates to a convention.

Millions in union dues will now go toward funding the court-appointed monitor, and the UAW had to pay significant attorney's fees for officials who were charged, Gardey wrote in a sentencing memo.

Jones, now of Corsicana, Texas, south of Dallas, also will have to repay \$550,000 to the union and another \$42,000 to the Internal Revenue Service. But his liability could be lower depending on amounts paid by other defendants, including Williams.

He also was fined \$10,000, and he'll have to forfeit more than \$151,000, including money in two bank accounts, plus a set of golf clubs seized by authorities at the Missouri regional office where Jones was director before becoming president.

Gardey told Borman that Jones will help in other matters as the UAW investigation continues, as well as help the union monitor with internal disciplinary cases. He said it's possible prosecutors will return to the court and ask Borman to recognize that cooperation, presumably with a lighter sentence.

Gardey blamed the scandal on what he said was a lack of democracy in the union, which lacked financial controls and had no opposition to leadership. "There is no opportunity to provide checks and balances to abuse of power," Gardey said. Instead, he said the union is dominated by its administrative caucus, which carried favor of leaders rather than serving members.

Jones led the 400,000-member union from June 2018 until November 2019, when he stepped down as the investigation intensified.

Prosecutors alleged that he conspired with at least six other high-level union officials. He let some of them vacation with their families at union expense for months at a time at villas in Palm Springs, California. He spent union money on lavish meals, and over \$60,000 on cigars, entertainment, booze and rounds of golf.

During the scheme, UAW leaders took over \$100,000 worth of clothing, golf equipment and other items. Jones also took \$45,000 in cash for his own use.

"The exorbitance was jaw-dropping," Gardey wrote in the memo.

Jones spent on other senior officials because of his "desire to obtain and retain power" in the union, the memo said.

Jones' lawyer, J. Bruce Maffeo of New York, wrote that Jones should get a lower sentence because of

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his cooperation, and because most of the crimes to which he pleaded guilty took place when he was a regional director in St. Louis, before he was elected UAW president.

His crimes continued practices put in place by other union officials, including former president Dennis Williams, Maffeo wrote. In May, Williams was sentenced to 21 months in prison as part of the same embezzlement scheme.

Judge Borman said the criminal conduct was a bad period in Jones' life, but he lived a "wonderful period" for most of his life. "I'm sure that he henceforth will continue on the good side of the street," the judge said.

Sunrise special: Solar eclipse thrills world's northern tier

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The top of the world got a sunrise special Thursday — a "ring of fire" solar eclipse.

This so-called annular eclipse began at the Canadian province of Ontario, then swept across Greenland, the North Pole and finally Siberia, as the moon passed directly in front of the sun.

An annular eclipse occurs when a new moon is around its farthest point from us and appearing smaller, and so it doesn't completely blot out the sun when it's dead center.

The upper portions of North America, Europe and Asia enjoyed a partial eclipse, at least where the skies were clear. At those locations, the moon appeared to take a bite out of the sun.

It was the first eclipse of the sun visible from North America since August 2017, when a dramatic total solar eclipse crisscrossed the U.S. The next one is coming up in 2024.

A total lunar eclipse graced the skies two weeks ago.

Gottfried Boehm, architect of concrete churches, dies at 101

BERLIN (AP) — German architect Gottfried Boehm, who was famous for his concrete brutalist-style church buildings, has died at 101.

Boehm's Cologne architecture office on Thursday confirmed his death on Wednesday night but didn't give a cause.

Boehm, who was born in Offenbach in central Germany in 1920, built more than 50 churches, many of them in his signature concrete style. He was one of the most famous postwar architects in the country and in 1986 became the first German to receive the renowned Pritzker Architecture Prize.

One of his most best-known sacral buildings is the Catholic pilgrimage church Mary, Queen of Peace, in Neviges near the western city of Duesseldorf. Built in the brutalist style and consecrated in 1968, the church became famous for its irregular roof and forum-like interior.

Boehm also created other buildings such as the city hall of Bensberg near Cologne, a glass-and-steel fronted theater in Potsdam, and a pyramid-shaped public library in Ulm.

The governor of North Rhine-Westphalia state, Armin Laschet, praised Boehm for his work.

"His unique architecture style made him world-famous," Laschet said adding that Boehm leaves behind a "visible and impressive lifework."

Poll: Millions in US struggle through life with few to trust

By ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Karen Glidden's loneliness became unbearable during the coronavirus pandemic.

The 72-year-old widow, who suffers from vision loss and diabetes and lives far from any relatives, barely left her house in Champion, Michigan, this past year, for fear of contracting the virus. Finally vaccinated, she was looking forward to venturing out when her beloved service dog died last month.

It doesn't help that her circle of trusted friends has dwindled to one neighbor she counts on to help her shop, get to the doctor and hang out.

"I feel like I'm in a prison most of the time and once in a while, I get to go out," said Glidden, whose adult children live in California and Hawaii, where she was born and raised.

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She is not alone in her sense of social isolation.

Millions of Americans are struggling through life with few people they can trust for personal and professional help, a disconnect that raises a key barrier to recovery from the social, emotional and economic fallout of the pandemic, according to a new poll from The Impact Genome Project and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The poll finds 18% of U.S. adults, or about 46 million people, say they have just one person or nobody they can trust for help in their personal lives, such as emergency child care needs, a ride to the airport or support when they fall sick. And 28% say they have just one person or nobody they can trust to help draft a resume, connect to an employer or navigate workplace challenges.

The isolation is more acute among Black and Hispanic Americans. Thirty-eight percent of Black adults and 35% of Hispanic adults said they had only one or no trusted person to help navigate their work lives, compared with 26% of white adults. In their personal lives, 30% of Hispanic adults and 25% of Black adults said they have one or no trusted people, while 14% of white adults said the same.

Researchers have long debated the idea that the U.S. has suffered from a decline in social capital, or the value derived from personal relationships and civic engagement.

The General Social Survey, a national representative survey conducted by NORC since 1972, suggests that the number of people Americans feel they can trust had declined by the early 2000s, compared with two decades earlier, although there is little consensus about the extent of this isolation or its causes. The rise of social media has added another layer of debate, as experts explore whether it broadens networks or lures people in isolating echo chambers.

The Impact Genome/AP-NORC poll sought to measure how much social capital Americans can count as they try to pick up the pieces of lives fractured by the pandemic. The findings suggest that for many Americans, the pandemic has chipped away at whatever social capital they had going into it.

Americans were more likely to report a decline than an increase in the number of people they could trust over the past year. Just 6% of Americans said their network of trusted people grew, compared with 16% who reported that it shrank. While the majority of Americans said the number of people they could trust stayed the same, nearly 3 in 10 said they asked for less support from family and friends because of COVID-19.

Community bonds have proved to be critical to recovery from calamities such as Superstorm Sandy in 2012, said Jennifer Benz, deputy director of The AP-NORC Center.

But the nature of the pandemic made those bonds difficult or even impossible to maintain. Schools, community centers, churches, synagogues and mosques closed. People couldn't ask neighbors or grandparents for help with child care or other needs for fear of spreading the virus.

About half of Americans are engaged in civic groups such as religious institutions, schools or community service groups, according to the new poll. And 42% of all adults said they have become less involved with civic groups during the pandemic, compared with just 21% who said they became more engaged.

"Compared to the way social capital can be leveraged in other disasters, the key difference has been that this is a disaster where your civic duty was to be on your own," Benz said.

Surveys from the Pew Research Center suggested that relocation increased during the pandemic. While some people moved to be closer to family, more relocated because of job loss or other financial stresses.

Warlin Rosso, 29, has moved often in pursuit of financial stability, often at the cost of his social ties.

He left behind his entire family, including 14 siblings, when he immigrated to the U.S. five years ago from the Dominican Republic. He worked at a warehouse in Chicago for three years, sharing an apartment with a girlfriend. But when that relationship fell apart, he couldn't afford to move out on his own. In December 2019, he relocated to Jackson, Mississippi, where a childhood friend let him move in.

That friend, Rosso said, remains the only person in Jackson he can trust for help. As the pandemic closed in, Rosso struggled in a city where the Hispanic community is tiny.

Through social media, he found work with a Nicaraguan man who owned a construction business. Later, he found a training program that landed him a job as hospital aide.

His co-workers are friendly, but he feels isolated. Sometimes, he said, patients bluntly ask to be helped

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by a non-Latino worker. He hopes eventually to get a similar job back in Chicago, where he has friends. "It's not always welcoming for Hispanics here," Rosso said. "Here, I'm alone."

Homicides are up, but GOP misleads with claims about blame

By DAVID KLEPPER and GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — "SKYROCKETING MURDER RATES," claimed the National Fraternal Order of Police. "An explosion of violent crime," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. "Democrat-run cities across the country who cut funding for police have seen increases in crime," tweeted U.S. Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C.

On social media and in political speeches, some Republicans and pro-police groups say last year's calls to slash spending on law enforcement have led to a dramatic rise in killings in cities overseen by Democrats.

The increases they cite are real, and several big cities did make cuts to police spending. But the reductions were mostly modest, and the same big increases in homicides are being seen nationwide — even in cities that increased police spending. At the same time, the rates for burglaries, drug offenses and many other types of crime are down in many cities across the country.

The effort to blame Democrats for crime may offer a preview of Republicans' strategy for upcoming elections: a new twist on an old "law and order" argument from the party's past, harkening back to President Richard Nixon.

Just as it did half a century ago, the argument ignores the complicated reasons for fluctuations in crime rates — a list that today includes the upheaval wrought by the coronavirus pandemic and protests that erupted after the killing of George Floyd by police.

"2020 was just a crazy complicated year where lots of things happened, and there are lots of potential explanations for why we saw these big changes," said David Abrams, a University of Pennsylvania Law School professor, who tracks crime rates and is studying the impact of the pandemic. The bottom line? "It's complicated."

Late last month, the National Fraternal Order of Police posted a graphic on social media showing big increases in the homicide rate in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Portland, Oregon — all cities currently led by Democrats. "The leadership in all of these cities turned the keys over to the 'Defund the Police' mob," the post read.

The numbers in it were alarming: Homicides in Chicago, up by 22% through late May compared with the same period last year. In Minneapolis, homicides were up by 56%; in Portland, 800%.

Top Republicans have taken up the claim, too.

"Look at what's happening where they're defunding the police," former President Donald Trump said Saturday at the North Carolina GOP convention, echoing an argument he made on the campaign trail last year. "The crime rate is going up by 50, 60, 100%, 131% in one city."

Killings have been on the rise since 2020, but the numbers don't tell the whole story about reductions in police spending or a troubling increase in homicides being seen throughout the country.

Last year in Minneapolis, city officials shifted \$8 million — less than 5% of the police budget — to programs focused on community mental health and violence prevention. In February, they approved \$6.4 million to hire new police officers after an unprecedented number of officers retired or went on extended medical leave following Floyd's killing.

In Portland, homicides were up from six in the first five months of 2020 to 38 in the first five months of 2021, according to city police data, a more than 530% increase. That's lower than the 800% increase claimed by the Fraternal Order of Police, which said it was based on homicides through May 25.

The city, a center of defund police efforts, trimmed its police budget last year by less than 4%, far short of the \$50 million in cuts sought by activists.

This year, Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler, a Democrat, has sought greater funds for programs targeting gun violence, which he said is a national problem. "It has reached crisis proportions," he said in March.

Los Angeles and Chicago have also seen double-digit increases in their homicide rates this year, and

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they did reduce spending on police. Chicago cut its police budget by 3%, largely by eliminating vacant positions. Los Angeles reduced spending on police by about 5% overall.

Yet homicide rates are also increasing in cities that didn't cut spending.

In Houston, a city led by a Democratic mayor, killings have increased, but so, too, has funding for police. Nashville, Tennessee, also led by a Democratic mayor, increased the police budget but has seen homicides spike 50% so far this year over last.

Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Fresno, California, have also seen more killings so far in 2021. Both cities have Republican mayors.

Meanwhile, other types of crime are down, according to preliminary statistics and researchers who say crime initially dropped around the world after the pandemic began. While cities are reporting jumps in their homicide rate, there's been no similar increase in other crimes, like burglaries, robberies or drug offenses.

That's not what you'd expect if calls to defund the police were leading to a rash of crime, Abrams said. "Any theory explaining the rise in homicides would also have to explain why we haven't seen a spike in other kinds of crimes," he said.

So why are killings up?

Economic losses and personal stress brought on by the pandemic are one suggestion. COVID-19 also disrupted in-person education and many community programs designed to quell violence. It put a strain on police departments, hospitals, courts and other institutions tasked with dealing with the impact of crime.

Other possibilities include rising gun ownership and the protests over police killings that could have emboldened criminals. Then there are the host of factors that contribute to localized violence, including gangs, drugs and poverty.

James Alan Fox, a criminologist and professor at Boston's Northeastern University, said small changes to a police budget, or the party affiliation of a particular mayor, aren't likely to play a big role. Some violence fluctuations are part of long-standing problems.

"It's not related to which party is ruling," Fox said. "But you can win a lot of votes by pushing fear."

Nixon used a similar argument in his successful 1968 presidential campaign, arguing that protests over civil rights "have torn 300 cities apart." The strategy helped galvanize support among white voters concerned about racial integration, according to Elizabeth Hinton, a Yale Law School professor who studies the history of criminalization in America.

Now, just as then, misleading claims about crime seem designed to exploit racism among white voters while ignoring the real reasons behind the increase in homicides, she said.

"Instead of linking this to COVID and mass unemployment and general anxiety, they're saying that somehow calls to defund the police are behind this, as a way to justify more policing as a response," Hinton said.

Scientists hail golden age to trace bird migration with tech

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

TAKOMA PARK, Md. (AP) — A plump robin wearing a tiny metal backpack with an antenna hops around a suburban yard in Takoma Park, then plucks a cicada from the ground for a snack.

Ecologist Emily Williams watches through binoculars from behind a bush. On this clear spring day, she's snooping on his dating life. "Now I'm watching to see whether he's found a mate," she said, scrutinizing his interactions with another robin in a nearby tree.

Once the bird moves on at season's end, she'll rely on the backpack to beam frequent location data to the Argos satellite, then back to Williams' laptop, to track it.

The goal is to unravel why some American robins migrate long distances, but others do not. With more precise information about nesting success and conditions in breeding and wintering grounds, "we should be able to tell the relative roles of genetics versus the environment in shaping why birds migrate," said Williams, who is based at Georgetown University.

Putting beacons on birds is not novel. But a new antenna on the International Space Station and receptors on the Argos satellite, plus the shrinking size of tracking chips and batteries, are allowing scientists

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to remotely monitor songbird movements in much greater detail than ever before.

"We're in a sort of golden age for bird research," said Adriaan Dokter, an ecologist at Cornell University who is not directly involved with Williams' study. "It's pretty amazing that we can satellite-track a robin with smaller and smaller chips. Ten years ago, that was unthinkable."

The device this robin is wearing can give precise locations, within about 30 feet (about 10 meters), instead of around 125 miles (200 kilometers) for previous generations of tags.

That means Williams can tell not only whether the bird is still in the city, but on which street or backyard. Or whether it's flown from the Washington, D.C., suburbs to land on the White House lawn.

A second new tag, for only the heaviest robins, includes an accelerometer to provide information about the bird's movements; future versions may also measure humidity and barometric pressure. These Icarus tags work with a new antenna on the International Space Station.

That antenna was first turned on about two years ago, "but there were some glitches with the power-supply and the computer, so we had to bring it down again with a Russian rocket, then transport it from Moscow to Germany to fix it," said Martin Wikelski, director of the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior, whose scientific team is honing the technology. After "the usual troubleshooting for space science," the antenna was turned back on this spring.

As researchers deploy precision tags, Wikelski envisions the development of "an 'Internet of animals' — a collection of sensors around the world giving us a better picture of the movement of life on the planet."

The American robin is an iconic songbird in North America, its bright chirp a harbinger of spring. Yet its migratory habits remain a bit mysterious to scientists.

"It's astounding how little we know about some of the most common songbirds," said Ken Rosenberg, a conservation scientist at Cornell University. "We have a general idea of migration, a range map, but that's really just a broad impression."

An earlier study Williams worked on showed some robins are long-distance migrants — flying more than 2,780 miles (4,480 km) between their breeding area in Alaska and winter grounds in Texas — while others hop around a single backyard most of the year.

What factors drive some robins to migrate, while others don't? Does it have to do with available food, temperature fluctuations or success in mating and rearing chicks?

Williams hopes more detailed data from satellite tags, combined with records of nesting success, will provide insights, and she's working with partners who are tagging robins in Alaska, Indiana and Florida for a three-year study.

Scientists have previously put GPS-tracking devices on larger raptors, but the technology has only recently become small and light enough for some songbirds. Tracking devices must be less than 5% of the animal's weight to avoid encumbering them.

In a Silver Spring, Maryland, yard, Williams has unfurled nylon nets between tall aluminum poles. When a robin flies into the net, she delicately untangles the bird. Then she holds it in a "bander's grip" — with her forefinger and middle finger loosely on either side of the bird's neck, and another two fingers around its body.

On a tarp, she measures the robin's beak length, takes a toenail clipping and plucks a tail feather to gauge overall health.

Then she weighs the bird in a small cup on a scale. This one is about 80 grams, just over the threshold for wearing the penny-sized Argos satellite tag.

Williams fashions a makeshift saddle with clear jewelry cord looped around each of the bird's legs. She then tightens the cord so the tag sits firmly on the bird's back.

When she opens her hand, the robin hops to the ground, then takes a few steps under a pink azalea shrub before flying off.

In addition to providing very precise locations, the satellite tags transmit data that can be downloaded from afar onto Williams' laptop. The data on older tags couldn't be retrieved unless the same bird was recaptured the following year — a difficult and uncertain task.

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Wikelski hopes the new technology will help scientists better understand threats birds and other creatures face from habitat loss, pollution and climate change.

"It is detective work to try to figure out why a population is declining," said Ben Freeman, a biologist at the Biodiversity Research Centre at the University of British Columbia. Better information about migration corridors "will help us look in the right places."

A 2019 study co-written by Cornell's Rosenberg showed that North America's population of wild birds declined by nearly 30%, or 3 billion, since 1970.

He said tracking birds will help explain why: "Where in their annual cycles do migratory birds face the greatest threats? Is it exposure to pesticides in Mexico, the clearing of rainforests in Brazil, or is it what people are doing in their backyards here in the U.S.?"

US unemployment claims fall to 376,000, sixth straight drop

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits fell for the sixth straight week as the U.S. economy, held back for months by the coronavirus pandemic, reopens rapidly.

Jobless claims fell by 9,000 to 376,000 from 385,000 the week before, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The number of people signing up for benefits exceeded 900,000 in early January and has fallen more or less steadily ever since. Still, claims are high by historic standards. Before the pandemic brought economic activity to a near-standstill in March 2020, weekly applications were regularly coming in below 220,000.

Nearly 3.5 million people were receiving traditional state unemployment benefits the week of May 29, down by 258,000 from 3.8 million the week before.

Businesses are reopening rapidly as the rollout of vaccines allows Americans to feel more comfortable returning to restaurants, bars and shops. The Labor Department reported Tuesday that job openings hit a record 9.3 million in April. Layoffs dropped to 1.4 million, lowest in records dating back to 2000; 4 million quit their jobs in April, another record and a sign that they are confident enough in their prospects to try something new.

"As life normalizes and the service sector continues to gain momentum, we expect initial jobless claims to continue to trend lower," said Joshua Shapiro, chief U.S. economist at the economic and financial consulting firm Maria Fiorini Ramirez, Inc.

In May, the U.S. economy generated 559,000 million new jobs, and the unemployment rate dropped to 5.8% from 6.1% in April. Many economists expected to see even faster job growth. The United States is still short 7.6 million jobs from where it stood in February 2020.

But employers are posting vacancies faster than would-be applicants can fill them. Many Americans are contending with health and childcare issues related to COVID-19 and with career uncertainty after the coronavirus recession wiped out many jobs for good. Some are taking their time looking for work because expanded federal jobless benefits pay more than their old jobs.

Many states are scheduled to begin dropping the federal benefits this month. Altogether, 15.3 million people were receiving some type of jobless aid the week of May 22; a year earlier, the number exceeded 30 million.

Polls: US image abroad has rebounded since Biden took office

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

The United States' image around the world has improved sharply since President Joe Biden took office, according to new surveys conducted in 16 countries, including many long-standing allies of the U.S.

The Pew Research Center surveys show majorities of the citizens across the countries — more than 6 in 10 in each — express confidence in Biden to "do the right thing" in world affairs.

Biden arrived in Britain on Wednesday on the first leg of his first overseas trip, hoping to reestablish the

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United States' global standing and reinforce partnerships with key European allies.

Favorable ratings of the U.S. have started to rebound after declining considerably during Donald Trump's four years as president, growing as much as 30 percentage points since last year in partner nations like France and Germany. In 2020, positive views of the U.S. reached or neared low points in these two countries, as well as the United Kingdom, Canada and Japan.

In France, for example, 65% now have a favorable view of the U.S., up from 31% last year. No more than half in France rated the U.S. positively during Trump's presidency, but at least 6 in 10 had during each of Barack Obama's eight years as president.

And 74% of the public in France say they have confidence in Biden, a Democrat, to do the right thing regarding world affairs, compared with just 11% saying that for Trump, a Republican, last year. Across 12 countries surveyed in both 2020 and 2021, the gap in confidence in the two presidents is at least 40 percentage points — in Biden's favor in all 12.

Biden seeks to reaffirm to allies his commitment to the U.S. role abroad, which stands in contrast to Trump's "America First" approach. Biden will initially meet with Group of Seven leaders before continuing on to Brussels for a NATO summit, a meeting with heads of the European Union and several face-to-face meetings with other world leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin in Geneva.

Even as the U.S. global standing is rosier among the citizens of these nations around the world, Biden faces challenges as he looks to transition the U.S. out of the Trump era. The surveys find many nations skeptical of the U.S., both as a global partner and as a functioning democracy.

No more than 2 in 10 across the 16 countries say the U.S. is a "very" reliable partner, with majorities in most calling the U.S. "somewhat" reliable. In Canada, France, Spain and Greece, roughly a third say the U.S. is not reliable as a global partner.

Germany is the only nation surveyed where a majority say relations with the U.S. will improve in the next few years. Across most other countries, more think the relationship will stay the same rather than get better.

The state of U.S. democracy also earns mixed reviews around the world. In Canada, for example, 6 in 10 say the political system in the U.S. does not work well, as do about two-thirds of Australians and New Zealanders. About 4 in 10 in France and Spain say the U.S. democracy is working poorly, compared with slim majorities who say it does work at least somewhat well. In Germany and the U.K., people are closely divided.

And majorities across most of the 16 countries say the U.S. democracy "used to be a good example, but has not been in recent years."

Sales pitch summer? Dems aim to showcase virus relief effort

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

MAIDENS, Va. (AP) — When Sherry Brockenbrough and her family opened a distillery on a leafy vista overlooking the James River on March 5, 2020, the coronavirus still seemed like a distant threat.

But in the coming weeks, Hill Top Distillery faced the kind of barriers few businesses could survive and almost none had prepared for. By the thousands, restaurants, breweries and distilleries across the country would largely shutter.

Brockenbrough moved to swiftly adapt, replacing tasting room gatherings with curbside pickup and outdoor, distanced activities. Still, she was not close to meeting her financial goals and the distillery hasn't turned a profit, leaving the 63-year-old Brockenbrough and her husband, John, to pump even more of their savings into the business to keep it going.

"It's a really scary place to be with no money coming in," she said.

Her business was sustained in part by money that came from the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, the pandemic relief legislation that Congress passed in March solely with Democratic votes. She is using the funds to buy new equipment and make improvements to the property, investments she hopes will lure customers interested in her vodka, whiskey and moonshine.

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"We are grateful," Brockenbrough said. The funds "take the edge off. You're not hitting the panic button going 'okay now what?'"

This summer, Democrats are also hoping they get a return on the investment in businesses like Brockenbrough's. With Democrats facing formidable prospects in the battle to retain both chambers of Congress, the virus rescue package may be the party's best opportunity to argue their work in Washington had a positive, tangible effect on communities across the country during a time of historic crisis.

The sense of urgency is growing as other ambitious pillars of the Democratic agenda, ranging from the protection of voting rights to a far-reaching infrastructure package and reforms of policing, gun rights and immigration, are at risk in an evenly divided Senate. That raises the prospect that the rescue package may emerge as the most significant piece of legislation for Democrats to campaign on next year.

That could be crucial in some of the nation's most narrowly divided congressional districts that may decide control of the House, including this one that stretches through 10 counties of suburbs and rural communities in central Virginia. Republicans need a net gain of just five seats to retake the House next year and are eyeing this district, currently represented by Democrat Abigail Spanberger, as a prime pickup opportunity.

As they make their sales pitch, Democrats are aiming to avoid a repeat of the perceived mistakes of former President Barack Obama's administration, when policy accomplishments on health care, taxes and the economy didn't translate into easy political wins. Democrats suffered dramatic losses in the first midterm after Obama's election, and the former president himself has acknowledged that he and his team often focused more on designing sound policy than selling it politically.

"We can't just be the nice people and say, oh, this is great, all the things we've been able to do," said Democratic National Committee Chair Jaime Harrison. "People need to understand who actually did it. The 'D' in Democrat stands for delivers."

The DNC has already spent the past several months peppering local markets across the country with billboards, digital and television ads reminding voters of the hometown Democrats who helped pass the rescue plan. As Americans gather for more traditional July Fourth celebrations next month, the party plans to start a new campaign highlighting the role the legislation played in restoring normalcy this summer.

The enhanced child tax credit that will begin rolling out on July 15 will give Democrats another opportunity to highlight provisions of the rescue package and make the case that Americans have more money ahead of the back-to-school shopping season because of the legislation.

The rescue measure is the centerpiece of President Joe Biden's pandemic response and has, so far, received praise from a majority of Americans. A late March poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research showed 54% approving of the massive virus relief package, while 25% disapproved. There's a dramatic partisan split, however, with 80% of Democrats backing the measure compared to just 26% of Republicans.

Although Republicans united in opposing the legislation, they have promoted some of its more popular provisions, including the assistance for restaurants, which has directed \$24.4 billion to 95,000 participants, according to the Small Business Administration.

Democrats have accused the GOP of hypocrisy and are certain to use the legislation as a cudgel against Republicans next year. But the GOP is betting that other economic issues may take precedence, including concerns about inflation and arguments that some provisions in the bill make it less attractive for the jobless to find work.

"Countless small businesses across the country have been hurt by Democrats' \$1.9 trillion socialist giveaway because it incentivized people not to work," said Mike Berg, a spokesperson for the National Republican Congressional Committee, which focuses on retaking control of the House. "Even worse, Democrats' spending spree is causing inflation, which is a hidden tax on every single American."

If Republicans successfully recast the legislation as a costly government giveaway, that could prove powerful in sharply divided congressional districts like the one that includes Hill Top Distillery. Extending from the western suburbs of Richmond to exurban Washington, D.C., it was once firmly Republican terri-

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tory and sent Eric Cantor, the former House majority leader, to Congress.

But the booming Richmond suburbs have tipped the district narrowly toward Democrats. In 2018, Spanberger became the first Democrat to win the seat in several decades. She was reelected last year by about 8,000 votes out of roughly 453,000 cast and is a top target of Republicans heading into 2022.

After touring the distillery this week, Spanberger acknowledged concerns about the cost of the rescue program, but said she would enter the election year focused on its benefits.

"It's a risk to spend billions of dollars supporting distilleries and breweries and restaurants," Spanberger said. "But if they all go under, that's a loss for the community, that's a loss from an employment standpoint."

"When I'm talking about what the value of this bill was," she continued, "yes, it was a tremendous investment, but that's what it was — an investment."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, June 11, the 162nd day of 2021. There are 203 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 11, 1993, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that people who commit "hate crimes" motivated by bigotry may be sentenced to extra punishment.

On this date:

In 1509, England's King Henry VIII married his first wife, Catherine of Aragon.

In 1770, Captain James Cook, commander of the British ship Endeavour, "discovered" the Great Barrier Reef off Australia by running onto it.

In 1776, the Continental Congress formed a committee to draft a Declaration of Independence calling for freedom from Britain.

In 1864, German composer Richard (REE'-hard) Strauss was born in Munich.

In 1936, Kansas Gov. Alfred "Alf" Landon was nominated for president at the Republican national convention in Cleveland.

In 1947, the government announced the end of sugar rationing for households and "institutional users" (e.g., restaurants and hotels) as of midnight.

In 1955, in motor racing's worst disaster, more than 80 people were killed during the 24 Hours of Le Mans in France when two of the cars collided and crashed into spectators.

In 1962, three prisoners at Alcatraz in San Francisco Bay staged an escape, leaving the island on a makeshift raft; they were never found or heard from again.

In 1985, Karen Ann Quinlan, the comatose patient whose case prompted a historic right-to-die court decision, died in Morris Plains, New Jersey, at age 31.

In 1986, the John Hughes comedy "Ferris Bueller's Day Off," starring Matthew Broderick, was released by Paramount Pictures.

In 2001, Timothy McVeigh, 33, was executed by injection at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana, for the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 people.

In 2009, with swine flu reported in more than 70 nations, the World Health Organization declared the first global flu pandemic in 41 years.

Ten years ago: Rejecting calls by Democratic leaders for him to resign in a sexting scandal, Rep. Anthony Weiner instead announced he was seeking professional treatment and asking for a leave of absence from Congress. (Weiner ended up resigning.)

Five years ago: Queen Elizabeth II and her family marked her official 90th birthday with a parade, a colorful military ceremony and an appearance on the Buckingham Palace balcony.

One year ago: Louisville, Kentucky, banned the use of "no-knock" warrants and named the new ordinance for Breonna Taylor, who'd been fatally shot by officers who burst into her home. San Francisco's mayor said city police officers would stop responding to non-criminal activities such as disputes between neighbors

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and reports about homeless people; they would be replaced on those calls by trained, unarmed professionals. Army Gen. Mark Milley, the nation's top military officer, said he'd been wrong to walk in uniform with President Donald Trump past protesters who'd been cleared from Lafayette Park to a photo op outside a church. Two Florida amusement parks, SeaWorld Orlando and Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, reopened, but with reservations required to limit crowds amid the continuing coronavirus pandemic.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.S. Rep. Charles B. Rangel, D-N.Y., is 91. Comedian Johnny Brown is 84. International Motorsports Hall of Famer Jackie Stewart is 82. Singer Joey Dee is 81. Actor Roscoe Orman is 77. Actor Adrienne Barbeau is 76. Rock musician Frank Beard (ZZ Top) is 72. Animal rights activist Ingrid Newkirk is 72. Singer Graham Russell (Air Supply) is 71. Rock singer Donnie Van Zant is 69. Actor Peter Bergman is 68. Pro Football Hall of Famer Joe Montana is 65. Actor Hugh Laurie is 62. TV personality Mehmet Oz, M.D., is 61. Singer Gioia (JOY'-ah) Bruno (Expose) is 58. Rock musician Dan Lavery (Tonic) is 55. Country singer-songwriter Bruce Robison is 55. Actor Clare Carey is 54. Actor Peter Dinklage is 52. Actor Lenny Jacobson is 47. Actor Joshua Jackson is 43. Americana musician Gabe Witcher (Punch Brothers) is 43. Actor Shia LaBeouf (SHY'-uh luh-BUF') is 35.