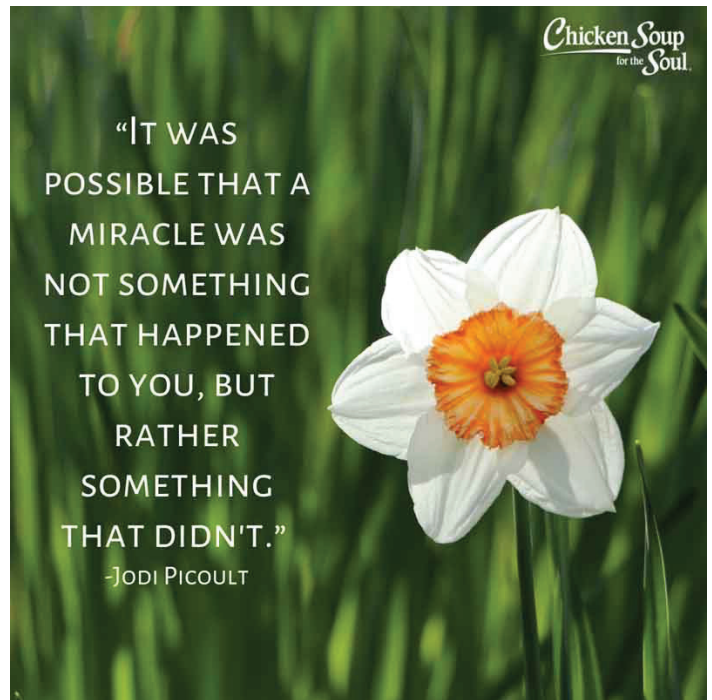


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**OPEN:** **Recycling Trailer in Groton**  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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## "Tea - A Taste of Happiness"

Ladies' Luncheon & Program  
Wednesday, July 21st at Noon  
Bethesda Lutheran Church, Bristol  
Silent Auction at 10:30

Door Prizes

Skit by the WELCA members

Advance tickets required: \$10

Call Kay Espeland 605-492-3507  
Alice Jean Peterson 605-216-2835

Full or Part time help  
wanted. Must be able  
to lift 50lbs. Usual  
hours Monday-Friday  
8 to 5.

\$15/hr starting wage.  
Contact Bob Wegner at  
New Deal Tire Groton,  
SD.

605-397-7579

# HELP

# WANTED!

(0711.0808)

## Overnight Road Closure Timing Adjusted for S.D. Highway 20 West of South Shore

WATERTOWN, S.D. – – The South Dakota Department of Transportation says S.D. Highway 20 will be closed between Interstate 29 and the city of South Shore during the overnight hours on Wednesday, July 14. An adjustment from the original planned closure during the overnight hours on Tuesday, July 13 was necessary due to an equipment issue.

Mortenson Company will be tracking a large crane across Highway 20. In preparation for the move, temporary accesses have been built and mats will be placed across Highway 20 during the closure period.

Highway 20 will close at 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday, July 14. The lanes will remain closed until the crane has been fully moved. Mortenson Company is coordinating traffic control and anticipates Highway 20 will reopen by 4 a.m. that same day. During the closure period, traffic will be detoured one mile south of Highway 20. Drivers should anticipate delayed traffic during this closure.

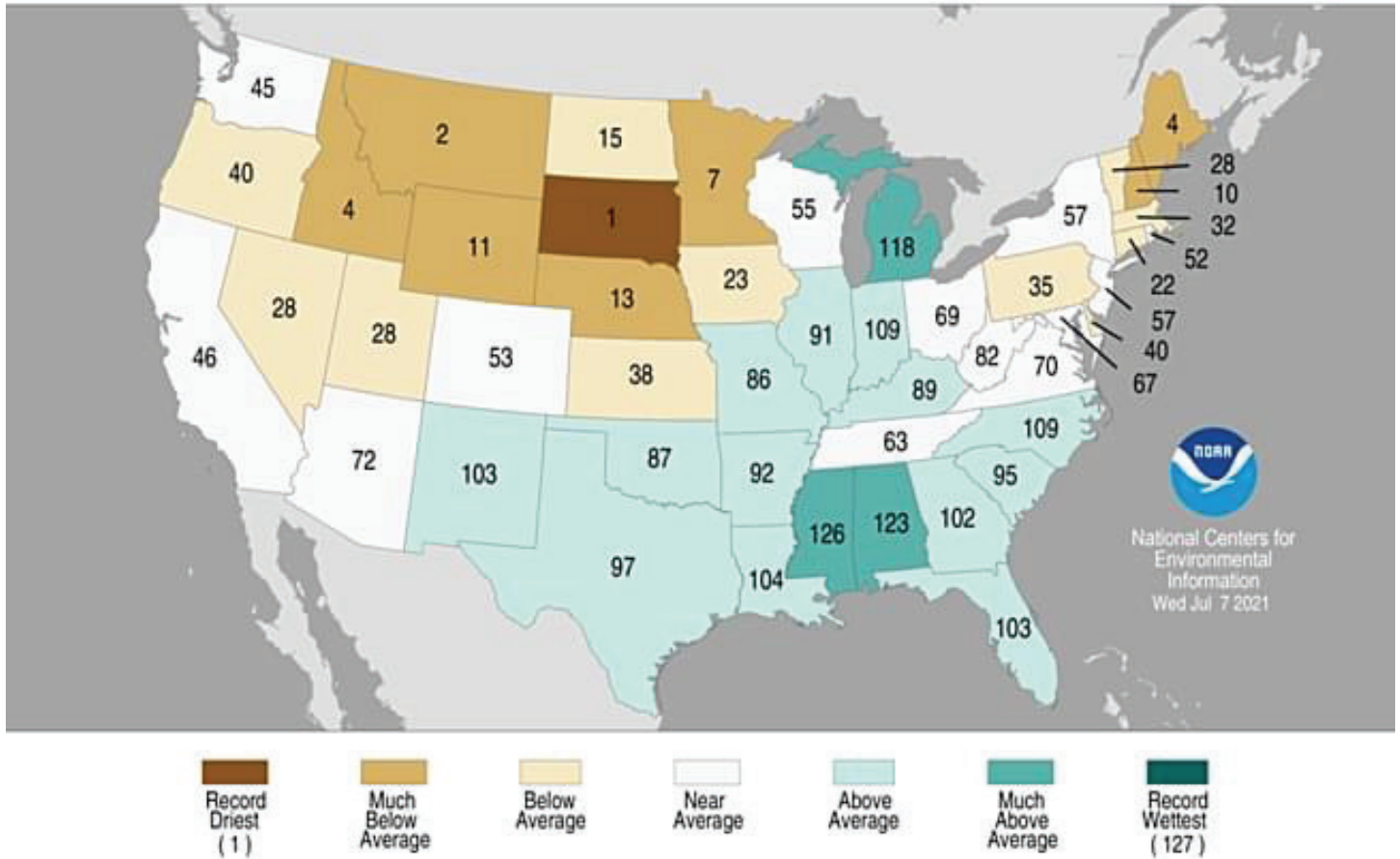
If the South Shore area experiences severe weather conditions during the evening hours of Tuesday, July 13, the move will be postponed.

## 2021 Public Presentation Day

Three Brown County 4-H Members participated in Public Presentation Day on April 5, 2021 at the Brown County 4-H Office and three members participated on July 8th also at the Brown County 4-H Office. Participants gave demonstrations, illustrated talks, and public speeches, which related to a 4-H project they were enrolled in. Each participant could receive a purple, blue, red and white ribbon placing. Receiving top purples were: Ashlynn Warrington, Logan Warrington, Addison Ward, Jessemy Sharp, Isaiah Sharp, and Ada Sharp. All the participants will be giving their presentations at the Fashion Revue and Royalty Contest during the Brown County Fair on Thursday 19, under the Ken's Tent at 6:00 p.m. As well as, they have the option to participate at the State Fair over Labor Day weekend.

## South Dakota has driest June on record

Statewide Precipitation Ranks  
June 2021  
Period: 1895-2021



From NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information, this past June ranked as the driest on record state-wide in South Dakota, as well as the 4th hottest. Minnesota ranked 7th driest and 3rd hottest. Records go back to 1895, a 127 year period.

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- High rear wheels to maneuver with ease

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- 21.5 HP<sup>††</sup> Kawasaki® FR 651V engine
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- Tuff Torq® foot-controlled hydrostatic transmission (K46)

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- 23 HP<sup>††</sup> Kawasaki® FR691V engine
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- Dual Hydro-Gear® EZT-2200™ transmission
- 2" x 2" tubular steel frame for enhanced durability

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\*Product Price – Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes, freight, setup and handling charges may be additional and may vary. Models subject to limited availability. Specifications and programs are subject to change without notice. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications. †† As required by Kawasaki, horsepower tested in accordance with SAE J1995 and rated in accordance with SAE J2723 and certified by SAE International. \*\*See your local Cub Cadet Independent Dealer for warranty details. © 2021 Cub Cadet3PV\_Q\_ECOMMERCE

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## The Life of Cheri Strom

Memorial services for Cheri Strom, 57, of Groton will be 2:00 p.m., Thursday, July 15th at New Life Fellowship, 619 8th Ave NW in Aberdeen. Pastor Micah Westby will officiate.

Cheri passed away in Groton on July 10, 2021 after a courageous battle with cancer.

Cheryl Lynn Sippel was born on November 29, 1963 in Aberdeen to Milton "Mick" and Katherine (Tastad) Sippel. She attended school in Groton, graduating from Groton High school in 1982. Cheri then went on to Stewarts School of Hairstyling in Aberdeen. In 1984, she was united in marriage with Ron Belden and together they had three children. Cheri was later employed at Avera when she decided to go into the Nursing Program at Presentation College. She was married to Randy Kurtz and they were blessed with two sons. Cheri graduated with her degree in 2003 and over the years worked as an RN at Avera St. Lukes, Redfield Community Hospital, Beverly Healthcare, Groton and Sun Dial Manor, Bristol. On June 3, 2011 she married her longtime friend, Thomas Strom. Cheri followed her passion for hairdressing and opened Cheri's on Main in 2012.



Cheri loved animals of all kinds, especially her farm cats and chickens. They spent many hours at En-emy Swim Lake, camping and enjoying the outdoors. Cheri absolutely loved time spent with her family, especially her grandchildren.

Celebrating her life is her husband, Tom of Groton, her parents, Mick Sippel of Groton and Kathy (Jack) Erickson of Britton, her children, Garrett (Emily) Belden of Denver, CO, Gregory Belden of Groton, Alicia Gauer (Colin Burrer) of Groton, Wyatt Kurtz and fiancé Megan Ulmer of Aberdeen, Clayton Kurtz of Groton, four grandchildren, Brantley Belden, Addison Gauer, Finley Gauer, Wrenley Kurtz, her siblings, John (Lisa) Sippel of Groton and Doug Sippel of Groton. Cheri is also survived by her brother-in-law, Dwight (Eugenia) Strom, sister-in-law, Crystal Strom of Pierpont, her parents-in-law, Luverne & Carol Strom and longtime friend, Rubiann Fisher.

Preceding her in death were her grandparents.

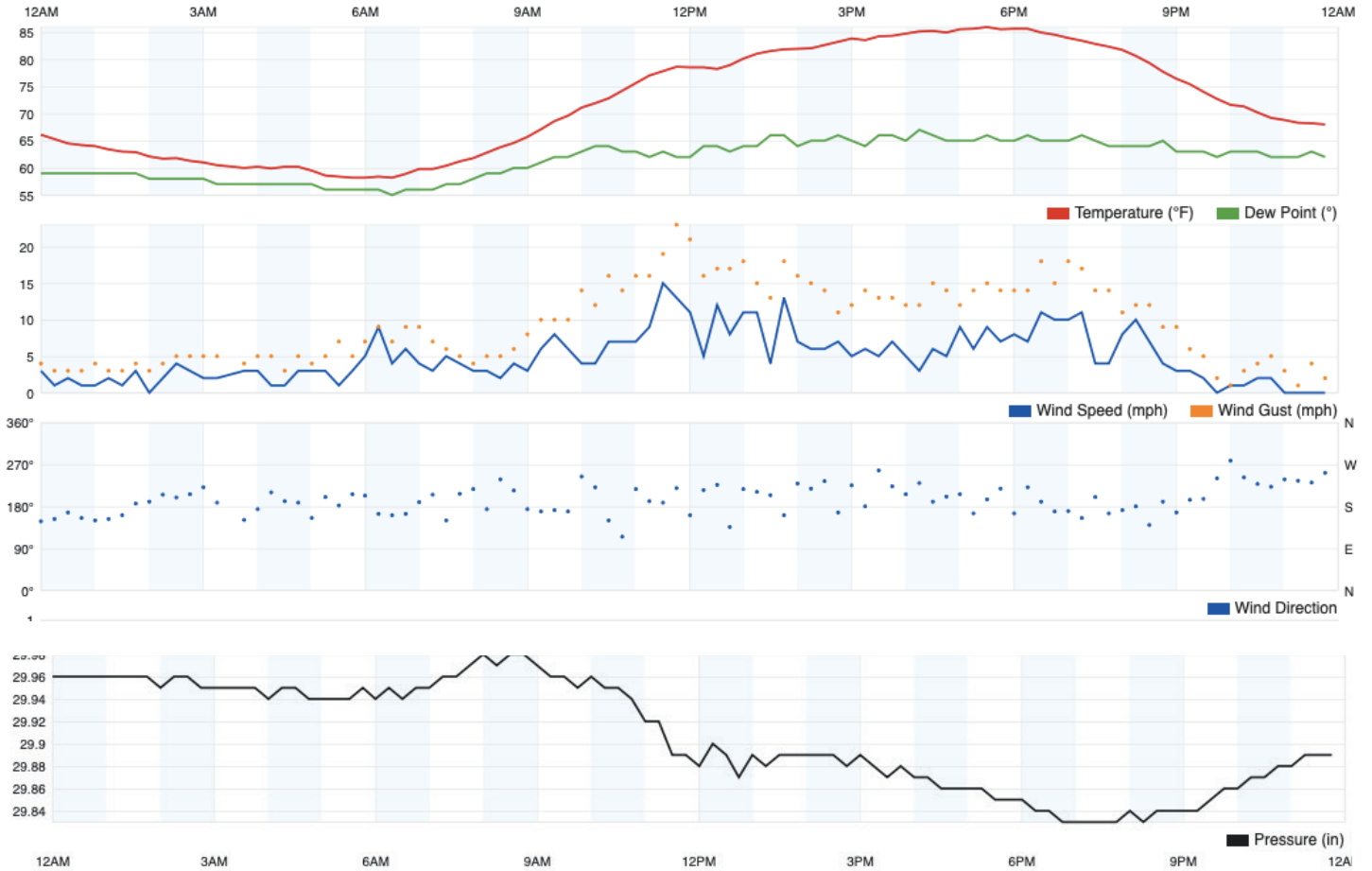
Honorary Urn Bearers will be "The Lake Crew."

[www.paetznick-garness.com](http://www.paetznick-garness.com)

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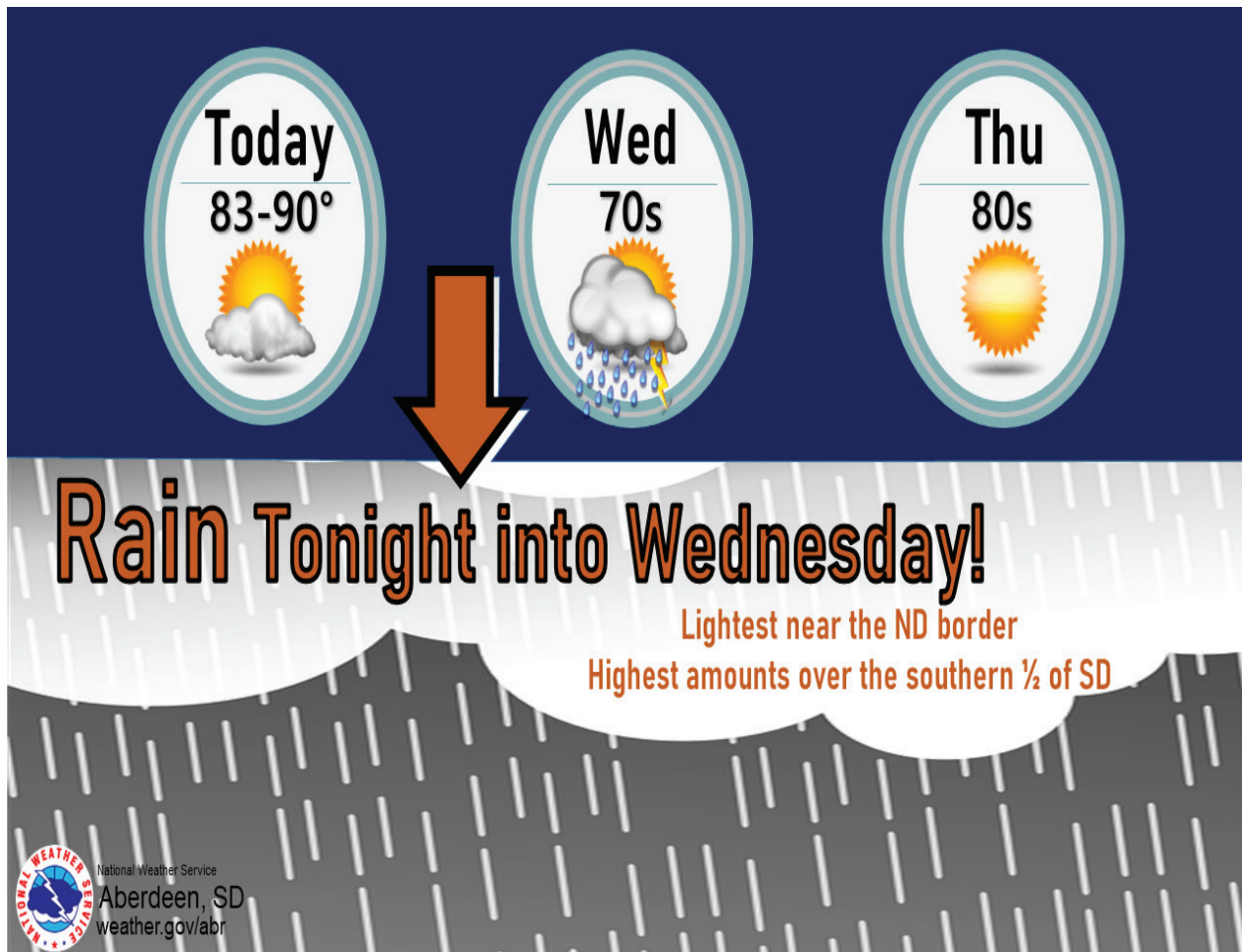
## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





# Broton Daily Independent


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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Chance T-storms	T-storms Likely	Slight Chance T-storms	Sunny
High: 85 °F	Low: 62 °F	High: 73 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 83 °F




**Today**  
83-90°  


**Wed**  
70s  


**Thu**  
80s  


**Rain Tonight into Wednesday!**  
Lightest near the ND border  
Highest amounts over the southern 1/2 of SD

 National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD  
weather.gov/abr

Rain and thunderstorms this evening will mainly be across western and central South Dakota, and expand into eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota overnight. Rain and thunderstorms will continue off and on through Wednesday. A few storms could become strong or severe Wednesday morning or early afternoon over portions of eastern South Dakota or western Minnesota. A widespread soaking rain is expected, especially over the southern half of South Dakota.



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## Today in Weather History

July 13, 1964: Early morning low temperatures dropped into the lower to mid-30s across the northern half of the state. Some low temperatures include 32 degrees at Castlewood, 33 in Andover and 4 miles NW of Onida.

1895 - A tornado struck Cherry Hill in New Jersey causing fifty thousand dollars damage. It also descended into the Harlem and Woodhaven areas of New York City killing one person, and finally ended as a waterspout in Jamaica Bay. (David Ludlum)

1951: Rivers across eastern Kansas crest well above flood stage, causing the most significant destruction from flooding in the Midwestern United States at that time. Five-hundred-thousand people were left homeless, and 24 people died in the disaster.

1975 - Dover, DE, was deluged with 8.50 inches of rain to establish a 24 hour record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1977 - Lightning struck a key electrical transmission line in Westchester County of southeastern New York State plunging New York City into darkness. (David Ludlum)

1980 - Afternoon highs of 108 degrees at Memphis, TN, 108 degrees at Macon, GA, and 105 degrees at Atlanta, GA, established all-time records for those three cities. The high of 110 degrees at Newington, GA, was just two degrees shy of the state record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Unseasonably cool weather prevailed across the Midwest. Ten cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Casper, WY, with a reading of 39 degrees. By way of contrast, record heat was reported in the eastern U.S., with highs of 93 degrees at Burlington, VT, and 101 degrees around Miami, FL. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - There were just three reports of severe weather across the country, and just one record high temperature reported. Thunderstorms brought much needed rains to the Tennessee Valley area, producing nine inches at Senatobia, MS. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A thunderstorm at Albany, GA, produced 1.40 inches of rain in forty minutes, along with wind gusts to 82 mph. Afternoon highs of 98 degrees at Corpus Christi, TX, 110 degrees at Tucson, AZ, and 114 degrees at Phoenix, AZ, equalled records for the date. Greenwood, MS, reported 55.65 inches of precipitation for the year, twice the amount normally received by mid July. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

# Groton Daily Independent

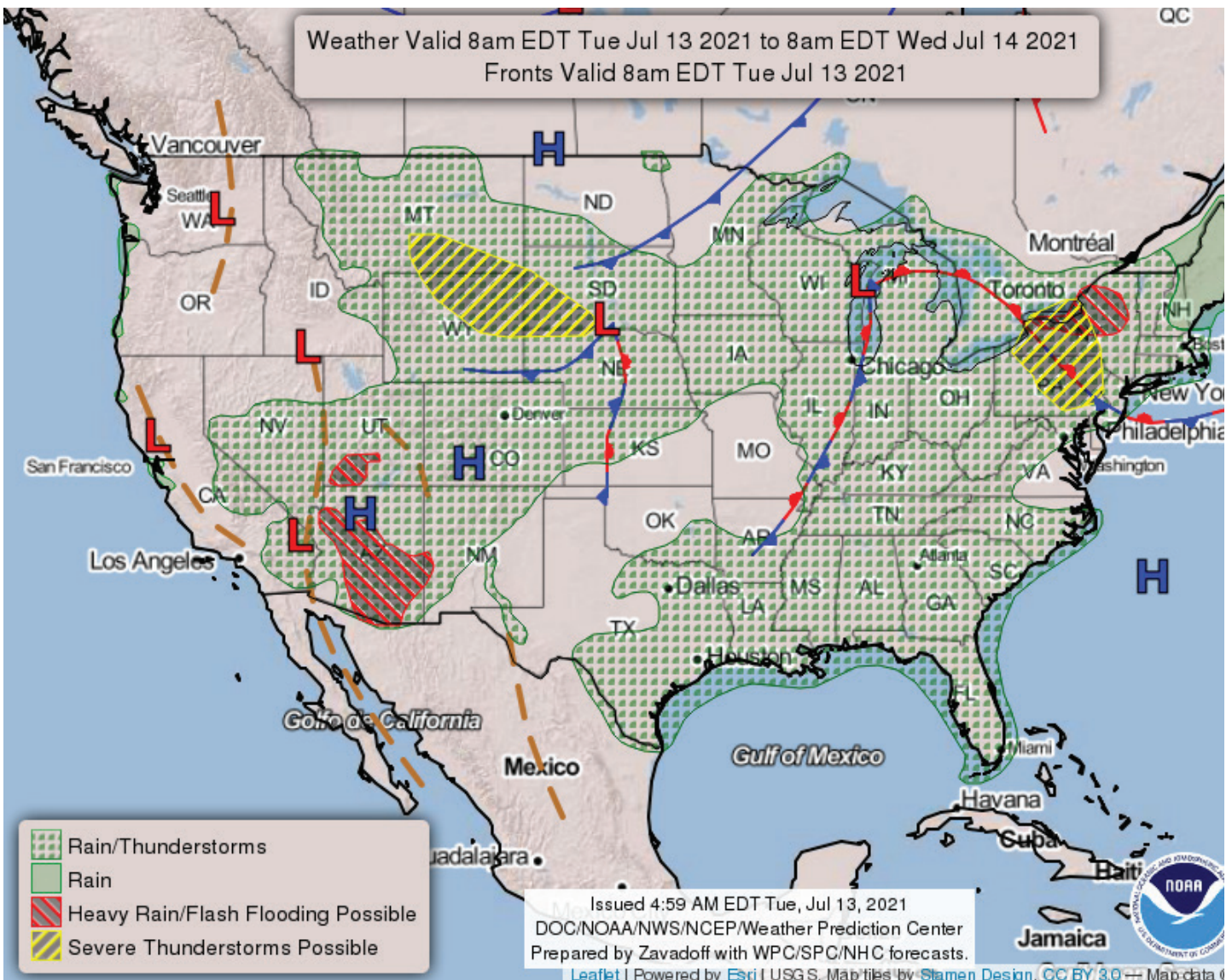
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 85.9 °F**  
**Low Temp: 58.2 °F**  
**Wind: 23 mph**  
**Precip: 0.00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 106° in 1936**  
**Record Low: 44° in 1987**  
**Average High: 85°F**  
**Average Low: 60°F**  
**Average Precip in July.: 1.37**  
**Precip to date in July.: 1.73**  
**Average Precip to date: 12.38**  
**Precip Year to Date: 6.48**  
**Sunset Tonight: 9:20 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:59 a.m.**



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## THE MARVELS OF MEMORIES

The mind has a mind of its own. Occasionally, it takes little trips and goes on interesting journeys that bring back memories from long ago. Memories that are both pleasant and painful. Memories that are both welcomed and worrisome. Memories that must have been stored there by God to help us remember His mercy and, at times, His judgment.

Psalm 77 is very egocentric. Take time, if you will, and count the number of times the personal pronoun "I" occurs. It is rather amazing.

It begins with the writer carefully reviewing many instances of feeling forsaken and abandoned by God. He writes of calling for help – but no voice responded. His eyes would not close – and he was reminded of tragedies he wanted to forget. He felt rejected and unloved and even gave up on God ever being faithful or kind to him again.

Then, suddenly, his mind called things to a halt. God seemed to awaken him and he said, "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes I will remember Your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all Your works and consider all Your mighty deeds."

Our minds do wander and walk through dark valleys filled with deep sorrows and painful valleys. And when it does, it only takes a moment, if we choose, to turn things around and change the shadows and sorrows and valleys in to sunlight and smiles and sun-lit mountain tops. God did this for the Psalmist. He wants to do the same for us: recall His miracles in our lives that give us peace and eternal hope in His Word.

Prayer: Remind us, Lord, that in all things and through all things and with all things that we are not alone or abandoned. Give us confidence to trust You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But then I recall all you have done, O Lord; I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago. They are constantly in my thoughts. I cannot stop thinking about your mighty works. Psalm 77:11-12

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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 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** 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  
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament  
08/28/2021 Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am 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

### Reynolds says Iowa will pay for troopers sent to border

By RYAN J. FOLEY and DAVID PITT Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — Gov. Kim Reynolds said Monday that Iowa will cover the cost of troopers sent to Texas to fight crime along the U.S. border with Mexico, confirming the state would fund the mission after the release of agreements showing the effort would come at “no cost to Texas.”

Since Reynolds announced June 24 that she would join other Republican governors in sending forces to the border, her administration has argued Texas could later reimburse Iowa for expenses under a multi-state compact. However, Iowa’s assistance agreements released to The Associated Press on Monday stated that Texas and Arizona asked other states to “absorb the associated costs with this mission” for the good of the country.

“Iowa is donating this resource,” according to the agreements, signed by the director of Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management on July 2 and released by the department under the open records law.

Later Monday, Reynolds was asked at a news conference in Nebraska who would pay for the deployment, and she acknowledged the costs would fall to her state.

“That will be a state function,” Reynolds said. “We sat down with the commissioner before we sent them down to make sure we felt that they could not only handle the safety of the citizens of the state of Iowa but have the resources to go down there, and they assured us that they did.”

Reynolds spokesman Pat Garrett had said earlier Monday there still was a chance Texas could eventually reimburse some costs. When asked whether the governor was confirming that Iowa would pay, he responded by text: “The governor did say that. The final costs themselves yet to be determined per what DPS said.”

Reynolds, speaking at the Tri-State Governor’s Conference in South Sioux City, Nebraska, with Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts and South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, provided more details about the troopers’ mission.

Reynolds said Iowa sent 29 troopers and that they arrived in Del Rio, Texas, a few days ago. She said they would stay for 16 days.

They include road troopers, members of an Iowa State Patrol tactical team that responds to high-risk situations, command staff and an investigator, according to the documents released to the AP.

Ricketts said he has sent 25 troopers to Del Rio to help with law enforcement. A Nebraska State Patrol spokesman said officials there also have not finalized funding for their contribution to the effort.

Noem said she sent 50 National Guard members who are helping with observation posts and coordinating with border control officers to help secure the southern border.

Noem has said she would use a \$1 million donation from a Republican donor to send National Guard troops. In a speech to a conservative audience Sunday, she criticized governors who sent officers to the border, saying it was irresponsible “to shortchange law enforcement.”

“They’re needed at home,” she said, adding that National Guard units were better trained for the mission.

Garrett said Iowa has ruled out the use of private donations.

Iowa Department of Public Safety spokeswoman Debbie McClung said Monday that discussions about “payment structures are ongoing.” The cost of the mission is unknown.

Reynolds announced the deployment last month, responding to requests for assistance from the GOP governors of Texas and Arizona through the interstate Emergency Management Assistance Compact. She said Iowa “has no choice but to act” to help secure the border, citing drugs, human trafficking and violent crime that affect all 50 states.

It’s believed to be the first time Iowa state police officers have been sent on an out-of-state mission since Iowa joined the compact in the 1990s. Several other Republican governors have pledged to send law enforcement in response to the requests, including in Florida, Idaho and Ohio.

Iowa also has 30 soldiers from the Iowa National Guard providing assistance to law enforcement at the border, Reynolds said.

The documents released Monday show Texas has requested 434 state troopers, 75 investigators and six tactical teams from other states.

Iowa troopers will not bring their patrol cars and instead will team up with Texas state troopers and Texas Rangers, although one investigator planned to drive an unmarked car from Iowa, the agreements state.

All the officers will also need hotel rooms. They will, however, bring their own equipment including uniforms, handguns, rifles, ammunition, body armor and other gear.

McClung has said the deployment — 5.3% of the department's 552 sworn officers — would "not compromise the department's ability to provide public safety services to Iowans." She has compared the scope of the assignment to annual summertime deployments for officers to patrol the Iowa State Fair and a popular statewide bicycle ride.

Their deployment comes amid rising traffic fatalities on Iowa's highways that the Iowa State Patrol said last month was caused by excessive speeding and other reckless driving.

## **Driver of SUV who hit moped located; no arrests or charges**

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police in Sioux Falls say the driver of an SUV who struck a man on a moped and fled the scene has been located.

The crash happened on July 3. Authorities say the 41-year-old Sioux Falls man operating the moped was not wearing a helmet and was seriously injured.

Police spokesman Samuel Clemens says the driver was found last week. Clemens says the motorist has not been arrested and no charges have been filed.

## **South Dakota struggles to provide rural broadband access**

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — As federal officials debate investing billions of dollars in broadband access, South Dakota is planning to invest \$100 million as it struggles to extend reliable internet service to every corner of the state.

Data reported by the Sioux Falls Argus Leader on Monday suggests that many South Dakota schoolchildren and adults who worked from home during the pandemic struggled with sub-par access to high-speed internet, particularly in the state's poorest and/or least populated counties.

Advocates say the "digital divide" across South Dakota and the rest of the U.S. is due largely to two factors: a lack of internet infrastructure in rural areas and relatively high costs that have made broadband unaffordable for many in urban centers.

In about half of South Dakota's counties — 34 of 66 — measured by a Federal Communications Commission study, broadband access is available to at least 88% of residents. Yet in about half of the state measured by Microsoft — 33 of 65 counties — no more than 28% of households actually have high-speed access, a USA TODAY analysis shows.

That helps explain why the South Dakota Legislature and Gov. Kristi Noem earlier this year set aside \$100 million — mostly federal pandemic relief money — to help the telecommunications industry build fiber lines and antenna towers in rural areas.

Last month, President Joe Biden and a bipartisan group of lawmakers reached a deal on a far-reaching infrastructure plan that would direct \$65 billion to increase broadband connectivity from coast-to-coast. In South Dakota, 13% of residents don't have adequate broadband infrastructure and 48% live in areas with only one internet provider, according to the White House.

The proportions of South Dakota households with high-speed access varies widely. In Mellette County, it's just 5% and in Ziebach County, it's 9%. Leading the state are Hyde County with 93%, Lincoln County with 77% and Potter County with 63%.

## Two die in weekend crashes on South Dakota highways

LEAD, S.D. (AP) — A man has died and a woman was seriously injured in a motorcycle crash 1 mile west of Lead in western South Dakota.

Preliminary information indicated that the motorcycle was westbound on U.S. Highway 14A around 6 p.m. Saturday when the driver failed to negotiate a curve, the South Dakota Highway Patrol said Monday. The motorcycle traveled across the roadway and into the ditch.

The Highway Patrol said both riders were thrown from the motorcycle. Neither was wearing a helmet, the patrol said. The 31-year-old male driver died at the scene. The 29-year-old female passenger was flown to a Rapid City hospital with life-threatening injuries. Names were not immediately released pending notification of family members.

Another person died Saturday afternoon in a two-vehicle crash 13 miles west of Martin in south-central South Dakota. The Highway Patrol said a subcompact car was westbound on U.S. Highway 18 around 5:45 p.m. Saturday when it crossed the center line and collided with an eastbound semi.

The 69-year-old man driving the car was not wearing a seat belt and was thrown from the vehicle. He died at the scene. The truck driver was not injured. The victim's name was not immediately released.

## Pressured by allies, Biden escalates fight for voting rights

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden will lay out the "moral case" for voting rights as he faces growing pressure from civil rights activists and other Democrats to combat efforts by Republican-led state legislatures to restrict access to the ballot.

Biden has declared that protecting voting rights was the central cause of his presidency, but the White House has taken sharp criticism from allies for not doing more while contending with political headwinds and stubborn Senate math that have greatly restricted its ability to act.

Biden's speech Tuesday in Philadelphia, to be delivered at the National Constitution Center, is intended as the opening salvo of a public pressure campaign, White House aides said, even as legislative options to block voting restrictions face significant obstacles.

"He'll lay out the moral case for why denying the right to vote is a form of suppression and a form of silencing," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday as she previewed the speech. "He will re-double his commitment to using every tool at his disposal to continue to fight to protect the fundamental right of Americans to vote against the onslaught of voter suppression laws."

Several states have enacted voting restrictions, and others are debating them, as Republicans have seized on former President Donald Trump's false claim of massive voter fraud in the 2020 election as a pretense for curtailing ballot access.

Psaki said Monday that Biden will vow to "overcome the worst challenge to our democracy since the Civil War." But aides have suggested that his address will not contain much in the way of new proposals.

Democrats on Capitol Hill have already tried to respond with a sweeping voting and elections bill that Senate Republicans united to block. Most Republicans have similarly dismissed a separate bill, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would restore sections of the Voting Rights Act that the Supreme Court previously weakened.

Those roadblocks have increased focus on the Senate filibuster, which, if left in place, would seem to provide an insurmountable roadblock to the pair of voting rights overhaul measures pending in Congress. Republicans have been unanimous in their opposition, and it would take the elimination or at least modification of the filibuster for the bills to have a chance at passage.

Moderate Democrats like Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona so far have expressed reluctance to changing the Senate tradition. The voting bills have little other chance of passage in a body that is a 50-50 deadlock, with Vice President Kamala Harris breaking the tie.

Biden's long-awaited speech was to roll out just hours after a group of Democratic Texas lawmakers arrived in the nation's capital after fleeing their state to try to kill a Republican bill making it harder to vote

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in Texas. The legislators said they were ready to remain in Washington for weeks, forcing a dramatic new showdown over voting rights in America.

Private planes carried a large group of Democrats from Austin to Washington, the lawmakers skipping town just days before the Texas House had been expected to give early approval to sweeping new voting restrictions in a special legislative session. They hoped to deprive the Legislature of a quorum — the minimum number of representatives who have to be present for the body to operate.

Hours later, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott said he would keep calling special sessions through next year if necessary, and raised the possibility of Democrats facing arrest upon returning home.

Many Democrats have expressed frustration with the lack of White House push to reform the filibuster, with civil rights activists stressing that Biden was elected with broad support from Black people whose votes are often put at risk by voting restrictions. House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, a longtime Biden ally, urged this week that the filibuster be modified for voting rights legislation.

Biden, a veteran of the Senate, has offered some support for filibuster changes but has not put his political weight behind the issue. He and Harris, who is leading the administration's efforts on voting rights, met last week with some of the civil rights leaders, who made clear that they expected a legislative solution.

"Our backs are against the wall. This is the moment. We have no more time," said Sherrilyn Ifill, president of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, after the meeting. "I told the president: We will not be able to litigate our way out of this threat to Black citizenship."

Although not abandoning hope of a legislative solution, the West Wing has been shifting focus to other measures to protect the vote, including legal remedies pursued by the Justice Department and in individual states, according to the officials. There also will be an emphasis on boosting voter turnout, with aides pointing to the successes Democrats had in getting out votes last year during the height of the pandemic.

Officials concede, though, that turning out voters is always harder in a nonpresidential election year. Some frustrated aides, seeing the reality in the Senate, believe too much of a focus has been placed on federal legislative measures and think that civic and business groups can also play a role in fighting the voting restrictions, noting that an outcry in Georgia helped water down some of the GOP's proposed plans.

Many Republicans continue to question the 2020 election's outcome, despite the absence of evidence of fraud. Republican-elected officials in a number of states have responded by enacting restrictions on early voting and mailed-in ballots, as well as tougher voter identification laws, prompting some liberals to demand that Biden do more.

## **IOC's Bach slips up and refers to Japanese as 'Chinese'**

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — IOC President Thomas Bach referred to his Japanese hosts as Chinese when he appeared in public on Tuesday for the first time since arriving in Tokyo last week.

Giving a pep talk at the headquarters of the Tokyo Olympics organizing committee, Bach's opening remarks were, "You have managed to make Tokyo the best-ever prepared city for the Olympic Games. This is even more remarkable under the difficult circumstances we all have to face."

Bach tripped over his words, referring to the "Chinese people" rather than "Japanese people."

"Our common target is safe and secure games for everybody; for the athletes, for all the delegations, and most importantly also for the Chinese people -- Japanese people," Bach said, catching his mistake quickly.

Bach's comments in the briefing were interpreted from English to Japanese, but the slip was not included in the interpretations. Still, the Japanese media quickly reported it and there was backlash on social media.

He ended his speech with a Japanese phrase: "Gambari mashou," which translates as "Let's do our best."

The pandemic-postponed Olympics open in 10 days.

Bach spent his first three days in isolation at the International Olympic Committee's five-star hotel in central Tokyo, and his movements are limited — like almost everyone entering for the Olympics — for the first 14 days.

Organizers and the IOC decided last week to ban fans from all but a handful of outlying venues, a move



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that came after the Japanese government instituted a state of emergency in Tokyo forced by rising coronavirus cases. The state of emergency went into force on Monday and runs through Aug. 22.

The state of emergency will be in effect throughout the entire duration of the Olympics, which open on July 23 and close on Aug. 8. Its main impact is to push bars and restaurants to close early and stop selling alcohol, a move aimed at cutting down circulation on crowded trains.

Bach's visit on Tuesday coincided with the official opening of the Olympic Village on Tokyo Bay. Organizers did not offer an immediate count of how many athletes were on hand.

Bach is scheduled to visit Hiroshima on Friday in an effort to tie the Olympics to the city's effort to promote world peace. IOC Vice President John Coates is to visit Nagasaki the same day.

Japan's Kyodo news has reported that a group in Hiroshima is opposing Bach's visit.

A small group of protesters gathered on Saturday outside Bach's hotel carrying placards that said he was unwelcome in Tokyo.

Organizers have been criticized for pressing ahead with the Olympics during the pandemic amid polls that show — depending on how the question is phrased — that 50%-80% of the public oppose the Olympics taking place.

The Olympics will involve 11,000 athletes entering Japan along with tens of thousands of others including officials, judges, media, and broadcasters.

Also on Tuesday, police in Tokyo said a group of four U.S. and British men working for a power company contracted to the Olympics were arrested on suspicion of using cocaine.

Aggreko Events Services Japan confirmed it employed the suspects and apologized for the trouble. NHK public television reported the four suspects entered Japan from February to May and were staying in Tokyo.

New virus cases in Tokyo were reported at 830, up from 593 one week ago. It is the 24th straight day that cases were higher than seven days previous.

The office of the Japanese prime minister said Tuesday that 18.5% of Japanese are fully vaccinated.

## **Immunized but banned: EU says not all COVID vaccines equal**

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — After Dr. Ifeanyi Nsofor and his wife received two doses of AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine in Nigeria, they assumed they would be free to travel this summer to a European destination of their choice. They were wrong.

The couple — and millions of other people who have been vaccinated through a U.N.-backed effort — could find themselves barred from entering many European and other countries because those nations don't recognize the Indian-made version of the vaccine for travel.

Although AstraZeneca vaccine produced in Europe has been authorized by the continent's drug regulatory agency, the same shot manufactured in India hasn't been given the green light.

EU regulators said AstraZeneca hasn't completed the necessary paperwork on the Indian factory, including details on its production practices and quality control standards.

But some experts describe the EU move as discriminatory and unscientific, pointing out that the World Health Organization has inspected and approved the factory. Health officials say the situation won't only complicate travel and frustrate fragile economies but also undermine vaccine confidence by appearing to label some shots substandard.

As vaccination coverage rises across Europe and other rich countries, authorities anxious to salvage the summer tourism season are increasingly relaxing coronavirus border restrictions.

Earlier this month, the European Union introduced its digital COVID-19 certificate, which allows EU residents to move freely in the 27-nation bloc as long as they have been vaccinated with one of the four shots authorized by the European Medicines Agency, have a fresh negative test, or have proof they recently recovered from the virus.

While the U.S. and Britain remain largely closed to outside visitors, the EU certificate is seen as a potential model for travel in the COVID-19 era and a way to boost economies.

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The officially EU-endorsed vaccines also include those made by Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson. They don't include the AstraZeneca shot made in India or many other vaccines used in developing countries, including those manufactured in China and Russia.

Individual EU countries are free to apply their own rules for travelers from inside and outside the bloc, and their rules vary widely, creating further confusion for tourists. Several EU countries, including Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, allow people to enter if they have had non-EU-endorsed vaccines; several others, including France and Italy, don't.

For Nsofor, the realization he could be barred was "a rude awakening." After a tough year of working during the pandemic in Abuja, Nsofor and his wife were looking forward to a European vacation with their two young daughters, perhaps admiring the Eiffel Tower in Paris or touring Salzburg in Austria.

Nsofor noted that the Indian-made vaccine he received had been authorized by WHO for emergency use and had been supplied through COVAX, the U.N.-backed program to provide shots to poor corners of the world. WHO's approval included a visit to the Serum Institute of India factory to ensure that it had good manufacturing practices and that quality control standards were met.

"We're grateful to the EU that they funded COVAX, but now they are essentially discriminating against a vaccine that they actively funded and promoted," Nsofor said. "This will just give room to all kinds of conspiracy theories that the vaccines we're getting in Africa are not as good as the ones they have for themselves in the West."

Ivo Vlaev, a professor at Britain's University of Warwick who advises the government on behavioral science during COVID-19, agreed that Western countries' refusal to recognize vaccines used in poor countries could fuel mistrust.

"People who were already suspicious of vaccines will become even more suspicious," Vlaev said. "They could also lose trust in public health messages from governments and be less willing to comply with COVID rules."

Dr. Mesfin Teklu Tessema, director of health for the International Rescue Committee, said countries that have declined to recognize vaccines cleared by WHO are acting against the scientific evidence.

"Vaccines that have met WHO's threshold should be accepted. Otherwise it looks like there's an element of racism here," he said.

WHO urged countries to recognize all of the vaccines it has authorized, including two Chinese-made ones. Countries that decline to do so are "undermining confidence in lifesaving vaccines that have already been shown to be safe and effective, affecting uptake of vaccines and potentially putting billions of people at risk," the U.N. health agency said in a statement this month.

In June, the Serum Institute of India's CEO, Adar Poonawalla, tweeted that he was concerned about vaccinated Indians facing problems traveling to the EU and said he was raising the problem at the highest levels with regulators and countries.

Stefan De Keersmaeker, a spokesman for the EU's executive arm, said last week that regulators were obligated to check the production process at the Indian factory.

"We are not trying to create any doubts about this vaccine," he said.

AstraZeneca said it only recently submitted the paperwork on the Indian factory to the EU drug regulatory agency. It didn't say why it didn't do so earlier, before the agency made its original decision in January.

The failure of some national authorities to recognize vaccines made outside the EU — but whose European-made versions are authorized — is also frustrating some Europeans immunized elsewhere, including the U.S.

Gerard Araud, a former French ambassador to the Israel, the U.S. and the U.N., tweeted this week that the country's COVID-19 pass is a "disaster" for people vaccinated outside of France.

Public health experts warned that countries that decline to recognize vaccines backed by WHO are complicating global efforts to safely restart travel.

"You can't just cut off countries from the rest of the world indefinitely," said Dr. Raghieb Ali of the University of Cambridge. "To exclude some people from certain countries because of the vaccine they've received is wholly inconsistent because we know that these approved vaccines are extremely protective."

Nsofor said he and his wife are still deciding where to take their summer vacation and are leaning toward

Singapore or East Africa.

"I didn't realize there were so many layers to vaccine inequity," he said.

## **Rioting, looting continues in South Africa, deaths up to 32**

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — South Africa's rioting continued Tuesday with the death toll rising to 32 as police and the military struggle to quell the looting and violence in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces.

Many of the deaths occurred in chaotic stampedes as scores of people looted food, electric appliances, liquor, and clothing from retail centers, KwaZulu-Natal premier Sihle Zikalala told the press on Tuesday morning.

"Yesterday's events brought a lot of sadness. The number of people who have died in KwaZulu-Natal alone stands at 26. Many of them died from being trampled on during a stampede while people were looting items," said Zikalala.

In Gauteng, South Africa's most populous province which includes the largest city, Johannesburg, six people have died, said officials.

The deployment of 2,500 soldiers to support the South African police has not yet stopped the rampant looting although arrests are being made at some areas in Johannesburg, including Vosloorus in eastern Johannesburg.

Looting continued Tuesday in Johannesburg shopping malls in township areas including Jabulani Mall and Dobsonville Mall in Soweto. There were also reports of continued looting in centers in KwaZulu-Natal.

The violence started in KwaZulu-Natal last week as protests against the imprisonment of former President Jacob Zuma, who began serving a 15-month sentence for contempt of court. He was convicted of defying a court order to testify before a state-backed inquiry probing allegations of corruption during his term as president from 2009 to 2018.

The sporadic pro-Zuma violence spiraled into a spree of criminal theft in poor, township areas of the two provinces, according to witnesses. So far the lawlessness has not spread to South Africa's other nine provinces.

The Constitutional Court, the country's highest court, heard Zuma's application to have his sentence rescinded on Monday. Zuma's lawyer presented his arguments that the top court made errors when sentencing Zuma to prison. After 10 hours of testimony on Monday, the court judges said they would study the arguments and announce their decision at a later date.

## **Iraqi health officials: 64 dead in fire at coronavirus ward**

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — The death toll from a catastrophic blaze that erupted at a coronavirus hospital ward in southern Iraq the previous day rose to 64 on Tuesday, Iraqi medical officials said.

Two health officials said more than 100 people were also injured in the fire that torched the coronavirus ward of al-Hussein Teaching Hospital in the city of Nasiriyah on Monday.

Anguished relatives were still looking for traces of their loved ones on Tuesday morning, searching through the debris of charred blankets and belongings inside the torched remains of the ward. A blackened skull of a deceased female patient from the ward was found.

Many cried openly, their tears tinged with anger, blaming both the provincial government of Dhi Qar, where Nasiriyah is located, and the federal government in Baghdad for years of mismanagement and neglect.

"The whole state system has collapsed, and who paid the price? The people inside here. These people have paid the price," said Haidar al-Askari, who was at the scene of the blaze.

Overnight, firefighters and rescuers — many with just flashlights and using blankets to extinguish small fires still smoldering in places — had frantically worked searching through the ward in the darkness. As dawn broke, bodies covered with sheets were laid on the ground outside the hospital.

Earlier, officials had said the fire was caused by an electric short circuit, but provided no more details.

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Another official said the blaze erupted when an oxygen cylinder exploded. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to journalists.

The new ward, opened just three months ago, contained 70 beds.

Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi chaired an emergency meeting in the wake of the fire and ordered the suspension and arrest of the health director in Dhi Qar, as well as the director of the hospital and the city's director of civil defense. A government investigation was also launched.

In the nearby Shiite holy city of Najaf, mourners prepared to bury some of the victims.

It was the second time a large fire killed coronavirus patients in an Iraqi hospital this year. At least 82 people died at Ibn al-Khateeb hospital in Baghdad in April, when an oxygen tank exploded, sparking the blaze.

That incident brought to light widespread negligence and systemic mismanagement in Iraq's hospitals. Doctors have decried lax safety rules, especially around the oxygen cylinders.

On Monday, Ammar al-Zamili, spokesman for the Dhi Qar health department, told local media that there were at least 63 patients inside the ward when the fire began. Maj. Gen. Khalid Bohan, head of Iraq's civil defense, said in comments to the press that the building was constructed from flammable materials and prone to fire.

Iraq is in the midst of another severe COVID-19 surge. Daily coronavirus rates peaked last week at 9,000 new cases. After decades of war and sanctions, Iraq's health sector has struggled to contain the virus. Over 17,000 people have died of the virus among 1.4 million confirmed cases since the start of the pandemic.

## 'Purely ethnic profiling': New wave of Tigrayans detained

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) — Witnesses say thousands of Tigrayans are being detained and their businesses closed in cities across Ethiopia in a new wave of ethnic targeting by authorities over the eight-month conflict in the Tigray region.

The detentions follow the dramatic turn in the war last month when resurgent Tigray forces marched into the regional capital, Mekele, as Ethiopian soldiers retreated and Ethiopia's government announced a unilateral cease-fire. An earlier wave of detentions followed the start of the war in November after months of tensions between the government and Tigray's leaders.

Meron Addis, a 32-year-old attorney who has raised money for food and other aid to people in Tigray and has been outspoken about the toll on civilians, told The Associated Press that two plainclothes police officers came to her home in the capital, Addis Ababa, on June 28 and accused her of storing weapons. Then dozens of uniformed officers searched the place without presenting a warrant, she said.

After finding no weapons, they took her to a police station where she was charged with expressing support for the Tigray forces and spreading hate on social media. She met several other Tigrayans while in custody and was released a week later.

Police told her she was helping the "junta," a common term used by authorities for the Tigray fighters. "You are causing friction between the government and the people of Tigray by posting pictures on Facebook of children and victims of the war, hunger and rape," she said they told her. After her release, two of her relatives were detained.

Another detainee who was released last week told the AP that several dozen other Tigrayans were held in a center in the outskirts of the capital.

"At first we were told that we were suspected of having links with the (Tigray fighters). Once in jail, they began accusing us of sending money to support terrorists and vowed we won't be released unless Ethiopian prisoners of war under the control of the (Tigray forces) are released," he said. "None of us were brought to court." Like many others, he spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

With Ethiopia's government having declared Tigray's ruling party a terrorist group, ordinary Tigrayans across the country are under even more pressure even as they seek to speak out about alleged war atrocities and send aid to the region as hundreds of thousands of people face the world's worst famine crisis in a decade,

And Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in a speech after the Ethiopian forces' retreat alleged that ordinary Tigrayans had supported the Tigray fighters.

The new wave of mass detentions has not been publicly acknowledged by security officials. Federal police spokesman Jeylanr Abdi didn't respond to questions, but the federal police told the Addis Standard media outlet they don't arrest citizens based on ethnicity.

The governmental Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, however, said it is monitoring the detentions of Tigrayans and media workers suspected of links to the situation in Tigray. "Such measures aggravate the public's concerns on the risk of ethnic profiling," it said in a statement.

A Tigrayan activist told the AP the detentions appear to be occurring in major cities across Ethiopia. "People who have never set foot in the Tigray region and those who have no knowledge of politics are becoming victims," he said, adding that some are fleeing the capital out of fear of being detained.

A letter from Tigrayan lawyers to the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, obtained by the AP, said the fate of thousands of people remains unknown. And "hundreds of Tigrayan businesses in Addis Ababa, including restaurants, bars, cafes and other places, have been closed and sealed with no apparent reason than the claim of security concerns," it reads. "This campaign against Tigrayans must be stopped because it is a dangerous practice that violates the rights of citizens without sufficient evidence."

One lawyer, Tesfalem Berhe, said he has compiled a list of 103 Tigrayans detained in the capital in the past few weeks. Many were taken at shops, cafes and bus stations because their IDs showed their ethnicity or because they were speaking Tigrinya, he said. Others were taken from their homes.

"They are disappeared," he said, estimating that tens of thousands have been detained. "They are not given access to their families and lawyers. ... There is no allegation of crime. It is purely ethnic profiling."

A Tigrayan civil servant in the capital told the AP he watched as a colleague was detained by two plain-clothes officers at the health center where he worked. When the colleague's manager asked why, the officers cited unspecified "security reasons."

"I'm very nervous because we hear about lots of people being arrested. I worry the police and security services are monitoring us, so I barely talk on the phone," the civil servant said. "For every Tigrayan in Addis Ababa, it's hard for us at this time because of the political situation."

Tsegazeab Kidanu, a volunteer coordinator for a civil society group that campaigns against human rights abuses in Tigray, was detained at his home on June 29 while he was watching TV in his pajamas, a relative said. Again, a warrant wasn't presented. He wasn't charged.

Authorities later told his lawyer, Tesfalem, that he had been released, but his whereabouts remain unknown.

## Are Jan. 6 rioters traitors? So far, criminal charges say no

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Plotted to block the certification of Joe Biden's election victory: Check. Discussed bringing weapons into Washington to aid in the plan: Check. Succeeded with co-insurrectionists, if only temporarily, in stopping Congress from carrying out a vital constitutional duty: Check.

Accusations against Jan. 6 rioter Thomas Caldwell certainly seem to fit the charge of sedition as it's generally understood — inciting revolt against the government. And the possibility of charging him and others was widely discussed after thousands of pro-Trump supporters assaulted scores of police officers, defaced the U.S. Capitol and hunted for lawmakers to stop the certification. Some called their actions treasonous.

But to date, neither Caldwell nor any of the other more than 500 defendants accused in the attack has been indicted for sedition or for the gravest of crimes a citizen can face, treason. And as an increasing number of lesser charges are filed and defendants plead guilty, those accusations may never be formally levied.

Some legal scholars say that sedition charges could be justified but that prosecutors may be reluctant to bring them because of their legal complexity and the difficulty historically in securing convictions. Over-

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zealousness in applying them going back centuries has also discredited their use. And defense attorneys say discussions of such charges only add to the hyperbole around the events of that day.

Overall, the bar for proving sedition isn't as high as it is for the related charge of treason. Still, sedition charges have been rare.

The last time U.S. prosecutors brought such a case was in 2010 in an alleged Michigan plot by members of the Hutaree militia to incite an uprising against the government. But a judge ordered acquittals on the sedition conspiracy charges at a 2012 trial, saying prosecutors relied too much on hateful diatribes protected by the First Amendment and didn't, as required, prove the accused ever had detailed plans for a rebellion.

Among the last successful convictions for seditious conspiracy stemmed from another, now largely forgotten storming of the Capitol in 1954 when four Puerto Rican nationalists opened fire on the House floor, wounding five representatives.

Treason is one of the few crimes specifically defined in the Constitution. It's defined as "levying war" against the U.S. or "giving aid and comfort" to its enemies. Legal scholars say the Founding Fathers, who were themselves accused of treason by the British, sought to clearly articulate it because they knew the potential to misapply it to legitimate dissent.

In a landmark ruling in 1807, Chief Justice John Marshall wrote that treason required a citizen actually go to war against the United States, not to just brainstorm or draw up plans for it. Even recruiting and training rebels for war, he argued, isn't treason if war is never engaged.

In the history of the U.S., the government has convicted fewer than 10 people for treason, according to the FBI.

Among the last treason cases was of American-born Iva Toguri D'Aquino — known as "Tokyo Rose" during World War II for her anti-American broadcasts — convicted in 1949 of "giving aid and comfort" to Japan. President Gerald Ford pardoned her in 1977 after reports U.S. authorities pressured some witnesses to lie.

The only American charged with treason since the World II era was Adam Gadahn, indicted in 2006 for giving "aid and comfort" to al-Qaida. Before he could be tried, he was killed by a U.S. drone strike in Pakistan.

Carlton Larson, a University of California law professor and author of "On Treason: A Citizen's Guide to the Law," ruled out treason for the Jan. 6 rioters. But he believes some qualify for a provision of seditious conspiracy on "hindering" the execution of U.S. laws. "I think it easily fits," he said.

Last summer, then-Deputy Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen sent a memo allowing federal prosecutors to consider sedition charges against police reform demonstrators, particularly in Portland, Oregon, where clashes between rioters and federal authorities raged outside a federal courthouse. It was never used.

But the memo said the Justice Department believed the statute doesn't require proof of a plot to overthrow the government and could also be used when a defendant tries to oppose the government's authority by force.

In the weeks after the Capitol attack, federal prosecutors said they were looking at all possible charges. Washington's then-acting U.S. Attorney Michael Sherwin told CBS' "60 Minutes" on March 17 that prosecutors were mulling seditious conspiracy charges against some rioters.

"I believe the facts do support those charges," Sherwin said. "And I think that, as we go forward, more facts will support that."

He had first floated the possibility in January, saying a special group of prosecutors was examining whether they would apply to any rioters. The Justice Department did not respond to questions about what happened to that group, or why no sedition charges were ever brought. And Sherwin's comments were criticized by a federal judge and defense lawyers who said it was inappropriate to discuss ongoing investigations publicly. He left the Justice Department soon after.

The Justice Department is continuing its work to prosecute a record number of cases. But they have so far opted for comparatively run-of-the-mill charges, like entering a restricted area and obstructing an official proceeding. Caldwell faces those charges, as well as conspiracy, which, like sedition, carries a maximum 20-year prison term. Treason carries a possible death sentence.

He has been charged alongside other members and associates of the far-right Oath Keepers extrem-

ist group with conspiring to block the vote certification. He later boasted in a message to a friend about grabbing an American flag, joining the crowd that surged toward the Capitol and saying "let's storm the place and hang the traitors." The 65-year-old from Virginia told his friend, "If we'd had guns I guarantee we would have killed 100 politicians."

Defense attorneys say hyperbole has been a hallmark of the Jan. 6 prosecutions.

"If grandiose rhetoric was evidence, the Government's case would be very strong," Caldwell's lawyer, David Fischer, wrote in one filing. He didn't respond to a message seeking comment.

In filings, Fischer also said prosecutors took his client's words out of context to falsely accuse an ailing 20-year military veteran. He said Caldwell, like many veterans, was prone to puffery and enjoyed portraying himself in recounting his actions on Jan. 6 as a movie character who picks up a battle flag to lead the charge.

Fischer also asked Caldwell's Washington judge this month to transfer Caldwell's case to another city on grounds Sherwin's comments regarding sedition would prejudice jurors.

On Jan. 5, another rioter, Guy Reffitt, allegedly spoke of "dragging ... people out of the Capitol by their ankles" and installing a new government. The 48-year-old Texan came prepared for battle on Jan. 6, carrying a gun and wearing body armor as he pushed through Capitol police lines as officers shot him with rubber bullets, prosecutors said.

Charges against Reffitt include entering a restricted building with a deadly weapon, as well as obstructing justice by threatening his teenage children. The oil industry consultant allegedly told them later in January they'd be traitors if they turned him in. He added, "Traitors get shot."

In an unapologetic note written from jail and filed with the court in May, Reffitt denied there had ever been a conspiracy, and provided a chilling reason.

"If overthrow (of the government) was the quest," Reffitt wrote about Jan. 6, "it would have no doubt been overthrown."

## Taliban surge in north Afghanistan sends thousands fleeing

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

CAMP ISTIQLAL, Afghanistan (AP) — Sakina, who is 11, maybe 12, walked with her family for 10 days after the Taliban seized her village in northern Afghanistan and burned down the local school.

They are now among around 50 families living in a makeshift camp on a rocky patch of land on the edge of the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif. They roast in plastic tents under scorching heat that reaches 44 degrees Celsius (110 degrees Fahrenheit) at midday. There are no trees, and the only bathroom for the entire camp is a tattered tent pitched over a foul-smelling hole.

As the Taliban surge through northern Afghanistan — a traditional stronghold of U.S.-allied warlords and an area dominated by the country's ethnic minorities — thousands of families like Sakina's are fleeing their homes, fearful of living under the insurgents' rule.

In the last 15 days, Taliban advances have driven more than 5,600 families from their homes, most of them in the northern reaches of the country, according to the government's Refugee and Repatriations Ministry.

In Camp Istiqlal, family after family, all from the Hazara ethnic minority, told of Taliban commanders using heavy-handed tactics as they overran their towns and villages — raising doubts among many over their persistent promises amid negotiations that they will not repeat their harsh rule of the past.

Sakina said it was the middle of the night when her parents packed up their belongings and fled their village of Abdulgan in Balkh province, but not before the invading Taliban set fire to her school. Sakina said she doesn't understand why her school was burned.

In Camp Istiqlal, there's not a single light, and sometimes she hears noises in the pitch blackness of night. "I think maybe it's the Taliban and they have come here. I am afraid," said the girl, who hopes one day to be an engineer.

Yaqub Maradi fled his village of Sang Shanda, not far from Abdulgan, when the Taliban arrived. He said

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they tried to intimidate villagers into staying. Maradi's brother and several members of his family were arrested, "held hostage to stop them from leaving," he said.

"Maybe he is released today, but he cannot leave," Maradi said from inside his small sweltering plastic tent pitched over a sunbaked mud floor, with mattresses folded in one corner.

A howling, brutally hot wind ripped through the tent as Mohammad Rahimi, the self-appointed camp leader, who also fled from Abdulgan, recalled how a poorly equipped militia force in his Zari district tried to defend against a larger Taliban force. Rahimi named a handful of militia fighters he said died defending their district.

In areas they control, the Taliban have imposed their own fees and taxes. Ashor Ali, a truck driver, told The Associated Press he pays the Taliban a 12,000 Afghani (\$147) toll for every load of coal he brings from a Taliban-controlled part of neighboring Samangan province to Mazar-e-Sharif. That amounts to more than half of what he makes on each haul.

The Taliban are attending international conferences, even sending their ex-ministers on missions to Afghanistan from Qatar, where they have a political office, to assure Afghans they have nothing to fear from them, especially minorities. The group still espouses Islamic rule but says its methods and tenets are less severe.

But if it's a gentler face they are seeking to portray, fleeing residents say it seems many Taliban commanders in the field either haven't gotten the message or aren't listening.

A February 2020 agreement the Taliban signed with the United States reportedly prevents the insurgents from capturing provincial capitals. Yet two — Kandahar in the south and Badghis in the north — are under siege. In the capital of Kabul, where many fear an eventual Taliban assault, a rocket defense system has been installed, the Ministry of Interior said over the weekend. The statement offered no detail about its origin or cost.

The U.S., Russia, China and even Afghanistan's neighbor Pakistan, where the Taliban leadership council is headquartered, have all warned the Taliban against trying for a military victory, warning they will be international pariahs. Taliban leaders have vowed they are not doing so, even as they boast of their gains in recent meetings in Iran and in Russia,

The Taliban blame the Afghan government for foiling efforts to jumpstart stalled talks that would elevate discussions to include leaders on both sides of the conflict.

Suhail Shaheen, the Taliban's political spokesman and a member of its negotiation team, told the AP that on three different occasions his side waited for a high-level delegation from Kabul to come to Doha for talks. They never came, he said.

The Kabul delegation was to include former President Hamid Karzai, as well as Abdullah Abdullah, the head of the National Reconciliation Council, and senior warlords like Ata Mohammad Noor, one of the most powerful northern commanders.

Afghan officials familiar with the planned meetings confirmed their intent to travel to Doha and participate, but said President Ashraf Ghani has been reluctant, often obstructing efforts. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the negotiations with reporters.

Last week, President Joe Biden urged Afghanistan's leaders to find unity and said it was up to Afghans to bring an end to decades of war. With 90% of the final U.S. and NATO withdrawal completed and its top commander Gen. Scott Miller having relinquished his command, Washington is nearing the end of its "forever war."

Maradi, whose brother was refused permission to leave, said he doesn't trust the Taliban promises.

Many are still haunted by memories of the tit-for-tat massacres that had characterized the Taliban rule in areas dominated by Afghanistan's ethnic minorities in the late 1990s.

Mazar-e-Sharif was the scene of horrific bloodletting. In 1997, Uzbek and Hazara fighters killed some 2,000 ethnic Pashtun Taliban, who were captured in the city after a truce deal fell through. In some case, they forced the captives to jump into pits on the plains north of the city, then threw in grenades and sprayed them with automatic weapons. The next year, the Taliban rampaged through Mazar-e-Sharif, kill-



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ing thousands of Hazaras and driving tens of thousands more out fleeing to Kabul.

At Camp Istiqlal life is brutal. There's little water to wash, most meals are bread and tea brought to the camp by Rahimi, the leader. Fatima, who cradled her sickly 2-month-old daughter Kobra, said she hadn't had much food or drink since arriving about one week ago and was unable to produce enough milk to feed her infant. Another mother showed blisters covering the arms and legs of her 2-year-old son, Mohammad Nabi. In the nighttime blackness he knocked over scalding water. They said they have no money for a doctor.

The camp residents say no one has come to help them.

At the edge of the camp, Habibullah Amanullah cried, his 7-year old daughter hiding behind his arm. "She asks me for something to eat. What can I tell her? We have nothing."

## France rushes to get vaccinated after president's warning

PARIS (AP) — Nearly 1 million people in France made vaccine appointments in a single day, after the president cranked up pressure on everyone to get vaccinated to save summer vacation and the French economy.

An app that centralizes France's vaccine and other medical appointments, Doctolib, announced Tuesday morning that 926,000 people had made appointments Monday, a daily record since the country rolled out coronavirus vaccines in December. People under age 35 made up 65% of the new appointments.

President Emmanuel Macron announced Monday that vaccination would be obligatory for all health care workers by Sept. 15, and held out the possibility of extending the requirement to other parts of the population.

With infections on the rise again around France, expectations had mounted in recent days that Macron would announce some kind of vaccination requirement, driving new demand for appointments.

Around 41% of the French population has been fully vaccinated, though the pace of vaccination waned as summer vacations approached.

Health Minister Olivier Veran welcomed the renewed vaccine interest, saying on BFM television Tuesday: "That's thousands of lives saved."

More than 111,000 people with the virus have died in France.

## Wildfires threaten homes, land across 10 Western states

By JOHN ANTCZAK and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Wildfires that torched homes and forced thousands to evacuate burned across 10 parched Western states on Tuesday, and the largest, in Oregon, threatened California's power supply.

Nearly 60 wildfires tore through bone-dry timber and brush from Alaska to Wyoming, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. Arizona, Idaho and Montana accounted for more than half of the large active fires.

The fires erupted as the West was in the grip of the second bout of dangerously high temperatures in just a few weeks. A climate change-fueled megadrought also is contributing to conditions that make fires even more dangerous, scientists say.

The National Weather Service says the heat wave appeared to have peaked in many areas, and excessive-heat warnings were largely expected to expire by Tuesday. However, they continued into Tuesday night in some California deserts, and many areas were still expected to see high in the 80s and 90s.

In Northern California, a combined pair of lightning-ignited blazes dubbed the Beckwourth Complex was less than 25% surrounded after days of battling flames fueled by winds, hot weather and low humidity that sapped the moisture from vegetation. Evacuation orders were in place for more than 3,000 residents of remote northern areas and neighboring Nevada.

There were reports of burned homes, but damage was still being tallied. The blaze had consumed 140 square miles (362 square kilometers) of land, including in Plumas National Forest.

A fire that began Sunday in the Sierra Nevada south of Yosemite National Park exploded over 14 square

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miles (36 square kilometers) and was just 10% contained. A highway that leads to Yosemite's southern entrance remained open.

The largest fire in the United States lay across the California border in southwestern Oregon. The Bootleg Fire — which doubled and doubled again over the weekend — threatened some 2,000 homes, state fire officials said. It had burned at least seven homes and more than 40 other buildings.

Over the weekend, the Klamath County Sheriff's Office warned that it would cite or even arrest people who ignored orders to "go now" in certain areas immediately threatened by the blaze.

Tim McCarley told KPTV-TV that he and his family were ordered to flee their home on Friday with flames just minutes behind them.

"They told us to get the hell out 'cause if not, you're dead," he said.

He described the blaze as "like a firenado," with flames leaping dozens of feet into the air and jumping around, catching trees "and then just explosions, boom, boom, boom, boom."

The fire was burning in the Fremont-Winema National Forest, near the Klamath County town of Sprague River. It had ravaged an area of about 240 square miles (621 square kilometers), or nearly twice the size of Portland.

Firefighters hadn't managed to surround any of it as they struggled to build containment lines.

The fire drastically disrupted service on three transmission lines providing up to 5,500 megawatts of electricity to California, and that state's California's power grid operator has repeatedly asked for voluntary power conservation during evening hours.

Elsewhere, a forest fire started during lightning storms in southeast Washington grew to 86 square miles (223 square kilometers). It was 20% contained Monday.

Another fire west of Winthrop closed the scenic North Cascades Highway, the most northern route through the Cascade Range. The road provides access to North Cascades National Park and the Ross Lake National Recreation Area.

In Idaho, Gov. Brad Little mobilized the National Guard to help fight twin lightning-sparked fires that have together charred nearly 24 square miles (62 square kilometers) of dry timber in the remote, drought-stricken region.

The July heat wave follows an unusual June siege of broiling temperatures in the West, and comes amid worsening drought conditions throughout the region.

Scientists say human-caused climate change and decades of fire suppression that increases fuel loads have aggravated fire conditions across the region.

## High court ruling gives immigrants facing deportation hope

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Just a few short months ago, Lucio Perez moved out of the western Massachusetts church he'd lived in for more than three years to avoid deportation.

Immigration authorities in March granted the 40-year-old Guatemalan national a temporary stay in his deportation while he argued to have his immigration case reconsidered.

Now, Perez is looking to a recent Supreme Court ruling to help him clear that final hurdle and officially be allowed to remain in the country he's called home for more than two decades.

"At this point, I'm feeling very positive that everything is on the right track," he said recently from his home in Springfield, Massachusetts. "I don't have that fear of deportation anymore. I feel safer now."

Perez is among scores of immigrants hoping to get their deportation cancelled because they didn't receive proper notice of the court proceedings.

In April, the Supreme Court ruled in *Niz-Chavez vs. Garland* that the federal government must provide all required information to immigrants facing deportation in a single notice.

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement for years has been notifying immigrations about their deportation cases in roughly two parts: an initial notice to appear in court and follow up notices providing the date, time and location of the proceedings.

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But Justice Neil Gorsuch, in his majority opinion, criticized the piecemeal approach as exceeding federal law.

The issue, he argued, hinged on the shortest of words: a 1996 immigration law calls for the government to issue "a" notice to appear, implying Congress intended those facing deportation to receive a single document.

"At one level, today's dispute may seem semantic, focused on a single word, a small one at that," said Gorsuch, a conservative judge appointed by former Republican President Donald Trump. "But words are how the law constrains power."

Immigration lawyers and advocates, who have long complained about the deportation notification process, say the ruling has implications for scores of immigration cases.

"It's a bombshell," said Jeremy McKinney, a North Carolina attorney who is president-elect of the American Immigration Lawyers' Association. "It's the second time in less than three years that the court has had to remind the government that a notice to appear actually has to notify a person when and where to appear."

The high court, he noted, made a similar ruling on deportation notices in *Pereira vs. Sessions*, but that 2018 decision was somewhat narrower in scope.

Immigration activists argue ICE's current notice process causes too many immigrants to miss their court hearings, as months can pass between the initial and follow-up notices. Some, they say, don't even find out until years later that they had a deportation hearing and were ordered removed from the country by a judge.

It could be months before the true impact of the *Niz-Chavez* decision is felt, but McKinney and other immigration experts say it's sure to add more cases to an already overburdened immigration court system.

At minimum, the decision gives new life to cases in which immigrants weren't properly notified, never showed up for their deportation cases and were ultimately ordered to leave the country, he said.

It also likely benefits anyone issued a deportation notice without the necessary specifics going forward. Indeed in places like Cleveland, Ohio, and Arlington, Virginia, immigration court judges are already granting requests to terminate deportation proceedings if an immigrant was issued a notice that lacks a place or date and time for the initial hearing, according to immigration lawyers.

Matt Benson, a Cincinnati-based attorney, estimated his firm alone has filed more than two dozen such motions, with the vast majority being granted by judges.

"The court is being flooded with these motions," he said. "This is now a major tool to avoid a removal order against a client."

ICE, which had argued in the Supreme Court case that its notification process was sufficient, said Friday it's been providing the required information on a single notice since January 2019.

It also referred to a June memo in which it said ICE lawyers will "exercise their prosecutorial discretion" in deciding whether to challenge immigrants who seek to reopen their immigration cases in light of the *Niz-Chavez* ruling.

In the meantime, Augusto Niz-Chavez, the 30-year-old Guatemalan national at the center of the Supreme Court case, says he's waiting for his case to be remanded to the immigration court in Detroit.

*Niz-Chavez* says he's anxious for it to be resolved. His wife was deported to Guatemala last year and he's been raising their three children in Detroit while trying to balance work at a local pallet factory.

"My priority right now is to stay by my kids," he said by Zoom recently. "If I'm able to obtain lawful permanent residency in the future, I would be interested in trying to find a lawful path for my wife to return to the United States."

In Massachusetts, Perez is hoping for a similar outcome in court.

The father of four, who entered the country illegally in 1999 at the age of 17, was served with a notice to appear in immigration court back in 2011, but it didn't have the date and time of his hearing, according to Glenn Formica, Perez's lawyer.

"This is everything Lucio needs to get a second chance in his case," he said.

For now, Perez is easing back into the life he put on hold for the last three years while he lived in the

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First Congregational Church in Amherst with support from the Pioneer Valley Workers Center and the hundreds of volunteer supporters the group helped coordinate.

The longtime landscaper hopes to open a store selling Guatemalan clothes and food if he's granted permanent status.

"I felt like a bird in a cage before," Perez said. "Now, I'm out of the cage and back in my life. I can leave the house, go to the store, go to work. I'm really grateful for that."

## Blind Chinese dissident who escaped in 2012 now a US citizen

By KATHY McCORMACK Associated Press

A blind Chinese dissident who escaped to the United States in 2012 is now an American citizen.

Chen Guangcheng, speaking through a translator, said in an interview with The Associated Press last week he was "very grateful that America, this free country, has welcomed us."

Chen met with members of his legal team July 8 in Manchester, New Hampshire, to celebrate. He became a U.S. citizen in Baltimore on June 21.

"It's a long journey from being under house arrest in China to being a U.S. citizen. It took 15 years," said George Bruno, former U.S. ambassador to Belize and one of Chen's lawyers.

An international symbol for human dignity after running afoul of local government officials for exposing forced abortions carried out as part of China's one-child policy, Chen was subjected to years of persecution and illegal detention for advising villagers on how to counter official abuses.

After serving four years in prison on what supporters called fabricated charges, Chen was kept under house arrest until escaping in 2012, dodging a security cordon around his home in east China's Shandong province and placing himself under the protection of U.S. diplomats.

Chen's 2012 flight to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing sparked a six-day diplomatic tussle between the U.S. and China, threatening to derail then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's strategic talks intended to build trust between the world's superpower and its up-and-coming rival.

Last year, Chen addressed the Republican National Convention, where he called on other countries to support President Donald Trump in leading a coalition to "stop China's aggression."

Chen, 49, a visiting fellow at Catholic University of America, said he hopes America "will stand by the Chinese people" against the Communist Party.

"The human rights situation is getting worse and worse," he said. "As people in China are more aware of their rights as they get more information online, and have more demand for their rights, the Communist Party is becoming more and more worried about losing their control and power, and that results in them using more and more force to suppress the people to protect the control of the power."

A spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment.

Chen also said the United States needed to take a harder line with the Communist Party, or the CPC, and "give up on the appeasement policy."

"If we only negotiate with the CPC, they will not be afraid. The CPC has always been unreasonable and arbitrary."

## Searchers recover personal possessions from collapse rubble

By TERRY SPENCER and KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — When the body of 4-year-old Emma Guara was pulled from the rubble of last month's Florida condominium collapse, she was wearing the silver necklace her mother recently gave her, the pendant shaped like half a heart and inscribed "Little Sis."

When firefighters found her 11-year-old sister, Lucia Guara, she was not wearing her near-matching necklace, the pendant shaped like the other half of the heart and inscribed "Big Sis." Lucia had developed an allergic reaction and had temporarily stopped wearing hers, said their aunt, Digna Rodriguez.

"We would like to get that necklace back," Rodriguez said. "They loved those necklaces."

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The girls' parents, Anaely Rodriguez and Marcus Guara, also died in the June 24 collapse of the Champlain Towers South that killed at least 94 people and left 22 missing. They were among the first recovered from the rubble. The girls were buried in the same coffin last week, Emma wearing her necklace.

As they search through tons of broken concrete and twisted rebar for more remains, authorities are also trying to recover keepsakes for families that have lost relatives and for surviving residents of the building. They have set up a database for people to upload information about missing property.

Each time crews find personal possessions, they take photos and log the location using GPS. They have made a grid of the pile, knowing approximately where each family's condo unit should be. Detectives place the objects into a bin. They are taken to an area to be cataloged and sealed in bags. Then they are placed in a locked and guarded cargo container for later shipment to a warehouse.

For the possessions of the deceased, there will be an "estate process" to claim items to make sure they get to the proper heir, Miami-Dade Police Director Freddy Ramirez said.

Miami-Dade police Sgt. Danny Murillo, a leader of the operation, said the process had to be designed through "trial and error" because the collapse of a residential tower "is not your everyday event." He said it can be emotional when an item like a child's toy is found.

"We are all human," he said.

Rachel Spiegel, who lost her 66-year-old mother, Judy Spiegel, in the collapse, hopes the crews will find her family's mementos. Her mother's remains were recovered Friday.

"All my parents' stuff over a lifetime is gone," Rachel Spiegel said. "Their wedding album is gone. My dad's wine collection is gone, all my mom's jewelry, all my mom's clothes, the dress she wore at my wedding that I wanted to wear one day. All of their belongings are gone. We have nothing."

Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett, who has visited the site repeatedly since the collapse, said crews are finding items as small as rings and jewelry in the rubble.

"The work is so delicate that we're even finding unbroken wine bottles," Burkett said. He said because of the information families have provided, search teams often know what to look for in specific parts of the pile. He held up a photo of a ring that was found in the wreckage where searchers believed it would be.

"They're expecting to find these things. And in this case, they did," Burkett said.

Ramirez said special consideration is being taken for religious property. Rabbis have toured the processing area to ensure that religious artifacts are properly stored and handled with care. He said some of the items have enormous significance.

"It could be the smallest little thing that to a common person it just looks like a little container. It really means generations. It's very spiritual, and I'm just so impressed. Our officers are learning so much about culture," he said. "There are just so many dynamics with the sadness and the sorrow."

## At least 8 dead in hotel collapse in city in eastern China

BEIJING (AP) — Rescue workers were digging through the remains of a collapsed hotel in eastern China looking for any survivors of a disaster that has killed at least eight people and left nine missing, authorities said Tuesday.

The workers in the city of Suzhou searched through the night, using rescue dogs, cranes, ladders and metal cutters, after the building collapsed Monday afternoon, the city government said in social media posts.

Photos showed orange-suited rescuers with helmets working through the ruins of the building, which had been reduced to girders and rubble. The cause of the collapse is under investigation.

At least 23 people were trapped when the hotel collapsed. Six people were rescued and eight people were confirmed dead, leaving nine people unaccounted for.

Authorities said 18 of those trapped were identified through check-in records, apparently hotel guests. The identities of the other five was unclear.

The 54-room Siji Kaiyuan Hotel opened in 2018, according to Ctrip, a Chinese online booking app.

More than 600 people including earthquake rescue teams and 120 vehicles were mobilized for the operation, the city government said.

Suzhou, a city in Jiangsu province near Shanghai, is a popular tourist destination known for its historic canals and traditional Chinese gardens.

## Cuban leaders beef up police patrols after rare protests

By ANDREA RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Cuban police are out in force on the country's streets as the president is accusing Cuban Americans of using social media to spur a rare outpouring of weekend protests over high prices and food shortages.

The demonstrations in several cities and towns were some of the biggest displays of antigovernment sentiment seen in years in tightly controlled Cuba, which is facing a surge of coronavirus cases as it struggles with its worst economic crisis in decades as a consequence of U.S. sanctions imposed by President Donald Trump's administration.

Many young people took part in Sunday's demonstrations in Havana. Protests were also held elsewhere on the island, including in the small town of San Antonio de los Baños, where people objected to power outages and were visited by President Miguel Díaz-Canel. He entered a few homes, where he took questions from residents.

Authorities appeared determined to put a stop to the demonstrations. More than a dozen protesters were detained, including a leading Cuban dissident who was arrested trying to attend a march in the city of Santiago, 559 miles (900 kilometers) east. The demonstrators disrupted traffic in the capital for several hours until some threw rocks and police moved in and broke them up.

Internet service was spotty, possibly indicating an effort to prevent protesters from communicating with each other.

"We've seen how the campaign against Cuba was growing on social media in the past few weeks," Díaz-Canel said Monday in a nationally televised appearance in which his entire Cabinet was present. "That's the way it's done: Try to create inconformity, dissatisfaction by manipulating emotions and feelings."

In a statement Monday, U.S. President Joe Biden said Cuban protesters were asserting their basic rights.

"We stand with the Cuban people and their clarion call for freedom and relief from the tragic grip of the pandemic and from the decades of repression and economic suffering to which they have been subjected by Cuba's authoritarian regime," Biden said.

The U.S. urges the Cuban government to serve their people "rather than enriching themselves," Biden added.

U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq on Monday stressed the U.N. position "on the need for freedom of expression and peaceful assembly to be respected fully, and we expect that that will be the case."

The demonstrations were extremely unusual on an island where little dissent against the government is tolerated. The last major public demonstration of discontent, over economic hardship, took place nearly 30 years in 1994. Last year, there were small demonstrations by artists and other groups, but nothing as big or widespread as what erupted this past weekend.

In the Havana protest on Sunday, police initially trailed behind as protesters chanted, "Freedom!" "Enough!" and "Unite!" One motorcyclist pulled out a U.S. flag, but it was snatched from him by others.

"We are fed up with the queues, the shortages. That's why I'm here," one middle-age protester told The Associated Press. He declined to identify himself for fear of being arrested later.

Later, about 300 pro-government protesters arrived with a large Cuban flag, shouting slogans in favor of the late President Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution. Some assaulted an AP videojournalist, smashing his camera. AP photojournalist Ramón Espinosa was then beaten by a group of police officers in uniforms and civilian clothes; he suffered a broken nose and an eye injury.

The demonstration grew to a few thousand in the vicinity of Galeano Avenue and the marchers pressed on despite a few charges by police officers and tear gas barrages. People standing on many balconies along the central artery in the Centro Habana neighborhood applauded the protesters passing by. Others joined in the march.

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About 2 1/2 hours into the march, some protesters pulled up cobblestones and threw them at police, at which point officers began arresting people and the marchers dispersed. AP journalists counted at least 20 people who were taken away in police cars or by individuals in civilian clothes.

Although many people tried to take out their cellphones and broadcast the protest live, Cuban authorities shut down internet service throughout the afternoon Sunday.

On Monday, Cuban authorities were blocking Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Telegram, said Alp Toker, director of Netblocks, a London-based internet monitoring firm.

"This does seem to be a response to social media-fueled protest," he said. Twitter did not appear to be blocked, though Toker noted Cuba has the ability to cut it off if it wants to.

## Democrats eye immigration action in budget, but outlook hazy

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congressional Democrats and immigration advocates are staring at their best chance in years to overcome Republican opposition and give millions of people in the U.S. without legal authorization a way to become citizens.

Their goal is to stuff the language into a huge measure this fall financing many of President Joe Biden's priorities that would be shielded from a Republican Senate filibuster. That bill-killing procedure requires a virtually impossible 60 votes to overcome, but erasing that danger with a Democrat in the White House means they could score an immigration triumph by themselves after years of Republicans blockading such efforts.

"This is the chance to finally get it done," said Kerri Talbot, deputy director of the Immigration Hub, a pro-immigration strategy group.

Yet Democrats' prospects, while tantalizing, remain murky because of two major hurdles.

Democrats in the narrowly divided Congress will need virtual unanimity to approve the sweeping legislation, which could include Biden's proposed tax boosts on the wealthy and other proposals likely to cause political heartburn. On immigration alone, the party will need solid support from vulnerable swing-district Democrats and moderates, whom Republicans are certain to accuse of favoring amnesty and open borders in next year's elections for congressional control.

Immigration advocates point to polls showing public support for opening the citizenship doorway and studies showing immigration spurs economic growth.

But Republicans and conservative groups sense a favorable political environment for themselves. They cite the large numbers of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border recently and growing public concern with crime, which the GOP often links to immigration.

"It would be a harder fight for our side if the administration were actually controlling the border," said Rosemary Jenks, government relations director for NumbersUSA, which favors limiting immigration. "It doesn't seem like a great way to go into the midterms" for Democrats.

Yet perhaps Democrats' biggest hurdle is the Senate parliamentarian, Elizabeth MacDonough, who determines whether legislative language follows the chamber's rules. MacDonough, 55, is a respected impartial arbiter, but Democrats haven't forgotten that she ruled against including another coveted progressive priority, a minimum wage increase, in their COVID-19 relief package months ago, essentially dooming the provision.

In a crucial first step in this process, Congress must approve a budget resolution. Senate Budget Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., has been trying to win Democratic support for one that he hopes to unveil soon.

The budget will be pivotal in two ways. First, it will contain language preventing Republicans from filibustering the subsequent bill funding Biden's priorities. By law, the budget resolution itself cannot be filibustered.

Second, the budget will set overall spending and revenue limits for that forthcoming spending bill, which is expected to be several trillion dollars. It will also assign congressional committees specific amounts they can spend, or raise in revenue, as they write language bolstering climate, family support and other priorities.

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Lawmakers are also writing a separate measure financing infrastructure projects that they hope to pass with bipartisan support.

In an early budget draft, Sanders proposed creating multiyear pathways to legal permanent residency, and potentially citizenship, for four groups of immigrants without legal status. These are people brought illegally to the U.S. as children, called "Dreamers"; others who fled violence or disasters in certain countries; essential workers; and farmworkers.

Because some immigrants fit into multiple groups, it's hard to say exactly how many people Sanders' proposal would help. The liberal Center for American Progress estimates it would affect 6 million people — barely over half the 11 million immigrants in the U.S. illegally whom Biden wants to assist, but still huge.

"In the whole scheme of immigration reform, it does not go far enough," Rep. Raul Ruiz, D-Calif., chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, said of Sanders' plan. "But we are strategically tailoring the groups that would most likely fit into a budgetary framework" so it would survive the parliamentary perusal.

Under Senate rules, provisions in a bill immune from filibusters must affect spending or revenue in a way that isn't "merely incidental" to that provision's overall policy. That's a subjective call that will be up to MacDonough, the parliamentarian, to make.

Democrats are pinning their hopes on a 2005 ruling by an earlier Senate parliamentarian that gave the green light to a narrower immigration proposal, though that provision never cleared Congress.

Sanders' early budget proposal also called for \$126 billion for processing immigrants for legal status, and \$24 billion to strengthen border security.

Border security money is especially important for Democrats facing close 2022 reelections because it will let them argue they're being tough, not just swinging doors open to immigrants. This could be important for moderates like Sen. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., and House lawmakers from closely divided or border-area districts.

Also being watched closely, though not facing imminent reelection, are Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, one of Congress' most conservative Democrats, and hard-to-predict centrist Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz.

Sanders' security proposal "shows one of the most progressive members of the Senate is saying, 'We've got to pay attention to border security,'" said Ali Noorani, president of the National Immigration Forum, which supports immigration. "It shows he's taking the politics of this seriously."

Immigration advocates are already applying pressure.

Rep. Jesus "Chuy" Garcia, D-Ill., told The Hill publication he'd oppose the sweeping spending bill unless it has a citizenship pathway for immigrants. We Are Home, a coalition of pro-immigration groups, and other organizations have announced a \$50 million campaign to prod lawmakers to back the push.

"People are fed up with empty promises," said Lorella Praeli, co-president of the progressive group Community Change Action and a We Are Home leader. "Focus on the people who elected you."

Democrats have no votes to spare in the 50-50 Senate, and this autumn will be able to lose no more than three House votes.

The House approved two bills in March creating pathways to citizenship for many "Dreamers," refugees from troubled countries and agricultural workers. While bipartisan talks have continued, the measures have gone nowhere in the Senate, largely due to GOP opposition.

"If we use every tool and every ounce of our power, then we can legalize millions this year," said Frank Sharry, executive director of the pro-immigrant group America's Voice.

## Mystery grows with key suspect in Haiti president killing

By DÁNICA COTO, TERRY SPENCER and BEN FOX Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — A physician. A church pastor. A failed Florida businessman who filed for bankruptcy.

New details that have emerged about a man considered a key player in the killing of Haiti's president deepened the mystery over the assassination that shocked this nation of more than 11 million people as it faces an uncertain future.

Local authorities identified the suspect as Christian Emmanuel Sanon, 62, a Haitian who once expressed



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a desire to lead his country in a YouTube video. However he is unknown in Haitian political circles, and associates suggested he was duped by those really behind the slaying of President Jovenel Moïse in an attack last week that critically wounded his wife, Martine.

A Florida friend of Sanon told The Associated Press the suspect is an evangelical Christian pastor and also is a licensed physician in Haiti, but not in the U.S. The associate, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of safety concerns, said Sanon told him he was approached by people claiming to represent the U.S. State and Justice departments who wanted to install him as president.

He said the plan was only for Moïse to be arrested, and Sanon would not have participated if he knew Moïse would be killed.

"I guarantee you that," the associate said. "This was supposed to be a mission to save Haiti from hell, with support from the U.S. government."

Echoing those sentiments was the Rev. Larry Caldwell, a Florida pastor, who said he worked with Sanon setting up churches and medical clinics in Haiti in 2000-2010. He doesn't believe Sanon would have been involved in violence.

"I know the character of the man," Caldwell said. "You take a man like that and you're then going to say he participated in a brutal crime of murder, knowing that being associated with that would send him to the pits of hell? ... If there was one man who would be willing to stand in the breach to help his country, it would be Christian."

Haiti's National Police chief, Léon Charles, said Moïse's killers were protecting Sanon, whom he accused of working with those who plotted the assassination.

Charles said officers found a hat with the logo of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, 20 boxes of bullets, gun parts, four license plates from the Dominican Republic, two cars and correspondence, among other things, in Sanon's house in Haiti.

Twenty-six former Colombian soldiers are suspected in the killing, and 23 have been arrested, along with three Haitians. Charles said five suspects are still at large and at least three have been killed.

A U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration official told AP that one of the suspects in Moïse's assassination was at times a confidential source to the agency, and that the suspect reached out to his contacts at the DEA after the killing and was urged to surrender. The official said the DEA and a U.S. State Department official provided information to Haiti's government that led to the surrender and arrest of one suspect and one other individual, whom it didn't identify.

Meanwhile, Colombia's national police chief, Gen. Jorge Luis Vargas, said that a Florida-based enterprise, CTU Security, used its company credit card to buy 19 plane tickets from Bogota to Santo Domingo for Colombian suspects. Most arrived in the Dominican Republic in June and moved into Haiti within weeks, Vargas said.

He said Dimitri Hérard, head of general security at Haiti's National Palace, flew to Colombia, Ecuador and Panama in the months before the assassination, and Colombian police are investigating whether he had any role in recruiting the mercenaries. In Haiti, prosecutors are seeking to interrogate Hérard as part of the assassination investigation.

Charles said that Sanon was in contact with CTU Security and that the company recruited the suspects in the killing. He said Sanon flew into Haiti in June on a private jet accompanied by several of the alleged gunmen.

The suspects were told their job was to protect Sanon, but they were later ordered to arrest the president, Charles said.

Charles said that after Moïse was killed, one suspect called Sanon, who got in touch with two people believed to be masterminds of the plot. He did not identify the masterminds or say if police know who they are.

Sanon's associate said he attended a recent meeting in Florida with Sanon and about a dozen other people, including Antonio Enmanuel Intriago Valera, a Venezuelan émigré to Miami who runs CTU Security. He said a presentation was made for rebuilding Haiti, including its water system, converting trash into energy and fixing roads.

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He said Sanon asked why the security team accompanying him to Haiti were all Colombians. Sanon was told that Haitians couldn't be trusted and that the system is corrupt, the associate said. He said Sanon called him from Haiti a few days before the assassination and said the Colombians had disappeared.

"I'm all by myself. Who are these people? I don't know what they are doing," the associate quoted Sanon as saying.

Sanon "is completely gullible," the associate added. "He thinks God is going to save everything."

Sanon has lived in Kansas City, Missouri and in Florida, where he filed for bankruptcy in 2013 and identified himself as a medical doctor in a YouTube video titled "Leadership for Haiti" in which he denounced the country's leadership as corrupt and accused them of stripping the country's resources.

However, records show Sanon has never been licensed to practice medicine or any other occupation covered by Florida's Department of Health.

Sanon said in court papers filed in his 2013 bankruptcy case that he was a physician and a pastor at the Tabarre Evangelical Tabernacle in Haiti. He said he had stakes in enterprises including the Organization of Rome Haiti, which he identified as a non-governmental group, a radio station in Haiti and medical facilities in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

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Florida records show Sanon started about a dozen businesses over the last 20 years, all of which failed, including ones that appeared related to medical imaging, physical therapy, fossil fuel trading, real estate and veganism.

Sanon's arrest comes as a growing number of politicians have challenged interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph, who is currently in charge of Haiti with backing from police and the military.

U.S. officials, including representatives from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security, met Sunday with Joseph, designated Prime Minister Ariel Henry and Joseph Lambert, the head of Haiti's dismantled Senate, whom supporters have named as provisional president in a challenge to Joseph, according to the White House National Security Council.

The delegation also met with Haiti's National Police and reviewed the security of critical infrastructure, it said.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the delegation received a request for additional assistance. She said deployment of U.S. troops remained "under review," but also suggested that Haiti's political uncertainty was a complicating factor.

"What was clear from their trip is that there is a lack of clarity about the future of political leadership," Psaki said.

U.S. President Joe Biden said he was closely following developments, adding: "The people of Haiti deserve peace and security, and Haiti's political leaders need to come together for the good of their country."

Meanwhile, U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said Haiti's request for security assistance is being examined.

The United Nations has been involved in Haiti on and off since 1990, but the last U.N. military peacekeepers left the country in 2017.

## 'The Queen's Gambit,' 'Ted Lasso' vie for Emmy nominations

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "The Crown" and "Ted Lasso," among the TV shows that helped distract America during an oppressive pandemic year, are in the hunt for Emmy recognition.

The nominations for the 73rd Primetime Emmy Awards will be announced Tuesday by father-and-daughter actors Ron Cephas Jones ("This Is Us") and Jasmine Cephas Jones ("Blindspotting"), and TV academy chief executive Frank Scherma.

In its fourth season, the British royal drama "The Crown" moved closer to contemporary events with its

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version of the courtship and rocky marriage of Prince Charles and Diana Spencer, played by Josh O'Connor and Emma Corrin.

The actors are among the favorites for Emmy nods, along with Olivia Colman as Queen Elizabeth II and Gillian Anderson as Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

For Netflix, which led the way for the rise of streaming services but has yet to claim a top series trophy, "The Crown" may represent its best bet. It's been nominated three times before.

"Ted Lasso," a feel-good comedy about a middling American football coach abruptly imported to England to take over a soccer team, could snare nominations for star Jason Sudeikis and cast members including Hannah Waddingham and Nick Mohammed.

Contenders in the miniseries category include "The Queen's Gambit," with breakout star Anya Taylor-Joy as a troubled chess prodigy, and "The Underground Railroad," based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Colson Whitehead and created by Oscar-winning director Barry Jenkins ("Moonlight").

Thuso Mbedu and Aaron Pierre, who star in the wrenching depiction of U.S. slavery combined with elements of magical realism, are potential nominees.

"Lovecraft Country," which spins a tale about mid-20th-century racism with elements of horror, is up for drama series honors despite its cancellation by HBO after one season.

"The Mandalorian" and "WandaVision" are among the sci-fi and fantasy genre shows in contention.

Also vying for Emmy consideration are shows that made a splash and boast movie stars, including the crime miniseries "Mare of Easttown" with Kate Winslet and "The Undoing" with Nicole Kidman and Hugh Grant.

TV academy voters have a chance to build on the inclusiveness of last year's acting nominations, which included a record number of Black nominees — 35 — among the 102 contenders for lead, supporting and guest performances in drama, comedy and limited series or TV movie.

At slightly more than 34% of nominees, that improved on the 2018 record of just under 28% of Black actors in those categories. Voters also have the chance to recognize other actors of color, including Rosie Perez for the comedy thriller "The Flight Attendant," and trans actors Mj Rodriguez and Angelica Ross for "Pose."

The Sept. 10 ceremony, which last year was held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic, will air live on CBS from a theater and include a limited in-person audience of nominees and guests. Cedric the Entertainer is the host.

## Texas Democrats leave state to try to stop GOP voting bill

By PAUL J. WEBER and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Democrats in the Texas Legislature bolted Monday for Washington, and said they were ready to remain there for weeks in a second revolt against a GOP overhaul of election laws, forcing a dramatic new showdown over voting rights in America.

Private planes carrying more than 50 Democrats left Austin for Dulles International Airport midafternoon, skipping town just days before the Texas House of Representatives was expected to give early approval to sweeping new voting restrictions in a special legislative session. The numbers meant the House would not have enough lawmakers in attendance to conduct business and could not, at least for now, vote on the bill.

The cross-country exodus was the second time that Democratic lawmakers have staged a walkout on the voting overhaul, a measure of their fierce opposition to proposals they say will make it harder for young people, people of color and people with disabilities to vote. But like last month's effort, there remains no clear path for Democrats to permanently block the voting measures, or a list of other contentious GOP-backed proposals up for debate.

Hours after they took off, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott told an Austin television station he would simply keep calling special sessions through next year if necessary, and raised the possibility of Democrats facing arrest upon returning home.

"As soon as they come back in the state of Texas, they will be arrested, they will be cabined inside the

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Texas Capitol until they get their job done," Abbott said.

As they arrived in Washington Monday evening, the lawmakers said they would not be swayed.

"We are determined to kill this bill," said state Rep. Chris Turner, who said he and his colleagues were prepared to run out the clock on a special session that ends early next month.

Democrats' decision to hole up in Washington is aimed at ratcheting up pressure on President Joe Biden and Congress to act on voting at the federal level. Biden is set to deliver a major address on the issue Tuesday in Philadelphia, after facing growing criticism for taking what some on the left call too passive a role in the fight.

"This is a now-or-never for our democracy. We are holding the line in Texas," said Democratic state Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer. "We've left our jobs, we've left our families, we've left our homes. Because there is nothing more important than voting rights in America."

The Texas bills would outlawing 24-hour polling places, banning ballot drop boxes used to deposit mail ballots and empowering partisan poll watchers.

The measures are part of the GOP's rush to enact new voting restrictions in response to former President Donald Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen. More than a dozen states this year have already passed tougher election laws — but only in Texas have Democrats put up this kind of fight.

The state has a history of attention-getting political tactics. Texas Democrats, shut out of power in the state Capitol for decades, last fled the state in 2003 to thwart a redistricting plan. They ultimately lost that fight.

Turner noted this time the state lawmakers had dual goals. They called on Congress to pass the Democrat-backed, federal voting rights law prior to when they go on August recess, which is around the same time Texas' special session will end. He said the group would meet with Democrats across Washington, but a White House official said there are no current plans for a White House visit.

Turner said in order to pass the voting rights expansion law, the Senate may have to modify its procedural rules, but added, "I don't really care how they do it."

Back in Texas, Republican House Speaker Dade Phelan promised to use "every available resource" to secure a quorum. He did not elaborate, but some House Republicans signaled they would take action when the chamber reconvenes Tuesday. When Democrats fled the state two decades ago state troopers were deployed to bring them back.

In an interview with Austin television station KVUE, Abbott said he was prepared to keep calling special sessions though next year's election.

"If these people want to be hanging out, wherever they're hanging out on this taxpayer-paid junket, they're going to have to be prepared to do it for well over a year, he said.

But it was not immediately clear who was footing the bill for the Democrats' trip. Martinez Fischer said he would use his own campaign funds to pay for hotels for House members, but declined to comment on who funded the chartered flights.

Speaking in the airport parking lot, he blasted the governor for likening the group, which includes many Black and Latino lawmakers, to "animal or property, to say he will corral us and he will cabin us in the capitol to get this agenda." After addressing the media, Black lawmakers led the group in singing "We Shall Overcome."

Over the weekend, Texas Republicans began advancing measures that also bring back provisions to ban drive-thru voting, add new voter ID requirements to absentee ballots and prohibit local elections officials from proactively sending mail-in ballot applications to voters. Abbott also gave lawmakers a lengthy to-do list this summer, heavy on hot-button conservative issues including restrictions over how race is taught in schools and banning transgender athletes from playing in girls' sports.

The decision to flee carries risks, and no guarantee of victory in the long run.

Abbott, who is up for reelection in 2022 and has demanded new election laws in Texas, could keep calling 30-day special sessions until a bill is passed. He also punished Democrats after their May walkout by vetoing paychecks for roughly 2,000 Capitol employees, which will begin taking effect in September unless the Legislature is in session to restore the funding.

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Staying away for an extended time could also carry repercussions in next year's midterm elections, although many Texas Democrats are already expecting a difficult cycle in 2022, particularly with Republicans set to begin drawing new voting maps this fall that could cement their majorities.

For weeks, Democrats have signaled they were ready to draw a line. Adding to their anger: A Houston man who gained attention last year after waiting more than six hours to cast a ballot was arrested on illegal voting charges a day before the special session began Thursday. Attorneys for Hervis Rogers say the 62-year-old did not know that his being on parole for a felony burglary conviction meant he wasn't allowed to vote.

Vice President Kamala Harris applauded Texas Democrats for their "courage and commitment" before they boarded the flight. Back in Texas, Republican Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick signaled that he would still try to pass a voting bill as early as Tuesday in the Senate. It was unclear whether Democrats in that chamber would continue showing up.

## **Sanders, Biden meet as infrastructure bill swells past \$3.5T**

By LISA MASCARO and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Emerging from a private meeting at the White House, Sen. Bernie Sanders said Monday that he and President Joe Biden are on the same page as Democrats draft a "transformative" infrastructure package unleashing more than \$3.5 trillion in domestic investments on par with the New Deal of the 1930s.

Sanders, chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, and Democrats on his panel also huddled privately at the Capitol for two hours late Monday with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and key White House advisers during a consequential time for Biden's top priority. Congress is racing to put together a sweeping proposal financing infrastructure, family assistance and other programs for initial votes later this month.

Sanders, I-Vt., said he had a "very good discussion" with Biden .

"He knows and I know that we're seeing an economy where the very, very rich are getting richer while working families are struggling," Sanders told reporters.

Sanders said he and the president did not discuss a topline figure, but the Vermont senator mentioned his own more far-reaching \$6 trillion proposal, which includes expanding Medicare for older adults. Later at the Capitol, he told reporters that the Democrats' package would be bigger than \$3.5 trillion, an amount floated as in line with Biden's initial proposal.

"The end of the day we're going to accomplish something very significant," Sanders said.

After Democrats' evening meeting at the Capitol, Sanders said lawmakers were still discussing overall spending and other figures.

"What we're trying to do is a multitrillion-dollar bill which is going to address long neglected problems of the working families in this country" and the problem of climate change, he told reporters.

Other lawmakers said senators would meet again Tuesday.

Biden's big infrastructure proposals are moving through Congress on various tracks — each potentially complementing or torpedoing the other.

A bipartisan group of 10 senators unveiled a nearly \$1 trillion package of traditional infrastructure for roads, bridges, broadband and some climate change investments in electric vehicles and resiliency for extreme weather conditions.

Senators in the bipartisan group are struggling to draft their proposal into legislation but hope to have a bill ready as soon as this week. Disagreements are emerging over how to pay for it.

"Pay-fors are still up in the air," said Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D.

The rest of Biden's ideas are being collected into the much broader multitrillion-dollar package that could be approved by Democrats on their own under a special budget reconciliation process that allows passage with 51 votes in the Senate, rather than the typical 60-vote threshold that's needed to overcome a Senate filibuster.

Sanders, as chair of the Budget Committee, has been leading his colleagues in a series of private con-

versations. A one-time Biden rival for the presidency, Sanders now holds an influential position shaping the president's top priority.

"My job is to do everything I can to see that the Senate comes forward with the strongest possible legislation to protect the needs of the working families of this country," Sanders said at the White House.

## Florida suspect in Haiti president killing deepens mystery

By DÁNICA COTO, BEN FOX and TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — The arrest of a failed Haitian businessman living in Florida who authorities say was a key player in the killing of Haiti's president deepened the mystery Monday into an already convoluted plot surrounding the assassination.

Haitian authorities identified the suspect as Christian Emmanuel Sanon, 62, who once expressed a desire to lead his country in a YouTube video. However, he is unknown in Haitian political circles, and associates suggested he was duped by those really behind the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in an attack last week that critically wounded his wife, Martine, who remains hospitalized in Miami.

A Florida friend of Sanon told The Associated Press that the suspect is an evangelical Christian pastor and a licensed physician in Haiti, but not in the U.S. The associate, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of safety concerns, said Sanon told him he was approached by people claiming to represent the U.S. State and Justice departments who wanted to install him as president.

He said the plan was for Moïse to be arrested, not killed, and Sanon would not have participated if he knew Moïse would be assassinated.

"I guarantee you that," the associate said. "This was supposed to be a mission to save Haiti from hell, with support from the U.S. government."

Echoing those sentiments was the Rev. Larry Caldwell, a Florida pastor, who said he worked with Sanon setting up churches and medical clinics in Haiti from 2000-2010. He doesn't believe Sanon would have been involved in violence.

"I know the character of the man," Caldwell said. "You take a man like that and you're then going to say he participated in a brutal crime of murder, knowing that being associated with that would send him to the pits of hell? ... If there was one man who would be willing to stand in the breach to help his country, it would be Christian."

Haiti's National Police chief, Léon Charles, said Moïse's killers were protecting Sanon, whom he accused of working with those who plotted the assassination.

Charles said officers found a hat with the logo of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, 20 boxes of bullets, gun parts, four license plates from the Dominican Republic, two cars and correspondence, among other things, in Sanon's house in Haiti.

Twenty-six former Colombian soldiers are suspected in the killing and 23 have been arrested, along with three Haitians. Charles said five suspects are still at large and at least three have been killed.

"They are dangerous individuals," Charles said. "I'm talking commando, specialized commando."

A U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration official told AP that one of the suspects in Moïse's assassination was at times a confidential source to the agency, and that the suspect reached out to his contacts at the DEA after the killing and was urged to surrender. The official said the DEA and a U.S. State Department official provided information to Haiti's government that led to the surrender and arrest of one suspect and one other individual, whom it didn't identify.

Meanwhile, Colombia's national police chief, Gen. Jorge Luis Vargas, said that a Florida-based enterprise, CTU Security, used its company credit card to buy 19 plane tickets from Bogota to Santo Domingo for the Colombian suspects. Most arrived in the Dominican Republic in June and moved into Haiti within weeks, Vargas said.

He said that Dimitri Hérard, head of general security at Haiti's National Palace, flew to Colombia, Ecuador and Panama in the months before the assassination, and Colombian police are investigating whether he had any role in recruiting the mercenaries. In Haiti, prosecutors are seeking to interrogate Hérard over

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the assassination.

Charles said Sanon was in contact with CTU Security and that the company recruited the suspects in the killing. He said Sanon flew into Haiti in June on a private jet accompanied by several of the alleged gunmen.

The suspects' initial mission was to protect Sanon, but they later received a new order: to arrest the president, Charles said.

"The operation started from there," he said, adding that 22 additional suspects joined the group.

Charles said that after Moïse was killed, one suspect phoned Sanon, who got in touch with two people believed to be masterminds of the plot. He did not identify them or say if police know who they are.

Sanon's associate said he attended a recent meeting in Florida with Sanon and about a dozen other people, including Antonio Enmanuel Intriago Valera, a Venezuelan émigré to Miami who runs CTU Security. He said a presentation was made for rebuilding the country, including its water system, converting trash into energy and fixing roads.

He said Sanon asked why the security team accompanying him to Haiti were all Colombians. Sanon was told Haitians couldn't be trusted and that the system is corrupt, the associate said. He said Sanon called him from Haiti a few days before the assassination and said the Colombians had disappeared.

"I'm all by myself. Who are these people? I don't know what they are doing," the associate quoted Sanon as saying.

Sanon "is completely gullible," the associate added. "He thinks God is going to save everything."

Sanon has lived in Broward County in Florida, as well as in Hillsborough County on the Gulf Coast. Records also show he resided in Kansas City, Missouri. He filed for bankruptcy in Florida in 2013 and identified himself as a medical doctor in a video on YouTube titled "Leadership for Haiti."

However, records show Sanon has never been licensed to practice medicine or any other occupation covered by Florida's Department of Health.

Sanon said in court papers filed in a 2013 bankruptcy case in Florida that he was a physician and a pastor at the Tabarre Evangelical Tabernacle in Haiti. He said he had stakes in enterprises including the Organization of Rome Haiti, which he identified as a non-governmental organization, a radio station in Haiti and medical facilities in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

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Florida records show Sanon started about a dozen businesses over the last 20 years, all of which failed, including ones that appeared related to medical imaging, physical therapy, fossil fuel trading, real estate and veganism.

In a 2011 YouTube video, Sanon denounced Haiti's leadership as corrupt, accusing them of stripping the country of its resources, saying: "They don't care about the country, they don't care about the people."

He falsely claimed that Haiti has uranium, oil and other resources that have been taken by government officials.

"Nine million people can't be in poverty when we have so much resources in the country. It's impossible," he said. "We need new leadership that will change the way of life."

Sanon's arrest comes as a growing number of politicians have challenged interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph, who is currently in charge of Haiti with backing from police and the military.

U.S. officials, including representatives from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security, met Sunday with Joseph, designated Prime Minister Ariel Henry and Joseph Lambert, the head of Haiti's dismantled Senate, whom supporters have named as provisional president in a challenge to Joseph, according to the White House National Security Council.

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political uncertainty was a complicating factor.

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The United Nations has been involved in Haiti on and off since 1990, but the last U.N. military peacekeepers left the country in 2017.

## Summer camps hit with COVID outbreaks — are schools next?

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH, KANTELE FRANKO and LINDSEY TANNER Associated Press

The U.S. has seen a string of COVID-19 outbreaks tied to summer camps in recent weeks in places such as Texas, Illinois, Florida, Missouri and Kansas, in what some fear could be a preview of the upcoming school year.

In some cases the outbreaks have spread from the camp to the broader community.

The clusters have come as the number of newly confirmed cases of the coronavirus in the U.S. has reversed course, surging more than 60% over the past two weeks from an average of about 12,000 a day to around 19,500, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

The rise in many places has been blamed on too many unvaccinated people and the highly contagious delta variant.

Gwen Ford, a 43-year-old science teacher from Adrian, Missouri, was cautiously optimistic when she eyed the dropping case numbers in the spring and signed up her 12-year-old daughter for the West Central Christian Service Camp.

But one day after the girl got home from a week of playing in the pool, worshipping with friends and bunking in a dormitory, Ford got an email about an outbreak and then learned that her daughter's camp buddy was infected.

"It was very nerve-wracking. It kind of seems like we finally felt comfortable and it happened," Ford said, adding that her daughter ultimately tested negative.

Ford said she definitely plans to get her daughter vaccinated but hadn't done so because there wasn't much time between the start of camp and the government's authorization of the Pfizer vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds in May.

A note posted on the camp's Facebook page showed that the camp nurse and several other staff members and volunteers were among those infected. Staff members at the camp did not return a call for comment.

JoAnn Martin, administrator of the public health agency in surrounding Pettis County, lamented the difficulty in getting people to take the virus seriously and get vaccinated.

"It has been a challenge since the first case," she said. "You have people who still say it is not real. You have people who say it is a cold. You have people who say what is the big deal. You have people who say it is all a government plot."

Dr. William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University infectious disease specialist, said he isn't surprised by the outbreaks as camps reopen this year after being closed last summer. He said he had his doubts that some camps "thought through all the implications of camping during COVID."

Ideally, he said, camps would require vaccinations for adults and for campers who are old enough, and would take other measures such as serving meals in shifts, putting fewer youngsters in the cabins and requiring anyone unvaccinated to wear masks indoors.

In the Houston area, health officials reported more than 130 youths and adults tested positive for the virus in cases connected to a church camp. The pastor of Clear Creek Community Church in League City said the outbreak happened in two waves, first at the camp and then when people returned home in late June.



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"In some cases, entire families are sick," pastor Bruce Wesley said on the church's Facebook page.

In Illinois, health officials said 85 teens and adults at a Christian youth camp in mid-June tested positive, including an unvaccinated young adult who was hospitalized, and some people from the camp attended a nearby conference, leading to 11 additional cases.

The Illinois Department of Public Health said all the campers were eligible for the vaccine, but only "a handful" of campers and staff had received it. The camp didn't check people's vaccination status or require masks indoors, according to the department.

The health department in Leon County, Florida, which includes Tallahassee, tweeted this month that an increase in cases there also was tied in part to summer camp outbreaks.

And in Kansas, about 50 people have been infected in an outbreak linked to a church summer camp held last month not far from Wichita.

Elsewhere the situation is better. The roughly 225 overnight camps and thousands of day camps run by local YMCAs are mostly open this summer, though with slightly reduced capacity, said Paul McEntire, chief operating officer for YMCA of the USA.

McEntire said he is aware of a few cases of Y camps where people tested positive for the virus, but no instances of significant spread. He said many camps are taking precautions such as serving meals in shifts or outside and trying to keep youngsters in separate groups. Most are requiring masks indoors, but he acknowledged it can be a challenge.

"To be frank, there are some parents that didn't want to send their kids unless they were assured that masking was being used indoors," he said. "There were others that took the exact opposite viewpoint."

Ahead of the school year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its guidance last week to say vaccinated teachers and students don't need to wear masks inside and 3-foot distancing of desks is not necessary for the fully vaccinated.

On Monday, California announced rules for public schools that let students and teachers sit as close to each other as they want but still require them to wear masks. Other state and district officials have adopted a patchwork of coronavirus regulations for schools.

Summer camp outbreaks "certainly could be a precursor" to what happens when youngsters return to classrooms in the fall, said Dr. Michelle Prickett, a pulmonary and critical care specialist at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. The outcome will depend on vaccination rates and which virus variants are prevalent, she said.

"We just need to be vigilant," Prickett said.

Schaffner said he thinks schools won't face similar outbreaks because they tend to be more structured and disciplined than camps and because most got used to making adjustments over the past year and a half. But he said the best way to reduce the risk is to get most people vaccinated.

"There are many parts of the country that simply have not grasped this," he said.

It could be several months before regulators make a decision on authorizing shots for children under 12. Studies on such youngsters are still going on.

Meanwhile, in Tennessee, the state's top vaccination official was fired Monday after facing scrutiny from Republican state lawmakers over her department's outreach efforts to vaccinate teenagers against COVID-19. Dr. Michelle Fiscus told The Tennessean newspaper about her termination. A Health Department official said the agency would not comment.

The Department of Health instructed county-level employees recently to stop vaccination events aimed at teens and to halt any online outreach to them, The Tennessean previously reported, citing emails it obtained.

Ford, the teacher whose daughter narrowly escaped getting COVID-19 at a Missouri summer camp, is worried.

"With the uptick in cases, I am concerned that we won't be able to go back to normal, and we will have to ask people to mask and stuff," she said, "and I have a feeling that there is going to be a huge argument."

## Firefighters make progress against big fires in US West

By JOHN ANTCHAK and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Dozens of wildfires burned across the torrid U.S. West on Monday, but fire agencies reported some progress in corralling the flames and forecasters predicted a gradual decrease in extreme temperatures.

The fires have forced evacuations in numerous areas with scattered homes and tiny communities where some burned houses and other structures have been observed, but total losses were still being tallied.

The fires erupted as the West was in the grip of the second bout of dangerously high temperatures in just a few weeks. A climate change-fueled megadrought also is making conditions that lead to fire even more dangerous, scientists say.

The National Weather Service said, however, that the heat wave appeared to have peaked in many areas, and excessive-heat warnings were largely expected to expire by Monday night or Tuesday.

The two largest fires were burning forests in northeastern California and southern Oregon, sending smoke across other states.

The Beckwourth Complex, two lightning-ignited blazes, covered about 140 square miles (362 square kilometers) on Northern California's border with Nevada. Plumas National Forest officials said firefighters successfully contained almost a quarter of the blaze but still expected some extreme fire activity.

Evacuation orders were in effect for more than 3,000 residents of remote areas of California's Lassen and Plumas counties and Nevada's Washoe County. Some structures were destroyed over the weekend in Doyle, California, a town of about 600 residents.

"A damage assessment team has arrived to validate and assess reports of structures damaged or destroyed," a forest statement said.

In Oregon, the Bootleg Fire covered 240 square miles (621 square kilometers) in the Fremont-Winema National Forest, near the Klamath County town of Sprague River.

After doubling in size at least twice over the weekend, it grew only incrementally Sunday, a sign of some progress, said Rich Saalsaa, spokesman for the Oregon State Fire Marshal.

"It's allowed firefighters to build more lines and go on the offensive," Saalsaa said.

Seven homes and 43 outbuildings have been destroyed in an area on the south end of the blaze, Saalsaa said.

"Most of these places are not within a community per se. Maybe they're the same postal zone. But it's kind of scattered out there, very remote," Saalsaa said.

Some 1,926 homes were within the current evacuation zone, he said, but he didn't know how many people that includes.

Firefighters were contending with erratic winds, but temperatures were slightly lower.

In central Oregon, a wildfire that started Sunday near the resort town of Sisters doubled in size to 6.2 square miles (16 square kilometers).

The Bootleg Fire disrupted service on three transmission lines providing up to 5,500 megawatts of electricity to California, where the state's grid operator asked for voluntary power conservation from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. to ease the strain. The timing coincides with decreasing generation from solar facilities as night falls.

Elsewhere, a forest fire started during lightning storms in southeast Washington grew to 86 square miles (223 square kilometers). It was 20% contained Monday.

Another fire west of Winthrop closed the scenic North Cascades Highway, the most northern route through the Cascade Range. The road provides access to North Cascades National Park and the Ross Lake National Recreation Area.

In Idaho, Gov. Brad Little mobilized the National Guard to help fight twin lightning-sparked fires that have together charred nearly 24 square miles (62 square kilometers) of dry timber in the remote, drought-stricken region.

A new fire broke out Sunday afternoon in the Sierra Nevada south of Yosemite National Park and by evening had exploded over more than 6 square miles (15.5 square kilometers), triggering evacuations in

areas of two counties. The fire's size, however, remained unchanged early Monday and was 5% contained. A highway that leads to Yosemite's southern entrance remained open.

The July heat wave follows an unusual June siege of broiling temperatures in the West, and comes amid worsening drought conditions throughout the region.

Global warming has contributed to the megadrought and is making plants more prone to burning. Human-caused climate change and decades of fire suppression that increases fuel loads have aggravated fire conditions across the West, scientists say.

## US drilling approvals increase despite Biden climate pledge

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Approvals for companies to drill for oil and gas on U.S. public lands are on pace this year to reach their highest level since George W. Bush was president, underscoring President Joe Biden's reluctance to more forcefully curb petroleum production in the face of industry and Republican resistance.

The Interior Department approved about 2,500 permits to drill on public and tribal lands in the first six months of the year, according to an Associated Press analysis of government data. That includes more than 2,100 drilling approvals since Biden took office January 20.

New Mexico and Wyoming had the largest number of approvals. Montana, Colorado and Utah had hundreds each.

Biden campaigned last year on pledges to end new drilling on federal lands to rein in climate-changing emissions. His pick to oversee those lands, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, adamantly opposed drilling on federal lands while in Congress and co-sponsored the liberal Green New Deal.

But the steps taken by the administration to date on fossil fuels are more modest, including a temporary suspension on new oil and gas leases on federal lands that a judge blocked last month, blocked petroleum sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and cancellation of the Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada.

Because vast fossil fuel reserves already are under lease, those actions did nothing to slow drilling on public lands and waters that account for about a quarter of U.S. oil production.

Further complicating Biden's climate agenda is a recent rise in gasoline prices to \$3 a gallon (\$0.79 a liter) or more in many parts of the country. Any attempt to limit petroleum production could push gasoline prices even higher and risk souring economic recovery from the pandemic.

"He's walking the tightrope," said energy industry analyst Parker Fawcett with S&P Global Platts, noting that Keystone and ANWR came without huge political costs because they were aimed at future projects.

"Those easy wins don't necessarily have huge impacts on the market today," Fawcett said. "He is definitely backing off taking drastic action that would rock the market. ... What you're going to see is U.S. oil production is going to continue to rebound."

Haaland has sought to tamp down Republican concern over potential constraints on the industry. She said during a House Natural Resources Committee hearing last month that there was no "plan right now for a permanent ban."

"Gas and oil production will continue well into the future and we believe that is the reality of our economy and the world we're living in," Haaland told Colorado Republican Rep. Doug Lamborn.

Interior officials declined further comment on permits issued under Biden.

Under former President Donald Trump, a staunch industry supporter, the Interior Department reduced the time it takes to review drilling applications from a year or more in some cases, to just a few months.

Companies rushed to lock in drilling rights before the new administration. And in December, Trump's last full month in office, agency officials approved more than 800 permits — far more than any prior month during his presidency.

The pace dropped when Biden first took office, under a temporary order that elevated permit reviews to senior administration officials. Approvals have since rebounded to a level that exceeds monthly numbers

seen through most of Trump's presidency.

The data obtained by AP from a government database is subject to change because of delays in transmitting data from Interior field offices to headquarters.

If the recent trends continue, the Interior Department could issue close to 6,000 permits by the end of the year. The last time so many were issued was fiscal year 2008, amid an oil boom driven by crude prices that reached an all-time high of \$140 per barrel that June.

Decisions on about 4,700 drilling applications remained pending as of June 1, which means approvals are likely to continue at a heavy pace as officials work through a backlog left over from the Trump administration, said Fawcett, the industry analyst.

Environmentalists who share the administration's goals on climate have expressed growing frustration as prospects for a ban on drilling fade. They contend the administration could take executive action that would stop further permits but has caved to Republican pressure.

"Every indication is they have no plans of actually fulfilling their campaign promise," said Mitch Jones, policy director for the environmental group Food & Water Watch. "The result of that will be continued and increasing development of fossil fuels on public lands, which means more climate change."

Economists and other experts have been skeptical about how much impact a permit ban would have. Companies simply could shift onto private and state lands and keep drilling, said University of Chicago deputy dean Ryan Kellogg.

The administration's defenders say it's being pragmatic in the face of a Senate split 50-50 between Democrats and Republicans and questions over whether the government could legally stop drilling on leases already sold to companies.

That's meant forgoing a drilling ban in hopes of getting bipartisan support for a huge infrastructure package that includes clean energy incentives and other measures to address global warming.

"It's the long game. ... You've got to appease some of those oil and gas state senators," said Jim Lyons, who was deputy assistant Interior secretary under Barack Obama and is now an environmental consultant. "It means jobs back home for thousands of workers. You can't just pull the plug overnight."

## Police patrol Havana in large numbers after rare protests

By ANDREA RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Large contingents of Cuban police patrolled the capital of Havana on Monday following rare protests around the island nation against food shortages and high prices amid the coronavirus crisis. Cuba's president said the demonstrations were stirred up on social media by Cuban Americans in the United States.

Sunday's protests marked some of the biggest displays of antigovernment sentiment in the tightly controlled country in years. Cuba is going through its worst economic crisis in decades, along with a resurgence of coronavirus cases, as it suffers the consequences of U.S. sanctions imposed by former President Donald Trump's administration.

Many young people took part in demonstrations in Havana. Protests were also held elsewhere on the island, including in the small town of San Antonio de los Baños, where people objected to power outages and were visited by President Miguel Díaz-Canel. He entered a few homes, where he took questions from residents.

Authorities appeared determined to put a stop to the demonstrations. More than a dozen protesters were detained, including a leading Cuban dissident who was arrested trying to attend a march in the city of Santiago, 559 miles (900 kilometers) east. The demonstrators disrupted traffic in the capital for several hours until some threw rocks and police moved in and broke them up.

Internet service was spotty, possibly indicating an effort to prevent protesters from communicating with each other.

"We've seen how the campaign against Cuba was growing on social media in the past few weeks," Díaz-Canel said Monday in a nationally televised appearance in which his entire Cabinet was also present.

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"That's the way it's done: Try to create inconformity, dissatisfaction by manipulating emotions and feelings."

In a statement Monday, U.S. President Joe Biden said Cuban protesters were asserting their basic rights.

"We stand with the Cuban people and their clarion call for freedom and relief from the tragic grip of the pandemic and from the decades of repression and economic suffering to which they have been subjected by Cuba's authoritarian regime," Biden said.

The U.S. urges the Cuban government to serve their people "rather than enriching themselves," Biden added.

U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq on Monday stressed the U.N. position "on the need for freedom of expression and peaceful assembly to be respected fully, and we expect that that will be the case."

The demonstrations were extremely unusual on an island where little dissent against the government is tolerated. The last major public demonstration of discontent, over economic hardship, took place nearly 30 years in 1994. Last year, there were small demonstrations by artists and other groups, but nothing as big or widespread as what erupted this past weekend.

In the Havana protest on Sunday, police initially trailed behind as protesters chanted, "Freedom!" "Enough!" and "Unite!" One motorcyclist pulled out a U.S. flag, but it was snatched from him by others.

"We are fed up with the queues, the shortages. That's why I'm here," one middle-age protester told The Associated Press. He declined to identify himself for fear of being arrested later.

Later, about 300 pro-government protesters arrived with a large Cuban flag, shouting slogans in favor of the late President Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution. Some assaulted an AP videojournalist, smashing his camera. AP photojournalist Ramón Espinosa was then beaten by a group of police officers in uniforms and civilian clothes; he suffered a broken nose and an eye injury.

The demonstration grew to a few thousand in the vicinity of Galeano Avenue and the marchers pressed on despite a few charges by police officers and tear gas barrages. People standing on many balconies along the central artery in the Centro Habana neighborhood applauded the protesters passing by. Others joined in the march.

About 2 1/2 hours into the march, some protesters pulled up cobblestones and threw them at police, at which point officers began arresting people and the marchers dispersed. AP journalists counted at least 20 people who were taken away in police cars or by individuals in civilian clothes.

Although many people tried to take out their cellphones and broadcast the protest live, Cuban authorities shut down internet service throughout the afternoon Sunday.

On Monday, Cuban authorities were blocking Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Telegram, said Alp Toker, director of Netblocks, a London-based internet monitoring firm.

"This does seem to be a response to social media-fueled protest," he said. Twitter did not appear to be blocked, though Toker noted Cuba has the ability to cut it off if it wants to.

## **FDA adds warning about rare reaction to J&J COVID-19 vaccine**

By MATTHEW PERRONE and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. regulators on Monday added a new warning to Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine about links to a rare and potentially dangerous neurological reaction, but said it's not entirely clear the shot caused the problem.

The Food and Drug Administration announced the new warning, flagging reports of Guillain-Barre syndrome, an immune system disorder that can cause muscle weakness and occasionally paralysis. Health officials described the side effect as a "small possible risk" for those getting the shot.

The action comes after the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reviewed reports of about 100 people developing the syndrome after receiving the one-dose vaccine. Almost all of them were hospitalized and one person died, the FDA said.

Guillain-Barre syndrome occurs when the body's immune system mistakenly attacks some of its nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis that typically is temporary. An estimated 3,000 to 6,000 people develop the syndrome each year, according to the CDC.

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The number of cases reported in connection with J&J's vaccine represents a tiny fraction of the nearly 13 million Americans who have received the one-dose shot. Most cases were reported in men — many 50 years old and up — and usually about two weeks after vaccination.

J&J said in a statement it has been discussing the reports with the FDA and other health regulators around the world.

The CDC said it would ask its panel of outside vaccine experts to review the issue at an upcoming meeting.

The government said the vaccines most used in the U.S., made by Pfizer and Moderna, show no risk of the disorder after more than 320 million doses have been administered.

The new warning will be included in pamphlets given to people getting the J&J shot. They should seek medical attention if they experience any symptoms, which include tingling sensations, trouble walking and double vision, the FDA said.

Vaccines historically provide broad protection with little risk but come with occasional side effects just like other drugs and medical therapies. The three COVID-19 vaccines used in the U.S. were each tested in tens of thousands of people, but even such huge studies can't rule out extremely rare side effects.

The CDC and the FDA have been monitoring side effect reports submitted by physicians, drugmakers and patients to a federal vaccine safety database.

Guillain-Barre can be triggered by a number of infections, including flu, cytomegalovirus and Zika virus. But there have been rare cases in which people develop the disorder days or weeks after receiving certain vaccines.

J&J's vaccine was highly anticipated because of its one-and-done formulation and easy-to-ship refrigeration. But early on, it was linked to another rare risk, of blood clots, and the company hasn't been able to produce as much as expected because of problems at a Baltimore factory that helps make the shots.

## **Biden balances fighting rising crime, reforming police**

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, MICHAEL BALSAMO and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facing rising fears of summer violence, President Joe Biden is embarking on a political high-wire act, trying to balance his strong backing for law enforcement with the police reform movement championed by many of his supporters.

His focus Monday was on crime.

Biden met at the White House with urban leaders — including Eric Adams, the heavy favorite to be the next mayor of New York City — about increased shootings, as Democrats warily watch a surge across the nation. Though limited to what can be done at the federal level, Biden promised to support efforts on the ground to combat crime.

"We know when we utilize trusted community members and encourage more community policing, we can intervene before the violence erupts," the president said.

The meeting was the second in just three weeks, underscoring the political concern crime has become for Democrats as they look to protect their thin margins in Congress. Big city mayors and lawmakers have sounded the alarm on the rise in crime, believed partly fueled by destabilizing forces of the pandemic, and polls suggest it is an increasing matter of concern for many Americans.

White House aides believe that Biden, with his long legislative record on crime as a former senator, is not easy to paint as soft on the issue. And the president has been clear that he is opposed to the "defund the police" movement, which has been effectively used against some Democrats to paint them as anti-law enforcement.

The president promoted the money for policing in his COVID-19 relief bill and, reflecting on his nearly four decades in the Senate, declared that "Most of my career has been on this issue."

At the same time, Biden has also tried to boost progressives' efforts to reform policing and has backed a bill that, after initial promise, has stalled in the Senate.

Biden lent his support to the protests that swept the nation last year after the death of George Floyd, a Black man, under the knee of a white police officer. That incident sparked a national reckoning on race,

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including sometimes-violent protests that were seized upon by then-President Donald Trump to raise anger among his conservative supporters.

Crime has become a major Republican talking point and has been a frequent topic of conversation on conservative media.

That's where Biden's balancing act comes in.

He received overwhelming election support from Black voters and picked the first Black woman, Kamala Harris, to be vice president. The president and White House aides are frequently in touch with civil rights leaders to consult on police reform and voting access.

While combating crime and reforming the police don't inherently have to be at odds, the two efforts have been increasingly billed that way. And the presence in the White House meeting of Adams, who doesn't face general election voters until November, was symbolic of the administration's effort to find a middle ground.

A rise in shootings as New York City began to emerge from the pandemic helped propel a late charge for Adams, a black former police captain who rejects defund-the-police talk. Adams also says he would bring back a contentious plainclothes anti-crime unit that focused on getting guns off the streets, a unit that was disbanded amid charges that it used excessive force.

Adams beat more-liberal candidates, but his lifetime of speaking out against police misconduct and his blunt, working-class style make it difficult to pigeonhole him. He spoke frequently on the campaign trail of being beaten by police officers as a teenager and joining the force to reform it from within. And Adams, who appears to face only token Republican opposition this fall, was a founder of a group called 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care that fought against racial profiling and advocated for the hiring of more officers of color.

"My request of the president was number one, to make sure that we use the money that has been allocated to deal with underlying causes," said Adams after Monday's meeting. "But he must have a plan that's prevention and intervention."

Adams, the current Brooklyn Borough president, said, "Other communities are waking up to an alarm clock" while minority communities are "waking up to gunshots, and this president said 'This is not good.'"

Biden recently announced new efforts to stem the tide of violence, but the federal government is limited in what it can do to help localities reduce the spike. His plan focuses on providing funding to cities that need more police, offering community support and cracking down on gun violence and illegal firearms.

But much of Biden's effort is voluntary — centered on encouraging cities to invest some of their COVID-19 relief funds into policing and pushing alternative crime reduction steps such as increased community support and summer jobs for teenagers, who are often both targets and perpetrators of violence.

Having already issued a series of executive actions but powerless to do much more on his own, Biden again on Monday called for Congress to pass gun legislation. But there are no signs of movement on Capitol Hill.

Federal statistics show significant increases in murder nationwide, though spikes in crime are common in the summer months. The federal government has been trying to step up its efforts, launching strike forces in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Washington, D.C., to help address illegal gun trafficking.

And while crime is rising, violent crime overall remains lower than it was a decade ago or even five years ago. And most violent crimes plummeted during the first six months of the pandemic, as people stayed indoors and away from others.

In fact, the spike in crime defies easy explanation. Experts point to a number of potential causes: the pandemic that has killed more than 600,000 people in the U.S., worries about the economy, large gatherings after months of stay-at-home orders, intense stress and even the weather.

Police leaders nationwide have said they are struggling with the increase in shootings and homicides. They're grappling with retirements and fewer staff and a difficulty in recruiting officers to help push back.

In the cities, "disparities exist everywhere; we're talking education, health care, criminal justice system,"

Portland Oregon Chief Chuck Lovell said recently at a forum on crime.

"We're solely focused on law enforcement at the moment. My hope is that throughout this time we can do some things that really benefit people in general, but we really need to think globally."

## **Collapsed condo: Weighing how to honor dead at 'holy site'**

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — As crews keep searching for the last missing remains of the souls who perished in their collapsing beachfront condos nearly three weeks ago, the question is swirling across the ruins of the Champlain Towers South: What will become of the ground that bears so much pain?

"There's a lot of emotion. People talk about it as a holy site," said Miami-Dade Police Director Alfredo Ramirez. "People want some sort of connection with their family member."

Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett suggested Monday that with scores of families still processing their losses, it's too soon to come up with anything specific. But he said the tragedy — now with 94 people confirmed dead and 22 others still missing — compels that something be placed on the site to remember them.

"I think the first thing we need to do is get the families situated, so they have a semblance of their life back — get them to the point where they aren't burdened by the grief and emotion that they're going through right now," Burkett said.

"It's obvious that this has become much more than a collapsed building site," the mayor said. "It has become a holy site."

An impromptu memorial sprung up along a nearby tennis court, soon after the collapse. Its fence is now festooned with drying bouquets and fading photographs of those confirmed dead and those yet to be found. Crosses and candles line the street, and stars of David are interspersed throughout the scene. There are teddy bears, toys, shoes — all in tribute to the scores of victims.

Within the rubble, personal items are being collected and will eventually be returned to their owners or next of kin. The twisted steel rebar and shards of concrete that have been hauled away, under the escort of police, are being kept in storage for investigators who are gathering clues as to what made 12 stories plunge to the ground on June 24.

In time, all of it will be cleared away. What then?

Memorials are not unusual after a tragedy, of course. Monuments were erected at the site of the World Trade Center after its twin towers were felled by terrorists, as was a memorial in Oklahoma City. After 1989's Loma Prieta Earthquake in Northern California, memorials popped up across the San Francisco Bay Area.

It's a human act to want to remember, said Dovy Ainsworth, whose parents, Tzvi and Itty Ainsworth, died in the Surfside tragedy.

"It provides comfort for the families and community while also serving as a reminder ensuring it never happens again," Ainsworth said, suggesting that it might be inappropriate to rebuild because "so many lost their lives."

Soraya Cohen, the wife of Brad Cohen, who is unaccounted for, wants the government to step in to buy the property so it can be preserved as a memorial. She said his remains are now part of what she and others call hallowed ground.

"The earth is soaked with the blood and tissue and other parts of the body of our loved ones, and to think that this area will just be looked at as a commercial development opportunity is quite frankly sickening," she said. "It is a sacred cemetery for Jewish and non-Jewish people alike, because they died there together in a horrible way."

Owners of the demolished complex and its board of directors have yet to formally weigh in on the discussion. Survivors and family members are already suing for civil damages. The beachfront property sits atop valued real estate, which could complicate how things proceed.

"It seems indelicate and insensitive to talk about the use of the property other than a memorial," said state Sen. Jason Pizzo, a Democrat whose district includes Surfside. "It's an incredibly complicated balance to be respectful and honor the memory of those we've lost, while also being diligent to ensure that we



help people rebuild their lives (and) to get the greatest value for their homes.”

Authorities on Monday said they are increasing security along the perimeter to preserve potential evidence and to keep people off the property, however well-intentioned their interests might be, as they continue the search for those unaccounted for.

“This is one of those situations where you have the connections of the investigation and a lot of hurt, a lot of pain,” said Ramirez, the police director.

## **Musk on trial: Defends SolarCity, calls lawyer ‘bad human’**

By PAUL WISEMAN and TOM KRISHER AP Business Writers

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Tesla founder Elon Musk took to a witness stand Monday to defend his company’s 2016 acquisition of a troubled company called SolarCity against a lawsuit that claims he’s to blame for a deal that was rife with conflicts of interest and never delivered the profits he’d promised.

And to the surprise of no one, the famously colorful billionaire did so in the most personally combative terms.

“I think you are a bad human being,” Musk told Randall Baron, a lawyer for shareholders who was pressing Musk to acknowledge his mistakes in helping engineer the acquisition of SolarCity, a manufacturer of solar panels.

“I have great respect for the court,” Musk later added, “but not for you, sir.”

The long-running shareholder lawsuit asserts that Musk, who was SolarCity’s largest stakeholder and its chairman, and other Tesla directors breached their fiduciary duties in bowing to Musk’s wishes and agreeing to buy the company. In what the plaintiffs call a clear conflict of interest, SolarCity had been founded by Musk and two of his cousins, Lyndon and Peter Rive.

In the Delaware Court of Chancery on Monday, Baron sought to establish that Musk has sought to run Tesla without interference and therefore bears responsibility for any failures. The lawyer showed a video clip in which Musk said he liked running his own companies because he doesn’t want anyone to make him do what he doesn’t want to do.

As an example of what he characterized as Musk’s imperious management style, Baron mentioned that the CEO once declared himself “Technoking of Tesla” and gave his chief financial officer the title “master of coin” — a reference to HBO’s “Game of Thrones” — in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The hostility between the billionaire CEO and the plaintiffs’ lawyer dates to at least 2019 and a deposition in which Musk insulted Baron and questioned his professionalism. On Monday, Baron played clips from that deposition to try to portray Musk’s stance toward what he might regard as criticism.

Pushing back, Musk insisted that “I don’t want to be the boss of anything.”

“I prefer to spend my time on design and engineering,” he said.

Musk, who is well-known for rejecting skepticism of himself or his company, insisted that he welcomes criticism:

“If I’m mistaken,” he said on the witness stand, “I view critical feedback as a gift.”

Musk said his off-beat titles and other quips simply reflect his sense of humor.

“I think I’m funny,” he offered.

What’s more, he said, the resulting media attention often plays to Tesla’s benefit.

“If we’re entertaining, people will write stories about us,” and the company can save on advertising.”

Regarding Tesla’s all-stock acquisition of SolarCity, Musk asserted that he had nothing to gain financially from it because he owned shares of both companies.

Musk also argued that SolarCity’s failure to meet aggressive sales forecasts and its loss of market share were only temporary setbacks. He said they reflected his decision to divert Tesla resources toward salvaging production of the Tesla Model 3 electric car — and then running “headlong into a pandemic.”

The effort to salvage Tesla 3 was “all-hands-on-deck” operation — so desperate that even the company’s lawyers were enlisted in the effort, Musk said, drawing laughter in the court.

Musk’s defense noted that SolarCity had been in Tesla’s plans as early as his 2006 master plan for the

electric carmaker. In saying so, he asserted that the joining of the companies 10 years later wasn't an emergency bailout as the plaintiffs have alleged.

But Baron pointed out that the 2006 document mentioned only a potential marketing arrangement, not a full-fledged merger or acquisition, between Tesla and SolarCity.

Baron repeatedly pressed Musk about evidence that SolarCity had been in trouble — short of cash, unable to obtain financing, in danger of violating the terms of an existing loan agreement — before the Tesla buyout.

Musk conceded nothing. He argued that SolarCity could have raised money, if it wanted to, by issuing shares of stock. And he noted that fast-growing young companies, including Amazon and Tesla itself, often bleed cash in their early years before achieving success later.

Why, Baron asked, did another Musk company, Space X, waive its own investment guidelines to buy risky SolarCity bonds? Musk replied that those bonds offered a better payout than did bank accounts that paid little more than zero.

"I had faith," Musk said, "in the future of SolarCity."

Baron tried to pin down whether Musk had recused himself from Tesla-SolarCity negotiations to avoid a conflict of interest.

"I had no material role," Musk said.

"What's is a 'material role?'" Baron fired back. "That sounds like a wiggle word to me."

"You're the expert in wiggle words," Musk countered.

The trial that began Monday marks the culmination of seven shareholder lawsuits, consolidated into one, that alleged that Tesla directors breached their fiduciary duties in bowing to Musk's wishes and agreeing to buy SolarCity. Last August, a judge approved a \$60 million settlement that resolved claims made against all the directors on Tesla's board except Musk without any admission of fault.

That left Musk, who refused to settle, as the sole remaining defendant. The trial that began Monday had been scheduled for March of last year but was postponed because of the viral pandemic.

Daniel Ives, an analyst at Wedbush Securities, has called the acquisition a "clear black eye" for Musk and Tesla, in large part because SolarCity has failed to turn a profit.

"It basically was putting good money after bad," Ives said. "For all the successes and all of the unimaginable heights Musk has achieved, this is one of the lowlights."

Even if the trial ends with Musk having to pay personally for the whole SolarCity deal, \$2.5 billion won't much hurt the world's third-wealthiest person. Forbes magazine has estimated that Musk is worth roughly \$163 billion.

## France's Macron orders all health workers to get vaccinated

By ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday ordered all French health care workers to get virus vaccine shots by Sept. 15 and urged all of his compatriots to get vaccinated as soon as possible, to fight resurgent infections that are threatening the country's economic recovery.

In a televised address, Macron also mandated special COVID-19 passes for anyone who wants to go to a restaurant, shopping mall or hospital or get on a train or plane. To get a pass, people must have proof they're fully vaccinated, or recently recovered from the virus, or have taken a fresh negative virus test.

The delta variant is driving France's virus infections back up again, just as the country kicked off summer vacation season after a long-awaited reopening. Some 40% of France's population is fully inoculated.

"Get vaccinated!" was the president's overall message. He even tweeted a GIF of himself repeating the phrase.

"The country is facing a strong resumption of the epidemic touching all our territory," Macron said, speaking against the backdrop of the Eiffel Tower. Warning of a new wave of potential hospitalizations in August, he said, "The equation is simple. The more we vaccinate, the less space we leave this virus to circulate."

But he stopped short of any new lockdown measures, saying "We have to learn to live with the virus."

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Macron said the government would declare a medical state of emergency again starting Tuesday, which allows authorities more freedom to impose virus restrictions.

Most European governments have shied away from mandating vaccinations. But after tens of thousands of people with the virus died in French nursing homes, Macron said vaccination is essential for all workers in health care facilities or nursing homes, and all workers or volunteers who care for the elderly or ailing at home. Those who don't get vaccinated by Sept. 15 will face potential sanctions or fines, he said.

Greece announced Monday that health care workers will be suspended if they refuse to get vaccinated. Italy made the coronavirus vaccination obligatory for health care workers and pharmacists, and those who opt out risk suspension from their jobs or a salary cut.

In Denmark, restaurants and public events require a digital pass showing you've been fully vaccinated or have a recent negative test. Some German states require the same for restaurants, though suggestions of making vaccines obligatory have prompted widespread unease.

In France, vaccines are widely available for anyone 12 and over. But interest has ebbed in recent weeks because of vaccine hesitancy, a sense that the virus is no longer a threat, and because some people put off their shots until after their summer vacation. Demand started rising again over the weekend as people braced for Macron's announcements.

Macron also declared Monday that France will start charging money for some virus tests, which up to now have all been free for anyone on French territory.

Meanwhile, French restaurants and bars are thriving again, the Tour de France cycling race is drawing tightly packed crowds across the country, and Hollywood stars are posing arm-in-arm and mask-free on the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival. Cheek kisses are making a comeback.

After staying shuttered for nine months since the pandemic began, Paris restaurant owners expressed worry about the challenges of enforcing the new requirements.

"Our job used to be to make sure that our guests had a great time while they were with us. Now, we spend our time reprimanding them. We weren't trained for this," said the manager of the Parisian restaurant Bancs Public, Louis le Mahieu. He said he would observe any new health rules, but warned the new measures would likely incur new costs and lower returns.

For Gauthier Max, whose bar Mama Kin was slapped with a nine-day closure for violating COVID-19 measures, restaurants and bars are no longer places of leisure but have become spaces of constraints and restrictions.

"We've effectively become policemen," he told The Associated Press.

France's virus infections started rising again two weeks ago. The number of people in French hospitals and intensive care units has been declining for weeks, but doctors predict it too will rise when the increase in delta variant infections hits vulnerable populations, as it has in Britain and Spain.

Meanwhile, Macron also met with car industry figures Monday as he tried to combine his virus warnings with a message of hope for one of the world's biggest economies. New infections are threatening France's all-important tourism industry and Macron's ambitious economic recovery plan — just nine months before the next presidential election in which he is expected to run.

## **Afghan vet: 'What have we ended up with at the end of it?'**

By JULIE WATSON, KEN MILLER and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

Images of the World Trade Center towers collapsing in New York were still fresh in the minds of the first American troops arriving in Afghanistan, as the U.S. launched an invasion targeting the Afghanistan-based al-Qaida leaders who plotted the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. More than 800,000 U.S. troops have served in the Central Asian country since then, in a war that quickly expanded to confronting Afghanistan's Taliban and to nation-building. On Monday, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Scott Miller, relinquished his command in Kabul, underscoring the winding down of America's longest war.

One-third of the roughly 4 million troops who served in the post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq served multiple tours, some in well-secured bases in times of comparative quiet, others facing improvised

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explosive devices on the roads, mortar and rocket attacks on their positions, and firefights. While the U.S. quickly succeeded in quelling the al-Qaida fighters behind the 9/11 attacks, Americans leave with the Taliban rapidly claiming fresh territory. Many Afghans fear the return of civil war, or strict Taliban rule, with the Western troops' departure.

The Associated Press talked to some of the U.S. veterans of Afghanistan as Americans withdraw, after nearly 20 years:

## ARMY VETERAN

For Andrew Brennan, 36, it's the days the painful memories subside that bother him. A former Army captain who flew combat missions, Brennan lost one of his closest friends, pilot Bryan Nichols, when his Chinook helicopter was shot down in 2011, killing 30 Americans, seven Afghan soldiers and one interpreter. It was the single deadliest day for U.S. troops during the war.

Brennan spent a week helping recover the bodies.

"As much as I hate admitting it, there are days that go by when I don't think about Bryan, our crew, and the team guys on the back of that aircraft. And if I don't think about it and I was that close to it, what do most Americans think?" the Baltimore man wrote in an email to The Associated Press.

Brennan has worn a Killed in Action bracelet in honor of Nichols for nearly a decade. He has worked to get a memorial wall built for 9/11 veterans.

While he honors those who sacrificed their lives, he believes it was a senseless war.

"What have we ended up with at the end of it, other than trillions spent, 7,000+ Americans dead, and more than two broken generations of warriors?" Brennan wrote.

"The only stakeholder group that learned anything through this entire period were politicians: They learned that the American population is so removed from their modern day 'legions' that they can do anything with our nation's all-volunteer military and no one will pay attention or care enough to change it."

## MARINE VETERAN

Marine veteran Jennifer Brofer will never forget the loud, popping noise.

It was on a hot July afternoon in 2010 when her convoy rolled over an IED on a road in Helmand Province four months into her deployment to Afghanistan. Her heart froze as she and her fellow Marines stopped and realized what had occurred. But what followed were only the sounds of daily life.

This was a lucky day.

"For some reason it did not detonate," the former staff sergeant said.

It was a defining moment to be that close to death, said Brofer, one of the comparatively few female Marines to serve in America's longest war.

A public affairs officer, Brofer was charged with documenting the stories of troops.

"Those moments in Afghanistan really put everything into perspective for me. Because I really didn't fully appreciate all of the luxuries that I had been afforded prior to my deployment," such as hugs from loved ones, hot showers and driving down a road without fear of her vehicle exploding, she said.

Brofer, 38, who now works in the television and film industries in Hollywood, said she feels proud to have served "shoulder-to-shoulder with my male Marine counterparts" in a time of war.

Still, Brofer can't say whether the war was worth it.

"War is ugly. And sometimes it's necessary and it's not like we can go back and change anything. We can only change how we respond in the future," she said. "When I was deployed it was already considered then the longest war and I think it's about time that our men and women came home."

## NATIONAL GUARD

After the United States launched a second war, in Iraq, in 2003, Oklahoma National Guard Sgt. Eran Harrill was one of hundreds of thousands of guard members called to duty as an all-volunteer U.S. military strained to fight two wars simultaneously.

Harrill fought in 2011 as part of a combat unit in Afghanistan's Laghman Province, as the U.S. surged troops in hopes of crippling Afghanistan's Taliban. A marketing director and business development executive

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in Oklahoma City, he patrolled alongside a mechanic, a K-9 police officer, students and other Oklahomans.

"The very first firefight we got in was certainly an aha moment" for the citizen soldiers, Harrill said.

"I think we did some good there, maybe helped some people and prevented some loss of life," said Harrill, 38, who had always wanted to serve in the military, while some guard colleagues had seen it as a way to bring in money for college. "Was it worth the loss of life we had? I don't know, that's for someone else to answer."

Back home, Harrill served in jobs that included leading Oklahoma City's Black Chamber of Commerce. He's developing a directory aimed at identifying which employers are most suitable for members of the military like National Guard members.

That's after seeing guard members struggle with bosses unhappy over time away for training and deployment, including managers who reached out to a deployed guard member in the field to threaten him with firing if he didn't return.

"We have a bad habit in this country of putting little yellow ribbons, 'support our troops,' in the window," Harrill said. "But we don't really support our troops as to how it affects us when the rubber hits the road."

## Listen up: Biden speaks volumes in a whisper to make a point

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden was at a public transit station in Wisconsin, talking about repairing roads and bridges, when he shifted gears and began defending his plan to send money to parents for each minor child, payments some critics call a "giveaway."

Biden folded his arms, rested on the lectern, leaned into the mic and lowered his voice.

"Hey, guys, I think it's time to give ordinary people a tax break," he said, almost whispering as he addressed his critics. "The wealthy are doing fine."

It was the latest instance of Biden speaking volumes by whispering.

The White House and communications experts say Biden's whispering is just this veteran politician's old-school way of trying to make a connection while emphasizing a point.

Biden's critics on the right as well as some late-night TV talk show hosts say the whispers are "creepy" and "weird." Conservatives use the dramatic soft talk to fuel the narrative that the Democratic president is unfit for the job, and comedians deploy it to generate laughs.

"It's an intimate form of communication," said Vanessa Beasley, associate professor of communication studies at Vanderbilt University.

Biden whispered some of his answers to reporters' questions during an impromptu White House news conference last month after he and a group of Senate Republicans announced they had reached a deal to spend \$973 billion on rebuilding the nation's infrastructure.

As he stood in the East Room, Biden was questioned about his timeline for providing additional financial help to families. He leaned in, eyes wide, and whispered: "I got them \$1.9 trillion in relief so far. They're going to be getting checks in the mail that are consequential."

During a lengthy response to a separate question, he whispered, "I wrote the bill," before bending down to get closer to the microphone and adding, "on the environment."

On the subject of employers' hiring difficulties, Biden leaned into the mic again, arms resting on the lectern and said softly that the solution is to "pay them more."

Beasley said the use of whispering by Biden, who was a U.S. senator and vice president for a total of more than 40 years, is a throwback to a long-ago time of chummier relations between lawmakers and members of the Washington press corps.

"I think it's a symbolic gesture to a kind of intimacy and familiarity," she said.

Beasley and others noted the contrast between Biden and former President Donald Trump, who often spoke loudly and angrily.

"One of the things that Trump never did was whisper," said Robin Lakoff, professor emerita of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley.

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Public speakers — lawmakers, celebrities, corporate executives — often raise or lower their voices for dramatic effect or tell jokes to keep their audiences following along instead of falling asleep.

Beasley said the tone of political discourse these days seems set to loud so that “it sort of sets everybody back a little bit when you see someone going in a different direction and reducing their volume.”

Lakoff said what Biden does isn’t really whispering because his vocal chords vibrate and make sound.

“A true whisper is something you wouldn’t be able to hear very well,” she said, comparing what Biden does to a “stage whisper” in which an actor in a play steps out of character to share a secret with the audience or preview some action that’s about to happen.

The White House defended Biden, saying conservatives who criticize the way he speaks, including his stuttering, do so because they don’t have a better agenda to offer voters.

“Under President Biden’s leadership, COVID cases have plunged by over 90%, we’ve achieved an historic level of job creation, the economy is growing at its highest rate in 40 years, and we’ve achieved a breakthrough on the world stage to stop the offshoring of American jobs,” deputy press secretary Andrew Bates said.

“And this performative criticism is just the latest acknowledgement by Republicans that he’s running the table on them while they’re grasping for a case to make,” Bates whispered.

Kayleigh McEnany, a White House press secretary for Trump, called Biden’s whispering “peculiar” and “crazy” before panelists on the Fox News Channel program she co-hosts discussed it. Other Fox News personalities and guests also panned Biden’s low-volume speech.

On the late-night talk show circuit, comedian Stephen Colbert featured what he called Biden’s “new rhetorical flourish” in a recent monologue on his CBS show.

After airing clips of the president, Colbert leaned into a hand-held microphone and whispered: “Mr. President, Mr. President. You know I’m a fan, but the way you lean forward and whisper. Guess what? It’s a little creepy. It’s a little creepy.”

On the flip side, Biden raises his voice, too, as he did while addressing the nation from the White House lawn on July Fourth.

“On this sacred day, I look out to those monuments on our National Mall, and beyond them, into the hearts of our people across the land and I know this,” he said, voice rising as he neared the conclusion of his speech. “It’s never, ever been a good bet to bet against America. Never.

“We just have to remember who we are. We are the United States of America,” Biden thundered. “And there’s nothing — nothing — we can’t do if we do it together.”

## Johnson: England to lift last virus restrictions on July 19

By PAN PYLAS and SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — All remaining lockdown restrictions in England will be lifted in a week despite a sharp rise in coronavirus cases, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson confirmed Monday. He said it was “the right moment to proceed” as schools close for summer vacation but urged people to “proceed with caution.”

Johnson said although risks of the pandemic remain, legal restrictions will be replaced by a recommendation that people wear masks in crowded places and on public transport. Nightclubs and other venues with crowds should use vaccine passports for entry “as a matter of social responsibility,” he added.

“This pandemic is not over. This disease, coronavirus, continues to carry risks for you and your family. We cannot simply revert instantly from Monday July 19 to life as it was before COVID,” Johnson said.

The final stage of easing England’s lockdown means that all restrictions on social gatherings will be removed and social distancing measures will be scrapped. Nightclubs can reopen for the first time since March last year, and there will no longer be limits on people attending concerts, theaters, weddings or sports events.

Earlier, Health Secretary Sajid Javid said it was the right time to allow Britons a chance to return to normal life. The government’s decision balances the harms brought by COVID-19 and damage done by continued restrictions, he said.

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Javid told Parliament that Britain's successful vaccine rollout means that nine out of 10 adults in the U.K. now have antibodies against the virus. The government is on track to meet its target of offering all adults a first vaccine dose by July 19, the day when all remaining lockdown restrictions, including mandatory mask-wearing, are to be lifted.

As of Monday, 87% of the U.K.'s adult population have had their first dose, and 66% have had both doses. At the same time infections have soared in recent weeks, running at over 30,000 new cases daily, driven by the delta variant.

Javid said while new infections could reach 100,000 a day later in the summer, two doses of the vaccine offer effective protection against serious illness from the virus and officials believe the surge in cases will not put "unsustainable pressure" on hospitals.

Waiting any longer to lift restrictions will risk having the virus spread peak in the autumn and winter, when children return to school and hospitals are most likely to be overwhelmed by seasonal infections, Javid and Johnson said.

"There will never be a perfect time to take this step, because we simply cannot eradicate this virus — whether we like it or not, coronavirus is not going away," Javid said.

Many of the infections have occurred among younger people who have yet to receive a first dose of vaccine. The government has no plans yet to offer vaccines to children under 18.

The British government believes that the vaccine rollout has mostly severed the link between infections and those needing hospitalization. The numbers of people requiring hospitalization or dying from COVID-19 have stayed low and broadly stable, though they have been edging up in recent days.

Still, concerns over the rapid increase in cases has piled pressure on the government to take a more cautious approach over lifting restrictions.

Jonathan Ashworth, the health spokesperson for the opposition Labour Party, said Javid's plan was akin to "pushing his foot down on the accelerator while throwing the seat belts off." And Stephen Griffin, associate professor at Leeds University's school of medicine, called the move an irresponsible gamble.

"I am dumbfounded by the notion that public health can be left to individual choice when, in the case of infectious disease it is, in fact, the epitome of collective responsibility," Griffin said. "Government messaging on restrictions currently amounts to an outright oxymoron by urging caution whilst simultaneously allowing all guidance to be lifted."

Peter Openshaw, a member of a group that advises the government on new and emerging respiratory viruses, said it was vital to keep some protective measures in place, such as wearing masks.

"I really don't see why people are reluctant to wear face coverings, it is quite clear that they do greatly reduce transmission," he told BBC radio. "Vaccines are fantastic but you have to give them time to work."

The British government, which enforced one of the longest lockdowns in the world, has lifted restrictions for England in a series of steps that began with reopening schools in March. The fourth and final stage was delayed last month to provide time for more people to be vaccinated amid the rapid spread of the delta variant.

Other parts of the U.K. — Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland — are following their own, broadly similar, road maps out of lockdown.

## Police investigate racist abuse of three England players

By FRANK GRIFFITHS and PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British police opened investigations Monday into the racist abuse of three Black players who failed to score penalties in England's shootout loss to Italy in the European Championship final.

The Metropolitan Police condemned the "unacceptable" abuse of Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka, and said they will be investigating the "offensive and racist" social media posts published soon after Italy won Sunday's shootout 3-2 following a 1-1 draw. A mural of Rashford on the wall of a cafe in south Manchester was also defaced with graffiti in the wake of the match.

The racist abuse, which was condemned as "unforgivable" by England coach Gareth Southgate, has

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led to calls for social media companies, such as Facebook and Twitter, to do more in hunting down the perpetrators of the abuse.

All three players targeted are part of a young England squad that has been widely praised for its diversity and social conscience. Rashford, for one, has been at the forefront of a campaign against child poverty, which convinced the British government to restore free lunches for thousands of poor children amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"We have been a beacon of light in bringing people together, in people being able to relate to the national team, and the national team stands for everybody and so that togetherness has to continue," Southgate said Monday.

The abuse was widely condemned, with Prince William, the president of the English Football Association, saying he was "sickened" by the racism aimed at the England players.

"It is totally unacceptable that players have to endure this abhorrent behaviour," he wrote on Twitter. "It must stop now and all those involved should be held accountable."

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday told those who directed racist abuse at some of the players that he hoped "you will crawl back under the rock from which you emerged."

But he has faced criticism for emboldening those booing the England team for taking a knee before their matches to protest against racial injustice.

Last month, Johnson's spokesman said the prime minister is "more focused on action rather than gestures." That comment led to widespread criticism that Johnson was effectively encouraging those booing to carry on. Three days later, his spokesman changed tack, saying the prime minister "respects the right of all people to peacefully protest and make their feelings known about injustices" and that he wanted them to cheer the team and "not boo."

Keir Starmer, leader of the main opposition Labour Party, accused Johnson of a failure of leadership for not calling out the booing of the England team.

"The prime minister failed to call that out and the actions and inactions of leaders have consequences, so I'm afraid the prime minister's words today ring hollow," he said.

Gary Neville, a former Manchester United player and now a TV commentator, said he wasn't surprised that the three players who failed to convert their penalties were targeted for racist abuse and also called out Johnson.

"The prime minister said it was OK for the population of this country to boo those players who are trying to promote equality and defend against racism," he said on Sky News. "It starts at the very top and so for me I wasn't surprised in the slightest that I woke up this morning to those headlines."

In recent years, soccer authorities in England have joined with the players in trying to tackle racism both within the sport — at every level — and in society as a whole.

The English FA said it will give the players affected what support it can and will press on authorities for the "toughest punishments possible" for anyone found to have been responsible for the abuse.

"We will continue to do everything we can to stamp discrimination out of the game, but we implore government to act quickly and bring in the appropriate legislation so this abuse has real life consequences," it said.

Social media companies, it said, need to "step up and take accountability and action to ban abusers from their platforms" to ensure that their platforms are "free from this type of abhorrent abuse."

Facebook, which owns Instagram, said Monday it tried to remove harmful content as quickly as possible and encouraged people to use the tools it offers to block abuse.

"We quickly removed comments and accounts directing abuse at England's footballers last night and we'll continue to take action against those that break our rules," it said in a statement.

Twitter said the "abhorrent racist abuse" has no place on its platform, adding it removed more than 1,000 tweets and permanently suspended a number of accounts for violating its rules.

"We will continue to take action," Twitter said, "when we identify any tweets or accounts that violate our policies."

The British government is planning new laws to enshrine a new legal duty of care on online companies



to protect users from harm, including people receiving abusive comments, threats and harassment.

## Scientists: Pup births hopeful sign for Isle Royale wolves

By JOHN FLESHER AP Environmental Writer

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) — Wolf pups have been spotted again on Isle Royale, a hopeful sign in the effort to rebuild the predator species' population at the U.S. national park, scientists said Monday.

It's unknown how many gray wolves roam the island chain in northwestern Lake Superior. The coronavirus pandemic forced cancellation of the census that Michigan Technological University experts had conducted each winter for 63 years.

Remote cameras detected four pups on the park's eastern end in January, the researchers said in a new report. The sightings, and additional clues such as previously observed scats and tracks, suggest that two litters were born in the area last year and perhaps another on the western side.

Park officials said last fall that at least two pups likely were born in 2019.

The population was 12 to 14 during the last Michigan Tech survey in winter 2020. The latest births would indicate it is higher now, but some older wolves may have died.

"It most likely will be winter of next year before we have firm information," said Sarah Hoy, a research assistant professor and animal ecologist, adding that the presence of young wolves is reason for optimism. "Things are definitely looking up."

Scientists with Michigan Tech, the National Park Service and State University of New York will combine available information with genetic analyses to produce a population estimate based on death rates and numbers of litters.

An initial data summary should be finished this month, said Mark Romanski, a biologist and natural resources program manager at Isle Royale.

"Because of constraints placed on field activities during the pandemic, we are especially pleased to have multiple lines of evidence to enumerate the population," he said.

Wolves are believed to have migrated to Isle Royale from Minnesota or the Canadian province of Ontario around the middle of the 20th century, crossing about 15 miles (24 kilometers) over the frozen lake surface.

Once established, they began feasting on the park's abundant moose and helped keep the herd from outgrowing its food supply. But wolf numbers plummeted in the past decade, which scientists blamed primarily on inbreeding.

The National Park Service announced plans in 2018 to restore the population, which had fallen to two. Crews took 19 wolves from Minnesota, Ontario and Michigan's Upper Peninsula to the island in a series of airlifts. Some have died and at least one wandered back to the mainland but most appear to be settling in.

"They're killing moose, starting to function as they should," Hoy said.

The goal is to have 20-30 wolves within three to five years. Officials haven't decided whether to bring more in, park spokeswoman Liz Valencia said.

"A healthy park ecosystem includes a variety of wildlife and abundant food sources," said Christine Goepfert, Midwest associate director for the National Parks Conservation Association. "As wolves bounce back after nearly disappearing from the park, their presence as a predator on the island will help all wildlife and native plants thrive at Isle Royale."

The wolves' decline fueled a moose boom between 2012 and 2019, when the population may have reached 2,000 before dropping to 1,876 last year. It appears to have fallen further since, the report said.

During vegetation surveys this spring, researchers found 15 moose dead from starvation. Balsam fir saplings, their primary winter food source, were in "the worst condition ever observed" as moose munched every available branch, Hoy said. Blood-sucking ticks that thrived during the mild winter made things worse.

Also during the past year, personnel with the park service and Michigan Tech organized thousands of moose bones that have been gathered at Isle Royale. They're being cleaned, photo-documented and entered into a database. The collection eventually will be housed in a museum.

"It is gratifying to see the National Park Service invest in the long-term preservation of moose bones,

and it is almost certain that the scientific value of the collection will increase over time," Michigan Tech wildlife ecologist Rolf Peterson said. "We have already put it to use in ways never anticipated when the bones were first collected and saved."

## Lively leader of Cuban American community among Fla. victims

By LINDA A. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Sixty years before Juan Mora's Florida condo building came crashing down, killing him and at least 89 others, he was among hundreds of Cuban exiles who signed up for a covert, CIA-funded operation to overthrow Fidel Castro's Soviet-backed dictatorship.

Mora's dream of restoring democracy in his homeland took him from military training at a Guatemalan jungle camp to the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, where he was captured and then crammed into a decrepit, rat-filled Cuban prison for 20 months, friends once imprisoned with him told The Associated Press.

Authorities on Friday identified the remains of 80-year-old Juan A. Mora, also known as Juanito, recovered from the rubble of the Champlain Towers South building in Surfside. Others killed included his wife, Ana, and their adult son, Juan Mora Jr., who worked in Chicago and had been staying with his parents when their 12-story building suddenly pancaked on June 24.

Mora Sr. was a much-liked figure in the Miami area Cuban-American community, once active in the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association and the Bay of Pigs Museum it houses, museum board member Humberto Lopez said Friday. Mora was "always trying to help," organizing events, writing editorials about the invasion and emailing with other members of the veterans group, Lopez recalled.

Lopez said he and the loquacious Mora were close for the past decade, and described his wife as "charismatic."

Ana Mora had worked as assistant to the president of a prestigious Catholic high school in Miami, Belen Jesuit Prep, from which the couple's son had graduated, said another family friend, Johnny Lopez de la Cruz, president of the museum and veteran's association.

Mora Jr. was a manager for Morton Salt's road salt business in Chicago, according to a close friend there, Matthew Kaade, who graduated with him from Loyola University in Chicago in 2011.

Lopez de la Cruz said Mora Sr. also had two daughters from a prior marriage. Another friend, Humberto Diaz Arguelles, said Mora's first wife died of cancer.

Mora Sr. was part of a band of Cuban exiles funded by the CIA late in the Eisenhower administration to help counter Soviet influence and missiles placed in Cuba. The volunteers were sent to training camps in Guatemala's jungle in 1960 and early 1961. The force came to be known as Brigade 2506 — the ID number of the first casualty, a man who fell off a cliff during a training accident, said Diaz Arguelles, who trained at one of the camps with Mora.

They lived in tents, eating food that was sometimes spoiled and drinking river water as they learned to use machine guns, grenades, bazookas and mortars.

"We were so convinced about what we were doing to go free Cuba that nobody complained," Diaz Arguelles remembered.

He said Mora, a radio operator in the brigade's Battalion 3, was lively and popular and "always talking about every subject you can think of."

When training ended in April 1961 and the fighters headed to Cuba, they realized they weren't getting the help they'd been promised by the U.S. military, including aerial support and a "navy armada," Diaz Arguelles said. Roughly 1,400 men were transported from a Nicaraguan port in rusty merchant cargo ships to the Bay of Pigs on Cuba's southern coast, then had to climb down ropes in the dark to board "18-foot aluminum boats from Sears" and reach the beach — while under fire, because Castro had learned of the invasion in advance.

"There was no time to get scared," said Diaz Arguelles, whose boat sank after hitting a reef, forcing him to swim ashore with a mortar tube and two boxes of ammo.

President John F. Kennedy, who authorized the mission barely three months into his term, had canceled

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a second planned airstrike after U.S. support for the April 17, 1961, invasion became known, according to the JFK Library.

After three days fighting the overwhelming Cuban force, hiding in swamps and running out of ammunition, water and food, more than 100 members of the 2506 Brigade had been killed. Diaz Arguelles and about 20 invaders were surrounded by Cuban troops and taken to Castillo del Principe, or Castle of the Prince, a huge military fort in Havana. There Diaz Arguelles again met Mora, who like him had been captured.

Diaz Arguelles said the prison was deteriorated and full of fungus, and they had to sleep on the floor with rats running over them at night. Their meager food had rats and cockroaches in it, and contaminated water left the men sick and weak.

Lopez also was imprisoned there and spent about eight months in the same cell with Mora, who was then moved elsewhere in the prison.

Nearly 1,200 prisoners eventually were returned to the U.S. in exchange for \$53 million in food and medicine, according to the JFK Library. The Brigade 2506 survivors were flown to Florida just before Christmas 1962 and reunited with whatever family they had there.

Diaz Arguelles said he and Mora both got jobs and worked their way through college.

The men had drifted apart for years but reconnected after retirement. Diaz Arguelles recalled Mora had owned a business selling hurricane-proof windows and doors for at least a decade, and said they last spoke a couple months ago, naturally about the Bay of Pigs veterans group.

## UN calls for global database of human gene editing research

LONDON (AP) — The World Health Organization issued new recommendations Monday on human genome editing, calling for a global registry to track “any form of genetic manipulation” and proposing a whistle-blowing mechanism to raise concerns about unethical or unsafe research.

The U.N. health agency commissioned an expert group in late 2018 following a dramatic announcement from Chinese scientist He Jiankui that he had created the world’s first gene-edited babies.

In two reports Monday, WHO’s expert group said all studies involving human genome editing should be made public, although the committee noted that wouldn’t necessarily stop unprincipled scientists.

“In the field of stem cell research, unscrupulous entrepreneurs and clinics have deliberately misused clinical trial registries by registering procedures they plan to undertake as if they were properly sanctioned clinical trials,” the group said, calling for WHO to ensure that all genetic editing research registered in their database are reviewed and approved by an ethics committee.

When Chinese scientist He announced he had altered the DNA of twin babies to prevent them from catching HIV, he said the university where he worked was not aware and that he had funded the work himself. He was later sentenced to three years in jail for conducting “illegal medical practices.”

WHO’s expert group also said the U.N. agency should develop ways to identify any potentially concerning gene editing trials, saying a mechanism should be developed “for reporting violations of research integrity.”

Robin Lovell-Badge of the Francis Crick Institute, one of the experts on the committee, cited several instances where scientists in Russia, Ukraine and Turkey planning controversial genetic editing experiments were pressured not to proceed and called for a more formal whistle-blowing mechanism.

Still, the group acknowledged that as gene editing techniques become cheaper and easier to use, the ability of WHO to monitor such research is limited. The U.N. agency also has no authority to compel countries to cooperate, even during a public health emergency.

During the coronavirus pandemic, for example, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has repeatedly criticized rich countries for not sharing their vaccines, warning in January that the world was on the brink of a “catastrophic moral failure.”

But rich countries have made little effort to immediately share their doses with poor countries, even as COVID-19 spikes across Africa and Southeast Asia. Of the more than 3 billion vaccines that have been administered globally since then, fewer than 2% have been in poor countries.

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## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, July 13, the 194th day of 2021. There are 171 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 13, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson nominated Thurgood Marshall to be U.S. Solicitor General; Marshall became the first Black jurist appointed to the post. (Two years later, Johnson nominated Marshall to the U.S. Supreme Court.)

On this date:

In 1787, the Congress of the Confederation adopted the Northwest Ordinance, which established a government in the Northwest Territory, an area corresponding to the present-day Midwest and Upper Midwest.

In 1863, deadly rioting against the Civil War military draft erupted in New York City. (The insurrection was put down three days later.)

In 1886, Father Edward Joseph Flanagan, the founder of Boys Town, was born in County Roscommon, Ireland.

In 1939, Frank Sinatra made his first commercial recording, "From the Bottom of My Heart" and "Melancholy Mood," with Harry James and his Orchestra for the Brunswick label.

In 1972, George McGovern received the Democratic presidential nomination at the party's convention in Miami Beach.

In 1973, former presidential aide Alexander P. Butterfield revealed to Senate Watergate Committee staff members the existence of President Richard Nixon's secret White House taping system. (Butterfield's public revelation came three days later.)

In 1974, the Senate Watergate Committee proposed sweeping reforms in an effort to prevent another Watergate scandal.

In 1985, "Live Aid," an international rock concert in London, Philadelphia, Moscow and Sydney, took place to raise money for Africa's starving people.

In 1999, Angel Maturino Resendiz (ahn-HEHL' mah-tyoo-REE'-noh reh-SEHN'-deez), suspected of being the "Railroad Killer," surrendered in El Paso, Texas. (Resendiz was executed in 2006.)

In 2006, Israel imposed a naval blockade against Lebanon and blasted the Beirut airport and army air bases; Hezbollah fired dozens of rockets into Israel.

In 2010, New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner died in Tampa, Florida, nine days after turning 80.

In 2013, a jury in Sanford, Florida, cleared neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman of all charges in the shooting of Trayvon Martin, the Black teenager whose killing unleashed furious debate over racial profiling, self-defense and equal justice.

Ten years ago: California became the first state in the nation to add lessons about gays and lesbians to social studies classes in public schools under a measure signed by Gov. Jerry Brown. Three coordinated bombings in India's busy financial capital killed 26 people in the worst terror attack in the country since the 2008 Mumbai siege.

Five years ago: With emotions running raw, President Barack Obama met privately at the White House with elected officials, law enforcement leaders and members of the Black Lives Matter movement with the goal of getting them to work together to curb violence and build trust. Theresa May entered No. 10 Downing Street as Britain's new prime minister following a bittersweet exit by David Cameron, who resigned after voters rejected his appeal to stay in the European Union.

One year ago: California Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered bars and indoor dining shut down as the coronavirus swept the state with new ferocity; the shutdown also affected indoor religious services, gyms and hair and nail salons. School officials in Los Angeles and San Diego said they wouldn't bring students back to classrooms for the start of the new school year; New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said schools could open in areas where the coronavirus was under control. The Treasury Department said the federal government had incurred the biggest monthly budget deficit in history in June -- \$864 billion -- as spending to combat the coronavirus recession exploded, and job losses cut into tax revenues. Washington's NFL franchise

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dropped the "Redskins" name and Indian head logo amid pressure from sponsors; the move followed decades of criticism that the name and logo were offensive to Native Americans. (As new names were considered, the team would be known as the Washington Football Team.) The body of former "Glee" star Naya Rivera was found in Southern California's Lake Piru, five days after she went missing while boating with her 4-year-old son. (An autopsy confirmed that she died from accidental drowning.)

Today's Birthdays: Game show announcer Johnny Gilbert (TV: "Jeopardy!") is 93. Actor Patrick Stewart is 81. Actor Harrison Ford is 79. Singer-guitarist Roger McGuinn (The Byrds) is 79. Actor-comedian Cheech Marin is 75. Actor Daphne Maxwell Reid is 73. Actor Didi Conn is 70. Actor Gil Birmingham is 68. Singer Louise Mandrell is 67. Rock musician Mark "The Animal" Mendoza (Twisted Sister) is 65. Actor-director Cameron Crowe is 64. Former tennis player Anders Jarryd is 60. Comedian Tom Kenny is 59. Country singer-songwriter Victoria Shaw is 59. Bluegrass singer Rhonda Vincent is 59. Actor Kenny Johnson is 58. Roots singer/songwriter Paul Thorn is 57. Country singer Neil Thrasher is 56. Actor Ken Jeong is 52. Singer Deborah Cox is 48. Actor Ashley Scott is 44. Rock musician Will Champion (Coldplay) is 43. Actor Fran Kranz is 40. Actor Aya Cash is 39. St. Louis Cardinals catcher Yadier Molina is 39. Actor Colton Haynes is 33. Actor Steven R. McQueen is 33. Soul singer Leon Bridges is 32. Actor Hayley Erin ("General Hospital") is 27. Actor Kyle Harrison Breitkopf is 16.