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Activities Calendar Updated

If you go to our home page at 397news.com, the Groton School Activities Calendar has been updated to now include the Forensics schedule. The updated file will now end in the letter B (second version).

The only thing we are awaiting on is one ad (or 3 more), girls and boys basketball region dates and Robotics schedule. As soon as they are completed, we will begin printing the schedules!



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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.

New "Destructive" Severe Thunderstorm Warning category to trigger Wireless Emergency Alerts on mobile phones

Severe thunderstorms can be life-threatening, but not all severe storms are the same. Hazardous conditions range from tornadoes, large hail storms, and widespread straight-line winds called derechos, to cloud-to-ground lightning and flash flooding. Starting August 2, the National Weather Service will better convey the severity and potential impacts from thunderstorm winds and hail by adding a "damage threat" tag to Severe Thunderstorm Warnings, similar to our Tornado and Flash Flood Warnings.

"Destructive" and "Considerable" Damage Threat Categories

We developed three categories of damage threat for Severe Thunderstorm Warnings. The categories, in order of highest to lowest damage threat, are destructive, considerable, and base. These tags and additional messaging are designed to promote immediate action, based on the threats. A Wireless Emergency Alert for a Severe Thunderstorm Warning

The criteria for a destructive damage threat is at least 2.75 inch diameter (baseball-sized) hail and/or 80 mph thunderstorm winds. Warnings with this tag will automatically activate a Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) on smartphones within the warned area.

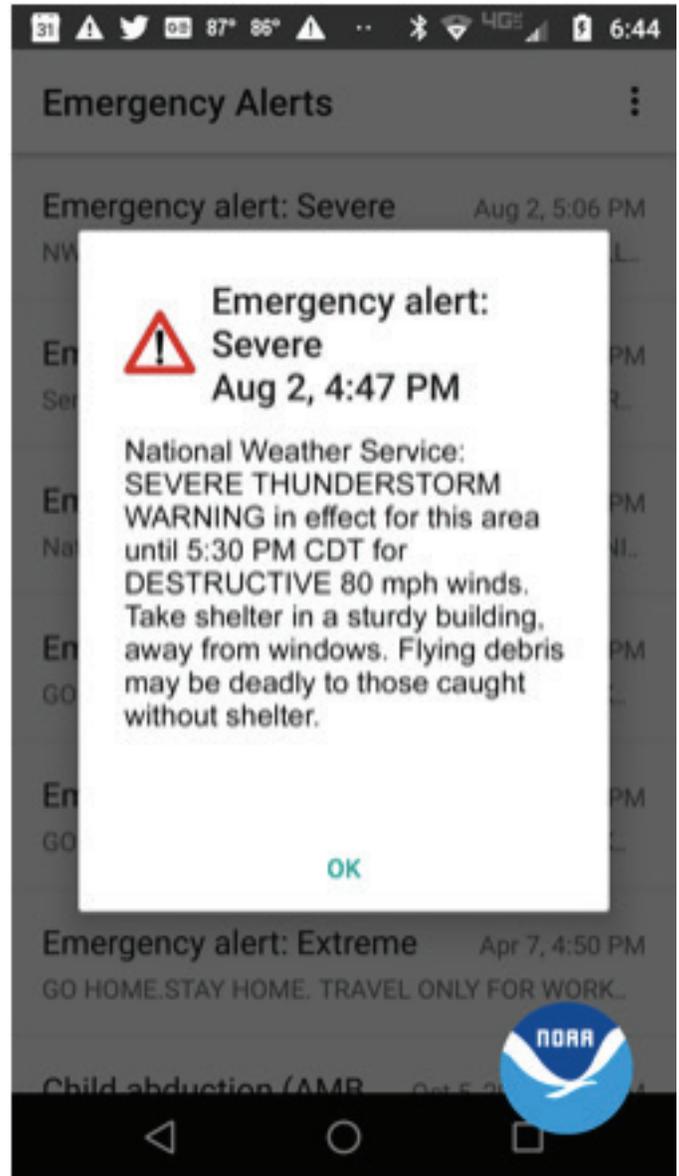
The criteria for a considerable damage threat is at least 1.75 inch diameter (golf ball-sized) hail and/or 70 mph thunderstorm winds. This will not activate a WEA.

The criteria for a baseline or "base" severe thunderstorm warning remains unchanged, 1.00 inch (quarter-sized) hail and/or 58 mph thunderstorm winds. This will not activate a WEA. When no damage threat tag is present, damage is expected to be at the base level.

On average, only 10 percent of all severe thunderstorms reach the destructive category each year, nationwide. Most of these storms are damaging wind events such as derechos and some of the larger, more intense thunderstorms, called "Supercell" storms that can typically produce very large hail in their path. The new destructive thunderstorm category conveys to the public urgent action is needed, a life-threatening event is occurring and may cause substantial damage to property. Storms categorized as destructive will trigger a WEA to your cell phone.

All National Weather Service Severe Thunderstorm Warnings will continue to be issued and distributed via weather.gov, NOAA Weather Radio, Emergency Alert System and through dissemination systems to our emergency managers and partners. The addition of damage threat tags are part of the broader Hazard Simplification Project to improve communication of watches and warnings to the public.

Thirteen of the 22 costliest weather disasters in 2020 were severe thunderstorms. The new "destructive" tag would have activated a Wireless Emergency Alert for many of these impactful events, including the costliest thunderstorm in U.S. history, the \$11 billion derecho that affected Iowa in August 2020.





Inform. Enlighten. Illuminate.

Juvenile justice reforms working, but not as well for minority offenders in South Dakota

Danielle Ferguson
South Dakota News Watch

A series of juvenile justice reforms enacted in South Dakota over the past decade have kept more low-level youth offenders out of detention centers and away from criminal activity that could land them in the adult system, according to state officials.

But state data show that youth of color — who make up a wide majority of the population in the juvenile justice system — have not benefited as much from the reforms and are still being detained in locked facilities at much higher rates than white youths.

In the early 2010s, South Dakota placed children in a detention center after an arrest at a higher per-capita rate than any other state in the country, and almost half of the youth offenders who spent time in a detention facility ended up in the criminal justice system.

At the time, there were very few options outside of locked detention centers for youth involved in the justice system in South Dakota, which contributed to high youth incarceration populations, according to

a report by the state Juvenile Justice Oversight Council.

In many situations, putting children in a detention center was the only way for them to get help, and low-offending minors often mixed with youths accused of more severe offenses.

That prompted lawmakers, judges, attorneys and advocates to consider whether committing children to a correctional facility was the best way to respond to juvenile crime, laying the groundwork for a set of reforms passed in 2015 aimed at decreasing the number of youth who are put in detention for low-level offenses, increasing youth court attendance and lowering recidivism.

The reforms didn't necessarily result in fewer youth committing felony crimes, but they did raise the threshold for when youths are placed in detention, and increased the number allowed to enroll in community-based diversion programs.

A major goal of the reforms has been

Youth sentenced to South Dakota Department of Corrections



Source: SD Kids Count

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to keep children who are accused of misdemeanors or low-level felonies out of locked detention centers where they lose contact with family and community, and where instead they come in close contact with youths who committed more significant crimes, some of which are serious enough to be handled in adult court.

"We're attempting to minimize the effects of labeling youth as offenders," said Annie Brokenleg, coordinator of the state Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, which encompasses the state reform efforts. "The farther a kid is processed through the system, the higher their chance of offending in the future."

Since JDAI was enacted, more children are being put into diversion programs within local communities rather than being sent to a locked detention facility potentially hours away from their home. The reforms aim to keep low-level offenders out of locked facilities while awaiting trial and also reduce the number of youths who are convicted and sent to secure facilities to serve their sentence.

Since 2011, admissions into youth detention centers have decreased by 81% in Minnehaha County and by 64% in Pennington County, the state's two population centers.

Reforms less effective for youth of color or with mental issues

But major challenges remain, especially among Native Americans, other minority populations and emotionally troubled youths who enter the justice system at disproportionately high rates in South Dakota. Juvenile justice officials say the state needs more treatment options for youth with mental health needs and more cultural-specific programs for youth of color.

Data from the Juvenile Justice Oversight Council and Kids Count identified an increasing over-representation of Native American youths and Black youths in the juvenile system over the past decade.

The number of youth of color admitted to a detention center has decreased overall, but the proportion of youth of color who are detained in locked facilities is still disproportionate compared to white youth.

In 2014, counties with the juvenile justice reforms in place reported that 75% of the youth admitted to a detention facility while their case worked through court were youth of color, according to Kids Count. In 2020, the proportion of youth of color admitted to facilities from those same counties had increased to 81%.

In 2011, Native American youth were 23% of the state youth population, but Native youth made up 45% of those put into temporary custody and 48% of the new commitments to the Department of Corrections, according to a 2015 state report.

Now, about 60% of the youth in the locked juvenile services center in Rapid City are Native American, said Joe Gutierrez, Pennington County Juvenile Services Center Commander.

Overall, about 81% of the youth admitted to that detention center in 2020 were youth of color, according to data from Kids Count. Those numbers also include kids working through the federal system. In Minnehaha County, 68% of youth admitted into a detention facility last year were youth of color, compared to 61% in 2011.

Discovering and implementing programs to reach more youth offenders of color is the next step but also one of the most challenging hurdles to overcome in the ongoing efforts to reform juvenile justice in South Dakota, said Brokenleg.



Joe Gutierrez, commander of the Western South Dakota Juvenile Services Center in Rapid City, hands a diploma to a youth at the juvenile center in 2019. Some residents of the center are able to take courses toward obtaining a high-school degree. Photo: Courtesy of

the Western South Dakota Juvenile Services Center



This mural in the Minnehaha County Juvenile Detention Center was created by artists from the Washington Pavilion, who come into the facility to do projects with the youth offenders to help them learn and grow. Photo:

Danielle Ferguson, South Dakota News Watch

same child over and over again and can't put them in detention because of a suggestion based on the risk assessment tool.

New efforts are being made to expand culturally sensitive programs to reach more youths, and to increase access to services for children in rural areas, she said.

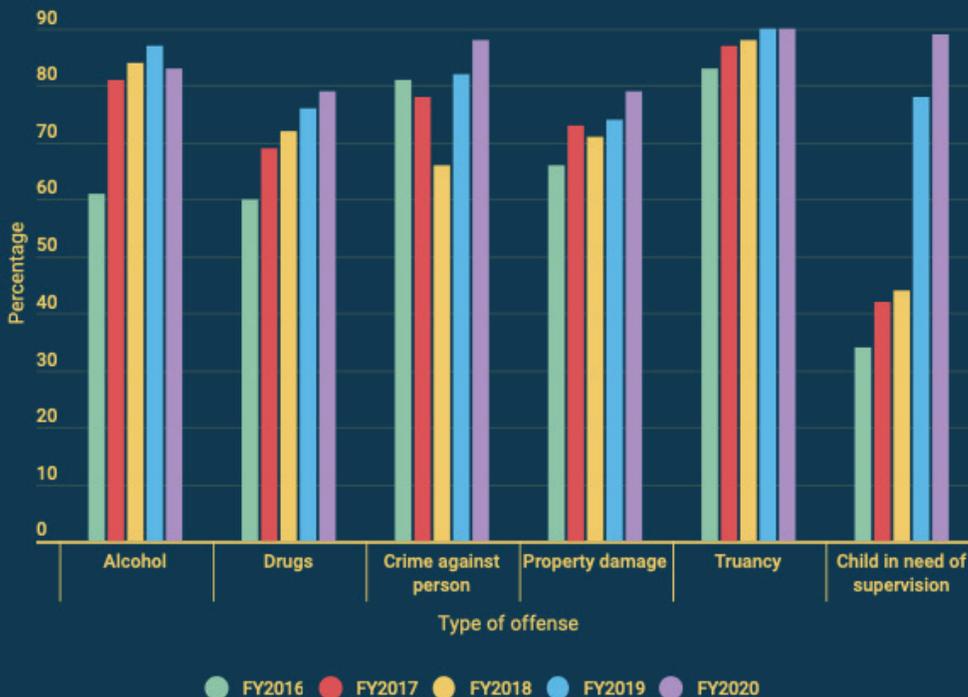
"We're working on culturally responsive programming to improve outcomes for youth of color entering the system," Brokenleg said.

Juvenile justice reforms that are keeping more South Dakota youthful offenders out of locked facilities have had some unexpected negative outcomes. Putting fewer youths in detention has put more responsibility on families, law enforcement and schools to manage youths who are repeatedly disruptive but whose behaviors do not warrant incarceration.

School expulsions were on the decline until last year, when they more than doubled from the year prior. The 33 students expelled from schools statewide from July 2019 to July 2020 was the highest number of expulsions since 2016, when 22 students were expelled.

Law enforcement agencies sometimes see the

Successful youth diversions by offense



Source: Juvenile Justice Oversight Council preliminary 2020 report

Families frustrated by ongoing teen misbehavior sometimes want their child to be taken to a detention center in hopes of changing their behavior, but may be unable to do so under the reformed system, said Davison County Juvenile Diversion Director Katie Buschbach.

"I think a lot of it is everybody is trying to see what everybody else can do," Buschbach said. "We've all been kids before. It takes time. It takes time for these kids to learn these things. We're going to get through it."

Directors of the state's two largest juvenile detention centers, in Minnehaha and Pennington counties, said the biggest challenge they face is a lack of access to long-term mental

health services.

"We have kids with mental health issues but have committed an offense. Because they have mental health issues, they're hard to place, and there are not a lot of places for kids with mental health concerns," said Guttierrez in Rapid City.

According to a provisional 2020 report from the Juvenile Justice Oversight Council, mental health services are available statewide, but it's unknown how long those options can serve a child. The Human Services Center in Yankton is the only state-run behavioral center and has limited space for minors.

In Minnehaha County, Juvenile Detention Center Director Jamie Gravett said the reforms already in place would be enhanced by increasing long-term mental health services for juveniles.

"We need to come up with a better solution for mental health problems," Gravett said. "They work hard in the community, but there comes a time when only so much can be done in the community."

Gravett and Guttierrez also said they are seeing younger children get involved in crime and substance use, particularly abuse of alcohol, making the need for diversion programs even greater. Overall in 2020, about 3,700 youths were arrested for a crime in South Dakota.

Over the last few years, citations for alcohol use have increased, while all other kinds of citations, including truancy, damage to property and petty theft, have decreased.

Alcohol citations for youth have increased from 37% of all citations given in 2016 to 66% in 2020. Cannabis youth treatment and cognitive behavioral treatment for substance abuse were added to juvenile services in 2019. Since then, 108 youth have been served one of those treatment options.

Several reforms seen as a success

The pilot juvenile alternatives initiative was introduced in Pennington and Minnehaha counties in 2011 and then expanded statewide four years later alongside a cluster of changes brought with the Juvenile Justice Public Safety Improvement Act approved by the Legislature in 2015.

As part of that legislation, services such as functional family therapy, substance use disorder treatment and aggression replacement treatment were made available statewide.

"We have seen a drastic reduction in detention admissions (while maintaining public safety) across the state and local jurisdictions have been able to reallocate detention dollars to more successful alternatives like evening reporting centers, shelter care, and community supervision," Greg Sattizahn, chair of the Juvenile Justice Oversight Council, wrote to News Watch in an email.

Several juvenile diversion programs have seen success over the past decade. About 60% of families who participated in functional family therapy from July 2019 to July 2020 completed the program, and about 90% said they experienced a general positive change in family relationships.

About 64% of youth enrolled in aggression therapy completed the program and 92% of parents say their children reacted positively to the treatment.

Criminal recidivism among youth has been on the decline since the reforms were passed, data show.

The number of youth who do not reoffend within three years of attendance in a probation or diversion program has increased from 65% in 2014 to about 85% last year. Since JDAI was introduced, a larger proportion of youths charged with crimes have completed probation, and fewer have been committed to the Department of Corrections. The cumulative months children have been committed to out-of-state



Officers at the Western South Dakota Juvenile Services Center in Rapid City fit a youth offender with an ankle monitor. Photo: Courtesy

WSDJSC

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A pod in the Western South Dakota Juvenile Services Center in Rapid City houses youth who have been ordered by the court to be held in the facility. Photo: Courtesy of the Western South Dakota Juvenile Services Center

Dakota Juvenile Services Center

authorities, Gutierrez said.

"If you place them in detention with kids who are here for some serious assaults, rape and murders, it's not wise to put those two people together," Gutierrez said. "If a low-risk kid meets a high-risk kid, they become more high risk than the other way around."

Since 2015, five more South Dakota counties have adopted the diversion efforts: Brown, Davison, Codington, Brookings, and this year, Yankton.

Buschbach has coordinated programs for about 130 children in diversion since the program started in Davison County in October 2019. She tries to tailor the program to the situation, she said. A successful diversion is when a child goes through their four-month program without reoffending.

"I think we've learned that we can rely more heavily on our own communities than we had originally thought," Buschbach said. "We had to start getting creative with how we were dealing with things rather than sending them to a facility and expecting them to be healed in two weeks from trauma they've had for years."

Overall, she's pleased by the community members who have gotten involved and created programs to help children locally, and hopes a diverse set of treatment options will help more youth.

In Rapid City, a Native American-centered program called I.Am.Legacy works to bring justice and cultural healing to youth with talking circles in jails, a gym for justice-involved youth and more.

"I wish we had those programs all over the state," Brokenleg said. "When we say diversion and community programming, my vision is we're utilizing programs like that."

In Brookings County, the Boys and Girls Club started a program called 180, where leaders in the community come into the club weekly to meet with youth in the diversion program and teach them new skills or educate them about different career paths, said Karlee Chapin, juvenile diversion director for the club.

In Davison County, Buschbach helps children create and monitor a garden. Those who have attended have enjoyed the programs so much that they have asked to continue attending once they complete diversion, she said.

Both directors say families appreciate being able to keep their kids in the area, rather than sending them away. Some families, however, are frustrated by ongoing behavior and would sometimes prefer to have the child temporarily out of the home, and sometimes that's appropriate, they said. But the mindset of sending away every child who commits an offense is starting to shift.

"Prior to JDAI, we needed that immediate gratification of locking a kid up. When we didn't get that,

facilities has decreased by about 50% since 2015.

Authorities use a Risk Assessment Instrument, or RAI, to determine where they take a youth who has come into contact with law enforcement. By considering the most recent offense, previous interactions with law enforcement, likelihood to reoffend, home life and other factors, the risk assessment tool suggests whether a juvenile will go home, go to a service center or diversion program, or go to a secure detention facility while their case works through the legal system.

"Diversion is a very developmentally appropriate way in response to most youth misbehavior," Brokenleg said. "Teens make impulsive decisions and choices. If we can meet them where they're at. That's definitely going to produce better outcomes in the long run."

The risk assessment instrument has been crucial to prevent the intermingling of youth who make one mistake with those who need longer contact with

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people got upset," said Gravett, juvenile detention center director in Minnehaha County.

Gravett, who was a probation officer when JDAI came to Minnehaha County in 2011, said he believes the reforms have been mostly effective at creating a better path forward for youth offenders.

"I think overall it's been very positive. Not everyone will agree with me," he said. "What people need to understand is just because they don't get locked up immediately after an arrest doesn't mean nothing happens. They're still given consequences through the court. We're trying to look at what benefits the kids the most. It doesn't mean they aren't going to get some form of punishment down the line. The process doesn't stop just because they're not locked up."



ABOUT DANIELLE FERGUSON

Danielle Ferguson, Sioux Falls, S.D., is an investigative reporter for South Dakota News Watch.

She grew up in Salem, S.D. and previously worked as a watchdog reporter at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

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

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CEO's Report: Heartland's Summer Conference returns

This year's Summer Conference was one for the record books, and I'm not talking about the high temperatures.

After taking a year off due to COVID-19, we came back this year at a new venue. We tried out the new tent offered by the Best Western Plus Lakeview Hotel in Madison. While those wearing sport coats may have regretted their decision, it went off without a hitch.

I was thoroughly impressed by our line up of speakers. What is maybe most impressive is that all of them volunteered their time to share their expertise and wisdom with us.

Something that struck me was that several of our speakers thanked us. They thanked us for giving them the opportunity to speak. Did I mention we didn't pay any of them? Shouldn't we be the ones thanking them?

I think their thanks speaks to the high caliber crowd we entertain. Our customers are top notch. You come ready to listen and willing to learn. You make the speakers feel welcomed and appreciated.

Each speaker brought something valuable to the table. Kecia Beranek and Brooke Rollag are true champions in their communities. Their drive to make their communities better is admirable.

They are promoting the places they call home, the places they love. What better advocates than people living, working, and raising their families there?

Terry Schultz is also a champion for his community. He has made multiple investments in Madison and continues to advocate for growth. He has utilized Heartland programs and promotes them to others.



The City of Groton is a member of the Heartland Consumers Power District. Hope Block and Paul Kosel attended the event in Madison. (Courtesy Photo)

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Ryan Budmayr is a true professional. His marketing insights were tips anyone can use. You don't have to work in an advertising firm to promote your town.

Finally, Andrew Kramer and Lee Ann Wheeler offered simple and valuable tools we can all easily implement to protect us from cyber attacks and help us know what to do if we are compromised.

Networking proves invaluable

Of course, for many, the best part of the day is the afternoon social activities. The networking involved in a round of golf or boat ride proves invaluable.

We welcomed several legislators to the event as well as staff from our Congressional delegation's offices. There were several other special guests in attendance including HELP Fund loan recipients, PUC commissioners, lobbyists, economic development professionals and industry partners.

Getting the chance to visit with these folks one on one doesn't happen often and we are proud we can pull our customers together with these key individuals for some valuable interaction.

Most of the customers Heartland serves are small, rural communities. The same person often wears many hats, as is certainly the case for Kecia and Brooke. While no one can be an expert on every topic, having a network of individuals with expertise in different areas gives you someone to reach out to with questions when you don't have the answer yourself.

While every community is different, they are also similar. Every community must tackle projects from electrical upgrades to street projects to wastewater and the list goes on. If you are thinking of tackling a project, chances are, another Heartland community has already done it. Events like our Summer Conference give you the chance to visit with those folks and put a name with a face next time you want to reach out.

We hope everyone took something valuable away from the conference. If you weren't able to attend and have questions about any of the presentations, please let us know.

I look forward to seeing you at our next event.

South Dakota Supports Breastfeeding

PIERRE, S.D. – In acknowledgement of the importance of breastfeeding to the health of South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem has proclaimed August 2021 as Breastfeeding Month.

South Dakota joins the nation and world in celebrating and supporting World Breastfeeding Week and National Breastfeeding Month through the theme 'Every Step of the Way' as support is essential to success and longevity.

Breastfeeding significantly impacts the health and wellbeing of mothers and babies. All major medical authorities recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, with continued breastfeeding for at least one year.

South Dakota WIC is committed to supporting breastfeeding mothers by providing nutritious food, breast pumps, and education. The program offers access to mom-to-mom support through Peer Counselors and professional support through Certified Lactation Counselors and International-Board Certified Lactation Consultants.

"Long-term breastfeeding success requires a strong support system from fathers, families, employers, childcare and healthcare providers, and community members," said Megan Hlavacek, State WIC Outreach & Breastfeeding Coordinator.

The South Dakota Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Pledge is one-way communities can support breastfeeding mothers. Over 700 worksites across the state have taken the online pledge at www.healthysd.gov/breastfeeding. All pledged businesses display a Breastfeeding Welcome Here window cling to publicly show their support.

UpSkill Program Application Deadline Extended

PIERRE, S.D. – The Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) and Board of Technical Education are partnering to provide eligible individuals occupational skills training through the state's four technical colleges. The deadline to apply has been extended to Aug. 17.

All applications begin at the technical colleges. Individuals interested in participating should contact the technical college offering the certificate program of interest. For contact information, visit SDUpSkill.com.

UpSkill certificate programs are available for people who have obstacles to overcome to secure employment. Eligibility criteria vary and can include being laid off from a job, being low income or having a disability.

"Eligible participants will earn credentials in a high-demand field at little to no cost," said state Labor and Regulation Secretary Marcia Hultman. "After completing the UpSkill program, the participant can enter a new career field, advance in their current field or continue their education."

Nineteen certificates are available and designed as primarily 18-credit programs to be completed by spring 2022. They are available online, in-person and via hybrid formats. Credits earned from certificate programs can integrate with associate and bachelor's degree programs at public institutions across the state.

"Enrollment in UpSkill also comes with DLR's excellent case management and our full array of services for job seekers," said Secretary Hultman.

UpSkill is funded through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief fund as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding.

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Groton Police Report July 19-25

City Miles Driven: 664
County Miles Driven: 76

1 animal call, 2 to assist other departments, 2 to assist other law enforcement agencies, 1 request for family crisis/transient, 3 suspicious activities, 1 business security, 6 citizen assistance, 2 county vehicle accidents, 3 dog complaints, 1 domestic disturbance, 3 fire assistance, 2 locked vehicle assistance, 2 medical/rescue/ambulance, 5 warnings issues, 2 summons issued, 6 speeding tickets, 3 to finger print people, 1 violation - No contact order.

July 26 to August 1

City Miles Driven: 545
County Miles Driven: 84

1 animal call, 1 to assist other law enforcement agencies, 1 bad driving complaint, 1 request for family crisis/transient, 3 suspicious activities, 1 business security, 1 new sex offender registration, 5 citizen assistance, 1 fire assistance, 5 warnings issued, 2 summons issued, 4 speeding tickets, 1 locked vehicle assistance, 2 medical/rescue/ambulance, 1 motorist assistance, 1 gas drive-off, 1 to finger print person, 1 equipment complaint, 1 careless driving complaint, 1 violation of move over law.

DANR RECOGNIZES CITY OF GROTON FOR DRINKING WATER COMPLIANCE

PIERRE - The South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) announced today that the City of Groton public water system and the system's operation specialists have been awarded a Secretary's Award for Drinking Water Excellence.

"Access to safe and reliable water sources is crucial for all South Dakotans," said DANR Secretary Hunter Roberts. "It is my honor to present the Secretary's Award for Drinking Water Excellence to the City of Groton who, through hard work and dedication, has achieved 20 consecutive years of Safe Drinking Water compliance. " The system's operations specialists are Terry Herron and Dwight Zerr.

To qualify for the Secretary's Award for Drinking Water Excellence, public water systems and their system operations specialists had to meet all of the compliance monitoring and reporting requirements, drinking water standards, and certification requirements for ten consecutive years or more.

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#458 in a series Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Since we last talked, just four days ago when the seven-day new-case average was just over 78,000, we've blown right past 80,000 and 90,000 to 92,005. We're now in the territory we were in mid-February when things were still awful and almost no one was vaccinated yet. I'll add that, although children and teens are still less likely to get seriously ill than adults, case numbers in this age group rose 84 percent in just a week and have increased fivefold since early June; that is definitely not great. Hospitalizations have taken another jump and are now over 50,000 at 50,659, up another 25 percent in four days. This is a good deal worse than last summer was, and if you will cast your mind back to last summer, we all thought we were living through hell then. A good share of our trouble stems from all these unvaccinated people walking around like they've never heard of a pandemic. I guess the months since last summer have given us some perspective on just how bad things can be; and maybe it's going to have to get as bad as it ever was before we wise up. The good news is that we're far off last summer's peak deaths; we were running 1000 per day back then. And while they're lagging cases, deaths are finally starting to move upward too, from 308 on July 31 to 371 yesterday. Still, each of those 371 very, very dead; and almost all of them were preventable.

Things are, overall, bad with a fourfold increase in new-case rates in just two weeks. The worst of the trouble is still quite concentrated in just a few states even while it spreads to more and more. Almost half the new cases in the past week turned up in just five states. Florida, Texas, and California account for 40 percent of cases with a third in just Florida and Texas and 20 percent in Florida alone. The other two states in the top five are Louisiana and Missouri. All of them except California have fully vaccinated less than half their residents.

Florida's breaking records all over the place—first on Saturday for new cases and then on Sunday a year-old one for hospitalizations. I'm thinking about how much worse this would look if the state didn't have such a high proportion of the population over 65, a group who are more vaccinated than any other age group. I suspect tourists are offsetting the senior citizens in terms of viral trouble-making. They're also leading the nation in per capita hospitalizations and are worse off than at any prior point in this pandemic. At least 10 hospitals in the Orlando and Jacksonville areas have set records for Covid-19 admissions. Vincent Hsu, infectious-disease physician at AdventHealth, which is reporting record numbers of hospitalized patients, told the Washington Post, "What's extraordinary is the speed at which we are currently seeing new cases. We have to be prepared for a long surge, a long siege."

There is what the AP describes as a "startling" increase in the number of hospitalized children as well. I wonder what this would look like if no one was vaccinated. Probably better we'll never know. Experts are saying the numbers in the state are not expected to peak before mid-September, so we are going to have a golden opportunity to see what worse looks like. Given there is no official mitigation effort and new vaccination impacts won't be felt for several weeks soonest, worse is definitely in the cards.

Louisiana has also set records for hospitalizations this week. Tulane University epidemiologist, Susan Haskig, told the Washington Post, "It's a tenfold increase in just one month, and it's not showing any signs of stopping." She mentioned they're looking at hospitalization numbers like what were seen in the ugly days last March when Louisiana became one of the earliest states to reach a crisis in this pandemic.

Joseph Kanter, the state health officer talked with the Post about the low vaccination rate in the state and the summer heat pushing people indoors and then mentioned the new variant: "This delta variant has proven much more aggressive than anything we have faced before. We've led the country in cases

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before, and it's frustrating to be back here."

Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge, the largest private hospital in the state, said Monday it was under "immense pressure" with the highest patient numbers since April, 2020. About half of those were under 50 and the vast majority were unvaccinated. A critical care physician at Our Lady of the Lake told CNN, "We're becoming victims of the unvaccinated. We currently are overwhelming our bed capacity. We're creating burnout for our teams. And honestly, we're beginning to impact the rest of the health care of the community." They have patients waiting for ICU beds, and generally speaking, people who need ICU beds can't really wait. The hospital's chief medical officer told CNN, "We no longer think we're giving adequate care to anybody, because these are the darkest days of the pandemic." Ninety-seven percent of the Covid-19 patients were unvaccinated with an average age of 48. That was bound to happen. Texas hospitals are reporting critical demands on capacity. Mississippi has real stresses on their ability to care for patients, even those who have ailments other than Covid-19; the University of Mississippi Medical Center ICU was full-up already on Friday.

Missouri seems to finally be leveling off. Don't get me wrong: New case numbers are still far into the red zone, but the steep rate of increase in new-case rates seems to be slowing. Any effect from the recent improvement in vaccination rates is weeks off from showing up in the numbers, but they do seem to have peaked. Be nice if they showed a steep plunge as the UK experienced after their most recent surge. Let's hope: They've suffered enough.

Of course, they did share their virus with neighboring Arkansas while they were hot, and that state looks to be far from its peak. Hospitalizations continue to surge there. Eric Pianalto, president of Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas, told the Washington Post, "I expect through the fall and winter it's going to be a big strain on not just our health system but really all health systems." Why not, right?

Forty-five states and territories (out of 56) have escalating or unchecked transmission at the moment; more than half of those are unchecked, nearly all of them in the South and Southwest. The increasing new-case numbers are creeping across the country now with new states showing escalating transmission in the Northeast and Northwest and, increasingly in the Midwest as well. We don't have to go back that far to find a time when there were zero states in the red zone, just to July 14. On that day, we had just seven states and territories with escalating spread and everyone else was looking very good. Things fell apart fast.

We do expect the problem to continue to move north soon as summer wanes and school starts. Living as I do in one of those not-very-well-vaccinated northern-tier states which isn't doing a damned thing to mitigate transmission, I may dread this fall as much as I did last year—and that's quite a lot. The Upper Midwest is expected to become the new poster child for getting your vaccine. Hurray.

We've talked about this before, but it keeps coming up, so we're talking about it again. We still don't have definitive data to support the anecdotal reports—and stories aren't data—but doctors continue to report a fair upsurge in hospitalized and severely ill patients under 50, in fact, well under 50. Now we would expect a significant downturn in the over-65 numbers because this age group is 80 percent fully vaccinated in the US; but the cases in young people are surprising a lot of folks (probably including those young people who are going to the hospital). To be clear, these are people in their 30s and 40s without any of the risk factors like obesity or diabetes; they're previously healthy young people. They're coming in sicker and deteriorating faster. The New York Times reports doctors are talking about "younger, sicker, quicker." Maybe this is because of some feature of B.1.617.2 or Delta, the variant first identified in India which now accounts for 93.4 percent of US cases (up from just 3 percent in late May); there are a few studies that indicate this variant may cause more severe disease, but not much that addresses the age of

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the patient. Another possible explanation may simply be the low vaccination rates in young people; less than half the 18 to 39 population is fully vaccinated, and 97 percent of the folks in hospitals are unvaccinated. At any rate, young adults have no reason to feel as bulletproof as they've been feeling.

We finally hit that July 4 goal of 70 percent of adults with at least one dose of vaccine. We're a month late, but better late than never. Here's where we stood on Monday: 816,203 doses went into arms on Sunday; 49.7 percent of the population (48.1 percent of eligible people) fully vaccinated; seven-day average of 441,329 initiating vaccination each day; 673,185 doses per day. We have a 56 percent increase in vaccinations in the past couple of weeks; that's a good sign. The largest increases are in states with high new-case rates; there vaccination rates have more than doubled—average increase of 171 percent in the eight states with the highest recent case rates. Louisiana, for example, has seen a 42 percent increase in vaccine doses administered. That's not going to do much good in the current surge, but it might make a difference when the next one hits in the fall and winter. Looks like people can be scared straight. Twenty states have fully vaccinated more than half their residents and 20 states have met the 70 percent one-dose mark. We now have only two states—Alabama and Mississippi—which have fully vaccinated less than 35 percent. To put all of this in perspective though, we still have 90 million eligible people who haven't bothered. Even if we could convince everyone to be vaccinated, at the current pace, it will be February before we've gotten even a single dose into every eligible person in the country: long way to go. And I do want to emphasize that all of the evidence still says vaccinations provide robust protection against severe disease, hospitalization, and death. While fully vaccinated people can transmit the virus when they are infected, fact is those are, for the most part, not the people who are dying.

We've been talking for some weeks now about places with low vaccination rates and high infection rates—about how hospitalization numbers have been stressing the system. Well, now the trouble is moving into places where vaccination rates are far higher (although, to be honest, not where we need them to be). New York, which saw the worst early in this pandemic, has double the hospitalizations they had a month ago and case rates four times as high. The divide between vaccinated and unvaccinated people is pretty stark: four cases and 0.19 hospitalizations per 100,000 among the vaccinated and 17 cases and 1.27 hospitalizations per 100,000 among the unvaccinated.

We have a small piece of new guidance for the fully vaccinated person. This too is an outgrowth of those new data that show infected vaccinated people are much more likely to transmit Delta than earlier variants; it means different and greater precautions are needed. And so, the new guidance says fully vaccinated persons who experience even mild symptoms of Covid-19 should get tested. Makes sense: If they can transmit, we want to know when they're infected.

Also on the subject of vaccines, I have good news: The FDA announced Tuesday they will have a decision on Pfizer/BioNTech's Biologics License Application (BLA) in just a few weeks; their self-imposed deadline is Labor Day. This process is much longer than the emergency use authorization (EUA) process because there are masses more data—six months' worth—to get through for the BLA plus the detailed inspections of every manufacturing step involved in vaccine production for the US market. Tuesday's statement mentioned the agency's "all-hands-on-deck approach" to this one; as they did with the EUAs, they are using whatever personnel they need to get this done, including pulling in what they're calling "sprint teams" from across the agency to get all of the work done expeditiously. They are at the same time conscious of the importance of not only doing all the right things, but being seen as doing all the right things for the credibility of this decision. An unnamed official, speaking to CNN without being identified, said, "We have to make sure we dot all the i's and cross all the t's, or else people will say we did not do the approval correctly." For the record, barring something entirely unexpected popping up, this decision is expected to be affirmative; there's been nothing at all to indicate an issue with this vaccine and the production process meeting the regulatory standards.

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It also appears we'll soon be making a change in the guidance for vaccinating immunocompromised individuals, a group we know is not responding to vaccines as well as others and who also seem to show a much more robust response to an additional dose. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told CNN on Tuesday, "There are those individuals who are immune compromised. Those individuals we know almost invariably do not have an adequate response, so the need to give them an additional boost is much more emergent than the general population." We know the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has met to discuss this issue, and now it appears there may be news coming on this point. Fauci added, "We are trying very hard to get the regulatory mechanism in place very soon to get those individuals a boost that might bring up their immunity to the level where it should be, if possible." This is a good move.

Likewise, to address concerns some have raised that Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine recipients might not have as robust protection against the Delta variant as those receiving an mRNA vaccine, the San Francisco Department of Public Health, announced on Tuesday that they will permit these folks to receive a booster dose of an mRNA vaccine. This change will require a consultation with a physician and is not, according to the Department, "a recommendation or policy change." The statement said, "We are not recommending. We are accommodating requests." Interesting construction. To all of my Janssen/Johnson & Johnson recipient friends, be assured I am following this issue closely; I'll let you know when I think we have something there. So far, there hasn't been evidence this vaccine requires another dose, and this is why the FDA is not recommending additional doses. I will also note that we do not have safety data for a first dose of Janssen/Johnson & Johnson followed by a second dose of an mRNA vaccine, so there's that too. Hang in there.

This is the news none of us wanted to hear: Dr. Rick Barr, Chief Clinical and Academic Officer of Arkansas Children's Hospital, told NPR last Thursday, "I have to emphasize, this is very different than what we saw earlier in the COVID pandemic with respect to kids. We started seeing in June and definitely in July, kids coming in the hospital that were sick with COVID. . . . And just in the month of July we've committed over 40 children to the children's hospital . . . and a number of those have ended up in the intensive care unit." Half of those kids were over 12 and eligible for vaccination, but none had been vaccinated. That means half were under 12 and not eligible—many otherwise healthy, not just the compromised and the chronically ill. In Louisiana, test positivity in children has risen from less than two percent six weeks ago to 23 percent this week. School starts in just a few weeks, and I don't see an EUA extension to cover the age group before October/November at best. Seems like a recipe for disaster. And no, I don't know what to do about it. Except for this: The best protection for kids is if all the adults in their lives have been vaccinated. But if your liberty matters more to you than these kids' lives, carry on. I'm sure your liberty will keep you warm while your child struggles for air. Maybe you'll get lucky and it will only be someone else's kid. That would be OK, right?

I'm seeing a lot of government entities and businesses moving to some sort of vaccination requirement for employees and sometimes for visitors and customers as well. I suspect that movement will accelerate once we have a licensed vaccine, something that appears to be imminent. Now this week, New York City has put in place a requirement for proof of vaccination to enter an array of indoor businesses, restaurants, gyms, and entertainment venues among them, with enforcement to begin next month. Officials made it clear they are contemplating adding other types of businesses to the list as time goes on. This move toward mandates appears to be the general direction of things in several parts of the country and several kinds of places. I don't believe this will slow down or reverse itself; I think we're going to see more and more such requirements turning up.

That's it for today. Keep yourself safe. We'll talk again.

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Feature from the Game, Fish & Parks Dept.

Mink are considered a semiaquatic mammal, and it is rarely found far from water. They live under logs, in burrows near streambanks or use abandoned beaver lodges or muskrat dens. Mink are most active from dusk through the night during all seasons.

Photo by Keith Anderson

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City of Columbia Council Meeting – August 4, 2021

CALL MEETING TO ORDER – 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL – Cara Dennert, Ellen Harr, Emily Eichler, Cole Kampa, Corey Mitchell

Community –

Corey Mitchell called the meeting to order. Minutes were passed out from the July 14th meeting. Ellen Harr made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Cole Kampa seconded the motion. All in favor – motion carried.

Warrant Vouchers: Jeremy Dosch – 419.99; Kelsie Ehresmann – 335.99; GDI – 29.97; Cara Dennert – 823.50; Runnings – 29.56; SDPAA – 3753.39; Kolker Law Office – 2677.50

There was some discussion on the bill from the attorney. Emily Eichler made a motion to accept the vouchers as presented with the exception of the Kolker bill. Corey will talk to Kari and figure out what the city's portion of that bill should be. Ellen Harr seconded the motion. All in favor – motion carried.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS /CORESPONDENCE – SDML Conference information, Madison Cyber Labs info.; JVT 2020 Annual Report; SDML 2020 Financial Report & Election Notices

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – There were no changes to the current suspended Columbia Covid19 ordinance. Baseball Field Update

Nuisances - Trevor & Cole met with the County Sheriff. Certified letters are being sent out in regards to the junked vehicles in town.

Streets - the streets may possibly be graded before fall. The intersection near the dump needs work.

Parks - Corey has been mowing the ball park – it is really rough down there.

Lagoon/sewer – Cole reported that we are up to date with testing. The city received a bid for sewer line work from Pipe Detectives out of Jamestown. Corey recommends that we use this company.

Rubble Site – Corey e-mailed Jacob about the cost of electricity down at the rubble site – it should be around \$6,000 – less than what was first estimated.

NEW BUSINESS – Ellen got some information on artificial turf. Emily asked about the possibility of putting flower pots around town next summer – maybe it could be a project for the summer rec program. There are some dog vaccination reminder letters that need to be sent out.

FINANCIAL REPORT – Cara presented bank balances. Ellen Harr made a motion to accept the financial reports as given. Cole Kampa seconded the motion. All were in favor – motion carried.

July 31, 2021 balances: SF - \$179,516.23; GF - \$ 157,876.33 ; FIT - \$13,978.76

Cash on hand - \$115

Cole Kampa made a motion to adjourn. Emily Eichler seconded the motion. All were in favor – meeting adjourned.

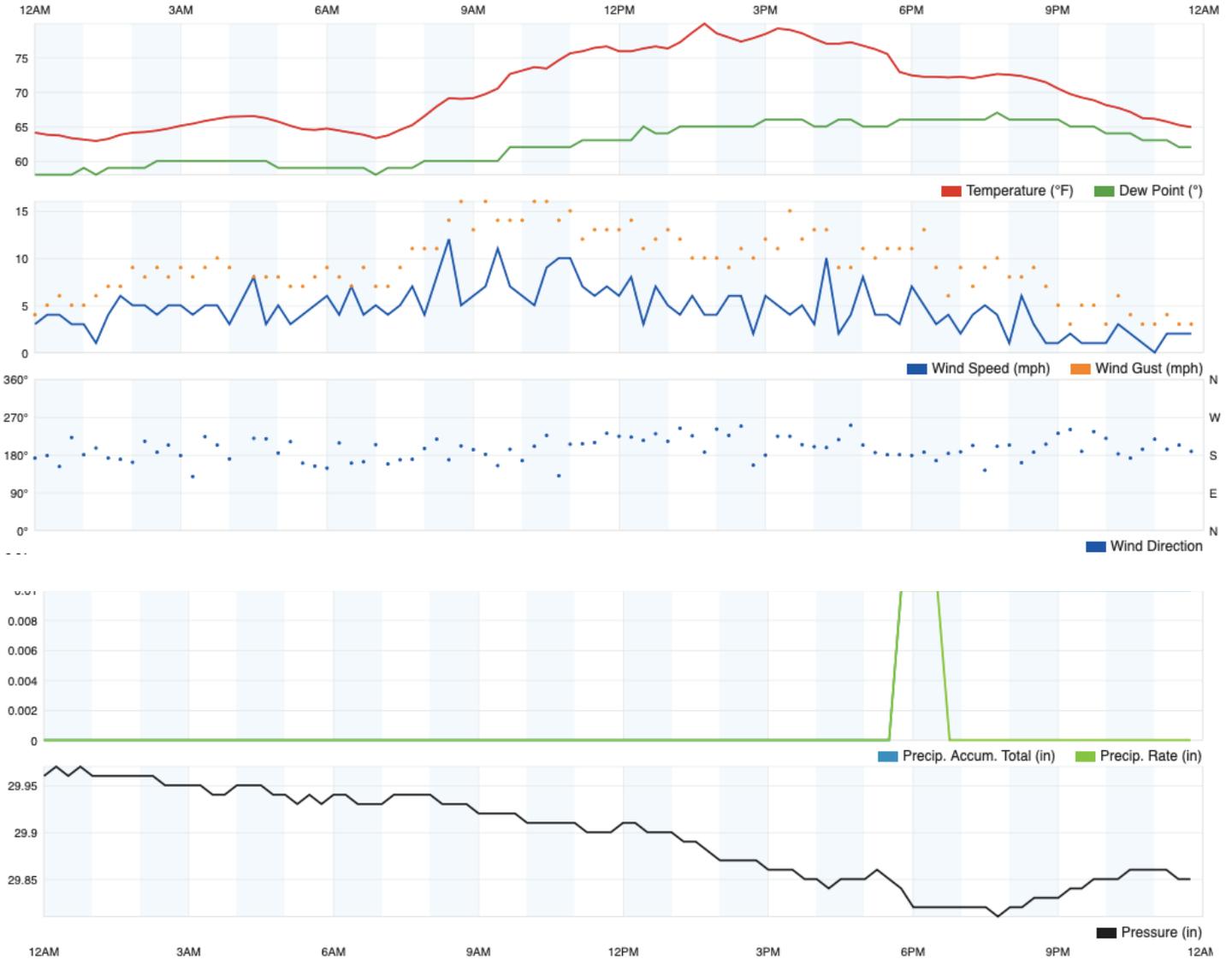
Next City Council Meeting - September 1, 2021 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by Cara Dennert, Finance Officer

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
				
Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms
High: 84 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 85 °F	Low: 65 °F	High: 85 °F

Tonight
Low 60s



Decreasing Clouds.
Only Isolated Showers and Thunderstorms, ending over eastern SD & western MN overnight



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
Check out your latest forecast at
www.weather.gov/abr

-- Very Warm & mainly Dry --

Thursday



82 to 94°

Friday



85 to 97°

Saturday



Chance of Showers & Thunderstorms
(mainly Friday night through Saturday evening)

82 to 94°

Sunday



85 to 98°

8/4/2021 3:23 PM

mainly dry weather takes hold through Friday. Another round of light showers or thunderstorms will be possible Friday night through Saturday evening. Highs through Sunday will be generally in the mid 80s to 90s.

Today in Weather History

August 5, 1987: Six tornadoes touched down in central South Dakota. Five of these tornadoes touched down in Lyman County, including three which did damage near Kennebec within 25 minutes of each other. One of the tornadoes destroyed three farms, downing outbuildings, power lines, granaries, and killing cattle.

August 5, 2000: A wet microburst with winds estimated at 120 mph caused substantial damage in and around Mitchell. Apartments and several mobile homes were destroyed, vehicles were overturned, and other damage occurred to buildings and vehicles. Widespread tree and power line damage also occurred. Ten people were injured, although the majority of the injuries were minor. The damage path was approximately a mile and a half long and a mile wide, extending over the southwest part of Mitchell.

1843 - A spectacular cloudburst near Philadelphia turned the small creeks and streams entering the Delaware River into raging torrents. As much as sixteen inches of rain fell in just three hours. Flooding destroyed thirty-two county bridges, and caused nineteen deaths. It is believed that several small tornadoes accompanied the torrential rains, one of which upset and sank more than thirty barges on the Schuylkill River. (David Ludlum)

1875: Several tornadoes moved across northern and central Illinois. One of the stronger tornadoes touched down in Warren and Knox County where it destroyed 25 homes and killed two people. Another in a series of tornadoes touched down near Knoxville and moved east into northern Peoria County. This estimated F4 tornado injured 40 people and was described by eyewitnesses as looking like a "monstrous haystack."

1961 - The temperature at Ice Harbor Dam, WA, soared to 118 degrees to equal the state record established at Wahluke on the 24th of July in 1928. The afternoon high of 111 degrees at Havre, MT, was an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Severe thunderstorms raked eastern South Dakota. The thunderstorms spawned half a dozen tornadoes, produced softball size hail at Bowdle, and produced wind gusts to 90 mph south of Watertown. Hot weather continued in eastern Texas. Afternoon highs of 100 degrees at Houston and 106 degrees at Waco equalled records for the date. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Indiana and Lower Michigan to Pennsylvania and New York State during the day. Thunderstorms in Michigan produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Ashley, Hastings and Lennon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Oklahoma, and from Iowa to the Upper Ohio Valley, with 216 reports of large hail or damaging winds between early Saturday morning and early Sunday morning. Thunderstorms moving across Iowa around sunrise produced extremely high winds which caused ten million dollars damage to crops in Carroll and Greene Counties. Thunderstorm winds at Jefferson IA reached 102 mph. Afternoon thunderstorms produced tennis ball size hail at Bay Mills, WI. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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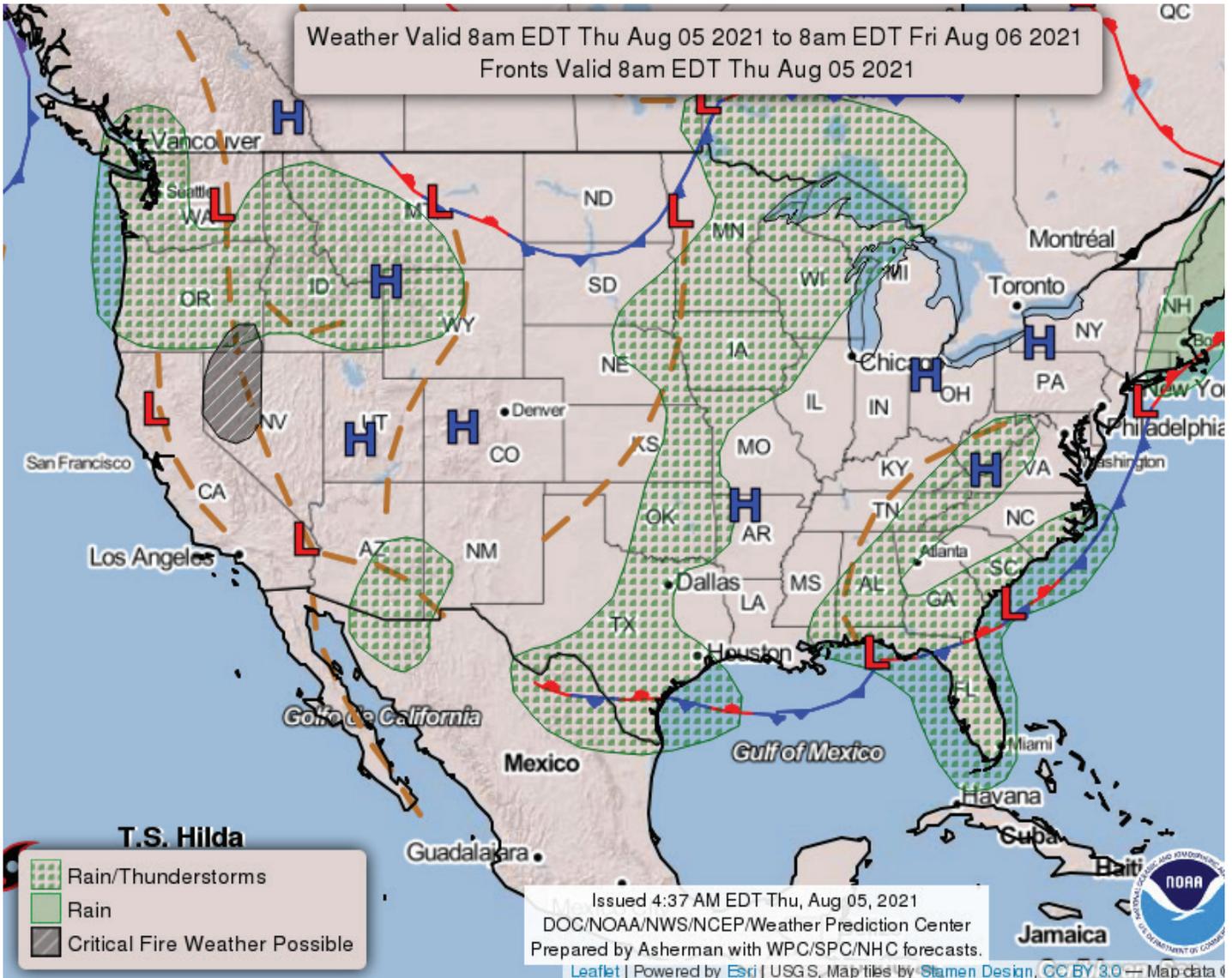
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 80 °F at 1:45 PM
Low Temp: 63 °F at 1:24 AM
Wind: 17 mph at 8:51 AM
Precip: 0.01

Today's Info

Record High: 107° in 1941
Record Low: 41° in 1994
Average High: 85°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 0.30
Precip to date in Aug.: 0.01
Average Precip to date: 14.40
Precip Year to Date: 7.28
Sunset Tonight: 8:56 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:24 a.m.



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THE ONLY WAY

A welfare worker, visiting in the home of one of her clients, discovered a crippled child that had never gone to school because he was unable to walk. Her compassionate heart was deeply touched by his condition and she decided to do something out of the ordinary for him.

Initially, she took him to a distinguished orthopedic surgeon who performed several procedures to correct the problems in his legs. Then a podiatrist corrected the problems with his crooked feet. Little by little he learned to walk and run and play. He also learned to read and write and make enough progress to attend school with his friends.

One day, in telling this story to a group of her friends she said, "He is now a grown man. And I want you to tell me where you think he is and what he is doing."

After a few moments her colleagues began to reply: "A doctor?" asked one. "No," she responded. "A minister?" wondered another. "No," she replied. "I know," said a third, "a welfare worker because of your influence in his life."

"No," she said with tears in her eyes. "He is now in prison serving a life term for murder. You see, we spent all of our time in teaching him how to walk and run, read and write, but we did not teach him where to walk and what to read and who he should communicate with."

David prayed, "Teach me Your way, O Lord, and I will walk in Your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name."

Prayer: Father, write on our hearts and in our minds the words of Your Son: "I am the way, the truth and the life!" May we share those words with others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 86:11 Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

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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
08/29/2021 Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day at GHS Parking Lot (4-5 p.m.)
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)
12/04/2021 Olive Grove Tour of Homes
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

04-15-16-17-23

(four, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, twenty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$33,000

Lotto America

12-15-27-38-52, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 2

(twelve, fifteen, twenty-seven, thirty-eight, fifty-two; Star Ball: ten; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.25 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$191 million

Powerball

05-21-32-36-58, Powerball: 14, Power Play: 2

(five, twenty-one, thirty-two, thirty-six, fifty-eight; Powerball: fourteen; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$211 million

South Dakota sees rise in virus cases, jump in delta variant

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials reported Wednesday coronavirus cases jumped by 68% last week as more cases of the delta virus were identified.

The Department of Health reported 429 new cases statewide in its weekly virus report, bringing the number of active cases statewide to 657. Health officials counted 41 new cases of the delta variant, a virus strain first detected in India that has quickly become dominant wherever it has landed.

However, vaccines still provide strong protection against it. Nearly all hospitalizations and deaths are among the unvaccinated. In South Dakota, hospitalizations from COVID-19 statewide increased to 39, while seven more people died after contracting the disease. A total of 2050 people have died over the course of the pandemic.

The rate of vaccinations picked up after slowing in recent months. The Department of Health reported almost 5,000 people received either their first or second shot last week. About 59% of eligible people statewide have received at least one vaccination.

Sturgis bike rally revs back bigger, despite virus variant

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Crowds of bikers are rumbling their way towards South Dakota's Black Hills this week, raising fears that COVID-19 infections will be unleashed among the 700,000 people expected to show up at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

The rally, which starts Friday, has become a haven for those eager to escape coronavirus precautions. Last year, the rally hardly slowed down, with roughly 460,000 people attending. Masks were mostly ditched as bikers crowded into bars, tattoo parlors and rock shows, offering a lesson in how massive gatherings could spread waves of the virus across the country.

This year — the 81st iteration of the rally — is expected to be even bigger, drawing people from around the U.S. and beyond, despite concerns about the virus' highly contagious delta variant.

"It's great to see a party of hundreds of thousands of people," said Zoltán Vári, a rallygoer who was settling into his campsite Tuesday after making the trek from Hungary.

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He was eager to return to riding a Harley-Davidson through the Black Hills after missing last year. Vári evaded U.S. tourism travel restrictions on Europe by spending two weeks in Costa Rica before making his way to South Dakota. He hopes 1 million people will show up. Typical attendance is around a half a million.

The city of Sturgis, usually a sleepy community of under 7,000, tried to tamp things down last year, canceling most city-sponsored events and promotion, but hordes of bikers showed up anyway.

"The rally is a behemoth, and you cannot stop it," said Carol Fellner, a local who worried that this year's event would cause a fresh outbreak of cases. "I feel absolutely powerless."

This year, the city is embracing the crowds. Republican Gov. Kristi Noem has given the rally her blessing and will appear in a charity ride. The event is a boon for tourism, powering over \$800 million in sales, according to the state Department of Tourism.

The rally is happening as other giant summer events — from state fairs to music festivals like Lollapalooza — are returning around the U.S. In Wisconsin, health officials say nearly 500 coronavirus cases may be linked to the crowds that attended Milwaukee Bucks games or gathered outside the team's arena — estimated as high as 100,000 one night — during their push to the NBA championship.

The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally's defenders argue open air is plentiful on the meandering highways and in the campgrounds where many bikers stay, but contact tracers last year reported 649 virus cases from every corner of the country linked to the rally, including one death. A team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concluded in a published study that the 2020 rally "had many characteristics of a superspreading event."

Rallygoers reasoned that after years of riding Harleys, the coronavirus was just another risk. Five motorcycle riders were killed in crashes during the 2020 rally, and one fatal crash has already been reported this year.

The attitude was summed up on a T-shirt sold last year: "Screw COVID. I went to Sturgis."

But public health experts warned the massive gathering revved the virus far beyond those who chose to attend. One team of economists argued that the rally set off a chain reaction that resulted in 250,000 cases nationwide. However, that paper was not peer reviewed and was criticized by some top epidemiologists — as well as some bikers — for overestimating the rally's impact.

While it's not clear how many cases can be blamed on last year's rally, it coincided with the start of a sharp increase across the Great Plains that ultimately crescendoed in a deadly winter.

The gathering could potentially power a fresh wave of infections like the one that is currently shattering hospitalization records in parts of the South, said Dr. Michael Osterholm, the director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy.

"I understand how people want to move on from this pandemic — God knows I want to — but the reality is you can't ignore it," he said. "You can't just tell the virus you're done with it."

The current rate of cases in South Dakota is roughly half of what it was in the days leading up to last year's rally. Deaths have also dropped significantly.

COVID-19 vaccines provide hope the rally won't set off virus spread, but it's not clear how many in the Sturgis crowd have received a shot. Unlike events like Lollapalooza that required attendees to show proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test, precautions at Sturgis are minimal and optional. The biggest step the city has taken was to allow rallygoers to drink on public property, reasoning it will spread the bacchanalia into the open air.

Only about 46% of adults in the county that hosts Sturgis are fully vaccinated, according to the CDC, compared with 60.6% nationwide. Vaccination rates were similarly low in the five counties where most 2020 rallygoers hailed from, according to an analysis of cellphone data from the Center for New Data. Only one — Maricopa County, Arizona — has cracked 50%. Campbell County in Wyoming, has the lowest rate, at just 27%.

Vári, the biker from Hungary, said he's been fully vaccinated — but only because he falsely thought he needed proof of vaccination to get into the U.S.

"Sturgis or bust," he wrote on Facebook.

School year to begin in South Dakota with teacher shortage

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Education leaders in South Dakota say that as the new school year approaches the state doesn't have enough teachers and support staff, a situation they attribute to the coronavirus pandemic.

State Education Secretary Tiffany Sanderson says every school district in South Dakota is dealing with staffing shortages for the upcoming school year.

"The open positions right now, going into the school year 3 weeks away, we still have almost 120 unfilled positions for classroom teachers."

Sanderson says some teachers decided to retire earlier than planned because of COVID-19. She says schools are also looking for additional staff to help students who need tutoring or special assistance to make up for lost learning during the pandemic.

Sioux Falls Superintendent Jane Stavem says her district is having trouble finding enough bus drivers and other support staff. Stavem says she is concerned the pandemic will make college students rethink pursuing a teaching career, South Dakota Public Broadcasting reported.

"The complexities that our staff dealt with in just the dailiness of teaching were immense and it was very exhausting. And, you know, it's come and teach but you have all these other things if you were going into teaching you might be thinking twice about that, and we don't want to lose people from the profession."

Stavem says one way to recruit more teachers is to raise their salaries. The Sioux Falls school board voted in May to raise the base pay for new teachers from \$37,000 to \$41,000.

South Dakota woman killed in northwest Nebraska crash

KILGORE, Neb. (AP) — A South Dakota woman died in a crash near the village of Kilgore over the weekend, authorities in northwestern Nebraska said.

The crash happened Saturday, when the woman's vehicle left a county road, rolled and landed in a ditch, the Omaha World-Herald reported.

The driver, 48-year-old Jacqueline Frances Kills In Sight, of the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, was thrown from the vehicle and died from her injuries, according to the Cherry County Attorney's Office.

Kilgore is about 21 miles (33.8 kilometers) south of Rosebud and about the same distance west of Valentine, Nebraska.

Israel launches airstrikes on Lebanon in response to rockets

By LAURIE KELLMAN and ZEINA KARAM Associated Press Writer

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel on Thursday escalated its response to rocket attacks this week by launching rare airstrikes on Lebanon, the army and Lebanese officials said.

The Israeli army said in a statement that jets struck the launch sites from which rockets had been fired over the previous day, as well as an additional target used to attack Israel in the past. The IDF blamed the state of Lebanon for the shelling and warned "against further attempts to harm Israeli civilians and Israel's sovereignty."

The overnight airstrikes in southern Lebanon were a marked escalation at a politically sensitive time. Israel's new eight-party governing coalition is trying to keep peace under a fragile cease fire that ended an 11-day war with Hamas' militant rulers in Gaza in May. Several incidents leading up to this week's rocket fire from Lebanon have focused attention on Israel's northern border, and the United States swiftly condemned the attacks on Israel.

The strikes also come as Lebanon is mired in multiple crises, including a devastating economic and financial crisis and political deadlock that has left the country without a functional government for a full year.

Lebanese President Michel Aoun said Israel's use of its air force to target Lebanese villages "is the first of its kind since 2006 and indicated the presence of aggressive, escalatory intentions" against Lebanon.

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In a statement, he said Lebanon would submit a complaint to the United Nations.

Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah fought a devastating, monthlong war in 2006 which killed some 1,200 Lebanese, mostly civilians, and around 160 Israelis, mostly soldiers. The war failed to neutralize the group's rocket threat, and Israeli officials say Hezbollah's improved missile arsenal is now capable of striking virtually anywhere in the country.

No one has claimed responsibility for the rocket fire from Lebanon, and Hezbollah has not commented. The Hezbollah-owned Al-Manar TV reported the Israeli strikes at around 2 a.m. Thursday, saying they hit an empty area in the Mahmoudiya Village in Marjayoun district.

Avichai Adraee, the Israeli army's Arabic-language spokesman, said the Lebanese government is responsible for what happens on its territories and warned against more attacks on Israel from south Lebanon.

Three rockets were fired from Lebanon into Israeli territory Wednesday and the army responded with sustained artillery fire, Israel's military said. The announcement came after sirens sounded in northern Israel warning of a possible rocket attack. Two rockets landed inside Israeli territory, the army said.

Channel 12 reported that one rocket exploded in an open area and another was intercepted by Israel's defense system, known as the Iron Dome. Israeli media reported that the incoming rockets started fires near Kiryat Shmona, a community of about 20,000 people near the Lebanese border.

The Lebanese military reported 92 artillery shells fired by Israel on Lebanese villages as a result of the rocket fire from Lebanon. It said the Israeli artillery shelling resulted in a fire in the village of Rashaya al-Fukhar. In a statement, the Lebanese army also said it was conducting patrols in the border region and had set up a number of checkpoints and opened an investigation to determine the source of the rocket fire.

There have been several similar incidents in recent months.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price condemned the rocket fire from Lebanon.

"Israel has the right to defend itself against such attacks," he told reporters in Washington, adding that the U.S. would remain engaged with partners "in the region in an effort to de-escalate the situation."

At the United Nations, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, known as UNIFIL, was aware of the rocket fire and Israel's artillery response. He said the UNIFIL commander, Maj. Gen. Stefano Del Col, appealed for a cease-fire and urged both sides to "exercise maximum restraint to avoid further escalation."

Olympics Latest: Britain's Walls wins track cycling omnium

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

Britain's Matthew Walls won the opening scratch race of the four-event omnium and was never really challenged over the remainder of the races in winning the gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

Walls finished third in the tempo race and second in the elimination race before taking a lap on the field early in the concluding points race to effectively put the gold medal out of reach.

Campbell Stewart of New Zealand gained his second lap on the field just before the race concluded, sending him soaring from out of the medals to silver. Defending champion Elia Viviani of Italy fell to bronze.

France has beaten Egypt 27-23 for a place in the final of the Olympic men's handball tournament.

France was 5-1 down after a slow start but recovered to 13-13 at half time and squeezed out Egypt in the second half. The French will play either Spain or Denmark in Saturday's final.

France can become the first country in 37 years to win the men's and women's tournaments at the same Olympics. The French women's team faces Sweden in their semifinal game Friday.

Egypt will play for the men's bronze medal and could become the first African nation ever to reach an Olympic handball podium.

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MEDAL ALERT

Italy's Massimo Stano won the men's 20-kilometer race walk at the Olympics, and Japan secured the silver and bronze.

It was the first time since the 2008 Beijing Games that China wasn't on the podium.

Stano took the gold medal in 1 hour, 21 minutes and 5 seconds in Sapporo on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido.

Koki Ikeda took silver for the home country in 1:21:14 and Toshikazu Yamanishi the bronze in 1:21:28.

The race walks and marathon races were moved to cooler Sapporo to avoid the heat and humidity of the Tokyo summer.

MEDAL ALERT

Shanne Braspenninx of the the Netherlands has won gold in the women's keirin at the Tokyo Olympics, hours after teammate Laurine van Riessen was taken out of the Izu Velodrome on a stretcher following a crash.

Braspenninx went to the front on the final lap of the six-lap race, where the first three are paced by a motorized bike and the last three are a free-for-all sprint to the finish.

She was followed across the line by New Zealand's Ellesse Andrews with the silver medal and Lauriane Genest of Canada taking bronze.

Braspenninx's victory keeps the gold medal in Dutch hands. Elis Ligtlee won it at the Rio Games before retiring.

World champion Harrie Lavreysen of the Netherlands has cruised past two-time defending Olympic champ Jason Kenny in their best-of-three quarterfinal in the men's sprint at the Tokyo Games.

Kenny's gold medals at the 2012 London Games and the 2016 Rio Games came after he took silver against countryman Chris Hoy at the 2008 Games in Beijing. Kenny will head home without a medal in his signature event.

Britain still has hopes of a fourth consecutive gold medal in the men's sprint after Jack Carlin advanced to Friday's semifinal round. Also advancing were Dutch rider Jeffrey Hoogland and Trinidad and Tobago's Nicholas Paul.

Maddie Musselman and the U.S. beat the Russian Olympic Committee 15-11 to advance to the women's water polo final, continuing the team's bid for a third consecutive gold medal.

The U.S. beat the Russian team 18-5 last week, but the ROC was much more engaged in the semifinal meeting. The U.S. had to rally after it trailed 7-4 with 48 seconds left in the first half.

Musselman scored five times, and captain Maggie Steffens had three goals. Next up for the U.S. is the winner of the Spain-Hungary semifinal.

The U.S. improved to 133-4 since it won gold at the Rio de Janeiro Games. It has won three in a row since it lost 10-9 to Hungary in group play for its first loss at the Olympics since the 2008 final against the Netherlands.

MEDAL ALERT

Chinese teenagers Quan Hongchan and Chen Yuxi have swept the top two spots in women's 10-meter platform diving.

The 14-year-old Quan took gold with 466.20 points and the 15-year-old Chen grabbed silver with 425.40 as China completed a golden sweep of the women's diving events.

Melissa Wu of Australia claimed the bronze medal with 371.40 points.

Dutch track cyclist Laurine van Riessen was taken from the track at the Izu Velodrome on a stretcher after a crash in the semifinals of the keirin at the Tokyo Olympics.

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Van Riessen was trapped between two riders entering the final lap of the race. Her front wheel suddenly dodged to the right, wiping out British favorite Katy Marchant and sending both of them to the track.

Marchant was able to get back on her bike but van Riessen lay on the track apron for several minutes. She eventually was loaded onto a stretcher and taken down a tunnel.

The keirin is a six-lap race in which riders follow a motorized bike called a derny for the first three laps. It slowly picks up speed before leaving the track, leaving the riders to sprint the final three laps to the finish.

MEDAL ALERT

Albert Batyrgaziev of the Russian team has won the gold medal in men's featherweight boxing, beating American Duke Ragan in a meeting of two professional fighters chasing Olympic glory.

Batyrgaziev won the bout 3:2, cruising to victory after winning the first two rounds on three of the five judges' cards. He got off to an impressive, active start against Ragan, who needed time to find his groove before winning the third round on four of five cards.

Batyrgaziev and Ragan both turned pro last year during the Olympic delay caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Batyrgaziev recorded the best tournament run of his Olympic and amateur careers in Tokyo, while Ragan surged from an unseeded position to fall just short of the American team's first men's gold medal since 2004.

Lázaro Álvarez of Cuba and Samuel Takyi of Ghana won bronze medals. Takyi's medal is the fifth won by Ghana in all sports in its Olympic history, and its first since 1992.

The Russian Olympic Committee men's volleyball team avenged a semifinal loss to Brazil in the last Olympics by mounting a big rally in the third set to win their semifinal match in four sets.

The ROC fought back from eight points down to win the crucial third set and then closed it out in the fourth in a matchup of the sport's two biggest powerhouses.

The Russians will play the winner of the France-Argentina semifinal on Saturday for the gold medal. Brazil will play the loser for the bronze after failing to make it to the gold medal game for the first time since 2000.

IOC investigators are "setting up the interviews" with the Belarus team suspected of trying to forcibly remove sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya from the Olympics.

IOC spokesman Mark Adams says the disciplinary process that formally opened Tuesday is "determining who needs to be heard."

Belarus officials Artur Shumak and Yuri Moisevich have been linked by the IOC to taking Tsimanouskaya in a car to the airport Sunday to put her on a plane to Belarus.

It is unclear if Shumak and Moisevich retain Olympic accreditation and can contact other Belarus athletes.

The IOC was asked Thursday if it acted fast enough when Olympic accreditations have been quickly removed in other cases.

Adams says the IOC moved "pretty swiftly ... there has to be a process because there's all sorts of allegations swirling around and we have to hear what they are."

Tsimanouskaya, who had criticized team coaches on social media, is now in Poland, which gave her a humanitarian visa.

Marcell Jacobs will carry Italy's flag at Sunday's closing ceremony after succeeding Usain Bolt as 100-meter champion at the Olympics.

Italian Olympic Committee president Giovanni Malagò made the announcement shortly after Jacobs helped the Azzurri qualify for the final of the 4x100 relay.

The Texas-born sprinter was the surprise winner of the biggest race of the Olympics last weekend.

MEDAL ALERT

Australia's Keegan Palmer has won the last skateboarding gold of the Tokyo Games.

He won in men's park, breaking what had been Japanese domination in all three previous events.

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The silver went to Pedro Barros of Brazil. Cory Juneau took bronze, the second skateboarding medal for the United States.

The first for the U.S., also a bronze, was won by Jagger Eaton in men's street. Palmer, who is 18 and was born in the United States, was untouchable with two runs of tricks and stunts in the eight-man final.

His gold was the first medal in skateboarding for Australia. All the golds in the other three events went to Japanese skaters.

MEDAL ALERT

Pedro Pichardo of Portugal has won the men's triple jump gold medal at the Olympics.

The Cuban-born Pichardo recorded 17.98 meters on his third attempt to clinch his first Olympic title. He previously won silver medals at the 2013 and 2015 world championships while representing Cuba.

China's Zhu Yaming took silver at Tokyo's Olympic Stadium with 17.57.

Burkina Faso's Hugues Fabrice Zango claimed the bronze with 17.47, the first Olympic medal ever for his West African country.

MEDAL ALERT

Australia's Thomas Green and Jean van der Westhuyzen have won the men's kayak double 1,000 meters at the Sea Forest Waterway with a finishing kick over the final 200.

Germany's Mox Hoff and Jacob Schopf were 0.304 seconds behind to take silver. Rodek Slouf and Josef Dostal of the Czech Republic won bronze.

The International Olympic Committee says it's not aware of any plans to change the schedule for the women's soccer final between Canada and Sweden.

Both teams asked to avoid kicking off in the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo's heat and humidity at 11 a.m. Friday — an almost unprecedented early start for soccer at any time of year.

The forecast temperature at kickoff is around 91 degrees (31 Celsius).

A later kickoff time would risk a clash with the track and field program in the stadium later Friday, though other venues in Tokyo have been used for Olympic soccer and seem available.

IOC spokesman Mark Adams says he "can't shed any more light" on the process of moving the game.

Changes to the Olympic schedule involve the IOC, Tokyo officials, sports bodies like soccer's FIFA and broadcasters.

The world champion United States team was expected to make the final and the 11 a.m. kickoff in Tokyo would have allowed NBC to broadcast the final at 10 p.m. on the east coast and 7 p.m. on the west.

MEDAL ALERT

New Zealand's Lisa Carrington has won the women's kayak single 500 to add to her gold medal haul at the Sea Forest Waterway.

Carrington won her third gold medal in three days, to go with her victories in the kayak single 200 and double 500. She is still scheduled to race the 500 fours.

Like her earlier races, Carrington was dominant from start to finish. Tamara Csipes of Hungary won silver. Denmark's Emma Aastrand Jorgensen won bronze.

MEDAL ALERT

Ryan Crouser has broken his own Olympic record on his way to defending his shot put title.

On his last attempt, Crouser went 23.30 meters to earn the first track and field gold for the American men at the Tokyo Games. U.S. teammate Joe Kovacs finished second and Tomas Walsh of New Zealand was third.

The 28-year-old Crouser went 22.52 meters when he won at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games.

Crouser is already the world-record holder after breaking a 31-year-old mark on June 18 at the U.S.

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Olympic trials. His throw that evening went 23.37 meters.

In the heat at Olympic Stadium, Crouser took the lead on his first attempt and saved his best for his final one.

Teenagers Quan Hongchan and Chen Yuxi dominated the semifinal round of the women's 10-meter platform as China seeks a sweep of the women's diving events.

The 14-year-old Quan led with 415.65 points and the 15-year-old Chen was second with 407.75.

Delaney Schnell of the United States advanced in third with 342.75 points.

The top 12 finishers of 18 starters qualified for the final later Thursday.

China has won every women's diving event at the past three Olympics.

The only diving event that China has not won at these Games came in the men's 10-meter synchro, which was won by Tom Daley and Matty Lee of Britain.

Chen is the reigning world champion in 10 meters and already won gold at these Games in the 10-meter synchro with teammate Zhang Jiaqi.

MEDAL ALERT

Hansle Parchment of Jamaica has won gold in the 110-meter hurdles at the Olympics by overtaking American Grant Holloway right near the end.

Holloway, the world champion, was in front through nine out of the 10 hurdles, but suddenly faded on the last. Parchment flew past him to add an Olympic gold to the bronze medal he won at the 2012 London Games.

Parchment won in his season's best time of 13.04 seconds.

Holloway took silver in 13.09 and another Jamaican, Ronald Levy, had the bronze in 13.10 seconds.

MEDAL ALERT

Hungary's Sandor Totka has won the gold medal in the men's kayak 200, becoming the first non-British paddler to win the event since it started in 2012.

Rizza Manfredi of Italy took silver and defending Olympic champion Liam Heath of Britain won bronze.

Totka beat Heath for the European championship earlier this year and bolted off the start line before claiming victory in a photo finish that saw 0.045 seconds separate gold from silver.

The U.S. men have failed to advance to the final of the 4x100 relay in track and field, extending a long string of failure in an event they used to own.

The team of Trayvon Bromell, Fred Kerley, Ronnie Baker and Cravon Gillespie finished sixth in the second heat of qualifying, done in by a series of bad exchanges that resulted in a time of 38.10 seconds.

This marks the 10th time since 1995 that the men have botched a relay at a world championships or Olympics. They were disqualified for a faulty exchange five years ago in Rio de Janeiro.

The U.S. women made it through with a second-place finish in their heat. They'll race for the gold medal Friday.

Tokyo Olympics organizers have apologized for introducing Ukrainian athletes as Russians at an artistic swimming medal ceremony.

Tokyo spokesman Masa Tanaka says it was "purely an operational mistake" when he announced the apology at the daily Tokyo Games news conference.

The error is more sensitive because of diplomatic tensions between Ukraine and Russia.

The Ukrainian region of Crimea was annexed by Russia soon after the 2014 Sochi Winter Games and conflict between government forces and Russia-backed separatists continues

The artistic swimming duet competition was won late Wednesday by the Russian Olympic Committee athletes Svetlana Romashina and Svetlana Kolesnichenko.

The Ukrainian duo of Marta Fiedina and Anastasiya Savchuk took bronze but were announced at the

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podium as representing the ROC.

Australia will play the United States for the beach volleyball gold medal.

Mariafe Artacho and Taliqua Clancy beat Latvia 23-21, 21-13 on Thursday to clinch at least a silver. Latvia's Tina Graudina and Anastasija Kravcenoka will play for the bronze against Switzerland, which lost to the Americans in the earlier semifinal.

Australia was an early Olympic beach volleyball power, when Natalie Cook and Kerri Pottharst claimed a bronze medal in Atlanta and gold at Bondi Beach in Sydney.

But they haven't reached the podium since.

The American "A-Team" has advanced to the gold medal match of the Olympic beach volleyball tournament.

April Ross and Alix Klineman beat Switzerland 21-12, 21-11 at Shiokaze Park on Thursday to clinch at least a silver medal. It will be the third medal for Ross, who won silver in London and bronze in Rio de Janeiro. Klineman is a first-time Olympian.

Switzerland's Joana Heidrich and Anouk Verge-Depre will play for the bronze against the loser of the second semifinal, between Australia and Latvia.

The Americans never trailed in the first set. They lost the first point of the second before rolling off three straight points to take a lead they never relinquished.

The victory also assures the United States of a beach volleyball medal for the seventh straight Summer Games. That's every one of them since the sport was added to the program in Atlanta in 1996.

Only Brazil had achieved the same success -- until now. It has been shut out in Tokyo for the first time, with none of its teams reaching the semifinals.

BMX rider Connor Fields was released from St. Luke's International Hospital in Tokyo on Thursday, five days after a horrific crash in his semifinal race at the Tokyo Olympics left him with a brain bleed and other injuries.

Dr. Jonathan Finnoff, the chief medical officer for the U.S. Olympic Committee, said in a statement that Fields will be able to return to his home in Henderson, Nevada, to begin his rehabilitation.

The 28-year-old Fields had already qualified for the finals last Friday based on his first two semifinal heats when the gate dropped for the final one. He was flanked by riders on each side of him as he landed hard on a jump into the first turn. The impact with the ground was severe enough, but Fields also was hit at high speed by two other riders.

He remained motionless while the race concluded. Medical personnel then rushed out to attend to Fields, who eventually was loaded onto a stretcher and taken to the hospital in an ambulance.

Fields sustained a brain hemorrhage in the crash, and while the Olympic neurosurgeon was on standby in case surgery was needed to relieve pressure on his brain, a follow-up CT scan taken the next morning showed no additional injuries.

Fields also had broken ribs and a collapsed lung from the crash.

MEDAL ALERT

Germany's Florian Wellbrock has added a gold medal in marathon swimming to his bronze medal at the pool, winning the men's 10-kilometer race at Tokyo Bay.

Wellbrock raced out to an early lead and was up front most of the way on another sweltering morning in Tokyo. Even with the race starting at 6:30 a.m. local time, the temperature was already 81 degrees (27.2 Celsius) with 80 percent humidity, making it feel like close to 90 degrees.

The stifling conditions apparently got to France's David Aubry, who dropped out of the race with less than two laps to go and was carried off the deck on a stretcher. There's no word yet on his condition.

Britain's Hector Pardoe also failed to finish.

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Wellbrock pulled away on the final lap to win by a dominating 25.3 seconds, finishing in 1 hour, 48 minutes, 33.7 seconds. He also won a bronze in the 1,500-meter freestyle on the last day of swimming at the pool.

The silver went to Hungary's Kristof Rasovsky in 1:48.59.0, while Italy's Gregorio Paltrinieri picked up the bronze in 1:49.01.1. The Italian was silver medalist in the 800 freestyle at the pool.

Defending Olympic marathon champion Ferry Weertman of the Netherlands finished seventh, while American Jordan Wilimovsky was 10th.

Airstrikes pummel Taliban in south; insurgents gain in north

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Afghan air force carried out more airstrikes against Taliban positions in southern Afghanistan on Thursday, as the insurgent force made additional gains in the country's north.

The European Union, United Nations and Human Rights Watch urged both sides to avoid causing civilian casualties as the fighting rages on. The Taliban has been on the offensive in recent months, as U.S. and NATO forces complete their pullout from the war-torn country. They have taken vast swaths of land and have now turned their guns on larger urban centers.

A defense ministry statement said air strikes were carried out across the country, including in the southern Helmand province, where the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah is being fiercely contested. The Taliban control of nine of the city's 10 police districts.

Residents in Lashkar Gah reported heavy bombing near the government radio and television station, which is under Taliban control. Several wedding halls and a guesthouse of the provincial governor are located near the radio and television station.

The fighting has driven thousands of people from Kandahar and Helmand provinces in the south to seek refuge in Kandahar city, which is under siege by the Taliban. Government forces control only three of Kandahar province's 17 districts.

The battle for the city remains at stalemate despite days of ground and air operations. Most of the markets are closed, and people in the four displacement camps lack proper access to water under a scorching sun.

In northern Afghanistan, the Taliban have taken control of most of the provincial capital of Sar-e-Pul, the head of its council, Mohammad Noor Rahmani said. In recent months, the group has gained control of dozens of districts across several provinces in the north.

Meanwhile, Jawzjan province in the north remains under a three-month Taliban attack. The stronghold of Marshal Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek warlord, it has lost eight out of ten districts to the insurgents, who continue to advance on the capital, Shibirghan city.

The Taliban onslaught seems to have intensified with the start of the final withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops in late April. As attacks intensify, Afghan security forces and government troops have retaliated with increasing air strikes, aided by the United States. This has raised growing concerns about civilian casualties across the country.

"We can tell you that we are deeply concerned about the safety and protection of people in Lashkar Gah, in the south, where tens of thousands of people could be trapped by fighting," Stephane Dujarric, the United Nations spokesman said on Wednesday.

"We, along with our humanitarian partners in Afghanistan, are assessing needs and responding in the south, as access allows," he said.

People living in urban centers have started a campaign in support of Afghan forces and saying no to violence in country shouting "Allahu Akbar" God is great starting from western Herat and continues to different other provinces.

Palestinian dad expects no justice for son killed by Israel

By JACK JEFFERY and IMAD ISSEID Associated Press

BEIT UMMAR, WEST BANK (AP) — A week after the death of his eldest son, Moayed al-Alami sat on the sofa on his ground floor patio, protectively hugging and kissing two of his remaining children.

The Israeli military has opened an investigation into the killing of 12-year-old Mohammed al-Alami who

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was shot by Israeli soldiers as he rode in the family car. But that is no comfort to his father, who is devastated by his son's death and has little faith that he will see justice.

"I have no confidence in the investigation until I see the soldiers in court," he said. The rear of Moayed's car is riddled with bullet holes and the back seats are still covered in bloodstains.

Mohammed was shot and killed by Israeli forces as he traveled with his father and two siblings in their hometown of Beit Ummar in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. His death sparked two days of violent clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli troops, resulting in the death of one protester.

Recounting the events of last week, al-Alami said he had just picked up some snacks for the children, using his car, when Mohammed asked to return to the store.

"Mohammed told me, 'father you have forgotten something.' I asked if it was necessary, and he said it was very necessary. So, I told him that we will go back and buy it," said al-Alami.

Al-Alami said he turned the car around. Moments later, his white Renault was struck by gunfire from the rear, including at least three bullets that he said hit Mohammed. The boy was rushed to hospital and operated on for four hours before he died.

The Israeli military has said soldiers in the area called on the van to stop, and that the forces fired warning shots and only aimed at the vehicle's tires. Al-Alami said he never heard any warnings. Over 10 bullet holes riddled the vehicle.

The army also said that al-Alami's car resembled a vehicle driven by a group of men who were seen burying what turned out to be a dead baby earlier that day.

Al-Alami's brother — who witnessed the entire event from the balcony -- said the two events were not related and that earlier, another family had been burying a stillborn baby in a cemetery.

"The three people who arrived earlier had come to bury a baby that had died in the womb," Ashraf Al-Alami said.

After the three people had left, he said he began to worry when he saw soldiers arrive. He feared they would mistake the burial site as a crime scene and grow suspicious. That was when his brother's car approached.

The Israel human rights group B'Tselem this week released what it said was security-camera video of the shooting. In the video, al-Alami's van is seen approaching a dip in the road, with a group of Israeli soldiers standing further down a hill.

Al-Alami is seen doing a U-turn before being chased up the street by troops, who are heard shouting at him to stop, before opening fire. The actual shooting is not seen, but at least a dozen shots are heard. B'Tselem said the video shows the family posed no threat to the troops.

The army has said that senior commanders and military police — which investigate suspected wrongdoing by troops— are involved in the probe.

But Moayed said that he did not expect the investigation to lead to anything. He said the military helped transfer the boy to the hospital after the shooting, but that he has not heard from investigators.

And B'Tselem, a major human rights group, grew so frustrated with the military justice system that in 2016 it halted its longtime practice of assisting in investigations. It accuses the army of whitewashing wrongdoing and says soldiers are rarely punished.

In the first seven months of this year, Israeli fire has killed 11 Palestinian children in the West Bank, surpassing the total number of child killings in 2020, according to the advocacy group Defense for Children Palestine.

Israeli soldiers man a watchtower next to Beit Ummar in order to protect traffic going in and out of the nearby Israeli settlement of Karmeit Zur.

Mohammed's funeral the following day resulted in large clashes in which a 20-year-old Palestinian man was killed by Israeli army fire. His funeral was held on Friday, followed by more clashes.

The mayor of Beit Ummar — who is also a member of the extended al-Alami family — said that most of Beit Ummar's 17,000 residents attended the boy's funeral.

"The soldiers did not allow us to bury our child in dignity," said Habis Al-Alami. "To kill a boy with just

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bread in his hand. It is a crime, we just want to be treated as human beings.”

EXPLAINER: What Olympic host Japan’s COVID ‘emergency’ means

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Japan is playing host to the Tokyo Olympics. But the capital, as well as other populous areas, are in the middle of a government-declared “state of emergency” to curb surging COVID-19 infections. What does that state of emergency mean? How is it enforced? We break it down here.

HOW LONG HAS THIS STATE OF EMERGENCY BEEN GOING ON?

Japan is now in its fourth state of emergency. Tokyo has been in that state much of this year. People are getting resigned to it, no longer alarmed by a situation that’s “critically urgent,” which is how the Japanese term translates, but accepting it as a new normal. So even as the nation celebrates medal winners, blaring ambulance sirens can be heard regularly. Tokyo has been racking up record daily cases, totaling several thousand, tripling since the Olympics opened July 23. Experts say that could reach 10,000 people in a couple of weeks.

WHAT IS THIS STATE OF EMERGENCY — OR WHAT ISN’T IT?

One thing it’s not is a lockdown. Restaurants and bars are asked to close early and can’t serve alcohol. The idea is that people who consume alcohol and are influenced by it talk in loud voices, and that spreads infections. But some medical experts say that’s unfairly targeting eateries when airborne variants can spread anywhere.

The states of emergency have varied slightly, with earlier ones not banning alcohol. Last year, schools were closed temporarily. The regions affected have also differed. Other areas have periodically been under a less stringent measure.

IS IT REALLY WORKING?

Some would say not. Tokyo’s streets are bustling with people, commuter trains are packed and, despite government-mandated requests for people to work from home, salarymen and salarywomen say their bosses demand they come into the office.

WHAT HAS IT MEANT FOR THE OLYMPICS?

The events are being held without spectators, although the stands aren’t totally empty because team and Olympic officials, as well as reporters, are there. Athletes are tested daily for COVID-19, and others involved with the Games are also regularly tested. Those tests are free. That’s in contrast to the general public, for whom such tests have been hard to get and cost hundreds of dollars each.

The Olympic “bubble” hasn’t been perfect, with about 30 people, almost all non-athlete Japanese workers, testing positive a day. Taisuke Nakata, a University of Tokyo professor who has been studying the effects of the emergency measures on the economy, says that number is insignificant compared to the movement of 126 million Japanese people and how that potentially spreads infections. Nakata believes people’s actions may finally change if the cases keep surging, but he isn’t sure.

AREN’T JAPANESE VACCINATED BY NOW?

Japan has among the slowest vaccine rollouts in the developed world, with about a third of the adult population now fully vaccinated. Although the elderly get priority, people have complained that signing up for the shots, by phone or online, has been frustrating, like winning coveted concert tickets with slots getting filled almost as soon as they open.

One may think Japan, home to the likes of Toyota Motor Corp. and Sony Corp., would be a production powerhouse. But it’s totally dependent on imported vaccines. A Made in Japan vaccine likely won’t arrive until next year, perhaps 2023. Critics say strict drug approval regulations, especially for vaccines, prevent speedy decision-making. The problem is also about the money. Former President Donald Trump’s Project Warp Speed totaled \$2 billion. Japan has earmarked some 50 billion yen (\$500 million) toward vaccine development.

Philippe Fauchet, who has two decades of experience in the pharmaceutical industry in Japan, serving as head of GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi-Aventis, says the nation’s conservative risk-averse “insular culture”

hurt its response to the pandemic.

ARE PEOPLE WORRIED?

Although Japan tends to be an orderly and conformist place, protesters have taken to the streets to oppose the Olympics. They say gathering tens of thousands of people from all over the world sends the wrong message during a pandemic about valuing human life. Dissatisfaction with the political leadership lies deep, with support ratings for Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga nose-diving. The sentiment among regular Japanese, apparent in the quiet defiance of those revelers crowding Tokyo bars in the middle of an emergency, might go something like this: If you're risking your health to go to work anyway, why not party a little?

Tokyo logs record 5,042 cases as infections surge amid Games

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Tokyo reported 5,042 new daily coronavirus cases on Thursday, hitting a record since the pandemic began as the infections surge in the Japanese capital hosting the Olympics.

The additional cases brought the total for Tokyo to 236,138. Nationwide, Japan reported more than 14,000 cases on Wednesday for a total of 970,000.

Tokyo has been under a state of emergency since mid-July, and four other areas have since been added and extended until Aug. 31. But the measures, basically a ban on alcohol in restaurants and bars and their shorter hours, are increasingly ignored by the public, which has become tired of restrictions.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has denied that the July 23-Aug. 8 Olympics have caused a rise in infections.

Alarmed by the pace of the spread, some experts have called for a current state of emergency in Tokyo and five other areas to be expanded nationwide.

Instead, Suga on Thursday announced a milder version of the emergency measures in eight prefectures, including Fukushima in the east and Kumamoto in the south, expanding the areas to 13 prefectures.

Experts at a Tokyo metropolitan government panel cautioned that infections propelled by the more contagious delta variant have become "explosive" and could exceed 10,000 cases a day in two weeks.

Immigrant detentions soar despite Biden's campaign promises

By PHILIP MARCELO and GERALD HERBERT Associated Press

WINNFIELD, La. (AP) — Alexander Martinez says he fled from homophobia, government persecution and the notorious MS-13 gang in El Salvador only to run into abuse and harassment in America's immigration detention system.

Since crossing the border illegally in April, the 28-year-old has bounced between six different facilities in three states. He said he contracted COVID-19, faced racist taunts and abuse from guards and was harassed by fellow detainees for being gay.

"I find myself emotionally unstable because I have suffered a lot in detention," Martinez said last week at Winn Correctional Center in Louisiana. "I never imagined or expected to receive this inhumane treatment."

He's among a growing number of people in immigration detention centers nationwide, many of whom, like Martinez, have cleared their initial screening to seek asylum in the U.S.

The number of detainees has more than doubled since the end of February, to nearly 27,000 as of July 22, according to the most recent data from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. That's above the roughly 22,000 detained last July under then-President Donald Trump, though it's nowhere close to the record in August 2019, when the number of detainees exceeded 55,000, ICE data shows.

The rising detentions is a sore point for President Joe Biden's pro-immigration allies, who hoped he would reverse his predecessor's hardline approach. Biden campaigned on ending "prolonged" detention and use of private prisons for immigration detention, which house the majority of those in ICE custody.

"We're at this really strange moment with him," said Silky Shah, executive director of Detention Watch Network, which advocates for ending immigration detention outright. "There's still time to turn things

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around, but his policies so far haven't matched his campaign rhetoric."

In May, the Biden administration terminated contracts with two controversial ICE detention centers — one in Georgia and another in Massachusetts — getting praise from advocates who hoped it would be the start of a broader rollback.

But no other facilities have lost their ICE contracts, and Biden has proposed funding for 32,500 immigrant detention beds in his budget, a modest decrease from 34,000 funded by Trump.

A White House spokesman said Biden's budget reduces the number of ICE detention beds and shifts some of their use to processing immigrants for parole and other alternatives.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said in a recent congressional hearing that he's "concerned about the overuse of detention" and pledged to continue to review problematic facilities.

The rising number of asylum-seekers detained for prolonged periods is among the most concerning developments, said Heidi Altman, policy director at the National Immigrant Justice Center.

The number of detainees who have passed their initial asylum screening has leapt from around 1,700 in April to 3,400 in late July, making up about 13% of all detainees, according to the most recent ICE data.

"By ICE's own policy, these are people that shouldn't be in detention any longer," Altman said, citing ICE's process for paroling asylum-seekers until a judge decides their case.

ICE officials declined to comment.

Martinez, the Salvadoran national, cleared his initial screening in May, which determines whether an asylum-seeker has a "credible fear" of persecution in their homeland.

But his lawyers say ICE is keeping him detained because it wrongly believes he's a member of the MS-13 gang.

Martinez says he fled El Salvador after he and his family received death threats because he testified against the gang in the killing of one of his friends. He says investigators tried to get him to testify in other gang-related murders but he was reluctant because he had not witnessed those crimes.

"I was very scared," Martinez said. "I told the investigators that I was going to leave the case. I didn't want to go through the process anymore because I don't want them to hurt my family, let alone me."

ICE officials in New Orleans declined to comment on Martinez's case and specific concerns about treatment at the Winn prison, citing federal confidentiality rules for cases dealing with victims of violence and other crimes.

Winn, one of the nation's largest ICE detention centers, has long angered civil rights groups. The Southern Poverty Law Center in June called on the Biden administration to cancel its government contract, citing abuse, medical neglect, racism and other mistreatment at the facility, which is tucked in a dense forest in rural Louisiana and ringed by barbed wire.

An agency spokesperson said ICE generally is committed to ensuring detainees are in a safe, secure and clean environment, are provided comprehensive medical care and have their concerns and complaints addressed by staff in writing.

Immigration opponents argue that a more troubling trend than the rise in detentions is an apparent drop-off in ICE enforcement in cities and towns.

As of last month, more than 80% of detainees had been apprehended by Border Patrol officials, and less than 20% by ICE agents, the ICE data shows. Last July under Trump, 40% of detainees were picked up by the Border Patrol, and 60% by ICE.

That means most of those in detention were apprehended trying to enter the country illegally, not from local immigration enforcement, said Andrew Arthur, a fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for lower immigration.

"We're simply not enforcing immigration law in the interior of the country," he said.

Meanwhile, detainees and advocates call for closing detention facilities in favor of monitoring paroled immigrants with GPS devices and other measures.

ICE detainees at the Bergen County Jail in New Jersey filed an administrative complaint last month with Homeland Security's civil rights office seeking an investigation into allegations including poor sanitary conditions and medical neglect during the pandemic.

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"At the end of day, we're detainees, not inmates," said Jean Claude Wright, a 38-year-old native of Trinidad and former U.S. Air Force officer named in the complaint. "But this is worse than prison."

ICE detainees at the Plymouth County House of Corrections in Massachusetts similarly sent a letter to supporters in June, detailing issues like restrictions on visits.

Allison Cullen says she hasn't been able to visit her husband, a Brazilian national, since before the pandemic.

The couple's youngest child was only a few months old when Flavio Andrade Prado was detained, and he hasn't seen his now-2-year-old daughter in person in months, she said.

"We're in this never-ending limbo," said Cullen, a U.S. citizen from Brockton, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) south of Boston. "There is no easy way to talk to my kids about what's going on and when Dad is coming home."

Back in Louisiana, Martinez says he's asked to be placed in solitary confinement, fearing for his safety.

Two detainees who harassed him for being gay were moved, but ICE officials later sent him to a higher-security unit where he said many gang-affiliated detainees are housed.

He says he spends most of his days in his cell, with limited access to communications and recreation.

"It's really difficult and miserable, and I'm all alone all the time," Martinez said. "I'm a good person. This treatment is inhuman."

He wants to settle in San Jose, California, where a friend promised to help him find work. He wants to send money back to El Salvador — his mother has cancer and his younger sister is in college.

"I just want what everyone wants," Martinez said, "to get out, be free and help support my family."

Suspected rape and killing of Indian girl triggers protests

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Angry villagers in the Indian capital held a protest Thursday outside a crematorium where they say a 9-year-old girl was raped and killed earlier this week.

The protesters, sitting on a makeshift stage, held placards demanding justice for the girl, who lived nearby. The case has revived outrage over the number of gruesome sexual crimes against women in India as well the treatment of those on the lowest rung of the country's rigid caste system, from which the girl hailed.

Four men suspected in the crime, all of them workers at the crematorium, have been arrested but have yet to be charged, said police officer Ingit Pratap Singh.

Police said the girl told her mother on Sunday that she was going to get water at a tap at the crematorium in southwest New Delhi. About 30 minutes later, police said, the crematorium's priest called the mother, who was told that her daughter had been electrocuted.

The mother was shown her daughter's body, which the suspects then cremated without calling authorities, police said.

The mother said she saw her daughter's body on the floor of the crematorium with bruises all over. She said the priest and three other men at the crematorium told her not to call the police and threatened her.

The mother cannot be named due to Indian law that prohibits releasing information that could identify the victims of sexual crimes.

Villagers said some of the girl's remains were saved from the crematorium.

Singh said the extent of the cremation meant a post-mortem examination was unable to establish whether the girl was raped or how she was killed.

"The cause of death is inconclusive," he said.

Police said forensic experts were testing her clothing for bodily fluids or other evidence.

The suspects are in police custody but under Indian law can't be formally charged until the police investigation is complete.

Rape and sexual violence have been under the spotlight in India since the 2012 gang rape and killing of a 23-year-old student on a New Delhi bus. The attack sparked massive protests and inspired lawmakers to order the creation of fast-track courts dedicated to rape cases and stiffen penalties for those convicted

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of the crime.

Four men sentenced to death for the 2012 attack were later hanged.

Nevertheless such crimes persist, and according to government data a woman is raped every 15 minutes in India.

Rights organizations say that woman who are on the lowest level of India's unforgiving Hindu caste hierarchy — known as Dalits — are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and other attacks.

They say men from dominant castes often use sexual violence as a weapon to reinforce repressive hierarchies. They say police frequently fail to investigate such crimes and survivors and the families of victims struggle to get justice.

Tina Verma, an activist who was among the 200 protesters gathered Thursday outside the crematorium, said she frequently used to see the girl begging outside a Sufi Muslim shrine just across from the cremation ground.

"I shudder at the thought of what was done to her," said Verma, who has been on a hunger strike for two days to demand justice for the girl. "This is a barbaric crime and must be dealt with swiftly."

US routs Australia 97-78, to play for more basketball gold

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

SAITAMA, Japan (AP) — The U.S. has owned gold for three straight Olympics, making the middle of the medals platform property of the Americans.

The Australians tried everything they could to shove them off.

"They hit us with a nice punch," Kevin Durant said after their men's Olympic semifinals matchup. "We knew that team was going to get us down early and see how we'd respond."

The response was not what Australia had hoped.

Durant scored 23 points, Devin Booker had 20 and the U.S. blew past and eventually blew away the Aussies 97-78 on Thursday after falling into a 15-point hole.

With their gold-medal streak looking in jeopardy midway through the second quarter, the Americans overwhelmed the Australians with a 48-14 stretch that gave them a 74-55 lead after three periods.

The U.S. missed its first 10 3-point attempts and didn't hit one until late in the second quarter. Then it felt as if the Americans hardly missed again, with Booker making three 3-pointers.

"Obviously, getting down 15 points you know you've got to bring it up a notch and that's what we did," Booker said.

Jrue Holiday had 11 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the U.S., which will play European champion Slovenia or France for a fourth straight gold medal Saturday. The French beat the Americans 83-76 in their Olympic opener.

That was part of a 2-3 start to the summer for the U.S., which included a loss to the Australians in an exhibition game in Las Vegas.

The Americans don't look like that team anymore.

They look like the best team in the world, like those that used to win gold with ease.

It's clear the Americans still have their grip on gold and it's going to take more than a few bad minutes for anyone to take it away from them.

Patty Mills scored 15 points for Australia, which still needs a win for its first Olympic basketball medal.

The Australians have finished fourth four times at the Olympics, including in 2016, but believed this time they could bring home gold.

For 1 ½ quarters, it looked like they'd get a chance.

They dropped the Americans into their second double-digit deficit in two games, outplaying the world's No. 1-ranked team and looking capable of forcing the U.S. to settle for anything other than Olympic gold for the first time since the Americans stumbled home with bronze in 2004.

But the U.S. recovered and romped after halftime, improving to 9-0 against Australia at the Olympics.

"In the locker room, it basically was, 'How bad do you want it?' And we came out with the same intent we

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had in the first half," Australia's Nic Kay said. "We didn't do it at the level we needed to. It's unfortunate."

The minutes before the first semifinal were another unusual scene in these most unusual Olympics, where the public address announcer pleaded multiple times for players to clear the court while Durant and Mills were warming up so a robot that entertains the almost-nonexistent audience could perform his shooting routine before the game.

The robot missed both his attempts from halfcourt. His long-range shooting was off.

So were the Americans, at least for a little while.

The Australians opened an eight-point lead while the Americans managed only one basket over a span of more than four minutes. Australia took a 24-18 lead into the second quarter after Chris Goulding made a 3-pointer in the closing seconds.

The U.S. kept misfiring from behind the arc and even had some shaky moments at the rim — Khris Middleton had an open dunk attempt coming off the baseline but slammed the ball into the front of the rim.

The Australians took advantage with eight straight points midway through the second. Dante Exum made a 3-pointer, Matisse Thybulle converted a three-point play after scoring on the break and Exum threw a lob to Jock Landale to make it 41-26 with 5:23 to go.

But the Australians got only one basket the rest of the half and will look back at that stretch if they again go home without a medal. They still led by 11 with 2:59 to go but the Americans cut the deficit to 45-42 by halftime.

"Last five minutes of the second quarter they were fantastic and it continued into the third," U.S. coach Gregg Popovich said.

The Americans started the second half with two buckets from Holiday and two more from Durant. By the time the Australians got a basket nearly four minutes into the half, the U.S. had opened a nine-point lead.

The U.S. outscored Australia 32-10 and led 74-55 heading into the fourth quarter.

"Everything fell in line for us in that second half and that's who we are," Durant said.

In Tokyo, social platforms help the Pandemic Olympics shine

By JENNA FRYER AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — A condom fixed Jessica Fox's canoe, and skateboarder Jagger Eaton celebrated his bronze medal by broadcasting live on Instagram. Margielyn Didal "let" Tony Hawk take a picture with her to post on Facebook.

The stability of the cardboard framed beds in the athlete's village has been tested by Olympians who treated them as trampolines on nearly every social media platform, and a Greek water polo player created a dating app — which might have come in handy for American rugby player Ilona Maher, who rolled with the schtick of the "Thirsty Olympian."

The made-to-watch Tokyo Games, where pandemic precautions prevent permitting spectators, have become a digital affair more than ever. From social media to streaming, athletes and their events are reaching the public in record-smashing and trailblazing ways.

More than 100 million unique users had visited Olympic digital platforms or used the Tokyo 2020 app through the first week of the games. U.S. rightsholder NBC has notched 2.5 billion streaming minutes of Olympics content across all its digital platforms, the network said, a 77% increase from the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games. The first week in Tokyo was the highest-ever weekly usage for streaming platform Peacock.

But it's the social media platforms that are causing the breakout buzz. Social posts by Olympics accounts on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Weibo generated 3.7 billion engagements. The Olympics' social media accounts have a combined total of 75 million followers.

Then there is the TikTok phenomenon. Launched in 2017, the short-form, video-sharing app has been one of the preferred social media platforms of these games. Athletes you'd never heard about before Tokyo — particularly those from niche sports — have used TikTok to capture moments that have not only gone viral but became the avenue to introduce themselves to the world.

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Karate, skateboarding, sport climbing and surfing — all sports that resonate with a younger demographic — certainly helped drive traffic to TikTok. The podium winners in women's street skateboarding were 13, 13 and 16 years old, and silver medalist Rayssa Leal of Brazil has 3.4 million followers on TikTok, half of her 6.5 million followers on Instagram.

Even the official Olympics page has soared with more than three billion views of videos related to its #OlympicSpirit challenge.

"TikTok, as my son told me recently, is the digital place of choice of younger audiences," IOC spokesman Mark Adams says. "The Games has to go to where the people are."

WHO STOOD OUT

The world was familiar with gymnast SIMONE BILES before her second Olympics, and teammate SUNISA LEE was quite popular, too. After Lee won the women's all-around, she surpassed 1 million followers on her Instagram account. When she settled for bronze on uneven bars, the 18-year-old admitted her increased fame had been a distraction.

But ILONA MAHER? Few knew of the 24-year-old rugby player from Vermont who might very well be TikTok's breakout star of the Olympics. Posting while wearing a red, white and blue bucket hat, the self-deprecating 5-foot-10, 200-pound nursing school graduate read an article that called her "the thirsty Olympian" and ran with it.

Maher uses a #beastbeautybrains campaign and hopes her videos spread body image positivity, bring more attention to the sport of rugby, and, most importantly, land her some endorsement deals.

"As a female athlete in an emerging sport, I don't make a lot of money, so I do hope it opens the doors for brand deals," Maher says. As for the message she's trying to send young girls: "It's OK to take up space. You can be so many things, a beast on the rugby field, a beauty whenever, and have as much brains as the smartest person out there."

JAGGER EATON arrived in Tokyo with a following in the skateboarding community that began in 2012 when he set a record as the youngest X Games competitor at age 11. But it wasn't until his sport was added to the Olympics that the rest of America became familiar with the 20-year-old Arizonan who won bronze with AirPods in his ears and his iPhone in his pocket.

When he messed up a trick and then was shown searching for his fallen AirPods, Eaton went viral.

"I am so stoked that skateboarding got that many eyes on it. I think it really pushes the sport forward and legitimizes skateboarding," says Eaton, who says he has "no idea" why America fell in love with him. His social media presence is deliberate, with a defined aesthetic he hopes legitimizes skateboarding.

"I feel like people really see how much I love skateboarding and how much I want to give back to the skate community, as well as the younger generation that has given me so much motivation," Eaton says.

Australian canoeist JESSICA FOX found her fame not by winning gold in canoe slalom or bronze in kayak slalom, but when she posted a TikTok video of someone using a condom to repair the nose of her boat.

Filipino skateboarder MARGIELYN DIDAL posted a picture alongside Tony Hawk, considered the greatest skateboarder of all-time, that jumped in on Hawk's running joke that he's often misidentified in public. When her post was misinterpreted as Didal didn't recognize Hawk, the GOAT had to explain.

ERIK SHOJI, an American volleyball player, gained attention with TikTok food reviews and tours from the athlete's village, along with behind-the-scenes looks at the athlete's experience. He didn't take social media seriously until he started a YouTube channel last year while battling COVID.

Shoji amped up his presence as both a way to preserve his memories and spotlight the U.S. men's volleyball team off the court.

"People see us playing but don't really know us off of the court," the Hawaiian says. "I hope that by showing myself and my teammates on TikTok that viewers were able to get to know us in a different light and fall in love with our team."

Halfway around the world in Slovakia, 18-year-old synchronized swimmer SILVIA SOLYMOSYOVA gained traction even though she's not yet an Olympian. Solymosyova has studied TikTok trends to gain 1.2 million followers while reaching the U.S. audience with her underwater videos.

"Lots of Slovaks think that everything from abroad is better. My region is too small and my niche is too

specific. That's why I was trying to engage mostly with U.S. TikTokers and target the English speaking audience," she said. "Because I'm GenZ who is setting trends on TikTok, I've learned necessary skills, and I'm a little ahead."

Then there's MARIOS KAPOTSIS, who is trying to lead Greece to its first-ever Olympic medal in men's water polo. The 29-year-old developed a dating app called "Vespr" that only functions at night.

"So the app starts when the sun goes down, it's open, and when the sun goes up, it's closed," Kapotsis says. "So it's only during the night. Whatever you do during the night, the next night, everything is finished. So every night is something new."

Worst-Case Scenario: Firms wrestle with supply bottlenecks

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Toy maker Eric Poses created a card game last year he called The Worst-Case Scenario, a wry reference to the way the coronavirus had upended normal life.

He had no idea.

In a twist that Poses never could have predicted, his game itself would become caught up in the latest fallout from the health crisis: a backlogged global supply chain that has delayed shipments around the world and sent freight costs rocketing.

Worst-Case Scenario, produced in China, was supposed to reach U.S. retailer Target's distribution centers in early June. Instead, the games were stuck for weeks at the Port of Seattle and didn't arrive until mid-July.

"It's consuming my life," said Poses, who started his Miami Beach, Florida-based toy company All Things Equal in 1997, selling games from the trunk of his car. "You do everything right. You produce on time. You're psyched about your product."

And then ... unforeseeable disaster.

Like other importers, Poses is contending with a perfect storm of supply trouble — rising prices, overwhelmed ports, a shortage of ships, trains, trucks — that is expected to last into 2022. The experience proved disturbing enough that Poses is reconsidering a cost-saving decision he made five years ago: to shift production of his games and toys out of the United States to China. Now, he thinks, it might make sense to bring production back — at least to Mexico, if not the United States — to protect him from the risks of relying on factories an ocean away in China.

"I'm willing to make smaller margins," he said, "if it means less anxiety."

Other American companies are making similar calculations: 52% of the U.S. manufacturing executives surveyed by the consulting firm Kearney said they have started buying more supplies in the United States in response to COVID-related supply disruptions. Forty-seven percent said they plan to reduce reliance on supplies or factories from a single country; 41% specifically said they wanted to cut their dependence on China.

And not just because of the virus-related bottlenecks in shipping, severe as they are. Companies are worried, too, about becoming caught in the crossfire of a trade war between the United States and China, the world's two biggest economies.

The conflict began when President Donald Trump imposed taxes on \$360 billion worth of Chinese imports to protest Beijing's combative effort to surpass American technological dominance.

But neither Chinese leader Xi Jinping nor Trump's successor, Joe Biden, appears to be in a hurry to seek peace.

"The whole relationship is in bad shape," said Rosemary Coates, a longtime consultant to companies wanting to establish factories in China.

In America, there is bipartisan frustration over China's sharp-elbowed trade practices — which, critics say, includes cybertheft — as well as its crackdown on civil liberties in Hong Kong, repression of Muslims in Xinjiang and bullying of neighbors in South and Southeast Asia.

"Are we in a 21st century version of the Cold War? Yes," said trade lawyer Michael Taylor, a partner at King & Spalding. "The endgame is not nuclear annihilation. The endgame now is economic dominance."

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For decades, companies have piled up profits by moving manufacturing to China and other low-wage countries, then exporting their products back to the United States. They have also held down costs by keeping inventories to a minimum. Under a “just-in-time” approach, factories buy materials only as they need them to meet orders.

But relying on distant factories and keeping inventories threadbare is risky. In March 2011, an earthquake and tsunami damaged auto parts plants in northwestern Japan. The resulting parts shortages temporarily idled car plants around the world, including some in the United States — a sobering reminder that lengthy supply chains are vulnerable to disruption.

Then came Trump’s trade war. Importers scrambled to reconfigure their supply chains and find alternatives to Chinese factories after Trump imposed stiff tariffs on goods from China.

But they’d never seen anything like what COVID-19 inflicted on global commerce.

As countries locked down and families took refuge at home in February and March last year, companies sold off inventories and canceled orders from suppliers. And the economy did, in fact, collapse: In the United States, gross domestic product, the broadest measure of economic output, fell at a 31.2% annual rate from April through June 2020 — the worst quarter in records dating to 1947.

Then something unexpected happened.

“What nobody knew was that when you send everybody home, the first thing we all do is shop” online, said Lewis Black, CEO of Almonty Industries, which mines the rare metal tungsten. “You had, on one hand, inventories being run down and manufacturing ground to a halt, and on the other, people were spending like crazy.”

Fueled by pent-up consumer demand, especially as vaccines allowed economies to reopen and families to get back outside again, growth roared back. The U.S. economy expanded at a stunning clip — a record annual rate of 33.8% from July through September 2020 — and kept chugging along, most recently registering a healthy 6.5% annual growth rate from April through June this year.

Suddenly, companies were overwhelmed with orders they couldn’t meet.

“They had an oops moment,” Black said.

“It’s a classic case of overreacting on the front end and having to play catchup,” said Tom Derry, CEO of the Institute for Supply Management, an association of purchasing managers. “No one really foresaw the strength in the surge of demand Supply just can’t keep up.”

As companies hurried to meet surging demand, the cost of raw materials soared: The price of oil is up more than 70% over the past year, aluminum 55%. Tin prices have doubled. The price of high density polyethylene blow-molded plastic — common in bottles, fuel tanks, industrial drums and other products — has surged 157%, according to the Plastics Exchange spot market.

Freight costs shot up, too, as companies tried to book shipping containers. The Baltic Dry Index, which measures shipping costs, has rocketed more than 700% since mid-May 2020.

Getting products onto container ships was hard. But that wasn’t the end of the trouble. Ports were overwhelmed when the cargo arrived.

“They couldn’t get the ships in and out,” said Richard Gottlieb, CEO of the consultancy Global Toy Experts. “They were backed up. You know that horrible experience where your airplane lands and there’s no open gate? That’s what happened to containers.”

The result is that the supply chain breakdown is paralyzing many businesses.

Consider Elmer Schultz Services, a Philadelphia company that repairs and maintains kitchen equipment for restaurants and other clients. It is facing maddening delays in getting parts. It used to take seven to 10 days to get backordered parts. Now, it takes three or four weeks.

“It’s very frustrating to tell a customer we can’t fix their oven for three or four weeks,” said Kirby Malon, president of Elmer Schultz and of the trade group Commercial Food Equipment Service Association.

Glitches made things worse. The huge container ship Ever Given got stuck in the Suez canal for a week in March, cutting off shipping between Asia and Europe. The world’s fourth-busiest port — Yantian near the Chinese manufacturing center Shenzhen — was shut down for a month by a resurgence of COVID

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cases in late May.

"When you give up your own manufacturing and let somebody manufacture for you — if it all goes well, you can make more money. But the reason you can make more money is there's more risk," said Taylor, the trade lawyer. "And that risk is supply disruptions, labor issues, quality control, theft of your" intellectual property.

Importers tried to calculate how much of the higher costs they could pass on to their customers. At Mindscope Products near Los Angeles, owner George Balanchi wants to avoid raising the prices he charges retailers for his company's toys, including remote-controlled cars and the Jabberin' Jack talking pumpkin.

"It's tough," he said.

Raising prices, he said, is easier online. He has upped the online price of Mindscope's radio-control stunt car to \$22.99 from \$19.99 and plans another price hike to \$24.99 next year.

Companies that resisted moving production overseas now enjoy an advantage. They don't have to wait for their products to cross the ocean — or figure out whether they can pass along to customers the import taxes that hit them at the U.S. border.

"The guys who stuck through the tough time while their competitors had huge profit margins now look like they were smarter than everybody thought they were," Taylor said.

Make-A-Fort in Wichita, Kansas, is one of the fortunate — or visionary — ones. Co-founder Kent Johnson decided to make his company's products — easy-to-assemble cardboard fortresses to play in — in the United States. He didn't like the long lead times required for manufacturing overseas. He wanted more control over the quality of the product and wanted to be able visit the assembly lines regularly.

And he wanted to keep jobs in America.

"We started out doing it at a disadvantage," he said. "We just got a little bit lucky. We don't have a lot of supply chains."

Freight charges are way up in the United States, he said, but that's still nothing like the exploding cost of shipping containers.

Mursix Corp., which makes precision metal components for the auto and healthcare industries, has been pounded by higher steel costs and shipping bottlenecks.

"We used to be able to put something on a boat and get it in five to seven weeks," said Andy Dieringer, director of supply chain for the Yorktown, Indiana, company. Now, it takes nine to 11 weeks for shipments to arrive from China.

As a result, the company is looking for new suppliers in Mexico, said company co-owner Susan Murray Carlock, also vice president of business development. "I could see us being able to get there by next year" — maybe by the second quarter of 2020, she said.

But leaving China isn't easy. Costs there remain low. And specialized suppliers cluster in Chinese manufacturing centers, making it easy for factories to get parts when they need them.

At All Things Equal, for example, Poses laments that "I have not yet had luck in finding a North American factory to produce my games at a competitive price. But, I'm still trying!"

"There are zillions of parts that are not made in the U.S. and probably won't be made in the U.S. because they're low-cost parts and because the industry is so vertically integrated," said Coates, the consultant, who is executive director of the Reshoring Institute, a nonprofit that helps companies manufacture in the United States.

It can also be risky. Companies might be forced to leave equipment behind, raising the possibility that the Chinese workers they've trained can put the abandoned molds and machine tools to work cranking out competing products.

"It's complicated to extract yourself from China," Coates said, "and often very expensive."

But growing awareness of the risks of depending on supplies that must cross a vast ocean — especially at a time of U.S.-China tensions — is making U.S. companies look for alternatives closer to home. After all, major supply chain disruptions are becoming more common, the consulting firm McKinsey has found

"Although COVID feels like such a black swan — and it is — disruptions in supply chains have been increasing in severity and frequency," said Katy George, a McKinsey partner.

Once rare, supply chain breakdowns that last a month or more are now occurring every 3.7 years, McKinsey found, noting in a report that “a single severe event that disrupts production for 100 days — something that happens every five to seven years on average — could erase almost a year’s earnings in some industries.”

Delta variant challenges China’s costly lockdown strategy

By JOE McDONALD and HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The delta variant is challenging China’s costly strategy of isolating cities, prompting warnings that Chinese leaders who were confident they could keep the coronavirus out of the country need a less disruptive approach.

As the highly contagious variant pushes leaders in the United States, Australia and elsewhere to renew restrictions, President Xi Jinping’s government is fighting the most serious outbreak since last year’s peak in Wuhan. The ruling Communist Party is reviving tactics that shut down China: Access to a city of 1.5 million people has been cut off, flights canceled and mass testing ordered in some areas.

That “zero tolerance” strategy of quarantining every case and trying to block new infections from abroad helped to contain last year’s outbreak and has kept China largely virus-free. But its impact on work and life for millions of people is prompting warnings that China needs to learn to control the virus without repeatedly shutting down the economy and society.

Zhang Wenhong, a Shanghai doctor who became prominent during the Wuhan outbreak, suggested in a social media post that China’s strategy could change. “We will definitely learn more” from the ongoing outbreak, he said, calling it a stress test for the nation.

“The world needs to learn how to coexist with this virus,” wrote Zhang, who has 3 million followers on the widely used Sina Weibo platform.

China’s controls will be tested when thousands of athletes, reporters and others arrive for the Winter Olympics in Beijing in February. And the ruling party faces a politically sensitive change of leadership in late 2022, for which leaders want upbeat economic conditions.

Last year, China shut down much of the world’s second-biggest economy and cut off almost all access to cities with a total of 60 million people — tactics imitated on a smaller scale by governments from Asia to the Americas. That caused China’s most painful economic contraction in five decades, but Beijing was able to allow business and domestic travel to resume in March 2020.

The new infections, many in people who have already been vaccinated, have jolted global financial markets, which worry Beijing’s response might disrupt manufacturing and supply chains. The main stock indexes in Shanghai, Tokyo and Hong Kong sank Tuesday but were rising again Thursday.

China needs to shift to creating barriers to infection within communities by stepping up vaccinations and quickly treating infected people while allowing business and travel to go ahead, said Xi Chen, a health economist at the Yale School of Public Health. He said country needs access to the full range of vaccines, including allowing in the shot developed by Germany’s BioNTech.

“I don’t think ‘zero tolerance’ can be sustained,” said Chen. “Even if you can lock down all the regions in China, people might still die, and more might die due to hunger or loss of jobs.”

But Beijing has shown no sign of abandoning its tactics.

Disease controls must “be even faster, more firm, stricter, more expansive and ready,” He Qinghua, an official of the National Health Commission’s Disease Control Bureau, said at a news conference Saturday.

The year’s biggest outbreak has tentatively been traced to airport employees who cleaned a Russian airliner on July 10 in Nanjing, northwest of Shanghai in Jiangsu province, according to health officials.

Some travelers flew through Nanjing to Zhangjiajie, a popular tourist spot southwest of Shanghai in Hunan province, turning that city into a center for the virus’s spread. The disease was carried to Beijing and other cities in more than 10 provinces.

On Tuesday, the government of Zhangjiajie announced no one was allowed to leave the city, imitating controls imposed on Wuhan, where the first virus cases were identified, and other cities last year.

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Flights to Nanjing and Yangzhou, a nearby city with 94 cases, were suspended. Trains from those cities and 21 others to Beijing were canceled. Jiangsu province set up highway checkpoints to test drivers. The government called on people in Beijing and the southern province of Guangzhou not to leave those areas if possible.

In Yangzhou, children at two tutoring centers were quarantined after a classmate tested positive, according to Zhou Xiaoxiao, a university student there. She said some parts of the city were sealed.

Eggs and some other food was scarce after shoppers cleared out supermarkets in anticipation of a lockdown, Zhou said. She said the government was delivering rice to households.

"The price of vegetables has risen. That's nothing to me. But to the kind of family whose life isn't very good and who have no income, it's very troublesome," said Zhou, 20.

The 1,142 infections reported since mid-July, many linked to Nanjing, are modest compared with tens of thousands of new daily infections in India or the United States. But they jolted leaders in China, which hasn't recorded a fatality since early February.

The outbreak poses "serious challenges to the country's hard-won victory in the epidemic battle," said the newspaper The Global Times, which is published by the ruling party's People's Daily.

China has reported 4,636 deaths out of about 93,000 confirmed cases.

So far, most of the people infected in Nanjing had been vaccinated, and few cases are severe, the head of the critical care unit at the hospital of the city's Southeastern University, Yang Yi, told the Shanghai news outlet The Paper.

She said that means "vaccines are protective" — though concerns remain that Chinese-made vaccines offer less protection than some others.

Authorities have blamed Nanjing airport managers and local officials for failing to enforce safety rules and to detect infections for 10 days until July 20, after the virus spread.

A 64-year-old woman who is believed to have carried the virus from Nanjing to Yangzhou was arrested Tuesday on charges of hindering disease prevention, police announced.

Cleaning staff at Nanjing's new international terminal mingled with co-workers in the domestic wing, when they should have been separated, according to news reports. The Russian flight was diverted due to bad weather from Shanghai, where airports are better equipped to handle foreign travelers.

Still, the city of 9.3 million people is the second-biggest in eastern China after Shanghai and has more resources than many smaller cities.

China needs to learn how to "allow the virus to exist" in areas with high vaccination rates and stronger health care, said Chen, the economist. He noted some areas have vaccinated at least 80% of adults.

"I don't think they are blind to this," said Chen. "They should already be thinking about it."

At least 10 dead as van carrying migrants crashes in Texas

By TERRY WALLACE Associated Press

An overloaded van carrying 29 migrants crashed Wednesday on a remote South Texas highway, killing at least 10 people, including the driver, and injuring 20 others, authorities said.

The crash happened shortly after 4 p.m. Wednesday on U.S. 281 in Encino, Texas, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of McAllen. Sgt. Nathan Brandley of the Texas Department of Public Safety says the van, designed to hold 15 passengers, was speeding as the driver tried to veer off the highway onto Business Route 281. He lost control of the top-heavy van, which slammed into a metal utility pole and a stop sign.

The van was not being pursued, said Brooks County Sheriff Urbino.

Martinez said he believed all of the passengers were migrants. Brandley said the death toll was initially announced as 11 but was later revised. He also said the 20 who survived the initial crash all have serious to critical injuries.

The identities of the 30 in the van were being withheld until relatives can be notified, Brandley said. No information about the van, including where it was registered or who owned it, was immediately released.

Encino is a community of about 140 residents about 2 miles (3.22 kilometers) south of the Falfurrias

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Border Patrol checkpoint.

A surge in migrants crossing the border illegally has brought about an uptick in the number of crashes involving vehicles jammed with migrants who pay large amounts to be smuggled into the country. The Dallas Morning News has reported that the recruitment of young drivers for the smuggling runs, combined with excessive speed and reckless driving by those youths, have led to horrific crashes.

Victor M. Manjarrez Jr., director of the Center for Law & Human Behavior at the University of Texas at El Paso, told the newspaper that criminal organizations recruit drivers from Austin, Dallas and Houston. Others come from the El Paso area, while others come from parts of Latin America rife with police corruption.

"They're told, 'If you're caught, it'll go bad for you,'" he said.

They'll be picked out of a group of migrants seeking safe passage across the border for a reduction of their smuggling fee, Manjarrez said. They're told to follow a scout vehicle.

"It's not bad for a few hours' work," Manjarrez said.

One of the deadliest crashes came on March 3, when 13 people were killed when a semitrailer truck slammed into a sport utility vehicle containing 25 migrants near Holtville, California, about 125 miles (200 kilometers) east of San Diego.

On March 17, eight migrants were killed when the pickup truck carrying them crashed into another truck while being pursued by police nearly 30 miles (50 kilometers) north of the border city of Del Rio, Texas. The driver faces a possible life sentence after pleading guilty to multiple federal charges on May 24. No sentencing date has been set.

Australia to spend \$813M to address Indigenous disadvantage

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australia's government on Thursday pledged 1.1 billion Australian dollars (\$813 million) to address Indigenous disadvantage, including compensation to thousands of mixed-race children who were taken from their families over decades.

The AU\$378.6 million (\$279.7 million) to be used to compensate the so-called Stolen Generations by 2026 is the most expensive component of the package aimed at boosting Indigenous living standards in Australia.

The compensation of up to AU\$75,000 (\$55,400) in a lump sum plus up to \$AU7,000 (\$5,200) for expenses such as psychological counselling will only be available to mixed-race children who had been under direct federal government control in the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory and Jervis Bay Territory.

Most members of the Stolen Generations had been under state government control when they were separated from their Indigenous mothers under decades of assimilation policies that ended as recently as the 1970s.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the compensation was a recognition of the harm caused by forced removal of children from families.

"This is a long-called-for step recognizing the bond between healing, dignity, and the health and well-being of members of the Stolen Generations, their families and their communities," Morrison told Parliament.

"To say formally not just that we're deeply sorry for what happened, but that we will take responsibility for it," Morrison added.

Pat Turner, the Northern Territory-based Indigenous chief executive officer of the National Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation, welcomed the compensation, which was recommended in 1997 by a government inquiry into the Stolen Generations.

"Many of our people have passed, including my mother, so it's a sad day for those who have passed, but it's a good day for those who have survived," Turner said. Turner's mother Emma Turner had been taken from her own mother in the 1920s and they didn't reunite until the 1970s.

"It will never replace growing up with family, you can never replace that," she added. "I hope this will give some relief to the survivors of the Stolen Generations."

Australian states have legislated their own compensation plans for Stolen Generations survivors between 2008 and last year.

But Queensland and Western Australia, states with some of the country's largest proportions of Indig-

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enous people within their populations, do not have specific Indigenous compensation plans. Anyone who experienced neglect or abuse while in a Queensland or Western Australia state institution is entitled to compensation.

Turner said it was time Queensland and Western Australia also acknowledged the Stolen Generations' human rights.

"I'm quite happy to say to the W.A. government and the Queensland government: time's up for redress of the Stolen Generations. You have to follow the other jurisdictions throughout Australia," Turner said.

Minister for Indigenous Australians Ken Wyatt, the first Indigenous person appointed to the job, said his own mother Mona Abdullah was separated from her siblings in Western Australia from infancy until they were in their 20s.

"You can't undo the emotional impact that that has," Wyatt said.

Among the Stolen Generations members who won't receive federal compensation is Lorna Cubillo.

In 2000, Cubillo lost a landmark Federal Court case against the Australian government seeking compensation for the abuse and neglect she suffered in a home for Indigenous children in the Northern Territory city of Darwin. She died in Darwin last year at age 81.

Indigenous Australians account for 3% of the population and have poorer health, lower education levels and shorter life expectancies than other ethnic groups. Indigenous adults account for 2% of the Australian population and 27% of the prison population.

A center-left Labor Party government launched the ambitious Closing the Gap initiative in 2008 aimed at achieving equality for Indigenous Australians in health and life expectancy within a generation.

But Morrison's conservative government last year scrapped the 12-year-old timetable, declaring the policy had failed.

Morrison said that among the most significant achievements of Australia's pandemic response were the facts that COVID-19 had been kept out of Outback Indigenous communities and no Indigenous Australian had died from coronavirus.

Not again! US men's team gone after another messy relay

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

TOKYO (AP) — The first time U.S. sprinter Ronnie Baker tried to grab the baton, he found himself holding a handful of Fred Kerley's jersey. The second time, Baker whiffed. By the third try, Kerley was side-by-side with Baker, practically using both hands to shovel the stick into his teammate's palm.

The names might change, but the results for the American Olympic 4x100-meter relay team remain every bit as brutal.

The exchange between Kerley and Baker wrecked the Americans in qualifying Thursday, leading to a sixth-place finish that left them out of the final and extended a quarter-century of misery for the country that brings the deepest track team to the Games.

"We just didn't get the job done today. That's all," said Kerley, who ran the second leg.

Outrage spread quickly, as it always does when this happens.

"The USA team did everything wrong in the men's relay," sprinting great Carl Lewis wrote on Twitter. "The passing system is wrong, athletes running the wrong legs, and it was clear that there was no leadership. It was a total embarrassment, and completely unacceptable for a USA team to look worse than the AAU kids I saw."

The U.S. men won't win a medal they used to count on in what is turning out to be a rough Olympic track meet. (Shot putter Ryan Crouser's gold at around the same time as the relay debacle was the first win for the men over the 7-day-old meet.) But what used to be a conversation about the deepest track team in the world simply giving away a medal really can't be viewed in that light anymore.

The U.S. men haven't won the 4x100 at the Olympics since 2000 and haven't made it cleanly to the finish line in a final since taking a silver medal in 2012. But they gave that one back because of a doping ban against Tyson Gay.

This marked the first time the U.S. has failed to make the final since 2008, when Gay was involved in a

bumbled exchange. The U.S. made the final in 2016, but got DQ'd for another bad pass in the medal race.

"Trying to time that up perfectly with a couple of practices is a little difficult, but it is what it is," Baker said.

Indeed, the team has not practiced much, but that's no different from any other country. All have had their training time restricted because of the coronavirus pandemic, both in Tokyo and in the year leading up to it.

This didn't seem to impact China, Canada or Italy, who finished 1-2-3 in a qualifying heat that most teams use more as practice than a hard run.

It also didn't impact the U.S. women, a team headlined by Teahna Daniels and Javianne Oliver, who also ran in the individual sprints and estimated they got about five practices in with their teammates.

"When me and 'J' were doing the 100, I know the rest of the ladies were really getting it done with handoffs and things," Daniels said. "We trusted what they were doing and we just kind of gelled into each other for this."

The men did not gel. They often don't.

This marks the 10th time since 1995 they have given away a relay at a world championships or Olympics, either due to a disqualification, a dropped baton, a doping violation, or a faulty exchange, the likes of which led to the latest result.

They had reason to think things were changing.

Usain Bolt once suggested the Americans "tend to panic," especially knowing what might be required to beat him and his Jamaican teammates to the line.

But with Bolt out of the mix, and with Christian Coleman and Noah Lyles in the lineup, the United States romped to a victory at the world championships in Qatar in 2019. The win was triggered by a team meeting Coleman called after a shaky run through qualifying. They got on the same page, and after the final, Lyles screamed "We broke the curse! We broke the curse!"

But Coleman isn't at the Tokyo Olympics because of a ban involving missed doping tests.

And Lyles won a bronze in the 200 on Wednesday night, so he had the morning off.

Now, he's got the rest of the week off, too.

"I'm honestly kind of mad, not at these guys, they did what they could do," Trayvon Bromell, who ran the opening leg, told NBC after the race. "I did what I can do. I can really just speak for myself in a sense. Like I said, these guys did their job, I did what I could do. On the first leg, it just — it's really some BS for real, to be honest with you."

'Trauma as his shield': Cuomo's apology, defense criticized

By JOCELYN NOVECK and MALLIKA SEN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — He said his actions had been misconstrued, his words misunderstood. He said it was cultural: He hugs, he kisses, he says "Ciao, bella." He said it was generational: Sometimes he lapses into "honey" or "sweetheart" or tells bad jokes.

But of all New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's responses to investigative findings that he sexually harassed 11 women, one that most disturbed many women — particularly sexual assault survivors and their advocates — was his use of a family member's sexual assault to explain his own behavior with an accuser.

"We will not be moved by Governor Cuomo's attempts to use the stories of survivors, including those he harassed, as a shield for his own misconduct and abuse of power all while claiming the harassment was a 'misunderstanding,'" said an open letter to be released Thursday by the National Women's Law Center and several gender and survivor groups, demanding the Democratic governor's resignation or removal.

Tarana Burke, the survivor and advocate who gave the #MeToo movement its name, wrote in an email to The Associated Press that "abusers, no matter their own personal histories, do not get to center themselves in cases of abuse."

"In these moments, survivor's stories are the ones that should be elevated," Burke said. "There are 11 women, whose stories were corroborated, who experienced harassment at the hands of the governor. His family's story does not exonerate him, and he does not get to use someone else's trauma as his own

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shield.”

The allegations that investigators said they corroborated ranged from inappropriate comments to forced kisses and groping.

In a taped statement Tuesday, Cuomo denied ever touching anyone inappropriately but apologized to two accusers, including former staffer Charlotte Bennett. He said he asked Bennett about her love life in a misunderstood bid to help her cope with trauma from a past sexual assault. He spoke of a family member, about the same age, who'd been sexually assaulted in high school.

“I thought I could help her work through a difficult time,” the governor said of Bennett.

Emily Martin, vice president for education and workplace justice at the NWLC, said Cuomo was “suggesting that he is a hero for survivors of sexual assault, which is an especially disturbing move given all that this report found.”

“In some ways it reminds me of the ‘father of daughters’ comments that we hear from so many men in power,” Martin said, “that we should take them at their word that they care about these issues based on their personal family relationships.”

Bennett herself called Cuomo's apology “meaningless.”

“If he were sorry, he would step down. That's how accountability works,” she told the AP immediately following the remarks.

Elaborating Wednesday on ABC's “Good Morning America,” Bennett said: “He insinuated that survivors of trauma and sexual assault can't tell the difference between mentorship and leadership and sexual harassment itself, which is not only insulting to me but to every survivor who listened to him yesterday.”

Marissa Hoechstetter was one of those survivors. She said she was saddened by Cuomo's reference to his relative's assault “because I do not want to diminish those experiences.” But, added the advocate for reform in New York state, “two things can be true. You can have someone in his family who experienced sexual harm, and he could also have caused this harm.”

“You feel so gutted when you see people's trauma trotted out to try to explain away another person's rightful voice,” Hoechstetter said.

Deborah Tuerkheimer, a Northwestern University law professor who specializes in sexual misconduct, saw Cuomo's remarks as part of a larger strategy to discredit his accusers and save his political career.

“We often draw on a set of longstanding misconceptions about abusers as ‘monsters’ with no redeeming qualities whatsoever,” Tuerkheimer said. “Whenever an accused man looks different from this imagined monster, we're more inclined to doubt the allegations against him. And accused men often strategically tap into this cultural bias by highlighting, as evidence of innocence, their best qualities — including, perhaps, empathy for victims of sexual assault.”

For Indira Henard, director of the D.C. Rape Crisis Center, the case against Cuomo's statement was simple: You can't support survivors in one sentence and discredit them in another.

“If you stand and believe survivors, then you believe survivors,” Henard said. “You don't get to take apart their story.”

Many also questioned the effectiveness of other parts of Cuomo's taped statement, which was accompanied by a slideshow of him hugging and kissing people in benign settings.

“I do kiss people on the forehead,” he said. “I do kiss people on the cheek. I do kiss people on the hand. I do embrace people. I do on occasion say, ‘Ciao, bella.’”

Evan Nierman, CEO and president of Red Banyan, a crisis public relations firm based in Florida and Washington, D.C., called it “a bold move” by Cuomo “to assert that he's some sort of a serial hugger and therefore none of the allegations could be true because he hugs and kisses everybody.”

“There's a big difference between appropriate physical contact and types of allegations that were levied against the governor,” said Nierman, “and so I don't think most people are going to conflate the two.”

Deborah Tannen, a Georgetown University linguistics professor who studies cross-cultural communication, noted Cuomo's reference to his heritage. She acknowledged that Italian Americans tend toward casual touches in conversation, “but that's not touching sexual places.”

"That is friendly kissing," she said. "So I think that, too, is not really relevant to the most serious allegations."

From crisis communication experts to survivors, many agreed that Cuomo's political future seems unsalvageable. For New York and his accusers to move forward, they said, the governor needs to be held accountable.

"Simply put, he needs to resign," Henard said, adding that if he doesn't, he should be removed. "There's no coming back from this."

Fire engulfs Northern California town, leveling businesses

By NOAH BERGER Associated Press

GREENVILLE, Calif. (AP) — California's largest wildfire has leveled much of the downtown and some surrounding homes in a small Northern California mountain community.

The Dixie Fire tore through the Greenville on Wednesday evening, destroying businesses and homes as the sky was cast in an orange glow. A photographer on assignment for The Associated Press described seeing a gas station, hotel and bar burned to the ground.

"If you are still in the Greenville area, you are in imminent danger and you MUST leave now!!" the Plumas County Sheriff's Office posted on Facebook earlier Wednesday.

The sheriff's department and Cal Fire did not immediately respond to messages.

The 3-week-old fire has grown to over 428 square miles (1,108 square kilometers) across Plumas and Butte counties.

Firefighters had been trying to protect the town of 800 about 280 miles (450 kilometers) northeast of San Francisco by clearing debris from roads and marking hazards.

Pandora Valle, a spokesperson with the U.S. Forest Service, earlier told The San Francisco Chronicle that "firefighters are fighting for the town of Greenville," but could not provide further details about the damage.

The destruction came amid a red flag warning issued by forecasters warning of hot, bone-dry conditions with winds up to 40 mph (64 kph). That could drive flames through timber, brush and grass, especially along the northern and northeastern sides of the vast Dixie Fire.

"I think we definitely have a few hard days ahead of us," said Shannon Prather with the U.S. Forest Service.

Firefighters were able to save homes and hold large stretches of the blaze. But flames jumped perimeter lines in a few spots Tuesday, prompting additional evacuation orders for about 15,000 people east of Lake Almanor, fire officials said.

Heat from the flames created a pyrocumulus cloud, a massive column of smoke that rose 30,000 feet (10,000 yards) in the air, said Mike Wink, a state fire operations section chief.

Dawn Garofalo watched the cloud grow from the west side of the lake, where she fled with a dog and two horses, from a friend's property near Greenville.

"There's only one way in and one way out. I didn't want to be stuck up there if the fire came through," Garofalo said.

From her campsite on the lake bed, she watched the fire glowing on the horizon before dawn. "The flames were huge. They must have been 500 feet high. Scary," she said.

The fire has threatened thousands of homes and destroyed 67 houses and other buildings since breaking out July 14. It was 35% contained.

About 150 miles (240 kilometers) to the west, the lightning-sparked McFarland Fire threatened remote homes along the Trinity River in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The fire was only 5% contained. It had burned fiercely through nearly 25 square miles (65 square kilometers) of drought-stricken vegetation.

Similar risky weather was expected across Southern California, where heat advisories and warnings were issued for interior valleys, mountains and deserts for much of the week.

Heat waves and historic drought 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.

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More than 20,000 firefighters and support personnel were battling 97 large, active wildfires covering 2,919 square miles (7,560 square kilometers) in 13 U.S. states, the National Interagency Fire Center said.

Montana on Tuesday had 25 active large blazes, followed by Idaho with 21 and Oregon with 13. California had 11.

In Hawaii, firefighters gained control over the 62-square-mile (160-square-kilometer) Mana Road Fire that forced thousands of people to evacuate over the weekend and destroyed at least two homes on the Big Island.

Oregon's Bootleg Fire, the nation's largest at 647 square miles (1,676 square kilometers), was 84% contained. Firefighters were busy mopping up hot spots and strengthening fire lines.

"Crews are working tirelessly to ensure we are as prepared as we can be for the extreme fire weather forecast for the next couple days," a U.S. Forest Service update said.

US plans to require COVID-19 shots for foreign travelers

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is taking the first steps toward requiring nearly all foreign visitors to the U.S. to be vaccinated for the coronavirus, a White House official said.

The requirement would come as part of the administration's phased approach to easing travel restrictions for foreign citizens to the country. No timeline has yet been determined, as interagency working groups study how and when to safely move toward resuming normal travel. Eventually all foreign citizens entering the country, with some limited exceptions, are expected to need to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to enter the U.S.

The official spoke on the condition of anonymity Wednesday to preview the policy under development.

The Biden administration has kept in place travel restrictions that have severely curtailed international trips to the U.S., citing the spread of the delta variant of the virus. Under the rules, non-U.S. residents who have been to China, the European Schengen area, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Brazil, South Africa and India in the prior 14 days are prohibited from entering the U.S.

All travelers to the U.S., regardless of vaccination status, are required to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within three days of air travel to the country.

The Biden administration has faced pressure to lift some restrictions from affected allies, the air travel industry and families who have been kept separated from loved ones by the rules. Many have complained that the travel restrictions don't reflect the current virus situation — particularly as caseloads in the U.S. are worse than in many of the prohibited nations.

Airlines for America, a trade group for major U.S. airlines, said it was pleased by reports that the administration plans to make it easier for more foreign travelers to enter the country if they have been vaccinated.

Can I get 'long COVID' if I'm infected after vaccination?

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

Can I get 'long COVID' if I'm infected after vaccination?

It's unclear, but researchers are studying the chances of long-term symptoms developing in anyone who might get infected after vaccination.

The COVID-19 vaccines in use around the world are effective at preventing severe illness and death from the coronavirus, but some people do get infected after the shots. With such "breakthrough" cases, health experts say the vaccines should help lessen the severity of any illness people experience.

But researchers are also looking at whether those breakthrough cases could lead to long COVID-19, which is when people experience persistent, returning or new symptoms a month or more after an infection. The condition can develop after severe initial infections or even in those who initially had mild or no symptoms.

Some estimates indicate about 30% of unvaccinated COVID-19 patients develop long-term symptoms, including shortness of breath, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, insomnia and brain fog. Similar symptoms can develop after other viral infections, too.

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A small study from Israel published recently found apparent long COVID-19 in several health workers with breakthrough infections. They developed mild symptoms including cough, fatigue and weakness that persisted for at least six weeks.

Larger studies are ongoing.

Researchers don't know why symptoms linger, but believe some symptoms reflect lung scarring or damage to other organs from severe initial infections. Another theory suggests that the virus may linger in the body and trigger an immune response that leads to the symptoms.

Progressives see blueprint for next fights in eviction win

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, JOSH BOAK and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The rare clash this week between the Biden administration and congressional Democrats over a lapsed eviction moratorium could become a blueprint for even larger fights that lie ahead.

Finding allies in congressional leadership, a new generation of progressive lawmakers insisted the White House pay attention to them. Their tactics, including a well-publicized, multiday protest on the steps of the U.S. Capitol, ultimately forced the administration to find a new way to keep most tenants in their homes.

After largely holding back as President Joe Biden spent his opening months in office courting moderate Democrats — and even some Republicans — many progressives say that deference is over. And with Democrats holding exceedingly narrow margins in Congress, that means the White House may have to pay closer attention to the left wing of the Democratic Party in the coming weeks, especially as the administration's push for an infrastructure package intensifies.

"Hopefully, this has shown not only leadership, the caucus, but our progressive family that when we say we are not going to back down, we don't back down," said Rep. Cori Bush, D-Mo., who staged the round-the-clock sit-in on the Capitol steps.

While progressives are feeling emboldened in Washington, there are warning signs. Voters in Ohio on Tuesday rejected a congressional candidate enthusiastically backed by progressive leader Sen. Bernie Sanders. That followed similar setbacks for the left in elections earlier this year in New York City and Virginia.

This week's progressive revolt, however, was distinguished by Bush's protest.

By the time she brought her chair to the Capitol steps on Saturday, the House had already tried — and failed — to pass a quickly drafted bill to prevent a moratorium lapse. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer told Biden a day earlier that Congress would not be able to provide a legislative fix.

As Bush began her vigil, people streamed to the steps to join the freshman lawmaker, who spoke passionately of her own time being unhoused, a young mother of two, living out of her Ford Bronco on the streets around what's now her St. Louis-area congressional district.

Her visitors included Sanders, Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, whose presence added to the media attention.

A quieter lobbying campaign was also taking place. Over several days, Pelosi rushed into a series of phone calls to Biden and senior White House officials, insisting the administration needed to move unilaterally and focus on a new moratorium directly linked to the public health emergency and the delta variant.

"She was saying things like: 'They can do it, I don't know what they're talking about. They are not prevented from doing it,'" Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., the Financial Services Committee chairwoman, said of Pelosi.

"We said, 'Mr. President, you have to step up to the plate,'" Waters said.

At the White House, officials were keenly aware that many of those impacted by the moratorium were Biden's constituents and recognized the need to keep the liberals on the party line.

But many in the administration were galled by claims that they had failed to take aggressive action to stop evictions. A senior White House official who requested anonymity to discuss conversations with the president said their efforts were a beehive of energy and activity over several months.

The first challenge was that the Trump administration's guidance for issuing rental aid required extensive

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documentation and hobbled the entire program. Biden's team updated the guidance multiple times after consulting with advocates, academics and housing experts, trying to make it easier for states and cities to administer with updated guidance on Feb. 22, May 7 and June 24.

When the Supreme Court suggested that congressional approval would be needed to extend any moratorium, the White House turned to the local court system where the evictions occur. Their goal was to have local judges require efforts to receive the rental aid before approving any evictions, the official said.

But after days of bad headlines, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a new eviction moratorium that would last until Oct. 3. The ban announced Tuesday could help keep millions in their homes as the coronavirus' delta variant has spread and states have been slow to release federal rental aid.

The senior White House official said the president had been told a national moratorium would likely be unconstitutional, but Biden kept instructing agencies to dig into the matter and look for ways to keep people in their homes. One of the keys was to have a moratorium that was targeted and dynamic — meaning that evictions could resume with a sufficient reduction in COVID-19 infections.

That made it different from the previous nationwide moratorium that was set without regard to the pandemic's trends.

"This is also going to be a temporary solution regardless, and a longer-term solution will require legislative action," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Wednesday. "But (Biden's) message to anyone who's been a passionate advocate is that he shares their concern, he shares their commitment."

To this point, Biden's agenda has focused on working across the aisle with the bipartisan infrastructure deal, including keeping moderate Democratic senators happy. The president has yet to fully tackle progressive priorities like climate change, voting rights and student debt.

But the eviction moratorium was an undeniable win for the progressives — and proof of their clout heading into a budget package that is especially central to Biden's promise to reshape government's relationship with its citizens.

"Today is important because it marks, I hope, a turning point in the way that this White House views progressives," said Rep. Mondaire Jones, D-N.Y. "We are prepared to leverage our energy and our activism in close coordination with grassroots activists and people all across this country of good conscience to do right by the American people."

Moving forward, the administration knows the end of the latest eviction moratorium will be a problem if the aid is still sitting in state coffers.

The White House Domestic Policy Council and Gene Sperling, the official overseeing the coronavirus relief programs, are meeting with every department to find more ways to keep renters in their homes. And on Friday, White House adviser Susan Rice and Sperling will hold a Cabinet-level meeting with the ultimate goal of getting aid out through the states in order to reduce the number of potential evictions once the new moratorium ends.

In Congress, meanwhile, Waters said she has prepared a package of housing bills she will insist on being included in Biden's infrastructure measure.

EXPLAINER: How sport climbing reached the Olympics

By JOHN MARSHALL AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Basketball, baseball, tennis — the list goes on and on of Olympic sports nearly everyone has at least tried before. Watch those athletes in Tokyo on the TV and somewhere in the back of your mind, it's easy to think: I could probably do that.

Seeing sport climbers hang one-handed from their fingertips or upside down from one foot wedged into a crevice ushers in a different kind of response: Yeah, no way I could do that.

Sport climbing has made its Olympic debut, giving the world a chance to see just how physically demanding it can be. A mix of speed, strength and agility, the sport has opened a few eyes through two days of qualifying. It will become even more intense with the finals, starting with the men on Thursday.

So how did sport climbing get here, and what exactly is going on?

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A BRIEF HISTORY

Climbing has been around since early man looked up at a rock wall and thought: Wonder what it would be like to climb that?

As with almost every other athletic endeavor, it turned into a competition.

Sport climbing first took hold in the 1980s on outdoor walls and moved inside late in the decade to avoid having a negative environmental impact. The first world championships were held a decade later and the International Federation of Sport Climbing was founded in 2007, providing the sport more structure.

The sport has climbed in popularity in recent years with the success of the documentary *Free Solo*, the social media prowess of its climbers and a TV deal with ESPN to broadcast World Cup events.

The sport has kept some of its laid-back vibe. But the competitions have given climbers a different kind of outlet and the financial means to continue pursuing the sport they love.

THE FORMAT

Sport climbing's Olympic program is broken down into three disciplines: speed, bouldering and lead.

Lead is a lot like what people see on indoor recreational walls, only much, much harder. The scoring is simple, too: climbers have six minutes to see who can make it the highest on the 45-meter wall. Any ties are broken by who did it fastest.

Bouldering is a set of four "problems" climbers have to try solving in four minutes each. The problems can include overhangs, places where climbers have to wedge themselves between holds and spots where going upside down is the only option to keep climbing. Climbers earn points for reaching each top and get partial points for reaching various zones up the walls.

The setup for speed is simple: climbers race side by side up a 45-meter wall dotted with standardized holds.

Speed was a controversial addition to the sport's Olympic debut because it requires a different skill set than the other two disciplines. As Britain's Shauna Coxsey put it, having speed is like asking Usain Bolt to add the marathon and hurdles to his sprint events.

The IOC is handing out just two climbing medals in Tokyo — one each for men and women — and wanted a fast-moving element to the sport in its debut, so speed was included in the format. Speed will be a separate event at the 2024 Paris Games.

SCORING

Scoring is a combination of each climber's place in the three disciplines. The places are multiplied together and lowest total wins. An example: if a climber places first in boulder, second in lead, 10th in speed, their total would be 20.

The scoring format gives winners of any of the three disciplines a huge advantage since their total will be multiplied by one, allowing room to have a bad finish in one discipline.

Many of the top lead and boulder climbers are not nearly as proficient at speed climbing as the speed specialists, so their goal is to win at least one of the other disciplines to have a chance in the combined.

Belarus Olympic runner who feared going home lands in Poland

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV and DAVID KEYTON Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Belarusian Olympic sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, who feared for her safety at home after criticizing her coaches on social media, flew into Warsaw on Wednesday night on a humanitarian visa after leaving the Tokyo Olympics, a Polish diplomat confirmed.

Deputy Foreign Minister Marcin Przydacz said the 24-year-old athlete had arrived in the Polish capital after flying in from Tokyo via Vienna, a route apparently chosen to confuse those who would endanger her safety. In a statement, the diplomat said he "wanted to thank all the Polish consular & diplomatic staff involved, who flawlessly planned and secured her safe journey."

The plane that she was traveling on from Vienna was directed to a separate airport building in Warsaw used by government officials. Police vans were seen all over the airport. Passengers from the flight told reporters that one young woman was left on board as they exited the plane and were put on buses to

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the main terminal.

Tsimanouskaya later was seen with a top Belarusian dissident in Poland, Pavel Latushko, in a photo taken just after her arrival inside the airport building.

"We are glad that Kristina Timanovskaya managed to get to Warsaw safely!" Latushko said on Twitter, adding he hopes she will be able to return to a "New Belarus" and continue her career there.

In a dramatic weekend standoff at the Tokyo Games, Tsimanouskaya said Belarus team officials tried to force her to fly home early after she criticized them. She urged the International Olympic Committee to look into the dispute and some European countries stepped in to offer assistance.

It's not clear what's next for the runner — either in her sporting life or her personal one. Before she left Japan, she said she hoped to continue her running career but that safety was her immediate priority. Her husband fled Belarus this week shortly after his wife said she would not be returning, and Poland has also offered him a visa.

"We are very happy that she is here safe," said Magnus Brunner, a top Austrian government official, after Tsimanouskaya's plane arrived in Vienna on Wednesday afternoon. "But she is scared about her future and about her family."

At the Vienna airport, the runner was protected by Austrian police officers, public broadcaster ORF reported, and stayed in the transit area. Tsimanouskaya flew first to Austria instead of directly to Poland on the advice of Polish authorities for security reasons, said Vadim Krivosheyev of the Belarusian Sport Solidarity Foundation.

The drama began after Tsimanouskaya's criticism of how officials were managing her team set off a massive backlash in state-run media in Belarus, where the government has relentlessly stifled any criticism. The runner said on Instagram that she was put in the 4x400 relay even though she has never raced in the event. She was then barred from competing in the 200 meters.

She accused team officials of hustling her to the Tokyo airport but she refused to board a plane home and was protected by Japanese security.

The officials "made it clear that, upon return home, I would definitely face some form of punishment," Tsimanouskaya told the AP in a videocall from Tokyo on Tuesday. "There were also thinly disguised hints that more would await me."

The sprinter called on international sports authorities "to investigate the situation, who gave the order, who actually took the decision that I can't compete anymore." She suggested possible sanctions against the head coach.

Reached by phone, Dzmitry Dauhalionak, the head of Belarus' delegation at the Tokyo Olympics, declined to comment.

The standoff has drawn more attention to Belarus' uncompromising authoritarian government. When the country was rocked by months of protests following a presidential election that the opposition and the West saw as rigged, authorities responded by arresting some 35,000 people and beating thousands of demonstrators. In recent months the government has orchestrated a strong crackdown on independent media and opposition figures.

President Alexander Lukashenko, who led the Belarus National Olympic Committee for almost a quarter century before handing over the job to his son in February, has a keen interest in sports, seeing it as a key element of national prestige.

And his government has shown it is willing to go to extreme lengths to target its critics. In May, Belarus authorities diverted a European passenger jet to the capital of Minsk, where they arrested an opposition journalist on board.

In the AP interview, Tsimanouskaya expressed concern for her parents, who remain in Belarus.

Her husband, Arseni Zdanevich, left for Ukraine shortly after the drama began. Poland has since issued him a humanitarian visa.

Amid Tsimanouskaya's rift with team officials, two other Belarusian athletes announced their intention to stay abroad.

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Heptathlete Yana Maksimava said she and her husband, Andrei Krauchanka, who won silver in the decathlon at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, would remain in Germany.

"I'm not planning to return home after all the events that happened in Belarus," Maksimava said on Instagram, adding that "you can lose not just your freedom but also your life" in her homeland.

Western leaders have condemned Tsimanouskaya's treatment by Belarusian authorities.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken denounced Belarusian officials' attempt to force Tsimanouskaya to return to Belarus for exercising free speech as "another act of transnational repression."

"Such actions violate the Olympic spirit, are an affront to basic rights, and cannot be tolerated," Blinken said on Twitter.

While Tsimanouskaya said she hoped to continue her sporting career, she could face lengthy procedures if she wants to compete under a different flag.

Tomasz Majewski, vice president of the Polish Athletics Association and twice an Olympic gold medalist in the shot put, voiced fears that Tsimanouskaya "will lose the best period of her career" if she changes citizenship.

"These are complicated matters. We know that there will be clear objections from the home team, which will probably make it difficult or even seek the disqualification of the athlete," he said.

Facebook shuts out NYU academics' research on political ads

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

Facebook has shut down the personal accounts of a pair of New York University researchers and shuttered their investigation into misinformation spread through political ads on the social network.

Facebook says the researchers violated its terms of service and were involved in unauthorized data collection from its massive network. The academics, however, say the company is attempting to exert control on research that paints it in a negative light.

The NYU researchers with the Ad Observatory Project had for several years been looking into Facebook's Ad Library, where searches can be done on advertisements running across Facebook's products.

The access was used to "uncover systemic flaws in the Facebook Ad Library, to identify misinformation in political ads, including many sowing distrust in our election system, and to study Facebook's apparent amplification of partisan misinformation," said Laura Edelson, the lead researcher behind NYU Cybersecurity for Democracy, in a statement.

Facebook's action against the NYU project also cut off other researchers and journalists who got access to Facebook data through the project, Edelson said.

The researchers offered Facebook users a web browser plug-in tool that let them volunteer their data showing how the social network targets political ads.

But Facebook said the browser extension was programmed to evade its detection systems and vacuum up user data, creating privacy concerns.

In a blog post late Tuesday, Facebook said it takes "unauthorized data scraping seriously, and when we find instances of scraping we investigate and take action to protect our platform."

Facebook sent a cease-and-desist letter to Edelson and another researcher, Damon McCoy, in October but didn't shut down their accounts until Tuesday, hours after Edelson informed the platform that she and McCoy were studying the spread of disinformation on the platform about the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, the researchers said.

Mike Clark, Facebook product management director, wrote in the blog post that the Menlo Park, California, company welcomes research that holds it accountable but that doesn't compromise the security of the platform or users' privacy.

"While the Ad Observatory project may be well-intentioned, the ongoing and continued violations of protections against scraping cannot be ignored and should be remediated," he wrote.

At least two Democratic senators expressed concerns about Facebook's move. Mark Warner of Virginia said tech platforms should "work with, and better empower, independent researchers" but instead the

company has “seemingly done the opposite.” Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota said she was troubled by Facebook cutting off researcher access to political advertising data, “which has shown that the company continues to sell millions of dollars’ worth of political ads without proper disclosures.”

Facebook says it makes information on political ads available through its Ad Library and provides “privacy-protected data sets” to researchers through other means.

Nursing home to workers: Get vaccine or lose your job

By BERNARD CONDON and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. nursing home industry’s resistance to forcing workers to get vaccinated against COVID-19 for fear that too many of them might quit began to crack this week when its biggest player announced its employees must get the shot to keep their jobs.

The new requirement at Genesis Healthcare, which has 70,000 employees at nearly 400 nursing homes and senior communities, is the clearest sign yet that owners may be willing to risk an exodus at already dangerously understaffed facilities to quickly vaccinate the 40% of workers still resisting shots and fend off the surging delta variant.

Some experts are calling for mandatory vaccinations at nursing homes, warning that unprotected staff members are endangering residents. Even residents who have been inoculated are vulnerable because many are elderly and frail, with weak immune systems.

More than 1,250 nursing home residents across the U.S. were infected with COVID-19 in the week ending July 25, double the number from the week earlier, and 202 died, according to federal data.

“It’s so easy now to say, ‘Well, Genesis is doing it. Now we’ll do it,’” said Brian Lee, who leads Families for Better Care, an advocacy group for long-term care residents. “This is a big domino to fall.”

Lawrence Gostin, a professor of health law at Georgetown University, said he likewise foresees a “snowball effect.” He said resisting vaccination mandates at this point is “unconscionable.”

Some local governments are taking the decision out of the industry’s hands, with Massachusetts and Denver announcing mandatory vaccinations at nursing homes this week.

The question has become more urgent as the highly contagious delta variant drives up new COVID-19 cases in the U.S. to about 90,000 a day on average — the most since mid-February — and has led to several outbreaks in nursing homes and sent hospitalizations surging in states like Florida and Louisiana to the highest levels since the pandemic began.

Despite the terrible toll taken by the disease at nursing homes, many of the nation’s 15,000 such institutions have rejected mandatory vaccinations for fear large numbers of workers will leave in protest. Nearly a quarter of nursing homes are already short of nurses or nurse’s aides.

But Associated Press interviews this past week with managers at 10 mostly smaller nursing home operations across the nation that are requiring vaccines found that the threat of workers quitting en masse over the shots may be overblown.

After Canterbury Court in Atlanta announced a mandate in January, CEO Debi McNeil was so fearful of a “massive walkout” that she brought in medical experts to talk to workers, met with holdouts one-on-one and invited staff to gather in the community room for meetings that occasionally got heated.

In the end, only 10 of 180 workers quit, and McNeil said Canterbury’s nursing home, independent living and assisted living facilities have reported no new COVID-19 cases since February.

“It was a gamble that paid off for us,” McNeil said. “I thought more people would have mandated it by now.”

At Jewish Home Family in Rockleigh, New Jersey, only five of 527 workers at its nursing home and assisted-living facilities quit. Westminster Village in Bloomington, Illinois, lost only two out of 250.

“It’s important to educate, but at some point we have to end this pandemic,” said Scott Crabtree, CEO of Lambeth House in New Orleans, which lost only 10 of 200 workers after it started requiring shots when they became available last year. “When do we say, ‘Enough is enough?’”

More than 130,000 nursing home residents in the U.S. have died from COVID-19, making such institu-

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tions by far the deadliest place to be during the pandemic. About 80% of residents have been vaccinated, double the rate for staff, according to the government.

Some workers have rejected the vaccine because they think it was rushed into development and is unsafe, or they feel protected because they already got COVID-19.

"It's too soon to put that crap in my body," said Christina Chiger, a nurse's aide at a nursing home in Tampa, Florida. "It took how many years to perfect the polio vaccine? This was done in months."

Others have been swayed by false rumors that the vaccine was made from dead babies or contains microchips or will make you infertile. That last notion concerned Michaela Murray, a nurse's aide at an Alabama nursing home that made vaccinations mandatory.

"I was kind of worried, but I talked to the doctors and they put my mind at ease," said Murray, who agreed to get a vaccine to keep her job at Hanceville Nursing & Rehab Center, which had only six of 260 workers quit. "I had had COVID and didn't want to go through that again."

Pennsylvania-based Genesis said volunteer vaccinations were appropriate earlier in the pandemic, but not now, as the more infectious variant spreads and only 65% of its staff has received shots. Genesis is giving employees until Aug. 23 to get their first shot.

"To succeed against the delta variant is going to require much higher vaccination rates," said Chief Medical Officer Richard Feifer. "Our tactics in the fight have to change."

Jennifer Moore of Hollywood, Florida, whose husband is living at a nursing home where only 35% of the staff is vaccinated, said it's also a matter of ethics.

"Whenever I see a story about somebody being anti-vax, I just want to scream," said Moore, whose husband, Thomas, has Parkinson's disease. "I understand people have concerns about the vaccine, but these people are working with the most vulnerable population. They have a duty to their patients."

Majority of NY Assembly would oust Cuomo if he doesn't quit

By MARINA VILLENEUVE and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — A majority of state Assembly members support beginning impeachment proceedings against Gov. Andrew Cuomo if he doesn't resign over investigative findings that he sexually harassed at least 11 women, according to an Associated Press count Wednesday.

At least 86 of the body's 150 members have said publicly or told The AP that they favored initiating the process of ousting the third-term Democratic governor if he doesn't quit. It takes a simple majority to authorize an impeachment trial.

The tally reflects a governor plunged into a political deep freeze — a Democratic scion who has now lost most, if not all, of his allies in the party establishment, just a year after basking in national attention as a blunt-but-relatable voice of fighting the coronavirus.

Cuomo denies making any inappropriate sexual advances and insists the findings don't reflect the facts. But while political pressure is growing, so is the potential for criminal charges against Cuomo.

District attorneys in Manhattan, suburban Westchester and Nassau counties and the state capital of Albany said they asked for investigative materials from the inquiry, overseen by Democratic state Attorney General Letitia James. The inquiry found that Cuomo — a former state AG himself — violated civil laws against sexual harassment, and it left the door open for local prosecutors to bring cases.

Joyce A. Smith, Nassau County's acting district attorney, called the findings "deeply disturbing" and pledged her office would "thoroughly and expeditiously investigate."

After James released her report Tuesday, Democrats from the statehouse to the White House called for Cuomo to go. President Joe Biden said the governor should resign, though press secretary Jen Psaki wouldn't say Wednesday whether Biden wanted to see Cuomo removed from office.

"The president believes Governor Cuomo should do the right thing, resign, and leave space for future leadership in New York," Psaki said.

One of the governor's closest allies, New York Democratic Party chairperson Jay Jacobs, declared that Cuomo "has lost his ability to govern, both practically and morally." Jacobs told Spectrum News he had

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tried privately to persuade Cuomo to resign but “wasn’t making headway.”

Cuomo showed no signs of heeding such messages. He said some episodes described in the report never happened, others were misconstrued or mischaracterized and the whole exercise was tainted.

“Politics and bias are interwoven throughout every aspect of this situation,” he said Tuesday in a recorded video response.

Assembly Democrats, who lead the chamber, debated virtually for hours Tuesday about whether to impeach the governor now, wait to see whether he resigns, or give the Judiciary Committee time to wrap up its wide-ranging investigation into topics from sexual misconduct to the Cuomo administration’s months-long obfuscation of the total number of nursing home residents who died from COVID-19.

At least 40 Democrats back starting impeachment proceedings if Cuomo doesn’t leave on his own.

As New York became the nation’s deadliest coronavirus hotspot in spring 2020, Cuomo’s daily briefings garnered him fans around the country and an International Emmy Award. Casting himself as a tough-minded yet compassionate leader who steered the state through crisis, the governor even wrote a book about it.

Now, that book itself is among the focuses of investigations into Cuomo, with James examining the role some of his aides played in producing it.

As complaints and investigations accumulated in recent months, Cuomo became an embattled but unabashed figure. He often still touts the state’s handling of the pandemic, despite now-rising infection rates amid a national surge in the more infectious delta variant.

The 150-member Assembly would need 76 votes to impeach Cuomo and send articles of impeachment to the Senate. The Assembly includes 106 Democrats, 43 Republicans and one Independent.

Assembly Republican Leader Will Barclay urged Speaker Carl Heastie, a Democrat, to convene an emergency special session to vote to impeach Cuomo.

Heastie said he wants to conclude the Assembly’s investigation as quickly as possible. Judiciary committee members Tom Abinanti and Phil Steck variously estimated the timeframe at weeks or a month.

The two Democrats said that some lawmakers want to vote for impeachment within days, but time is needed to build a strong case for a Senate trial.

If the Assembly votes to impeach, the state Senate could launch an impeachment trial in weeks, Deputy Majority Leader Mike Gianaris told The Associated Press. He said the chamber has been preparing for months.

“We’ll be ready to go if and when the impeachment articles are sent over,” he said. “It could happen very quickly.”

James’ investigation, conducted by two outside lawyers, found that the governor touched or made sexually inappropriate comments to a series of women. Many worked for him, including a state trooper whom Cuomo successfully sought to have assigned to his security detail.

While many of the allegations involve verbal comments, some women alleged that he gave them unwanted kisses or touches. One aide said he reached under her shirt and groped her breast at the governor’s mansion in Albany.

The governor denied Tuesday that he ever inappropriately touched anyone and said that he never intended harm.

Cuomo — a son of three-term Gov. Mario Cuomo — has rebuffed calls to step down and has moved ahead with plans to run for a fourth term in 2022.

Wildfire reaches Turkey power plant, prompts evacuations

By MEHMET GUZEL and ZEYNEP BILGINSOY Associated Press

MUGLA, Turkey (AP) — A coal-fueled power plant in southwest Turkey and nearby residential areas were being evacuated Wednesday evening as flames from a wildfire reached the plant, a mayor and local reporters said as sirens from the plant could be heard blaring.

Milas Mayor Muhammet Tokat, from Turkey’s main opposition party, has been warning of the fire risks for the past two days for the Kemerkoym power plant in Mugla province. He said late Wednesday that the plant was being evacuated. Local reporters said the wildfires had also prompted the evacuation of the

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nearby seaside area of Oren.

Turkey's defense ministry said it was evacuating people by sea as the fires neared the plant. The state broadcaster TRT said the flames had "jumped" to the plant. Strong winds were making the fires unpredictable.

Authorities have said safety precautions had been taken at the Kemerkooy power plant and its hydrogen tanks were emptied. TRT said flammable and explosive substances had been removed. The privately run plant uses lignite to generate electricity, according to its website.

Videos from the area showed bright orange, burning hills with power towers and lines crisscrossing the foreground. Pro-government news channel A Hbr broadcasting live from near the evacuated power plant late Wednesday said firefighters were working inside the compound cooling equipment and dousing sparks in an effort to keep the fire away. The channel's crew showed an incinerated police water cannon.

As the mayor announced the evacuation on Twitter, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was speaking live on A Hbr and said the power plant was at risk of burning. Three ministers were there to oversee developments, he said, and added planes and helicopters had been there all day to fight the fires.

But the mayor said air support came infrequently and only focused on the closer flames around the plant rather than addressing the wider fires in the area that were being fanned by shifting winds. At night, air support was not possible at all and videos showed flames in the plant's vicinity.

The wildfires have turned into yet another partisan issue in Turkey. Erdogan accused opposition party members of a "terror of lies" for criticizing Turkey's lack of adequate aerial firefighting capabilities and inadequate preparedness for large-scale wildfires. The president said the municipalities were also responsible for protecting towns from fires and that responsibility did not fall on the central government alone but the mayors say they weren't even invited to crisis coordination.

Firefighters have been trying to protect the power plant for the past two days. Along with police water cannons, they fought back the flames Tuesday night while other rescuers dug ditches around the Kemerkooy plant. Videos from an adjacent neighborhood in Milas showed charred, decimated trees.

Scorching heat, low humidity and strong winds have fed the fires, which so far have killed eight people and countless animals and destroyed forests in the past eight days. Villagers have had to evacuate their homes and livestock, while tourists have fled in boats and cars. In the seaside province of Mugla, where tourist hot spot Bodrum is located, seven fires continued Wednesday. In Antalya, at least two fires raged on and two neighborhoods had to be evacuated.

Officials say 167 fires had been brought under control and 16 continued in five provinces. Thousands of firefighters and civilians were working to douse the flames.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said another firefighting plane and its staff would come from Azerbaijan on Thursday morning and 40 firetrucks would drive to Turkey to help with the fires. He announced four rented firefighting planes had landed and two from Israel would come Thursday.

Environmental groups and opposition lawmakers in Turkey have also been voicing fears that fire-damaged forests could lose their protected status.

Turkey's parliament passed a law in July that gives the tourism ministry power to manage all aspects of new tourism centers, approved by the president, including in forests and on treasury lands for "public good," taking away responsibilities from the ministries of environment and forestry. The law says these locations would be identified according to their tourism potential, considering the country's natural, historic and cultural values.

Turkish officials, including Erdogan, have firmly rejected the speculation that the forests were in danger of construction and said the burned forests were protected by the constitution and would be reforested. While the exact acreage burned in the past week remains unclear, officials have promised the affected areas would not be transformed for other purposes.

Environmentalists were already protesting mining licenses issued for parts of some forests and trying to stop companies from cutting down trees. They have staged sit-ins across Turkey.

A 2020 report by the Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion showed that 58% of Turkey's forests

have been licensed to mines. About 59% of Mugla, where the fires have been raging, has been designated for mines, it said.

"I won't be able to see the forests that will be replanted. Maybe my kids won't even see them," said Resit Yavuz, a resident in Marmaris, in Mugla province. "There are no trees left. There's nowhere left for fires to erupt."

A heat wave across southern Europe, fed by hot air from North Africa, has led to wildfires across the Mediterranean, including in Italy and Greece. Temperatures in Marmaris reached an all-time high of 45.5 C (114 F) on Tuesday.

The heatwave is forecast to continue in Turkey and Greece until the end of the week.

Man who fatally stabbed Pentagon officer had troubled past

By ERIC TUCKER, MICHAEL BALSAMO and MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As officials seek clues about what prompted a Georgia man to fatally stab a Pentagon police officer, details of the suspect's troubled past emerged Wednesday through interviews and court records.

Austin William Lanz, 27, was arrested last April for a break-in at a neighbor's home and drew police attention months earlier for a harassment campaign involving sexually explicit photos and messages, according to interviews and records obtained by The Associated Press.

Investigators have not revealed a motive in the ambush-style killing of Pentagon police officer George Gonzalez, 37. But Lanz's past brushes with the law, and neighbors' accounts of recent menacing behavior, appear to suggest the violence was more likely the act of a troubled, violence-prone individual than part of a broader conspiracy.

"I wish there was a better way to address those mental health issues that people have," said Phillip Brent, who shared a backyard fence with Lanz in Georgia and describes repeated harassment directed at himself and his then-fiancee. "It feels like it was just a clear failure of our system to help someone out who needed that help."

The FBI on Wednesday said the burst of violence began around 10:40 a.m. Tuesday when Lanz exited a bus at the Pentagon Transit Center and stabbed Gonzalez without provocation. The two struggled and Lanz shot himself with Gonzalez's weapon. Other "officers engaged the subject, who ultimately died at the scene," the FBI said.

The attack temporarily placed the U.S. military headquarters on lockdown and rattled the nerves of a region already primed to be on high alert for violence and potential intruders outside federal government buildings, particularly after the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol.

The Pentagon Force Protection Agency described Gonzalez on Wednesday as a "die-hard" New York Yankees fan and an Army veteran who served in Iraq and joined the police force in 2018. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said flags at the Pentagon would be flown at half-staff while the White House saluted Gonzalez as having "lost his life protecting those who protect the nation."

Meanwhile, investigators were continuing to examine Lanz's background, including his criminal history, jail records, financial information and any online accounts, in search of a motive, a law enforcement official said.

Officials did not reveal why Lanz picked the Pentagon area for violence. Lanz had enlisted in the Marine Corps in October 2012 but was "administratively separated" less than a month later and never earned the title Marine, the Corps said.

One episode of likely interest to investigators is an April arrest in Cobb County, Georgia, in which Lanz was accused of breaking into Brent's home in the Atlanta suburb of Acworth in the middle of the night with what police said appeared to be a crowbar.

He was recorded on video by the security system roaming the house for 13 minutes and turned on all the lights, which police said indicated that he'd been "searching through the residence for something or someone." He left without taking anything, according to arrest reports and court filings.

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Lanz was arrested and booked on charges of burglary and trespassing charges. When informed he was being charged, Lanz objected, saying, "but I didn't take anything," the arrest report said. He then made statements to a police officer about how planes had been flying over the neighborhood and tracking his cellphone.

While being processed at the county jail, Lanz, who was listed as 6 feet, 3 inches (1.9 meters) tall and roughly 190 pounds (86 kilograms), is alleged to have attacked two sheriff's deputies in the intake area without provocation, including one who sustained a chipped bone and torn ligament in her knee. After he was restrained, Lanz reportedly accused the officers of being "gay" for teaming up on him and asked to be uncuffed so he could fight them one-on-one.

A judge reduced his bond in May to \$30,000 and released him, imposing some conditions, including that he not take illegal drugs, that he undergo a mental health evaluation and that he not possess a firearm. The charges against him are still listed as pending.

A spokesperson for the Cobb County Sheriff's Office confirmed that Lanz had been held at the agency's detention center but referred all other questions to the FBI.

An attorney who represented Lanz in the Georgia cases didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment. Messages left with family members at Lanz's home in Acworth were not immediately returned.

The April break-in was the culmination of a lengthy harassment campaign that involved sexually explicit and "vaguely threatening" messages that Lanz was caught on surveillance camera slipping into the mailbox of the neighboring home where Brent and his then-fiancee lived, Brent said.

The harassment briefly stopped after the police, presented with the video footage, confronted Lanz with a warning, Brent said.

But it later resumed, including in the form of a massive cardboard sign that was duct-taped on Brent's front door and said, cryptically, on one side: "I'm done wondering for real" and "Wut is the point of that" on the other.

By the time of the break-in, Brent said, he was so unnerved that he was sleeping at his sister's house. On April 24, around 4 a.m., he was alerted that the alarm company had reported a break-in at his home. He pulled up the surveillance system video camera on his phone, "and I was like, oh, it's Austin."

He said Lanz broke in through the back door with a sledgehammer, opened all the blinds and rummaged through his bed. Though it is not mentioned in the police report, Lanz was also carrying a handgun, Brent said.

"It was terrifying," he said.

Brent and his former fiancée, Eliza Wells, said they were frustrated with the criminal justice system, which they say failed to initially treat the harassment claims with appropriate seriousness and then permitted him to be out on bond.

Brent said he recently learned from a prosecutor that Lanz's lawyer was seeking a bond modification that would permit Lanz to travel to the Washington, D.C., area to work with his father, who did not return messages seeking comment.

"It just causes me to wonder what could have been done differently to help Austin mentally and give him the actual tools and resources if he needed, instead of just letting him out on bail and allowing him to travel out of state, and that sort of stuff," Wells said.

Mexico sues US gun manufacturers over arms trafficking toll

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO and CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The Mexican government sued United States gun manufacturers and distributors Wednesday in U.S. federal court, arguing that their negligent and illegal commercial practices have unleashed tremendous bloodshed in Mexico.

The unusual lawsuit was filed in U.S. federal court in Boston. Among those being sued are some of the biggest names in guns, including: Smith & Wesson Brands, Inc.; Barrett Firearms Manufacturing, Inc.; Beretta U.S.A. Corp.; Colt's Manufacturing Company LLC, and Glock Inc. Another defendant is Interstate

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Arms, a Boston-area wholesaler that sells guns from all but one of the named manufacturers to dealers around the U.S.

The manufacturers did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The Mexican government argues that the companies know that their practices contribute to the trafficking of guns to Mexico and facilitate it. Mexico wants compensation for the havoc the guns have wrought in its country.

The Mexican government "brings this action to put an end to the massive damage that the Defendants cause by actively facilitating the unlawful trafficking of their guns to drug cartels and other criminals in Mexico," the lawsuit said.

The government estimates that 70% of the weapons trafficked to Mexico come from the U.S., according to the Foreign Affairs Ministry. And that in 2019 alone, at least 17,000 homicides were linked to trafficked weapons.

The National Shooting Sports Foundation, the U.S. firearm industry's trade association, said in a statement that it rejected Mexico's allegations of negligence.

"These allegations are baseless. The Mexican government is responsible for the rampant crime and corruption within their own borders," said Lawrence G. Keane, the group's senior vice president and general counsel. The Mexican government is responsible for enforcing its laws, he said.

The group also took issue with Mexico's figures for the number of guns recovered at crime scenes and traced back to the U.S. It said that traces were attempted on only a fraction of the recovered guns and only on the ones carrying a serial number, making them more likely to have originated in the U.S.

Alejandro Celorio, legal advisor for the ministry, told reporters Wednesday that the damage caused by the trafficked guns would be equal to 1.7% to 2% of Mexico's gross domestic product. The government will seek at least \$10 billion in compensation, he said. Mexico's GDP last year was more than \$1.2 trillion.

"We don't do it to pressure the United States," Celorio said. "We do it so there aren't deaths in Mexico."

Ebrard said the lawsuit was another piece of the government's efforts against guns. "The priority is that we reduce homicides," he said. "We aren't looking to change American laws."

Mexico did not seek the advice of the U.S. government on the matter, but advised the U.S. Embassy before filing the lawsuit.

Steve Shadowen, the lead attorney representing Mexico, said that in the early 2000s about 30 U.S. cities brought similar litigation against gun manufacturers arguing that they should be responsible for increased police, hospitalization and other costs associated with gun violence.

As some cities started winning, gun manufacturers went to Congress and got an immunity statute for the manufacturers. Shadowen said he believes that immunity doesn't apply when the injury occurs outside the United States.

"The merits of the case are strongly in our favor and then we have to get around this immunity statute which we think we're going to win," he said. "That statute just simply doesn't apply. It only applies when you're in the United States."

He said he believes it is the first time a foreign government has sued the gun manufacturers.

Adam Winkler, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles and expert on gun policy, called Mexico's effort a "long shot."

"It is a bold and innovative lawsuit," he said. "We haven't seen anything like this before. The gun manufacturers have enjoyed broad immunity from lawsuits for now two decades."

He said he had not seen arguments that the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act applies only to damages in the United States.

The sale of firearms is severely restricted in Mexico and controlled by the Defense Department. But thousands of guns are smuggled into Mexico by the country's powerful drug cartels.

There were more than 36,000 murders in Mexico last year, and the toll has remained stubbornly high despite President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's pledge to pacify the country. Mexico's nationwide murder rate in 2020 remained unchanged at 29 per 100,000 inhabitants. By comparison, the U.S. homicide rate

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in 2019 was 5.8 per 100,000.

In August 2019, a gunman killed 23 people in an El Paso Walmart, including some Mexican citizens. At that time, Foreign Affairs Secretary Marcelo Ebrard said the government would explore its legal options. The government said Wednesday that recent rulings in U.S. courts contributed to its decision to file the lawsuit.

It cited a decision in California allowing a lawsuit against Smith & Wesson to move forward, a lawsuit filed last week against Century Arms related to a 2019 shooting in Gilroy, California, and the \$33 million settlement reached by Remington with some of the families whose children were killed in the Newtown, Connecticut, Sandy Hook Elementary mass school shooting.

Winkler, the UCLA professor, mentioned the Sandy Hook lawsuit as one that initially few thought would go anywhere.

"The plaintiffs in that case made an innovative and bold argument, too," he said. "They argued that the immunity statute does not prevent these gun makers from being held liable where they act negligently."

"Over the past year or so, we've seen some cracks in the immunity armor provided by federal law," Winkler said. "Even if this lawsuit moves forward, it will be extremely difficult for Mexico to win because it will be hard to show that this distribution process or their distribution practices are a manifestation of negligence on the part of the gun makers."

Greek fires force beach rescue, approach Olympics birthplace

By THANASSIS STAVRAKIS and NICHOLAS PAPHITIS Associated Press

VARIBOBI, Greece (AP) — Greece evacuated people in boats from an island beach Wednesday amid heavy smoke from a nearby wildfire and fire crews fought to keep flames away from the birthplace of the ancient Olympic Games as the country sweltered under a record heat wave.

With over 100 wildfires burning in Greece, the European Union sent assistance to it and other southeast European countries grappling with huge wildfires. The help came a day after another major blaze burned more than 100 homes and businesses near the Greek capital of Athens.

Civil Protection chief Nikos Hardalias said 118 wildfires broke out over the past 24 hours, and warned that even worse days could lie ahead for the hard-pressed fire service.

"We are making a titanic effort on many fronts," he told an evening briefing. "According to our threat forecasts, tomorrow too is expected to be a difficult day ... The toughest part lies ahead of us, the next days and weeks will be even harder. Our key target is to protect human lives."

Evacuations were taking place in Greece's southern Peloponnese region due to a major fire near ancient Olympia — where the Olympics were held every four years from 776 B.C. for more than a millennium. The adjacent town of Ancient Olympia was evacuated, with another seven nearby villages. The area was ravaged by wildfires in 2007 that cost dozens of lives but spared Olympia's ruined sports venues and temples.

The mayor of the nearby town of Pírgos said a strong firefighting cordon had been placed around the verdant site.

"I think the site's security is at a satisfactory level," Panagiotis Andonakopoulos said.

The coast guard evacuated about 90 people stranded on a beach near the northern village of Rovies on the island of Evia. Private boats helped in the operation. Media reports said three firefighters suffered burns. Several homes were burnt as well as swaths of forest.

Temperatures in Greece reached 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) Wednesday, in what authorities described as the worst heat wave since 1987. Neighboring countries face similar conditions, fueling deadly wildfires in Turkey and blazes in Italy and across the Mediterranean region. Officials in Albania said one person died of smoke inhalation near the southern city of Gjirokaster.

An EU disaster response group said firefighters and water-dropping planes were being sent from EU members to Italy, Greece, Albania and North Macedonia.

"Following the situation with great concern. European solidarity is at work to fight these terrible fires," EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen tweeted.

The EU Atmosphere Monitoring Service said smoke plumes from the region's wildfires were clearly visible

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in satellite images, which also showed that the intensity of the wildfires in Turkey was at the highest level since records started in 2003.

Greek scientists said the total destruction in just three days this month in Greece exceeded 50% of the average area burnt in the country in previous years. An Athens Observatory report said an estimated 6,000 hectares (14,800 acres) went up in smoke in the wildfires between Sunday-Wednesday — compared to 10,400 hectares in the whole of last year.

The causes of the Greek wildfires were unclear, but authorities say human error and carelessness are most frequently to blame.

Outside Athens, low-flying helicopters and planes dumped water on charred forests around Tatoi, 20 kilometers (12 1/2 miles) north of Athens, where more than 500 firefighters had battled through the night to contain the blaze that started Tuesday. At least 80 cars were burned.

"The ground crews did vital work, (fighting) nightmarish fires in suburban forests," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said, visiting a mobile control center. "We had no loss of human life. ... Homes will be rebuilt and over time the forest will grow back."

Firefighters pumped water from a swimming pool to douse the flames, and water-dropping buckets were attached to military helicopters. Authorities said more than 100 homes and businesses had been seriously damaged or destroyed, and more than 500 people were put up for the night in hotels.

The fire sent clouds of smoke over the Greek capital. It also raged close to a large forested estate and palace that once belonged to Greece's royal family and is now a public park but Greece's Culture Ministry said Wednesday the Tatoi estate was not harmed.

It said artifacts "of particular historic and artistic value" were removed from storage areas in the estate as a precaution. Under a major restoration program, thousands of artifacts from the former palace — including ceremonial carriages, luxury cars, antiquities, paintings and clothes — have been stored for years on the estate pending conservation.

Sporadic power outages occurred after the flames toppled electricity transmission towers, adding more strains to Greece's overloaded national power grid at the height of the key summer tourist season.

The heat wave is forecast to hover over Greece and Turkey until the end of the week.

Impact of space station spin requires study, official says

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Space engineers will analyze whether a glitch that caused the International Space Station to spin out of its normal orientation could have impacted any of its systems, a Russian space official said Wednesday.

Sergei Krikalev, the director of crewed space programs at the Russian space corporation Roscosmos, emphasized that last week's incident did not inflict any observable damage to the space station but he said that experts would need to study its potential implications.

"It appears there is no damage," Krikalev said in an interview broadcast by Russian state television. "But it's up to specialists to assess how we have stressed the station and what the consequences are."

NASA emphasized Wednesday that the station was operating normally and noted that the spin was within safety limits for its systems.

Thrusters on Russia's Nauka laboratory module fired shortly after the module arrived at the International Space Station on Thursday, making the orbiting outpost slowly spin about one-and-a-half revolutions. Russia's mission controllers fired thrusters on another Russian module and a Russian cargo ship attached to the space station to stop rotation and then push the station back to its normal position.

Both U.S. and Russian space officials said the station's seven-person crew wasn't in danger during the incident.

The station needs to be properly aligned to get the maximum power from solar panels and to maintain communications with space support teams back on Earth. The space station's communications with ground controllers blipped out twice for a few minutes on Thursday.

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NASA said in a tweet Tuesday that the station was 45 degrees out of alignment when Nauka's thrusters were still firing and the loss of control was discussed with the crew. "Further analysis showed total attitude change before regaining normal attitude control was (tilde)540 degrees," NASA said.

On Wednesday, NASA noted that "continued analysis following last week's event with unplanned thruster firings on Nauka has shown the space station remains in good shape with systems performing normally."

"Most importantly, the maximum rate and acceleration of the attitude change did not approach safety limits for station systems and normal operations resumed once attitude control was regained," it said.

Roscosmos' Krikalev, a veteran of six space missions who spent a total of 803 days in orbit, noted Wednesday that firing orientation engines created a dynamic load on the station's components, making a thorough analysis of whether some of them could be overstressed necessary.

"The station is a rather delicate structure, and both the Russian and the U.S. segments are built as light as possible," he said. "An additional load stresses the drivers of solar batteries and the frames they are mounted on. Specialists will analyze the consequences. It is too early to talk about how serious it was, but it was an unforeseen situation that requires a detailed study."

Krikalev said Nauka's engines fired because a glitch in the control system mistakenly assumed that the lab module hadn't yet docked at the station and activated the thrusters to pull it away.

The launch of the 22-ton (20-metric-ton) module has been repeatedly delayed by technical problems. It was initially scheduled to go up in 2007, but funding problems pushed the launch back, and in 2013 experts found contamination in its fuel system, resulting in a long and costly replacement. Other Nauka systems also underwent modernization or repairs.

Nauka is the first new compartment for the Russian segment of the International Space Station since 2010, offering more space for scientific experiments and room for the crew. Russian crew members will have to conduct up to 11 spacewalks beginning in early September to prepare it for operation.

The space station is currently operated by NASA astronauts Mark Vande Hei, Shane Kimbrough and Megan McArthur; Oleg Novitsky and Pyotr Dubrov of Roscosmos; Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Akihiko Hoshide and European Space Agency astronaut Thomas Pesquet.

In 1998, Russia launched the station's first compartment, Zarya, which was followed in 2000 by another big piece, Zvezda, and three smaller modules in the following years. The last of them, Rassvet, arrived at the station in 2010.

AP: Police brass eyed in probe of Black man's deadly arrest

By JIM MUSTIAN and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

MONROE, La. (AP) — Federal prosecutors are investigating whether Louisiana State Police brass obstructed justice to protect the troopers seen on long-withheld body camera video punching, dragging and stunning Black motorist Ronald Greene during his fatal 2019 arrest.

It marks a significant expansion of the federal inquiry that began as a blow-by-blow examination of the troopers' violence against Greene and their apparent efforts to cover it up. Investigators are now moving up the chain of command, probing allegations that supervisors disregarded the video evidence, quashed a recommendation to arrest one of the troopers and recently pressed a state prosecutor not to bring any charges, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press and a half dozen people familiar with the case.

"Their investigation is far beyond just use of force," said Ron Haley, an attorney for Greene's family, who met with federal authorities at length last month. "They're casting a very wide net."

The development comes as federal prosecutors are preparing to present their findings to a grand jury by the end of the summer, which could bring the first charges of any kind in a case that's long been shrouded in secrecy.

Greene's deadly arrest on May 10, 2019, came after he eluded a stop for a traffic violation and led troopers on a chase near Monroe at speeds topping 115 mph. Troopers initially told Greene's relatives the 49-year-old died from a crash at the end of the chase, despite his car showing little damage, and only

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later did state police acknowledge a struggle.

It took 474 days for state police to launch an internal inquiry and officials from Gov. John Bel Edwards on down refused to release body camera video for more than two years. That was until the AP obtained and published it in May, showing white troopers beating Greene and dragging him by his ankle shackles, even as he pleaded for mercy and wailed, "I'm your brother! I'm scared! I'm scared!"

A key point under scrutiny in the federal investigation came just a day after the AP published the video, when the head of the state police, Col. Lamar Davis, and his chief of staff, Lt. Col. Doug Cain, made a hastily arranged attempt to dissuade state prosecutors from charging troopers in the Greene case, according to several people familiar with the investigation who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss it.

Davis and Cain traveled to District Attorney John Belton's office in Ruston — more than 200 miles north of Baton Rouge — on May 20 to review the video frame by frame and make the case that the troopers' actions were justified. Belton, who told colleagues he was deeply disturbed by the footage, referred the case to federal authorities in September 2019 but has not ruled out prosecuting the troopers at the state level.

Capt. Nick Manale, a state police spokesman, said the agency is continuing to cooperate with the federal investigation and "intends to release all documents and investigative files at the appropriate time." He said the federal inquiry "prevents the release of further information."

Davis has declined repeated interview requests. Cain did not respond to messages seeking comment.

"Why would the top command people be so adamant on protecting their officers when it's apparent that the officers didn't do everything right?" said Andrew Scott, a former Boca Raton, Florida, police chief who testifies as an expert witness in use-of-force cases. "There's a culture and a custom and practice that this type of behavior is condoned or winked at by command staff and has been allowed to perpetuate itself over the course of many years."

Of particular interest to federal investigators is why the state police failed to arrest Chris Hollingsworth, a veteran trooper who can be seen on the video stunning Greene and was later recorded boasting to a colleague that he choked Greene and beat the "ever living f--- out of him."

Seven days after Greene's death, on May 17, 2019, state police detectives told their superiors that Hollingsworth should be arrested for turning off his dashboard and body cameras before the high-speed pursuit and later when he realized one of the devices was recording him talking about beating Greene, according to notes written by the lead investigator, Det. Albert Paxton.

But state police commanders in Monroe pressured their detectives to hold off, the notes say. Among those present at the meeting were Capt. John Peters, the regional troop commander, and Bob Brown, then the major over statewide criminal investigations.

The meeting became "very heated," the notes say, with the commanders warning that charging Hollingsworth would cause investigators to "have issues with patrol."

The detectives also suggested Hollingsworth be charged with aggravated battery. Peters responded, "What is evidence and who decides?"

Hollingsworth was never arrested and was only fired in September after he admitted to bashing Greene's head with a flashlight — a use of deadly force internal investigators said was unjustified. The 46-year-old died in a single-car highway crash in Monroe hours after he learned of his firing.

Also under scrutiny, according to those familiar with the probe, is why the state police failed to provide the body camera video and even the most basic police reports for the official autopsy. It listed Greene's cause of death as "cocaine induced agitated delirium complicated by motor vehicle collision, physical struggle, inflicted head injury and restraint." The forensic pathologists, however, say the lack of supporting materials left them unable to determine whether the crash or excessive police force caused his most severe injuries.

The FBI recently asked the pathologist to make another attempt at such a conclusion accounting for the evidence state police initially failed to provide.

As federal prosecutors home in on possible obstruction charges, state police leaders have redoubled

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their hunt for leaks in a case that's steeped the agency in controversy and divided its ranks.

At least six high-ranking state police officials — including Peters, Brown and Col. Kevin Reeves, the head of the state police at the time of Greene's death — have retired amid the growing fallout from the case.

Last month, Peters announced his departure as head of the Monroe-based Troop F — which has become notorious for its harsh treatment of Black suspects — with an email saying, "Shamefully, we have now seen there are those within our own ranks tearing this agency apart from the inside."

Peters didn't mention in his email that he recently received a 32-hour suspension for signing off on a use-of-force report without reviewing the body camera footage of his troopers beating yet another Black motorist, according to state police records. Peters, who was among the commanders to sign off on the use-of-force reports in Greene's case, told investigators it was "common practice" for him to approve such documents without reviewing the materials. He declined to comment to AP.

Leading the federal inquiry is Assistant U.S. Attorney John Luke Walker, a Lafayette-based prosecutor who won accolades for his role in a sprawling child exploitation case that resulted in dozens of convictions.

Walker is also investigating Louisiana state troopers' beatings of at least two other Black motorists. They include Aaron Larry Bowman, who was pulled over near his Monroe home just 20 days after Greene's death and was struck 18 times with a flashlight, leaving him with a broken jaw, ribs and wrist, and a gash to the head.

Trooper Jacob Brown, the son of Bob Brown, was arrested in December on second-degree battery and malfeasance charges in Bowman's beating. Brown did not respond to requests for comment.

Bowman's lawyer, Donecia Banks-Miley, said federal prosecutors met with her and her client in June and showed them Brown's 2019 body camera footage for the first time.

"It's been covered up for so long," Banks-Miley said. "It's just been covered up."

Grieving and angry, Lebanese mark year since horrific blast

By ZEINA KARAM and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — United in grief and anger, families of the victims and several thousand Lebanese on Wednesday marked one year since the horrific explosion at Beirut's port with a moment of silence and prayers at the foot of the silos that was shredded by the blast on that fateful day.

A few blocks away, groups of protesters hurled stones and Molotov cocktails and clashed with security forces near Parliament, which they accuse of blocking the investigation into the port blast by refusing to lift immunity of senior politicians implicated in negligence that led to the explosion. Police responded with water cannons and volleys of tear gas.

The grim anniversary came amid an unprecedented economic and financial meltdown, and a political stalemate that has kept the country without a functioning government for a full year.

"We have to call for justice and we have to stand together, all of us together as one people, next to the families, to really ask for truth and justice," said Nada Hjeily whose close friend died in the blast.

The explosion killed at least 214 people, according to official records, injured and maimed thousands and devastated entire neighborhoods of the Lebanese capital.

It was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history — the result of hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate igniting after a fire broke out. The explosion tore through the city with such force, it caused a tremor across the entire country that was heard and felt as far away as the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, more than 200 kilometers (180 miles) away.

It soon emerged in documents that the highly combustible nitrates had been haphazardly stored at a port warehouse alongside other flammable material since 2014, and that multiple high-level officials over the years knew of its presence and did nothing.

A year later, there has been no accountability, and the investigation has yet to answer questions such as who ordered the shipment of the chemicals and why officials ignored repeated internal warnings of their danger.

Several thousand people gathered at various locations in Beirut on Wednesday, chanting slogans against

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the country's political class widely blamed for the port disaster and years of corruption and mismanagement that plunged Lebanon into bankruptcy. They all marched toward the port.

"This is too big of a crime for it to be swept under the carpet," said Sara Jaafar, an architect whose house opposite the port was totally destroyed, as she marched toward the rally there.

"It's important for foreign countries to know we are against this murderous ruling class," Jaafar added. A year on, she has not been able to go back to her home, which like so many remains in ruins.

Protesters converged on the highway that snakes around the port, covering the streets with a sea of Lebanese flag and walking up and down the bridges over the motorway. Families of the victims walked down the road parallel to the explosion site, carrying posters with photographs of their loved ones. The crowds lined up on both sides broke out in applause, in a show of support and respect.

They then held a memorial and prayers inside the port, which still holds the ruins of the giant silos. Names of each of the killed were read out. A huge metal gavel with the words "Act for Justice" was placed on a wall opposite the port.

"We are all victims of this system," said Paul Naggear, father of 3-year-old Alexandra, who perished in the blast. He spoke on a podium outside the port, his wife Tracy standing next to him.

Flags flew at half-staff over government institutions and embassies, and even medical labs and COVID-19 vaccination centers were closed to mark the day, which had been declared a national day of mourning. Reflecting the raw anger at the country's ruling class, posters assailing authorities were hung on the facades of defaced buildings across from the port.

"Here starts your end and our beginning," read one poster that took up the space of five floors of a high-rise. "Hostages of a murderous state," read another.

"This is a day of pain and grief. It is the day we lost our loved ones and relatives and children. We hope all those coming down (to the streets) in solidarity with us to respect our pain," said Ibrahim Hoteit, who lost his brother in the blast and is now a spokesman for the families fighting for accountability.

The blast, coupled with the devastating economic crisis, political stalemate and rising poverty, have posed the gravest threat to the small country's stability since its 1975-90 civil war.

In a statement Wednesday afternoon, the Lebanese army said it arrested a number of people who were on their way to take part in anniversary commemorations, saying they had a large number of weapons and ammunition in their possession.

In Beirut's eastern neighborhood of Gemayzeh, a fist fight broke out between supporters of the Lebanese Communist Party and others who support the right-wing Christian Lebanese Forces. Several people were lightly injured in the stone-throwing, before security forces opened fire, shooting into the air and dispersed the two sides.

Later, protesters marched toward the parliament building and began throwing stones from behind a giant metal barrier, setting off clashes with security forces, which fired volleys of tear gas and water cannons to disperse the crowd.

In an extensive investigative report, Human Rights Watch on Tuesday called for an international probe into the port blast, accusing Lebanese authorities of trying to thwart the investigation. HRW said a lack of judicial independence, constitution-imposed immunity for high-level officials and a range of procedural and systemic flaws in the domestic investigation rendered it "incapable of credibly delivering justice."

The explosion — which destroyed and damaged thousands of homes and businesses — and the lack of accountability have added to the deep political and sectarian divisions, tensions and anguish in a country reeling from multiple crises, including an economic unraveling so severe it has been described by the World Bank as one of the worst in the last 150 years.

The crisis has led to a dramatic currency crash and hyperinflation, plunging more than half of the country's population below the poverty line. The international community has refused to help Lebanon financially before wide reforms are implemented to fight widespread corruption and mismanagement.

Meanwhile, an international conference co-hosted by France and the United Nations on Wednesday raised \$370 million in aid for Lebanon's growing humanitarian needs, including \$118.6 million pledged by France, the former colonial power in Lebanon. The money is intended for the people of Lebanon, bypassing the

government.

At the Vatican, Pope Francis recalled the suffering of the Lebanese people, as he held his first weekly audience with the public since surgery a month ago.

"A year after the terrible explosion in the port of Beirut, Lebanon's capital, that caused death and destruction, my thoughts go to that dear country, above all to the victims, to their families," the pontiff said.

"And so many lost the illusion of living," he added.

Unvaccinated, hospitalized: Patient now advocates for shots

By STACEY PLAISANCE Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Cedric Daniels and Joshua Bradstreet Contreras didn't think they really needed the coronavirus vaccine. After all, the uncle and nephew are both young — 37 and 22, respectively — and Contreras was "as healthy as a horse," Daniels said.

But just days after Daniels went to visit Contreras in New Orleans — a long-awaited reunion that came after not seeing each other for months because of the pandemic — the nephew was rushed away in an ambulance. He couldn't breathe, even when sitting completely still. He is now in a hospital in a New Orleans suburb, on a ventilator and in a medically induced coma.

At about the same time, Daniels started feeling weak, had blurred vision and was so short of breath he could barely make it from his couch in the living room to the bathroom. He tested positive for the virus, then went to a hospital in Baton Rouge already overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients, where he stayed for a week on oxygen as he recovered from pneumonia.

Contreras and Daniels are among a flood of patients filling up overloaded hospitals across the U.S. amid a surge of COVID-19 cases driven by the virus's highly contagious delta variant. Health officials say the most serious cases have been among the unvaccinated.

"It is frustrating, because it's preventable ... but more than that, it's really sad," said James Ford, a critical care doctor in the ICU at Our Lady of the Lake Medical Center in Baton Rouge, where Daniels was treated.

To help with the influx, the hospital brought in a disaster medical assistance team of nearly three dozen health care workers on Monday. That same day, hospital leaders at a news conference where Gov. John Bel Edwards announced a reinstated statewide mask mandate described grim conditions across Louisiana: facilities filled with COVID-19 patients, including children, and hospital hallways lined with stretchers because there aren't enough beds.

"A lot of them are debilitated and need around-the-clock care," said Ford, who has been working on his days off to help ease his hospital's burden. "It's very labor intensive."

Some of those patients, like Daniels, now wish they had taken the shot.

"They're talking about putting tubes down your throat possibly if your oxygen doesn't go up within the next hour, and that is frightening," he told The Associated Press on Monday as he lay in a bed with an oxygen tube in his nose. He was released shortly afterward but still must use oxygen at home.

"I am now a huge advocate for doctor's orders," Daniels added. "They think we ought to get vaccinated, I think we ought to get vaccinated."

Daniels, who lives in Gonzales, about 57 miles (92 kilometers) northwest of New Orleans, said he and Contreras were the only unvaccinated members of their households. Daniels' wife and live-in mother-in-law, both of whom were inoculated months ago, have both tested negative twice since he tested positive.

Contreras' mother, Tarsha Bradstreet, had also been vaccinated, as had her 19-year-old son who lives in the same house in New Orleans. Bradstreet said she tried to persuade Contreras to get the shot, but said she had only so much pull over him.

"Josh hardly goes anywhere since COVID hit, so he didn't think he needed the vaccine," Bradstreet said.

One of the places to which Contreras did go, however, was his summer job at Café Reconcile. About the time he started getting ill, he got a call from the restaurant telling him that a co-worker had tested positive for the virus and he needed to get tested himself.

"He had a headache and some nausea, so at first we thought it was dehydration," Bradstreet said. "A

week later, he couldn't smell. He couldn't breathe. I noticed his breath was quick and rapid, and he could barely stand up or do anything. I had to call an ambulance."

A while later, the hospital called and said, "Your son is on a ventilator, and I almost died," Bradstreet said. "I couldn't believe it. I didn't realize how serious it was. I didn't know. He almost died."

Bradstreet talks to her son every day through one of the hospital's portable laptops, so that he can hear her voice even if he can't see her.

She also prays a lot, and hopes that sharing her son's story will motivate others who have not yet been vaccinated to go and get the shot.

"When we go through things, it's to help other people, to teach people something," she said. "Their choice may leave them in the hospital. Maybe they'll get the lesson before they have to go through this."

EXPLAINER: Will new CDC moratorium keep tenants housed?

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — After a federal eviction moratorium was allowed to lapse this weekend, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a new moratorium Tuesday on evictions that would last until Oct. 3.

The new moratorium aims to keep millions in their homes and prevent the spread of the coronavirus' delta variant. The order cites the fact that there are lower vaccination rates in areas most at risk for eviction.

The moratorium also give states additional time to get out nearly \$47 billion in rental assistance, most of which has yet to be distributed to tenants and landlords.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THE NEW MORATORIUM?

Most tenants facing eviction and who counted on the CDC moratorium in the past should be protected. The new ban would temporarily halt evictions in counties with "substantial and high levels" of virus transmission and is expected to cover areas where 90% of the U.S. population lives.

The number of tenants protected is likely to change, however, since it would stop being applicable in counties that go 14 days without seeing substantial or high levels of coronavirus transmission. Counties that are not covered now, but later experience spikes, would also fall under the moratorium when that happens.

There are concerns among advocates that judges, especially in rural areas, may ignore the CDC moratorium as some did earlier in the pandemic. Already, a lawyer in North Carolina said Wednesday that a judge refused to accept it as a defense because the Administrative Office of the Courts has not provided any guidance on it.

HOW CAN A TENANT USE THE MORATORIUM TO PREVENT AN EVICTION?

Just like the original CDC moratorium, a tenant facing eviction for nonpayment of rent must fill out a form and present it to their landlord or the owner of the property.

The new order makes clear that someone protected by the original CDC order would still be protected. It also says that anyone in court for nonpayment of rent but whose case has not yet been completed would be protected by the order.

But as was the case previously, the order would not protect someone who engaged in criminal activities, damaged their apartment or threatened the health and safety of other residents among other violations

WILL THIS ORDER SURVIVE LEGAL CHALLENGES?

After pushing the CDC to reconsider its options, President Joe Biden acknowledged Tuesday that he wasn't sure the new moratorium could withstand lawsuits about its constitutionality. Landlords had successfully challenge the original order in court.

When the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the eviction ban to remain in place through the end of July by a 5-4 vote, one justice in the majority, Brett Kavanaugh, wrote that Congress would have to act to extend it further.

Landlords groups reacted to the new order as they did the old one, criticizing it as an unfunded government mandate. They have yet to detail their legal strategy, though most housing advocates are counting on more lawsuits. Even if the order is overturned in court, advocates are hopeful it gives states enough

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time to get rental assistance out.

WHAT MORE COULD BE DONE FOR TENANTS?

Housing advocates have called the extension the best option given the current situation. Most would have liked Congress to take up the issue and pass a comprehensive eviction moratorium. But that is unlikely in the current political climate.

The other option is for states and cities to pass their own moratoriums, as many did during the pandemic. California, New York and New Jersey are among a handful of states that still have moratoriums in place.

But it's unlikely that states or cities will enact their own, especially with the CDC extension in place. For most advocates, the focus remains on getting states to speed up the distribution of rental assistance — seen as the best long-term option to keeping tenants housed over the long-term and making landlords whole.

For Missouri Rep. Cori Bush, the eviction fight is personal

By BRIAN SLODYSKO and JIM SALTER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Roughly two decades before she was elected to Congress, Rep. Cori Bush of Missouri lived in a Ford Explorer with her then-husband and two young children after the family had been evicted from their rental home.

So for Bush, a first-term Democrat from St. Louis, the debate over whether to revive the moratorium on evictions during the pandemic is deeply personal. To dramatize her point, she started to sleep outside the U.S. Capitol last Friday to call attention to the issue as part of the effort to pressure President Joe Biden and Congress to act.

On Tuesday, she won. After coming under intense pressure, the Biden administration issued a new eviction moratorium that will last until Oct. 3, temporarily halting evictions in counties with "substantial and high levels" of virus transmissions, which covers areas where 90% of the U.S. population lives.

Bush's experience sets her apart from the more conventional partisan sniping and grandstanding in the capital because of her direct connection to an urgent problem affecting millions of Americans.

"I know what it's like to be evicted and have to live out of my car with my two babies," Bush said in an interview Saturday. "As long as I am a sitting U.S. congressperson, I will not keep my mouth shut about it."

Bush was a prominent part of a larger push among progressives to stop evictions. Her Capitol campout resonated: She was thrust into meetings with top congressional leaders and administration officials and sought after for interviews.

She met Monday with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and had a brief chat with Vice President Kamala Harris — attention that punctuates a political rise that took Bush from leading protests against police brutality in Ferguson, Missouri, to the halls of Congress in little more than five years.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Tuesday gave a salute to Bush "for her powerful action to keep people in their homes."

Schumer was more effusive. "She made yesterday's announcement possible," he said Wednesday.

Before reversing course, the Biden administration initially argued that it didn't have legal authority to extend the moratorium again, pointing to a Supreme Court opinion in June that suggested Congress should pass legislation to do so.

A last-minute attempt to pass a bill through the House also came up short Friday. Then the chamber adjourned and lawmakers left town for an extended August recess — a response Bush says "failed to meet this moment."

On Tuesday, before the administration's announcement, Bush said: "Am I supposed to just go home? No, I'm an organizer. I am an activist. So I fell back into what I know how to do."

It is activism born of personal experience.

In 2001, Bush became ill while pregnant with her second child and had to quit her job at a preschool. The lost income led to their eviction.

For about three months, the couple lived out of their Explorer with two playpens in the back. She said that, at the time, she was working in a low-wage job. Eventually, her family, already struggling themselves,

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was able to help her find a home.

"I don't want anyone else to have to go through what I went through, ever," Bush said while wiping away tears.

The couple later divorced, and Bush went back to school, earning a nursing degree. She also became a pastor.

Her life changed in 2014 when a white police officer fatally shot Michael Brown, a Black 18-year-old, in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, Missouri.

Bush joined the thousands of activists in the protests that followed the shooting and quickly became a leader of the movement that sought police and criminal justice reform in Ferguson and throughout the St. Louis region. She was back on the streets again three years later after a white St. Louis police officer was acquitted in the shooting death of a Black suspect.

Her activism fueled an interest in politics. She ran unsuccessfully in the Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate in 2016, followed by another losing primary race for a congressional seat in 2018. She was defeated by roughly 20 percentage points.

Two years later, her supporters sensed a change in the political landscape after George Floyd's death. With backing from the progressive group Justice Democrats, she sought a rematch against longtime Democratic Rep. William Lacy Clay — and won.

"They counted us out," Bush said after her primary win. "They called me — I'm just the protester, I'm just the activist with no name, no title and no real money. That's all they said that I was. But St. Louis showed up today."

She won easily in heavily Democratic St. Louis in November.

The Rev. Darryl Gray, a political adviser to Bush, said her tenacity was apparent early in her failed 2016 bid for Senate, when she was willing to campaign in rural and very conservative corners of the state.

"She wasn't afraid to show up and speak for justice in places where people would warn us about going, some of these 'sunset towns,'" Gray said. "She knew she wouldn't get support, but people respected the fact she showed up."

Still, there are some who questioned the decision to pick a fight with congressional leadership and the president from her own party. Administration and congressional officials also noted that much of the money Congress had allocated to provide housing assistance has not been distributed by states.

House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., said he was "sensitive" to Bush's aim, but suggested she may be waging the wrong battle.

"It's not the federal government that's doing it," Clyburn said. "If you've appropriated \$46 billion for the country, and only \$3 billion has been used, then that's not Congress. ... It's on whoever has got the money tied up."

On Tuesday evening, after the administration made its announcement, Bush tweeted out a photo of her and others sitting on the Capitol steps with a one-word caption: Grateful.

This year's summer of climate extremes hits wealthier places

By SETH BORENSTEIN and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

As the world staggers through another summer of extreme weather, experts are noticing something different: 2021's onslaught is hitting harder and in places that have been spared global warming's wrath in the past.

Wealthy countries such as the United States, Canada, Germany and Belgium are joining poorer and more vulnerable nations on a growing list of extreme weather events that scientists say have some connection to human-caused climate change.

"It is not only a poor country problem, it's now very obviously a rich country problem," said Debby Guha-Sapir, founder of the international disaster database at the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters at Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. "They (the rich) are getting whacked."

Killer floods hit China, but hundreds of people also drowned in parts of Germany and Belgium not used

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to being inundated. Canada and the Pacific Northwest of the U.S. had what climate scientist Zeke Hausfather called "scary" heat that soared well past triple digits in Fahrenheit and into the high 40s in Celsius, shattering records and accompanied by unusual wildfires. Now southern Europe is seeing unprecedented heat and fire.

And peak Atlantic hurricane and U.S. wildfire seasons are only just starting.

When what would become Hurricane Elsa formed on July 1, it broke last year's record for the earliest fifth named Atlantic storm. Colorado State University has already increased its forecast for the number of named Atlantic storms — and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Wednesday said it was expecting one or two named storms more than it predicted in May.

For fire season, the U.S. West is the driest it has been since 1580, based on soil moisture readings and tree ring records, setting the stage for worsening fires if something ignites them, said UCLA climate and fire scientist Park Williams.

What happens with U.S. hurricane and fire seasons drives the end-of-year statistics for total damage costs of weather disasters, said Ernst Rauch, chief climate and geo scientist for insurance giant Munich Re. But so far this year, he said, wealthier regions have seen the biggest economic losses.

But when poorer countries are hit, they are less prepared and their people can't use air conditioning or leave so there's more harm, said Hausfather, climate director of the Breakthrough Institute. While hundreds of people died in the Pacific Northwest heat wave, he said the number would have been much higher in poor areas.

Madagascar, an island nation off East Africa, is in the middle of back-to-back droughts that the United Nations warns are pushing 400,000 people toward starvation.

Though it is too early to say the summer of 2021 will again break records for climate disasters, "We're certainly starting to see climate change push extreme events into new territories where they haven't been seen before," Hausfather said.

The number of weather, water and climate disasters so far this year is only slightly higher than the average of recent years, said disaster researcher Guha-Sapir. Her group's database, which she said still is missing quite a few events, shows 208 such disasters worldwide through July — about 11% more than the last decade's average, but a bit less than last year.

Last year, the record-shattering heat that came out of nowhere was in Siberia, where few people live, but this year it struck Portland, Oregon, and British Columbia, which gets more Western media attention, Hausfather said.

What's happening is "partly an increase in the statistics of these extreme events, but also just that the steady drumbeat, the pile on year-on-year ... takes its cumulative toll on all of us who are reading these headlines," said Georgia Tech climate scientist Kim Cobb.

"This pattern of recent Northern Hemisphere summers has been really quite stark," said University of Exeter climate scientist Peter Stott.

While the overall temperature rise is "playing out exactly as we said 20 years ago, ... what we are seeing in terms of the heat waves and the floods is more extreme than we predicted back then," Stott said.

Climate scientists say there is little doubt climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas is driving extreme events.

A new study using satellite images of global flooding since 2000, shows that flooding worldwide hits 10 times as many people as previously thought. Wednesday's study in the journal Nature finds that from 2000 to 2018 between 255 and 290 million people were directly affected by floods — which lead author Beth Tellman of the University of Arizona says is based on 913 floods with thousands more not counted because of satellite image problems.

Previous estimates showed far fewer people hit by flooding because they were based on computer simulations, rather than observations. The new study finds that population within flooded areas grew 34% since 2000, nearly twice as fast as those outside flooded areas.

Tellman identified 25 nations that are "climate surprise" countries that will have to cope far more with

the flooding problems than they do now. Those countries include the U.S, as well as Germany, Belgium and China, which were hit by flooding this summer.

Aside from dramatic floods and fires, heat waves are a major risk to prepare for in the future, Guha-Sapir said.

"It's going to be a very big deal in the Western countries because the most susceptible to sudden peaks of heat are older people. And the demographic profile of the people in Europe is very old," she said. "Heat waves are going to be a real issue in the next few years."

Black women, across generations, heed Biles' Olympic example

BY AARON MORRISON, ASTRID GALVAN and DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Naomi Osaka. Simone Biles. Both are prominent young Black women under the pressure of a global Olympic spotlight that few human beings ever know. Both have faced major career crossroads at the Tokyo Games. Both cited pressure and mental health.

The glare is even hotter for these Black women given that, after years of sacrifice and preparation, they are expected to perform, to be strong, to push through. They must work harder for the recognition and often are judged more harshly than others when they don't meet the public's expectations.

So when New York city resident Natelegé Whaley heard that Black women athletes competing in the Tokyo Olympics were asserting their right to take care of their mental health, over the pressure to perform a world away, she took special notice.

"This is powerful," said Whaley, who is Black. "They are leading the way and changing the way we look at athletes as humans, and also Black women as humans."

Being a young Black woman — which, in American life, comes with its own built-in pressure to perform — entails much more than meets the eye, according to several Black women and advocates who spoke to The Associated Press.

The Tokyo Games show signs of signaling the end of an era — one in which Black women on the world stage give so much of themselves that they have little to nothing left, said Patrisse Cullors, an activist and author who co-founded the Black Lives Matter movement eight years ago.

"Black women are not going to die (for public acceptance). We're not going to be martyrs anymore," said Cullors, who resigned her role as director of a BLM nonprofit foundation in May. "A gold medal is not worth someone losing their minds. I'm listening to Simone and hearing her say, 'I'm more important than this competition.'"

She added: "Activism and organizing is just one contribution that I've given. And we all need to know when enough is enough for us."

Biles' message also resonated with Whaley, who co-created an event series in New York City called Brooklyn Recess to preserve the culture of Double Dutch, a rope jumping sport popular in Black communities. Early on, Whaley and co-creator Naima Moore-Turner found they were talking a lot about a mental health component to their events.

"People will say, 'Let Black women lead, because they know,'" said Whaley, a 32-year-old freelance race and culture writer.

"It's like, (Black women) know not because we're some sort of special humans who are supernatural," she said. "It's because we live at those intersections where we have no choice but to know."

ATHLETES AT THE FOREFRONT

The world's greatest living Olympian, swimmer Michael Phelps, has been credited with elevating a conversation about sports and mental health. But when Phelps hung up his goggles five years ago, he was less likely to be burdened by the chronic health disparities, sexual violence, police brutality and workplace discrimination that Black women, famous or not, endure daily.

Still, the Black women Olympic athletes, echoed by many of their sisters in the U.S. and around the world, stepped forward and said they need to protect their mental health. They didn't ask for sympathy or permission. They demanded people respect their decisions and let them be.

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"I say put mental health first because if you don't, then you're not going to enjoy your sport and you're not going to succeed as much as you want to," Biles, 24, said after pulling out of the women's team gymnastics final on July 27. Before the Tokyo Games, she was already the most decorated American gymnast in modern times.

Prioritizing mental wellness "shows how strong of a competitor and person that you really are, rather than just battle through it," she said.

Biles went on to win a bronze medal in the balance beam competition on Tuesday.

Four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka, who is of both Japanese and Haitian descent, first raised concerns about her mental health in June when she avoided speaking to the press during the French Open, and ultimately pulled herself out of the competition until the Tokyo Games. Although Osaka, 23, was eliminated from Olympic medal competition, she reiterated her concern for her own well-being.

"I definitely feel like there was a lot of pressure for this," Osaka said after the Olympic defeat. Weeks earlier, she had written an op-ed for Time magazine in which she said: "It's OK to not be OK, and it's OK to talk about it."

Some of these attitudes might be about age. Many young people feel empowered to speak about mental health in a way previous generations have not.

Biles and Osaka, born months apart in 1997, are members of Gen Z, the first generation whose entire lives have been online. Gen Z-ers are notably more open about mental health struggles, said Nicole O'Hare, a licensed counselor in the Phoenix area.

"It's so beautiful to witness this sort of normalization of mental health and asking for help," O'Hare said. "They're really pushing that barrier and saying I can't, I need help, I'm struggling, I need support. ... If we really listen to what they're asking, we can hear a whole lot."

FACING MORE CHALLENGES

Even with the increased discussion, the overlooking of Black women's mental and emotional wellness is far from new.

Before slavery's abolition, enslaved Black women rarely enjoyed agency over their bodies or their families. They were wet nurses to enslavers' wives, objectified for sexual desires and made to toil in fields and homes without credit for successes or innovations. After slavery was abolished in 1865, Black women gained the right to vote with ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, 50 years after Black men.

More recently, Black women's mental health is likely to be impacted by disparities in health and socioeconomics. African American women have a maternal mortality rate three times higher than white women, and are more likely to report not being believed when they seek treatment for pain from medical professionals.

While they are architects and leaders of the modern movement against police violence, Black women are also victims of it. And with various studies showing Black people as much as three times as likely as white people to be fatally shot by police, Black women are more often grieving the loss of family members or close friends to police violence.

They are also more likely to experience sexual assault in their lifetimes, an issue that likely resonates with Biles, who reported being assaulted by Larry Nassar, the former USA Gymnastics team doctor convicted of criminal sexual conduct with minors. And in the workplace, Black women are paid between 48 to 68 cents for every dollar paid to a white man, according to the National Partnership for Women and Families.

During the U.S. Open last year, following a summer of protests and civil unrest, Osaka had the names of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and other Black Americans killed by police or vigilantes emblazoned on face masks.

But such activism is not a burden for Black women alone, Cullors said, adding that they could simply prioritize themselves if that's what they consider best.

The message is also resonating beyond well-known figures like Cullors. Liz Dwyer, a Black woman who is a writer and editor in Los Angeles, celebrated Biles on Twitter and declared that "Black women are no longer willing to be the mental health mule."

"The whole society gets the benefits from the work that we do," Dwyer said. "And yet the racism and

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sexism, worrying about the rise of hate crimes, worrying about the safety of your children, worrying about your children being profiled and put in the school to prison pipeline ... that all takes a toll."

Melanie Campbell, president and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation and convener of the Black Women's Roundtable, is of a different generation than Biles and Osaka. She said she has been inspired by their leadership on mental health.

"It motivates me to keep advocating, to keep pushing for civil rights because you see this generation is stepping up," said Campbell, who was recently arrested while engaging in civil disobedience during a voting rights campaign led by Black women.

"All of us have a role to play," she said. "I can speak about these issues and still be who I am."

Grammys commit to more hiring diversity for 2022 show

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Grammy Awards will adopt an inclusion rider that will require producers to recruit and hire more diverse candidates backstage and in front of the camera for next year's ceremony.

The Recording Academy announced Wednesday that the rider will be added to its agreement with producers staging the 64th annual awards as a way to ensure equity and inclusion at all levels of production.

Academy President and CEO Harvey Mason jr. called the concept a "monumental step" for an inclusive music community. The full inclusion rider will be released publicly on Sept. 16.

The rider requires Grammys producers to audition, interview, and hire onstage and offstage people who have been historically and systematically excluded from the industry.

"As the academy continues its transformational journey, diversifying our industry is at the core of every decision we make," Mason said in a statement. "We're dedicated to fostering an environment of inclusion industry wide and hope that our efforts set an example for our peers in the music community."

The academy's initiative was created in partnership with several groups including the Color of Change, inclusion rider co-authors Kalpana Kotagal and Fanshen Cox DiGiovanni, and Ryan Butler, the founding director of Warner Music/Blavatnik Center for Music Business at Howard University.

"There are a lot of unwritten rules in the entertainment industry that create racial exclusion, and at Color Of Change, we know that to change society you have to change the rules," said Rashad Robinson, president of the organization. "This inclusion rider is a written rule that will change the culture of hiring at the Grammys, and will make inclusion the norm."

Kotagal said incorporating the concept into the awards show will have an enormous impact on an industry that has a long history of "exclusion and underrepresentation."

"Part of what makes the inclusion rider so potent is its adaptability," said Kotagal, who is a civil rights attorney. She added that the inclusion rider for the Grammys will include a commitment to "deepening and diversifying hiring pools, setting benchmarks and targets for hiring, collecting and thoroughly analyzing applicant and hiring data and implementing accountability measures."

The term "inclusion rider" was brought into the spotlight in 2018 when Frances McDormand mentioned it during her best actress Oscar acceptance speech. Michael B. Jordan, Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Paul Feig and Warner Bros. followed suit by pledging to use inclusion riders in their production projects.

Olympics Latest: World champ Dutch out in women's handball

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:

World champion the Netherlands is out of the women's handball competition at the Tokyo Olympics after a 32-22 loss to France in the quarterfinals.

France led 19-11 at half time as it crushed the Dutch hopes of a first ever Olympic medal in the sport. Laura Flippes led the French team with six goals.

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France's semifinal opponent is Sweden, which beat South Korea 39-30. Kang Kyungmin top-scored for South Korea with eight goals and three Swedish players had six apiece.

The 2016 Olympic gold medalist Russian team faces Norway in the other semifinal game.

The world champions of the decathlon and heptathlon are out of Olympic medal contention after breaking down during their last races of the day.

Heptathlon world champion Katarina Johnson-Thompson injured her right calf muscle as she rounded the bend in the 200 meters, the fourth event of the competition. About an hour later, decathlon world champion Niklas Kaul of Germany appeared to injure an ankle during the 400-meter race, the fifth of 10 disciplines, and did not finish.

Damian Warner of Canada leads at the halfway point of the decathlon with 4,722 points, 81 ahead of Australia's Ash Moloney.

Johnson-Thompson slowed to a stop at the top of the straight and sat on the track before waving away medical attendants who went to her assistance — including one pushing a wheelchair. She got up and limped across the finish line but was disqualified for stepping out of her lane. Her preparation was hampered by a series of injuries, including her left Achilles tendon.

Johnson-Thompson had been in fifth place after the 100-meter hurdles, high jump and long jump.

With three events to go, 2017 world championship bronze medalist Anouk Vetter of the Netherlands leads with 3,968 points. She is 27 points clear of Noor Vidts of Belgium and 47 ahead of defending Olympic champion Nafissatou Thiam.

Gold medal favorite Janja Garnbret of Slovenia turned the Olympic bouldering course into her own personal playground, topping all four "problems" to lead sport climbing qualifying at the Tokyo Games.

Garnbret struggled in her worst event, speed, finishing 14th. The 22-year-old "flashed" through the boulder course, topping each problem in one try. She was the only climber to top all four boulders.

Garnbret finished fourth in lead and had 56 points, 29 ahead of Korea's Seo Chaehyun.

Scoring is determined by multiplying each climber's position in the three disciplines. The finals are Friday.

Japan's Miho Nonaka and Akiyo Noguchi, two of the top contenders to knock off Garnbret, were third and fourth.

American Brooke Raboutou was fifth.

British climbing great Shauna Coxey failed to qualify in her final competitive event before retiring.

Tetsuto Yamada hit a tiebreaking, three-run double off the top of the 16-foot wall in left-center in the eighth inning, and Japan beat South Korea 5-2 to earn a spot in the gold medal baseball game.

Go Woo-suk nearly was out of the inning with one runner on when Kensuke Kondoh hit a one-out grounder to first baseman Oh Jae-il, who threw to second. Go took the return throw from shortstop Oh Ji-hwan but couldn't get his foot on first to complete a double play, a call upheld by video review. Korea had claimed Kondoh took a turn toward second and was tagged.

After a wild pitch, an intentional walk to Munetaka Murakami and a walk to Takuya Kai, Yamada hit his second double of the game.

Baseball-mad Japan is pursuing its first Olympic gold in the tournament held primarily in Yokohama.

South Korea will play a semifinal against the U.S. on Thursday. The winner advances to face Japan for gold on Saturday, and the loser will play the Dominican Republic in the bronze medal game.

MEDAL ALERT

Andre de Grasse of Canada has won the Olympic gold medal in the 200-meter race five years after finishing second to Usain Bolt.

De Grasse won in a national record time of 19.62 seconds, holding off two Americans for the medals.

Kenneth Bednarek won silver in a personal best 19.68 seconds and 2019 world champion Noah Lyles

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took bronze in 19.74.

Erriyon Knighton, the youngest member of the U.S. men's track team at 17, placed fourth in 19.93.

MEDAL ALERT

Japan's Yukako Kawai held on to beat Kyrgyzstan's Aisuluu Tynybekova 4-3 in the women's freestyle 62-kilogram final.

Tynybekova, the No. 1 seed, had won her first three matches by a combined score of 24-0. It's Japan's first wrestling gold at these Olympics.

Kawai's sister, Risako Kawai, will wrestle for her second Olympic gold Thursday in the 57-kg class.

In the bronze medal matches, Ukraine's Iryna Koliadenko defeated Latvia's Anastasija Grigorjeva 3-1 and Bulgaria's Taybe Mustafa Yusein beat the Russian Olympic Committee's Liubov Ovcharova 10-0 in a match that lasted 56 seconds.

MEDAL ALERT

Lasha Talakhadze of Georgia has set three world records to retain his title in the heaviest men's weightlifting category, while Syria earned its first medal since the country's civil war began.

Talakhadze lifted a world-record 223 kilograms in the snatch and 265 in the clean and jerk for a total 488. All three figures broke his own world records in the over-109kg category.

That beat Iran's Ali Davoudi into second place by the vast margin of 47kg.

Man Asaad of Syria took the bronze with a total 424kg. Syria's last Olympic medal in any sport was a boxing bronze in 2004.

MEDAL ALERT

Wojciech Nowicki of Poland finally has a gold medal after winning the men's hammer throw.

The 32-year-old Nowicki led from the first round and improved with each of his first three attempts to reach a personal best 82.52 meters, the winning mark.

He was a bronze medalist at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro and won bronze medals at three world championships.

Eivind Henriksen of Norway set a national record with a 81.58 throw in the fifth round and finished with the silver medal.

Four-time world champion Pawel Fajdek of Poland took bronze with a mark of 81.53.

MEDAL ALERT

Emmanuel Korir won gold and led a Kenyan one-two finish in the 800 meters at the Olympics.

Korir pushed his way past Australia's Peter Bol on the last turn and surged home to win in 1 minute, 45.06 seconds. It was Kenya's fourth straight victory in the 800 at the Olympics.

Teammate Ferguson Rotich took silver with a late kick to overtake Poland's Patryk Dobek, who held on for bronze ahead of Bol.

Kenya has claimed this title at every Olympics since Beijing 2008.

World-record holder David Rudisha won the last two Olympic gold medals in the 800 but he didn't make Kenya's team this year because of long-term injury problems. Clayton Murphy of the United States, the bronze medalist in 2016, finished last.

Ben Maher earned Britain its second straight gold in equestrian individual jumping by besting five riders in a jump off.

Maher follows Nick Skelton, who retired shortly after winning gold at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, to give the country its second gold overall in the event.

Just six of the 30 finalists completed their runs without penalty, and Maher, riding Explosion, had the fastest time out of all of them in the jump-off round at 37.85.

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Peder Fredricson of Sweden earned silver for the second straight games with a jump-off time of 38.02 seconds. Maikel van der Vleuten of the Netherlands won bronze at 38.90.

World champion Katarina Johnson-Thompson injured her leg running in the 200-meter race of the heptathlon and was disqualified from the event.

She waved away people who went to help her, got up and limped to the finish line, but was not credited with a time.

Johnson-Thompson won the world championship title at Doha, Qatar, in 2019. She was in fifth place after the 100-meter hurdles, the high jump and the shot put but is now out of contention.

She went immediately for medical treatment. The 28-year-old British athlete had an injury-interrupted preparation for the Tokyo Games.

MEDAL ALERT

Russia's Svetlana Romashina claimed her record sixth Olympic gold medal in artistic swimming, teaming with Svetlana Kolesnichenko to win the duet.

The Russians were heavy favorites in a sport they have dominated for more than two decades. Their last Olympic loss in the sport formerly known as synchronized swimming came at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

Romashina had been tied with fellow Russians Anastasia Davydova and Natalia Ishchenko with five gold medals apiece.

Now, Romashina is in a class by herself after a riveting performance accompanied by the music "Spiders."

The Russian pair received marks of 98.8000 for their free routine for a combined score of 195.9079.

The silver went to China's Huang Xuechen and Sun Wenyan at 192.4499, while Ukraine's Marta Fiedina and Anastasiya Savchuk beat out Japan for the bronze with 189.4620.

MEDAL ALERT

Ukraine's Zhan Beleniuk beat Hungary's Viktor Lorincz 5-1 in the men's Greco-Roman 87 kilogram final. Beleniuk, the No. 2 seed, was an Olympic silver medalist in 2016. Lorincz was the No. 1 seed.

In bronze medal matches, Germany's Denis Kudla defeated Egypt's Mohamed Metwally and Serbia's Zurabi Datunashvili beat Croatia's Ivan Huklek.

WORLD RECORD

Georgian weightlifter Lasha Talakhadze has set a new world record in the snatch lift with 223 kilograms.

Talakhadze set the new record in the super-heavyweight, over-109-kilogram category with apparent ease even though he had to lift three times in a row because his entry weight was higher than anything attempted by his rivals.

Talakhadze has a commanding lead of 23 kilograms at the halfway point of the competition with Ali Davoudi of Iran in second before the clean and jerk.

MEDAL ALERT

Peruth Chemutai of Uganda made her move on the last lap and pulled away for the win in the women's 3,000-meter steeplechase final at the Tokyo Games.

Chemutai set a new national record with her time of 9 minutes, 1.45 seconds. American Courtney Frerichs took off from the pack with around 2 1/2 laps to go. She was chased down by Chemutai but held on down the stretch for silver. Hyvin Kiyeng of Kenya was third.

Emma Coburn of the United States was disqualified for what was listed as a lane infringement after finishing behind the field. She earned bronze at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games.

The 22-year-old Chemutai finished fifth at the 2019 world championships in Doha.

Frerichs was a silver medalist at the 2017 world championships in London.

MEDAL ALERT

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Iran's Mohammadreza Geraei beat Ukraine's Parviz Nasibov 9-1 to win gold in the men's Greco-Roman 67-kilogram class.

Germany's Frank Staebler defeated Georgia's Ramaz Zoidze 5-4 in one of the bronze medal matches. Staebler had previously announced he would retire after the Olympics. The 32-year-old is a three-time world champion who ended his career by winning his first Olympic medal.

Egypt's Mohamed Ibrahim Elsayed defeated Russian Olympic Committee's Artem Surkov in the other bronze medal match.

France's Bassa Mawem has pulled out of the sport climbing final at the Tokyo Olympics after rupturing a tendon in his left biceps during qualifying.

Mawem was injured during the final of three disciplines while reaching up with his left arm near the bottom of the lead wall. He immediately fell off the wall and stood at the bottom holding his biceps as an official untied his rope.

Mawem still managed to join his brother in qualifying for the finals after finishing first in boulder and 18th in speed.

The French Olympic Committee said Mawem is returning home to have surgery.

MEDAL ALERT

Britain has won gold in the two-person dinghy sailing event.

Hannah Mills becomes the first British woman to win at least three Olympic medals in sailing. She and Eilidh McIntyre won at Enoshima Yacht Harbor. Britain also won in Rio in 2016.

Agnieszka Skrzypulec and Jolanta Ogar of Poland won silver. Ogar, 39, becomes the oldest woman to win an Olympic medal in sailing.

Camille Lecointre and Aloise Retornaz of France won bronze.

MEDAL ALERT

Italy has broken its own world record to win the gold medal in men's team pursuit cycling at the Tokyo Olympics.

The team of Simone Consonni, Filippo Ganna, Francesco Lamon and Jonathan Milan stopped the clock in 3:42.032 to edge world champion Denmark in a dramatic final at the Izu Velodrome. Denmark finished in 3:42.203.

The Italians led through the first half of the 4,000-meter race, then watched as the Danish team of Lasse Norman Hansen, Niklas Larsen, Frederik Madsen and Rasmus Pedersen pulled ahead.

Over the last five laps, the Italians wiped out a deficit of nearly a half-second to win the gold medal.

Australia, the silver medalist in Rio, took the bronze. The Aussies were in a tight race with New Zealand before a touch of wheels sent one of the Kiwi riders to the ground and effectively eliminated them from contention.

A pair of teenagers gave China a 1-2 finish in the preliminaries of women's 10-meter platform diving.

The Chinese have won five of six diving events so far, and earned eight medals overall at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

China has won every women's diving event at the past three Olympics.

Chen Yuxi, a 15-year-old who is the current world champion, and her 14-year-old teammate, Quan Hongchan, led 18 women into the semifinals on Thursday.

Chen totaled 390.70 points for five dives. Quan was second at 364.45.

Quan fell from second to 25th on her third dive, earning just 47.85 points. That was her lowest score of the round. But she rebounded on her fourth dive with 76.80 points to tie for first.

American Delaney Schnell was third at 360.75. Her teammate, Katrina Young, squeaked into the semifinals in 17th place.

Schnell already won a silver medal in 10-meter synchro with partner Jessica Parratto, one of three diving

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medals for the United States.

A Russian athlete competing in karate has been ruled out of the Tokyo Olympics after testing positive for the coronavirus.

The Russian Karate Federation says on Instagram that Anna Chernysheva will not be able to compete and that her positive test was confirmed by a second test.

The 19-year-old was the Russian Olympic Committee team's only karate athlete at the Olympics. She was due to compete Thursday in the women's 55-kilogram kumite event on the first ever day of Olympic karate competition. It's a new sport on the program in Tokyo.

Olympic organizers also say Algerian weightlifter Walid Bidani has withdrawn from the men's over-109-kilogram event Wednesday "due to health situation which requires him to undergo quarantine." The statement doesn't mention the cause. Bidani won gold at the African championships in May.

Harrie Lavreysen and Dutch teammate Jeffrey Hoogland tied for the Olympic record in qualifying for the men's sprint at the Izu Velodrome, clocking the same time of 9.215 down to the thousandth of a second.

In the qualifying rounds, cyclists get what's called a flying start before they are timed over 200 meters. That means the two Dutch riders averaged 48.55 mph during their qualifying lap.

Hoogland will be seeded first and Lavreysen second for the knockout rounds. That's when riders face off against each other in a cat-and-mouse game over three laps with the fastest to the finish line advancing to the next round.

MEDAL ALERT

Mat Belcher and Will Ryan of Australia have won the two-person dinghy event at the Tokyo Olympics. Belcher won gold at the London Olympics in 2012 in the 470 class and combined with Ryan to win the silver medal at Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Belcher and Ryan only had to finish the last race without penalty to clinch the gold medal.

Anton Dahlberg and Fredrik Bergstrom of Sweden won the silver medal and Spain's Nicolas Rodriguez Garcia-Paz and Jordi Xammar took bronze.

The women's two-person dinghy, the last medal race in sailing at the Tokyo Games, was scheduled later Wednesday.

MEDAL ALERT

Arlen López has won his second Olympic boxing gold medal for Cuba, beating Britain's Benjamin Whittaker in the light heavyweight final at the Kokugikan Arena.

López outclassed the defense-minded Whittaker to win the fight on four of the five judges' scorecards. Cuba had never won gold at light heavyweight in its decorated Olympic boxing history until Julio Cesar La Cruz claimed the title in Rio de Janeiro.

López is the second Cuban boxer in two days to win a second gold medal in a different weight class by beating a British fighter after Roniel Iglesias achieved the same feat Tuesday. López won the middleweight division in Rio.

Russian athlete Imam Khataev and Cuban-born Loren Alfonso of Azerbaijan won light heavyweight bronze medals.

The defending champion Russian women's handball team has reached the semifinals with a 32-26 win over Montenegro after a troubled start to the tournament.

The Russian Olympic Committee team seemed unlikely to play for a medal after opening Olympic play with a 24-24 tie with Brazil and a crushing 36-24 loss to Sweden.

Further complicating matters, former coach Evgeny Trefilov has often been in the arena, sometimes calling out instructions which clashed with those from the coaches on the sideline.

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Now, though, the Russians are on a four-game winning streak after beating Hungary, Spain and France to qualify from the group stage before dismissing Montenegro in the quarterfinals.

The Russian team's semifinal opponent is Norway, which beat Hungary 26-22 on seven goals from Kari Brattset Dale. That sets up a repeat of the 2016 semifinals, when Russia beat Norway 38-37 in overtime.

American silver medalist Raven Saunders says her mother has died.

The shot putter wrote on her Twitter account early Wednesday that "my mama was a great woman and will forever live through me. My number one guardian angel."

Media reports say that Clarissa Saunders died in Orlando, Florida, where she had been attending Olympic watch parties. Raven Saunders won silver Sunday.

At the medal ceremony, she stepped off the podium, lifted her arms above her head and formed an X with her wrists. Asked what that meant, she explained: "It's the intersection of where all people who are oppressed meet."

The International Olympic committee was investigating whether the gesture violated a prohibition on political statements at medal ceremonies, but suspended the investigation after Saunders' mother's death.

Spokesman Mark Adams says the IOC "extends its condolences to Raven and her family."

NBA veteran Pau Gasol has been voted by his fellow Tokyo Games athletes to represent them as a member of the International Olympic Committee.

The IOC says Gasol got the most votes among 30 candidates for four vacant seats on the Olympic body. The results were announced the day after Gasol and Spain lost in the quarterfinals to the United States.

Gasol will be an IOC member for seven years through the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles, where he won two NBA titles with the Lakers.

The three-time Olympic medalist got 1,888 votes of more than 6,800 cast by athletes at Tokyo.

The other new members are cyclist Maja Martyna Wloszczowska of Poland, Italian swimmer Federica Pellegrini and Japan's Yuki Ota, from IOC president Thomas Bach's sport of fencing.

The losing candidates include Danka Bartekova, the Slovakian shooter who has been an IOC member since 2012, men's high jump gold medalist Mutaz Barshim of Qatar, and Australian swimmer Cate Campbell who won two relay gold medals in Tokyo.

The U.S. women's volleyball team has made it to the semifinals for the sixth time in the past eight Olympics after beating the Dominican Republic in straight sets in the quarterfinals.

The Americans advanced to a matchup with the winner of Serbia-Italy in semis, despite playing without injured starters Jordyn Poulter and Jordan Thompson.

Fill-ins Micha Hancock and Annie Drews helped set the tone early for the U.S. and the team wasn't seriously challenged at any point by the Dominicans. Drews finished with a team-high 18 points.

The U.S. is seeking its first gold medal in the sport after winning bronze five years ago in Rio de Janeiro and silver in 2008 and 2012.

MEDAL ALERT

Sakura Yozozumi of Japan has won the inaugural Olympic women's park event in skateboarding, solidifying Japan's dominance of the sport making its Olympic debut.

The silver went to Kokona Hiraki, who at 12 became Japan's youngest Olympic medalist.

Britain's Sky Brown prevented a Japanese medal sweep, taking the bronze.

Yozozumi won with a trick-filled first run that scored 60.09, the only score to break 60 points in the event at the Ariake Urban Sports Park.

It immediately piled on pressure on the seven other finalists, and none was able to dislodge her. Japanese skaters also took both golds in the men and women's street events in the first week of the Tokyo Games.

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Damian Warner of Canada is leading the Olympic decathlon with 2,966 points after the first three events. The 2016 Olympic bronze medalist is 223 points clear of fellow Canadian Pierce Lepage and 255 ahead of 2018 world junior champion Ash Moloney of Australia.

Decathlon world record holder Kevin Mayer of France, the Olympic silver medalist from Rio and world champion in 2017, is in fourth spot with 2,662 points.

Warner opened the competition by equaling his world decathlon best time of 10.12 seconds in the 100 meters and then produced an Olympic decathlon best 8.24 meters in the long jump. He had 14.80 meters in the shot put, allowing Lepage and Mayer to close the gap.

In the heptathlon, defending Olympic champion Nafissatou Thiam is leading with 2,176 points after two disciplines, 19 points clear of American Erica Bougard.

Thiam was 15th after the 100-meter hurdles but picked up 1,132 points in the high jump by clearing 1.89 meters to take the lead. Bougard moved from fourth place into second by clearing 1.86 and 2019 world champion Katarina Johnson-Thompson moved from seventh to third place on 2,138 points with a best jump of 1.86.

The International Olympic Committee says it will question two Belarus team officials who were allegedly involved in trying to remove a sprinter from the Tokyo Olympics.

IOC spokesman Mark Adams says it's part of a disciplinary case opened "to establish the facts" in the case of sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya.

After Tsimanouskaya criticized the management of her team on social media, she says officials hustled her to the airport and trying to put her on a plane back to Belarus.

The IOC says the Belarus officials under investigation are Artur Shumak and Yuri Moisevich.

Tsimanouskaya boarded a flight to Vienna on Wednesday, though it wasn't clear if that was her final destination. Several countries offered to help her and Poland has given her a visa on humanitarian grounds because she fears her life would be threatened in Belarus.

The IOC could suspend the Belarusian national Olympic committee ahead of the closing ceremony on Sunday.

MEDAL ALERT

American Sydney McLaughlin has broken her own world record to win the women's 400-meter hurdles in 51.46 seconds. She edged out Dalilah Muhammad, who won silver to make it a U.S. 1-2 finish.

McLaughlin set the previous world record of 51.90 seconds in June. Muhammad, who set the world record twice in 2019 and won the world championship gold medal that year, finished in 51.58.

Femke Bol of the Netherlands took bronze in 52.03.

A Belarusian Olympic sprinter who had a public feud with officials from her team has boarded a plane to Vienna.

It's not clear if Austria is Krystsina Tsimanouskaya's final destination. Several countries had offered to help her, and Poland has granted her a humanitarian visa.

She said in an interview with The Associated Press that officials from her team had "made it clear" she would face punishment if she returned home to an autocratic government that has relentlessly stifled any criticism.

Tsimanouskaya has said she hopes she can continue her career, but for now her safety is the priority. After she criticized the management of her team on social media, she accused officials of hustling her to the airport and trying to put her on a plane back to Belarus.

She was seen in Tokyo on Wednesday morning entering Narita International Airport surrounded by an entourage.

Brazil is out of the men's beach volleyball tournament at the Olympics, and Latvia can take the credit.

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Latvia's Martins Plavins and Edgars Tocs beat 2016 gold medalist Alison and his partner Alvaro Filho 21-16, 21-19 on Wednesday. The Latvians knocked out the other Brazilian men's team -- with Alison's partner in Rio de Janeiro, Bruno Oscar Schmidt -- in the round of 16 on Monday.

Only one of the two Brazilian women's teams has survived the quarterfinals, meaning the traditional beach volleyball power can win at most one medal in Tokyo. That will be its worst performance since the sport was added to the Summer Games in 1996.

In the other morning quarterfinal, top-seeded Anders Mol and Christian Sorum of Norway eliminated Russia. The Norwegians finished atop the qualification points list but lost to Russians Ilya Leshukov and Konstantin Semenov in the round robin.

Norway won the rematch 21-17, 21-19.

MEDAL ALERT

Ana Marcela Cunha of Brazil won the women's 10-kilometer marathon swimming event.

Cunha touched first in 1 hour, 59 minutes, 30.8 seconds on Wednesday morning, finishing nine-tenths of a second ahead of defending champion Sharon van Rouwendaal of the Netherlands.

Van Rouwendaal took silver in 1:59.31.7.

Kareena Lee of Australia earned bronze in 1:59.32.5.

Cunha won her first medal in her third Olympics. She was 10th five years ago in Rio de Janeiro and fifth in the 2008 Beijing Games.

American Haley Anderson finished sixth and her teammate, Ashley Twichell, was seventh.

The seven-lap course in Tokyo Bay featured a backdrop of skyscrapers, the Rainbow Bridge and the nearby floating Olympic rings.

The air temperature during the latter stages of the race was 86 degrees Fahrenheit (30 Celsius), with 74% humidity that made it feel like 95 degrees (35 C).

The water temperature was about 84 degrees (29 C), under the allowable limit of 88 degrees (31 degrees C).

Real-life Bennifers find happy endings after years apart

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — They're smooching on a yacht off Saint-Tropez. They're cuddling on a walk in the Hamptons. They're nuzzling over sushi at dinner in Malibu.

If PDA were an Olympic sport, Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck would be champs. But there's something more that's driving interest in Bennifer: the storybook nature of long-lost love required.

The A-listers rekindled their romance 17 years after they broke up in 2004. It's a familiar road to countless couples who came together years after coming apart.

The two stars spoke of intense tabloid pressure as a factor in calling off their engagement way back when, with Lopez telling People in 2016: "I think different time, different thing, who knows what could've happened? But there was a genuine love there."

While the tabloids aren't an issue for regular folk who have rekindled, the genuine love part is universal no matter what got in the way the first time around.

"She never left my thoughts. There was something about her, something about her soul, her spirit, that I felt like I was just drawn to even as I got older," said 43-year-old Matt Escobar Sr. of his wife, Jessica.

The Merced, California, couple — he a youth center program director and she a nurse — met in eighth-grade math class after Escobar was sent to live with an uncle just outside Seattle to escape his troubled youth in New York.

They had their first kiss on a walk in the woods that year, but Escobar's wayward behavior continued, including arrests for robbery and assault. He was expelled and sent back East, where he landed in a detention facility.

More trouble followed, including a stint on the streets, and the two lost contact for 15 years before Es-

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cobar tracked her down on Classmates.com in 2006. In between, there were marriages, children, moves and jobs, but Jessica also never forgot.

Her longtime best friend "would always say nobody could ever measure up to Matt. Even though he was troubled, you know, he was always very, very respectful and just very funny and very warm and very kind and not like what people might picture in their head about a kid who got into trouble," she said.

They married in 2013 and have six children between them.

"It was such a blessing to have her back in my life again after all the hard stuff I had gone through," Escobar said.

Meg Calkins, a 56-year-old college professor in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Steve Badger, a lawyer of the same age, became close friends in Indianapolis in fifth grade. They remained in the friend zone through high school but became college sweethearts junior year, just briefly.

"I made the first move," Calkins laughed. "I told him, 'I kinda have a crush on you.' We've always had a connection because we just love talking to each other and we get each other's humor."

After a couple of months, the two headed off for summer programs abroad. That's when Calkins met someone else. She was 20. She got married when she was 23.

And that was it for Badger.

Five years passed and Calkins' marriage ended in divorce. A second marriage also didn't work out, after 20 years. Badger married while in law school. That union lasted 29 years, before divorce.

For 30 years, Calkins and Badger laid eyes on each other just once, at their 20th high school reunion.

"He didn't speak to me," she recalled.

Badger added: "I did not. I wasn't very kind about that."

Both found themselves free in 2019. "Facebook would always tell me, oh, you should be friends with Steve Badger, but I never friended him because I thought he was so mad at me about our awkward breakup," Calkins said.

He wasn't. He got over it. He wound up reaching out himself on Facebook after his divorce. They chatted online, then Badger drove 100 miles to have lunch with Calkins in Louisville, Kentucky, where her daughter was playing in a volleyball tournament.

"I kept looking at Steve and his eyes were exactly the same as they were when he was 20 years old," Calkins said. "It's like there's a kindness and an intellect that radiates from his eyes. One of the things that I really love about him is that he's the smartest person I know. And he's also the kindest."

The two moved in together just three weeks ago after tending a long-distance relationship during the pandemic.

"I don't really love the person that I was at 21 and I don't love the person that I was in high school, either," Calkins said. "But I do like the person that I am now, and I think that's a big thing to consider when rekindling relationships for sure."

Clinical psychologist Carla Marie Manly, author of "Date Smart: Transform Your Relationships & Love Fearlessly," agreed.

"Relationships that are renewed after many years can actually thrive under certain situations, particularly if both partners are emotionally intelligent and self-aware," she said. "If partners were truly connected and well-matched but found that life issues got in the way, a later-life reconnection can be delightful and deeply rewarding."

Manly has seen a rise in rekindled love matches in the digital age with the ease of internet searching and social media. But the quest doesn't always pay off.

"Sometimes, former partners give too much hope and effort to resuscitating a relationship that was never meant to be," she said.

Tammy Shaklee, the founder of an LGBTQ matchmaking company in Austin, Texas, warned that the reasons for a breakup may still exist years later. Certain traits don't drastically change, she said.

"Introverts vs. extroverts is a prime example. People returning to a previous relationship who think those traits will be different this time around will likely end up right back where they were the last time," Shaklee said.

The maturing process, however, can sometimes go a long way toward a happy ending.

Page Jordan in Dallas was a 19-year-old intern in the commercial real estate brokerage where 25-year-old Jake Jordan worked when they began dating while she was still in college. She graduated and they broke up after three years.

"She had just gotten out of school and I started getting a little bit more serious about it. I think that scared her a little bit," Jake said.

Page added: "Yeah, at that point I wasn't in a place where I wanted to settle down. I just took my first job and was independent for the first time and wanted to kind of enjoy that. And he had started his own company and he was stressed out a lot and didn't handle the stress with a lot of patience, I would say."

The two reconnected in 2019. They married March 27 of this year. So how does he handle stress now, at 40?

"A lot better," Page said. "He's so much more patient, and I think I'm better at dealing with that and being aware and respectful when he does have a lot going on."

Jake sees something equally important: "We still cared immensely about each other."

Cuomo investigation: What we know and what's next

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's monthslong fall from grace reached a nadir Tuesday, when investigators said they substantiated sexual harassment allegations against him from 11 women, many of whom have worked for him.

Cuomo, once widely beloved for his telegenic response to the coronavirus pandemic, continues to deny the allegations and maintains he isn't going anywhere — but his political future might soon be out of his own hands.

Here are the takeaways from the report and Cuomo's response, along with what happens next:

WHAT WAS CUOMO ACCUSED OF DOING?

Multiple women accused Cuomo of sexual harassment and assault. The public allegations, which started in December and cascaded over the winter, ranged from inappropriate comments to forced kisses and groping.

DID THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S PROBE FIND CUOMO GUILTY?

Well, no. A probe can't find anyone guilty — that's for a judge and jury to decide. Plus, the probe was civil, not criminal, in nature. But investigators did find the 11 women were telling the truth about Cuomo's behavior and that Cuomo created a hostile work environment "rife with fear and intimidation."

BUT WILL CUOMO BE CHARGED?

State Attorney General Letitia James, who oversaw the probe, said there would be no criminal referral but local police and prosecutors can use the evidence and findings to build their own cases. The district attorney in New York's capital, Albany, said Tuesday he was requesting James' investigative materials and encouraged victims to come forward.

CUOMO TOLD THE PUBLIC TO WAIT TO JUDGE HIM UNTIL THE INVESTIGATION WAS COMPLETE. WHAT DOES HE SAY NOW?

Cuomo is more defiant than ever, disputing allegations in a taped response and saying "the facts are much different than what has been portrayed" and that he "never touched anyone inappropriately or made inappropriate sexual advances." He also alleged that the investigation itself was fueled by "politics and bias."

HOW IS CUOMO EXPLAINING HIS BEHAVIOR?

Cuomo apologized for making staffers feel uncomfortable, but chalked up some of the allegations to misunderstandings caused by generational and cultural differences (he's Italian American) while flat-out denying the more serious allegations. Accompanied by multiple slideshows of Cuomo and other politicians embracing members of the public, the governor said the gesture was inherited from his parents and meant to convey warmth.

IS ANYONE PRESSURING CUOMO TO RESIGN?

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Lots of people. President Joe Biden — once Cuomo's close ally — said Tuesday that, while he hadn't read the report, he thought Cuomo should quit. Both U.S. senators for New York, Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, say he should resign. So does U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the governors of neighboring New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut, and many other Democrats.

OK, SO WHAT'S NEXT IF CUOMO DOESN'T RESIGN?

The state Assembly has the power to bring impeachment charges against Cuomo and aims to wrap up its own probe "as quickly as possible," according to Speaker Carl Heastie, a Democrat who said it was clear Cuomo could no longer remain in office. The Assembly could theoretically vote to launch impeachment proceedings before the probe is finished.

WHY CAN'T NEW YORKERS JUST RECALL CUOMO?

This isn't California. New York has no mechanism to remove elected officials via recall.

FINE. HOW DOES IMPEACHMENT IN NEW YORK WORK?

New York impeachments start in the Assembly, and if a majority of members vote to impeach Cuomo, the matter moves to the Impeachment Court. In this case, that court would comprise the state Senate — minus its majority leader — and the seven judges of the state's highest court. Two-thirds of the court would need to vote to convict to remove Cuomo.

HAS A GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK EVER BEEN IMPEACHED?

Once, in 1913. Gov. William Sulzer was ousted after less than a year in office. He claimed his impeachment was retribution for turning his back on the powerful Tammany Hall Democratic machine.

IF CUOMO LEAVES OFFICE, WHO WOULD BECOME GOVERNOR?

Kathy Hochul, the 62-year-old lieutenant governor. The Democrat from western New York once served in Congress, but has a limited public profile in the state.

IS CUOMO IN ANY OTHER TROUBLE?

James is also investigating into whether Cuomo broke the law in having members of his staff help write and promote his pandemic leadership book, "American Crisis: Leadership Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic," for which he was set to earn more than \$5 million. Federal investigators are also probing the state's handling of data related to nursing home deaths.

IF HE ISN'T OUSTED, WILL VOTERS HAVE A SAY?

So far, all signs point to him running for a fourth term in 2022, and he has begun fundraising. Some polling earlier this year suggested the public's support for Cuomo had slipped, but not dramatically so. No other Democrats have officially issued a primary challenge. On the Republican side, possible opponents include U.S. Rep. Lee Zeldin and Andrew Giuliani, son of Rudy.

WAS THIS PROBE POLITICAL?

James has denied having any political motivations for the probe, which was authorized by Cuomo, and has not said publicly whether she is interested in running for governor. While her office oversaw the probe, it was conducted by two outside lawyers, Anne Clark and Joon Kim, who spoke with 179 people — including Cuomo himself.

DID THE INVESTIGATION UNCOVER ANY ALLEGATIONS THAT WE DIDN'T ALREADY KNOW ABOUT?

Yes — according to the report, a state trooper on Cuomo's security detail said Cuomo ran his hand or fingers across her stomach and her back, kissed her on the cheek, asked for her help in finding a girlfriend and asked why she didn't wear a dress. The report also included an allegation from a woman working for an energy company who said Cuomo touched her chest at an event and brushed his hand between her shoulder and breasts.

HOW DID CUOMO RETALIATE AGAINST A FORMER EMPLOYEE?

The former employee in question is Lindsey Boylan, Cuomo's first public accuser. Investigators said Cuomo's team sent reporters Boylan's personnel records within hours of Boylan's December tweet alleging sexual harassment. They also said the governor's circle circulated a letter that "attacked" Boylan's alleged work conduct and theorized she was funded by far-right Republicans.

WHAT WERE CUOMO'S ACCUSERS' RESPONSES TO THE REPORT?

Charlotte Bennett, a former aide to whom Cuomo personally apologized in a taped response to the

findings, called the apology “meaningless” and said that if the governor were truly sorry, he would step down. A lawyer for two accusers called Cuomo’s response “laughable” and “manipulative.” Boylan’s attorney expressed gratitude toward investigators.

WILL CUOMO TALK ABOUT THIS ON HIS BROTHER’S SHOW?

Probably not. The governor’s brother, Chris Cuomo, is a CNN anchor. The fraternal duo — sons of the late Gov. Mario Cuomo — grabbed headlines in the early days of the pandemic for their banter on the younger Cuomo’s primetime show, but Chris Cuomo has since been barred from covering his brother. Tuesday’s report also detailed how Chris Cuomo advised his older brother.

China seals city as its worst virus outbreak in a year grows

BEIJING (AP) — China’s worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic a year and a half ago escalated Wednesday with dozens more cases around the country, the sealing-off of one city and the punishment of its local leaders.

Since that initial outbreak was tamed last year, China’s people had lived virtually free of the virus, with extremely strict border controls and local distancing and quarantine measures stamping out scattered, small flareups when they occurred.

Now, the country is on high alert as an outbreak of cases connected to the international airport in the eastern city of Nanjing touched at least 17 provinces. China reported 71 new cases of COVID-19 from local transmission Wednesday, more than half of them in coastal Jiangsu province, of which Nanjing is the capital.

In Wuhan, the central city where the first cases of COVID-19 were identified in late 2019, mass testing has shown some of its newly reported cases have a high degree of similarity to cases discovered in Jiangsu province. Those cases have been identified as being caused by the highly transmissible delta variant that first was identified in India.

Meanwhile, another COVID-19 hotspot was emerging in the city of Zhangjiajie, near a scenic area in Hunan province famous for sandstone cliffs, caves, forests and waterfalls that inspired the on-screen landscape in the “Avatar” films.

The city, with a population of about 1.5 million, ordered residential communities sealed Sunday, preventing people from leaving their homes. In a subsequent order on Tuesday, officials said no one, whether tourist or resident, could leave the city.

The city government’s Communist Party disciplinary committee on Wednesday issued a list of local officials who “had a negative impact” on pandemic prevention and control work who would be punished.

The city itself has only recorded 19 cases since last week, three of which were people with no symptoms, which are counted separately. However, individual cases linked to Zhangjiajie’s outbreak have spread to at least five provinces, according to the Shanghai government-owned newspaper the Paper.

Far higher numbers were reported in Yangzhou, a city next to Nanjing, which has recorded 126 cases as of Tuesday.

After announcing last week that they were suspending issuance of passports for travelers except for those with an urgent need, officials at the National Immigration Administration reiterated the message again on Wednesday at a press briefing.

As of Tuesday, China has given more than 1.71 billion vaccine doses to its population of 1.4 billion. It’s not clear how many of those are first or both doses, but at least 40% of the population is fully protected, according to earlier announcements.

Chinese companies have not publicly shared real-world data on how effective their vaccines are against the delta variant, though officials have said the vaccines prevent severe disease and hospitalization.

In addition to the 71 cases of local transmission, 25 travelers from overseas have COVID-19 and have entered quarantine, making the total for Wednesday 96 new cases. The National Health Commission also said 15 people tested positive for the virus but have no symptoms.

China has reported 4,636 deaths and 93,289 cases of COVID-19 overall, most of them from the original outbreak in Wuhan that peaked early last year.

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Today in History

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Today in History

Today is Thursday, Aug. 5, the 217th day of 2021. There are 148 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 5, 1962, South African anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela was arrested on charges of leaving the country without a passport and inciting workers to strike; it was the beginning of 27 years of imprisonment.

On this date:

In 1864, during the Civil War, Union Adm. David G. Farragut led his fleet to victory in the Battle of Mobile Bay, Alabama.

In 1921, a baseball game was broadcast for the first time as KDKA radio announcer Harold Arlin described the action between the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Philadelphia Phillies from Forbes Field. (The Pirates won, 8-5.)

In 1936, Jesse Owens of the United States won the 200-meter dash at the Berlin Olympics, collecting the third of his four gold medals.

In 1953, Operation Big Switch began as remaining prisoners taken during the Korean War were exchanged at Panmunjom.

In 1954, 24 boxers became the first inductees into the Boxing Hall of Fame, including Henry Armstrong, Gentleman Jim Corbett, Jack Dempsey, Jack Johnson, Joe Louis and John L. Sullivan.

In 1964, U.S. Navy pilot Everett Alvarez Jr. became the first American flier to be shot down and captured by North Vietnam; he was held prisoner until February 1973.

In 1974, the White House released transcripts of subpoenaed tape recordings showing that President Richard Nixon and his chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, had discussed a plan in June 1972 to use the CIA to thwart the FBI's Watergate investigation; revelation of the tape sparked Nixon's resignation.

In 1981, the federal government began firing air traffic controllers who had gone out on strike.

In 1991, Democratic congressional leaders formally launched an investigation into whether the 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign had secretly conspired with Iran to delay release of American hostages until after the presidential election, thereby preventing an "October surprise" that supposedly would have benefited President Jimmy Carter. (A task force later concluded there was "no credible evidence" of such a deal.)

In 2002, the coral-encrusted gun turret of the Civil War ironclad USS Monitor was raised from the floor of the Atlantic, nearly 140 years after the historic warship sank during a storm.

In 2010, the Senate confirmed Elena Kagan, 63-37, as the Supreme Court's 112th justice and the fourth woman in its history. Thirty-three workers were trapped in a copper mine in northern Chile after a tunnel caved in (all were rescued after being entombed for 69 days).

In 2019, Toni Morrison, the first Black woman to receive the Nobel literature prize, died at 88 in New York; her novels included "Beloved," and "The Bluest Eye."

Ten years ago: Standard & Poor's lowered the United States' AAA credit rating by one notch to AA-plus. A federal jury convicted three New Orleans police officers, a former officer and a retired sergeant of civil rights violations in the 2005 shooting deaths of a teenager and a mentally disabled man crossing the Danziger Bridge following Hurricane Katrina. (The convictions were overturned because of prosecutorial misconduct, and the former officers pleaded guilty in April 2016 to a reduced number of charges.) The sun-powered robotic explorer Juno rocketed toward Jupiter on a five-year quest to discover the secret recipe for making planets. (Juno reached Jupiter on July 4, 2016.)

Five years ago: The opening ceremony for the Summer Olympics took place in Rio de Janeiro as Brazil laced its high-energy party with a sobering message of the dangers of global warming.

One year ago: Authorities said protesters in Portland, Oregon, barricaded about 20 police officers inside

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a precinct and tried to set it on fire; police used tear gas on the crowd for the first time since U.S. agents sent by President Donald Trump left the city the previous week. A city commission in Minneapolis blocked a November vote on a proposal to dismantle the city's police department in the wake of George Floyd's death. Democratic Party officials said Joe Biden would not travel to Milwaukee to accept the party's presidential nomination in person because of concerns over the coronavirus; party leaders had earlier told delegates not to travel to Milwaukee. (President Donald Trump had already abandoned plans to accept the Republican nomination in person.) Longtime New York City newspaper columnist and author Pete Hamill died at 85.

Today's Birthdays: College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL player Roman Gabriel is 81. Country songwriter Bobby Braddock is 81. Actor Loni Anderson is 76. Actor Erika Slezak is 75. Rock singer Rick Derringer is 74. Actor Holly Palance is 71. Pop singer Samantha Sang is 70. Rock musician Eddie Ojeda (Twisted Sister) is 66. Actor-singer Maureen McCormick is 65. Rock musician Pat Smear is 62. Author David Baldacci is 61. Actor Janet McTeer is 60. Country musician Mark O'Connor is 60. Basketball Hall of Famer Patrick Ewing is 59. Actor Mark Strong is 58. Director-screenwriter James Gunn is 55. Actor Jonathan Silverman is 55. Country singer Terri Clark is 53. Actor Stephanie Szostak is 50. Retired MLB All-Star John Olerud is 53. Rock musician Eicca Toppinen (EYE'-kah TAH'-pihn-neh) (Apocalyptica) is 46. Actor Jesse Williams is 41. Actor Brendon Ryan Barrett is 35. Actor Meegan Warner (TV: "TURN: Washington's Spies") is 30. Actor/singer Olivia Holt is 24. Actor Albert Tsai is 17. Actor Devin Trey Campbell is 13.