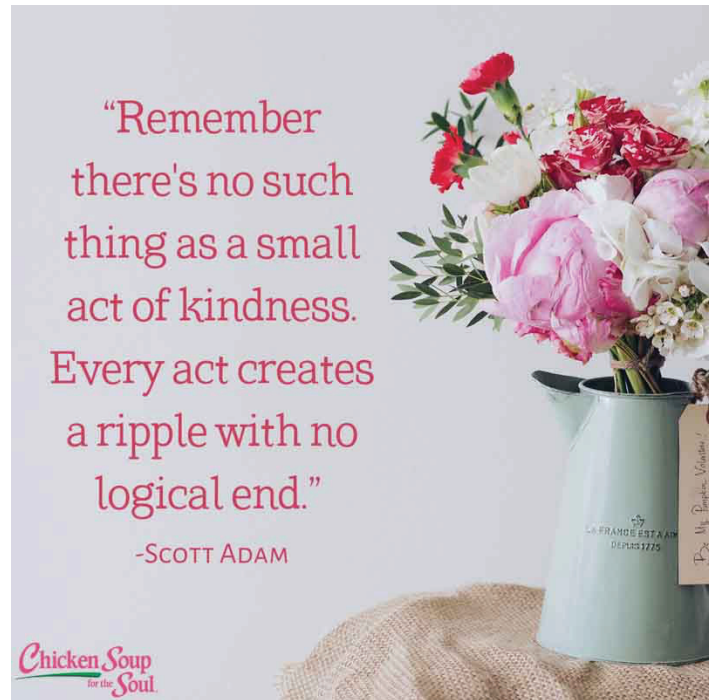


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OPEN: **Recycling Trailer in Groton**
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

JAMES VALLEY TELECOMMUNICATIONS 64TH ANNUAL MEETING

**Thursday, August 5th at 9am
Groton Area High School**

Registration begins at 8:30am in the old gym.

All members who register for the meeting will receive a **\$20 credit** on their JVT account.

\$500, \$250 (2) and \$100 (2) JVT credits to be given away!



**JAMES
VALLEY**
TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Brown County Receives FEMA Grant

Brown County has received a grant from FEMA to conduct and update the existing Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Plan. Federal Law requires that each state have a Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan and the State of South Dakota requires local jurisdictions to have individual plans in order to be eligible for Federal grant dollars in the event that a natural disaster occurs in our area and to also help with mitigation project funding.

A meeting for the Brown County and Local Jurisdiction Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan Update will be held on Monday, August 9th, 2021 from 1:00pm to 3:00pm at the Brown County Courthouse Community Room. Address of 25 Market Street Aberdeen, SD 57401

This meeting is part of the steps for Brown County in updating the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Hazard Mitigation Program encourages projects and funding to help jurisdictions become more resilient to natural hazards. Some examples of qualifying projects are storm shelters, increasing storm water capacity, backup generators for critical facilities, relocation or acquisition of flood prone properties, and grade raises, etc.

Public Involvement is a part of the PDM Plan and anyone who is interested in developing the Plan is encouraged to attend.

Questions can be directed to the Brown County Emergency Management Office at 605-626-7122 or emailed to: EmergencyManagement@browncounty.sd.gov.

South Dakota Department of Health Notice of Public Hearing to Adopt Rules

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Health announced that a public hearing will be held on August 18, 2021, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. CDT, in Conference Room 3 of the Kneip Building, 700 Governor's Drive in Pierre, SD to consider the adoption and amendment of proposed rules for South Dakota medical cannabis program as required by SDCL 34-20G.

Persons interested in testifying for or against the proposed rules may do so by appearing in person or remotely at the hearing. Those wishing to testify remotely must register by August 13, 2021, by clicking here. Individuals may also send written comments/materials to the South Dakota Department of Health to 600 East Capitol Avenue, Pierre, South Dakota, 57501.

Material sent by mail must reach the Department of Health by August 28, 2021, to be considered. After the hearing, the Department of Health will consider all written and oral comments it receives on the proposed rules.

Notice is further given to individuals with disabilities that this hearing is being held in a physically accessible place. Please notify the Department of Health at least 48 hours before the public hearing if you have special needs for which special arrangements must be made. The telephone number for making special arrangements is (605) 773-3361.

For more information on the South Dakota medical cannabis program, please visit medcannabis.sd.gov.

Wanner named to Dean's List

MANKATO, Minn. (July 27, 2021) - The Academic High Honor and Honor lists (Dean's lists) for the past spring semester at Minnesota State University, Mankato have been announced by interim Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Matt Cecil.

Among 3,608 students, a total of 1,070 students qualified for the High Honor List by achieving a 4.0 straight "A" average, while 2,538 students earned a 3.5 to 3.99 average to qualify for the Honor List.

To qualify for academic honors, undergraduate students must be enrolled for at least 12 credit hours for the semester.

Eliza Wanner was named to the Honor's List at MSU.

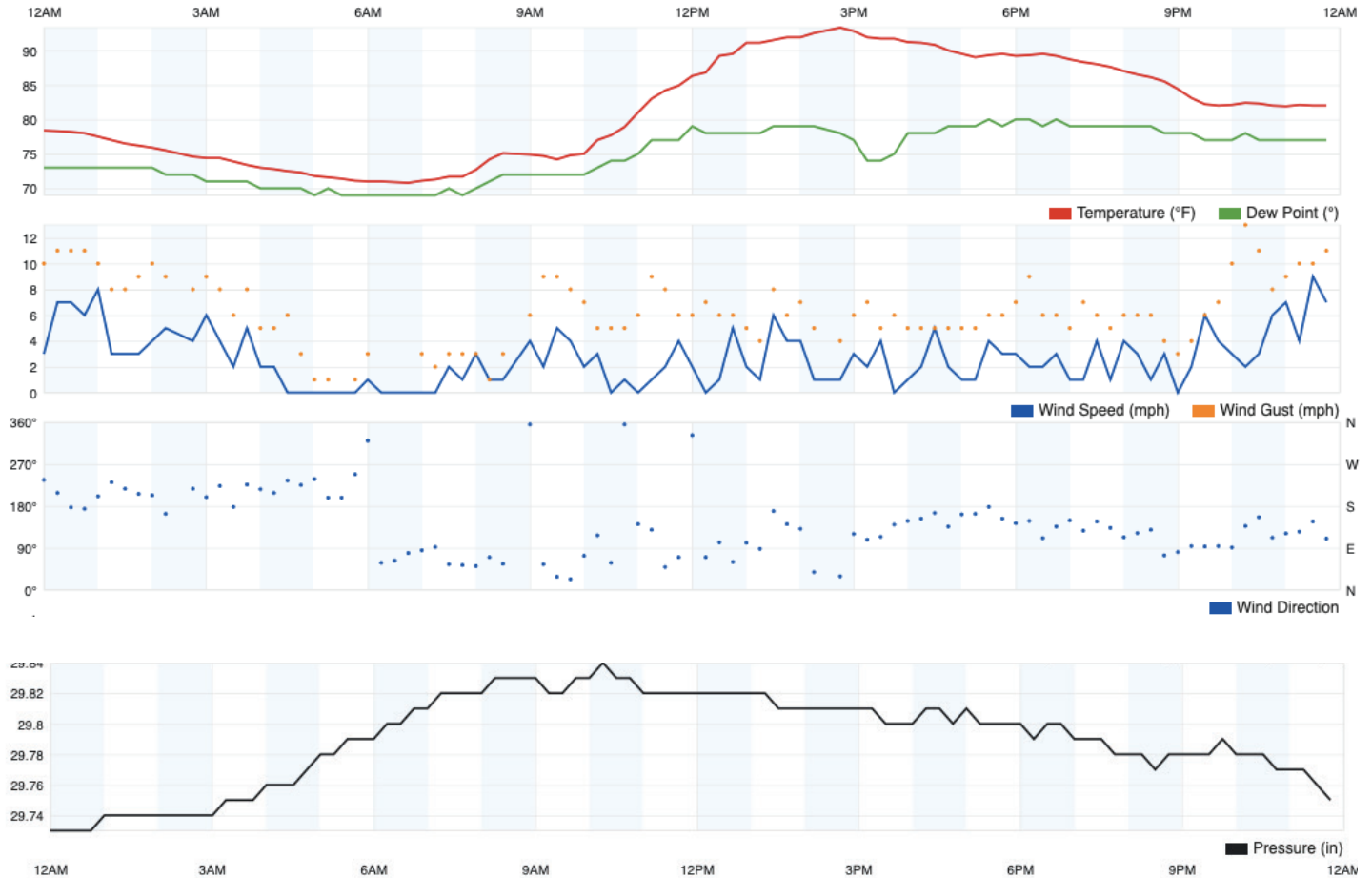
Antique Military Parade Today

On July 28th there will be an antique military vehicle parade in Groton. It will consist of 45 antique vehicles and will start at the north end of Main street and go to the Legion on the south end. They will set up the vehicles for display and there will be coffee and doughnuts provided by the Legion. The parade will start at 9am. These individuals will only be in town until 9:45. They are traveling the Yellowstone Trail and have other stops to make. They have been doing this for a number of years on historic highways across the US.

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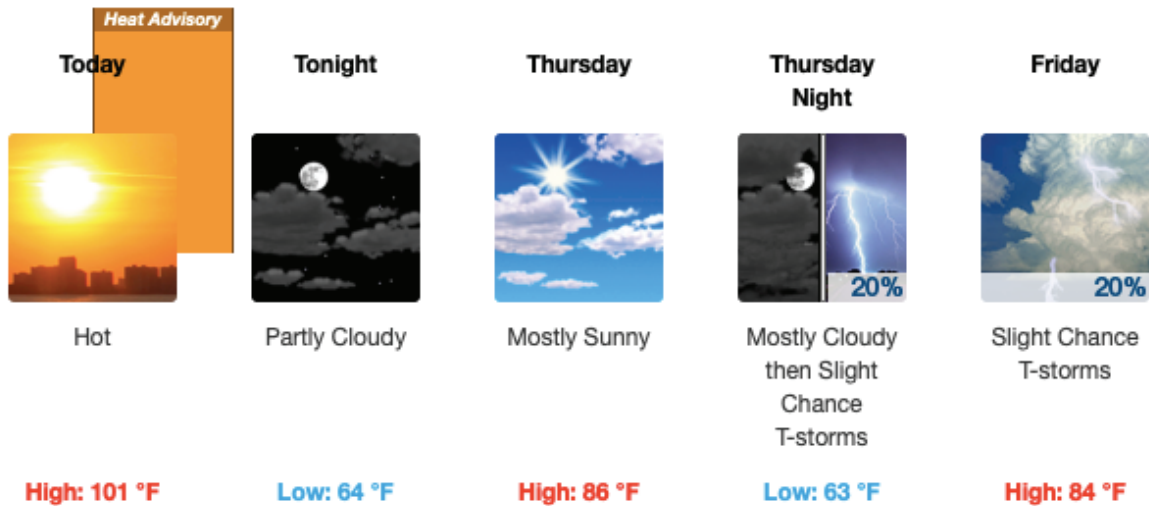
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Partly Cloudy, Hot and Humid today.

High-Very High Grassland Fire Danger this afternoon Central/North-Central SD.

Turning Cooler - Thu & Fri

3 Day Forecast

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
94-109°	82-93°	81-87°

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
7/28/2021 5:00 AM

The hot and humid conditions will remain with us for one more day today. Very hot temperatures this afternoon in the 90s to low 100s combined with the high humidity will create dangerous levels of heat for most of the area. The one exception will be areas along and west of the Missouri River where drier conditions this afternoon will raise grassland fire danger concerns to a high to very high level. Relief arrives later today into tonight when a frontal boundary moves through. It may touch off an isolated storm or two from western MN into east-central and south-central SD. Otherwise, dry conditions are expected the rest of the week until Friday. Temperatures will be closer to seasonal normal by the end of the week.

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Today in Weather History

July 28, 1986: Very intense thunderstorms developed in South Dakota and Nebraska and moved into Iowa. The first of these storms produced a tornado that crossed into Iowa south of Sioux City and slammed into a coal-burning power plant. This storm caused between 25 and 50 million dollars damage to the plant. The tornado continued across farmland, then damaged a store and flattened a motel in Sloan before lifting up.

1898: A severe thunderstorm produced considerable hail (some stones to 11 ounces) in Chicago, Illinois business district. Some people were hurt, not by hail, but by several hundred runaway horses spooked by the hailstones.

1976: At 3:42 AM, an earthquake measuring between 7.8 and 8.2 magnitudes on the Richter scale flattens Tangshan, a Chinese industrial city with a population of about one million people. An estimated 242,000 people in Tangshan and surrounding areas were killed, making the earthquake one of the deadliest in recorded history, surpassed only by the 300,000 who died in the Calcutta earthquake in 1737, and the 830,000 thought to have perished in China's Shaanxi province in 1556.

1819 - A small but intense hurricane passed over Bay Saint Louis, MS. The hurricane was considered the worst in fifty years. Few houses were left standing either at Bay Saint Louis or at Pass Christian, and much of the Mississippi coast was desolate following the storm. A U.S. cutter was lost along with its thirty-nine crew members. The storm struck the same area that was hit 150 years later by Hurricane Camille. (David Ludlum)

1930 - The temperature at Greensburg, KY, soared to 114 degrees to set a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1934 - The temperature at Grofino, ID, climbed to 118 degrees to establish a record for Idaho. (The Weather Channel)

1952 - A severe storm with hail up to an inch and a half in diameter broke windows, ruined roofs, and stripped trees of leaves near Benson, AZ. The temperature dropped to 37 degrees, as hail was three to four inches deep, with drifts 46 inches high. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - Severe thunderstorms moving out of South Dakota across Iowa produce high winds which derailed eighteen piggyback trailer cars of a westbound freight train near Boone, IA. Sixteen of the cars fell 187 feet into the Des Moines River. The thunderstorms also spawned a number of tornadoes, including one which caused twenty-five to fifty million dollars damage at Sloan, near Sioux City, IA. (Storm Data)

1987 - Thunderstorms in Nevada produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Searchlight, reducing visibilities to near zero in blowing dust and sand. Thunderstorms in Montana drenched Lonesome Lake with 3.78 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms drenched Wilmington, NC, with 3.33 inches of rain, bringing their monthly total 14.46 inches. Seven cities in Michigan and Minnesota reported record high temperatures for the date. Marquette, MI, hit 99 degrees, and the record high of 94 degrees at Flint MI was their tenth of the month. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Afternoon thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in Massachusetts. Early evening thunderstorms over Florida produced wind gusts to 68 mph at Fort Myers, and evening thunderstorms in South Dakota produced nearly two inches of rain in twenty minutes at Pierpoint. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

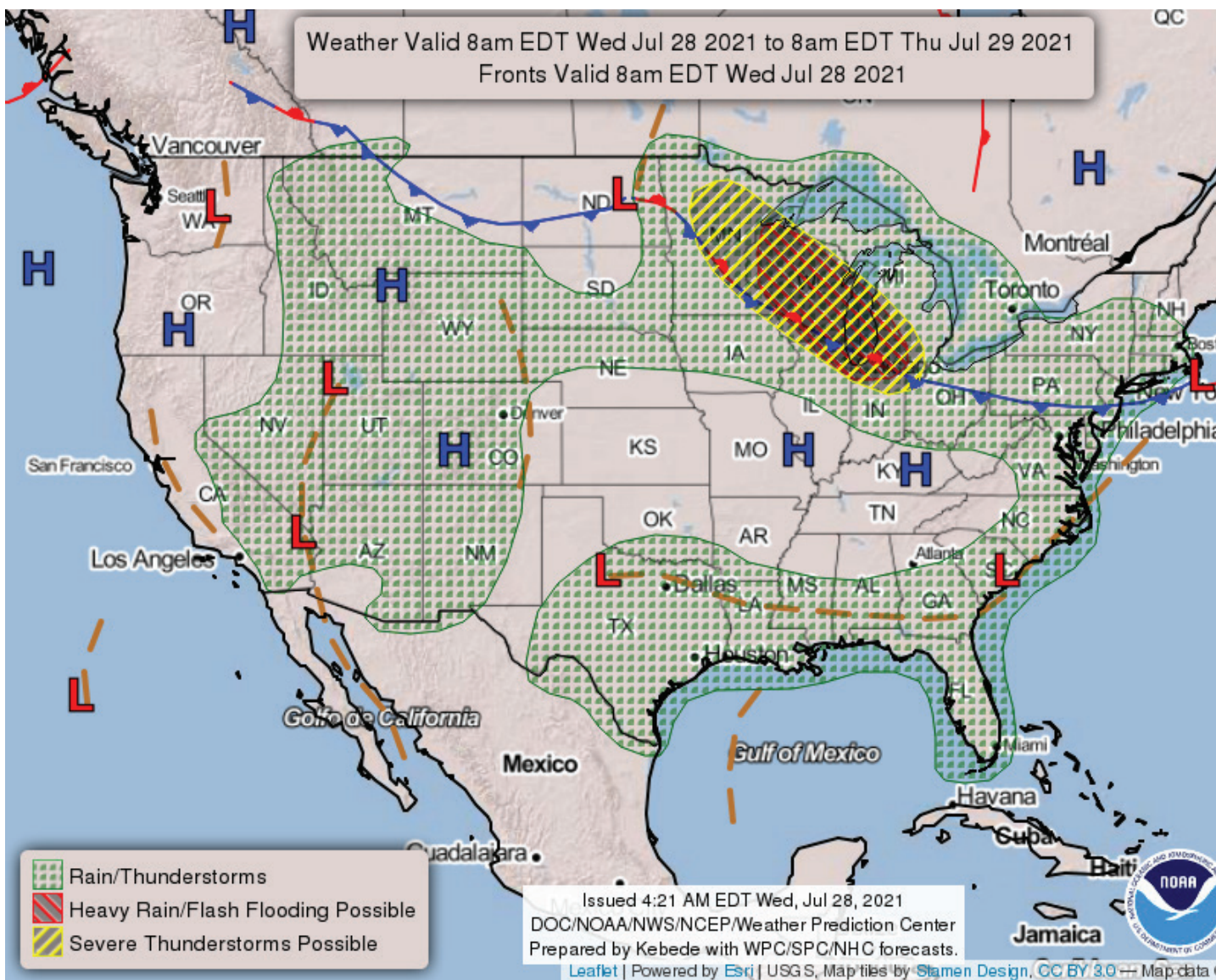
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 93 °F at 2:43 PM
Low Temp: 71 °F at 6:37 AM
Wind: 14 mph at 11:03 PM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 109° in 1975
Record Low: 40° in 2013
Average High: 85°F
Average Low: 60°F
Average Precip in July.: 2.76
Precip to date in July.: 2.50
Average Precip to date: 13.77
Precip Year to Date: 7.25
Sunset Tonight: 9:06 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:15 a.m.



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ACCOUNTABILITY

There was a time on earth when there were no nations or governments. People did as they pleased. As a result, God's creation – the human race – sank into disgraceful depths of despair. God wanted to solve the problem so He covered the earth with a flood in judgment. Then He put government in the world to restrain wickedness. That first government came from God, and every government ever since has come from God.

Why? Because no one has any authority unless it comes from God. Whether those who govern us are good or bad, right or wrong, gracious or greedy – they are there because God put them there. Some use their power to do God's will. Others use their power in an attempt to go against God's will. Whoever serves the people as leaders serve as He pleases with His permission.

So, it follows that those who refuse to obey the teachings and laws of God will ultimately be rewarded for their obedience or disobedience. Perhaps they will get away with it here, but certainly not in the "hereafter."

"God presides in the great assembly," wrote Asaph, the author of Psalm 82. And he concluded, "He gives judgment among the 'gods.'" In other words, if those whom God has placed in positions of leadership as rulers or judges do not rule with God's laws and commandments as their guide, they will face His judgment.

Not long ago, one ruler who was dying cried out, "Now I must face the Judge. This is what disturbs me." We, too, must face this Judge. What reward will we get on that day?

Prayer: Lord, may we live our lives realizing that someday we will stand before You as Judge of all we have done. Help us to live with that in mind. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: God presides in the great assembly. He gives judgment among the 'gods.' Psalm 82:1

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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

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News from the Associated Press

Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined
Yankton Press & Dakotan. July 26, 2021.

Editorial: Noem And COVID: The Record So Far

The COVID-19 pandemic isn't over, but we're already seeing efforts by many people to either clearly define — or re-define — the overall narrative.

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem is no exception. With an eye on her political future, she's been advertising for months that she has always been a champion of freedom in dealing with the pandemic while other governors (including some who might be her opposition in a potential 2024 presidential race) have imposed lockdowns. Critics have challenged her on this, noting the steps she took when the pandemic hit South Dakota in March 2020.

This is likely to remain an issue surrounding Noem as she heads into the 2022 gubernatorial race (assuming she seeks reelection, which at this point appears likely) and for as long as a rabid anti-COVID protocol, anti-vaccine, anti-masking mentality remains a significant force in the Republican base.

Noem and her advocates are technically correct when they say the governor never locked down the state. In fact, the state never closed businesses or restricted travel in the face of the coronavirus threat. Even when some sources (including this newspaper) were suggesting that Noem should consider a brief lockdown to get control of the virus spread in the spring of 2020, the governor resisted. But she also said more than once that the battle against COVID was going to be a marathon, not a sprint.

However, she did order schools to shut down, first for a week, then for another week and then longer until the semester was gone. One could parse words here: In her initial statement, she only "asked" the schools to shut down, a word choice that did cause some early confusion. When pressed, she admitted it was an order. Closing down the schools across the state is not the same as closing down the state, but it did have a momentous impact on life here.

She did issue a stay-at-home order for older residents in Minnehaha and Lincoln counties in the early days of the pandemic. This was very short term and confined to the two counties that were seeing the biggest increase in cases at that moment.

She did not order businesses across the state to shut down or modify operations; instead, she left those decisions up to local municipalities and counties. This also created a patchwork of regulations from town to town and, as in the case of Yankton County, from town to country. We were told anecdotally that when local officials looked to the state for some guidance during the early days of the crisis, the state was mostly hands' off. That might be seen as freedom, but it's not always the best medicine in all situations.

However, as far as we know, her administration never threatened to, say, punish a county that tried to implement a mask mandate on government property — unlike Nebraska, for example. That, too, could be defined as freedom.

In spring 2020, when the Park Jefferson speedway tried to hold races despite the strong encouragement not to host such an event in the mounting crisis, Noem appeared clearly unhappy with the situation, and the speedway's defiance made national news. (It ultimately backed down.) But three months later, she hailed the much larger and potentially more problematic Sturgis Motorcycle Rally as a sign of South Dakota's freedom.

The success of all this has been mixed. South Dakota at one point last fall was one of the top states in the nation in terms of COVID-19 death rates; as of July 23, the state ranked 10th in the nation in COVID-19 fatalities with 231 people per 100,000. Also, South Dakota saw a tremendous early response to the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines, but that pace has slowed of late, matching what is happening elsewhere.

With the Delta variant threatening a new wave of uncertainty, this narrative is far from complete. Noem and the people of this state still face challenges. But a blunt assessment of the past may be the best way

to confront the future.

END

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:

Mega Millions

02-35-36-54-64, Mega Ball: 11, Megaplier: 3

(two, thirty-five, thirty-six, fifty-four, sixty-four; Mega Ball: eleven; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$153 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$186 million

Tribal Leaders' Health Board requiring COVID-19 vaccinations

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board is requiring all its employees to be vaccinated for COVID-19.

The board's CEO, Jerilyn Church, has sent a memo to staff that says those working under the Health Board banner, including the Great Plains Tribal Epidemiology Center, Oyate Health Center, and the We Are Warriors EOC will be required to be fully vaccinated by Sept. 21.

"In accordance with GPTLHB's duty to provide and maintain a workplace that is free of known hazards, GPTLHB has adopted this policy to safeguard the health of our employees and their families, our relatives and visitors, and the community at large from infectious diseases that vaccinations reduce," said Church.

Currently, 74% of the Health Board's staff has received the vaccine, according to officials. But, with numbers on the rise and the emergence of the delta variant, mandatory vaccinations for all staff is a logical next step for the organization, Church said.

Meanwhile, the Department of Veterans Affairs on Monday became the first major federal agency to require health care workers to get COVID-19 vaccines. The aggressive delta variant is spreading across the nation and some communities are reporting increases in hospitalizations among unvaccinated people.

The VA's move came on a day when nearly 60 leading medical and health care organizations issued a call for health care facilities to require their workers to get vaccinated.

Sioux Falls woman has plea change hearing in infant's death

SIOUX FALLS undefined

A Sioux Falls woman who has pleaded not guilty in the 1981 death of her newborn has a hearing to change her plea.

Theresa Bentaas, 59, is charged with first- and second-degree murder and first-degree manslaughter in the death of her abandoned infant who became known as Baby Andrew.

Terms of the change of plea were not known. A hearing in Second Judicial Circuit Court is scheduled Oct. 8. An attorney for Bentaas did not immediately respond to phone and email messages to inquire about the change of plea.

A sentencing hearing for Bentaas has been scheduled for Dec. 2, the Argus Leader reported.

A motorist spotted the newborn, wrapped in a blanket, in a ditch in Sioux Falls on Feb. 28, 1981. An autopsy determined the infant died of exposure. After a few leads and attempts to contact the parents of the baby, the case went cold.

Decades later when the case was revived and with advancements in DNA matching, police identified Bentaas as the mother.

Bentaas was arrested and charged in the death of Baby Andrew in March 2019.

Analysis: For Biles, peace comes with a price - the gold

By WILL GRAVES AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — When you spend the better part of a decade redefining the possible within your sport, the standards change. Good is no longer good enough. Sometimes, great isn't either.

Simone Biles received a crash course on it five years ago in Rio de Janeiro.

The American gymnastics star had already won three gold medals at the 2016 Olympics when she began her routine in the beam finals. Midway through her set, the then 19-year-old lost her balance, as tends to happen when trying to execute world-class skills on a piece of wood narrower than the average iPhone. She reached down to steady herself, preserving a bronze in the process.

She was pumped. Others weren't.

"People were really upset," Biles told The Associated Press in May. "I'm like, 'Guys it's still a medal for the country and it's still a medal for myself.' If anybody else was going to get bronze they would have been cheering but it was Simone so they were, like, pissed."

Fast forward to team finals in Tokyo on Tuesday night, when the "demons" Biles has been grappling with for years proved to be too much. Spooked when she couldn't get comfortable on vault and burdened by what she described as the "weight of the world," the 24-year-old instead took herself out of competition.

"I didn't want to go out there and do something dumb and get hurt and be negligent," she said after the Americans took the silver. "So, I knew for myself that I had to take a step back."

Something that's been increasingly difficult since her return to the sport in the fall of 2017.

She made a promise to herself when she came back that she would be doing it on her terms. Her way. She spent much of the run-up to Tokyo desperately trying to hold onto that vision. She won a world championship in 2018 despite battling a kidney stone that left her in agony and became the most decorated gymnast ever with a five-medal haul in Germany a year later.

Everything was primed for a golden goodbye in Japan last August. Then the coronavirus pandemic hit, pushing the Games back a full 12 months. And everything had to be recalibrated.

She fended off depression, steeling herself to go on. There was a brand to build. Sponsors to please. Fans to honor. Critics — both internal and external — to silence. Much like Olympic greats Michael Phelps and Usain Bolt, the 24-year-old became a prisoner of her own excellence.

To be fair, in some ways she helped build the walls. She's embraced — winkingly, most of the time — her status as the Greatest of All-Time.

It takes a special kind of swagger to compete in a leotard with a bejeweled goat you've nicknamed "Goldie." A documentary series has spent the last two years chronicling her path. The acronym for the post-Olympic Gold Over America Tour she is headlining this fall is not a coincidence.

A room overlooking the massive gym her family runs in the northern Houston suburbs turned into a TV studio over the spring. Outlets asking for a piece of her time came and went, asking her the same questions over and over again. She accommodated as many as she could. It's all part of the process.

Internally, however, things were shifting. Her performances during the spring competition were ... OK, at least by her standards. Yes, she drilled her Yurchenko double pike vault when she unveiled it in May. She also fell off uneven bars the same night. During the U.S. Olympic Trials in June, she actually finished behind Olympic teammate Sunisa Lee on the final day of the competition, the first time that's happened in eight years.

Things didn't get any better in Tokyo. Biles topped qualifying as usual but an uncharacteristically messy block on her Cheng vault sent her nearly sideways off the table. She bounded all the way off the competition mat following one tumbling pass on floor. She carried so much momentum on her beam dismount she took three huge steps backward.

Something wasn't right. The doubts that have cropped up at times during her career re-emerged. And rather than brush them back, she accepted their presence. They lingered when she walked onto the floor Tuesday for the team final. Her warm-up wasn't great. Her vault was even worse, as the planned 2 1/2 twists of her Amanar became 1 1/2 instead.

This wasn't the first time she felt like this. She was a newly minted senior elite at the U.S. Classic in 2013. Things went badly. She fell on each of the first three events. Then coach Aimee Boorman withdrew the 16-year-old from the competition in an effort to protect her from herself.

Asked on Tuesday night if there were any similarities between that long night in Chicago, Biles laughed. "I was dumb and stupid (back then)," she said. "I was pulled out. I wanted to go out there and compete."

She's not "dumb and stupid" anymore. As she sat down with U.S. team doctor Marcia Faustin while waiting for her score to flash inside a stunned, fan-less Ariake Gymnastics Center, she realized she could no longer push through as she's done so many times before. Too much was on the line both mentally and physically. For her team. And for herself.

A gymnast flying through the air without any idea of where she might be going is a dangerous thing. Biles bent gravity to her will so easy for so long, people forgot there's no such thing as autopilot.

She didn't. So she stopped. Right there. Right then. Who knows if it's the last time she'll be seen in a competition leotard. She withdrew from Thursday's all-around final. Next week's event finals are a mystery.

It's a decision she is ready to live with. Standing next to her teammates with a silver medal slung around her neck on Tuesday, she finally realized whether everybody else can is their problem, not hers.

'OK not to be OK': Mental health takes top role at Olympics

By JENNA FRYER AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — For decades, they were told to shake it off or toughen up — to set aside the doubt, or the demons, and focus on the task at hand: winning. Dominating. Getting it done.

For years, Simone Biles was one of the very best at that. Suddenly — to some, shockingly — she decided she wasn't in the right headspace.

By pulling on her white sweatsuit in the middle of Tuesday night's Olympic gymnastics meet, and by doing it with a gold medal hanging in the balance, Biles might very well have redefined the mental health discussion that's been coursing through sports for the past year.

Michael Phelps, winner of a record 23 gold medals and now retired, has long been open about his own mental health struggles. Phelps has said he contemplated suicide after the 2012 Olympics while wracked with depression. Now an analyst for NBC's swimming coverage, he said watching Biles struggle "broke my heart."

"Mental health over the last 18 months is something people are talking about," Phelps said. "We're human beings. Nobody is perfect. So yes, it is OK not to be OK."

Biles joins some other high-profile athletes in the Olympic space — overwhelmingly females — who have been talking openly about a topic that had been taboo in sports for seemingly forever.

— Tennis player Naomi Osaka withdrew from the French Open, never went to Wimbledon and, after her early exit in Tokyo this week, conceded that the Olympic cauldron was a bit too much to handle.

— American sprinter Sha'Carri Richardson made no secret of the issues she faced as she prepared for an Olympic journey that never happened. She said she used marijuana to help mask the pain of her birth mother's death, to say nothing of the pressure of the 100 meters.

— Dutch cyclist Tom Dumoulin left training camp in January to clear his head, saying he was finding it "very difficult for me to know how to find my way as Tom Dumoulin the cyclist." He resumed training in May; on Wednesday, he won a silver medal in the men's individual time trials.

— Liz Cambage, a WNBA player who competes for Australia, pulled out of the Olympics a week before they opened because of anxiety over entering a controlled COVID bubble in Tokyo that would have kept her friends and family away.

"Relying on daily medication to control my anxiety is not the place I want to be right now. Especially walking into competition on the world's biggest sporting stage," she wrote on social media.

Biles, though, took things to a new level — one that now makes it thinkable to do what had been almost unthinkable only 24 hours before. She stepped back, assessed the situation and realized it would not be

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healthy to keep going.

On Wednesday, she pulled out of the all-around competition to focus on her mental well-being.

"I have to do what's right for me and focus on my mental health, and not jeopardize my health and well-being," a tearful Biles said after the Americans won the silver medal in team competition. She said she recognized she was not in the right headspace hours before the competition began.

"It was like fighting all those demons," she said.

The International Olympic Committee, aware of the struggles young athletes face, increased its mental health resources ahead of the Tokyo Games. Psychologists and psychiatrists are onsite in the Olympic village and established a "Mentally Fit Helpline" as a confidential health support service available before, during and for three months after the Games.

The 24-hour hotline is a free service that offers in more than 70 languages clinical support, structured short-term counseling, practical support and, if needed, guidance to the appropriate IOC reporting mechanisms in the case of harassment and/or abuse.

The IOC-developed Athlete365 website surveyed more than 4,000 athletes in early 2020, and the results led the IOC to shift its tone from sports performance and results to mental health and uplifting the athlete's voices.

Content was created for various social media platforms to feature current Olympians championing mental health causes. And the Olympic State of Mind series on Olympics.com shares compilations of mental health stories and podcasts.

"Are we doing enough? I hope so. I think so," IOC spokesman Mark Adams said Wednesday. "But like everyone in the world, we are doing more on this issue."

Naoko Imoto, a swimmer at the 1996 Atlanta Games, is a consultant on gender equity for the Tokyo Olympic Committee. She said Osaka's admission in early June about mental-health struggles represented an opening for a discussion largely avoided.

"In Japan, we still don't talk about mental health," Imoto said. "I don't think there's enough of an understanding on mental health, but I think there are a lot of athletes coming out right now and saying it is common."

Australian swimmer Jack McLoughlin choked back tears after winning the silver medal in the 400-meter freestyle Sunday, describing how the pressures of training during a pandemic while also pursuing an engineering degree nearly caused him to quit the sport.

"That's all to my family and friends. They really helped me out, I was really struggling," McLoughlin said. "I train up to 10, 11 times a week, so to do that when you are not 100% sure you're actually going to get where you want to be is pretty hard."

Particularly with the world watching. John Speraw, coach of the U.S. men's volleyball team and the son of a psychologist, hired a specialist to assist his athletes when he coached at UC Irvine. He was an assistant on two Olympic teams before advancing to be the head coach for the Rio Games. There, he noticed his players were posting on Facebook — during the actual opening ceremony.

"To me, it was the most striking," he said. "I think we are very conscious of the increased scrutiny and external pressure and expectations that it places on our athletes."

Thriveworks, a counseling, psychology, and psychiatry services with more than 300 locations, found that one in three elite athletes suffer from anxiety and depression. In an analysis of more than 18,000 data points from print, online, broadcast and social media sources covering track and field, swimming, tennis, gymnastics and soccer, 69% of negative mentions were about female athletes compared to 31% about male athletes.

It showed that when the focus is on an individual athlete, coverage becomes less enthusiastic with a 29% negative tone that exemplifies the public pressure and criticism athletes face, said Kim Plourde, a licensed clinical social worker at Thriveworks who works with elite athletes through the Alliance of Social Workers in Sport.

"Female athletes have to manage a different level of expectations from themselves, coaches, other ath-

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letes, media, and fans ranging from their physical appearance to their performance," Plourde said.

Jenny Rissveds of Sweden was the youngest women's cross-country mountain biking champion when she won gold in Rio at 22. A year later, two deaths in her family triggered depression she still deals with. Rissveds failed to win a second consecutive gold, finishing 14th in Tokyo, but she was elated to be done with competition.

"I'm just so f---ing happy that it's over," she said. "Not just the race. But all these years, to not have to carry that title any more. I have a name and I hope that I can be Jenny now and not the Olympic champion, because that is a heavy burden.

"I hope that I will be left alone now."

Olympics Latest: Arai wins Japan's 6th judo gold in Tokyo

TOKYO (AP) — The Latest on the Tokyo Olympics, which are taking place under heavy restrictions after a year's delay because of the coronavirus pandemic:

MEDAL ALERT

Chizuru Arai has won Japan's sixth gold medal in judo at the Tokyo Olympics, beating Austria's Michaela Polleres in the final of the women's 70-kilogram middleweight division.

Arai reached her first Olympic final with three ippon victories, surviving a semifinal bout that lasted nearly 17 minutes against Russian athlete Madina Taimazova. The two-time world champion then claimed gold over Polleres with an early waza ari at the Budokan.

Arai is just the second Japanese woman to win gold out of five weight categories in Tokyo. The men swept the first four gold medals in Tokyo, but they won't win a fifth after Shoichiro Mukai fell short before the medal rounds.

Japan is still coming away from the first five days in its homegrown martial art with eight medals from 10 weight classes. The final three days of the Olympic tournament include five more opportunities for gold, including the first-ever mixed team competition Saturday.

Taimazova and the Netherlands' Sanne van Dijke won bronze for their first Olympic medals.

Canadian gymnast Ellie Black has withdrawn from the all-around finals.

The International Gymnastics Federation made the announcement on Wednesday. No reason was given for Black's withdrawal.

The 25-year-old Black is competing in her third Olympics. A silver medalist at the 2017 world championships, Black came in 24th during qualifying at the Ariake Gymnastics Centre.

Black will be replaced by Lieke Wevers of The Netherlands in the finals. The decision came hours after reigning Olympic champion Simone Biles took herself out of the all-around competition to focus on her mental health.

The U.S. women will play the Russian athletes for the first gold medal in the new Olympic sport of 3-on-3 hoops.

Kelsey Plum and Alisha Gray each made free throws to give the United States the winning margin in its 18-16 win over France.

Then Russia's Olga Frolkina made a 2-pointer to seal a 21-14 win over China.

The U.S. and teams from the Soviet Union have won every women's 5-on-5 medal since the sport was introduced to the Olympic program in 1976.

Russia's men's team upset top-ranked Serbia 21-10 to earn its spot in the gold-medal game. The team officially known as "ROC" – Russian Olympic Committee – will play Latvia in the final. Latvia beat Belgium 21-8.

Olympics organizers say an additional 16 people accredited for the Tokyo Games have tested positive

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for COVID, bringing the total to 174 since July 1.

The total includes 20 athletes, though there were no new positive tests among athletes in the cases announced Wednesday. Tens of thousands of people are accredited for the Games.

Tokyo also recorded a record daily high of 3,177 COVID-19 cases Wednesday, up from a previous high of 2,848 on Tuesday.

Judo's governing body has formally warned a coach who slapped a female athlete hard in the face twice to prepare her for an Olympic bout.

German judoka Martyna Trajdos later defended coach Claudiu Pusa from criticism, saying it was her request "to fire me up" before stepping on the mat.

That did not satisfy the International Judo Federation, who issued the warning a day after the incident shocked Olympic viewers.

The IJF said it issued "a serious official warning" for the Germany team coach for "the bad behavior he showed."

Judo "is an educational sport and as such cannot tolerate such behavior," the governing body says.

Trajdos, who lost the bout, later wrote on Instagram that "Looks like this was not hard enough" in reference to the slaps.

Fiji has beaten New Zealand 27-12 to successfully defend the title it won when rugby sevens made its Olympic debut at Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

The gold in Rio was Fiji's first Olympic medal in any sport. Now the Pacific island nation has two.

Jerry Tuwai was in the squad five years ago and he led Fiji in its title defense in Tokyo, where they continued their unbeaten streak in Olympic games.

The silver medal was a vast improvement for New Zealand, which missed the podium in 2016 after an upset loss to Japan in its opening game and a quarterfinal loss to Fiji.

All the medals went to the southern hemisphere, with Argentina beating 2016 finalist Britain 17-12 for the bronze.

South Africa, the bronze medalist in Rio, beat the United States 28-7 in the playoff for fifth place.

Tennis player Novak Djokovic's Golden Slam bid is alive and well.

The top-ranked Serb beat training partner Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain 6-3, 6-1 to reach the quarterfinals at the Tokyo Games.

Djokovic is attempting to become the first man to achieve a Golden Slam by winning all four Grand Slam tournaments and Olympic gold in the same calendar year.

He has already won the Australian and French Opens plus Wimbledon this year. So now he needs the Tokyo Games title and the U.S. Open trophy to complete the unique collection.

Djokovic is scheduled to play again later with Serbian partner Nina Stojanovic against Marcelo Melo and Luisa Stefani of Brazil in the opening round of the mixed doubles competition.

Djokovic's quarterfinal opponent in singles will be Kei Nishikori of Japan.

Nishikori reached his third straight Olympic quarterfinal by beating Ilya Ivashka of Belarus.

MEDAL ALERT

Primoz Roglic has capped an incredible month for Slovenian cycling by winning the Olympic time trial.

He added a gold medal to the bronze won by Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar in the road race.

Roglic's closest rival was Dutch time trial specialist Tom Dumoulin, who finished more than a minute behind to win his second consecutive Olympic silver medal. Rohan Dennis of Australia claimed the bronze medal.

The prerace favorite, Italian time trial champ Filippo Ganna, faded over the final kilometers and finished fifth.

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Tennis player Daniil Medvedev has taken exception to a question from a reporter who asked if "Russian athletes are carrying a stigma of cheaters in this Games."

The second-seeded Russian Olympic Committee player responded that for "the first time in my life, I'm not going to answer a question and you should be embarrassed of yourself."

Medvedev then nodded to a Tokyo 2020 staff member to say, "I think you should (ban) him from the Olympic Games or the tennis tournament. I don't want to see him again on my interview."

The fallout from a state-backed doping scandal led to a ban on Russia competing under the country's name at the Tokyo Games and at next year's Beijing Winter Games.

The 335 athletes accredited for Tokyo are officially competing for the Russian Olympic Committee, known as ROC. The word "Russia" is banned from their uniforms.

Medvedev had just played through extreme heat to reach the quarterfinals.

A second Swiss track team member who was supposed to compete at the Tokyo Olympics has been suspended in a doping case.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport says it reinstated a provisional suspension for Alex Wilson, who was due to compete in the men's 100 and 200 meters.

Wilson tested positive for the anabolic steroid trenbolone in March. The court says he says it was caused by eating contaminated beef in the United States.

World Athletics and the World Anti-Doping Agency intervened with the court to ensure Wilson could not compete in Tokyo after a Swiss tribunal lifted his provisional ban.

Switzerland's Kariem Hussein, a former European 400-meter hurdles champion, is now serving a nine-month ban after testing positive for a stimulant in a case revealed last week.

MEDAL ALERT

China has won its third gold medal in diving at the Tokyo Olympics.

Wang Zongyuan and Xie Siyi won men's 3-meter synchronized springboard. They finished with 467.82 points after leading throughout the six-dive contest.

Andrew Capobianco and Michael Hixon of the U.S. earned silver at 444.36. It's the same color medal that Hixon won five years ago in Rio with a different partner.

Germany's Patrick Hausding and Lars Rudiger rallied from sixth to take bronze at 404.73.

China earlier won gold in women's 10-meter synchro and women's 3-meter synchro. The Chinese took silver in men's 10-meter synchro.

The U.S. women's water polo team lost at the Olympics for the first time since 2008, falling 10-9 to Rebecca Parkes and Hungary in group play.

The U.S. was a big favorite to win its third straight gold medal coming into Tokyo, but it was pushed hard by China during a rugged 12-7 victory Monday and then it struggled against Hungary. Even with the loss, it still should be able to advance to the knockout round.

Hungary trailed 9-8 with 2:28 left, but captain Rita Keszthelyi scored from deep and Parkes got the game-winner when she connected on a no-look goal with 45 seconds left. Parkes finished with a team-high three goals.

The U.S. had the ball in the final seconds but turned it over.

It was the United States' first loss at the Olympics since the 2008 final against the Netherlands. It had a draw in London, but it went 6-0 on the way to the title in Rio.

Simone Biles will not defend her Olympic title.

The American gymnastics superstar withdrew from Thursday's all-around competition to focus on her mental well-being.

USA Gymnastics said in a statement that the 24-year-old is opting to not compete. The decision comes a day after Biles removed herself from the team final following one rotation because she felt she wasn't

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mentally ready.

Jade Carey, who finished ninth in qualifying, will take Biles' place in the all-around. Carey initially did not qualify because she was the third-ranking American behind Biles and Sunisa Lee. International Gymnastics Federation rules limit countries to two athletes per event in the finals.

The organization said Biles will be evaluated daily before deciding if she will participate in next week's individual events. Biles qualified for the finals on all four apparatuses.

Quarantined Olympic skateboarder Candy Jacobs says she's had to take action to be allowed to get fresh air in an isolation hotel in Japan.

The Dutch athlete was removed from the Olympic Village after testing positive for COVID-19 a week ago.

Jacobs says in a video message posted on Instagram that "not having any outside air is so inhuman."

She says she refused to move on her seventh day of quarantine in a room where the window doesn't open.

After more than seven hours, she says, officials agreed she could stand at an open window under supervision for 15 minutes a day.

Jacobs says "having that first breath of outside air was the saddest and best moment in my life."

The 31-year-old skateboarder missed the street event in the sport's Olympic debut.

Jacobs says watching the event on television was "a super-cool distraction" from quarantine.

Two world champions have been knocked out of the Tokyo Olympic boxing tournament in the round of 16. That blows open the brackets at men's featherweight and men's light heavyweight.

Irish featherweight Kurt Walker pulled off one of the biggest upsets of the tournament with a 4:1 win over Uzbek world champion Mirazizbek Mirzakhilov.

Two hours later, Russian light heavyweight Imam Khataev surprised Kazakh world champ Bekzad Nurdauletov with a 4:1 victory. The 26-year-old Khataev has nearly a decade of high-level amateur experience, but no victories to compare to this upset.

Walker controlled the first round and hung on at the end to get a 29-28 decision on four of the five judges' cards. Walker wouldn't have been at the Olympics if they had been held on time: His daughter, Layla, was born three months prematurely in May 2020 and required months of hospital care before she emerged healthy.

Nesthy Petecio of the Philippines and Italy's Irma Testa also clinched their nations' first Olympic women's boxing medals by advancing to the semifinals at featherweight.

The U.S. men's volleyball team has improved to 2-1 in pool play at the Olympics by beating Tunisia 3-1.

The Americans bounced back from a loss to the Russians on Wednesday. They knocked off the lowest-ranked team in their group 25-14, 23-25, 25-14, 25-23.

The victory keeps the U.S. in good position to advance to the quarterfinals as one of the top four teams in Pool B. Tunisia has lost all three matches so far in Tokyo.

MEDAL ALERT

Annemiek van Vleuten has roared to an emphatic victory in the women's time trial at the Tokyo Olympics. That gave her a measure of revenge for some miscommunication that may have cost her gold in the road race last weekend.

The Dutch rider led by more than six seconds at the first time check, then pushed it to an astonishing 28 seconds before she put the hammer down to finish in 30 minutes, 13.49 seconds at Fuji International Speedway.

The sixth-from-last rider on the course, van Vleuten was forced to sit on the hot seat for several minutes while those who started after her finished. None of them really had a chance. Marlen Reusser of Switzerland finished more than 56 seconds back to earn the silver medal and van Vleuten's teammate Anna van

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der Breggen earned bronze.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach and Japanese baseball great Sadaharu Oh are attending the opener of the Olympic baseball tournament and were on the field for the ceremonial first pitch in Fukushima.

They were joined by Tokyo Organizing Committee President Seiko Hashimoto and World Baseball Softball Confederation President Riccardo Fraccari as a high school baseball player from the region threw out the first pitch -- a full windup from atop the rubber.

Bach, wearing bright white gloves on both hands, fist bumped the 14-year-old before Team Japan took the field for its game against the Dominican Republic.

It's the only Olympic baseball game being held in Fukushima, which was devastated by an earthquake and an ensuing tsunami and nuclear accident in 2011. The rest of the tournament will be held at Yokohama Baseball Stadium in Tokyo.

Baseball was restored to the Olympic slate this year for the first time since 2008. The sport will be dropped again for the 2024 Games in Paris but is expected to again be played in Los Angeles in 2028.

MEDAL ALERT

Britain has won the men's 4x200-meter freestyle relay at the Olympics for the first time since 1908, but just missed a world record.

With a powerhouse group that included the 1-2 finishers in the 200 freestyle, Britain blew away the field in 6 minutes, 58.58 seconds. That was just off the world record set by the Americans (6:58.55) at the 2009 world championships.

The 200-meter gold medalist, Tom Dean, led off for the British. James Guy and Matthew Richards took the middle legs before 200-meter silver medalist Duncan Scott swam the anchor leg. It was the first British gold in the event since it made its debut at the first London Games.

Russia claimed the silver in 7:01.81, while Australia took the bronze in 7:01.84.

The four-time defending champion Americans finished fourth -- the first time they've failed to win a medal in the event other than the boycotted 1980 Moscow Games.

MEDAL ALERT

Katie Ledecky has finally collected her first gold medal of the Tokyo Games.

Ledecky has won the 1,500-meter freestyle, which made its Olympic debut for women this year. That helped the American star make up for what has so far been the worst showing of her Olympic career.

About an hour after finishing fifth in the 200-meter freestyle, Ledecky held off teammate Erica Sullivan to win the metric mile in 15 minutes, 37.34 seconds.

Sullivan claimed the silver in 15:41.41, while Germany's Sarah Kohler grabbed the bronze in 15:42.91.

MEDAL ALERT

Japanese swimmer Yui Ohashi has swept the women's individual medley at the Tokyo Olympics.

Ohashi rallied to win the 200-meter medley, beating Americans Alex Walsh and Kate Douglass. Ohashi had previously won the 400-meter individual medley.

The winning time was 2 minutes, 8.52 seconds. Walsh took the silver in 2:08.65, while the bronze went to Douglass in 2:09.04.

Defending Olympic champion and world record-holder Katinka Hosszu of Hungary finished seventh. She was the oldest swimmer in the final at age 32.

MEDAL ALERT

China has wrapped a record-setting first day of rowing finals by smashing the world record in women's quadruple sculls and winning gold.

The Chinese boat finished in 6 minutes, 0.13 seconds and shaved nearly two seconds off the previous

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mark set by the Netherlands in 2014. The race was never close. Poland won silver more than 6 seconds behind the Chinese. Australia won bronze for that country's fourth medal of the day.

Windy conditions produced a strong tailwind for the rowers at Tokyo's Sea Forest Waterway, and new world or Olympic records were set in each of Wednesday's six medal races.

MEDAL ALERT

Kristof Milak of Hungary has romped to a dominating victory in the men's 200-meter butterfly at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

Milak won the the gold by about two body lengths, backing up his status as one of the biggest favorites at the Olympic pool. He touched in 1 minute, 51.25 seconds -- some 2 1/2 seconds ahead of the silver medalist, Japan's Tomoru Honda, who finished in 1:53.73.

The bronze went to Italy's Federico Burdisso in 1:54.45.

South African star Chad le Clos finished fifth. He won the 200 fly at the 2012 London Olympics, upsetting Michael Phelps, but was no match for the Hungarian star.

MEDAL ALERT

The Netherlands have set a new world record in men's quadruple sculls with a sprint over the final 500 meters to win the gold medal.

Their time of 5 minutes, 32.03 seconds beat the previous mark of 5:32.26 set by Ukraine at the 2014 world championships.

The Dutch boat was fourth after the first 500 meters but had closed to second by the next marker. A late push overtook Great Britain for the lead.

Great Britain then held off a late charge by Australia to win silver. Australia's bronze was the country's third medal of the day after winning gold in men's and women's four.

MEDAL ALERT

Ariarne Titmus has beaten Katie Ledecky again at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre. Ledecky didn't even win a medal -- the first time that's ever happened to her at the Olympics.

Titmus gave the Australian women their third individual swimming gold with a victory in the 200-meter freestyle. Titmus set an Olympic record of 1 minute, 53.50 seconds to make it 2-for-2 against the American star, following up a thrilling victory in the 400m freestyle.

In the longer race, Titmus conserved her energy over the first half of the race, then rallied to pass Ledecky with the second-fastest performance in history. Ledecky wasn't even close in the 200, making the first flip in seventh place and never getting higher than her fifth-place showing at the end. She finished in 1:55.21 -- nearly 2 seconds behind the winner.

Ledecky is facing a grueling morning that also includes the final of the 1,500 free. She's a big favorite for gold in that race, which is new to the women's program this year.

Italy's Federica Pellegrini of Italy finished seventh in her fifth and final Olympics. She won the gold in 2008 and is still the world-record holder.

MEDAL ALERT

Australia has doubled its haul of Olympic rowing gold medals as the men's four charged to victory moments after the Aussie women claimed their gold.

Australia had bolted to the front by the 500-meter mark and never were challenged for the lead to reach in the finish line as Romania fought a late surge by Italy to claim the silver medal. Australia's time of 5 minutes, 42.76 set a new Olympic record.

Italy won bronze.

MEDAL ALERT

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Australia's women's four set a new Olympic-best time to win the gold medal in windy conditions at Tokyo's Sea Forest Waterway.

The Australian boat led at each marker but had to fight off the Netherlands over the last 50 meters to win in 6 minutes, 15.37 seconds, just .34 seconds ahead of the Dutch boat.

Ireland took bronze more than 5 seconds back.

The windy conditions pushing rowers at the waterpark saw Olympic best times quickly fall as the first three races all saw new standards set.

MEDAL ALERT

The French team of Hugo Boucheron and Matthieu Androdias has held off a late charge from the Netherlands over the final 50 meters to win the men's double sculls by 0.2 seconds in Olympic record time of 6 minutes, 33 seconds.

China made a strong move out of the start before falling back even with the French and the Netherlands. The Dutch boat of Melvin Twellarr and Stef Broenink briefly held the lead at 1,500 meters.

Boucheron and Androdias quickly reeled in the Dutch with a powerful push that was good enough to hold off a late charge at the finish line.

China Zhiyu Liu and Liang Zhang finished third for bronze.

New U.S. beach volleyball partners Jake Gibb and Tri Bourne will have some more time at the Olympics to get to know one another.

The Americans had never played together before their first match in Tokyo on Sunday. They beat Switzerland 21-19, 23-21 on Wednesday to improve to 2-0 in the round-robin. They have one more match remaining, against Qatar on Friday night.

Gibb qualified for the Tokyo Games with Taylor Crabb as his partner. But Crabb tested positive for COVID-19 and withdrew, allowing Gibb to replace him. Bourne was on the third-place U.S. team in the qualifying race; each country is limited to a maximum of two spots.

Two wins should be enough to put the Americans in the knockout round. At worst, it would put leave them in a three-way tie for first and give them a tiebreaker match.

MEDAL ALERT

Romania's Ancuta Bodnar and Simona Radis have won the first rowing gold medal of the Tokyo Games, in women's double sculls.

They bolted from the start and never let up in a dominating performance.

The rowing medal events had been delayed for a day because of bad weather forecasts amid a tropical storm.

Once back on the water, the Romanians were never challenged and led by two boat lengths with just 500 meters to go. Bodnar and Radis are both just 22. Their sprint to victory left the only fight for the silver medal, where New Zealand's Brooke Donohue and Hannah Osborne edged the Dutch boat of Roos de Jong and Lisa Scheenaard.

Capitol riot arrest of restaurant owner rattles hometown

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

KANE, Pa. (AP) — A crank caller ordered an "insurrection pizza" from Pauline Bauer's restaurant. A profane piece of hate mail addressed her as a domestic terrorist. She even became a punchline for Stephen Colbert's late-night talk show on CBS.

A swift backlash greeted Capitol riot suspects like Bauer when they returned to their homes across the U.S. after joining the mob that stormed past police barricades, smashed windows and disrupted the certification of Joe Biden's presidential victory on Jan. 6. Relatives, friends or co-workers reported scores of them to the FBI. Some lost jobs. Others lost their freedom, jailed awaiting trials.

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In Bauer's hometown in rural Pennsylvania, her arrest and that of a longtime friend have rekindled partisan bickering, more often on social media than on street corners, some residents say. As Bauer and William Blauser Jr. fight the charges in court, many in the town of Kane have struggled to comprehend how two of their neighbors could be among the hundreds of Trump loyalists bent on overturning the election that day.

"I think it was totally outrageous, it was illegal and I think it was treasonous," said Joe Lanich, who operates a letterpress print shop with his wife called The Laughing Owl Press Co. in Kane's uptown business district. He said the town is populated by proud residents who work hard to improve Kane and "don't want to see one person paint us in a bad light."

Bauer tries to shrug off the scorn from strangers, but acknowledges her actions have angered some in her community.

"Some people didn't like the fact that I became political," she said during a break in dinner service at her restaurant, Bob's Trading Post.

In the months since Jan. 6, former President Donald Trump and his supporters have sought to portray the rioters as peaceful patriots even as videos from that day show members of the mob beating police officers and hunting for lawmakers in an unthinkable attack on the seat of American democracy. On Tuesday, officers who defended the Capitol that day described to a congressional committee investigating the insurrection how they feared for their lives and continue to suffer physical and emotional pain.

Bauer was heard shouting at police to "bring Nancy Pelosi out" to be hanged during the riot, the FBI says. Five people died in the attack or its aftermath, and dozens of law enforcement officers were injured. More than 500 people have been charged with federal crimes.

Even so, some in Kane have stood by Bauer, who insists her actions haven't cost her any friendships or harmed her business. On a recent Wednesday evening, tables at her restaurant were filled by her regular customers.

"She's a human being who stood up for her rights. She should have a right to stand up for what she believes in," said Glenn Robinson, 68.

Such political division over how Jan. 6 unfolded has occurred in communities across the country. Forty-seven percent of Republicans say it can be described as a "legitimate protest," while only 13% of Democrats say the same, according to a June poll from Monmouth University.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that 81% of Democrats say it's "extremely" or "very" important that investigations continue into what happened during the Capitol breach, but just 38% of Republicans say the same.

Bauer was arrested in May along with Blauser, a Vietnam War veteran and retired mail carrier. Surveillance video shows the two of them entering the Capitol through an east Rotunda door where at least three police officers were trying to block entry. Video from a police officer's body camera captured Bauer saying to bring out Pelosi, the Democratic speaker of the House.

"Bring them out now. They're criminals. They need to hang," she said.

Trump received nearly three-quarters of the votes in the 2020 election in the county that includes Kane, a borough in northwest Pennsylvania with roughly 3,500 residents, over 97% of whom are white. Many homes and businesses in town are still decorated with Trump signs and flags. A warehouse adorned with pro-Trump posters also has one that reads "Burn Loot Murder," a derisive reference to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Road signs bill Kane as "A Star in the Forest" and as the hometown of the late NBA basketball coach Chuck Daly. The town also is known as the "Icebox of Pennsylvania" for its frigid, snowy winters.

Before the riot, most Kane residents knew Bauer for the deep-dish pizza and ice cream she has been serving since she bought the restaurant 15 years ago. That began to change as the coronavirus pandemic temporarily closed her business along with many others in the small town on the edge of the 517,000-acre Allegheny National Forest.

She became an outspoken critic of COVID-19 lockdown measures that cost her business and drove a wedge between neighbors who clashed on social media. She complained about a mask mandate during

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a school board meeting two weeks before her arrest, The Kane Republican newspaper reported.

Last year, as her business suffered, Bauer also began to embrace an ideology that appears to comport with the "sovereign citizens" extremist movement's belief that the U.S. government is illegitimate. Bauer says she is a "sovereign people," not a sovereign citizen, and refers to herself as "Pauline from the House of Bauer."

Bauer has been combative with the judge presiding over her case and claimed the court has no authority over her. She was jailed for one night in June after she refused to answer a magistrate judge's routine questions. During a recent hearing, she told U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden that she doesn't want an attorney to represent her "or any lawyering from the bench."

"I do not recognize your bar card, sir," she told McFadden, who appointed a lawyer to act as her standby counsel.

She also told the judge that she wouldn't allow a pretrial services officer to inspect her home, in person or virtually. The judge warned her that she could be jailed again if she refused to comply. He also denied her request to dismiss her charges, which include obstruction of an official proceeding and disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds.

"On what terms?" she asked.

"You know what? You don't get to demand terms from me," the judge replied.

After the hearing, Blauser and Bauer hugged each other outside the Washington courthouse. Two days later, Blauser and his wife stopped by Bauer's restaurant for dinner. He sometimes eats three meals in a day at Bob's Trading Post and hasn't broken his routine since their arrest. One of Blauser's lawyers advised him to stay away from Bauer.

"I can't do that because she's my best friend, and I'm trying to help her. And if you can't help your best friend, God help you," he said.

On a recent episode of "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert," the host mocked Bauer for claiming to be a "divinely empowered entity immune from laws."

"Divinely empowered? So she's going to get away scot-free, just like Jesus," Colbert joked. "But it does raise the question: If you're chosen by God to be above the laws of government, why do you care who's in charge of it?"

Bauer posted on Facebook that she was inside the Capitol. Several witnesses who saw her posts contacted the FBI. One of them was a customer who said Bauer "became more and more political over the past year, and began losing business because people were uncomfortable about her constant political rhetoric," according to an FBI agent.

Investigators believe Bauer used her restaurant's Facebook page to promote a bus trip to Washington on Jan. 6 for the "mega million rally."

"Need 51 people to fill a bus," she wrote, according to the FBI.

Bauer denies that she organized a bus trip. Blauser said he, Bauer and seven others traveled to Washington in a passenger van, not a bus. She and Blauser left the Capitol about 38 minutes after they entered.

"A lot of people say that they're proud of me for standing up for my rights," Bauer said.

Blauser claims they "got caught up in the moment."

"Everyone else was going up and going in, so we just followed along with them," he added.

Bauser and Blauser both were freed on \$10,000 bond after their arrests. They don't have a trial date yet. More than 20 other Capitol riot defendants have pleaded guilty as of Monday. Only three have been sentenced, with one getting eight months in prison for breaching the U.S. Senate chamber.

Kane Mayor Brandy Schimp, a first-term Republican, takes a long pause when asked about how she reacted to the Jan. 6 riot.

"I felt like it was time to shut the TV off and to get back to work because there's too much division and there's too much anger and there's too much sadness and too much frustration," she said.

Basketball diplomacy: US, Iran meet on court at Tokyo Games

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By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

SAITAMA, Japan (AP) — The Americans applauded the Iranian national anthem. The Iranians applauded the U.S. anthem. There were a few handshakes before, plenty more handshakes after, and words of sportsmanship between the sides throughout the game.

For two hours, it was basketball diplomacy.

It's still somewhat rare for the U.S. and Iran — nations that haven't had diplomatic relations for more than four decades and often are at vastly different ends of the political spectrum — to get together in anything, from sporting events to nuclear talks. It happened Wednesday at the Tokyo Olympics, the U.S. easily prevailing 120-66 in a result that might soon be forgotten but a scene that may be long remembered.

"In general, I think people in different countries get along a whole lot better than their governments do," U.S. coach Gregg Popovich said.

That seemed to be the case Wednesday, anyway.

Popovich shook hands with Iran coach Mehran Shahintab and members of his staff both before and after the game, complimenting the way the overmatched Iranians — a group with one former NBA player against a team of 12 current NBA players — performed in his postgame remarks both on and off the floor. To him, there was nothing unusual about exchanging pleasantries.

"People are different," Shahintab said, "and separate from politics."

It's been 41 years since the U.S. and Iran severed diplomatic relations, a move that came a few months following the Iranian takeover of the American Embassy in Tehran on Nov. 4, 1979 and sparking what became a 444-day hostage crisis. There have been crippling economic sanctions levied on Tehran by Washington and a unilateral withdrawal from the world powers nuclear deal by former President Donald Trump, U.S. flags often being burned at rallies and protests in the streets of Tehran, and accusations in recent weeks that Iran has delayed a proposed prisoner swap to force a quick resumption of indirect nuclear talks.

"We continue to believe — and have never held back from noting — that Iran is a bad actor in the region," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said last month. "And they have taken part in and supported and participated in problematic, extremely problematic behavior, in our view."

But sports are often a unifying force.

Perhaps the most famous example is what is still known as "pingpong diplomacy" — when table tennis players from the U.S. and China played in the early 1970s and essentially began a major mending of relations between the two countries.

The Olympics also tend to create moments that likely wouldn't happen in the political world. Earlier this week, Shahintab shook hands with the coach of the Czech Republic after a game; that coach, Ronen Ginzburg, is from Israel — a nation that Iran does not recognize.

If political leaders from Iran and Israel shook hands, it would be front-page news. At the Olympics, it happened without fanfare.

"We're just here to play basketball," Iran center Hamed Haddadi said.

Even amid decades of political rhetoric, the U.S. and Iran have shown that athletes from those nations can coexist.

Wrestlers from the U.S. went to Iran in 1998, where they were surrounded in the streets — in a good way. Wrestling is extremely popular in Iran, so when that group of U.S. wrestlers ventured out to shop they found themselves shaking hands and taking pictures. There have been other wrestling events involving the nations since, all with similar receptions from both sides.

"Once you get to the politicians, that sort of thing, it becomes much more complicated: self-interests, ideologies and personal agendas," Popovich said. "But the people generally get along, appreciate each other, no matter what country you're talking about. I really believe that. I've always believed that."

At least one expert on international sport relations was not surprised that the U.S.-Iran basketball game occurred without incident.

"They are being good sports in a highly visible and lucrative sport," said Dr. Heather Dichter, an Associate

Professor of Sport Management and Sport History at De Montfort University in England. "Doing otherwise would likely have been more damaging reputationally in the second most popular sport globally."

Some of the players on the U.S. team knew Haddadi, the Iranian center with past NBA experience. Many of the players hadn't met those on the other team before, and the Americans didn't spend any time before the game discussing how the meeting between the nations might be perceived in diplomatic circles.

"I guess that's political, right? We stay away from that," U.S. forward Kevin Durant said, adding "for the most part we kept it at basketball."

Popovich lauded the system that the Iranian coaches had installed, complimented the way the opponents ran their offense, and wished Shahintab well after the game.

He couldn't have imagined the meeting going any differently.

"The Olympics, this is a venue and time where sports transcends all that petty crap between governments," Popovich said. "There's no surprise that the coaches enjoyed meeting each other and talking to each other, that the players showed sportsmanship. We just wish this happened in real life."

Turn off, turn on: Simple step can thwart top phone hackers

By ALAN SUDERMAN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — As a member of the secretive Senate Intelligence Committee, Sen. Angus King has reason to worry about hackers. At a briefing by security staff this year, he said he got some advice on how to help keep his cellphone secure.

Step One: Turn off phone.

Step Two: Turn it back on.

That's it. At a time of widespread digital insecurity it turns out that the oldest and simplest computer fix there is — turning a device off then back on again — can thwart hackers from stealing information from smartphones.

Regularly rebooting phones won't stop the army of cybercriminals or spy-for-hire firms that have sowed chaos and doubt about the ability to keep any information safe and private in our digital lives. But it can make even the most sophisticated hackers work harder to maintain access and steal data from a phone.

"This is all about imposing cost on these malicious actors," said Neal Ziring, technical director of the National Security Agency's cybersecurity directorate.

The NSA issued a "best practices" guide for mobile device security last year in which it recommends rebooting a phone every week as a way to stop hacking.

King, an independent from Maine, says rebooting his phone is now part of his routine.

"I'd say probably once a week, whenever I think of it," he said.

Almost always in arm's reach, rarely turned off and holding huge stores of personal and sensitive data, cellphones have become top targets for hackers looking to steal text messages, contacts and photos, as well as track users' locations and even secretly turn on their video and microphones.

"I always think of phones as like our digital soul," said Patrick Wardle, a security expert and former NSA researcher.

The number of people whose phones are hacked each year is unknowable, but evidence suggests it's significant. A recent investigation into phone hacking by a global media consortium has caused political uproars in France, India, Hungary and elsewhere after researchers found scores of journalists, human rights activists and politicians on a leaked list of what were believed to be potential targets of an Israeli hacker-for-hire company.

The advice to periodically reboot a phone reflects, in part, a change in how top hackers are gaining access to mobile devices and the rise of so-called "zero-click" exploits that work without any user interaction instead of trying to get users to open something that's secretly infected.

"There's been this evolution away from having a target click on a dodgy link," said Bill Marczak, a senior researcher at Citizen Lab, an internet civil rights watchdog at the University of Toronto.

Typically, once hackers gain access to a device or network, they look for ways to persist in the system

by installing malicious software to a computer's root file system. But that's become more difficult as phone manufacturers such as Apple and Google have strong security to block malware from core operating systems, Ziring said.

"It's very difficult for an attacker to burrow into that layer in order to gain persistence," he said.

That encourages hackers to opt for "in-memory payloads" that are harder to detect and trace back to whoever sent them. Such hacks can't survive a reboot, but often don't need to since many people rarely turn their phones off.

"Adversaries came to the realization they don't need to persist," Wardle said. "If they could do a one-time pull and exfiltrate all your chat messages and your contact and your passwords, it's almost game over anyways, right?"

A robust market currently exists for hacking tools that can break into phones. Some companies like Zerodium and Crowdfence publicly offer millions of dollars for zero-click exploits.

And hacker-for-hire companies that sell mobile-device hacking services to governments and law enforcement agencies have proliferated in recent years. The most well known is the Israeli-based NSO Group, whose spyware researchers say has been used around the world to break into the phones of human rights activists, journalists, and even members of the Catholic clergy.

NSO Group is the focus of the recent exposés by a media consortium that reported the company's spyware tool Pegasus was used in 37 instances of successful or attempted phone hacks of business executives, human rights activists and others, according to The Washington Post.

The company is also being sued in the U.S. by Facebook for allegedly targeting some 1,400 users of its encrypted messaging service WhatsApp with a zero-click exploit.

NSO Group has said it only sells its spyware to "vetted government agencies" for use against terrorists and major criminals. The company did not respond to a request for comment.

The persistence of NSO's spyware used to be a selling point of the company. Several years ago its U.S.-based subsidiary pitched law enforcement agencies a phone hacking tool that would survive even a factory reset of a phone, according to documents obtained by Vice News.

But Marczak, who has tracked NSO Group's activists closely for years, said it looks like the company first starting using zero-click exploits that forgo persistence around 2019.

He said victims in the WhatsApp case would see an incoming call for a few rings before the spyware was installed. In 2020, Marczak and Citizen Lab exposed another zero-click hack attributed to NSO Group that targeted several journalists at Al Jazeera. In that case, the hackers used Apple's iMessage texting service.

"There was nothing that any of the targets reported seeing on their screen. So that one was both completely invisible as well as not requiring any user interaction," Marczak said.

With such a powerful tool at their disposal, Marczak said rebooting your phone won't do much to stop determined hackers. Once you reboot, they could simply send another zero-click.

"It's sort of just a different model, it's persistence through reinfection," he said.

The NSA's guide also acknowledges that rebooting a phone works only sometimes. The agency's guide for mobile devices has an even simpler piece of advice to really make sure hackers aren't secretly turning on your phone's camera or microphone to record you: don't carry it with you.

What a day: Ledcky experiences defeat, victory, perspective

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Katie Ledcky will be the first to concede that her standards are almost impossible to meet, especially at this stage of her stellar swimming career.

She always wants to go faster, faster, faster — a singular vision that has carried her to the pinnacle of her sport. Yet it's not really a reasonable goal when you've already done it so many times before.

"It's a real blessing — and a curse," she said, managing a bit of a chuckle.

In the space of a little more than an hour Wednesday at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, Ledcky gained the sort of perspective that could serve other Olympians dealing with increasingly weighty expectations that

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come along once every four years (or five years, in the case of these pandemic-delayed games).

First, she experienced a crushing letdown.

Then, she rallied for an exhilarating triumph.

Neither of which, in the grander scheme of things, define what's really important in life, she was quick to point out.

"I'd much rather people be concerned about people who are really truly struggling," Ledecky said. "It's true privilege to be at an Olympics — let alone an Olympics in the middle of a pandemic. So many people around the world are going through a lot of hard things. I'm just so lucky to be here."

At an Olympics where mental health has surged to the forefront, where stars such as Simone Biles and Naomi Osaka have been worn down by the almost unfathomable burden of being better than the last time, Ledecky talked about getting through the most challenging day of her swimming life.

She had already come up short of gold in her opening race — the first time that's happened in her three Olympics. To those on the outside, a silver medal in the 400-meter freestyle seemed like a failure.

Ledecky returned to the pool for a rematch in the 200 free with the swimmer who beat her the first time, the Australian star known as the Terminator, Ariarne Titmus.

Titmus pulled away at the end for another gold, just as she did the first time, only it wasn't Ledecky she had to worry about. The 24-year-old American was seventh at the first flip and never climbed any higher than fifth, which is where she touched at the end.

It was a stunning result for a swimmer hailed as perhaps the greatest female freestyler ever to grace a pool.

But all the disappointment Ledecky was surely feeling had to be cast aside, and quickly. There was another race to come, the longest on her program, the 1,500 free. She has long dominated the metric mile, but if there was ever a moment where she looked beatable, this was it.

Ledecky ran into her coach, Greg Meehan, on the way to warm down.

"He did a lot to help me get my mind right, to help me move on from that 200," Ledecky said. "He just told me to kind of let it sit for a second, be angry about it if you want, let it fuel you for the 1,500. Whatever he said, it helped."

It also helped to think of her grandparents. As she glided from one end of the practice pool to the other, hidden a bit from the world, her thoughts turned to four people — two of them still living — who have been a guiding force in her life.

"I was trying to find some positive things to get me moving forward," Ledecky said. "I really love them all and it makes me really happy to think about them. They're four of the toughest people I know. I knew if I was thinking about them during the race, I wasn't going to die" — swimming slang for tiring out at the end — "and I wasn't going to have a bad race."

It wasn't Ledecky's best performance. Her time — 15 minutes, 37.34 seconds — was nearly 17 seconds off the world record she set three summers ago.

But she touched ahead of everyone else to claim the gold, about 4 seconds better than hard-charging teammate Erica Sullivan.

When Ledecky saw the "1" beside her name, she wasn't so concerned about the time that went along with it. Maybe for the first time in her entire career, she wasn't consumed with being better than she was the last time.

She could see the value of being good enough.

"I'm always striving to be my best, to be better than I have been," Ledecky said. "But it's not easy when your times are world records in some events. You can't just keep dropping time every single swim."

Ledecky let out an uncharacteristic scream toward the American cheering section in the mostly empty arena. She bounded over the lane rope to hug the silver medalist. And then, with her lips quivering and the tears welling up, she pulled the goggles back down over her eyes.

"She's such a bad chick, such a cool human being," Sullivan gushed. "She's a legend and she'll forever be a legend."

Ledecky had earned the sixth gold medal of her career.

It's probably fair to say none meant more than this one.

"I've really learned a lot over the years," she said. "The times might not be my best times, but I'm still really happy that I have a gold medal around my neck right now."

She thought of those she's met along the way. The children hospitalized with grave illnesses. The soldiers who've suffered horrific injuries in battle.

That word came up again.

Perspective.

"How their eyes light up when they see the gold medal," she said, her voice choked with emotion. "That means more to me than anything, that ability to put a smile on their faces. I just really wanted to get a gold medal to have that opportunity again."

Tokyo sets another virus record days after Olympics begin

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Tokyo reported 3,177 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, setting an all-time high and exceeding 3,000 for the first time days after the start of the Olympics.

The new cases exceeded the earlier record of 2,848 set the previous day and brought the total for the Japanese capital to 206,745 since the pandemic began early last year.

Tokyo has been under a fourth state of emergency since July 12 ahead of the Olympics, which began last Friday despite widespread public opposition and concern that they could further worsen the outbreak.

Experts say Tokyo's surge is being propelled by the new, more contagious delta variant of the virus and there is no evidence of the disease being transmitted from Olympics participants to the general public.

Nationwide, Japan reported 7,630 cases on Tuesday for a total of 882,823.

Japan has kept its cases and deaths lower than many other countries, but its vaccination campaign started very late in comparison to other large nations and there is fear that rising cases could overwhelm hospitals.

Japan's seven-day rolling average of cases is about 3.57 per 100,000 people, compared to 17.3 in the United States, 53.1 in Britain and 2.76 in India, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

Japan's vaccine minister, Taro Kono, said in an interview with The Associated Press on Wednesday that there is no evidence of the coronavirus spreading from Olympic participants to Japan's population.

"I don't think there have been any cases related to the Olympic Games. So we aren't worried about that issue," he said.

Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike urged younger people on Wednesday to cooperate with measures to bring down the number of infections and get vaccinated, saying their activities are key to slowing the surge during the Olympics.

Koike noted that the majority of the elderly have been fully vaccinated and infections among them have largely decreased, while mostly unvaccinated younger people are now dominating new cases.

"Younger people's activity holds the key (to slowing the infections), and we need your cooperation," Koike said. "Please make sure to avoid nonessential outings and observe basic anti-infection measures, and I would like younger people to get vaccinated."

As of Tuesday, 25.5% of the Japanese population has been fully vaccinated. The percentage of the elderly who are fully vaccinated is 68.2%, or 36 million people.

Vaccination prospects for younger people have improved, and some can get their shots organized by work places and colleges, while others still wait based on seniority. But there are also concerns over hesitancy among the young, with surveys showing many have doubts, in part due to false rumors about side effects.

Younger people have been blamed for roaming downtown areas after the requested closing hours for eateries and stores and spreading the virus. The state of emergency, which is to continue through the Olympics, mainly focuses on requiring establishments to stop serving alcohol and shorten their hours. Measures for the public are only requests and are increasingly ignored.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has also urged people to avoid nonessential outings and says there is no need to consider a suspension of the Games, which are being held with no fans in Tokyo and three

neighboring prefectures — Chiba, Kanagawa and Saitama.

The governors of the three areas, alarmed by Tokyo's surging cases, said on Wednesday they plan to ask Suga to place their prefectures under the state of emergency too.

Can Biden's plans manufacture more US factory jobs?

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden will be trying to connect with blue-collar workers Wednesday when he travels to a truck factory in Pennsylvania to advocate for government investments and clean energy as ways to strengthen U.S. manufacturing.

The Democrat will tour the Lehigh Valley operations facility for Mack Trucks, a chance to touch base with the plant's 2,500 workers, a majority of whom are unionized. Biden has made manufacturing jobs a priority, and Democrats' political future next year might hinge on whether he succeeds in reinvigorating a sector that has steadily lost jobs for more than four decades.

The administration is championing a \$973 billion infrastructure package, \$52 billion for computer chip production, sweeping investments in clean energy and the use of government procurement contracts to create factory jobs. Biden will be briefed Wednesday on Mack's electric garbage trucks.

"This is all part of his effort to lift up and talk about his Buy American agenda as well as the infrastructure package," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Tuesday in previewing the visit.

The president won Lehigh County in the 2020 election, but he is facing the perpetual challenge of past administrations to revive a manufacturing sector at the heart of American identity. Failure to bring back manufacturing jobs could further hurt already ailing factory towns across the country and possibly imperil Democrats' chances in the 2022 midterm elections.

Pennsylvania Sen. Pat Toomey, a Republican, said Biden should siphon off unspent money from his \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package to cover the investments in infrastructure, instead of relying on tax increases and other revenue raisers to do so.

"Hopefully, he will use his visit to learn about the real, physical infrastructure needs of Pennsylvanians — and the huge sums of unused 'COVID' funds which should pay for that infrastructure," Toomey said in a statement.

Deindustrialization has been a thorny problem for Democrats seeking voters during elections.

Layoffs of white factory workers led communities to vote for Republican challengers and turn against Democratic incumbents, according to a 2021 research paper by McGill University's Leonardo Baccini and Georgetown University's Stephen Weymouth. They found a connection between deindustrialization and greater racial division as white voters interpreted the layoffs as a loss of social status.

Areas with more factory layoffs also became more pessimistic about the entire economy. The trends documented in the research were most pronounced in 2016, when Donald Trump won the White House while emphasizing blue-collar identity and racial differences.

One challenge for Democrats is that they're not being forced to deal with the most recent manufacturing job losses, but layoffs that began decades ago.

"Biden would benefit from an improved manufacturing jobs outlook," Weymouth said. "But a lot of economists think that many of these jobs are gone for good. And so, it's an uphill battle. There's alternatives: The president can pursue a more substantial social safety net for people who lose their jobs or investments in these communities that declined for decades."

The Biden administration is separately trying to help domestic manufacturers by proposing Wednesday to increase the amount of American-made goods being purchased by the federal government.

Administration officials who insisted on anonymity to discuss the measures said they're proposing that any products bought by the government must have 60% of the value of their component parts manufactured in the United States. The proposal would gradually increase that figure to 75% by 2029, significantly higher than the 55% threshold under current law.

Manufacturing has improved since the depths of more than a year ago during the coronavirus pandemic-

induced recession. Labor Department data show that factories have regained about two-thirds of the 1.4 million manufacturing jobs lost because of the outbreak. Factory output as tracked by the Federal Reserve is just below its pre-pandemic levels.

But the manufacturing sector — especially autos — is facing serious challenges.

Automakers are limited by a global shortage of computer chips. Without the chips that are needed for a modern vehicle, the production of cars and trucks has dropped from an annual pace of 10.79 million at the end of last year to 8.91 million in June, a decline of nearly 18% as measured by the Fed. Analysts at IHS Market estimate that the supply of semiconductors will only stabilize and recover in the second half of 2022, right as the midterm races become more intense.

The impact of the chip shortage can trickle through the rest of the economy. Used vehicle prices have shot up 45.2% from a year ago, since there are not enough newly built cars and trucks available. The administration has been proactive in trying to address the problem, advocating for a bill designed to increase semiconductor production in the United States in ways that would also help other manufacturing sectors.

"I am engaging almost daily with industry," Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said last week at a White House briefing. "We need to incentivize the manufacturing of chips in America. And so, we are very focused on putting the pieces in place so that can happen."

For the past several decades, presidents have pledged to bring back factory jobs without much success. Manufacturing employment peaked in 1979 at nearly 19.6 million jobs, only to slide downward with steep declines after the 2001 recession and the 2007-09 Great Recession. The figure now stands at 12.3 million.

Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Trump each said his policies would save manufacturing jobs, yet none of them broke the long-term trend in a lasting way.

AP Interview: Japan minister urges young to get vaccinated

By FOSTER KLUG and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — As Olympics host Tokyo saw another record number of coronavirus cases Wednesday, Japan's vaccination minister said the speed of the country's inoculation campaign is less urgent than getting shots to young people, who some health experts are blaming for the current surge in infections.

Vaccination Minister Taro Kono told The Associated Press that Japan is "overshooting" its goal of a million shots a day, so "speed doesn't matter anymore." Japan is averaging about 10 million shots a week after a late start.

"Even if we slow down a little bit, I'm OK. Rather we need to reach out to the younger people, so that they would feel that it's necessary for them to get vaccinated," Kono said, speaking in English during an interview in his office.

Many in Japan fear that the tens of thousands of visitors allowed special entry for the Olympics will cause more huge spikes in cases or a new variant of the coronavirus.

Tokyo reported 3,177 new coronavirus cases Wednesday, an all-time high for the city and the first time it exceeded 3,000 infections in a day. The new cases exceeded the earlier record of 2,848 set Tuesday and bring the total for the Japanese capital to 206,745 since the pandemic began early last year.

Japan has so far kept its cases and deaths lower than many other countries. But its vaccination campaign started very late in comparison to other large economies, and there is fear that rising cases could overwhelm hospitals.

Tokyo is under its fourth state of emergency, which will last through the Olympics and into the Paralympics next month. Experts had earlier warned that the more contagious delta variant could cause a surge during the Olympics, which started Friday.

Health experts have noted that cases among younger, unvaccinated people are rising sharply. While about two-thirds of Wednesday's cases were people in their 30s or below, people in their 50s now dominate Tokyo's nearly 3,000 hospitalized patients and are gradually filling up available beds. Authorities reportedly plan to ask medical institutions to increase their capacity to about 6,000.

Dr. Ryuji Wakita, director general of the National Institute of Infections Diseases and head of a govern-

ment advisory board, said vaccination progress has been limited mostly to elderly people, while younger people are still largely unprotected. Emergency measures should be firmly exercised, he said, to prevent the further spread of the virus during the Olympics and the summer vacation season.

Wakita acknowledged that the rise of serious cases is modest compared to the sharp increase of daily cases, but even so, the ongoing surge could cause younger and unvaccinated patients who overflow from hospitals to develop serious cases while being left at home and untreated.

"The younger generations are largely unvaccinated, and that's why those in their 40s and 50s are increasingly getting infected and being hospitalized," he said. "The level of vaccinations in Japan has not reached a state where we can easily permit the number of infections to rise."

Even in absence, North Korea's presence felt at Tokyo Games

By FOSTER KLUG Associated Press Writer

TOKYO (AP) — North Korea isn't at the Tokyo Olympics this summer. And therein lies a tale — one of sports and viruses, but most of all a tale of complex politics.

While it's not making headlines here, the North's absence is noteworthy, especially among those who watch the intersection of sports and diplomacy — and the way North Korea's propaganda machine uses international attention to advance its needs.

The no-show is especially striking when contrasted with the last Games. Perhaps the hottest story of the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, was the North Korean delegation, which included 22 athletes, hundreds of cheerleaders and leader Kim Jong Un's powerful sister.

The coronavirus is the biggest reason for North Korea's decision not to come to Tokyo. Always highly sensitive to communicable disease outbreaks, the nation has shut its borders even more tightly than normal, worried that its fragile health care system and rickety economy could not withstand a major outbreak. That, in turn, could imperil the ruling Kim family's grip on power.

But there are other things at work, too, according to analysts.

North Korean sports, like much about the country, are intertwined with calculations about its pursuit of a nuclear-armed long-range missile program to target the U.S. mainland. After a brief period of engagement, Kim Jong Un now fears the introduction of another virus — the cultural one from the wealthy South — and may be biding his time until next year's Winter Games. Those take place in China, its longtime ally with which it shares a land border.

Kim may have also decided there's nothing to be gained by nuclear diplomacy at the Tokyo games, as Washington shows no intention of accepting Pyongyang's demand to end sanctions.

Neither do sports exist in a void inside the North, where domestic audiences consume messages controlled by the government every step of the way. Everything there is potential fodder for the propaganda mavens who try to maintain domestic unity and regime loyalty.

Kim Jong Un may use the North's absence from the Tokyo Games as a way to signal to his people that he values protecting them from the coronavirus — in rival Japan, no less — more than the possible glory his athletes could have enjoyed.

"North Korea excels in propaganda at international sport events," said Sung-Yoon Lee, a Korean studies professor at the Fletcher School at Tufts University in Massachusetts.

So it was likely a tough decision for North Korea not to attend the Tokyo Games, "which it could have dominated in the propaganda field by sending a few athletes, cheerleaders, and First Sister Kim Yo Jong," Lee said, referring to the leader's sister, Kim Yo Jong.

Missing a chance to score propaganda points "reflects some serious COVID paranoia," Joshua Pollack, a North Korea expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, said of the North's decision not to attend. The country clearly isn't ready for the delta variant, he says, "and the Olympic village seems like a great way to bring it home."

September brought a vivid example of North Korea's virus fears. Seoul accused the North of fatally shooting a South Korean fishery official found in the North's waters and then burning his body — moves

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apparently in line with an anti-virus policy that involves shooting anyone crossing the border illegally.

"They don't have medicines to cure COVID-19, their medical infrastructure isn't in good shape and they're not receiving vaccines," said Kim Yeol Soo, an analyst with South Korea's Korea Institute for Military Affairs. "So they might not think that going to the Olympics and winning a couple of gold medals means that much."

Geopolitical considerations might also be at play. Unlike the 2018 Pyeongchang Games, where North Korea was deeply interested in reaching hearts and minds in the South, there is no such desire to make nice with Japan, which was the violent colonial overlord of the Korean Peninsula before and during World War II.

At Pyeongchang, North Korea had no real medal contenders, but it was among the most watched nations at the Games, with a huge delegation highlighted by a 229-member all-female cheering squad.

After months of U.S.-North Korean tensions ahead of those Games, athletes from both Koreas marched together into the Olympic Stadium below a "unification" flag. They fielded a joint women's ice hockey team. And Kim Yo Jong made the first-ever visit to the South by a member of the Kim dynasty since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

Diplomacy blossomed after these Games, too, highlighted by several summits between then-U.S. President Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un, and also by Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

Not much came of it, however, and North Korea still faces the hardline sanctions that are crippling its economy. So it has since engaged little with its rivals, though this week the Koreas restored suspended communication channels and agreed to improve ties.

When North Korea does show up at the Olympics, sports often take a back seat to politics. The nation goes to great lengths to control its athletes and its message, but there are still surprising, unscripted moments of contact with other athletes. At Pyeongchang, for instance, a selfie taken by smiling North and South Korean skaters went viral online.

And what about sports themselves? North Korea could have seen success at Tokyo in weightlifting, boxing, women's wrestling and women's marathon. Fears, however, seem to have outweighed the perceived benefits.

Those include worries about outside influences, especially South Korean culture, infiltrating the country. "The contrast between the prosperous South and the struggling North is that much less palatable these days," Pollack said.

Some expect North Korea to emerge again from its self-imposed lockdown next year when China, a key political and aid lifeline, hosts the Winter Games.

If past behavior is an indication, weapons tests might take place in the months before those Games. While the North will likely avoid anything considered a provocation during the Tokyo Games, such tests could come when U.S. and South Korean soldiers conduct their annual military drills next month.

"Confrontation followed by dialogue always works best" for North Korea, said Lee, the Tufts professor. "I expect the regime to increase its 'net value' — as top athletes do in international sport competition — with a superb performance, of the martial kind, before the Beijing Winter Games."

Tropical storm dumps rain on northern Japan, spares Olympics

By CHISATO TANAKA Associated Press

RIFU, Japan (AP) — A tropical storm dumped rain in parts of northern Japan on Wednesday after moving away from the Tokyo region and relieving the Olympic host city of a feared disruption to the games.

In Sendai, some trains were delayed and pedestrians braced themselves against the wind on the city streets.

Tropical Storm Nepartak has caused no damage, but the Japan Meteorological Agency urged residents to take caution against mudslides. Up to 10 centimeters (4 inches) of rain was forecast across the northern region.

Office worker Mitsuyoshi Saito in Sendai said the storm wasn't that strong. "In some areas, it seems to have heavily rained, but I'm glad there was no damage."

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The season's eighth typhoon for Japan blew ashore far northeast of Tokyo and had winds of 65 kilometers per hour (40 mph) at midmorning. It was weakening as it moved north and is forecast to move off the western coast of Akita by Wednesday night.

Nepartak was the first landfall in Miyagi prefecture since the weather agency started compiling typhoon statistics in 1951. Miyagi was part of the northeastern region devastated by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

It moved further north than initially projected, causing only limited impact on the Olympics, with some events such as surfing and rowing rescheduled.

Olympic champ Biles withdraws from all-around competition

By WILL GRAVES AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Simone Biles will not defend her Olympic title.

The American gymnastics superstar withdrew from Thursday's all-around competition to focus on her mental well-being.

USA Gymnastics said in a statement on Wednesday that the 24-year-old is opting to not compete. The decision comes a day after Biles removed herself from the team final following one rotation because she felt she wasn't mentally ready.

Jade Carey, who finished ninth in qualifying, will take Biles' place in the all-around. Carey initially did not qualify because she was the third-ranking American behind Biles and Sunisa Lee. International Gymnastics Federation rules limit countries to two athletes per event in the finals.

The organization said Biles will be evaluated daily before deciding if she will participate in next week's individual events. Biles qualified for the finals on all four apparatuses, something she didn't even do during her five-medal haul in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

The 24-year-old came to Tokyo as arguably the face of the Games following the retirement of swimmer Michael Phelps and sprinter Usain Bolt. She topped qualifying on Sunday despite piling up mandatory deductions on vault, floor and beam following shaky dismounts.

She posted on social media on Monday that she felt the weight of the world on her shoulders. The weight became too heavy after vaulting during team finals. She lost herself in mid-air and completed 1 1/2 twists instead of 2 1/2. She consulted with U.S. team doctor Marcia Faustin before walking off the field of play.

When she returned, she took off her bar grips, hugged teammates Sunisa Lee, Grace McCallum and Jordan Chiles and turned into the team's head cheerleader as the U.S. claimed silver behind the Russian Olympic Committee.

"Once I came out here (to compete), I was like, 'No mental is, not there so I just need to let the girls do it and focus on myself,'" Biles said following the medal ceremony.

The decision opens the door wide open for the all-around, a title that was long considered a foregone conclusion. Rebeca Andrade of Brazil finished second to Biles during qualifying, followed by Lee and Russians Angelina Melnikova and Vladislava Urazova. The four were separated by three-tenths of a point on Sunday.

Carey now finds herself in the final, capping a remarkable journey for the 21-year-old from Phoenix. She spent two years traveling the globe in an effort to pile up enough points on the World Cup circuit to earn an individual nominative spot, meaning she would be in the Olympics but technically not be part of the four-woman U.S. team.

Carey posted the second-best score on vault and the third-best on floor during qualifying, earning trips to the event finals in the process. Now she finds herself competing for an all-around medal while replacing the athlete considered the greatest of all-time in the sport.

A birthday gift: Israeli woman donates kidney to Gaza boy

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

ESHAR, Israel (AP) — Idit Harel Segal was turning 50, and she had chosen a gift: She was going to

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give one of her own kidneys to a stranger.

The kindergarten teacher from northern Israel, a proud Israeli, hoped her choice would set an example of generosity in a land of perpetual conflict. She was spurred by memories of her late grandfather, a Holocaust survivor, who told her to live meaningfully, and by Jewish tradition, which holds that there's no higher duty than saving a life.

So Segal contacted a group that links donors and recipients, launching a nine-month process to transfer her kidney to someone who needed one.

That someone turned out to be a 3-year-old Palestinian boy from the Gaza Strip.

"You don't know me, but soon we'll be very close because my kidney will be in your body," Segal wrote in Hebrew to the boy, whose family asked not to be named due to the sensitivities over cooperating with Israelis. A friend translated the letter into Arabic so the family might understand. "I hope with all my heart that this surgery will succeed and you will live a long and healthy and meaningful life."

Just after an 11-day war, "I threw away the anger and frustration and see only one thing. I see hope for peace and love," she wrote. "And if there will be more like us, there won't be anything to fight over."

What unfolded over the months between Segal's decision and the June 16 transplant caused deep rifts in the family. Her husband and the oldest of her three children, a son in his early 20s, opposed the plan. Her father stopped talking to her.

To them, Segal recalled, she was unnecessarily risking her life. The loss of three relatives in Palestinian attacks, including her father's parents, made it even more difficult.

"My family was really against it. Everyone was against it. My husband, my sister, her husband. And the one who supported me the least was my father," Segal said during a recent interview in her mountaintop home in Eshhar. "They were afraid."

When she learned the boy's identity, she kept the details to herself for months.

"I told no one," Segal recalled. "I told myself if the reaction to the kidney donation is so harsh, so obviously the fact that a Palestinian boy is getting it will make it even harsher."

Israel has maintained a tight blockade over Gaza since Hamas, an Islamic militant group that opposes Israel's existence, seized control of the area in 2007.

The bitter enemies have fought four wars since then, and few Gazans are allowed to enter Israel. With Gaza's health care system ravaged by years of conflict and the blockade, Israel grants entry permits to small numbers of medical patients in need of serious treatments on humanitarian grounds.

Matnat Chaim, a nongovernmental organization in Jerusalem, coordinated the exchange, said the group's chief executive, Sharona Sherman.

The case of the Gaza boy was complicated. To speed up the process, his father, who was not a match for his son, was told by the hospital that if he were to donate a kidney to an Israeli recipient, the boy would "immediately go to the top of the list," Sherman said.

On the same day his son received a new kidney, the father donated one of his own — to a 25-year-old Israeli mother of two.

In some countries, reciprocity is not permitted because it raises the question of whether the donor has been coerced. The whole ethic of organ donation is based on the principle that the donors should give of their own free will and get nothing in return.

In Israel, the father's donation is seen as an incentive to increase the pool of donors.

For Segal, the gift that had sparked such conflict in her family accomplished more than she hoped. Her kidney has helped save the boy's life, generated a second donation and established new links between members of perpetually warring groups in one of the world's most intractable conflicts. She said she visited the boy on the eve of his surgery and maintains contact with his parents.

Segal said she honored her grandfather in a way that helps her cope with the grief of his death five years ago. The donation was an act of autonomy, she said, and she never wavered. And eventually her family came around — a gift, perhaps, in itself.

She said her husband understands better now, as do her children. And on the eve of Segal's surgery, her father called.

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"I don't remember what he said because he was crying," Segal said. Then, she told him that her kidney was going to a Palestinian boy.

For a moment, there was silence. And then her father spoke.

"Well," he said, "he needs life, also."

EXPLAINER: Olympic baseball a throwback to pre-analytics age

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

YOKOHAMA, Japan (AP) — If the Colorado Rockies were in the Olympics, they'd have had some shorter nights.

Olympic baseball, which started Wednesday, has some notable differences from Major League Baseball.

A biggie is the rout rule, which would have saved some innings for the Rockies. A game is over when a team is losing by at least 10 runs after seven innings. That would have cut short the Colorado's 12-2 win over Philadelphia on April 25, their 12-0 loss to San Francisco the following day and their 13-8 win over Cincinnati on May 13.

The Olympic rout rule was put in place by the World Baseball Softball Confederation for all but medal round games: The final out also has occurred if a team is ahead by 15 runs after five innings.

Olympic baseball is a throwback to the pre-analytics age. MLB Statcast isn't installed, so there is no scrutiny of spin rates, exit velocity and launch angle.

"Basically, we had nothing," American third baseman Todd Frazier said after the Americas qualifying tournament. "We had no video. We had no analytical process. It's 'Here's your bat. Bring your own stuff.'"

Here are 10 nuggets to compare and contrast.

10. **THE BALLS ARE DIFFERENT.** Balls are not the major league Rawlings variety, but a WBSC version with slightly different seams. Then again, the WBSC ran out of baseballs at the Americas qualifying tournament in Florida and organizers switched mid-tournament to minor league balls.

9. **FASTER IN KILOMETERS.** The only metric is truly metric: Pitch speeds are listed on the Yokohama Stadium scoreboard in both miles per hour and kilometers per hour. For those wondering, Jacob deGrom's major league-leading 99.2 mph average velocity sounds even more unhittable at 159.6 kph.

8. **WHO'S HERE AND WHO'S NOT.** DeGrom, of course, isn't at the Olympics, which is limited to players not on 40-man major league rosters. And even then, players who technically are eligible often are blocked by their clubs. St. Louis Triple-A left-hander Matthew Liberatore pitched for the U.S. in qualifying but the Cardinals refused to let him go to Japan, fearing a few more injuries to their major league pitching staff would put him in line for a possible promotion. Rosters have a vintage feel. The U.S. team includes Edwin Jackson and David Robertson. The Dominican batting order in Wednesday's opener included Jose Bautista, Juan Francisco and Emilio Bonifacio. Japan, however, stopped its Central and Pacific League seasons for the Games and has Masahiro Tanaka on its pitching staff. Oh: And rosters are 24 players rather than 26.

7. **MORE EXTRA-INNING RUNNERS.** The radical rule placing a runner on second base at the start of each extra inning is even more extreme: Runners are placed on first AND second. MLB and the Major League Baseball Players Association adopted the runner on second in extra innings last year as a pandemic method of getting people out of ballparks faster, but Commissioner Rob Manfred said it likely will be dropped after this season.

6. **TICK TOCK.** A 20-second pitch clock is used with no runners on base, similar to the one instituted at Triple-A and Double-A in 2018.

5. **WATCH THE TOUCHING.** There also is a high-five limitation. No congratulations from coaches while rounding the bases. "When a batter hits a home run, members of his team shall not be allowed to touch the hitter until he has passed the home plate," the regulations state.

4. **ACCESS AND INFORMATION.** Probable pitchers? Perhaps. Managers' thoughts pregame? They will not be able to meet media on game days until after games, WBSC spokesman Richard Baker said. Thoughts from stars of the game? Clubhouses are closed and while players are required to walk by media on the way out of the ballpark, they do not have to speak with reporters.

3. KEEPING THINGS MOVING. Manager and coach mound trips? Instead of one per pitcher per inning without a required pitching change, three during each game without a switch, with an additional trip for each three extra innings. There is also a limit of three stoppages for managers and coaches with batters or baserunners.

2. NO HOME-PLATE COLLISIONS. Attempting to dislodge the ball by barreling into the catcher is prohibited.

1. A NOTE TO HOUSTON ASTROS ALUMNI: "The use of electronic devices is forbidden during the games. None of the electronic devices such as cellular phones, laptops, tablets, video cameras, walkie-talkies, shall be used to communicate to on-field personnel, those in the dugout, bullpen, clubhouse and stands. The only exception to this rule is the use of phone/cellular phone to communicate between dugout and bullpen, however such device must be approved by WBSC in advance."

Infrastructure talks leave Biden's entire agenda at risk

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's latest leap into the Senate's up-and-down efforts to clinch a bipartisan \$1 trillion infrastructure deal comes with even more at stake than his coveted plans for boosting road, rail and other public works projects.

The outcome of the infrastructure bargaining, which for weeks has encountered one snag after another, will impact what could be the crown jewel of his legacy. That would be his hopes for a subsequent \$3.5 trillion federal infusion for families' education and health care costs, a Medicare expansion and efforts to curb climate change.

Biden and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., will need support from every Democratic moderate and progressive to push the \$3.5 trillion bill through the 50-50 Senate, with Vice President Kamala Harris' tie-breaking vote. If the infrastructure talks implode, it may be harder for moderates — who rank its projects as their top priority — to back the follow-up \$3.5 trillion plan, which is already making them wince because of its price tag and likely tax boosts on the wealthy and corporations.

"I would say that if the bipartisan infrastructure bill falls apart, everything falls apart," West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, one of his chamber's most conservative Democrats, warned reporters this week.

That could well prove an overstatement, since moderates like him will face enormous pressure from Biden, Schumer and others to back the \$3.5 trillion package, whatever the bipartisan plan's fate. But it illustrates a balancing act between centrists and progressives that top Democrats must confront.

"If infrastructure collapses, which I hope it does not, you'd have the difficulty of holding some of the Democrats" to back the \$3.5 trillion bill, No. 2 House leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said Tuesday in a brief interview. Party leaders will be able to lose no more than three Democrats to prevail in the 435-member House.

Both sides in the talks were expressing renewed optimism Tuesday about prospects for a deal, a view they've expressed before without producing results. The uncertainty underscored that Democrats were at a promising yet precarious point for their agenda, with stakes that seem too big for them to fail yet failure still possible.

Biden met at the White House on Tuesday with Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, a leader of moderate Democrats who've been laboring to strike an infrastructure deal with GOP senators. The president also used several tweets to prod lawmakers, including one saying, "There are no Democratic roads or Republican bridges — infrastructure impacts us all and I believe we've got to come together to find solutions."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden and Sinema "are very much aligned on the path forward" and expressed optimism, but also said the president was "not setting new deadlines" for a deal. Several target dates for reaching an agreement have come and gone, though Schumer wants a Senate vote on a package before sending lawmakers home for an August recess.

Sinema is a centrist who's alienated some Democrats who consider her unpredictable.

Illustrating that, Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., told House Democrats privately Tuesday that the infrastructure accord senators are trying to complete is "crap," according to two people who attended the session

and described it on condition of anonymity. He also said the measure was being crafted by “three Republicans,” pointedly naming Sens. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Sinema, they said.

Moderate Democrats have long made an infrastructure deal their top priority. The bipartisanship such an accord would display plus the meat-and-potatoes spending it would bring back home have made that their goal over the separate \$3.5 trillion measure for family and environmental programs.

If the infrastructure talks fail, it would deprive moderates of a victory that if reached might leave them more open to making concessions on the \$3.5 trillion measure. A collapse could also trigger fresh internal Democratic fighting over how much of the infrastructure spending would be transferred to the huge domestic spending plan, and how that would affect its overall price tag.

Even Republicans are divided over the infrastructure measure and what a failure of the bipartisan talks would mean as both parties eye 2022 elections in which House and Senate control are fully in play.

Some Republicans worry that approval of a bipartisan infrastructure plan would help Democrats pass their \$3.5 trillion measure by making moderate Democrats more prone to cooperate with their colleagues on that subsequent, costlier legislation.

They also say supporting the infrastructure measure would let Democrats rope the GOP into sharing the blame if inflation or other economic problems take hold amid massive federal spending programs.

But others say that since Republicans won't be able to stop Democrats from passing their \$3.5 trillion bill, the GOP might as well back an infrastructure agreement. That would let Republicans haul a share of its \$1 trillion in popular projects back to their home states.

Democrats plan to use special budget rules that would prevent Republicans from using a filibuster — a delay that takes 60 Senate votes to halt — to derail the \$3.5 trillion measure.

These Republicans also say passage of the infrastructure measure would make it harder for Manchin and Sinema — and moderate Democrats facing reelection in swing states, like New Hampshire's Maggie Hassan and Arizona's Mark Kelly — to vote for an even larger \$3.5 trillion plan.

“I think it puts their members more on the defensive and having to defend very, in my view, indefensible spending and taxing,” said No. 2 Senate GOP leader John Thune of South Dakota.

“Just proud”: Ledecky finally wins gold at Tokyo Olympics

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — When Katie Ledecky finally saw that familiar number next to her name, the emotions flooded to the surface at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

She tumbled over the lane rope to give her runner-up teammate a hug. She let out an uncharacteristic scream toward the American cheering section in the mostly empty arena. Finally, as the tears seemed ready to flow, she pulled the goggles back down over her eyes before exiting the pool.

On her third try at these Olympics, Ledecky finally touched first.

Bouncing back from the worst finish of her brilliant Olympic career, Ledecky claimed the first-ever gold medal in the women's 1,500-meter freestyle Wednesday.

About an hour earlier, she was blown away by Australia's Terminator, Ariarne Titmus, who made it 2-for-2 in their rivalry with a victory in the 200 free.

Ledecky didn't even win a medal — the first time that's ever happened to her in an Olympic race. She was far behind all the way, never getting any higher than her fifth-place finish.

“After the 200, I knew I had to turn the page very quickly,” Ledecky said. “In the warm-down pool I was thinking of my family. Kind of each stroke I was thinking of my grandparents.”

Her voice choked with emotion. She crunched her eyes trying not to cry.

“They're the toughest four people I know,” Ledecky said, “and that's what helped me get through that.”

The metric mile wasn't quite the breeze that everyone expected, given Ledecky's longtime dominance in an event that was finally added to the Olympic program for these games. She built a big lead right from the start, then worked hard to hold off American teammate Erica Sullivan's blazing finish.

But it was Ledecky touching first in 15 minutes, 37.39 seconds. Sullivan claimed the silver (15:41.41),

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while the bronze went to Germany's Sarah Kohler (15:42.91).

"I think people maybe feel bad for me that I'm not winning everything and whatever, but I want people to be more concerned about other things going on in the world, people that are truly suffering," Ledecky said. "I'm just proud to bring home a gold medal to Team USA."

Also winning on a busy day at the pool:

— Britain captured its first gold medal in the men's 4x200 freestyle relay since 1908, blowing away the field with a powerhouse group that included the top two finishers in the 200 free individual race, Tom Dean and Duncan Scott. The Americans failed to win a medal in the relay for the first time other than the boycotted Moscow Games in 1980.

— Japan's Yui Ohashi completed her sweep of the women's individual medley with a victory in the 400, holding off a pair of American teenagers.

— Kristof Milak of Hungary romped to a dominating — but rather nerve-wracking — victory in the men's 200 butterfly after hastily changing out a torn suit just before the race.

Titmus secured her place as one of the game's biggest stars and gave the Australian women their third individual swimming gold with an Olympic record of 1:53.50, adding to her thrilling triumph in the 400 free.

In her first victory, Titmus conserved her energy over the first half, then rallied to pass Ledecky with the second-fastest performance in history.

Ledecky settled for silver and set her sights on redemption in the 200.

Instead, she was nowhere to be found.

The defending Olympic champion made the first flip in seventh place and finished in 1:55.21 -- nearly 2 seconds behind the winner.

Siobhan Haughey of Hong Kong led much of the race before hanging on to take the silver in 1:53.92. The bronze went to Canada's Penny Oleksiak in 1:54.70.

"Obviously having a great swim in the 400 gives me confidence coming into the 200," Titmus said. "I thought my back end was definitely my strength in the 400. I knew I could have that on the way home in the 200."

Titmus, who will face Ledecky again in the 800 free, showed compassion for the swimmer who was thought to be her biggest rival.

"I don't think it's a bad result for her. She's still fifth at the Olympic Games," the Aussie said. "This was the field that had the most depth of all my events."

Indeed, Italy's Federica Pellegrini of Italy finished seventh in her fifth and final Olympics. She won the gold in 2008 and is still the world-record holder.

A day after Simone Biles' stunning withdrawal from the gymnastics team event, Ledecky insisted that she wasn't bothered by the burden of enormous expectations placed on her after winning four gold medals and a silver at the 2016 Rio Games.

"I feel like I handle the pressure," she said. "The biggest pressure I have is the pressure I put on myself and I feel like I've gotten past that over the years. I truly just want to enjoy this experience."

The British team was enjoying itself after a historic 4x200 free relay win.

Dean led off for the winners, James Guy and Matthew Richards took the middle legs, and Scott finished off the victory in 6:58.58.

That was just off the world record set by the Americans (6:58.55) at the 2009 world championships during the rubberized suit era.

It was the first British gold in the event since it made its debut at the first London Games more than a century ago. Russia claimed the silver in 7:01.81, while Australia took the bronze in 7:01.84.

The four-time defending champion Americans finished fourth — the first time they've failed to win a medal in the event except for '80.

The Americans did pick up a couple of medals in the women's 200 individual medley — but not the one they wanted.

Fresh off her victory in the 400, Ohashi claimed her second gold in 2:08.52, beating 19-year-old Ameri-

cans Alex Walsh (2:08.65) and Kate Douglass (2:09.04).

Defending Olympic champion and world record-holder Katinka Hosszu of Hungary finished seventh. She was the oldest swimmer in the final at age 32.

There were no surprises in the men's 200 butterfly but plenty of drama behind the scenes.

Milak won the gold by about two body lengths after hastily changing suits before the race, which he said cost him a chance of breaking his own world record.

Milak said that he realized about 10 minutes before walking on deck that his suit was damaged. He told Hungarian reporters that he totally lost focus, though it was hard to tell from his performance in the pool.

He held up the suit in the mixed zone, putting a finger through the tear before tossing it on a table in disgust.

Milak still touched in an Olympic record of 1:51.25 — more than a half-second off his 2019 world record (1:50.73) but some 2 1/2 seconds ahead of the silver medalist.

Japan's Tomoru Honda finished in 1:53.73, while the bronze went to Italy's Federico Burdisso (1:54.45).

South African star Chad le Clos finished fifth. He won the 200 fly at the 2012 London Olympics, upsetting Michael Phelps, but was no match for the Hungarian star.

Caeleb Dressel breezed through the semifinals of the 100 free, his first of three individual events. The American star posted the second-fastest time (47.23), just behind Russia's Kliment Kolesnikov (47.11).

"That's about what I expected," Dressel said. "It's going to be a fast final."

Capitol police testimony blunts GOP's law-and-order message

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Republican Party's self-portrayal as champions of law and order is colliding with searing testimony from police officers themselves. Officers on Tuesday described in vivid, personal terms the terror of defending the U.S. Capitol from violent insurrectionists inspired by then-president Donald Trump on Jan. 6.

Will it matter in next year's elections?

Heading into the 2022 midterms, the GOP is seeking political advantage in Americans' concern about rising crime nationwide. But the police testimony at Tuesday's debut hearing of the congressional panel investigating the insurrection could undercut that effort.

It highlighted the GOP's effort to brush past the violence unleashed by a mob of Trump's supporters that endangered hundreds of officers.

"You're talking about people who claim that they are pro-law enforcement, pro-police, pro-law and order," said Capitol Police Sgt. Aquilino Gonell. "Yet when they have the chance and the opportunity to do something about it, to hold people accountable, you don't, you pass the bucket, like nothing happened."

The hearing brought greater focus to how the debate over who's stronger or weaker on crime may unfold in elections. Republicans eager to pounce on Democrats may find themselves facing questions about whether the GOP did enough to stand up for law enforcement when put to the test.

Longtime GOP strategist Scott Jennings, who said it was hard to watch the officers' testimony and not feel "outraged" and "disgusted," said he expects crime to be "a massive issue" in the upcoming midterm contests. And while he expects Democrats to remain on the defensive, he said Republicans' response to Jan. 6 had given Democrats an opening "to distract from some of their real shortcomings."

"Republicans are certain to attack Democrats over what we would say are efforts to undermine the police. And Democrats are certain then to parry those attacks with, 'Well you weren't so pro-police when it comes to Jan 6,'" he said. "When you're thinking about campaign messaging, it just sort of makes it less clean."

Republicans are struggling to form an effective response to the testimony. The two GOP members of the panel, Reps. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois and Liz Cheney of Wyoming, are participating over the objection of their party's leaders. House GOP Leader Kevin McCarthy backed away from the panel after Speaker Nancy Pelosi rejected two of his appointees, a decision that makes it harder for him to influence the narrative of the hearing.

Leading Republicans are ultimately working to avoid angering Trump, who remains popular among many GOP voters and is becoming increasingly assertive in the party's primaries.

What did he have to say about the hearing?

In a statement, he said nothing about the Capitol conduct of his supporters and offered no sympathy for the testifying officers. Instead, he repeated his broader accusations that the press is ignoring crime that "is eating away at our cities and our country."

"America needs law and order, not defunding the police," Trump said. "We need our police back. America should and can be safe!"

Republicans' tough-on-crime strategy, which dates back decades to the Nixon era, was a winning one in many 2020 congressional races after Trump and other candidates seized on calls from some Democratic activists to "defund the police" and invest in alternative measures as part of sweeping changes to address systemic racism. Candidate, now-President Joe Biden notably rejected those efforts and instead called for reforms paired with additional resources for law enforcement.

Polls have found Americans give Biden lower marks when it comes to handling crime than other issues, though a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found voters split on which party they trust to do a better job of handling crime. Some 32% said Republicans, 30% Democrats. Roughly a third said they trust neither or both equally.

The poll also found stark differences between the parties' appetites for investigating the events surrounding Jan. 6. Fully 81% of Democrats said it's "extremely" or "very" important that investigations into the Capitol attack continue, versus just 38% of Republicans. Only 9% of Democrats say it's not important, 38% of Republicans.

While most voters have made up their minds about what happened, Alex Conant, a Republican strategist, said he expects Tuesday's testimony to nonetheless figure prominently in Democrats' campaign ads next year.

"It's clear that the Democrats want to run on the pandemic, the economy and Jan. 6. Republicans want to run on immigration, inflation and crime," he said. "Midterm voters will hear Republicans say that Democrats want to defund the police, and Democrats will point to Jan. 6. And I think in some of these bigger races, where swing voters matter, that will be an important debate."

It's a tactic Democrats have already been using, including at the White House, where Press Secretary Jen Psaki on Monday accused Republicans of hypocrisy.

"Many of the Republicans in Congress who are the most vocal about supposedly supporting the police and law and order are the same ones who have dismissed and downplayed the shameful events of that day," she said.

Racism of rioters takes center stage in Jan. 6 hearing

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

It had only been hinted at in previous public examinations of the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection: Scores of rioters attacked police officers not just with makeshift weapons, stun guns and fists, but with racist slurs and accusations of treason.

Four officers, two from the U.S. Capitol Police and two from the D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department, on Tuesday detailed the racism and bigotry they encountered during the violent assault on the Capitol. Their direct, harrowing accounts laid out the hours when the pro-police sentiment of supporters of former President Donald Trump was pushed aside, consumed by the fury of wanting to keep him in the White House.

Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn told lawmakers about an exchange he had with rioters, who disputed that President Joe Biden defeated Trump in the last presidential election. When Dunn, who is Black, argued with the rioters that he voted for Biden and that his vote should be counted, a crowd began hurling the N-word at him.

"One woman in a pink 'MAGA' (Make America Great Again) shirt yelled, 'You hear that, guys, this n——"

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voted for Joe Biden!” said Dunn, who has served more than a dozen years on the Capitol Police force.

“Then the crowd, perhaps around 20 people, joined in, screaming “Boo! F—— n—— !” he testified. He said no one had ever called him the N-word while he was in uniform. That night, he sat in the Capitol Rotunda and wept.

Ahead of Tuesday’s hearing, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, a member of the panel, said the Capitol and D.C. officers would provide insight into “what it was like to be on the front lines.”

However, Dunn was also speaking to the experience of being an African American police officer, who make up 29% of roughly 2,300 officers and civilians serving on the Capitol Police force.

Dunn said another Black male officer told him that, while confronting the rioters on Jan. 6, he was told to “Put your gun down and we’ll show you what kind of n—— you really are!”

The panel’s chairman, Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, pressed Dunn further about how he felt being an African American officer facing down racists and enduring racial slurs in the halls of democracy.

“It’s just so disheartening that people like that will attack you just for the color of your skin,” Dunn replied. “Once I was able to process it, it hurt. My blood is red. I’m an American citizen. I’m a police officer. I’m a peace officer.”

While Black Americans make up roughly 13% of the U.S. population, they were roughly 11% of all police officers in 2016 across a sampling of 18,000 local law enforcement agencies in the U.S., according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Over 71% of officers were white in 2016.

It’s this kind of treatment endured by Black men and women in law enforcement that policing experts say makes recruitment and diversity among U.S. police forces challenging. The law enforcement profession has also struggled with its origins in America, dating back to the slave patrols in the early 1700s formed to capture people who escaped slavery and terrorize the enslaved into submission. Although many African Americans have served valiantly on local and federal police forces since the civil rights movement, data shows Black Americans are still arrested in disproportionate numbers and more likely to be fatally shot by police.

Another Capitol Police officer, Sgt. Aquilino Gonell, wiped away tears as he recalled the story of his immigration to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic, only to face fellow Americans who considered him a traitor for defending the Capitol on Jan. 6.

“It was very disappointing,” Gonell said. “I saw many officers fighting for their lives against people, rioters (and) citizens, turning against us.”

Gonell, an Iraq War veteran, also called out the disparate law enforcement response to the overwhelmingly white crowd of rioters and the response to racial justice protests in 2020 that followed the murder of George Floyd and the police involved deaths of other Black Americans.

“As America and the world watched in horror what was happening to us at the Capitol, we did not receive timely reinforcements and support we needed,” he said. “In contrast, during the Black Lives Matter protest last year, U.S. Capitol Police had all the support we needed and more. Why the different response?”

Indeed, law enforcement agencies in dozens of cities last year showed overwhelming force toward BLM demonstrators. Many used chemical dispersants, rubber bullets and hand-to-hand combat with largely peaceful crowds and some unruly vandals and looters. By the end of 2020, police had made more than 14,000 arrests.

In January, as images and video emerged from the attacks on the Capitol, a racist and anti-Semitic element among the rioters became apparent. One man was pictured inside of the Capitol building carrying a Confederate battle flag.

And in the nearly seven months since the attacks, more video investigations revealed several rioters had flashed white supremacist gang signs and “white power” hand signals during the insurrection.

Gonell also called out the hypocrisy he perceived from many of the rioters who profess to support law enforcement — “the thin blue line” — but did not agree with those protesting over Floyd last summer.

“There are some who expressed outrage when someone simply kneeled for social justice during the

national anthem," Dunn said. "Where are those same people expressing outrage to condemn the violent attack on law enforcement officers, the U.S. Capitol, and our American democracy?"

"I'm still waiting for that," he said.

White House considering vaccine mandate for federal workers

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House is strongly considering requiring federal employees to show proof they've been vaccinated against the coronavirus or otherwise submit to regular testing and wear a mask — a potentially major shift in policy that reflects growing concerns about the spread of the more infectious delta variant.

The possible vaccine mandate for federal employees — regardless of the rate of transmission in their area — is one option under consideration by the Biden administration, according to a person familiar with the plans who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss deliberations that have yet to be made public. The White House is expected to announce its final decision after completing a policy review this week.

According to an analysis from the federal Office of Management and Budget, in 2020 there were more than 4.2 million federal workers nationwide, including those in the military.

President Joe Biden suggested Tuesday that expanding that mandate to the entire federal workforce was "under consideration," but offered no further details. The Department of Veterans Affairs on Monday became the first federal agency to require vaccinations, for its health workers.

The broader requirement under consideration would be the most significant shift by the Biden administration this week as the White House grapples with a surge in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations nationwide driven by the spread of the delta variant and breakthrough infections among vaccinated Americans.

On Tuesday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reversed its masking guidelines and said that all Americans living in areas with substantial or high coronavirus transmission rates should wear masks indoors, regardless of their vaccination status.

And just like that, masks were back at the White House.

By Tuesday afternoon, when the latest CDC data found that Washington, D.C., is facing substantial rates of transmission, White House staff were asked to begin wearing masks indoors starting Wednesday. Press were asked to follow suit, and those staff and reporters remaining in the White House were already masking up.

An aide for Vice President Kamala Harris passed out masks to the reporters covering her events earlier that day, asking them to put them on before walking in to her meeting with Native American leaders on voting rights.

Masks will also be required again at the U.S. House.

Citing the new CDC guidance, the Capitol's Attending Physician Brian P. Monahan issued a memo late Tuesday reinstating the mask requirement for all individuals, vaccinated and not, when entering the House chamber or other interior spaces in the complex when others are present. Fines that had been established under previous House rules can be imposed for offenders, though exceptions will be allowed when lawmakers are recognized to speak during proceedings.

For the Senate, with far fewer members, the masks are being recommended but not required for the chamber and other indoor spaces.

"All individuals should wear a well-fitted, medical-grade filtration mask," Monahan wrote in a similar letter obtained by The Associated Press.

Biden dismissed concerns that the new masking guidance from the CDC could create confusion among Americans, saying those who remain unvaccinated are the ones who are "sowing enormous confusion."

"The more we learn, the more we learn about this virus and the delta variation, the more we have to be worried and concerned. And there's only one thing we know for sure — if those other 100 million people got vaccinated, we'd be in a very different world," he told reporters after speaking to intelligence community employees at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence on Tuesday.

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But the whiplash on masking and vaccinations — just the day before, White House press secretary Jen Psaki had avoided questions over why the administration had yet to require vaccines for federal workers — reflects the uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus.

Various state and local governments, private companies, hospital administrators and universities across the nation have reverted to indoor mask mandates and instituted vaccine mandates in recent months, but just 60% of American adults have been completely vaccinated, and the latest wave of the coronavirus is hitting those communities with low vaccination rates particularly hard. The nation is averaging more than 57,000 cases a day and 24,000 COVID-19 hospitalizations.

But the Biden administration had thus far avoided embracing a vaccine mandate for its own employees — in part because officials are wary of further politicizing an already fraught issue by coming down too hard on the side of vaccine mandates.

Psaki acknowledged Tuesday that administration officials are aware of the risk that Biden's support for vaccine mandates could harden opposition to vaccines among his detractors.

"The president certainly recognizes that he is not always the right voice to every community about the benefits of getting vaccinated, which is why we have invested as much as we have in local voices and empowering local, trusted voices," she said.

GOP's Jake Ellzey wins US House seat over Trump-backed rival

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Republican Jake Ellzey of Texas won a U.S. House seat on Tuesday night over a rival backed by Donald Trump, dealing the former president a defeat in a test of his endorsement power since leaving office.

Ellzey's come-from-behind victory over Republican Susan Wright, the widow of the late Rep. Ron Wright, in a special congressional election runoff near Dallas is likely to be celebrated by Trump antagonists who have warned against his continued hold on the GOP. Trump backed Wright from the start and had made one last attempt to give her a boost with a telephone rally Monday night.

Ellzey was carrying more than 53% of the vote in Texas' 6th Congressional District with results from almost all precincts reported.

"One of things that we've seen from this campaign is a positive outlook, a Reagan Republican outlook, for the future of our country is what the people of the 6th District really really want," Ellzey said to supporters following his victory.

Ellzey is a Republican state legislator who finished a second to Wright in May, and who only narrowly made the runoff over a Democrat. The seat opened up following the death of Ron Wright, who in February became the first member of Congress to die after being diagnosed with COVID-19.

Far from running on an anti-Trump platform, Ellzey did not try distancing himself from the twice-impeached former president. He instead sought to overcome the lack of Trump's backing by raising more money and showing off other endorsements, including the support of former Texas Gov. Rick Perry.

Trump had endorsed Susan Wright early in the special election and recorded a robocall for her late in the runoff. Make America Great Action, a political action committee chaired by former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski, also made a \$100,000 ad buy over the weekend.

But the outcome may show the limits of his influence with voters. Republicans have continued making loyalty to Trump paramount since his defeat in November, even as Trump continues to falsely and baselessly assert that the election was stolen.

The North Texas district won by Ellzey — who narrowly lost the GOP nomination for the seat in 2018 — has long been Republican territory. But Trump's support in the district had also plummeted: after winning it by double-digits in 2016, he carried it by just 3 percentage points last year, reflecting the trend of Texas' booming suburbs shifting to purple and, in some places, outright blue.

Ron Wright, who was 67 and had lung cancer, was just weeks into his second term when he died. Susan Wright had also been diagnosed with COVID-19 and at one point was hospitalized with her husband.

GLIMPSES: Fragments of detail tell different Olympic stories

By The Associated Press undefined

TOKYO (AP) — It's easy to think of the Olympics as epic, as a collection of significant moments stitched into a grand and thrilling narrative. And the Games are often certainly that. But sometimes the genius is in the details — not even the details of actual competition, necessarily, but the tiny things that happen in passing.

In Associated Press photographer David Goldman's case, the wet foot of Britain's Jessica Learmonth tells its own story Tuesday as she transitions in the rain from the biking leg of the women's individual triathlon to running.

For AP photojournalist Dita Alangkara, the act of reaching for a shuttlecock, captured with the hand of Taiwan's Tai Tzu Ying during her match against Qi Xuefei of France on Wednesday, reveals a fleeting interaction with badminton gear that captures the larger whole.

The big moment and the tiny detail: A trained photojournalist is ready to capture both at a moment's notice. For that, the Olympics provide some of the most intriguing canvases of all.

Ex-airman sentenced to 45 months for leaking drone info

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) — A former Air Force intelligence analyst who once helped find targets for deadly U.S. drone strikes was sentenced to 45 months in prison for leaking top-secret details about the program.

Daniel Hale, 33, told a federal judge he felt compelled to leak information to a journalist out of guilt over his own participation in a program that he believed was indiscriminately killing civilians in Afghanistan far from the battlefield.

"It is wrong to kill," Hale said in a defiant statement in which he accepted responsibility for his actions, but also pleaded for mercy. "It is especially wrong to kill the defenseless."

But U.S. District Judge Liam O'Grady told Hale he had other avenues for airing his concerns besides leaking to a journalist. Citing the need to deter others from illegal disclosures, he imposed a punishment that was harsher than the 12- to 18-month term sought by Hale's attorneys but significantly more lenient than the longer sentence sought by prosecutors.

"You could have resigned from the military," or told "your commanders you weren't going to do this anymore," O'Grady told Hale.

The prosecution is one in a series of cases the Justice Department has brought in recent years against current and former government officials who have disclosed classified secrets to journalists. Attorney General Merrick Garland announced new guidelines this month to bar prosecutors from subpoenaing journalists' records in leak probes, but the department has shown no signs of scaling back efforts to charge officials whom they identify as having leaked national security information.

Prosecutors have argued that Hale, who deployed to Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan in 2012 and was honorably discharged the following year, abused the government's trust and knew the documents he was sharing "risked causing serious, and in some cases exceptionally grave, damage to the national security" but leaked them anyway. They say that documents leaked by Hale were found in an internet compilation of material designed to help Islamic State fighters avoid detection.

Hale's stated rationale that he was attempting to expose injustices surrounding the military's drone program has earned him support among whistleblower advocates and among critics of the government's war efforts, some of whom held supportive signs outside the courthouse and attended Tuesday's sentencing hearing.

But prosecutors painted a different portrait. Assistant U.S. Attorney Gordon Kromberg said the impact of Hale's actions was not to contribute to a public debate over war but rather to "endanger the people doing the fighting." He said that even if it was not Hale's intent to aid a terror organization, that was what he did.

The Justice Department said Hale began communicating with a journalist in April 2013 while still in the

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Air Force. The following February, while working as a defense contractor at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, Hale printed six classified documents that were each later published. He provided additional documents to the reporter that were published in whole or in part, including 11 that were marked as top secret or secret, prosecutors said.

He pleaded guilty earlier this year.

While court papers never specified the recipient of the leak, details about the case make it clear that the documents were given to Jeremy Scahill, a reporter at The Intercept, who used the documents as part of a series of critical reports on how the military conducted drone strikes on foreign targets.

The arguments Tuesday were less about whether Hale leaked the records — he openly acknowledges doing so — and more about his rationale for his actions and what role that should play in the sentence calculation.

Defense lawyers argued that he was motivated by his own conscience and that his leaks didn't jeopardize national security.

"He committed the offense to bring attention to what he believed to be immoral government conduct committed under the cloak of secrecy and contrary to public statements of then-President Obama regarding the alleged precision of the United States military's drone program," defense lawyers wrote in a filing last week.

Prosecutors painted Hale as eager to ingratiate himself with journalists, but Hale described himself as racked with angst over the role his actions may have played in the taking of innocent lives. He had served as a signals intelligence analyst, helping locate targets for drone strikes by tracking down cellphone signals.

He said in court Tuesday that he had wanted to dispel the idea that "drone warfare keeps us safe," and the documents he leaked showed among other things that the drone program was not as precise as the government claimed in terms of avoiding civilian deaths.

Reading aloud from a prepared statement, his voice occasionally cracking with emotion, Hale repeatedly took responsibility for his actions but expressed more regret over wartime actions than the "taking of papers."

He said he was pained by the possibility that his actions in the drone program could have emboldened terrorists in the United States, referring to the case of Omar Mateen, the gunman who massacred nightclub patrons in Orlando, Florida, in 2016 and had explicitly demanded during the shooting that air strikes needed to stop.

Wu-Tang Clan album sale pays off Martin Shkreli's court debt

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — An unreleased Wu-Tang Clan album forfeited by Martin Shkreli after his securities fraud conviction was sold Tuesday for an undisclosed sum, though prosecutors say it was enough to fully satisfy the rest of what he owed on a \$7.4 million forfeiture order he faced after his 2018 sentencing.

The entrepreneur known as "Pharma Bro" once boasted that he paid \$2 million in 2015 at auction for "Once Upon a Time in Shaolin," the 31-track double album the multiplatinum rap group spent six years creating.

"With today's sale of this one-of-a-kind album, his payment of the forfeiture is now complete," Acting U.S. Attorney Jacquelyn M. Kasulis in Brooklyn said in a release.

Authorities said the sales contract for the album contained a confidentiality provision that protects information relating to the buyer and price.

In a civil case in Manhattan federal court, lawyers wrote in an April document that Shkreli had already reduced his forfeiture debt by about \$5 million.

Shkreli's lawyer, Brianne E. Murphy, said she spoke to Shkreli late Tuesday and he said he is "pleased with the sale price and RIP ODB," a reference to Russell Tyrone Jones, known as Ol' Dirty Bastard, a founding member of the nine-man Clan who died of an accidental drug overdose in 2004.

Shkreli, 38, is scheduled for release in October 2022 after serving a seven-year prison sentence. He was prosecuted after he gained fame in 2015 after he boosted by 5,000% the price of Daraprim, a previously cheap drug used to treat toxoplasmosis, a parasitic infection that can be fatal to people with the AIDS virus or other immune-system disorders.

Shkreli's purchase of the Wu-Tang Clan album came as group member RZA said he wanted the album — packaged in a hand-crafted silver and nickel case which includes a 174-page book wrapped in leather — to be viewed as a piece of contemporary art.

At sentencing, Shkreli also claimed to own an unreleased Lil Wayne album, "Tha Carter V."

In its debut week in 2008, the rapper's "Tha Carter III" sold more than 1 million copies and helped launch Lil Wayne to superstar status.

In 2017, Shkreli was convicted of lying to investors and cheating them out of millions of dollars in two failed hedge funds he operated. Brafman described Shkreli at sentencing as a misunderstood eccentric who used unconventional means to make his defrauded investors even wealthier.

Man pleads guilty to 4 Asian spa killings, sentenced to life

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

CANTON, Ga. (AP) — A man accused of killing eight people, mostly women of Asian descent, at Atlanta-area massage businesses pleaded guilty to murder Tuesday in four of the killings and was sentenced to spend the rest of his life in prison.

Robert Aaron Long, 22, still faces the death penalty in the other deaths, which are being prosecuted in another county. The string of shootings at three businesses in March ignited outrage and fueled fear among Asian Americans, who already faced increased hostility linked to the coronavirus pandemic. Many were particularly upset when authorities suggested Long's crimes weren't racially motivated but born of a sex addiction, which isn't recognized as an official disorder.

Cherokee County prosecutors had planned to seek the death penalty but decided a plea deal would bring swift justice and avoid any lengthy appeals. That's what the victims and their families who they were able to contact wanted, District Attorney Shannon Wallace said.

Bonnie Michels' husband of 24 years, Paul, was the first person killed.

"A part of me died with him that day," she told the judge. "I am shattered."

Elcias Hernandez Ortiz, who was shot in the face, also addressed the court, saying it's been very hard for his family.

"Honestly, this man, why didn't he think before killing so many people? I only want justice," he said through a Spanish translator.

On March 16, Long shot and killed four people, three of them women and two of Asian descent, at Youngs Asian Massage in Cherokee County. A fifth person was wounded. Long then drove to Atlanta, where he shot and killed three women at Gold Spa before crossing the street to Aromatherapy Spa and killing another woman, police said. All of the Atlanta victims were of Asian descent.

In Atlanta, Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis has said she intends to seek the death penalty. There, Long faces charges of aggravated assault and domestic terrorism in addition to murder.

Wallace reiterated Tuesday that Cherokee County investigators saw no evidence of racial bias. Long walked through the first spa "shooting anyone and everyone he saw" and told detectives he was motivated by a sex addiction.

"This was not any kind of hate crime," Wallace said during the hearing.

Investigators interviewed people who knew Long for years, including three of Asian descent, who said they'd never heard him make racist comments, she said. Her team also considered the diversity of the people shot in Cherokee County. They included a Hispanic man and a white man and woman.

Asian American community leaders said Tuesday they were concerned that the shootings continue to be blamed on a sex addiction. Long's crimes were "intended to target Asian people, specifically Asian women," said state Rep. Bee Nguyen, the first Vietnamese American to serve in the Georgia House and a frequent advocate for women and communities of color.

Wallace said she would have argued at trial that Long was motivated by gender bias, though that wouldn't have extended his sentence.

Prosecutors in Fulton County, where all the victims were women of Asian descent, have said they believe Long was motivated by race and gender. They plan to seek a hate crime sentencing enhancement.

Georgia's new hate crimes law doesn't provide for a stand-alone hate crime. After a conviction on an underlying crime, a jury determines whether it was motivated by bias, which carries an additional penalty.

The American Psychiatric Association doesn't recognize sex addiction in its main reference guide for mental disorders. While some people struggle to control sexual behaviors, it's often linked to recognized disorders or moral views, said David Ley, clinical psychologist and author of "The Myth of Sex Addiction."

Long previously underwent inpatient and outpatient treatment for sex addiction, Wallace said. In fact, it was another patient who gave him the idea to seek sexual services at massage businesses, she said.

Long signed a plea agreement admitting to all charges in Cherokee County, including malice murder, felony murder, attempt to commit murder and aggravated assault. Cherokee County Superior Court Chief Judge Ellen McElyea then handed him four sentences of life without parole plus an additional 35 years.

Those killed in Cherokee County: Michels, 54; Xiaojie "Emily" Tan, 49; Daoyou Feng, 44; and Delaina Yaun, 33. The Atlanta victims were: Suncha Kim, 69; Soon Chung Park, 74; Hyun Jung Grant, 51; and Yong Ae Yue, 63.

Long said he planned to kill himself that day and went to the massage businesses thinking that paying for sex — which he considered shameful — would push him to do it. But while sitting in his car outside the first spa, he decided to kill the people inside.

After he was caught in south Georgia, Long told detectives he struggled with pornography and sex. He believed he was an addict and felt tremendous guilt when he viewed porn or engaged in sexual acts at massage businesses, Wallace said.

Long blamed the victims for his inability to control his impulses, Wallace said.

Long is scheduled for arraignment next month in Fulton County. His Cherokee County lawyers said in a statement they hope prosecutors there will follow Wallace's example and reach a similar plea agreement.

Wallace said that after the shootings at the two Atlanta spas, Long intended to carry out similar crimes in Florida.

By then, his parents had called authorities after recognizing their son in images from security video that authorities posted online. His parents were already tracking his movements through an application on his phone so they would know if he visited massage businesses, the prosecutor said, and that enabled officers to find him.

Bhutan fully vaccinates 90% of eligible adults within a week

By WASBIR HUSSAIN and RISHI LEKHI Associated Press

GAUHATI, India (AP) — The Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan has fully vaccinated 90% of its eligible adult population within just seven days, its health ministry said Tuesday.

The tiny country, wedged between India and China and home to nearly 800,000 people, began giving out second doses on July 20 in a mass drive that has been hailed by UNICEF as "arguably the fastest vaccination campaign to be executed during a pandemic."

In April, Bhutan grabbed headlines when its government said it had inoculated around the same percentage of eligible adults with the first dose in under two weeks after India donated 550,000 shots of AstraZeneca vaccine.

But the country faced a shortage for months after India, a major supplier of the AstraZeneca shot, halted exports as it scrambled to meet a rising demand at home as infections surged.

Bhutan was able to restart its drive last week after half a million doses of Moderna vaccine arrived from the United States as a donation under the U.N.-backed COVAX program, an initiative devised to give countries access to coronavirus vaccines regardless of their wealth.

Some 5,000 shots of Pfizer were also facilitated through COVAX, which is co-led by Gavi, the Vaccine

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Alliance, the World Health Organization and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation.

It also received more than 400,000 AstraZeneca shots from Denmark, Croatia and Bulgaria in the last two weeks.

"Our aim is to achieve herd immunity among our population in the shortest possible time to avert a major public health crisis," Dechen Wangmo, Bhutan's health minister, told The Associated Press.

Many Western countries with far more resources are yet to vaccinate such a high rate of eligible adults.

Health experts say Bhutan's small population helped, but the country also benefited from strong and effective messaging from top officials and an established cold chain storage system.

More than 3,000 health workers participated and 1,200 vaccination centers across the country helped ensure that shots reached every eligible adult. In some cases, health workers trekked for days through landslides and pouring rain to reach extremely remote villages atop steep mountains to administer doses to those unable to get to a center, said Dr. Sonam Wangchuk, a member of Bhutan's vaccination task force.

"Vaccination is the pillar of Bhutan's healthcare initiative," he said.

Bhutan's government is also led by medical practitioners. The prime minister, the foreign minister and the health minister are all medical professionals. And frequent messaging from the government, which directly answers questions from the public about the coronavirus and vaccinations on Facebook, also helped combat vaccine hesitancy among citizens.

"In fact, people are quite eager to come and get themselves vaccinated," Dr. Wangchuk said.

Its prime minister, Lotay Tshering, and monarch, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, were also early advocates of the vaccine, which allayed fears surrounding the rollout. The king also toured the country to raise awareness about the vaccination drive.

Bhutan is the last remaining Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas, but it has transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a democratic, constitutional monarchy.

Another crucial ingredient in the vaccine drive is the country's extensive network of citizen volunteers called "desuups," said Will Parks, the UNICEF representative for Bhutan. Some 22,000 citizens volunteered over the last year and a half to raise awareness, dispel misinformation, help conduct mass screening and testing and even carry vaccines across the country's difficult terrain, he said.

Bhutan's success is an anomaly in South Asia where countries such as India and Bangladesh are struggling to ramp up their vaccination rates. Experts say it underscores the importance of richer countries donating vaccines to the developing world and highlights just how big an impact the government and community outreach can have.

"Perhaps this little Himalayan kingdom can be a beacon of hope to a region that is on fire," Parks said.

Western wildfires calm down in cool weather, but losses grow

INDIAN FALLS, Calif. (AP) — Cooler weather on Tuesday helped calm two gigantic wildfires in the U.S. West, but a tally of property losses mounted as authorities got better access to a tiny California community savaged by flames last weekend and to a remote area of southern Oregon where the nation's largest blaze is burning.

Scientists say evidence shows Oregon's Bootleg Fire generated its own "fire tornado" this month, with winds higher than 111 mph (179 kph). The rare phenomenon is associated with extreme fire behavior spawned by dry, hot conditions, experts said.

Meanwhile, teams reviewing damage from the massive Dixie Fire in the mountains of Northern California have so far counted 36 structures destroyed and seven damaged in the remote community of Indian Falls, said Nick Truax, an incident commander for the fire. It's unclear if that figure included homes or smaller buildings.

The assessment was about half done, Truax said in an online briefing Monday night, and the work depends on fire activity.

The Dixie Fire has scorched more than 325 square miles (842 square kilometers), an area bigger than New York City, and it was partially contained Tuesday. More than 10,000 homes were threatened in the

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region about 175 miles (282 kilometers) northeast of San Francisco.

A historic drought and recent heat waves tied to climate change have made wildfires harder to fight in the American West. Scientists say climate change has made the region much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

An inversion layer, which is a cap of relatively warmer air over cooler air, trapped smoke over much of the fire Monday, and the shade helped lower temperatures and keep humidity up, incident meteorologist Julia Ruthford said.

Similar smoke conditions were expected through Tuesday. Monsoon moisture was streaming in over the region but only light showers were likely near the fire. A return to hotter, drier weather was expected later in the week.

The Dixie Fire, burning mostly on federal land, is among dozens of large blazes in the U.S.

With so many fires, officials have to prioritize federal resources, said Nickie Johnny, incident commander for the Dixie's east section, crediting help from local governments and California's firefighting agency.

"I just wanted to thank them for that because we are strapped federally with resources all over the nation," she said.

Authorities also were hopeful that cool temperatures, increased humidity and isolated showers will help them make more progress against the Bootleg Fire in Oregon. Crews have it more than halfway contained after it scorched 640 square miles (1,657 square kilometers) of remote land.

"The mild weather will have a short-term calming effect on the fire behavior. But due to the extremely dry conditions and fuels, as the week progresses and temperatures rise, aggressive fire behavior is likely to quickly rebound," a situation report said Tuesday.

The lightning-sparked fire has destroyed 161 homes, 247 outbuildings and 342 vehicles in Klamath and Lake counties, the report said, cautioning that the numbers could increase as firefighters work through the inner area of the fire.

On July 18, a day of especially extreme fire activity, the blaze spawned a fire tornado in the Fremont-Winema National Forest, scientists say. The phenomenon occurred when smoke rose nearly 6 miles (10 kilometers) into the sky and formed giant clouds, Bruno Rodriguez, a meteorologist assigned to the Bootleg Fire, told the Herald and News of Klamath Falls, Oregon.

Those massive clouds, combined with intense heat from the fire, intensified the updraft and pulled rotating hot air from the Earth's surface to the base of the clouds, creating a tornado, Rodriguez said.

Neil Lareau, a professor of atmospheric science at the University of Nevada, told the newspaper that extensive tree damage, scoured road surfaces and damage to the soil indicate winds speeds between 111 mph (178 kph) and 135 mph (217 kph).

"Prior to last year, there had only been two well-documented tornado-strength vortices generated by fires," said Lareau, who began studying the phenomenon after fire-generated tornadoes occurred last fall. "A decade ago, we could not have even imagined this. But here we are."

Scientists told the newspaper that fire-generated tornadoes need to urgent study because it's suspected they can hurl embers far afield and potentially start new blazes.

The National Weather Service confirmed the tornado but said the agency wasn't sure how to categorize it. That's because, unlike a normal tornado that could travel for miles, the winds from a fire tornado will stop as soon as it gets too far from the fire's heat.

"If they don't have the heat from the fire, then they don't have the updraft. Without the updraft, it would weaken very quickly," said Ryan Sandler, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Medford, Oregon.

Elsewhere, high heat was expected to return to the northern Rocky Mountains, where thick smoke from many wildfires drove pollution readings to unhealthy levels.

Unhealthy air was recorded around most of Montana's larger cities — Billings, Butte, Bozeman and Missoula — and in portions of northern Wyoming and eastern Idaho, according data from U.S. government air monitoring stations.

In California, the 106-square-mile (275-square-kilometer) Tamarack Fire south of Lake Tahoe was chew-

ing through timber and chaparral but was more than halfway contained. Evacuation orders for about 2,000 residents on both sides of the California-Nevada line have been lifted. At least 23 buildings have burned.

Senators, White House in crunch time on infrastructure deal

By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Time running short, senators and the White House worked furiously Tuesday to salvage a bipartisan infrastructure deal, with pressure intensifying on all sides to wrap up talks on President Joe Biden's top priority.

Despite weeks of closed-door discussions, several issues are still unresolved over the nearly \$1 trillion package. Spending on public transit remains in question and a new dispute flared over the regulation of broadband access. Patience was running thin as senators accused one another of shifting the debate and picking fights over issues that had already been resolved.

Still, all sides — the White House, Republicans and Democrats — sounded upbeat that an accord was within reach as senators braced for a possible weekend session to finish the deal. No new deadlines were set.

"Good progress," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said as he opened the chamber.

Republican negotiator Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio, who took the lead in key talks with a top White House aide, struck a similar tone, but also acknowledged the bipartisan group was "still working" on transit and other issues.

It's a make-or-break moment that is testing the White House and Congress, and the outcome will set the stage for the next debate over Biden's much more ambitious \$3.5 trillion spending package, a strictly partisan pursuit of far-reaching programs and services including child care, tax breaks and health care that touch almost every corner of American life, and that Republicans vowed Tuesday to oppose.

As talks drag on, anxious Democrats, who have slim control of the House and Senate, face a timeline to act on what would be some of the most substantial pieces of legislation in years. Republicans are weighing whether they will lend their votes for Biden's first big infrastructure lift or deny the president the political accomplishment in hopes of stopping both packages.

Biden met Tuesday morning at the White House with Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, one of the Democratic leaders of the bipartisan talks, to discuss both the current bill and the next one.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said after the president's meeting with Sinema that the administration sees "good signs" but is not setting any deadlines.

Ten Republicans would be needed in the evenly split 50-50 Senate to join all Democrats to advance the bipartisan bill past a filibuster toward passage, but it's an open debate among Republicans whether it's politically advantageous to give their support. A recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC found 8 in 10 Americans favor some increased infrastructure spending.

Republican senators sparred at their closed-door lunch Tuesday, one side arguing against doing anything that would smooth the way for Democrats' broader bill, according to a person granted anonymity to discuss the private meeting. Others spoke in favor of the bipartisan package.

The bipartisan package includes about \$600 billion in new spending on public works projects.

That falls far short of what House Democrats have proposed in their own transportation bill, which includes much more spending to address rail transit, electric vehicles and other strategies to counter climate change.

At a private meeting of House Democrats on Tuesday, Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., the chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, called the Senate's bipartisan measure complete "crap," according to two Democrats who attended the session.

DeFazio's remarks illustrated the tensions between Democrats in the two chambers over the budget talks. The Democrats spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the closed-door session.

Senators in the bipartisan group have been huddling privately since they first struck an agreement with Biden in June on the contours of the joint deal. The group includes 10 core negotiators, split evenly between Democrats and Republicans, but has swelled at time to 22 members.

Filling in the details has become a grueling month-long exercise over the scope of spending in each of the categories as well as some of the underlying policies.

Transit funding has remained a stubborn dispute, as Republican senators are wary of formalizing what has been a typical formula for the Highway Trust Fund allotting around 80% for highways and 20% for transit.

Most Republican senators come from rural states where highways dominate and public transit is scarce, while Democrats view transit as a priority for cities and a key to easing congesting and fighting climate change. Democrats don't want to see the formula dip below its typical threshold.

Expanding access to broadband, which has become vital for households during the coronavirus pandemic, sparked a new debate. Republicans pushed back against imposing regulations on internet service providers in a program that helps low-income people pay for service.

Democrats were insisting on a prevailing-wage requirement, not just for existing public works programs but also for building new roads, bridges, broadband and other infrastructure, but it's not clear that will make the final package.

The senators had been debating money for public water works projects and removal of lead pipes after Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, raised questions about the amount. He said Tuesday the issue had been settled.

Still unresolved is how to pay for the bipartisan package after Democrats rejected a plan to bring in funds by hiking the gas tax drivers pay at the pump and Republicans dashed a plan to boost the IRS to go after tax scofflaws.

Funding could come from repurposing COVID relief aid, reversing a Trump-era pharmaceutical rebate and other streams. It's possible the final deal could run into political trouble if it doesn't pass muster as fully paid for when the Congressional Budget Office assesses the details.

Meanwhile, Democrats are readying the broader \$3.5 trillion package that is being considered under budget rules that allow passage with 51 senators in the split Senate, with Vice President Kamala Harris able to break a tie. It would be paid for by increasing the corporate tax rate and the tax rate on Americans earning more than \$400,000 a year.

Democratic donor convicted of offering drugs for sex; 2 died

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A federal jury on Tuesday convicted a wealthy California political donor on charges he injected gay men with methamphetamine in exchange for sex, leading to two deaths and other overdoses.

Ed Buck, 66, was found guilty of all nine felony counts in federal court, which could lead to a life sentence. The verdict came exactly four years after one of the victims, 26-year-old Gemmel Moore, was found dead of an overdose in Buck's West Hollywood apartment.

"Today is bittersweet," LaTisha Nixon, Moore's mother, said after the verdict. "We got victory today."

The jury deliberated for more than four hours after a two-week trial. A sentencing date has not yet been scheduled.

Prosecutors said Buck paid men and provided drugs in return for sex acts. Buck had pleaded not guilty. His defense lawyers said neither fatal overdose victim died from meth and that many of the alleged victims were drug addicts.

Buck's attorneys — one of whom was a prosecutor in the O.J. Simpson case — did not immediately return a request for comment.

Buck's 2019 arrest marked a turning point for activists who protested outside his apartment and pressured law enforcement to act after Moore died on Buck's floor in 2017.

Even after Timothy Dean, 55, died 18 months later, it took another nine months and the near-death of another overdose victim before Buck was arrested in September 2019.

"This man did some terrible things to human beings," Joann Campbell, one of Dean's sisters, said after the verdict.

Family members and activists had pushed for Buck's arrest since Moore died. They said Buck escaped criminal charges for years because of wealth, political ties and race.

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"Ed Buck will never harm anyone else, and I thank God for that," said Joyce Jackson, another of Dean's sisters.

Buck is a wealthy white man who was active in gay causes and animal rights issues. He has given more than \$500,000 to mostly Democratic politicians and causes since 2000.

Prosecutors say he exploited vulnerable men — most of them Black — by paying them to come to his home to use drugs and engage in sex play to satisfy a fetish. Many were destitute drug users who often worked as prostitutes to support their habit.

The defense contends all the men were at Buck's apartment under their own will and that Moore and Dean did not die from methamphetamine.

"I know this has been an arduous, lengthy and difficult process," U.S. District Judge Christine A. Snyder told jurors after she read the verdict, according to the Los Angeles Times.

One of the prosecutors dropped to her knees and wept in the courthouse hallway after the jury was dismissed, the Times reported.

During the trial, Dane Brown testified that he had overdosed in Buck's apartment twice in one week in September 2019. He told investigators he had been living in a hotel on Skid Row when he met Buck on Adam4Adam, a gay dating and escort site, and moved in with him for part of summer 2019.

Brown said Buck injected him with meth nearly daily for five weeks, according to court documents. After his second overdose, Brown said Buck refused to call an ambulance and Brown was forced to call 911 at a nearby gas station.

"I didn't think I was going to be believed," Brown said after the verdict. "Walking out of that house, I didn't know what was going to happen next."

3 tech giants report combined profits of more than \$50B

Associated Press Associated Press

Three tech companies — Apple, Microsoft and Google owner Alphabet — reported combined profits of more than \$50 billion in the April-June quarter, underscoring their unparalleled influence and success at reshaping the way we live.

Although these companies make their money in different ways, the results served as another reminder of the clout they wield and why government regulators are growing increasingly concerned about whether they have become too powerful.

The massive profits pouring into each company also illustrated why they have a combined market value of \$6.4 trillion -- more than double their collective value when the COVID-19 pandemic started 16 months ago.

APPLE

Apple's first iPhone model capable of connecting to ultrafast 5G wireless networks continued to power major increases in quarterly revenue and profits for tech's most valuable company.

With iPhone sales posting double-digit growth over the previous year for the third consecutive quarter, Apple's profit and revenue for the April-June period easily exceeded analyst estimates. The Cupertino, California, company earned \$21.7 billion, or \$1.30 per share, nearly doubling profits earned during the same period last year. Revenue surged 36% to \$81.4 billion.

But in a Tuesday conference call with analysts, Apple CEO Tim Cook lamented that the steadily spreading delta variant of the coronavirus is casting doubt on how the rest of the year will unfold. "The road to recovery will be a winding one," Cook said. That uncertainty has already led Apple to delay employees' mass return to its offices from September to October. Most of Apple's stores, though, are already open.

The iPhone 12, released last autumn, is shaping up to be Apple's most popular model in several years, largely because it's the first to work on the 5G networks that are still being built around the world. Apple's iPhone sales totaled nearly \$40 billion in the latest quarter, up 50% from a year ago.

Apple's services division, the focal point of a high-profile trial revolving around the commissions it collects from iPhone apps, saw revenue climb 33% from last year to \$17.5 billion. A potentially game-changing decision from the trial completed in May is expected later this summer.

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Among Apple's upcoming challenges is whether shortages of computer chips and other key parts will force the company to delay its next iPhone this year, as it did last year. While Apple expects revenue to rise 10% in the current quarter, it said it may have more trouble getting parts for iPhones and iPad during the upcoming months. Executives skirted questions about another possible iPhone delay.

ALPHABET

Google's earnings improved markedly over the year-ago period, when the pandemic was starting to bite consumer spending and its partner, advertising. Now that vaccines have allowed people to shed the shackles of the pandemic and splurge again, a big chunk of that pent-up demand has spurred advertisers to spend more too, with a big chunk going to Google and its corporate parent Alphabet Inc.

Powered by Google, Alphabet earned \$18.53 billion, or \$27.26 per share, during the quarter, a nearly threefold increase from last year's earnings of \$6.96 billion, or \$10.13 per share. Google's advertising revenue soared 69% to \$50.44 billion thanks to what CEO Sundar Pichai called a "rising tide" of online activity among consumers and businesses.

Retail, along with travel and entertainment ads, were the biggest contributors to the revenue increase, the company said. Total revenue surged 62% from last year to \$61.88 billion. Revenue after subtracting TAC, or traffic acquisition costs, was \$50.95 billion.

The April-June quarter looks particularly strong since the 2020 downturn forced Google to report its first decline in quarterly ad revenue from the previous year.

Analysts were expecting Alphabet to earn \$19.24 per share on revenue of \$56.2 billion, and \$46.2 billion after subtracting TAC. Alphabet's stock jumped \$135, or 5.1%, to \$2,773 in after-hours trading after the results.

MICROSOFT

Microsoft on Tuesday reported fiscal fourth-quarter profit of \$16.5 billion, up 47% from the same period last year. Net income of \$2.17 per share beat Wall Street expectations. The software maker also topped forecasts by posting revenue of \$46.2 billion in the quarter that ended on June 30, a 21% increase over the same time last year.

Analysts were expecting Microsoft to earn \$1.91 per share for the April-June quarter on revenue of \$44.1 billion. Microsoft profits have soared throughout the pandemic thanks to ongoing demand for its software and cloud computing services for remote work and study. After an initial dip in after-hours trading, the company's shares later recovered and were up by less than 1%.

Growth in sales of Microsoft's cloud services, which compete with Amazon and other companies, and its Office productivity tools for handling work documents and email both outpaced overall revenue growth. The company's historical pillar — personal computing — grew just 9% in the quarter.

Microsoft noted that supply issues were affecting its personal-computing division, including for its Surface and Windows products. The company recently unveiled the next generation of Windows, called Windows 11, its first major update in six years. It will be available later this year.

CDC changes course on indoor masks in some parts of the US

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention changed course Tuesday on some masking guidelines, recommending that even vaccinated people return to wearing masks indoors in parts of the U.S. where the delta variant of the coronavirus is fueling infection surges.

Citing new information about the variant's ability to spread among vaccinated people, the CDC also recommended indoor masks for all teachers, staff, students and visitors at schools nationwide, regardless of vaccination status.

In other developments, President Joe Biden said his administration was considering requiring all federal workers to get vaccinated. His comments came a day after the Department of Veterans Affairs became the first federal agency to require its health care workers receive the vaccine.

Biden dismissed concerns that the new masking guidance could invite confusion, saying Americans who

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remain unvaccinated are the ones who are "sowing enormous confusion."

"The more we learn about this virus and the delta variation, the more we have to be worried and concerned. And there's only one thing we know for sure — if those other 100 million people got vaccinated, we'd be in a very different world," he said.

The White House quickly pivoted on its own masking guidance, asking all staff and reporters to wear masks indoors because the latest CDC data shows that Washington faces a substantial level of coronavirus transmission.

The CDC's new mask policy follows recent decisions in Los Angeles and St. Louis to revert to indoor mask mandates amid the spike in COVID-19 infections. The nation is averaging more than 57,000 cases a day and 24,000 COVID-19 hospitalizations.

The guidance on masks in indoor public places applies in parts of the U.S. with at least 50 new cases per 100,000 people in the last week. That includes 60 percent of U.S. counties, officials said. New case rates are particularly high in the South and Southwest, according to a CDC tracker. In Arkansas, Louisiana and Florida, every county has a high transmission rate.

Most new infections in the U.S. continue to be among unvaccinated people. So-called breakthrough infections, which generally cause milder illness, can occur in vaccinated people. When earlier strains of the virus predominated, infected vaccinated people were found to have low levels of virus and were deemed unlikely to spread the virus much, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said.

But with the delta variant, a mutated and more transmissible version of the virus, the level of virus in infected vaccinated people is "indistinguishable" from the level of virus in the noses and throats of unvaccinated people, Walensky said.

The data emerged over the last couple of days from over 100 samples from several states and one other country. It is unpublished, and the CDC has not released it. But "it is concerning enough that we feel like we have to act," Walensky said.

Vaccinated people "have the potential to spread that virus to others," she said.

For much of the pandemic, the CDC advised Americans to wear masks indoors and outdoors if they were within 6 feet of one another.

Then in April, as vaccination rates rose sharply, the agency eased its guidelines on the wearing of masks outdoors, saying that fully vaccinated Americans no longer needed to cover their faces unless they were in a big crowd of strangers. In May, the guidance was eased further, allowing fully vaccinated people to stop wearing masks outdoors in crowds and in most indoor settings.

The guidance still called for masks in crowded indoor settings, like buses, planes, hospitals, prisons and homeless shelters, but it cleared the way for reopening workplaces and other venues.

Subsequent CDC guidance said fully vaccinated people no longer needed to wear masks at schools either.

For months, COVID cases, deaths and hospitalizations were falling steadily, but those trends began to change at the beginning of the summer as the delta variant began to spread widely, especially in areas with lower vaccination rates.

Some public health experts said they thought the earlier CDC decision was based on good science. But those experts were also critical, noting that there was no call for Americans to document their vaccination status, which created an honor system. Unvaccinated people who did not want to wear masks in the first place saw it as an opportunity to do what they wanted, they said.

"If all the unvaccinated people were responsible and wore mask indoors, we would not be seeing this surge," said Dr. Ali Khan, a former CDC disease investigator who now is dean of the University of Nebraska's College of Public Health.

Lawrence Gostin, a public health law professor at Georgetown University, drew a similar conclusion.

"It was completely foreseeable that when they (the CDC) made their announcement, masking would no longer be the norm, and that's exactly what's happened," Gostin said.

The CDC may be seen as "flip-flopping," he said, because there's been no widely recognized change in the science, he said. Furthermore, it's not likely to change the behavior of the people who most need to wear masks.

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"I don't think you can effectively walk that back," he said.

The changes were sure to renew mask debates in school districts across the country.

In South Florida, the Broward County school board postponed a meeting Tuesday about whether students should wear masks in the classroom this fall after about 20 anti-mask protestors refused to don them. The delay angered the protestors, who called on Gov. Ron DeSantis, a strong mask mandate opponent, and the state government to override any mandates imposed by school districts.

"We need a special session of the state Legislature to ban this kind of crap right now," said Chris Nelson, 38, founder of an anti-mask group called Reopen South Florida. He threatened to go to board members' homes to confront them directly.

"If we can't be heard in public areas, and peacefully, we will go to where they are, and we will let them know how we feel about this, because we will not stand for children being masked for another year," he said.

Walensky said she is aware of the criticisms and concerns, and she acknowledged that many Americans are weary of the pandemic and do not want to return to prevention measures. But she said new scientific information forced the decision to change the guidance again.

"This is not something that I took lightly," she said.

Ken Thigpen, a retired respiratory therapist who now works for a medical device manufacturer, is fully vaccinated and stopped wearing his mask in public in May. But he started to reconsider in the last week after his job took him to hospitals in Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida, where he witnessed medical centers getting inundated with COVID-19 patients.

"That delta variant is intense. It is so transmissible that we have to do something to tamp it down," he said.

"I loved it when I could call the hospitals and they said, 'We actually closed our COVID ward today or we are down to two COVID patients,'" he recalled. "And now we are opening the wards back up, and the numbers are going nuts."

Inside a KKK murder plot: Grab him up, take him to the river

By JASON DEAREN Associated Press

PALATKA, Fla. (AP) — Joseph Moore breathed heavily, his face slick with nervous sweat. He held a cell-phone with a photo of a man splayed on the floor; the man appeared dead, his shirt torn apart and his pants wet.

Puffy dark clouds blocked the sun as Moore greeted another man, who'd pulled up in a metallic blue sedan. They met behind an old fried chicken shack in rural north Florida.

"KIGY, my brother," Moore said. It was shorthand for "Klansman, I greet you."

Birds chirped in a tree overhead and traffic whooshed by on a nearby road, muddling the sound of their voices, which were being recorded secretly.

Moore brought the phone to David "Sarge" Moran, who wore a camouflage-print baseball hat emblazoned with a Confederate flag patch and a metal cross. His arms and hands were covered in tattoos.

A nervous, giddy chuckle escaped Moran's mouth.

"Oh, shit. I love it," he said. "Motherf----- pissed on himself. Good job."

"Is that what y'all wanted?"

"Yes, hell yeah," Moran said, his voice pitched high.

It was 11:30 a.m. on March 19, 2015, and the klansmen were celebrating what they thought was a successful murder in Florida.

But the FBI had gotten wind of the murder plot. A confidential informant had infiltrated the group, and his recordings provide a rare, detailed look at the inner workings of a modern klan cell and a domestic terrorism probe.

That investigation would unearth another secret: An unknown number of klansmen were working inside the Florida Department of Corrections, with significant power over inmates, Black and white.

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Thomas Driver took a pull off a cigarette, and exhaled the smoke at Warren Williams. Driver, a white prison guard, and Williams, a Black inmate, faced each other.

It was a humid August day in 2013, about a year and a half before the clandestine murder photo reveal.

The two men stood in a sweltering prison dorm room in rural north Florida's Reception and Medical Center, a barbed wire-encircled complex built among farmland an hour south of the Georgia state line. The RMC is the state's prison hospital where new inmates are processed.

Williams, a quiet, 6-foot-1, 210-pound inmate, suffered from severe anxiety and depression. He was serving a year, records show, for striking a police officer. Williams agreed to plead no contest in exchange for a reduced sentence, and an order to receive a mental health evaluation and treatment under county supervision.

He found himself in front of Driver after he lost his identification badge, a prison infraction.

Williams told Driver to stop blowing smoke at him, he'd report later. Driver blew more, and Williams told him to stop again.

When Driver continued, Williams jumped him and they hit the ground. As they struggled, Williams bit Driver and gained an advantage, according to both men's accounts of the fight.

A group of guards responded, and beat Williams so badly that he required hospitalization, his mother and lawyer said.

Driver, in turn, needed a battery of precautionary tests for HIV and hepatitis C because of the bite. They would all be negative, but the ordeal enraged him.

He wanted revenge.

More than a year later, in December 2014, a wooden cross ignited in a field hidden by tall trees.

Dozens of hooded klansmen gathered around for a "klonklave," a meeting of the Florida Traditionalist American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Members of a biker club were being "naturalized" as citizens into the Invisible Empire of the Klan.

Security was tight. The bikers were worried about recording devices, and were checking people.

Driver, known by his fellow klansmen as "Brother Thomas," was there with Sarge Moran, who was also a prison guard. Moran had worked for the Florida Department of Corrections for decades; he'd also been a klansman for years. He had been disciplined more than once by the corrections department for violent incidents, according to records obtained by The AP. Despite this, Moran had been kept in a position of power over inmates.

Moran and Driver wanted to discuss an urgent matter with Joseph Moore, the group's "Grand Night Hawk," in charge of security.

Moore was a U.S. Army veteran. When not in his klan "helmet," he often wore a baseball hat pinned with military medals, including a Purple Heart. He commanded respect and fear from his klan brothers, and often regaled them with stories of his work killing targets overseas as part of an elite U.S. military squad.

The three men moved away for a private talk, and had another klansman keep watch nearby so they weren't overheard.

The guards gave Moore a paper with a picture of Williams, his name and other information. Driver described the fight, and how he and his family had worried for weeks about a false positive test for hepatitis C.

"Do you want him six feet under?" Moore asked.

Driver and Moran looked at each other, then said yes.

The very existence of a plot to murder a Black man by Ku Klux Klan members working in law enforcement evokes past tragedies like the 1964 "Mississippi Burning" case, where three civil rights workers were slain by klansmen. Sheriff's deputy Cecil Price Sr. was implicated in the deaths and was convicted of violating the young men's civil rights.

Today, researchers believe that tens of thousands of Americans belong to groups identified with white supremacist extremism, the klan being just one. These groups' efforts to infiltrate law enforcement have

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been documented repeatedly in recent years and called an "epidemic" by legal scholars.

FBI Director Christopher Wray said at a March Senate hearing that "racially motivated violent extremism," mostly by white supremacists, accounts for the most rapidly rising share of domestic terrorism cases.

"That same group of people ... have been responsible for the most lethal attacks over the last, say, decade," Wray added.

During the Jan. 6 insurrection in the U.S. Capitol, "Thin Blue Line" flags flew alongside white supremacist signs and banners, and more than 30 current and former police officers from a number of departments around the nation were identified as attendees.

"White supremacist groups have historically engaged in strategic efforts to infiltrate and recruit from law enforcement," said an FBI document released by a congressional committee in September, about four months before the Capitol riots. In the intelligence assessment, written in 2006, the FBI said some in law enforcement were volunteering "professional resources to white supremacist causes with which they sympathize."

While the FBI would not confirm if it had produced a more recent assessment of the ongoing threat, recent cases have confirmed that the problem the agency described in 2006 continues.

In November, a Georgia deputy was caught on an FBI wiretap boasting about targeting Black people for felony arrests so they couldn't vote, and recruiting colleagues into a group called "Shadow Moses." In 2017, an interim police chief in Oklahoma was found to have ties to an international neo-Nazi group. In 2014, two officers in Fruitland Park, Florida, were outed as klansmen and forced to quit.

Despite repeated examples, white supremacists who are fired from law enforcement jobs after being discovered can often find jobs with other agencies. There is no database officials can check to see if someone's been identified as an extremist.

In 2020, an officer in Anniston, Alabama, was hired by a county sheriff's department just a few years after the Southern Poverty Law Center posted a video of him speaking at a white nationalist League of the South meeting.

"There's no trail that follows them even if they're fired. It's spreading the problem around," said Greg Ehrie, former chief of the FBI's New York domestic terrorism squad, who now works with the Anti-Defamation League.

Domestic terrorism experts have been calling for better screening to help identify extremists before they're hired. Some states, such as California and Minnesota, have tried to pass new screening laws, only to be prevented by police unions, whose legal challenges argued successfully that such queries violate free speech rights.

Without screening, white supremacists who get inside can operate with impunity, targeting Black and other people of color, and recruiting others who share their views.

"Unless your name ends up in an FBI wiretap" an officer will go undetected, said Fred Burton, a former special agent with the U.S. Diplomatic Security Service. "There are loopholes in the background investigative process."

Warren Williams got out of prison a few months after his fight with Driver, the prison guard. It was just before Christmas, and he arrived at his mother's single-story brick house in Palatka, a small town in north Florida. It was cramped with his three little sisters.

The street dead-ended at some railroad tracks, beyond which flowed the St. Johns River. The wide, rushing waterway runs through town on its way back out to sea to the northeast, near Jacksonville.

After months in a prison cell, Williams longed to fish the St. Johns again. He looked forward to spending days outdoors in his landscaping job, and to writing poems and music in his free time.

Palatka, with a population split almost equally between Black and white, had been devastated by the 2008 Great Recession. Many of its prized murals were fading, and there were more shuttered shops in the old downtown than open ones. A coal-fired power plant on the river is Palatka's largest employer, as well as a paper mill that fills the air with a sour stench.

Williams struggled with anxiety, and sometimes had violent outbursts. His mother called these episodes

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his "protective mode." But he was home, where she could watch him. He'd been adhering to his probation requirements, and made his mandated meetings.

And in the 21st Century, the klan was not among Williams' list of worries. Images of burning crosses and klansmen targeting Black people for violence seemed anachronistic.

But the symbols of the group's reign in Palatka endure. Each time Williams met with his probation officer, he passed the statue of a Confederate soldier in front of the Putnam County courthouse in downtown Palatka, the county seat. The gangly live oak trees in the court square are mesmerizing to some observers, but to others they're a painful reminder of past lynchings.

Jim Crow Florida was one of the most dangerous places in the South to be Black. In that era, a Black man in Florida was more at risk of being lynched — an execution without trial, often by gun or hanging — than in any other state, according to a University of Georgia study of lynching records.

In 1925, the KKK controlled Putnam County. A klansman named R.J. Hancock was elected sheriff and he helped unleash a reign of terror, where lynch mobs dominated civic life. To stop it, Florida's governor threatened to declare martial law in 1926.

But the klan and its ilk have endured. Today it's just one group in a modern, decentralized white supremacy movement.

"It's surprising that we're even having a conversation about something that was prevalent in the 1920s, taking place 100 years later," said Terrill Hill, Williams' attorney and Palatka's mayor. "It's frustrating. It's angering."

It was a chilly and overcast January day when Joseph Moore, the klan's Grand Night Hawk, arrived at a small house tucked behind tall trees. The air smelled like pine.

It was the home of Charles Newcomb, a stone-faced, chain-smoking former prison guard who was the klan's Exalted Cyclops, a local chief. Newcomb had left his job at the prison, but he remained close to "Sarge" Moran. He wanted to discuss the "Brother Thomas issue" with Moore.

"I look at it this way brother. That was a direct ... attempted murder on him," Newcomb said, referring to Williams' biting Driver. "I don't care how you look at it."

"We just need to do our deed, and where it falls, it falls," Newcomb said. "Because he's a piece of trash anyway."

Because of Moore's professed background as an elite government assassin, Newcomb trusted him to help execute the plan.

"I'd like to see things done in a professional manner," Moore said, with the tone of an experienced hitman. "There are skills and techniques and things that survive the test of time. If you bury somebody in, say, an open field or whatever ... it is going to be dug up."

"But if you bury somebody in a graveyard over top of somebody that's already been buried, it's never going to be uncovered for a septic tank."

Both agreed they should take a trip to Palatka to scope out Williams' neighborhood.

"One night we find him out there and I can walk right up, put him out of his misery," Newcomb said.

Newcomb wanted to ensure Driver had an alibi.

"What we need is Brother Thomas (Driver) to be at work," Newcomb said. "And when we do it when Thomas is at work, (he) has an alibi."

Joseph Moore was a husband and father, a veteran and klansman. He was also a confidential informant being paid to provide information to the FBI.

It's life-threatening work. If his klan brothers found out, Moore had no doubt how it would end.

The relationship carried considerable risk for the FBI, too. Moore had suffered a mental breakdown and was hospitalized following an honorable discharge from the U.S. Army in 2002, where he'd been trained as a sniper.

He'd walked into a hospital in New Jersey, drunk, wearing a tactical vest. His pockets were stuffed with a few thousand dollars in cash. He was carrying a plane ticket to Jordan, and told police he'd planned to fight

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with the Peshmerga in the Kurdish region of Iraq. He would spend four months under medical observation.

The FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, or ATF, have long relied upon informants to investigate domestic extremist groups, with mixed results. Federal investigators have on occasion been fooled and manipulated by informants. And the effort is expensive. Informants often work in secret for years, and if they're found out, placed into protective custody.

In 2008, Moore appeared at the FBI's Gainesville office because he wanted them to investigate the local sheriff's office. His brother-in-law had been arrested on a drug-related charge, and Moore thought that a crooked deputy had planted the drugs. An FBI agent met with Moore, and eventually recruited him to join an investigation into a member of a different Florida klan group suspected of planning a murder.

During that investigation, Moore's wife had grown suspicious of his activities. She demanded answers. Eventually, he told her — and her family — about his FBI work. It was a basic violation of the rules and the FBI fired him.

A few years later, Moore's cellphone lit up with an unknown number. The voice, however, was familiar. It was an agent who'd known him from his previous work with the FBI, asking to meet about a new investigation into another violent klan cell. Because of Moore's success infiltrating the klan before, the agency recruited him again.

The FBI bought him a computer and phone so he could make contact online with the new klan group. Within a few weeks, Moore had scheduled a meeting with the Grand Dragon and second-in-command at a Dollar General parking lot in Bronson, Florida.

The klansmen checked Moore's drivers license and tested him in an exchange of klan jargon.

Moore told them that he'd killed people before, including a hit in China in 2005. He was lying. He'd never seen a battlefield and the medals he wore were fakes.

But the leaders were impressed. They invited Moore to be "naturalized." He filled out an application, paid a \$20 fee along with \$35 in annual dues.

He also signed a "blood oath," part of which read, "I swear ... to be Klannish in all things, to accept the life of the Brotherhood of Service, to regenerate our country and to the white race and maintain the white blood and natural superiority with which God has enabled it."

The Grand Dragon told him that a violation of his blood oath was punishable by death.

On January 30, 2015, less than two years after Moore had signed his klan oath, the murder plot was in motion.

Moore's tires crunched on Newcomb's driveway as he pulled his SUV past a weathered sign on a fence post. It featured a pistol barrel pointed at would-be trespassers. WARNING: There is Nothing Here Worth Dying For.

Moore found Newcomb excited about a new idea he'd had for how to kill Williams.

"I have several bottles of insulin in here if you wanted to do it that way," Newcomb said.

"Do we do it fast and get the hell out? Or do we want to grab him up and take him somewhere and shoot him with insulin?" Newcomb asked.

Moore masked his surprise. He'd thought they were just doing reconnaissance, and now Newcomb was planning to strike.

"It'd be quieter," Newcomb said, "if we can grab him up, throw his ass in the car and take off with him somewhere. And we'll just inject his happy ass with a bunch of insulin and let him start doing his floppin'."

An insulin overdose is an excruciating death marked by uncontrollable tremors. For a medical examiner, it's difficult to detect. A person's blood sugar declines naturally when they die, whether the person is diabetic or not. And syringe pricks are so small that, unless you're looking for them specifically, they're nearly undetectable.

"I've got two full needles ready, and then I got two other bottles with us," Newcomb said.

"Is that your wife's meds?" Moore asked.

Newcomb said they were, but that she had plenty extra.

He went into his garage and returned with a child's fishing pole, decorated with images of the cartoon

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character "Dora the Explorer."

"If we was gonna grab him up and take him down towards the river he'll need a fishing pole like he's been fishin' right?" Newcomb asked, rhetorically. "I wanna make it look realistic."

They were looking at the fishing pole when "Sarge" Moran pulled into the driveway. He apologized for being late.

"Sarge. I brought some insulin. Me and Brother Joe (Moore) was talking, and if we can just kinda grab his ass up," Newcomb said before Moran interrupted.

"Are we going to grab him now?"

"I mean, we're going down to look at some things right now and see if a chance presents itself," Newcomb said.

"I'm following y'all's orders. Whatever orders are given," Moran responded eagerly. "I'm here to serve. I'm at the will and pleasure of."

The three klansmen piled into Moore's SUV and pulled onto a two-lane highway, driving under Spanish-moss-draped tree branches.

They had the cooler of syringes, the Dora the Explorer fishing rod, and Newcomb's handgun, which he rested between his legs.

They fell silent as they drove past dirt roads that led back into dense Florida brush.

Then Newcomb's cell phone rang. His young daughter's voice was at the other end of the line.

"Y'all don't need to bother me today unless it's very, very important. OK?" he scolded. His voice softened. "All right. I love you. Bye bye."

Without missing a beat, Newcomb returned to his plans. A gun sat between his legs as he spoke.

"What I was thinking, though, is if we could grab that package up and take him to the river, which is not that far from him," Newcomb said. "Put his ass face down and give him a couple of shots, because I've got two completely full and they're already ready to go."

"If I set that fishing pole like he's been fishin', and give him a couple shots and we sit there and wait on him, then we can kind of lay him like he's kind of tipping over into the water and he's breathed in just a little bit."

Moran had other logistical issues on his mind. What would they do with the body?

"If we're going to do a complete disposal. If we're going to chop up the body," he said, before being cut off. Newcomb said they had lots of options.

"I mean, if we have to do pow pow, we will," he said, referring to shooting Williams.

Whatever they decided, Moran said, they needed to protect themselves. They'd brought face shields and coats to cover their skin in case things got messy.

After his initiation into the klan, the FBI had authorized Moore to start recording the group's two main leaders. Initially, they did not know the klansmen included active law enforcement personnel.

After the klansmen brought Moore into the murder plot, however, the FBI widened the scope of the people he could record. The FBI had outfitted Moore's SUV with recording devices that broadcast live to agents as they drove to Palatka.

Also, the FBI had made a number of moves to keep Williams safe. They held him in a safe house. They placed police vehicles around his neighborhood so when the klansmen arrived, the FBI agents, Florida Highway Patrol and Palatka police were clearly visible.

When the klansmen drove into Williams' neighborhood, the sight of police patrol cars unnerved them. "Can't make too many rounds with him sitting there," Newcomb said, eyeing a squad car.

Moore tried to play it cool as he turned the car to head back to Newcomb's house.

"I just hate that we didn't get to achieve our goal today," Newcomb said.

"We'll catch that fish," Moran reassured him.

Later Moore dialed his FBI contact, and described breathlessly what he'd recorded. "He actually loaded up a couple of insulin syringes and he was ready to grab him," he said, panting. "It's all on the recording."

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Williams lay on the floor of his mother's house, pretending to be dead. The prior day he'd received a strange phone call from his probation officer, asking him to come to the office the next day.

Williams was confused. He'd met with the officer that very day, and hadn't been in any trouble in the hours since.

He told his mother about the call, and she told him to go.

"If you didn't do anything wrong, just head on down there and talk to him," she said.

When he'd arrived at the mystery meeting there were unfamiliar faces in the room. They were federal domestic terrorism investigators.

They told him his life was in danger. He'd need to go into protective custody.

But first, they wanted to go to his house and take a photograph.

On the way, Williams saw his mother, Latonya Crowley, in a car at a stoplight on her way out of town for the weekend. The agents waved her down and she turned around and tailed their dark blue van back to her home.

Inside, the agents poured water on Williams' pants. They'd torn his shirt to appear as if he'd been shot.

When they were done, the FBI placed Williams in a safe house. Not even his mother knew where he was. They would only speak by phone until the men who wanted to kill Williams were in custody.

A few weeks later, Moore waited for Driver outside a Starbucks in a strip mall parking lot.

He'd already shown Moran the staged murder photo of Williams lying on the floor, video recording his gleeful response. The day before, he'd done the same with Newcomb, who told Moore "good job" and hugged him.

Driver was his last assignment. In their last discussion about Williams, Driver had said he'd stomp Williams' "larynx closed" if he had the chance. Moore had said either he or someone he contracted with would finish the job.

They greeted each other, and Moore told Driver to sit in his car.

"We remembered how emotional this was for you and wanted — thought you might want some closure."

Moore handed Driver the phone with the photo of Williams' supposedly lifeless body.

"Let us know what you think," Moore said.

"That works," Driver said curtly.

"That what you wanted?"

"Oh, yes," Driver said, relaxing into a chuckle.

Sarge Moran was at home when a prison colleague called: Could he come in on his day off to get fitted for new uniforms? Authorities arrested him when he arrived, and held him in the prison where he'd spent decades as a guard.

Driver and Newcomb were arrested at their homes.

In August, 2017, Newcomb and Moran stood trial at the Columbia County Courthouse in Lake City. Joseph Moore was the state's star witness, testifying against the men he'd spent years befriending. For a time, the government protected Moore's family; his current whereabouts are unknown.

In the end, a jury convicted Moran and Newcomb of conspiracy to commit murder. They were each sentenced to 12 years. Driver received four years after pleading guilty, and is due out this year.

Because of threats in Florida prisons, Driver was moved secretly to another state to serve his time, according to a source with knowledge of the case. Even though they are in prison, neither Newcomb nor Moran were in Florida's inmate locator system and could not be reached for comment.

Even though three current and former Florida prison guards were exposed as klansmen, the state's Department of Corrections says it found no reason to investigate whether other white supremacists were employed in its prisons.

There were no other "investigative leads," Michelle Glady, the department's director of public relations, said in a statement to The AP. "However, any allegation of a staff member belonging to a group such as those mentioned, would be investigated on an individual basis."

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Those in violation of a "willful breach" of the department's core values can be fired or face arrest.

On a recent visit to the prison where the three klansmen worked, numerous cars and trucks in the employee and volunteer parking lots were decorated with symbols associated with white supremacy: Confederate flags, QAnon symbols and Thin Blue Line flag decals.

Florida state Rep. Dianne Hart, D-Tampa, said she is not surprised by klansmen working as prison guards in her state, and called on the FBI to conduct a wider investigation.

"I have heard from correctional officers, inmates, and families about how deep this problem goes," Hart said in a statement, noting that there are officers who are "part of gangs and white supremacy groups that have positions of leadership within prisons around the state."

Williams and his family live today with uncertainty and paranoia.

"My fears? That maybe some of the other klan members could come around, and try to find us and harm us," his mother, Latonya Crowley, told The AP in her first interview about the ordeal.

Looking back, Crowley remembers weird occurrences around the house before the FBI got involved.

In one instance, a neighbor said they saw two white men — they looked like police — in Crowley's yard at daybreak. "No police came to my house," Crowley remembered replying to the news, dismissively.

A bag of her trash full of her empty insulin containers — she's diabetic - also disappeared. She wonders if that's why Newcomb thought to use insulin.

But Williams and Crowley are thankful, too. The FBI saved his life, and the state of Florida prosecuted the men who threatened him.

Williams has filed a lawsuit against the klansmen and the Florida Department of Corrections.

Williams' attorney is frustrated that Florida hasn't investigated more thoroughly to see if there are more white supremacists working for the state prisons, and wants them to take responsibility. Florida, for its part, has sought to have the case dismissed and declined further comment on it.

Williams is haunted by Driver's imminent release and the specter of other klansmen have made it impossible for him to move on.

"In the state of mind that he's in today, I don't see him getting better," Crowley said.

EXPLAINER: Employers have legal right to mandate COVID shots

By MAE ANDERSON and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The state of California. New York City. Hospitals and nursing homes. Colleges and universities. Employers are putting COVID-19 vaccine mandates into place and it's getting attention.

On Tuesday, President Joe Biden said a requirement is under consideration for all federal employees. But what happens if workers refuse?

Federal legal guidance out this week suggests the law is on the side of employers. Vaccination can be considered a "condition of employment," akin to a job qualification.

That said, employment lawyers believe many businesses will want to meet hesitant workers half-way.

CAN EMPLOYERS REQUIRE A CORONAVIRUS VACCINE?

Yes. Private companies and government agencies can require their employees to get vaccinated as a condition of working there. Individuals retain the right to refuse, but they have no ironclad right to legal protection.

"Those who have a disability or a sincerely held religious belief may be entitled to a reasonable accommodation under civil rights laws, so long as providing that accommodation does not constitute an undue hardship for the employer," said Sharon Perley Masling, an employment lawyer who leads the COVID-19 task force at Morgan Lewis.

Employees who don't meet such criteria "may need to go on leave or seek different opportunities," she added.

The U.S. Justice Department addressed the rights of employers and workers in a legal opinion this

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week. It tackled an argument raised by some vaccine skeptics that the federal Food, Drug & Cosmetic Act prohibits employers from requiring vaccination with shots that are only approved for emergency use, as coronavirus vaccines currently are.

Department lawyers wrote that the law in question requires individuals be informed of their "option to accept or refuse administration" of an emergency use vaccine or drug. But that requirement does not prohibit employers from mandating vaccination as "a condition of employment."

The same reasoning applies to universities, school districts, or other entities potentially requiring COVID-19 vaccines, the lawyers added. Available evidence overwhelmingly shows the vaccines are safe and effective.

The Justice Department opinion followed earlier guidance from the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission that federal laws prohibiting discrimination in the workplace "do not prevent an employer from requiring all employees physically entering the workplace to be vaccinated for COVID-19."

The EEOC listed some cases in which employers must offer exemptions. People who have a medical or religious reason can be accommodated through alternative measures. Those can include getting tested weekly, wearing masks while in the office, or working remotely.

WHO IS REQUIRING THE VACCINE?

The Department of Veterans Affairs on Monday became the first major federal agency to require health care workers to get COVID-19 vaccine. Also on Monday, the state of California said it will require millions of health care workers and state employees to show proof of a COVID-19 vaccination or get tested weekly. And New York City will require all of its municipal workers — including teachers and police officers — to get coronavirus vaccines by mid-September or face weekly testing.

Raising expectations, Biden said Tuesday that a vaccine requirement for all federal workers is "under consideration right now." He promised to lay out next steps for his administration's stalled vaccination campaign later this week.

"The more we learn about this virus and the delta variation, the more we have to be worried and concerned," the president said, adding that if another 100 million Americans were vaccinated "we'd be in a very different world."

The push for vaccines has been piecemeal in the corporate world. Delta and United airlines are requiring new employees to show proof of vaccination. Goldman Sachs is requiring its employees to disclose their vaccination status, but is not requiring staffers to be vaccinated.

Michelle S. Strowhiro, an employment adviser and lawyer at McDermott Will & Emery, said there are costs for employers requiring vaccines. There's the administrative burden of tracking compliance and managing exemption requests. Claims of discrimination could also arise.

But ultimately, the rise in the delta variant and breakthrough cases in fully vaccinated people has "served as extra motivation for employers to take a stronger stand on vaccination generally," she said. "Employers are going to be looking toward vaccine mandates more and more."

IS THERE ANY OTHER ALTERNATIVE TO MANDATES?

Instead of requiring vaccines, some companies are trying to entice workers by offering cash bonuses, paid time off and other rewards. Walmart, for example, is offering a \$75 bonus for employees who provide proof they were vaccinated. Amazon is giving workers an \$80 bonus if they show proof of vaccination and new hires get \$100 if they're vaccinated.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES IF THEY DON'T WANT TO TAKE THE VACCINE?

Most employers are likely to give workers some options if they don't want to take the vaccine. For example, New York City and California have imposed what's being called a "soft mandate" — workers who don't want to get vaccinated can get tested weekly instead.

If an employer does set a hard requirement, employees can ask for an exemption for medical or religious reasons. Then, under EEOC civil rights rules, the employer must provide "reasonable accommodation that does not pose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business." Some alternatives could include wearing a face mask at work, social distancing, working a modified shift, COVID-19 testing or the option to work remotely, or even offering a reassignment.

WILL WORKPLACE MANDATES TURN THE TIDE ON VACCINE HESITANCY?

It's too early to tell.

"Every employer that decides to mandate vaccination paves the way for other employers to feel safer doing so," said Masling.

A recent legal decision may help move the needle. In June, a federal district court in Texas rejected an attempt by medical workers to challenge the legality of Houston Methodist Hospital's vaccine mandate. The court found such a requirement in line with public policy.

Dorit Reiss, a law professor who specializes in vaccine policies at the University of California Hastings College of the Law, said "more businesses will have confidence they can mandate the vaccine."

She believes most companies will go the route of a soft mandate, with alternatives for employees who remain reluctant.

"I think it's a reasonable option," she said.

EXCLUSIVE: Biden mileage rule to exceed Obama climate goal

By TOM KRISHER and HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a major step against climate change, President Joe Biden is proposing a return to aggressive Obama-era vehicle mileage standards over five years, according to industry and government officials briefed on the plan. He's then aiming for even tougher anti-pollution rules after that to forcefully reduce greenhouse gas emissions and nudge 40% of U.S. drivers into electric vehicles by decade's end.

The proposed rules from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Transportation reflect Biden's pledge to attack climate change but also balance concerns of the auto industry, which is urging a slower transition to zero-emission electric vehicles.

The regulatory action would tighten tailpipe emissions standards rolled back under President Donald Trump. The proposed rules are expected to be released as early as next week, according to the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the rules haven't been finalized.

Environmental groups said Tuesday that the proposal did not go far enough.

"The world isn't the same as it was in 2012 when President Obama signed the clean car standards," said Katherine Garcia, acting director of Sierra Club's Clean Transportation for All campaign. "Millions of Americans have had to swelter in heat waves, evacuate their homes in the face of onrushing wildfires, or bail out flooded homes."

Biden has set a goal of cutting U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by at least half by 2030. The transportation sector is the single biggest U.S. contributor to climate change.

The proposed rules would begin with the 2023 car model year, applying California's 2019 framework agreement on emissions standards reached with Ford, Volkswagen, Honda, BMW and Volvo, according to three of the officials. The California deal increases the mileage standard and cuts greenhouse gas emissions by 3.7% per year.

Requirements ramp up in 2025 to Obama-era levels of a 5% annual increase in the mileage standard and a similar cut in emissions. They then go higher than that for model year 2026, one of the people said, perhaps in the range of 6% or 7%.

Neither EPA nor the Transportation Department would comment on the proposal.

The new standards aim to go partway in meeting the call from environmental groups, which had pushed for a more immediate return to at least the Obama-era standards.

"We're at the climate cliff, and the stakes are too high to aim low," the Center for Biological Diversity will write in a full-page ad in The New York Times on Wednesday urging tough action. Dan Becker, director of the center's Safe Climate Transportation Campaign, on Tuesday said the administration's proposal is inadequate because it embraces two years of the California deal, which offered a number of exemptions.

In the proposed rule, the EPA is likely to make a nonbinding statement that the requirements will ramp up even faster starting in 2027, forcing the industry to sell more zero-emissions electric vehicles, the industry and government officials said. For now, the agency is seeking to ask that 40% of all new car sales

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be electric vehicles by 2030, according to one of the officials.

The Biden administration defers for now in setting post-2026 mileage requirements, setting the stage for bigger fights ahead over the level of government effort needed to combat climate change against the future of the auto industry, which currently draws most of its profits from gas-powered SUV sales.

Delaware Sen. Tom Carper, who chairs the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, has been urging tough rules that would ban sales of new gasoline-powered passenger vehicles by 2035. He's argued that the industry is already moving in the direction of zero-emission electric vehicles.

Under Obama, automakers were required to raise fuel economy 5% per year from 2021 through 2026. But under Trump, that was reduced to 1.5% annually. In 2019, five automakers — Ford, BMW, Honda, Volkswagen and later Volvo — split with competitors and reached a deal with California to raise mileage by 3.7% per year.

Trump later repealed California's legal authority to set its own standards, which the Biden administration is moving to restore.

The Trump rollback of the Obama-era standards would require a projected 29 miles per gallon in "real world" stop and start driving by 2026. That's well below the requirements of the Obama administration rules that would have increased it to 37 mpg.

The California deal with Ford and the other automakers has vehicles getting about 33 mpg on average, according to environmental groups, after accounting for credits for electric vehicles.

It wasn't clear whether the Biden administration would restore credits for selling electric vehicles, but that is likely since EVs are a cornerstone of its plan to fight climate change. Biden's nearly \$2 trillion infrastructure proposal includes 500,000 new charging stations for electric cars and trucks, and he has proposed tax credits and rebates to help spur sales.

Under the Obama-era standards, automakers got double credit for fully electric vehicles toward meeting their fuel economy and pollution requirements. That "multiplier" was removed in the Trump rollback.

Several automakers including General Motors have expressed a commitment to transition to all electric vehicle sales, though environmental groups are skeptical the companies will stick to their promises if consumers continue to favor gas-powered cars, which now cost less. Potentially easing the transition for automakers is a nearly trillion-dollar bipartisan Senate infrastructure bill that would help fund the half-million new electric charging stations around the country. An accompanying \$3.5 trillion Senate spending bill backed by Democrats was expected to provide tax credits and other incentives for consumers to switch to electric vehicles.

Those measures are still pending in Congress.

The move comes at a time when Americans are buying record numbers of less-efficient pickup trucks and SUVs, which will make it harder for the industry to comply. So far this year, more than three-quarters of U.S. new vehicle sales were trucks, vans and SUVs, according to Edmunds.com. Fewer than a quarter were more efficient cars.

Only three automakers — Tesla, Honda and Subaru — complied with the standards in 2019, the latest year figures are available from the EPA. The rest had to use fuel efficiency credits from previous years or buy electric vehicle credits from other automakers to hit their goals.

Fully electric vehicles represent just 2% of new vehicle sales in the U.S., but analysts expect that to rise rapidly in coming years.

'This is how I'm going to die': Officers tell Jan. 6 stories

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — "This is how I'm going to die, defending this entrance," Capitol Police Sergeant Aquilino Gonell recalled thinking, testifying Tuesday at the emotional opening hearing of the congressional panel investigating the violent Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection.

Gonell told House investigators he could feel himself losing oxygen as he was crushed by rioters — supporters of then-President Donald Trump — as he tried to hold them back and protect the Capitol and

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lawmakers.

He and three other officers gave their accounts of the attack, sometimes wiping away tears, sometimes angrily rebuking Republicans who have resisted the probe and embraced Trump's downplaying of the day's violence.

Six months after the insurrection, with no action yet taken to bolster Capitol security or provide a full accounting of what went wrong, the new panel launched its investigation by starting with the law enforcement officers who protected them. Along with graphic video of the hand-to-hand fighting, the officers described being beaten as they held off the mob that broke through windows and doors and interrupted the certification of Democrat Joe Biden's presidential win.

Metropolitan Police Officer Michael Fanone, who rushed to the scene, told the committee — and millions watching news coverage — that he was "grabbed, beaten, tased, all while being called a traitor to my country." That assault on him, which stopped only when he said he had children, caused him to have a heart attack.

Daniel Hodges, also a D.C. police officer, said he remembered foaming at the mouth and screaming for help as rioters crushed him between two doors and bashed him in the head with his own weapon. He said there was "no doubt in my mind" that the rioters were there to kill members of Congress.

Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn said one group of rioters, perhaps 20 people, screamed the n-word at him as he was trying to keep them from breaching the House chamber — racial insults he said he had never experienced while in uniform. At the end of that day, he sat down in the Capitol Rotunda and sobbed.

"I became very emotional and began yelling, 'How the (expletive) can something like this happen?'" Dunn testified. "Is this America?"

"My blood is red," he said. "I'm an American citizen. I'm a police officer. I'm a peace officer."

Tensions on Capitol Hill have only worsened since the insurrection, with many Republicans playing down, or outright denying, the violence that occurred and denouncing the Democratic-led investigation as politically motivated. Democrats are reminding that officers sworn to protect the Capitol suffered serious injuries at the hands of the rioters.

All of the officers expressed feelings of betrayal at the Republicans who have dismissed the violence.

"I feel like I went to hell and back to protect them and the people in this room," Fanone testified, pounding his fist on the table in front of him. "Too many are now telling me that hell doesn't exist or that hell actually wasn't that bad. The indifference shown to my colleagues is disgraceful."

The witnesses detailed the horror of their assaults and the lasting trauma in the six months since, both mental and physical. At the hearing's end, the witnesses all pleaded with the lawmakers to dig deeper into how it happened.

The lawmakers on the committee, too, grew emotional as they played videos of the violence and repeatedly thanked the police for protecting them. Democratic Rep. Stephanie Murphy of Florida told them she was hiding near an entrance they were defending that day and said "the main reason rioters didn't harm any members of Congress was because they didn't encounter any members of Congress."

Illinois Rep. Adam Kinzinger, one of two Republicans on the panel, shed tears during his questioning. He said he hadn't expected to become so emotional.

"You guys all talk about the effects you have to deal with, and you talk about the impact of that day," Kinzinger told the officers. "But you guys won. You guys held."

Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, the panel's other Republican, expressed "deep gratitude for what you did to save us" and defended her decision to accept an appointment by Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

"The question for every one of us who serves in Congress, for every elected official across this great nation, indeed, for every American is this: Will we adhere to the rule of law, respect the rulings of our courts, and preserve the peaceful transition of power?"

"Or will we be so blinded by partisanship that we throw away the miracle of America?"

The House Republican leader, Kevin McCarthy, withdrew the participation of the Republicans he had appointed last week after Pelosi rejected two of them. She said their "antics" in support of Trump, and his

lies that he won the election, weren't appropriate for the serious investigation.

McCarthy has stayed close to Trump since the insurrection and has threatened to pull committee assignments from any Republican who participates on the Jan. 6 panel. He has called Cheney and Kinzinger "Pelosi Republicans."

On Tuesday, McCarthy again called the process a "sham." He told reporters that Pelosi should be investigated for her role in the security failures of the day but ignored questions about Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, who had identical authority over the Capitol Police and Capitol security officials.

After the hearing, Chairman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., said the probe could move forward urgently, with subpoenas "soon." The investigation is expected to examine not only Trump's role in the insurrection but the groups involved in coordinating it, white supremacists among them.

The probe will also look at security failures that allowed hundreds of people to breach the Capitol and send lawmakers running for their lives. Some of those who broke in were calling for the deaths of Pelosi and Vice President Mike Pence, who was hiding just feet away from the mob.

Capitol Police have repeatedly said they are hamstrung by a lack of funding. Senate leaders said Tuesday they had reached a deal on a \$2.1 billion emergency spending bill that could provide more resources.

Shortly after the insurrection, most Republicans denounced the violent mob — and many criticized Trump himself, who told his supporters to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat. But many have softened their tone in recent months and weeks.

And some have gone further, with Georgia Rep. Andrew Clyde saying video of the rioters looked like "a normal tourist visit," and Arizona Rep. Paul Gosar repeatedly saying that a woman who was shot and killed by police as she was trying to break into the House chamber was "executed."

Biles withdraws from gymnastics final to protect team, self

By WILL GRAVES AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Simone Biles arrived in Tokyo as the star of the U.S. Olympic movement and perhaps the Games themselves. She convinced herself she was prepared for the pressure. That she was ready to carry the burden of outsized expectations.

Only, as the women's gymnastics team final approached on Tuesday night, something felt off. And the athlete widely considered the Greatest of All Time in her sport knew it.

So rather than push through the doubts that crept into her head as she's done so many times in the past, Biles decided enough was enough. She was done. For now.

The American star withdrew from the competition following one rotation, opening the door for the team of Russian athletes to win gold for the first time in nearly three decades.

Jordan Chiles, Sunisa Lee and Grace McCallum guided the U.S. to silver while Biles cheered from the sideline in a white sweatsuit, at peace with a decision that revealed a shift not only in Biles but perhaps the sport she's redefined.

"We also have to focus on ourselves, because at the end of the day we're human, too," Biles said. "So, we have to protect our mind and our body, rather than just go out there and do what the world wants us to do."

The Americans — fueled by an uneven bars routine by Lee that not even Biles could match — drew within eight-tenths of a point through three rotations. ROC, however, never wavered on floor. And they erupted when 21-year-old Angelina Melnikova's score assured them of the top spot on the podium for the first time since the Unified Team won in Barcelona in 1992.

The victory came a day after ROC men's team edged Japan for the top spot in the men's final. Great Britain edged Italy for bronze.

"The impossible is possible now," Melnikova said.

Perhaps in more ways than one.

In the five years since Biles and the U.S. put on a dazzling display on their way to gold in Rio de Janeiro, gymnastics has undergone a reckoning. The tectonic plates in a sport where obedience, discipline and

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silence were long considered as important as talent and artistry are moving.

Biles has become an outspoken advocate for athlete's rights and the importance of proper mental health. There was a time, there were many times actually, where she felt she wasn't right and just powered through because that's what people expected of her.

Not anymore. And the stand she took could resonate far beyond the color of any medal she may win in Tokyo.

Biles is the latest in a series of high-profile athletes, including tennis star Naomi Osaka, who have used their platforms to discuss their mental health struggles. A subject that was once taboo has become far more accepted and embraced.

U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee CEO Sarah Hirshland applauded Biles for prioritizing her "mental wellness over all else" and offered the organization's full support. USA Gymnastics women's program vice-president called Biles' act "incredibly selfless."

Biles posted on social media Monday that she felt the weight of the world on her shoulders after an uncharacteristically sloppy showing during qualifying left the Americans looking up at the ROC on the scoreboard.

The tension affected her practice. It affected her confidence. And when she stepped onto the vault runway, it finally found its way to her performance, too.

She was scheduled to do an "Amanar" vault that requires a roundoff back handspring onto the table followed by 2 1/2 twists. Biles instead did just 1 1/2 twists with a big leap forward after landing. She sat down and talked to U.S. team doctor Marcia Faustin, then headed to the back while the rest of the Americans moved on to uneven bars without her.

When Biles returned several minutes later, she hugged her teammates and took off her bar grips. And just like that, her night was over.

"To see her kind of go out like that is very sad because this Olympic Games, I feel like, is kind of hers," Lee said.

Biles is scheduled to defend her Olympic title in the all-around final on Thursday. She also qualified for all four event finals later in the Games. She said she will regroup on Wednesday before deciding whether to continue.

Biles' abrupt absence forced the Americans to scramble a bit. The finals are a three-up/three-count format, meaning each country enters three of their four athletes on an apparatus, with all three scores counting.

Chiles stepped in to take Biles' place on uneven bars and balance beam. The 20-year-old who made the team with her steady consistency pulled off a solid bars routine and drilled her balance beam set two days after falling twice on the event.

Thanks in part to a little help from ROC — which counted a pair of falls on beam — the U.S. drew within striking distance heading to floor, the final rotation.

Without Biles and her otherworldly tumbling, the U.S. needed to be near perfect to close the gap. It didn't happen. Chiles stumbled to the mat at the end of her second pass, and any chance the U.S. had of chasing down ROC went right along with it.

Not that Chiles or the rest of the Americans particularly cared. The gold might be gone, but something more significant may have happened instead. It's a tradeoff they can live with.

"This medal is definitely for (Biles)," said Chiles. "If it wasn't if it wasn't for her, we wouldn't be here where we are right now. We wouldn't be a silver medalist because of who she is as a person."

Chiles then turned to her good friend. Biles helped convince her to move to Houston to train alongside her two years ago, a decision that turned Chiles into an Olympian. In an empty arena in the middle of Japan with the world watching, Chiles did for Biles what Biles has done for so many for so long. She had her back.

"Kudos to you girl," Chiles said. "This is all for you."

Human Rights Watch: Israeli war crimes apparent in Gaza war

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By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Human Rights Watch on Tuesday accused the Israeli military of carrying out attacks that “apparently amount to war crimes” during an 11-day war in May against the Hamas militant group.

The international human rights organization issued its conclusions after investigating three Israeli airstrikes that it said killed 62 Palestinian civilians. It said “there were no evident military targets in the vicinity” of the attacks.

The report also accused Palestinian militants of apparent war crimes by launching over 4,000 unguided rockets and mortars at Israeli population centers. Such attacks, it said, violate “the prohibition against deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against civilians.”

The report, however, focused on Israeli actions during the fighting, and the group said it would issue a separate report on the actions of Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups in August.

“Israeli forces carried out attacks in Gaza in May that devastated entire families without any apparent military target nearby,” said Gerry Simpson, associate crisis and conflict director at HRW.

He said Israel’s “consistent unwillingness to seriously investigate alleged war crimes,” coupled with Palestinian rocket fire at Israeli civilian areas, underscored the importance of an ongoing investigation into both sides by the International Criminal Court, or ICC.

In a statement, the Israeli army said its attacks were aimed at military targets and that it took numerous precautions to avoid harming civilians. It said Hamas is responsible for civilian casualties because it launches attacks from residential areas.

“While the terror organizations in the Gaza Strip deliberately embed their military assets in densely populated civilian areas, the IDF takes every feasible measure to minimize, as much as possible, the harm to civilians and civilian property,” it said.

The war erupted on May 10 after Hamas fired a barrage of rockets toward Jerusalem in support of Palestinian protests against Israel’s heavy-handed policing of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, built on a contested site sacred to Jews and Muslims, and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers in a nearby neighborhood. Israel has said it struck over 1,000 targets during the fighting.

In all, some 254 people were killed in Gaza, including at least 67 children and 39 women, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Hamas has acknowledged the deaths of 80 militants, while Israel has claimed the number is much higher. Twelve civilians, including two children, were killed in Israel, along with one soldier.

The HRW report looked into Israeli airstrikes. The most serious, on May 16, involved a series of strikes on Al-Wahda Street, a central thoroughfare in downtown Gaza City. The airstrikes destroyed three apartment buildings and killed a total of 44 civilians, HRW said, including 18 children and 14 women. Twenty-two of the dead were members of a single family, the al-Kawlaks.

The Israeli military said the attacks were aimed at tunnels used by Hamas militants in the area. The airstrikes unexpectedly caused nearby buildings to collapse, leading to “unintended casualties,” it said.

In its investigation, HRW concluded that Israel had used U.S.-made GBU-31 precision-guided bombs, and that it did not warn residents to evacuate the area ahead of time. It also found no evidence of military targets in the area.

“An attack that is not directed at a specific military objective is unlawful,” it wrote.

The investigation also looked at a May 10 explosion that killed eight people, including six children, near the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun. It said the two adults were civilians.

In its statement, the Israeli military said the casualties were caused by errant rocket fire launched by militant groups, not Israeli airstrikes. It released aerial photos of what it said was the launch site, some 7.5 kilometers (4.5 miles) away, and the landing area. It also said it did not carry out any strikes in the area at the time of the explosion.

But based on an analysis of munition remnants and witness accounts, HRW said evidence indicated the weapon had been “a type of guided missile” used by Israel.

“Human Rights Watch found no evidence of a military target at or near the site of the strike,” it said.

The New York-based group said that Israel refused to allow its investigators to enter Gaza. Instead, it

said it relied on a field researcher based in Gaza, along with satellite images, expert reviews of photos of munitions fragments and interviews conducted by video and telephone.

The third attack HRW investigated occurred on May 15, in which an Israeli airstrike destroyed a three-story building in Gaza's Shati refugee camp. The strike killed 10 people, including two women and eight children.

Israel said the target was a group of senior Hamas officials hiding in an apartment, and that the civilian deaths were unintended and "under review."

But Human Rights Watch said it found no evidence of a military target at or near the site and called for an investigation into whether there was a legitimate military objective and "all feasible precautions" were taken to avoid civilian casualties. HRW investigators concluded the building was hit by a U.S.-made guided missile.

The May conflict was the fourth war between Israel and Hamas since the Islamic militant group, which opposes Israel's existence, seized control of Gaza in 2007. Human Rights Watch, other rights groups and U.N. officials have accused both sides of committing war crimes in all of the conflicts.

Early this year, HRW accused Israel of being guilty of international crimes of apartheid because of discriminatory policies toward Palestinians, both inside Israel as well as in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel rejected the accusations.

In Tuesday's report, HRW called on the United States to condition security assistance to Israel on it taking "concrete and verifiable actions" to comply with international human rights law and to investigate past abuses.

It also called on the ICC to include the recent Gaza war in its ongoing investigation into possible war crimes by Israel and Palestinian militants. Israel does not recognize the court's jurisdiction and says it is capable of investigating any possible wrongdoing by its army and that the ICC probe is unfair and politically motivated.

In Gaza, Hamas spokesman Bassem Naim called for Israeli leaders to be brought before "international tribunals." He also claimed that the Hamas rocket fire was a "legitimate right to resist the occupation."

\$15 wage becoming a norm as employers struggle to fill jobs

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The signs and banners are dotted along suburban commercial strips and hanging in shop windows and restaurants, evidence of a new desperation among America's service-industry employers: "Now Hiring, \$15 an hour."

It is hardly the official federal minimum wage — at \$7.25, that level hasn't been raised since 2009 — but for many lower-skilled workers, \$15 an hour has increasingly become a reality.

Businesses, particularly in the restaurant, retail and travel industries, have been offering a \$15 wage to try to fill enough jobs to meet surging demand from consumers, millions of whom are now spending freely after a year in lockdown. And many of the unemployed, buoyed by stimulus checks and expanded jobless aid, feel able to hold out for higher pay.

The change since the pandemic has been swift. For years, and notably in the 2020 presidential race, labor advocates had trumpeted \$15 an hour as a wage that would finally allow low-paid workers to afford basic necessities and narrow inequality. It struck many as a long-term goal.

Now, many staffing companies say \$15 an hour is the level that many businesses must pay to fill their jobs. "That number is not a coincidence," said Aaron Sojourner, an economist at the University of Minnesota. "It's the number that those activists and workers put on the table 10 years ago, and built a movement towards."

Even so, millions of Americans are still earning less than \$15 an hour. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office calculates that even by 2025, roughly 17 million workers will remain below that level.

Yet at ZipRecruiter, the number of job postings on the site that are advertising \$15 an hour has more than doubled since 2019, said Julia Pollak, labor economist for the company. The proportion of jobs that

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offer 401(k) retirement accounts, flexible scheduling, signing bonuses and other benefits has risen, too. The beneficiaries are people like Maggie Himmel, who started working at the Flowers for Dreams flower shop in Milwaukee last fall for \$12.50 an hour. In January, the company raised its minimum wage to \$15.

The higher pay allowed Himmel, 22, to move into her own apartment after sharing living space with her sister. She is earning more than she did before the pandemic, when she worked part time at a flower shop in Kalamazoo, Michigan, for about \$11 an hour.

"Moving out on my own was a huge goal for me," she said. "I was so happy to get that news."

Steven Dyme, the owner of Flowers for Dreams, said the \$15 minimum made it much easier for him to staff up once the economy reopened this spring and demand for flowers, particularly for weddings, soared.

Dyme, whose company has four locations — one in Chicago, one in Milwaukee and two in Detroit — says he's fully staffed, with 80 full- and part-time workers.

At \$15 an hour, he said, "I saw a markedly different picture in how fast we could recruit and in the experience level of workers."

Mathieu Stevenson, the CEO of Snagajob, a site for hourly workers, says a handful of restaurant chains are going so far as to offer retirement plans — he calls it the "white collarization" of blue collar jobs — as benefits once reserved for professionals are being offered to some service workers.

"The \$15 an hour debate," Stevenson said, "is essentially being resolved through market forces."

Yet other trends have also helped drive the movement toward a \$15 wage. The Fight for \$15 labor movement has organized strikes by fast food workers and has lobbied states and cities for higher minimum wages. Thirty states and the District of Columbia have adopted wage floors that exceed the \$7.25 federal minimum. Eleven states have passed laws that will lift their minimum wages to \$15 over time. Among them is Florida, where voters last year approved a measure raising the minimum to \$15 by 2026.

Other states on track to a \$15 an hour wage floor include California, Illinois, New York and Virginia. Ben Zipperer, an economist at the liberal Economic Policy Institute, estimates that four in 10 workers live in states where the minimum is set to reach \$15 in the coming years.

The National Employment Law Project, an advocacy group for low-income workers, calculates that 26 million people, or about 16% of workers, have received higher pay because of all the state and local minimum wage increases since 2012, though often to less than \$15 an hour.

The increases have disproportionately benefited Black and Hispanic workers, the report found. Historically, higher minimum wages have been found to reduce racial wage gaps.

The \$7.25-an-hour federal minimum wage has now gone the longest stretch without an increase since it was first introduced in July 2009. Labor Department data showed that last year, only about 250,000 people — fewer than 0.5% of all workers — earned that wage.

Many employers are having to pay more to keep up with larger companies, including Amazon, Costco and Target, that have announced their own pay raises to \$15 or more. More recently, Under Armour, Southwest Airlines and Best Buy have adopted \$15 wage floors.

Economic research has found that when a large company raises pay, nearby employers feel compelled to follow suit. A study led by Ellora Derenoncourt, a Princeton University economist, found that companies in local markets that compete with Amazon, Target or Walmart generally responded by matching their wage hikes dollar-for-dollar. Derenoncourt's research also found that when companies seek to match the pay offered by their large competitors, they often end up employing fewer people, though the impact is relatively small.

Some economists argue that a federal minimum wage increase to \$15 an hour — more than double the current minimum — will cost jobs. The CBO, in its most recent assessment, said that it would mean 1.4 million fewer jobs by 2025. Yet the CBO also found that as many as 27 million people would receive pay increases.

One factor that's helping fuel higher wages is a change in outlook among many lower-paid workers, millions of whom were laid off when COVID-19 first erupted in the spring of 2020. Some who worked at grocery stores, restaurants or hotels now don't want to return to those jobs — at least at the same pay.

And three rounds of stimulus checks, plus a \$300-a-week federal unemployment benefit, have made it easier for them to turn down jobs that don't pay enough. Pollak, at ZipRecruiter, notes that with the extra unemployment benefit, jobless aid on average pays about \$625 a week — equivalent to about \$15 an hour.

That's likely a big reason why a March survey by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York found that workers without a college degree have raised the minimum pay they expect from a job by a whopping 26% from a year earlier.

Economists are uncertain whether or how long hefty pay gains will last. But many predict that when the \$300 federal benefit for the unemployed expires in September, schools reopen, and more mothers return to work with their children in school full time, the influx of workers will make it easier to hire and reduce the pressure on employers to raise wages.

Nebraska is among the states that have stopped paying the \$300 benefit and has reinstated requirements that jobless people document that they are searching for work. Greg Sulentic, who owns an Express Employment staffing agency franchise in Lincoln, Nebraska, said those steps have attracted more job-seekers but have hardly been a panacea. In the offices he oversees, there are still 1,300 jobs to be filled.

Sulentic said pay rates have jumped since the pandemic, with workers that made \$10 to \$11 an hour last year now getting \$15 or \$16.

"We've seen wage growth like we've never before seen in this industry, and I've been doing this for 25 years," he said.

Some employers, he said, have been reluctant to increase pay, but "it's been very difficult for those companies to hire on and retain employees."

'About time': LGBTQ Olympic athletes unleash a rainbow wave

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — When Olympic diver Tom Daley announced in 2013 that he was dating a man and "couldn't be happier," his coming out was an act of courage that, with its rarity, also exposed how the top echelons of sport weren't seen as a safe space by the vast majority of LGBTQ athletes.

Back then, the number of gay Olympians who felt able and willing to speak openly about their private lives could be counted on a few hands. There'd been just two dozen openly gay Olympians among the more than 10,000 who competed at the 2012 London Games, a reflection of how unrepresentative and anachronistic top-tier sports were just a decade ago and, to a large extent, still are.

Still, at the Tokyo Games, the picture is changing.

A wave of rainbow-colored pride, openness and acceptance is sweeping through Olympic pools, skate-parks, halls and fields, with a record number of openly gay competitors in Tokyo. Whereas LGBTQ invisibility used to make Olympic sports seem out of step with the times, Tokyo is shaping up as a watershed for the community and for the Games — now, finally, starting to better reflect human diversity.

"It's about time that everyone was able to be who they are and celebrated for it," said U.S. skateboarder Alexis Sablone, one of at least five openly LGBTQ athletes in that sport making its Olympic debut in Tokyo.

"It's really cool," Sablone said. "What I hope that means is that even outside of sports, kids are raised not just under the assumption that they are heterosexual."

The gay website Outsports.com has been tallying the number of publicly out gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and nonbinary athletes in Tokyo. After several updates, its count is now up to 168, including some who petitioned to get on the list. That's three times the number that Outsports tallied at the last Olympics in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. At the London Games, it counted just 23.

"The massive increase in the number of out athletes reflects the growing acceptance of LGBTQ people in sports and society," Outsports says.

Daley is also broadcasting that message from Tokyo, his fourth Olympics overall and second since he came out.

After winning gold for Britain with Matty Lee in 10-meter synchronized diving, the 27-year-old reflected on his journey from young misfit who felt "alone and different" to Olympic champion who says he now

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feels less pressure to perform because he knows that his husband and their son love him regardless.

"I hope that any young LGBT person out there can see that no matter how alone you feel right now you are not alone," Daley said. "You can achieve anything, and there is a whole lot of your chosen family out here."

"I feel incredibly proud to say that I am a gay man and also an Olympic champion," he added. "Because, you know, when I was younger I thought I was never going to be anything or achieve anything because of who I was."

Still, there's progress yet to be made.

Among the more than 11,000 athletes competing in Tokyo, there will be others who still feel held back, unable to come out and be themselves. Outsports' list has few men, reflecting their lack of representation that extends beyond Olympic sports. Finnish Olympian Ari-Pekka Liukkonen is one of the rare openly gay men in his sport, swimming.

"Swimming, it's still much harder to come out (for) some reason," he said. "If you need to hide what you are, it's very hard."

Only this June did an active player in the NFL — Las Vegas Raiders defensive end Carl Nassib — come out as gay. And only last week did a first player signed to an NHL contract likewise make that milestone announcement. Luke Prokop, a 19-year-old Canadian with the Nashville Predators, now has 189,000 likes for his "I am proud to publicly tell everyone that I am gay" post on Twitter.

The feeling that "there's still a lot of fight to be done" and that she needed to stand up and be counted in Tokyo is why Elissa Alarie, competing in rugby, contacted Outsports to get herself named on its list. With their permission, she also added three of her Canadian teammates.

"It's important to be on that list because we are in 2021 and there are still, like, firsts happening. We see them in the men's professional sports, NFL, and a bunch of other sports," Alarie said. "Yes, we have come a long way. But the fact that we still have firsts happening means that we need to still work on this."

Tokyo's out Olympians are also almost exclusively from Europe, North and South America, and Australia/New Zealand. The only Asians on the Outsports list are Indian sprinter Dutee Chand and skateboarder Margielyn Didal from the Philippines.

That loud silence resonates with Alarie. Growing up in a small town in Quebec, she had no gay role models and "just thought something was wrong with me."

"To this day, who we are is still illegal in many countries," she said. "So until it's safe for people in those countries to come out, I think we need to keep those voices loud and clear."

AP-NORC poll: Many Republicans uneasy about party's future

By JILL COLVIN and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most Republicans want former President Donald Trump to have at least some influence over their party's direction even as many who side with the GOP say they are uneasy about its future.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research captures widespread unease among Republicans over everything from the direction of the country to the state of American democracy and, in particular, President Joe Biden. Just 15% approve of the way Biden is handling his job, and 66% continue to say the Democrat was illegitimately elected, a lie perpetuated by Trump that underscores his persistent grip on GOP voters.

Republicans have plenty of concern about their own party, too. Fewer than half of Republicans, 41%, say they are optimistic about the GOP's future. Just 13% say they are "very" optimistic. And one third, 33%, say they are pessimistic.

Just a few seats shy of majorities in the House and the Senate, Republican leaders hope they are within striking distance of retaking control of Congress in next year's midterm elections. But the findings about the party's lukewarm optimism could be an early warning sign of lagging enthusiasm among Republican voters, particularly without Trump on the ballot after he helped lift congressional candidates in 2020.

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That's despite the fact history has shown the president's party almost always loses seats in the midterm elections and despite the general enthusiasm about the party's long list of potential 2024 candidates.

Some Republicans in especially competitive states said they are increasingly disillusioned with the political process.

"It's frustrating," said Dennis Herzog, 36, a contractor who lives in Reedsville, Wisconsin, of the constant bickering between the parties. While he describes himself as a staunch Republican, he said he's disenchanted by "the whole system in general."

"It's nonstop," he said. "I don't care who is in office. Just do what's right for the people and stop picking certain sides."

Republican leaders have spent much of this year trying to rile up voters, pointing to concerns about inflation and stoking culture wars over issues including immigration, election conspiracy theories and critical race theory, an academic framework that examines history through the lens of racism.

That's doing little to appeal to people like 28-year-old Nicholas Blethrow, a Republican who lives in Orange County, California, and described the state of his party as "pretty much a disaster."

Blethrow, who did not vote for Trump in 2016 or 2020, said he was frustrated by his party's ongoing efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election, which he calls "ridiculous," along with some of its members' opposition to COVID-19 vaccinations and continued embrace of the former president.

"Clearly there's a lot of people that enjoy him. But I don't think it's good," he said.

Other Republicans disagree. The poll shows that Trump remains a commanding figure in the party. While most former presidents tend to cede the spotlight after leaving office, Trump has continued to assert his power, holding rallies, making endorsements and teasing a 2024 comeback run.

While 60% of the public overall has an unfavorable view of Trump, 76% of Republicans view him favorably. And most would like to see him maintain at least some degree of influence over the GOP going forward.

Nearly half of Republicans, 47%, say that Trump should exert "a lot" of influence over the future of the party, and another 34% say he should have "a little" influence. Just 18% say Trump should have none at all.

"I think he did a lot of good for the party," said George Hunter, 61, who lives in Washington state outside Seattle and runs an online store. Hunter was among the minority of Republicans who said he felt optimistic about the party's future given what he sees as Democrats' failures on crime, foreign policy and the economy and his expectation that Republicans will sweep contests next November.

"After the next election, I think things will be better. I think the Democrats will lose their majorities. That way Biden will get less done than he wants," he said.

For Herzog, who describes the current political situation as "quite the mess," pessimism is driven, in part, by concerns about the economy, especially inflation, and the rising cost of his supplies. He said he knows of businesses that are talking about closing their doors because they can't find workers and he doesn't understand why the government keeps sending out additional relief payments.

But he'd also like to see his party embark on a new direction.

"I think there needs to be a switch in the Republican Party," he said. "There's got to be a happy medium between the old schoolers," he said, and a new generation. "You have to find some middle ground."

As for the 2020 election, the poll shows that 62% of Republicans say it's "extremely" or "very" important that investigations into the election continue, even though no substantiated evidence has emerged to support Trump's claims of mass election fraud, which have been dismissed by numerous judges, including some he appointed, state election officials and his own attorney general.

Just 38%, in contrast, say it's "extremely" or "very" important to continue investigations into the events of Jan. 6, when a group of Trump's supporters violently stormed the Capitol building, trying to halt the transition of power.

Like Democrats, few Republicans, only 10%, say democracy is working "extremely" or "very" well in the country today. But Republicans are more negative than Democrats; 63% of Republicans say democracy is not working well.

Just 17% say they think the nation is headed in the right direction.

As for other Republican leaders, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell faces mixed reviews from his

party, viewed favorably by only about 4 in 10 Republicans; roughly as many dislike him. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy is more popular than not with Republicans, though about half say they don't know enough about him to form an opinion.

Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., who voted for Trump's second impeachment and has since emerged as one of his top Republican critics, has the inauspicious distinction of being rated favorably by more Democrats than Republicans, 47% versus 21%.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., who has drawn headlines with her incendiary comments and conspiracy peddling, remains largely an unknown, even within her own party. While 29% of Republicans have a favorable opinion, 48% say they don't know enough about her to say.

Ex-US Sen. Mike Enzi of Wyoming dies after bicycle accident

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

GILLETTE, Wyo. (AP) — Retired Sen. Mike Enzi, a Wyoming Republican known as a consensus-builder in an increasingly polarized Washington, has died after he broke his neck in a bicycle accident. He was 77.

Enzi died peacefully Monday surrounded by family and friends, former spokesman Max D'Onofrio said. He had been hospitalized with a broken neck and ribs for three days following a bicycle accident near Gillette. He was stabilized before being flown to a hospital in Colorado but remained unconscious, D'Onofrio said.

Enzi fell near his home about 8:30 p.m. Friday, family friend John Daly said. Around the same time, Gillette police received a report of a man lying unresponsive on a road near a bike.

Police have seen no indication that anybody else was nearby or involved in the accident, Lt. Brent Wasson told the Gillette News Record.

A former shoe salesman first elected to the Senate in 1996, Enzi emphasized compromise over grandstanding and confrontation to get bills passed.

His "80-20 rule" called on colleagues to focus on the 80% of an issue where legislators tended to agree and discard the 20% where they didn't.

"Nothing gets done when we're just telling each other how wrong we are," Enzi said in his farewell address to the Senate in 2020. "Just ask yourself: Has anyone ever really changed your opinion by getting in your face and yelling at you or saying to you how wrong you are? Usually that doesn't change hearts or minds."

Wyoming voters reelected Enzi by wide margins three times before he announced in 2019 that he would not seek a fifth term. Enzi was succeeded in the Senate in 2021 by Republican Cynthia Lummis, a former congresswoman and state treasurer.

"He was a giant and will be really missed by all of us," Republican Rep. Liz Cheney, Wyoming's congresswoman, said Tuesday on ABC's "Good Morning America."

Enzi's political career began at 30 when he was elected mayor of Gillette, a city at the heart of Wyoming's then-booming coal mining industry. He was elected to the Wyoming House in 1986 and state Senate in 1991.

The retirement of Republican Sen. Alan Simpson opened the way for Enzi's election to the Senate. Enzi beat John Barrasso in a nine-way Republican primary and then Democratic former Wyoming Secretary of State Kathy Karpan in the general election; Barrasso would be appointed to the Senate in 2007 after the death of Sen. Craig Thomas.

Enzi wielded quiet influence as the Senate slipped into partisan gridlock over the second half of his career there.

His more recent accomplishments included advancing legislation to enable sales taxes to be collected on internet sales crossing state lines. He played a major role in reforming the No Child Left Behind law that set performance standards for elementary, middle and high school students.

He fought for Wyoming as the top coal-mining state to receive payments through the federal Abandoned Mine Land program, which taxes coal operations to help reclaim abandoned mining properties.

Enzi sought to encourage business innovation by hosting an annual inventors conference. He also backed

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bills involving the U.S. Mint but his proposal to do away with the penny was unsuccessful.

"Former Senator Mike Enzi was a loving family man + dedicated public servant," Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley, of Iowa, said on Twitter. "Through decades of friendship & service, I was honored to learn from Mike. He cared about the future of our country in every way & kept a sharp eye on Congress' fiscal responsibilities."

Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon in a statement ordered flags lowered to half-staff until sundown on the day of Enzi's interment, which hadn't been announced yet.

"Mike was a friend and a dedicated public servant who cared deeply about Wyoming and its people," Gordon said. "He was a strong advocate for the state's interests and was always committed to finding consensus where possible."

Enzi was born Feb. 1, 1944, in Bremerton, Washington. His family moved to Thermopolis soon after.

Enzi graduated from Sheridan High School in 1962 and from George Washington University with a degree in accounting in 1966. He received a master's in retail marketing from the University of Denver in 1968.

He married Diana Buckley in 1969 and the couple moved to Gillette where they started a shoe store, NZ Shoes. They later opened two more NZ Shoes stores, in Sheridan and Miles City, Montana.

From 1985 to 1997, Enzi worked for Dunbar Well Service in Gillette, where he was an accounting manager, computer programmer and safety trainer.

Enzi served two four-year terms as mayor of Gillette. He served on the U.S. Department of Interior Coal Advisory Committee from 1976 to 1979.

His family expressed appreciation for the prayers and support they've received but asked for privacy, D'Onofrio said. The family is planning "a celebration of a life well-lived," he said in a statement, and will share details later.

Enzi is survived by his wife; two daughters, Amy and Emily; a son, Brad; and several grandchildren.

Olympics Latest: Germany wins another equestrian gold

TOKYO (AP) — The Latest on the Tokyo Olympics, which are taking place under heavy restrictions after a year's delay because of the coronavirus pandemic:

MEDAL ALERT

The German dressage team won its ninth gold medal in the past 10 Olympics by beating the United States and Britain for the second straight time.

Isabell Werth earned her seventh gold and equestrian-record 11th medal overall. She had the second-best individual score in the competition. She trailed only teammate Jessica von Bredow-Werndl.

Dorothee Schneider of Germany also rode well three months after a horse she was riding collapsed and died. That left her with a broken collarbone.

The Germans have 13 Olympic titles in team dressage since the event was introduced at the 1928 Amsterdam Games. They have won medals in 16 straight Olympic team competitions.

The United States edged Britain for silver five years after finishing third behind the Brits.

MEDAL ALERT

Russian athlete Vladislav Larin won the gold medal in men's 80-kilogram taekwondo with a 15-9 victory over Dejan Georgievski of North Macedonia in the final.

The top-seeded Larin maintained a lead throughout the second half to earn his first Olympic medal in the final bout of the four-day taekwondo tournament in Tokyo.

The 22-year-old Georgievski fell short of gold but still earned North Macedonia's second-ever Olympic medal and its first silver. Magomed Ibragimov's bronze medal in wrestling from the 2000 Sydney Games was the only previous Olympic medal for the country that began competition in 1996.

Rafael Alba Castillo of Cuba and In Kyo-don of South Korea won bronze.

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MEDAL ALERT

Milica Mandić of Serbia won her second gold medal in women's 67-kilogram heavyweight taekwondo, beating Lee Dabin of South Korea 10-7 with a last-minute rally.

Mandić also won Olympic gold in London but was eliminated in the quarterfinals in Rio de Janeiro.

The fighters were tied 6-6 in a tactical bout with 35 seconds left but Mandić took the lead with a body punch and went up 9-6 on a body kick with 12 seconds left. She hung on to become Serbia's second woman to win two taekwondo medals. Tijana Bogdanovic won silver in Rio and bronze earlier in Tokyo.

Althea Laurin of France and Bianca Walkden of Britain claimed bronze.

MEDAL ALERT

Maude Charron of Canada won the weightlifting gold medal in the women's 64-kilogram category.

Charron lifted a total 236 kilograms in the snatch and clean and jerk to beat Giorgia Bordignon of Italy by 4 kilograms. Chen Wen-Huei earned Taiwan's second weightlifting medal of the day with 230kg for bronze.

The competition was left wide open without world record holder Deng Wei of China and the usually strong North Korean team.

Charron's winning total was the same as Taiwanese lifter Kuo Hsing-Chun one weight class lower.

Japan has won its second straight Olympic softball gold medal, beating the United States 2-0 in an emotional repeat of their 2008 victory in Beijing that again left the Americans in tears.

Yukiko Ueno took a one-hitter into the sixth inning five days after her 39th birthday. Japan snuffed out an American rally attempt with an acrobatic double play in the sixth inning that will long be replayed.

Before 34,046 mostly empty seats Yokohama Stadium, second-ranked Japan pushed across the first earned runs off the top-ranked Americans in the six-game tournament. The U.S. offense sputtered as it did throughout the Olympics, totalling just nine runs.

Earlier in the day, Canada beat Mexico 3-2 for softball bronze.

The Russian Olympic Committee has won the gold medal in women's gymnastics after U.S. star Simone Biles exited with a medical issue.

The Russian gymnasts posted a team score of 169.528, ahead of the U.S. in second place at 166.096. The gold is the first for the Russians since the Unified Team triumphed in Barcelona in 1992 and came a day after the men's team edged Japan for the top spot in the men's final.

Great Britain won bronze.

The Russian Olympic Committee has a narrow lead over the United States heading into the last rotation of the women's gymnastics team final.

The U.S. is without star Simone Biles, who withdrew with what USA Gymnastics called a "medical issue" following vault earlier in the competition.

The Russian athletes are up by eight-tenths of a point as both teams head to floor exercise.

USA Gymnastics did not specify the nature of Biles' medical issue, saying in a statement she "will be assessed daily to determine medical clearance for future competitions."

Estonia has its first Olympic gold medal in 13 years after Katrina Lehis sealed a tense 36-32 victory over South Korea in the final of women's team épée fencing.

Individual bronze medalist Lehis was up against No. 2-ranked Choi Injeong in the last bout with scores tied and won 10-6 to take the gold.

The last time Estonia won an Olympic event was in 2008 when Gerd Kanter took the men's discus throw. Italy beat China 23-21 to win the bronze.

Reigning Olympic gymnastics champion Simone Biles is out of the team finals after apparently suffering

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an injury during the vault.

The 24-year-old U.S. star, considered to be the greatest gymnast of all time, huddled with a trainer after landing her vault. She then exited the competition floor with the team doctor.

Biles returned several minutes later with her right leg wrapped. She took off her bar grips, and hugged teammates Grace McCallum, Sunisa Lee and Jordan Chiles before putting on a jacket and sweatpants.

The Americans will be forced to finish the rest of the competition without her, severely hampering their bid to claim a third straight Olympic title.

Biles arrived in Tokyo as the unquestioned star of the Games but struggled, at least by her high standards, during qualifying.

Simone Biles and the U.S. women's gymnastics team are off to a rocky start in the team finals.

Biles bailed on her planned Amanar vault, opting for an easier one in mid-air and then struggling with the landing. The rare miscue by the Olympic champion allowed the gymnasts from Russia to open up a one-point lead after the first rotation.

Vault has long been a strong suit for the U.S. and Biles is the defending Olympic and world champion in the event. Yet the Russian athletes have made up considerable ground since the 2019 world championships. They have an opportunity to win their first Olympic gold since the Unified Team topped the podium in Barcelona in 1992.

The women's gymnastics team final is underway, with the U.S. looking to secure a third straight Olympic title.

The team representing the Russian Olympic Committee stunned the Americans during qualifying, becoming the first team in 11 years to beat the U.S. in any portion of a major international competition.

The U.S. and the ROC will be paired together as they make their way around the Ariake Gymnastics Centre. The rivals will start on vault, followed by uneven bars, balance beam and floor exercise.

Surfer Bianca Buitendag of South Africa has announced that she's retiring from the sport, moments after accepting her silver medal at the Olympics.

The 27-year-old surprised many this week by winning match after match. She pulled off some of the biggest upsets of the week, particularly when she dethroned Australian Stephanie Gilmore, the most decorated surfer competing at these Games,

"I felt like this was the perfect opportunity for closure," Buitendag said. "I'm ready for the next season of my life."

Buitendag has been on and off the World Surf League since 2013, but has struggled to make her mark on the grueling professional tour.

She said she felt like the ultimate underdog and with zero expectations, she surfed strong and consistently all week. Several times, Buitendag won her match by capitalizing on wave selection priority, which is running out the clock before a competitor can find a good final wave.

MEDAL ALERT

Takanori Nagase has won Japan's fifth gold medal in judo at the Tokyo Olympics, beating Mongolia's Saeid Mollaei in the final of the men's 81-kilogram division.

Nagase improved on his bronze medal in Rio de Janeiro with a strong performance all day at the Budokan. The 2015 world champion had a history of falling short on judo's biggest stages, but he completed a waza ari 1:43 into golden score to claim the Olympic title.

Mollaei won his first Olympic medal two years after leaving his native Iran upon revealing that his national team coaches had ordered him to lose in the semifinals of the 2019 world championships in Tokyo to avoid facing Israel's Sagi Muki in the final. Mollaei subsequently moved to Germany and then acquired Mongolian citizenship. Mongolia has three judo medals in Tokyo.

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Belgium's Matthias Casse and Austria's Shamil Borchasvili claimed bronze medals. Austria hadn't won a judo medal since 2008.

MEDAL ALERT

France's Clarisse Agbegnenou has won her first Olympic gold medal in judo, beating Slovenia's Tina Trstenjak in the 63-kilogram final at the Budokan.

Agbegnenou won silver in Rio de Janeiro, but the five-time world champion cemented her dominance atop the sport with a waza ari to finish Trstenjak. Agbegnenou, a dual citizen of Togo, also has won four European championships.

Italy's Maria Centracchio and Canada's Catherine Beauchemin-Pinard claimed bronze. Beauchemin-Picard came through with the second-ever Olympic medal for a Canadian woman judo player one day after Jessica Klimkait won the first.

Miku Tashiro lost in the round of 16, preventing Japan from winning a medal for the first time in seven weight classes of competition in Tokyo.

MEDAL ALERT

Kuo Hsing-Chun has won Taiwan's first gold medal of the Tokyo Olympics with a dominant performance in the women's 59-kilogram weightlifting category.

In both the snatch and the clean and jerk, even Kuo's first lift was higher than any other athlete managed in three attempts.

Kuo lifted a total 236 kilograms, beating second-place Polina Guryeva of Turkmenistan by 19kg, but failed on a final attempt to break her own clean and jerk world record.

Kuo's chances were helped by the lack of an entry from China in the category and a doping ban for 2016 Olympic gold medalist Sukanya Srisurat of Thailand.

Japan took its first weightlifting medal of the Tokyo Olympics as Mikiko Andoh lifted a total 214kg.

MEDAL ALERT

American Carissa Moore has made history by winning surfing gold. The sport is making its Olympic debut at the Tokyo Games.

Moore is a child prodigy from Hawaii who grew up to be the youngest world champion surfer. She persevered after struggling to gain momentum in the early heats at the Tokyo Games.

Moore beat Bianca Buitendag of South Africa, who won silver. The 17th-ranked Buitendag pulled off upset after upset to deliver some of the contest's biggest moments in her path to the Olympic podium.

Japan's Amuro Tsuzuki took home bronze after handily winning her heat against American Caroline Marks.

MEDAL ALERT

Brazilian surfer Italo Ferreira has won gold in the last day of competition at the sport's historic debut.

Ferreira won in the finals against Kanoa Igarashi of Japan, despite the Brazilian crashing off an air to land on a broken board.

The incident required a quick board switch near the beginning of the heat, which didn't seem to rattle the man who had so little growing up that he learned to surf on a cooler.

By the time the clock ran out, Ferreira turned to the ocean, collapsed his hands together in a prayer and wept, nearly knocked over by his emotions and the waves crashing onto shore.

Igarashi, the hometown hero who surfed a career best earlier in the day, won silver.

Australian Owen Wright took home bronze after a close match against top-rated Gabriel Medina.

MEDAL ALERT

Germany's Ricarda Funk has won a surprise gold medal in women's kayak slalom. Heavy favorite Jessica Fox of Australia slipped to third when she touched two gates on the final run.

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Funk took the lead from Spain's defending gold medalist Maialen Chourraut of Spain with a time of 105.50 seconds on a clean run. Then she had to wait for Fox, who came to the Olympics as the favorite to win gold in both the kayak and canoe slalom events.

Fox, the top-ranked paddler in the world, struggled from the start when she touched the fourth gate of 25 for an immediate 2-second penalty. She was still ripping through the course and her splits were ahead of Funk until she again touched gate No. 24 to earn another penalty.

Fox finished 1.23 seconds off the lead and held her face in her hands at the finish line, knowing she had lost the gold medal. Chourraut took silver.

MEDAL ALERT

Yang Haoran and Yang Qian have given China a sweep in the first two mixed team shooting events, beating Americans Lucas Kozeniesky and Mary Tucker in 10-meter air rifle.

Yang and Yang won the gold medal match 17-13, giving China its eighth medal in nine shooting events at the Tokyo Olympics.

Russians Sergey Kamenskiy and Yulia Karimova won the bronze medal match 17-9 over South Korea's Kwon Eunji Nam Taeyun.

The gold is Yang Qian's second of the Tokyo Olympics after she won the women's individual 10-meter rifle. Yang Haoran also took the bronze in the men's individual event.

Pang Wei and Jiang Ranxin won gold in 10-meter air pistol mixed team earlier at Asaka Shooting Range.

Canada has won its first Olympic medal in softball, taking the bronze with a 3-2 victory over Mexico.

Canada won behind 2 1/3 innings of scoreless, one-hit relief from Danielle Lawrie, the sister of former major leaguer Brett Lawrie.

Lawrie, a veteran of Canada's 2008 Olympic team and the 2009 and 2010 USA college player of the year at the University of Washington, relieved with runners at the corners in the fifth and retired Victoria Vidales on a groundout. Lawrie struck out four, fanning Brittany Cervantes to end it.

Kelsey Harshman broke a 2-2 tie in the fifth with a sacrifice fly for the Canadians, who went 4-2, finishing behind the U.S. (5-0) and Japan (4-1).

In a game played in intermittent light rain, Emma Entzminger put Canada ahead with a two-run single in the second off Danielle O'Toole (0-2). Mexico tied the score on RBI singles by Cervantes in the third off starter Sara Groenewegen and by Suzy Brookshire in the fifth against Jenna Caira.

MEDAL ALERT

Jolanda Neff has won the women's mountain bike race at the Tokyo Olympics. She led a Swiss sweep of the medal stand while capping a long comeback from a career-threatening crash in the North Carolina mountains.

Sina Frei and Linda Indergand tried to chase down their countrywoman but never had a chance. They were left battling among themselves, at one point riding side-by-side, before Frei pulled ahead to take silver and left Indergand with bronze.

Neff took the lead when world champion Pauline Ferrand-Prevot crashed on a slippery section of rocks on the first loop in the mountains southwest of Tokyo. She soon built her advantage to more than a minute over a field that included France's Loana Lecomte, the winner of every World Cup race this season, and reigning Olympic champ Jenny Rissveds.

Japan's wildly successful judo team has finally missed out on a medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

Women's 63-kilogram judoka Miku Tashiro was eliminated by Poland's Agata Ozdoba-Blach in the second round Tuesday at the Budokan. Tashiro is the No. 3-ranked player in her weight class, but she lost by ippon midway through her second bout.

The 33-year-old Ozdoba-Blach only earned her first major international gold medal two months ago at an IJF Grand Slam event in Russia.

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Japan is the most successful nation in Olympic history in its homegrown martial art, and Japan has won more Olympic medals in judo than in any other sport.

Japan has won four golds, one silver and one bronze from the six weight classes contested over the first three days at its home Olympics.

Takanori Nagase is still in contention for Japan's seventh judo medal after reaching the semifinals of the 81-kilogram division.

Two-time Olympic boxer Daisuke Narimatsu of Japan has dropped out of the lightweight division at the Tokyo Games due to injury after winning his opening bout.

The Olympics Boxing Task Force said Tuesday that Narimatsu wouldn't be able to weigh in for his next bout, which is scheduled for Saturday. Narimatsu was slated to face Kazakhstan's Zakir Safiullin in the round of 16.

Narimatsu beat Fiston Mbuya by unanimous decision in his opening bout at the Kokugikan on Sunday, but Narimatsu told Japanese media he injured his head in the bout.

The 31-year-old Narimatsu is one of Japan's top amateur boxers. He competed at the Rio Olympics, winning his opening bout before losing to Carlos Balderas of the U.S.

Japan has won only five boxing medals in its Olympic history. Ryōta Murata won its only gold in London before moving on to a solid pro career as a middleweight champion.

MEDAL ALERT

China has won another gold medal in Olympic diving.

Chen Yuxi and Zhang Jiaqi won the women's 10-meter synchronized platform, giving the diving powerhouse its second gold of the Tokyo Games.

Chen and Zhang totaled 363.78 points over five rounds on Tuesday. They received two perfect 10s for execution on their second dive.

Jessica Parratto and Delaney Schnell of the U.S. took silver in just their second competition as a pair. They totaled 310.80.

Gabriela Agundez Garcia and Alejandra Orozco Loza of Mexico earned bronze at 299.70.

China won its first gold in Tokyo in women's 3-meter synchro springboard and earned silver in men's 10-meter platform synchro.

Sebastian Coe says he supports a review of marijuana's status as a doping substance after American sprinter Sha'Carri Richardson was banned ahead of the Tokyo Olympics.

The president of World Athletics says a review is now sensible and "it should be" done.

Coe was at the U.S. Olympic trials last month when the 21-year-old Richardson won the 100 meters in 10.86 seconds. Her result was disqualified and she accepted a 30-day ban after she tested positive for a chemical found in marijuana.

Richardson said she had smoked to help cope with her mother's recent death.

Coe says "I am sorry for her that we have lost an outstanding talent" from the Tokyo Games but adds the existing rules were interpreted correctly.

He says he has asked the independent Athletics Integrity Unit to work with the World Anti-Doping Agency on reassessing marijuana's place on the prohibited list.

Coe says Richardson's absence is "a loss to the competition" but he predicts "she will bounce back."

Two superstar surfers have been dethroned at the Olympics, where their sport is making its debut.

Hometown hero Kanoa Igarashi of Japan landed an incredible 360 aerial reverse on the beach he grew up on. The nearly-perfect maneuver sent him flying for seven seconds above the water and scored him a 9.33, enough to defeat Brazilian Gabriel Medina, the world's top-ranked surfer.

Bianca Buitendag of South Africa chose to wait out the clock again to pull off yet another major upset, this time against American phenom Caroline Marks, who simply could not catch a good enough wave.

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The finals now come down to Igarashi and the dominating Brazilian Italo Ferreira, and Buitendag against American Carissa Moore, the reigning world champion.

The U.S. women have fallen to Japan 20-18 in their final pool-play game in 3-on-3 basketball.

Despite the loss, the Americans will head into the knockout round as the top seed after compiling a 6-1 record over four days. The semifinals and medal games for the sport's Olympic debut are set for Wednesday.

With the score of Tuesday's game tied at 17, Japan's Mio Shinozaki made a 2-pointer to give her team the lead for good.

Serbia's men were 6-0 coming into Tuesday and have locked up a spot in the semifinals.

The U.S. men did not qualify for the tournament.

UPSET ALERT

Japan's tennis superstar is out of the Tokyo Olympics.

Naomi Osaka lost to former French Open finalist Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic 6-1, 6-4 in the third round of the Tokyo tournament.

The second-ranked Osaka, who was born in Japan and grew up in the United States, struggled with her usually reliable groundstrokes.

The 42nd-ranked Vondrousova produced a series of drop-shot winners and other crafty shots that drew Osaka out of her comfort zone.

Osaka won her opening two matches in straight sets following a two-month mental-health break. But conditions were different Tuesday with the roof closed because it was raining outside.

Tokyo reports record virus cases days after Olympics begin

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's capital, Tokyo, reported its highest number of new coronavirus infections on Tuesday, days after the Olympics began. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga urged people to avoid non-essential outings, but said there was no need to consider a suspension of the Games.

Tokyo reported 2,848 new COVID-19 cases, exceeding its earlier record of 2,520 daily cases on Jan. 7. That brings its total to more than 200,000 since the pandemic began last year.

Tokyo is under its fourth coronavirus state of emergency, which is to continue through the Olympics until just before the Paralympics start in late August.

Experts have warned that the more contagious delta variant could cause a surge during the Olympics, which started Friday.

Still, Japan has kept its cases and deaths lower than many other countries. Nationwide, it reported 5,020 daily cases Monday for a total of 870,445 and 15,129 deaths. Its 7-day rolling average of cases is about 3.57 per 100,000 people, compared to 2.76 in India, 17.3 in the United States and 53.1 in Britain, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

Asked if he is considering an option of suspending the Games, Suga replied, "There is no worry about that," adding that people have been moving about less since the Games started because of traffic controls and the government's request that they work remotely.

Suga again urged that people avoid non-essential outings. "Please watch the Olympic Games on TV at home,(asterisk) he said.

Suga's government has been criticized for what some say is prioritizing the Olympics over the nation's health. His public support ratings have fallen to around 30% in recent media surveys, and there is little festivity surrounding the Games.

Health Minister Norihisa Tamura, asked about the jump in cases, said it was not a surprise. "Taking into consideration the global acceleration of infections because of the delta strain, which is taking over earlier variants, it was quite possible," he said.

Tamura blamed bars and restaurants that are still serving alcohol despite a ban under the state of

emergency as a possible cause, instead of the Olympics.

The continuing upsurge despite two weeks of emergency measures, which focus on shortened hours for eateries and an alcohol ban, mean they are ineffective, said Kazuhiro Tateda, a Toho University infectious diseases expert who is on a government panel. With the Olympics and summer holidays prompting the movement of people, infections could escalate in coming weeks, Tateda told NHK public television.

Experts noted that cases among younger, unvaccinated people are rising sharply as Japan's inoculation drive loses steam due to supply uncertainty. Many serious cases involve those in their 50s. They now dominate Tokyo's nearly 3,000 hospitalized patients and are gradually filling up available beds. Authorities reportedly plan to ask medical institutions to increase their capacity to about 6,000 beds for COVID-19 patients.

Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike said elderly people are now more than 60% fully vaccinated and account for just 2% of new cases. "It is crucial to promptly vaccinate younger people," she said.

Japan's vaccination drive began late and slowly, but picked up dramatically in May for several weeks as the supply of imported vaccines stabilized and the government pushed to inoculate more people before the Olympics.

The government says 25.5% of Japanese have been fully vaccinated, still way short of the level believed to have any meaningful impact on reducing the risk for the general population.

EXPLAINER: US, NATO pledge billions to back Afghan forces

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The U.S. and NATO have promised to pay \$4 billion a year until 2024 to finance Afghanistan's military and security forces, which are struggling to contain an advancing Taliban. Already, the U.S. has spent nearly \$89 billion over the past 20 years to build, equip and train Afghan forces.

Yet America's own government watchdog says oversight of the money has been poor, hundreds of millions of dollars have been misspent and corruption is rife in the security apparatus.

Monitoring where the future funding goes will become virtually impossible after Aug. 31, when the last coalition troops leave. Here is a look at some of the issues:

U.S. SPENDING SINCE 2001

Nearly \$83 billion has been spent to build, equip, train and sustain Afghanistan's National Defense and Security Forces, which include the military, national police and the elite special forces.

That figure covers a wide range of items. For example, the U.S. spent nearly \$10 billion for vehicles and aircraft. It spent \$3.75 billion on fuel for the Afghan military between 2010-2020.

Separately, another \$5.8 billion went into economic and government development and infrastructure since 2001, with the expressed goal of winning public support and blunting the Taliban insurgency. The figures are from reports by John Sopko, the Special Inspector General on Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR, tasked with monitoring how U.S. taxpayer dollars are spent.

The U.S. allocation for 2022 is \$3.3 billion. It will include \$1 billion to support the Afghan Air Force and Special Mission Wing, \$1 billion for fuel, ammunition and spare parts, and \$700 million to pay salaries for Afghan soldiers.

It is difficult to see how the Afghan government will be able to pay to keep its military running after 2024.

More than 80% of the Afghan government budget is paid by the U.S. and its allies, according to SIGAR. Economic projections suggesting Kabul could carry more of the financial burden have been either wrong or vastly exaggerated, Sopko reported. Afghanistan's growth rate was to be 3.4% in 2021 but instead shrunk by 2%. In the last 4 of 7 years, Afghanistan has missed its economic growth targets.

WASTE AND CORRUPTION

Much of the billions injected into Afghanistan the past two decades has gone largely unmonitored, leading to runaway corruption by both Afghans and foreign contractors.

Sopko has issued dozens of reports identifying waste, mismanagement and outright corruption.

In one instance, the U.S. spent \$547 million to buy and refurbish 20 G222 military transport aircraft for

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the Afghan Air Force. Sixteen of them were later sold as junk to Afghan scrap dealers for \$40,257 because the American refurbishers delivered flawed and unsafe aircraft.

A retired U.S. air force general, contrary to retirement rules, had links to the firm that refurbished the planes, according to a report by Sopko earlier this year. The report said the Justice Department informed the watchdog agency in May 2020 that it would not prosecute any criminal or civil cases connected to the G222 program.

Of \$7.8 billion provided since 2008 to Afghan civilian authorities for buildings and vehicles, only \$1.2 billion went to buildings and vehicles that were used as intended. Only \$343.2 million worth of what was acquired was maintained in good condition, Sopko said earlier this year.

The Afghan army and police force officially have around 320,000 members, but SIGAR says the number is closer to 280,000. The discrepancy is attributed to the presence of so-called ghost soldiers, where corrupt officials pad the personnel numbers to collect money, reported SIGAR.

Sopko said in one of his reports that lack of oversight allowed bribery, fraud, extortion and nepotism, "as well as the empowerment of abusive warlords and their militias."

"Corruption significantly undermined the U.S. mission in Afghanistan by damaging the legitimacy of the Afghan government, strengthening popular support for the insurgency, and channeling material resources to insurgent groups."

WHAT KIND OF MILITARY IS LEFT?

For all the time, training and money funneled by the U.S. into the Afghan military as a whole, the small, elite commando forces appear to be the only units capable of standing as a bulwark against the Taliban.

As Taliban swept through districts in recent weeks, regular army and police have in many instances either negotiated their surrender to Taliban or simply walked off their bases. Often, their superiors left them without resupplies of ammunition, troops and sometimes even food as they faced the advancing insurgents.

Throughout the war, U.S. air support has been a crucial edge for Afghan forces on the battlefield. So building Afghan capabilities to carry out the role was vital, and the U.S. spent more than \$8.5 billion to support and develop the Afghan Air Force and the Special Mission Wing.

However, the Afghan air force risks being largely grounded once the coalition leaves. The Afghans' fleet of fighter jets is serviced by U.S. contractors, who are leaving along with the troops. Afghan officials say the coalition never gave them the training or infrastructure to carry out maintenance themselves.

The same holds for much of the arsenal of armored vehicles and heavy weapons the Americans have left for the Afghan military.

Several Afghan officials who spoke to The Associated Press were deeply critical of the U.S. and NATO failure to invest in factories to make spare parts, manufacturing plants to produce ammunition and training to produce skilled Afghan mechanics.

"Every bullet had to come from America," said Gen. Dawlat Waziri a former Afghan Defense Ministry official. "Why weren't we making them here?"

Bill Roggio, senior fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, said the coalition failed the Afghan government and military by making them overdependent on Western support.

More broadly, "the U.S. trained the wrong kind of army — a Western-styled army — when it needed to train an army capable of fighting the Taliban," said Roggio, who is also senior editor of The Long War Journal.

"The commandos, Special Forces and Air Force have performed well, but the regular Afghan Army, which make up a bulk of the fighting force, is not up to task," he said.

MONITORING BILLIONS OF DOLLARS

It's been several years since U.S. officials have been able to physically monitor U.S.-funded projects, because deteriorating security countrywide drastically restricted U.S. Embassy personnel's movements.

By 2016, U.S. advisers couldn't even meet Afghan security officials at their Kabul offices without heavily armored convoys, and later they could only go by helicopter, said Sopko's July report.

Staff at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul has been reduced to mostly essential personnel since mid-April. An

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embassy official told the AP that 1,400 Americans remain at the embassy, mostly restricted to the compound. Roggio said the U.S. and NATO had a hard enough time monitoring aid when they were in Afghanistan; it will be virtually impossible once they leave.

"And with the Taliban rampaging across the country," he added, "the incentive for Afghan officials to plunder the cash only increases."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, July 28, the 209th day of 2021. There are 156 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 28, 1976, an earthquake devastated northern China, killing at least 242,000 people, according to an official estimate.

On this date:

In 1540, King Henry VIII's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, was executed, the same day Henry married his fifth wife, Catherine Howard.

In 1821, Peru declared its independence from Spain.

In 1914, World War I began as Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

In 1932, federal troops forcibly dispersed the so-called "Bonus Army" of World War I veterans who had gathered in Washington to demand payments they weren't scheduled to receive until 1945.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced the end of coffee rationing, which had limited people to one pound of coffee every five weeks since it began in Nov. 1942.

In 1945, the U.S. Senate ratified the United Nations Charter by a vote of 89-2. A U.S. Army bomber crashed into the 79th floor of New York's Empire State Building, killing 14 people.

In 1984, the Los Angeles Summer Olympics opened.

In 1989, Israeli commandos abducted a pro-Iranian Shiite (SHEE'-eyet) Muslim cleric, Sheik Abdul-Karim Obeid (AHB'-dool kah-REEM' oh-BAYD'), from his home in south Lebanon. (He was released in January 2004 as part of a prisoner swap.)

In 1995, a jury in Union, South Carolina, rejected the death penalty for Susan Smith, sentencing her to life in prison for drowning her two young sons (Smith will be eligible for parole in 2024).

In 2015, it was announced that Jonathan Pollard, the former U.S. Naval intelligence analyst who had spent nearly three decades in prison for spying for Israel, had been granted parole. Tom Brady's four-game suspension for his role in using underinflated footballs during the AFC championship game was upheld by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

In 2017, the Senate voted 51-49 to reject Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's last-ditch effort to dismantle President Barack Obama's health care overhaul with a trimmed-down bill. John McCain, who was about to begin treatments for a brain tumor, joined two other GOP senators in voting against the repeal effort.

In 2019, a gunman opened fire at a popular garlic festival in Gilroy, California, killing three people, including a six-year-old boy and a 13-year-old girl, and wounding 17 others before taking his own life.

Ten years ago: The body of the military chief of the Libyan rebels' National Transitional Council, Abdel-Fattah Younis, was found dumped outside Benghazi along with those of two top aides. The president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Rev. Howard Creecy Jr., died in a fall in his Atlanta home seven months after taking office; he was 57.

Five years ago: Hillary Clinton accepted the Democratic presidential nomination at the party's convention in Philadelphia, where she cast herself as a unifier for divided times as well as an experienced leader steeled for a volatile world while aggressively challenging Republican Donald Trump's ability to lead.

One year ago: President Donald Trump issued a stout defense of the disproved use of a malaria drug, hydroxychloroquine, to treat COVID-19, hours after social media companies took down videos shared by Trump, his son and others promoting its use; Trump also retweeted several attacks on the credibility of

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Dr. Anthony Fauci, a leading member of the White House coronavirus task force. One of the nation's largest teachers' unions, the American Federation of Teachers, authorized members to strike if their schools planned to reopen without proper coronavirus safety measures. Mourners braved coronavirus fears and brutal heat to pay respects to the late Rep. John Lewis, the first Black lawmaker to lie in state in the Capitol Rotunda. Major League Baseball suspended the Miami Marlins' schedule for the rest of the week, after a coronavirus outbreak infected half the team. "Watchmen," an HBO series cloaked in superhero mythology but grounded in real-world racism, received a leading 26 Emmy nominations.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Darryl Hickman is 90. Musical conductor Riccardo Muti is 80. Former Senator and NBA Hall of Famer Bill Bradley is 78. "Garfield" creator Jim Davis is 76. Singer Jonathan Edwards is 75. Actor Linda Kelsey is 75. TV producer Dick Ebersol is 74. Actor Sally Struthers is 74. Rock musician Simon Kirke (Bad Company) is 72. Rock musician Steve Morse (Deep Purple) is 67. Former CBS anchorman Scott Pelley is 64. Alt-country-rock musician Marc Perlman is 60. Actor Michael Hayden is 58. Actor Lori Loughlin is 57. Jazz musician-producer Delfeayo Marsalis is 56. Former hockey player Garth Snow is 52. Actor Elizabeth Berkley is 49. Singer Afroman is 47. Rock singer Jacoby Shaddix (Papa Roach) is 45. Actor John David Washington is 37. Actor Jon Michael Hill is 36. Actor Dustin Milligan is 36. Actor Nolan Gerard Funk is 35. Rapper Soulja Boy is 31. Pop/rock singer Cher Lloyd (TV: "The X Factor") is 28.