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Death Notice: Rosemary Belden

Rosemary Belden, 80, of Groton passed away Saturday, August 14th at Avantara Groton. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Girls Soccer Team win season opener

Syndey Liecht scored the lone goal of the game with just two minutes gone in the second half as Groton Area defeated Garretson, 1-0. It was the first game of the year for both teams and the game was played Saturday at the Groton Soccer Complex.



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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United Methodist Church

Groton and Conde

Sunday, August 15, 2021

Conde Worship 9:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Tuesday, August 17, 2021

NO Bible Study 10:00 AM
Conde Ad Council 5:00 PM

Wednesday, August 18, 2021

Community Coffee Hour 9:30 AM

Sunday, August 22, 2021

Conde Worship 9:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton &

St. Joseph Catholic

Groton and Turton

Weekend Mass Schedule

Saturday 4:30pm Groton
Sunday 8:30am Groton & 11:00am Turton

Weekday

Tues 5:00pm Turton, W-F 8:30am Groton
Sat 10am Newman Center

Confessions:

Sat. 3:45-4:15pm & Sun. 7:45am to 8:15am (G)
Sun. 10:30-10:45am (T)

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, Aug. 15, 2021

9 a.m.: Worship/Communion
3 p.m.: Avantara

Monday, Aug. 16, 2021

6:30 a.m.: Bible Study

Thursday, Aug. 19, 2021

1:30 p.m.: WELCA Do-Day

Friday, Aug. 20, 2021

Newsletter Deadline.

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021

10:00 a.m.: Worship at Rosewood Court

Sunday, Aug. 22, 2021

9 a.m.: Worship

St. John's Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, Aug. 15, 2021

8 a.m.: Bible Study
9 a.m.: St. John's Worship with communion
11 a.m.: Zion's Worship with communion

Tuesday, Aug. 19, 2021

9 a.m.: Quilting

Sunday, Aug. 8, 2021

8 a.m.: Bible Study
9 a.m.: St. John's Worship
11 a.m.: Zion's Worship

Sunday, Aug. 22, 2021

8 a.m.: Bible Study
9 a.m.: St. John's Worship
11 a.m.: Zion's Worship

To submit your monthly or weekly church calendar, email to
news@grotonsd.net

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

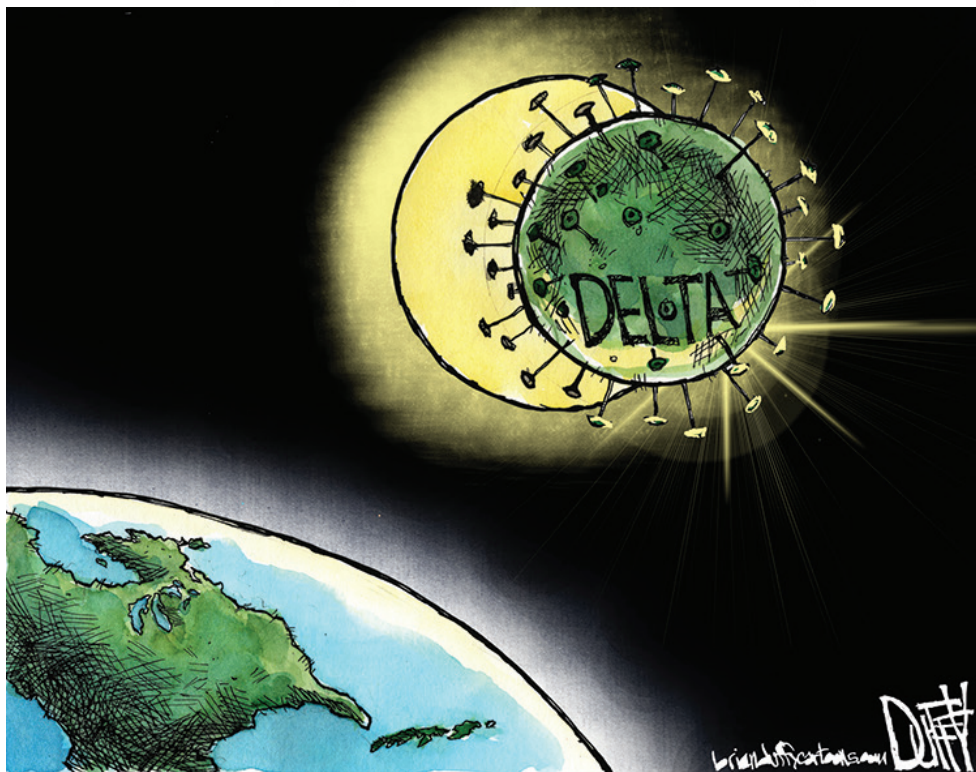
Then David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, having in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. So David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces.

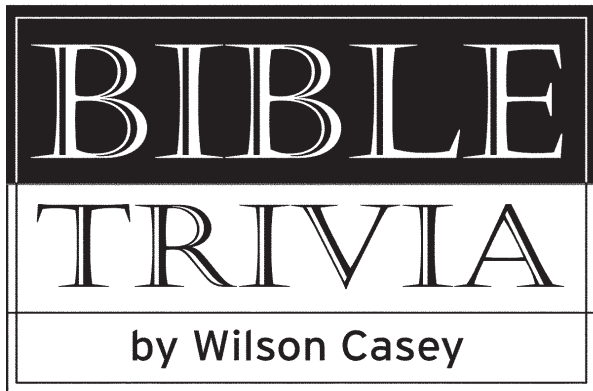
© 1 CHRONICLES 21:16



Detail of "Joshua Before the Angel with a Sword"
by Marc Chagall, 1956

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1. Is the book of Micah in the Old Testament, New Testament or neither?

2. After his servants covered him with clothes, what did King David's servants bring to keep him warm? *Hot bricks, Young virgin, Canopy skins, Wool from finest sheep*

3. Whose last words were, "Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded"? *Paul, John the Baptist, Ahab, Job*

4. From Proverbs 31, which king was taught sayings by his mother? *Lemuel, Neco, Ben-Hadad, Jehu*

5. In Genesis 27, who said, "Come near now, and kiss me, my son"? *Adam, Isaac, Seth, Moses*

6. Who was the father of Gideon? *Job, Jeremiah, Josiah, Joash*

ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) Young virgin; 3) Ahab; 4) Lemuel; 5) Isaac; 6) Joash

Hardcore trivia fan? Visit Wilson Casey's subscriber site at www.patreon.com/triviaguy.

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Cute Zucchini Meatloaf Muffins

Even if the men in your family aren't wild about zucchini, they'll go wild over these cute muffin meatloaves.

16 ounces extra-lean ground turkey or beef
1/2 cup plus 1 tablespoon dried fine breadcrumbs
1/4 cup finely chopped onion
3/4 cup shredded unpeeled zucchini
2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
1 cup (one 8-ounce can) tomato sauce
Sugar substitute suitable for baking to equal 1 tablespoon sugar
1/3 cup shredded reduced-fat mozzarella cheese

1. Preheat oven to 375 F. Spray a six-well muffin pan with olive oil-flavored cooking spray.

2. In a large bowl, combine meat, breadcrumbs, onion, zucchini, 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning and 1/2 cup tomato sauce. Mix well to combine. Evenly divide meat mixture between prepared muffin cups and make indentation in the center of each.

3. In a small bowl, combine remaining 1/2 cup tomato sauce, sugar substitute and remaining 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning. Stir in mozzarella cheese. Evenly spoon about 1 tablespoon sauce mixture over top of each "muffin."

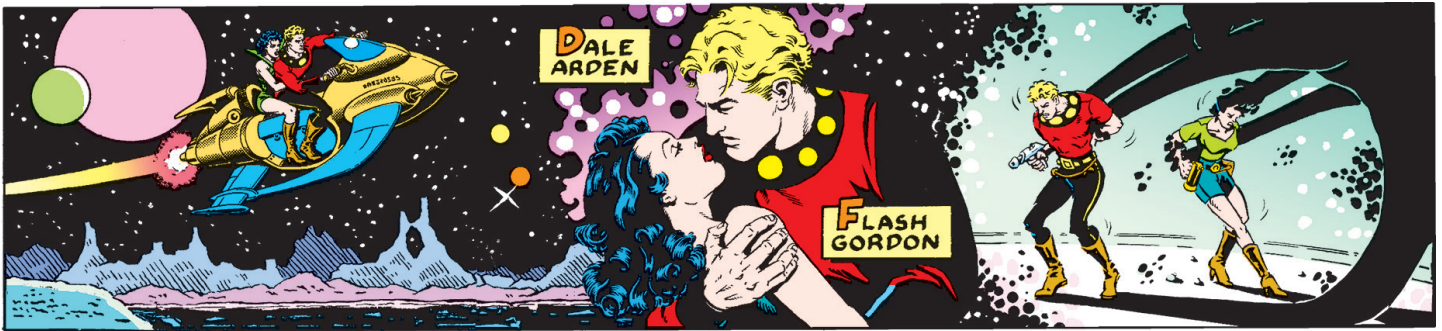
4. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes. Place muffin pan on wire rack and let set for 5 minutes. Remove "muffins" from pan and serve at once. Freezes well. Serves 6.

* Each serving equals: 188 calories, 8g fat, 17g protein, 12g carb., 457mg sodium, 1g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 2 Meat, 1 Vegetable, 1/2 Starch.

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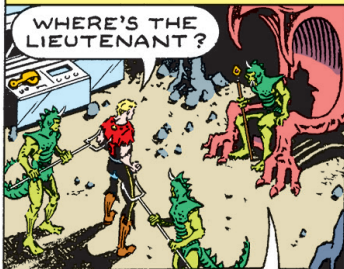


FLASH GORDON

By JIM KEEFE

8-8

DEEP IN THE BOWELS OF MOUNT CHOMOMATHA, FLASH IS BROUGHT BEFORE THE LEADER OF THE LIZARD-MEN.



WHERE'S THE LIEUTENANT?

THE HAWKMAN WAS THE GUEST OF HONOR AT OUR LAST FEAST, LUCK OF THE DRAW IN YOUR CASE.



YOU MEAN..?

I WOULD HAVE SAVED YOU A WING IF I THOUGHT YOU WOULD HAVE APPRECIATED WHAT A RARE DELICACY IT IS.



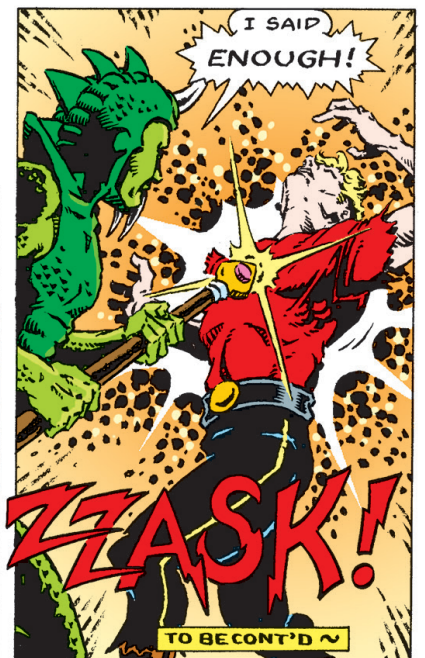
YOU MONSTER.

A COMMON RETORT FROM SOMEONE LOWER ON THE FOOD CHAIN.

BUT ENOUGH WITLESS BANTER.

IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING YOU HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF CERTAIN EQUIPMENT WE HAVE ACQUIRED.

YOU MEAN STOLE...

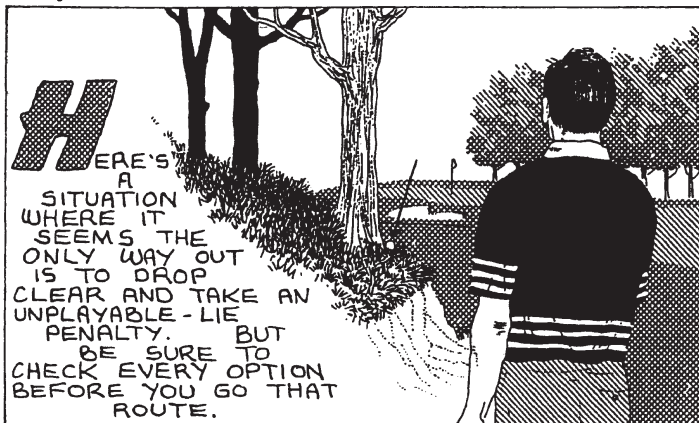


I SAID ENOUGH!

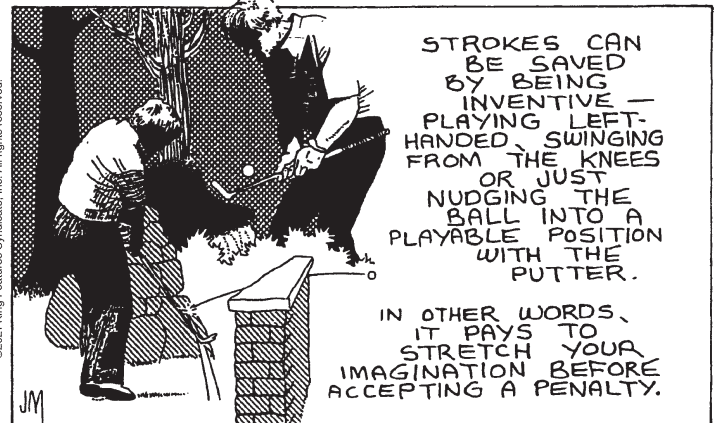
ZZASK!

TO BE CONT'D ~

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



HERE'S A SITUATION WHERE IT SEEMS THE ONLY WAY OUT IS TO DROP CLEAR AND TAKE AN UNPLAYABLE - LIE PENALTY. BUT BE SURE TO CHECK EVERY OPTION BEFORE YOU GO THAT ROUTE.



STROKES CAN BE SAVED BY BEING INVENTIVE - PLAYING LEFT-HANDED - SWINGING FROM THE KNEES OR JUST NUDGING THE BALL INTO A PLAYABLE POSITION WITH THE PUTTER.

IN OTHER WORDS, IT PAYS TO STRETCH YOUR IMAGINATION BEFORE ACCEPTING A PENALTY.



Non-Stop Acid Reflux? Look at Surgical Options

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a 78-year-old female who has suffered from acid reflux for many years and has been taking Prilosec (omeprazole) for at least 15 years. I have heard that it is not meant for longtime use. If I don't take it, I have such heartburn I can't sleep and am in misery all day and night. I recently attended a seminar on the new LINX surgery and hope to have it done. Do you have any information on the success of or problems after this surgery? -- J.B.

ANSWER: The LINX device is a magnetic ring, placed by laparoscopic surgery, that helps increase the strength of the lower esophageal sphincter, the valve-like muscular structure at the junction of the esophagus and the stomach. This reduces reflux (backward movement) of stomach acid up into the esophagus. The procedure was very effective at reducing both heartburn symptoms (89% before procedure to 12% after) and the need for daily medicines like omeprazole (100% before to 15% after).

The device has not been in use for a very long time, so long-term safety data is unavailable. Some people had to have the devices removed because they eroded into the esophagus, but only 0.3% of devices were removed at four years.

There are other types of surgeries used to treat reflux, most of which are effective at reducing both symptoms and the need for medication. There are now options for treatment being done endoscopically (with an instrument placed through the mouth), without the need even for laparoscopic surgery (with the instrument being placed by small incisions through the skin).

My personal practice is to discuss medication treatments as well as surgical treatments for people with moderate to severe acid reflux. Surgery in younger people may have more benefit by preventing a lifetime of daily medication. People who do not get relief with medication are those who most clearly benefit from these kinds of procedures.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a 90-year-old man. My wife's life was saved in 1952 with Red Cross blood. Since then, I have donated more than 31 gallons of blood. My blood is CMV-negative. They want me to donate more.

I had a CT scan after a fall, and a 1-cm ground-glass nodule was found in my lung. They are going to do another scan in six months to see if it is growing. The Red Cross said if I had cancer I should refrain from donating. What should I do? -- J.J.B.

ANSWER: Based on the information you are giving me, it's about 90% likely that this will not be cancer. A repeat scan to see if it is growing is a good idea.

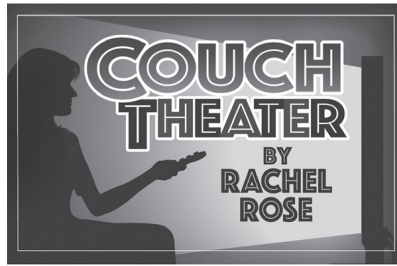
Even in the unlikely event this is cancer, the likelihood of passing cancer cells along in a blood transfusion is very, very small. However, blood banks like the Red Cross are exceedingly careful to maintain a safe blood supply, and waiting six months to donate is safest.

Let me add my thanks to your selfless giving of a precious, life-saving resource -- your blood -- which is especially valuable to people with immune system disease given the lack of the common pathogen cytomegalovirus, which can cause serious disease in people after cancer chemotherapy.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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CODA (PG-13) — As a child of deaf adults (a CODA), 17-year-old Ruby has spent her whole life straddling the hearing and non-hearing worlds. When she realizes her dream is to go away to college to pursue her love of singing, her family doesn't understand, since they can't experience her talent. Encouraged by her choir teacher, Ruby attempts to gain her family's support to leave home. Emilia Jones' performance as Ruby is exceptionally touching and realistic. Marlee Matlin as her mother is charming, frustrating and funny all at once. Subtitles for lots of sign language, and totally worth the effort. (Apple TV+)

100 Foot Wave (TV-14) — Does it really require six episodes to cover one surfer's quest to find and surf the world's biggest wave? Not really, but it sure makes for fantastic footage that I would watch for six days if it was offered. In this docuseries, surfing legend Garrett McNamara attempts to tackle "the Everest of the ocean" by riding a 100-foot wave in the fishing village of Nazare, Portugal. The conflict of chasing this dream while confronting his own human capabilities provides drama set against an absolutely thrilling backdrop of the powerful natural force of the ocean. (HBO Max)

The Owl House (TV-Y7-FV) — Luz Noceda is an adventurous, imaginative teenage human who opens a portal to another world called the Boiling Isles. There she discovers a variety of unique and weird characters, dabbles in spell-casting and sorcery, and deals with existing in a land where humans are considered lesser beings. Luz is a multifaceted character, showing determination, intelligence and introspection, but also some occasional low self-esteem. Ultimately, though, she displays

acceptance of her own quirkiness. The script is quite clever and witty, making this animated children's series tolerable for adults, too. (Disney+)

In Case You Missed It

Walk of Shame (R) — To anyone who's had a hot night out end up horribly wrong, this 2014 comedy is for you. Elizabeth Banks plays Meghan, a Los Angeles TV news anchor who finds herself in all the wrong neighborhoods in the wee hours of the morning after some hard partying. Alone, and with no phone or car, she has only her wits to get herself back across town to the news station in time for the evening broadcast ... and the promise of a promotion. A hilarious series of close calls and the help of some unsavory characters lead to a ridiculously funny conclusion. (Netflix)



HBO

Scene from "100 Foot Wave"

The Skeleton Twins (R) — Extramarital affairs, suicide attempts, sibling estrangement — this film has it all! Four actors typically known for their comedic work take on some seriously heavy topics, resulting in this 2014 Sundance Film Festival winner. Kristen Wiig, Bill Hader, Ty Burrell and Luke Wilson each play characters with intertwining personal issues to sort through. There's a lot of blame tossed among them, but the light-hearted moments are "really" funny, as you would hope from these comedians. Wiig and Hader have amazing chemistry playing sister and brother, both with an incredible talent for laughing through life's pain. (Amazon Prime Video)

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1. Name the first single Lesley Gore ever released.
2. What was the name of the little boy in "Puff, the Magic Dragon"?
3. Which one-hit-wonder girl group released "Sally Go 'Round the Roses"?
4. Who released "The Angels Listened In"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Love can touch us one time and last for a lifetime, And never let go till we're one."

Answers

1. "It's My Party," in 1963. The song went to No. 1, the only chart topper Gore ever had. She released five singles that year.

2. Little Jackie Paper. The lyrics were originally a poem written by a 19-year-old student. Years later

his roommate, Peter Yarrow, of Peter, Paul & Mary, put the words to music.

3. The Jaynetts, 1963. The single's B-side track was the instrumental version of the song.

4. The Crests, in 1959.

5. "My Heart Will Go On," by Celine Dion in 1997. It was on the soundtrack of the movie "Titanic." The film-score composer wanted it as an instrumental, but lyrics were written anyway. Then Celine Dion didn't want to sing it. The song ended up as one of the best-selling singles of all time.

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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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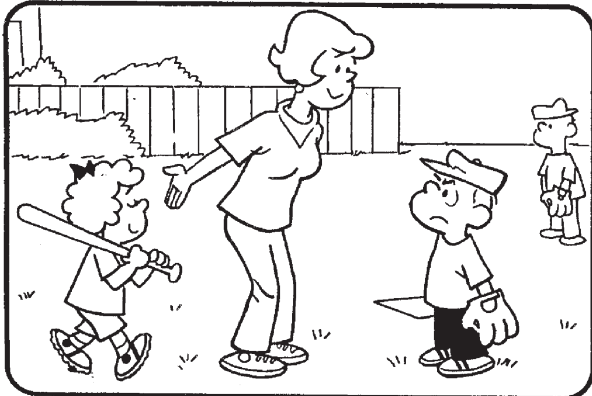
GRIN and BEAR IT



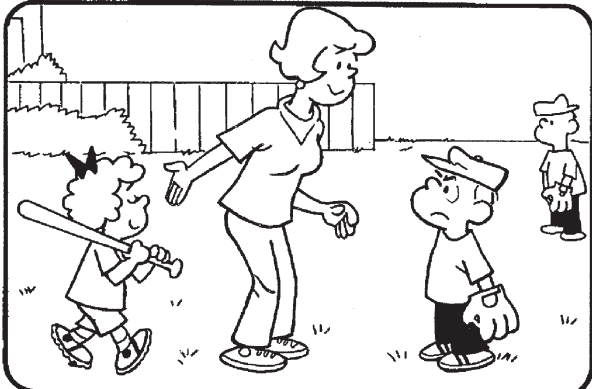
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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Bow is larger. 2. Hedge is missing. 3. Pants are different. 4. Base is missing. 5. Arm is showing. 6. Fence is shorter.

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- Rubbing alcohol can be used to remove ballpoint-pen ink from most upholstery.

- “Polish wall tiles in the bathroom using car wax. They will repel water really well. Just be sure that you cover the floor before you apply any wax. You do not want to polish your tub, as that is a safety hazard for sure!” — *M.W. in Missouri*

- If you have wood floors, you might already know about felt furniture pads — the little self-stick felt circles you put on furniture legs to reduce scratches on your floors. You might not know that these same pads can reduce scuff marks that appliances make on countertops. It also makes it easier to scoot around a

heavy mixer or other appliances.

- “Check your mower to see if you’re cutting your lawn to the optimum height. Generally, cutting grass to 2 1/2 inches will allow it to retain more moisture, requiring less watering, and help shade out weeds, too.” — *O.F. in Alabama*

- Here’s a workout tip: Rotate among a few pairs of running shoes to get the best life out of them. Rotating gives them a chance to dry out between wearings, and runners who practice this routine have a 39% lower chance of injury, according to a Luxembourg research firm.

- “If you’re looking to save money, don’t ignore the dollar store. You can find a lot of personal-care and home-care items there for, well, a dollar. I save quite a bit of money this way.” — *R.L. in Texas*

Send your tips to Now Here’s a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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I	Y	K	I	E	S	A	A
H							P
L							P
W							E
R							L
N							L
E	A	B	C	M	I	U	

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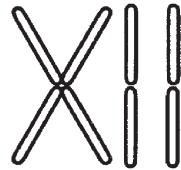
FIND the hidden riddle by reading every other letter as you go around the frame clockwise starting at "W."

Why is a plumber like a pelican?
Because of the size of his bill.

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

BET YOUR FRIENDS that you can prove that 12 minus 4 equals 7. To prove it, make a Roman numeral 12 as shown here using toothpicks. Now, remove the bottom four sticks, which will leave a Roman numeral 7, proving that $12 - 4 = 7$.



ONE + ONE = ONE

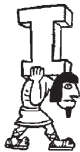
Below are two columns of three-letter words. Each word in column A must be combined with a word from column B to form a six-letter word. The word in column A must come first.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| A | B |
| CAT | PIE |
| BED | PET |
| KIT | EAR |
| HIP | PER |
| LEG | NAP |
| CAR | AIR |
| DIP | FLY |
| END | TEN |
| MAY | BUG |
| IMP | END |

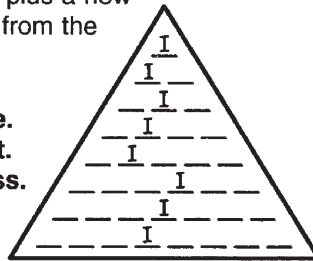
Time limit: three minutes.

Illustrated by David Coulson

THE I'S HAVE IT! Pictured here is a word pyramid. Each word, as you go down, contains the same letters as the word above it plus a new letter. We give you all of the I's. Here are some hints from the top down.



- 1) One's self (given).
- 2) Not out.
- 3) Moral offense.
- 4) -- language.
- 5) What a canary does.
- 6) To give out.
- 7) Outer covers.
- 8) Shrewdness.



I, in, sin, sign, sings, assign, casings, caginess.

Other words are possible.
Catnap, bedbug, kitten, hippie, legend, carpet, dipped, endear, mayfly, impati.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE

Panel 1: Hugo is sitting on a bicycle, looking unwell.

Panel 2: Hugo is lying in bed, looking sick. A character sits by his side.

Panel 3: Hugo is sitting up in bed, talking to the character.

Panel 4: Hugo is sitting up in bed, talking to the character.

Panel 5: Hugo is sitting up in bed, talking to the character.

Panel 6: Hugo is sitting up in bed, talking to the character.

Panel 7: Hugo is sitting up in bed, talking to the character.

Panel 8: Hugo is sitting up in bed, talking to the character.

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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Soviet space station
- 4 Dance move
- 8 Actress Fisher
- 12 — out a living
- 13 Abode
- 14 Punch
- 15 Shares with followers on social media
- 17 Fury
- 18 MSN rival
- 19 Fuming
- 21 Cop's badge
- 24 Flamenco cheer
- 25 Triumphed
- 26 Half a dozen
- 28 Travels by jet
- 32 Throat clearer
- 34 Jewel
- 36 Early Peruvian
- 37 Cleaning agent
- 39 Fawn's mom
- 41 Junior
- 42 Carried out
- 44 French cathedral city
- 46 Tea urn
- 50 Business mag
- 51 Pressing thing?
- 52 "The Handmaid's Tale" author
- 56 King of the

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15			16						17			
		18				19		20				
21	22				23		24					
25				26		27		28		29	30	31
32			33		34		35		36			
37				38		39		40		41		
			42		43		44		45			
46	47	48				49		50				
51					52		53				54	55
56					57					58		
59					60					61		

- jungle
- 7 Green sauce
- 33 "Material Girl" singer
- 57 Always
- 8 Haifa native
- 35 Extinct bird
- 58 Notable time
- 9 Bridge coup
- 38 VII doubled
- 59 "I did it!"
- 10 Olympic sled
- 40 Asylum seeker, perhaps
- 60 Faction
- 11 On in years
- 43 Titled women
- 61 Cowboy moniker
- 16 Misery
- 20 Sprite
- 45 — jiffy
- 21 Clear the decks?
- 46 Sediment
- 22 Jolly laugh
- 47 "Carmen" solo
- 23 Use a shovel
- 48 Disposition
- 27 Deleted
- 49 Sitarist Shankar
- 29 Behind closed doors
- 53 Roulette bet
- 30 Nobel Prize subj.
- 54 Before
- 31 Without
- 55 Levy

DOWN

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

M	I	R		S	T	E	P		I	S	L	A
E	K	E		H	O	M	E		S	L	U	G
R	E	T	W	E	E	T	S		R	A	G	E
	A	O	L		S	T	E	A	M	E	D	
S	H	I	E	L	D		O	L	E			
W	O	N		S	I	X		F	L	I	E	S
A	H	E	M		G	E	M		I	N	C	A
B	O	R	A	X		D	O	E		S	O	N
		D	I	D		A	M	I	E	N	S	
S	A	M	O	V	A	R		I	N	C		
I	R	O	N		M	A	R	G	A	R	E	T
L	I	O	N		E	V	E	R		E	R	A
T	A	D	A		S	I	D	E		T	E	X

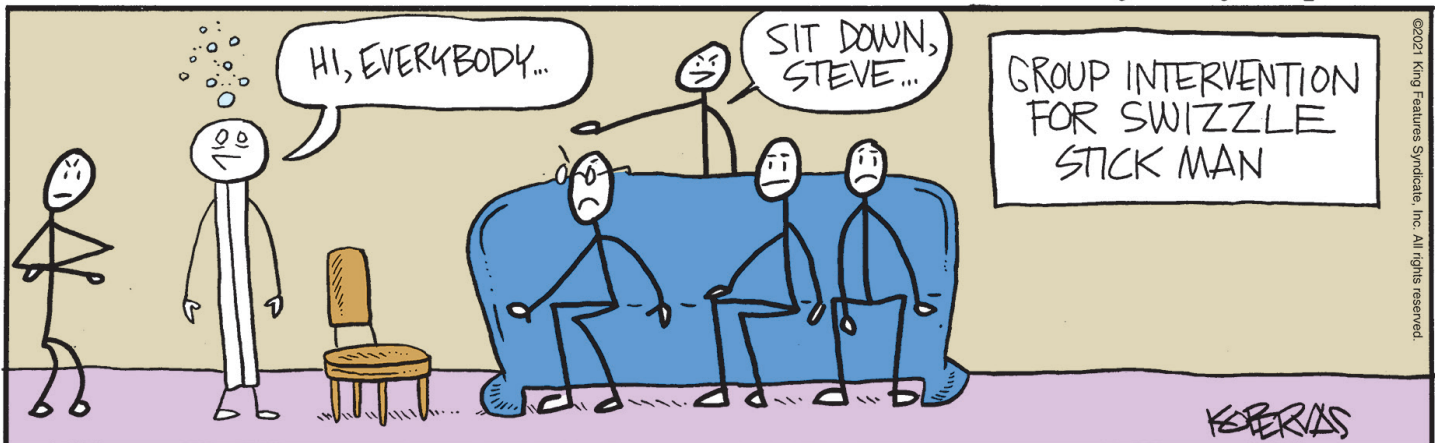
LAFF - A - DAY



"The folder from the hotel said 'golf'...
I didn't notice what kind."

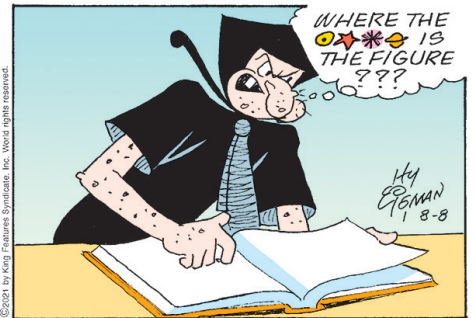
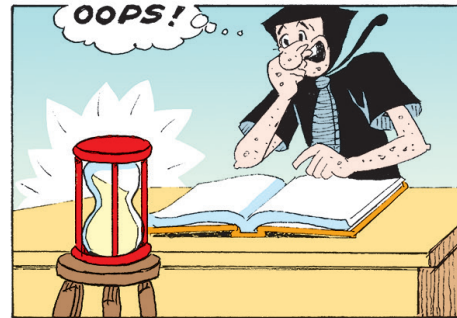
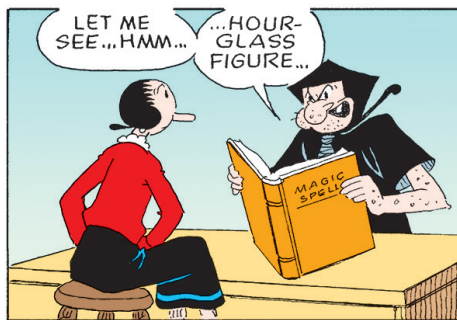
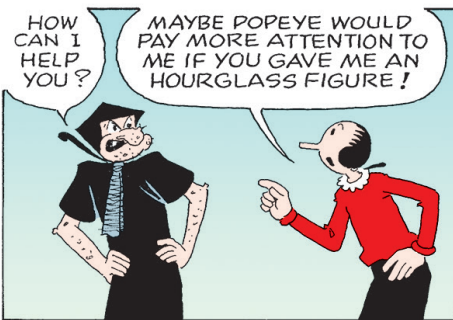
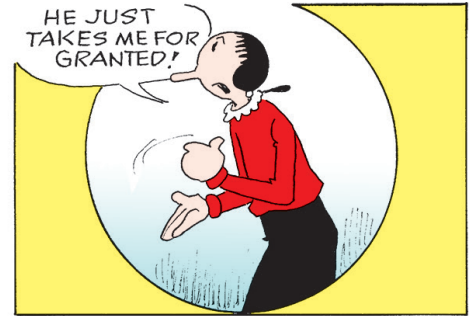
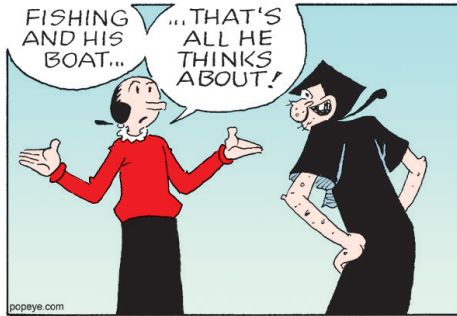
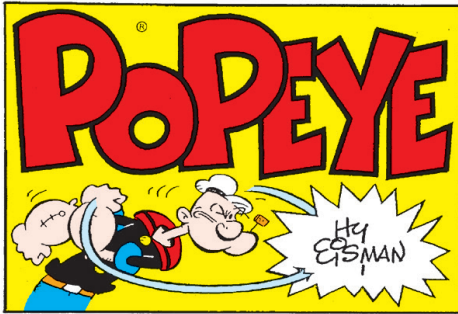
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



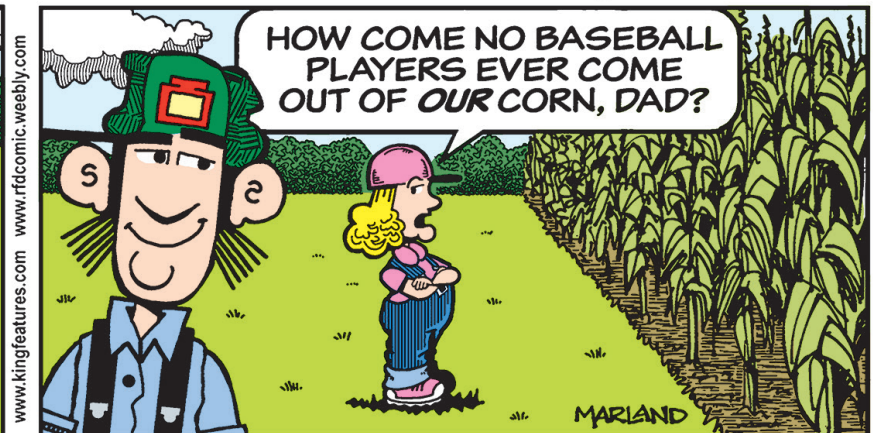
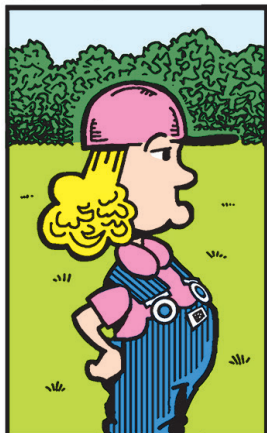
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland

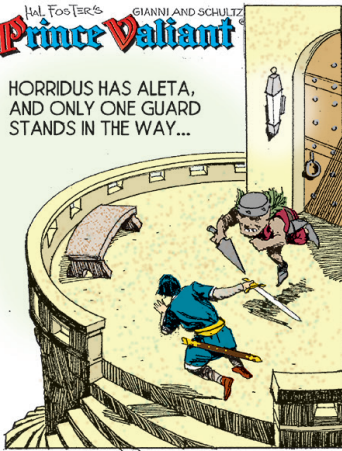


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Walt Foster's GIANNI AND SCHULTZ
Prince Valiant

HORRIDUS HAS ALETA, AND ONLY ONE GUARD STANDS IN THE WAY...

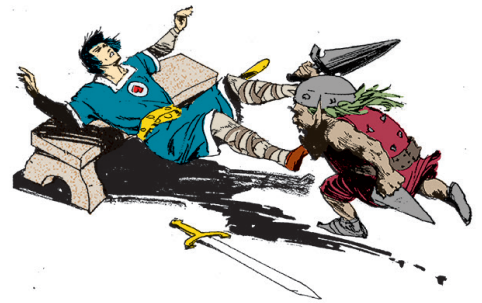


... BUT HORRIDUS' REMAINING ALLY IS FANATICALLY LOYAL...

...WITH THE STRENGTH OF A DWARFED GIANT.



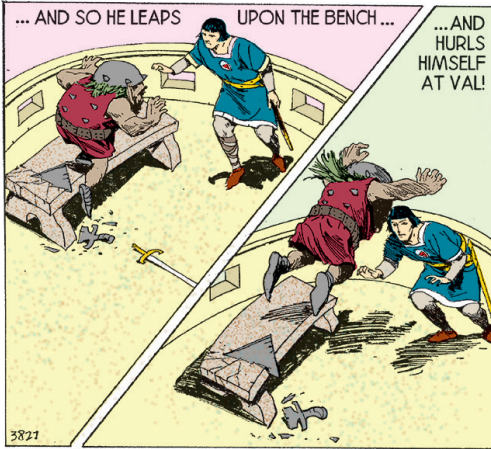
"YOU SHALL NOT PASS!" THE REBEL GROWLS WITH CRAZED INTENSITY, THROWING THE PRINCE BACKWARD LIKE A RAG DOLL.



VAL'S CAT-LIKE REFLEXES PULL HIM INCHES FROM DOOM. THE FANATIC'S SWORD SHATTERS...



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... AND SO HE LEAPS

UPON THE BENCH ...

...AND HURLS HIMSELF AT VAL!

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THE KNIGHT, HOWEVER, KNOWS A THING OR TWO ABOUT LEVERAGE.

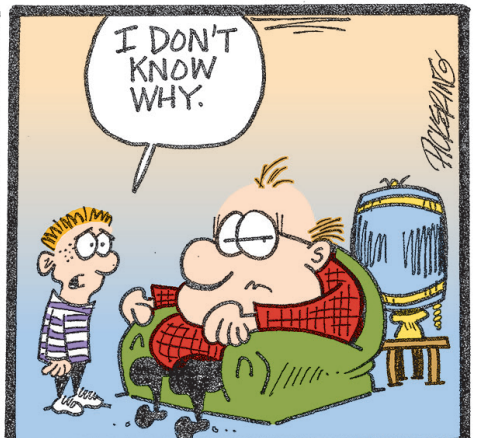
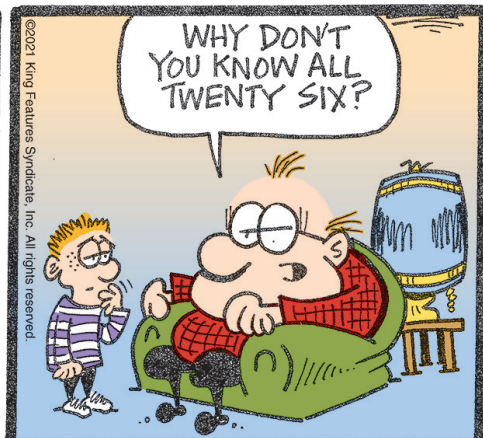
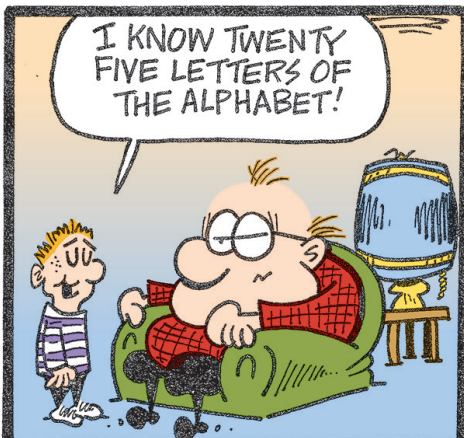


SUDDENLY, A BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM ERUPTS FROM WITHIN!

NEXT: Reckoning

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

We've Gotten Careless

If you read the news, you know there are serious questions about how well the vaccines we're been taking actually protect against COVID. Especially worrisome is the protection they offer against the Delta variant that's sweeping the world. Those in authority seem to be flipping a coin each day, depending on who you listen to. Some days we can throw caution to the wind and go about our business, and other days we need to continue to beware.

There's talk of going back to the indoor mask mandates, and that's likely one step away from again limiting the number of people allowed in stores at one time, or so I imagine. If those things happen, it won't be like it was in March 2020. Back then we were all scared to death. We'd spread out in the grocery aisles, staying far away from other people. We wore that mask at all times when out and about, and we respected all those 6-foot markers on the floor. We certainly didn't sit down at a restaurant table for four and take off our masks, or head to the gym.

Now, having lived through that whole horrible year, people are tired of it all, and we're eager for a normal life. We think that because so many people have had the vaccination, that surely we'll be safe. I fear that this time, however, if the mask mandates come again, it will be even more dangerous than it was last year, because we've gotten too casual, careless and passive about our safety.

My short to-do list involves buying new masks and more hand sanitizer, renewing my grocery curbside pickup account ... and saying no to an invitation to join a dance group.

How about you? Are you ready for what's likely coming?

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1. Boca Juniors, Independiente, Racing, River Plate and San Lorenzo are soccer clubs competing in what South American country?

2. Name the Chicago Cubs center-fielder who stopped two protesters from burning an American flag in the outfield at Dodger Stadium in April 1976.

3. What team selected Florida State running back Sammie Smith in the first round of the 1989 NFL Draft?

4. Karsten Solheim, who began making putters in his garage in 1959, founded what golf equipment company?

5. What boxer, nicknamed "The Mongoose," held the world light heavyweight title from 1952-62?

6. Before his NFL career, Flozell Adams won the Big Ten Offensive Lineman of the Year in 1997 as a member of what team?

7. What Pittsburgh Pirates first baseman struck a Milwaukee Brewers



Famous Racing Sausage mascot with a bat during a game in July 2003?

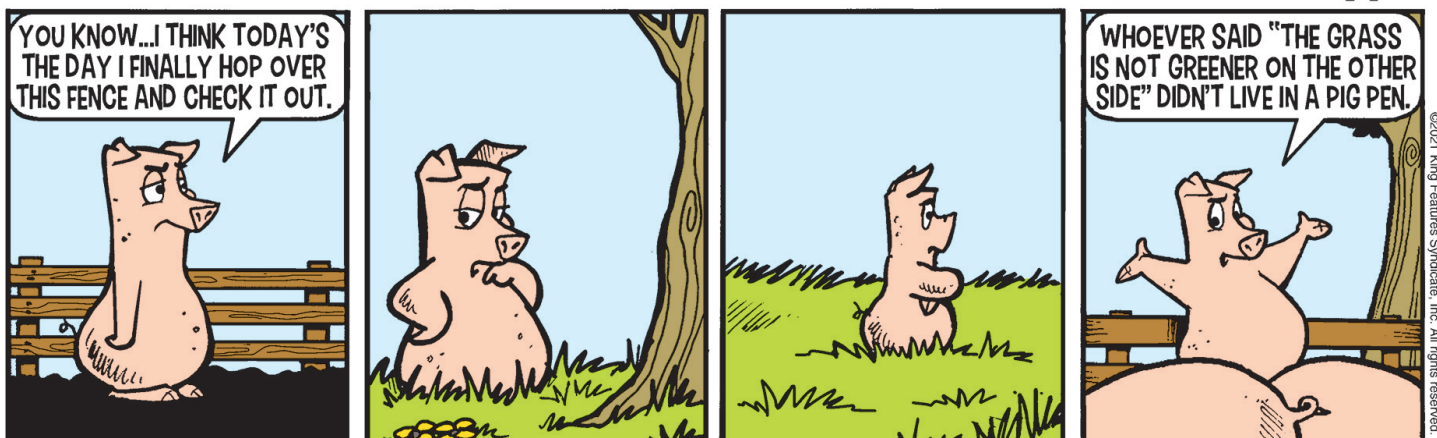
Answers

1. Argentina.
2. Rick Monday.
3. The Miami Dolphins.
4. PING.
5. Archie Moore.
6. The Michigan State Spartans.
7. Randall Simon.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Dog's Begging Spirals Out of Control

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: Our dog "Boadicea" is a sweetheart, but when she wants a treat she turns into a little monster. She drools on my arm, chews on my roommate's shoe (with his foot in it), barks loudly, yips ... whatever it takes. We eventually break down and give her a treat. This happens several times a day. How can we stop this behavior? — *Darren in Manchester, New Hampshire*

DEAR DARREN: There are two steps I'd recommend to curb this behavior, because you know the downside of Boadicea's begging: spiraling behavioral problems, future digestive issues and potential obesity.

First, reinforce her basic obedience training. Work with her at least once a day on the "sit," "stay," "lie down," "leave it" and "come here" commands.

I recommend not working with her during the time that you're normally relaxing in the living room with your roommate, because you want to try to reinforce that certain places and times are for training, play or treats.

Obedience training alone won't resolve the problem, though, because she's developed a habit of begging whenever you're trying to relax or socialize. So, you'll need to employ the "ignore and divert" strategy as well.

Ignore her attention-seeking behavior for a specific amount of time ... say, five minutes. Next, command her to either sit or lie down, and give her a chew toy. When she inevitably gets up to beg again, repeat the process. Don't give her a treat at all. This will take time, but eventually she will get it.

Many dog owners add a structured treat time to the day. For example, after your dinner and dishes are done, she can have her treat. This will help reinforce when and where she gets treats, and how she is supposed to behave.

Send your tips, questions and comments to ask@pawscorner.com.

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* The opposite of paranoia is pronoia. A person suffering from pronoia feels that people or entities around them are plotting to do them good!

* American flags left on the moon will eventually get bleached white by the sun.

* Only two animals have the ability to see behind themselves without turning around: the rabbit and the parrot. Their eyes are on the sides of their head, allowing them to swivel 360 degrees.

* Not that we ever gave any real thought to the

matter, but "snow-bones" are the lines of snow or ice left at the sides of roads after the rest of the snow has melted.

* David Babcock broke a Guinness World Record for his time in the Kansas City marathon, at 5 hours, 48 minutes and 27 seconds. But not for running -- he managed to complete the race while knitting a scarf that measured just over 12 feet long. As he said later, "Knitting the whole way really did help distract me from the hard parts of the marathon."

* At the planet Neptune's highest altitudes, winds blow at more than 1,100 mph.

* Mozart sold the most CDs in 2016, beating out Adele, Drake and Beyonce, even though those artists all had Grammy-winning hits that year.

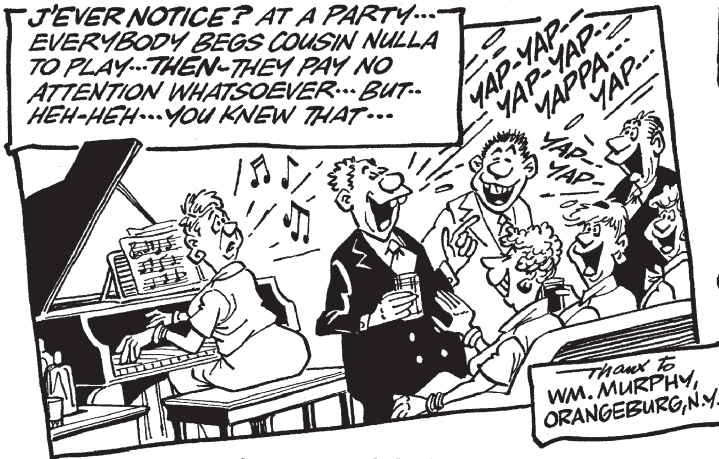
* In the 16th century, Parliament passed a law declaring the use of makeup "to deceive an Englishman into marriage" punishable as witchcraft.

* A survey of 2,000 U.S. adults by the skincare brand StriVectin found 63% admitted to spending at least half their time on video calls staring at their own face, while 58% admitted to getting so distracted by their own appearance that they sometimes stopped listening.

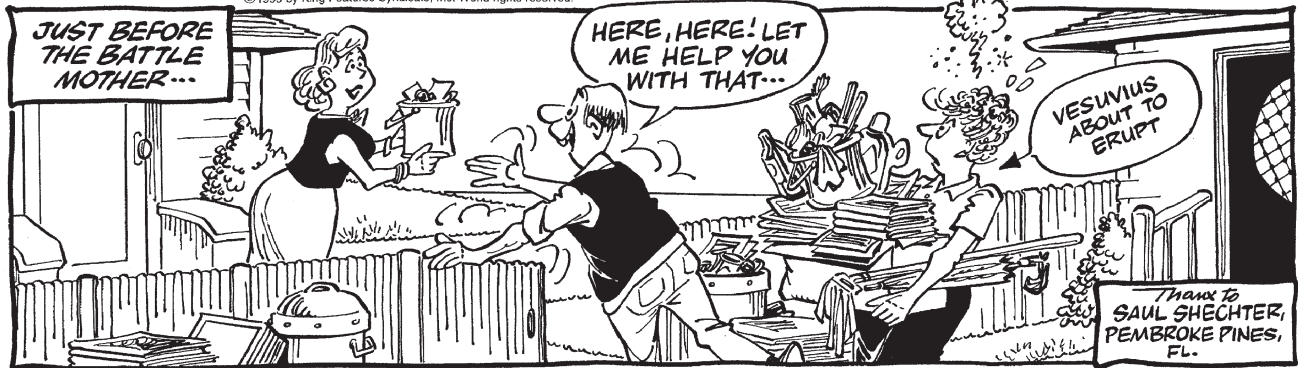
Thought for the Day: "Of all the liars in the world, sometimes the worst are our own fears." -- Rudyard Kipling


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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME



BY AL SCADUTO

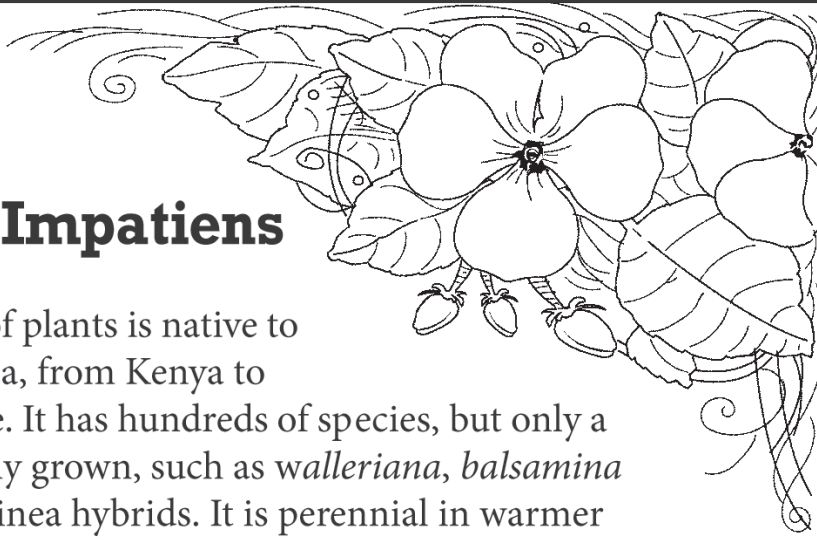




Impatiens

This family of plants is native to eastern Africa, from Kenya to Mozambique. It has hundreds of species, but only a few are widely grown, such as *walleriana*, *balsamina* and New Guinea hybrids. It is perennial in warmer climates, but treated as an annual where winters are cold. Its dazzling array of sizes, shapes and colors keep it popular.

- Brenda Weaver Source: wikipedia.org, mrimpatiens.com, botany.com



VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

Exposure Presumptives for Particulate Matter

The Department of Veterans Affairs has created a list of three presumptive conditions related to particulate matter exposure. Specifically, it will now cover asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis, but only if you served in a covered area and had one of those conditions within 10 years of leaving the military.

Locations and dates of service are specific: Afghanistan, Djibouti, Syria and Uzbekistan during the Persian Gulf War, from Sept. 19, 2001 to the present; or the Southwest Asia theater of operations, from Aug. 2, 1990 to the present. It covers Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, Red Sea and the airspace above these locations.

With particulate matter exposure, they're talking about the open burn

pits, in which there might have been petroleum, munitions, plastics, metal, chemicals, medical and human waste and more. In some cases, however, the exposure was sand, sand and more sand, or smoke from oil-well fires, aircraft exhaust, dust, fuel ... the list goes on. Your exposure, of course, depends on the amount of time you spent there, wind direction and the types of waste.

Check the Burn Pits page (www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits) and the Exposures page: (www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures).

It's said that if you already have a claim in for one of those illnesses, you don't have to do a thing. You'll hear back about a decision. I vote for not waiting. Don't take a chance that somebody will misplace your claim, especially if you have a claim for other conditions as well. Make a call. Or use VA Form 21-526EZ for first claims.

If you ever signed up on the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry (AHOBPR), check to see that you're still on the list. Print out a copy and use that to submit with your claim.

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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Work is Opportunity

Like many South Dakotans, I grew up in a working-class family where the value of hard work was instilled in me at a young age. The ability to earn an income and support your family is one of the greatest opportunities America has to offer.

The COVID-19 pandemic hindered this opportunity as businesses and schools closed across the country and many families found themselves hard-pressed financially.

The federal government took unprecedented steps to ensure that those who were most affected by the pandemic could receive assistance. Bipartisan supported programs like the Paycheck Protection Program were temporarily enacted to keep employees on payroll and help those most in need.

Now, in the midst of reopening our nation's economy, many of the temporary changes are still in place a year and a half later and hindering our recovery efforts.

The following policies are keeping people from returning to work:

Work requirements to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits remain repealed.

The additional \$300 a week in federal unemployment benefits continues in 25 states.

The automatically reenrolled advanced payments on the expanded Child Tax Credit have started, laying the foundation for universal basic income, a long-sought goal of socialism supporters.

There is simply no incentive to work when social safety net programs make it more lucrative to stay at home. This is evident in the fact that the labor participation rate remains near peak-pandemic levels.

However, there was good news this month. After half of the nation's Republican governors ended the extra federal unemployment benefit, the July jobs report did show a lower unemployment rate than past months.

According to a study by the Foundation for Government Accountability, unemployment claims have declined by 30% in states like South Dakota where additional unemployment benefits have ended. Meanwhile, in states that have kept federal unemployment benefits, new unemployment claims continue to rise. The data doesn't lie – taking away the incentive curbs unemployment and gets people back to work. That's why I'll continue to push my Get Americans Back to Work plan which would end the additional federal supplemental unemployment payment across the board.

The American dream is built on the notion that anyone can succeed if they work hard. Work should not be viewed as a punishment, but rather a way forward.

Work yields opportunity, work enriches communities, and work leads to a more prosperous nation.

Our government should encourage work, rather than disincentivize it.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

They Come to Sturgis (and South Dakota) for Freedom

The Sturgis Rally is one of the biggest gatherings for motorcycle enthusiasts in the world. While the rally has always promoted an independent spirit, these past two years have taken on a new meaning of freedom.

The Sturgis Rally is about hopping on your bike and exploring this great country through our open roads. Bikers come here because they want to be here. And we love to see them!

Outside of the Fourth of July, the Sturgis Rally must be one of the most iconic celebrations of freedom in the country. And where better to celebrate than in South Dakota, the freest state in the nation?

While the rally has yet to end – the last day is August 15th – the numbers have already shown that we are on pace to far surpass our 2020 attendance. This is on the heels of what has been the best tourism season ever for South Dakota. Record numbers of Americans are flocking to the Mount Rushmore state, seeking small towns, state parks, and national monuments as their chosen destination.

Many of the visitors to whom I've spoken say they're coming to South Dakota specifically because it reminds them of the America they grew up in. Free. Independent. Unburdened by the constraints and headaches that big cities and liberal ideology force upon them.

Mount Rushmore is certainly one of the most recognized symbols in America. But few know our state's motto: Under God the People Rule. That's an easy standard to live and serve under. The rights of individuals are what birthed this nation, and that independent spirit is what drove America to become the leader of not just the free world, but the whole world.

And it's that same spirit that is driving South Dakota tourism and business growth, making us the number one state in the nation for GDP growth. At the same time, we currently have some of the lowest COVID case numbers in the country. We have also worked hard with counselors to provide services for substance abusers, leading the nation in decreasing the number of deaths from overdose by 15.9 percent.

These are all signs that what we are doing in South Dakota is working and helping our citizens.

And yet, bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. and the media cast aspersions on the Sturgis Rally while ignoring concertgoers, lavish birthday parties, and the continuing crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border. It's a double standard that gives a free pass to so-called elites to do as they please and mandate others to do as they say. It's a failure in leadership on their part and why more and more Americans are fleeing big cities and

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blue states for places like South Dakota.

As South Dakota's governor, I have remained within the bounds of my authority and empowered citizens and businesses to make decisions for themselves. Rather than mandating they do as I say, I have chosen to let people take personal responsibility for decisions the government has no authority to make. There's a risk associated with everything that we do in life. Bikers like those attending the Rally this year get that better than anyone.

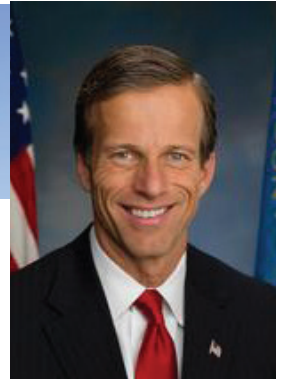
It's no surprise that when I rode my horse through downtown Deadwood at the start of the Legends Ride on Monday, I was greeted with cheers for freedom and for the American flag I carried. At that same event, we auctioned off a painting and that flag I carried for a total of \$80,000 to support the Treasured Lives charity, which helps victims of human trafficking.

This trip to Sturgis and the Rally was one to remember. When the auction was over, I hopped on a motorcycle and helped lead 300 bikers on a ride from Deadwood to the Buffalo Chip in Sturgis, where the celebration of freedom continued.

Under God, the people rule – and ride free on the open roads of South Dakota!

This column originally appeared as an op-ed on FoxNews.com

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



The Fight to Save the Farm

The long, sun-soaked days of summer have started to shorten, and for kids across the country that can only mean one thing: back to school. In suburban communities or coastal cities, the end of summer might signal the end of family beach trips or days spent lounging by the pool. But for farm families in South Dakota, it unfortunately means one less set of hands – or more – to help with the seemingly endless tasks of summer.

Picking rock with your sister, moving cows, fixing fence with grandpa, and long days in the field eating lunch – and probably supper – in the cab of a tractor is the summertime norm for most farm kids. It's what their parents and their parents' parents likely did too – even without the luxury of an air-conditioned cab. From a very young age, kids in rural America are taught to understand the value of a hard day's work. No one thinks twice about getting their hands dirty. It's exactly what the generations before them worked so hard to preserve through all of the ups and downs that exist on a family farm.

If you grew up in a rural community like the ones scattered throughout South Dakota you might be surprised that Democrats in Washington are now proposing tax cuts for coastal elites and all the free stuff you can imagine by taxing this way of life – your way of life. It's becoming clear that for Washington Democrats success and hard work isn't something to be celebrated, but something that should be taxed.

Our current tax code provides for something called "step-up in basis." That's Washington jargon for this: If you're left something by a loved one who died – whether that's land or a house – the value of that item is automatically "stepped up" from its original value to its current market value when you receive it. You don't have to pay taxes on that increase, and you shouldn't have to. Those gains over time are often unrealized. In other words, you didn't profit from the increased value while the asset remained in the family. It allows your grandparents and parents to pass the family operation from one generation to the next without penalty. Unfortunately, Democrats want to get rid of this longstanding tax policy, but not if I have anything to do with it.

During my time in Congress, I have helped lead the fight against the death tax. And now I am doing the same with what would amount to a double death tax on South Dakota's family-run farms, ranches, and small businesses.

I recently introduced an amendment to the Democrats' budget blueprint to highlight the importance of preventing this double death tax from becoming law. It was approved 99 to 0, and I'm glad all of my Democrat colleagues acknowledged how problematic this change in law could be, but don't be fooled by their vote. Unfortunately, immediately after passing my bipartisan amendment, all but one Democrat also voted for a watered down version. Long story short, they're doing legislative gymnastics and trying to have it both ways, and if they get their way, I have no doubt it will be a death blow to rural communities in South Dakota.

Now, summertime in these rural communities isn't all work and no play. There is 4-H and rodeo, fairs to showcase art, produce, and livestock. Maybe there's a baseball or softball game, too. But the fun stuff

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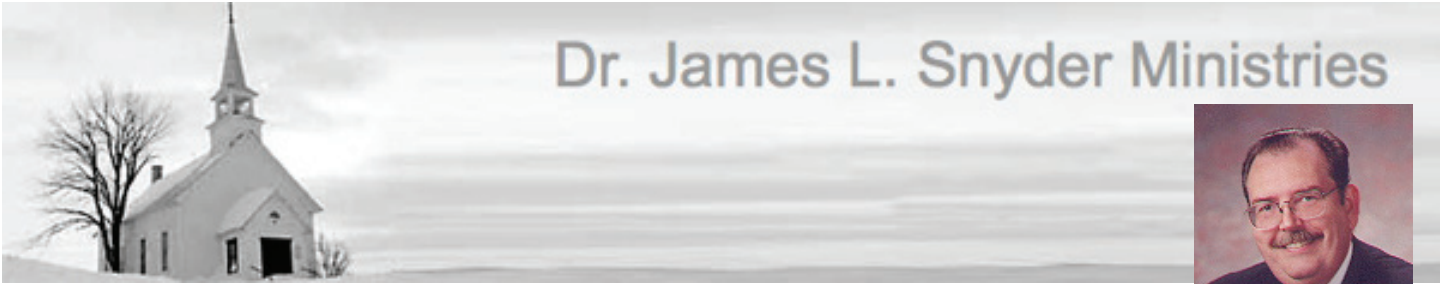
usually comes after the days' chores are done. Life typically revolves around family and community, and it is all underpinned by hard work and sacrifice.

Farming and ranching isn't just an occupation, it's a way of life for the whole family, and it is one to be proud of. And as far as I am concerned, Democrats in Washington could stand to learn a few of these lessons from the heartland.

This fight is far from over. I will continue to do everything in my power to stop the Democrats' attempt to fund a reckless tax-and-spending spree on the backs of hardworking South Dakota families, farmers, and ranchers. The South Dakota way of life, and the preservation of the family farm, is certainly something worth fighting for. I always will.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



What's All These Gadgets For?

Without any hesitation, I will gladly admit that I am on the short side when it comes to gadgets. For me, most of them do not make any sense at all. Instead, I like things simple and easy.

As for the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, she is obsessed with gadgets. She loves them almost as much as I love Apple Fritters. I've gone into her "Craft Room" and noticed all the gadgets neatly placed where they belong. Unfortunately, I could not tell you the identification of any of them.

I am gadgets-illiterate while she is gadget-obsessed.

I did not know how obsessed she was with gadgets until recently.

My truck was giving me some trouble, so I took it to my mechanic to look it over. Much to my distress, he said the engine was just about shot, and it would have to be replaced.

My choices were to replace the engine for around \$5,500 or buy another truck for about \$30,000. I may not be handy with gadgets, but when it comes to money, that is my specialty.

I reluctantly chose to have the engine replaced, but the bad news was, it would take about a month to do it. First, he had to find an engine and have it shipped to his garage.

I didn't know how long that month was until recently.

Because I did not have my truck, I had to borrow the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage's van. She bought that van a little over two years ago. It took her a whole year to find the kind of van she wanted. She did all her research and finally found the van of her liking.

For myself, being over 6 feet tall, it was all I could do to squeeze into her van as a passenger. I found out squeezing in as a driver was even more difficult.

She said I could drive it, and then instructed me on how to drive and all the gadgets associated with driving her van.

Unfortunately, my habit is not to pay attention when people are talking about gadget things.

I've had my driver's license for over 50 years, and I have driven many cars during that time.

I thanked her, got into her van, and it took quite a few minutes to get the seat settled where I can

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operate it.

Sitting in the driver's seat, I felt like I was being squished on all sides.

After a few minutes, I was able to start it on and then try to figure out how to put it in reverse. I found it finally and backed out of our driveway.

With a few more little squeegees, I put it back into drive and went forward. It was at this time I noticed the mirrors were all out of focus. How can my wife drive this van when the mirrors are so mixed up?

So, while driving along, I began to fiddle with the mirrors, trying to adjust them to where I could see out of them. There is a gadget for each mirror, and I got the gadgets mixed up. Finally, I got it to where it was at least usable for my driving.

I sighed a very deep sigh, which usually means I'm in trouble, while driving down the highway. I decided I wanted to turn the radio on and listen to music while driving. You might as well have fun while you're driving in such a gadget-contaminated vehicle.

Pressing several buttons, I finally was able to find the button for the radio. Unfortunately, the sound was very low. Now, I had to find a gadget to turn the sound up so I could hear it.

I'm unsure which gadget I pressed, but the sound went through the roof, scaring me so much that I almost jumped out of the vehicle. Fiddling around, I finally lowered the sound.

I did not notice before, but the steering wheel had gadgets all around it. I had no idea what any of those gadgets were for and was trying desperately not to touch one.

I had to make a right turn, and so I turned on the turn signal the way I usually do it in my truck, and it wasn't heaven that came through that van.

The windshield wipers began, the windows went up and down several times, the horn sounded three or four times, and I was a mess.

Very carefully, I managed to pull to the side and stop the vehicle. I sat there trying to figure out where do I start turning off all of these gadgets?

I could call my wife, but then I would hear it for the rest of my life.

An idea floated in my mind amid all this confusion. Why not turn the vehicle off, and maybe all the gadgets would close down.

I turned it on with my fingers crossed, and to my delight, all of the gadgets were not on. I'm not sure what I did; I hope I don't have to do it again.

A verse of Scripture came to my mind as I was driving home. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7).

Instruction seems to be the gateway to wisdom. I have a hard time with following instructions, which is why I have trouble and not just with gadgets.

EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: What is "slow fashion?" Does it relate to sustainability?
– K. Lam, Taos, NM

In the U.S., millions of shoppers pack clothing stores, excited to key into the newest trends while paying low prices. On the other side of the world, low-wage workers—many of them young girls—are crushed under the hammer of "fast fashion" (the mass production of cheap, poor quality, disposable clothing), laboring without safety protections or adequate rights. Fast fashion's impacts on both the environment and human rights are evident, and slow fashion may just be the only solution to a greener future.

First off, fast fashion revolves around the concept of speeding up production time while minimizing costs, which prompts producers to use the cheapest textiles and toxic textile dyes. Perhaps one of the most popular textiles, polyester is derived from fossil fuels and sheds microfibers that can end up in oceans. Another common material is cotton, which requires extensive quantities of water, pesticides and labor to produce. More important, fast fashion is constantly changing clothing trends—most consumers fall into this ploy and discard garments once they are out of trend. As a result, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, in 2018 11.3 million tons of textiles ended up in landfills and 3.2 million tons were incinerated—releasing high amounts of greenhouse gases.

While fast fashion exploits labor and the environment to make more and sell more, slow fashion focuses on quality over quantity and respects workers' rights. A foundational principle of slow fashion is simply to buy less in the first place. Social media and other influencers have lured shoppers with the hottest brands and pressed on the idea of wearing your clothing only once. Slow fashion encourages consumers to dismantle that mindset and learn to value every piece of clothing you own or buy.

Since many people shop for the experience and enjoy the feeling of buying clothes more than the clothing article itself, slow fashion emphasizes choosing high-quality pieces made with sustainable materials. Although more expensive doesn't necessarily mean more sustainable, higher cost investments do promote that shift in mindset for you to better cherish a garment and wear it more often.

For those who are more financially conservative, second-hand shopping is a great alternative to more expensive sustainable brands. Thrifting is an extremely cheap option for you to shop based on individual desires rather than trends while also gaining that sense of fulfillment from shopping. Other second-hand options like vintage or consignment stores allow shoppers to purchase unique, high-quality items at a fraction of the normal cost.

Slow-fashion also encourages making garments last longer, such as washing and drying clothing at the proper temperatures and buying sewing kits to fix small holes or replace buttons.

While fast-fashion brands have been doing well lately, slow-fashion is also gaining ground. For those who want to practice sustainable shopping, it's simple to take that step into your environmental journey—join a slow-fashion support group, start your own personal challenge to spend less, and spread awareness within your community and beyond.



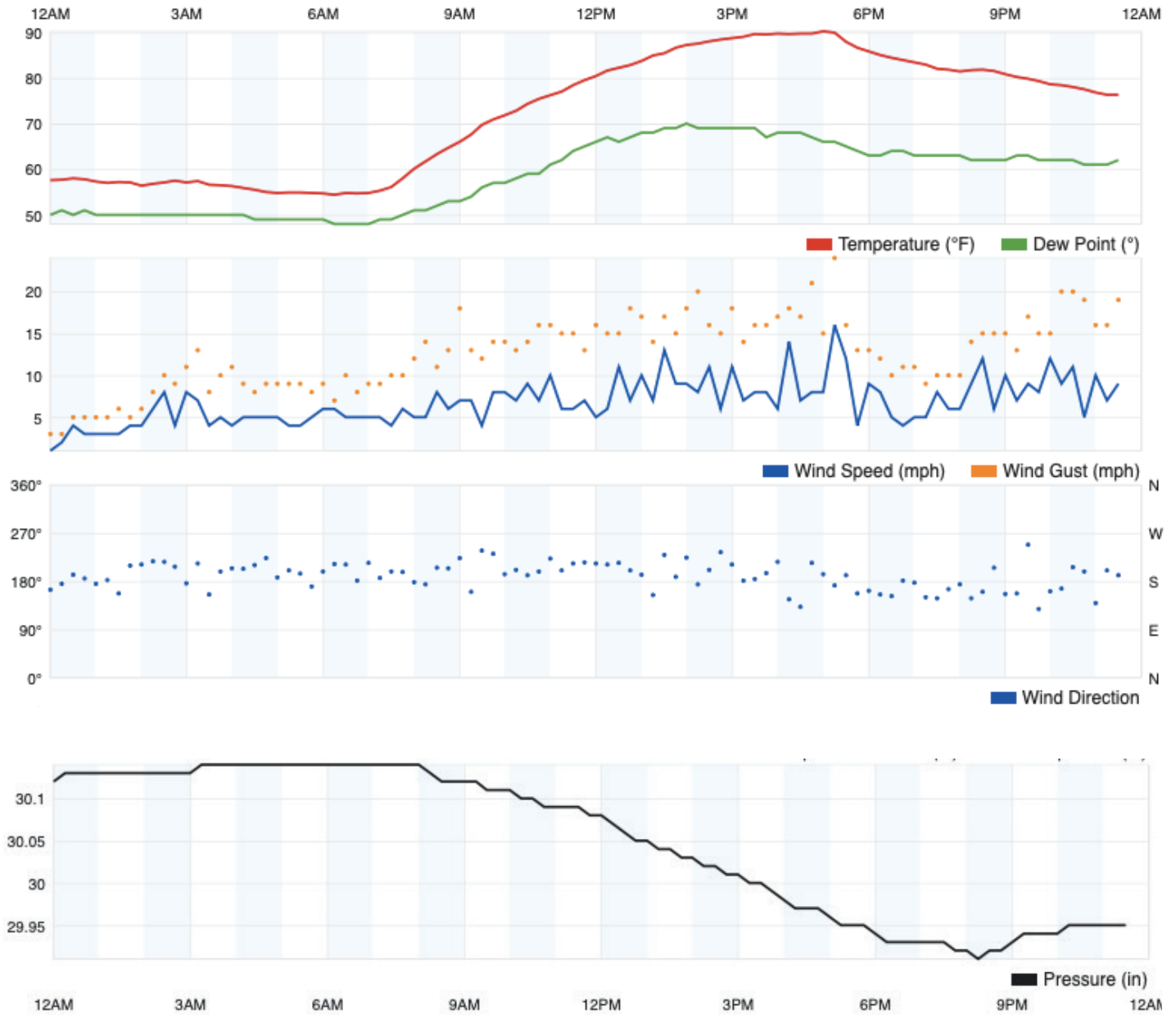
Ireland's Avoca Handweavers have been making fashionable clothing items with the care and attention to detail nowadays associated with "slow fashion" since 1723.

Credit: William Murphy, Flickr.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Hot

High: 95 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 69 °F

Monday



Hot

High: 97 °F

Monday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 69 °F

Tuesday



Hot

High: 96 °F

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
Updated: 8/14/2021 3:29 PM Central

**Continued
Hot into
Wednesday**

Sunday HI: 88 to 98° 	Monday HI: 87 to 98° 	Tuesday HI: 88 to 99° 	Wednesday HI: 87 to 95°
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Good chances of showers and storms return for mid and late week with a cool down for Thursday and Friday

Above normal temperatures will continue into Wednesday. Good chances of showers and storms will return for Wednesday afternoon into Friday with a cool down.

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Today in Weather History

August 15, 1886: A tornado moved northeast from 5 miles southwest of Newark in Marshall County, through town and into North Dakota. Only three buildings were reportedly undamaged at Newark, and a bartender at a saloon was killed. Three people died in two homes on adjoining farms 2 miles southwest of town. A saddle from a Newark stable was carried for a half mile. In North Dakota, houses and barns were damaged along the Wild River. This tornado was estimated as an F3.

August 15, 1987: On this day the largest hailstone was reported in Brown County. The size of the hailstone as 4.5 inches in diameter, and fell on the southwest corner of Warner. This storm also produced F1 tornado that touchdown about 2 miles southwest of Warner. An estimated wind gust of 60 mph was also reported about 2 miles NNW of Stratford.

August 15, 2011: Slow moving thunderstorms across parts of northern Roberts County produced anywhere from 4 to 8 inches of rainfall resulting in flash flooding. The town of New Effington was affected with many roads along with several homes flooded. Sandbagging took place to keep the water from the school. Highway 127 from New Effington to Hammer was flooded in several spots. The floodwaters remained for several days afterward with several roads flooded.

1787: Tornadoes were reported in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. Wethersfield, Connecticut was hard hit by the tornado outbreak. There, a woman and her family were caught in the open. She and her son were killed. Clothes from the family farm were carried three miles away. This event is regarded to be the most significant tornado outbreak in early New England history.

1946 - Saint Louis, MO, was deluged with a record 8.78 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1967 - The sundance fire in northern Idaho was started by lightning. Winds of 50 mph carried firebrands as much as ten miles in advance to ignite new fires, and as a result, the forest fire spread twenty miles across the Selkirk Mountains in just twelve hours, burning 56,000 acres. The heat of the fire produced whirlwinds of flame with winds up to 300 mph which flung giant trees about like matchsticks. (David Ludlum)

1983: Hurricane Alicia formed on this day and was the costliest tropical cyclone in the Atlantic since Hurricane Agnes in 1972. It struck Galveston and Houston, Texas directly, causing \$2.6 billion (1983 USD) in damage and killing 21 people. This storm was the worst Texas hurricane since Hurricane Carla in 1961. Also, Alicia was the first billion-dollar tropical cyclone in Texas history.

1987 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a sharp cold front produced severe weather in the Upper Midwest during the afternoon and evening hours, with Minnesota and eastern South Dakota hardest hit. A thunderstorm in west central Minnesota spawned a tornado at Eagle Lake which killed one person and injured eight others. A thunder- storm in eastern South Dakota produced softball size hail at Warner. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty five cities in twenty states in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Lamoni IA and Baltimore MD, where the mercury hit 105 degrees. Temperatures 100 degrees or above were reported in twenty-two states. Pierre SD was the hot spot in the nation with a high of 114 degrees. Bluefield WV reported eight straight days of record heat. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms in eastern New Mexico produced wind gusts to 66 mph at Clovis. Evening thunderstorms in West Texas produced baseball size hail around Hereford, Dimmitt, Ware and Dalhart. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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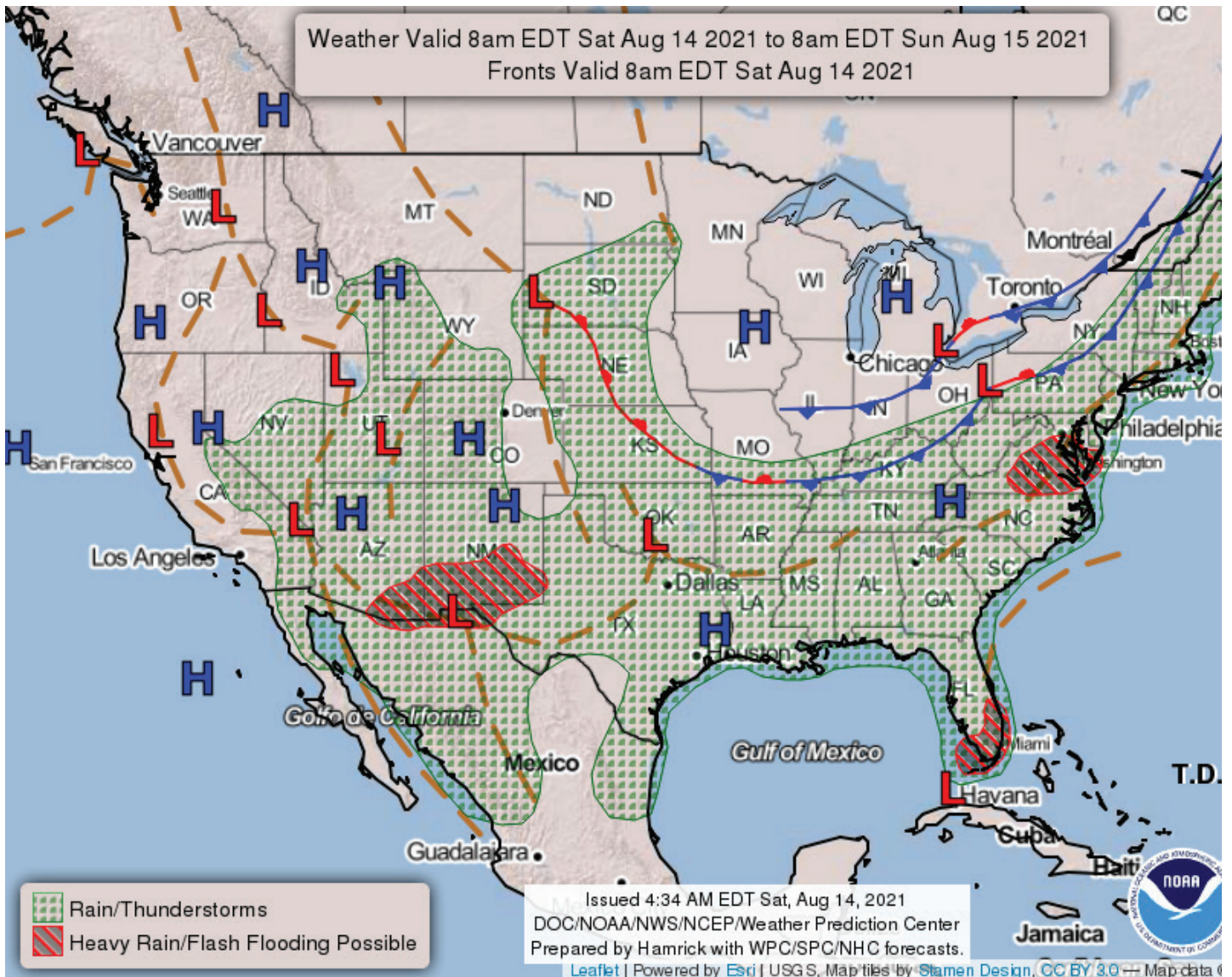
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 90.2 °F at 5:00 PM
Low Temp: 54.4 °F at 6:15 AM
Wind: 24 mph at 5:15 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 111° in 1937
Record Low: 42° in 1895
Average High: 83°F
Average Low: 57°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 1.01
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.12
Average Precip to date: 15.11
Precip Year to Date: 8.39
Sunset Tonight: 8:41 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:36 a.m.



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A BIRTH CERTIFICATE FROM GOD

Not long ago I lost my billfold and all of its contents. It was simple to call the bank that issued me my credit card and ask them to cancel it. But when I went to get a new driver's license, it took much more than a phone call. I had to produce three different documents – including my birth certificate. I was able to locate two of the documents with no difficulty. However my birth certificate was the most important of them all and was difficult to obtain.

But a birth certificate that says we are heaven-born and heaven-bound is certainly the most important document we will ever possess. In Psalm 87:6 we read that "The Lord will write in the register of the people this one was born in Zion" – referring to the community of believers – which for us, one day, will be Heaven.

One night, after dark, a religious leader named Nicodemus went to visit Jesus. As their conversation unfolded, he asked, "How can one get into heaven?" Jesus replied, "No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again."

"Nicodemus," Jesus said, "your earthly birth record will not allow you to enter heaven. You need a birth certificate that will be issued by God!"

At birth, we are born into an "earthly family" because we have an "earthly father." However, when we accept Christ as our Savior, we are born a "second time" – we are "born again" – and God becomes our "Heavenly Father." Then we become a member of God's family and enjoy the benefits and blessings God in store for us as our Heavenly Father. Jesus said, "I am the WAY" – the only way there is – to be born again, have a heavenly birth certificate, and have the honor of calling God our Heavenly Father.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for wanting to be our Heavenly Father. Thank You for inviting us into Your Kingdom, and to become Your child - forever. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 87:6 The Lord will write in the register of the peoples: "This one was born in Zion."

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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

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News from the  Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Saturday:

Dakota Cash

06-07-19-33-35

(six, seven, nineteen, thirty-three, thirty-five)

Estimated jackpot: \$45,000

Lotto America

08-19-21-35-45, Star Ball: 3, ASB: 4

(eight, nineteen, twenty-one, thirty-five, forty-five; Star Ball: three; ASB: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.4 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$242 million

Powerball

06-21-49-65-67, Powerball: 18, Power Play: 2

(six, twenty-one, forty-nine, sixty-five, sixty-seven; Powerball: eighteen; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$258 million

Arrests for drugs, drunken driving down at Sturgis rally

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — Data from the South Dakota Highway Patrol shows arrests for drugs and drunken driving are down at this year's Sturgis Motorcycle Rally compared to last year.

According to the Highway Patrol, DUIs are down 14% while misdemeanor drug arrests dropped 34% and felony drug arrests declined by 8%.

According to the patrol, citations and warnings are up from last year. Citations climbed 20% and warnings are up 23%.

Meade County Sheriff Ron Merwin said earlier this week that his deputies are generally looking past enforcing possession of small amounts of marijuana.

The use of medical marijuana became legal in South Dakota on July 1, but the state is still developing regulations. Gov. Kristi Noem is challenging the constitutionality of legalizing recreational marijuana, with the matter currently before the state Supreme Court.

The 81st annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally began Aug. 6 and concludes Sunday.

30 years in prison for man who attacked driver who died

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man has been sentenced to 30 months in a federal prison for assaulting a driver who had crashed into his front yard and later died.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said Friday 33-year-old Samuel White Horse was sentenced for assault and tampering with evidence in an attack on a motorist who had suffered a medical emergency and crashed Feb. 12, 2020 into White Horse's yard in Cherry Creek.

White Horse was convicted of punching the man in the head. Prosecutors say his father, Jerome White Horse Jr., used a garden hoe to strike the victim in the head multiple times. The victim died several days later after suffering from significant bleeding in his brain.

Jerome White Horse, Jr. pled guilty to and was convicted of voluntary manslaughter.

After witnessing his father beat the victim with the hoe, the defendant took the weapon and hid it under the front porch of his home to conceal it from law enforcement, prosecutors said. The garden hoe was recovered during a search a couple days later and found by the South Dakota Forensic Laboratory to have

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the victim's DNA on the blade and Jerome White Horse Jr.'s DNA on the handle.

U.S. District Court Chief Judge Roberto Lange also sentenced Samuel White Horse to three years of supervised release.

The investigation was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Law Enforcement Services, and the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation.

Taliban enters Kabul, awaits 'peaceful transfer' of power

By AHMAD SEIR, RAHIM FAIEZ, TAMEEM AKHGAR and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Taliban fighters entered the outskirts of the Afghan capital on Sunday and said they were awaiting a "peaceful transfer" of the city after promising not to take it by force, but panicked residents raced to the leave, with workers fleeing government offices and helicopters landing at the U.S. Embassy.

In a nationwide offensive that has taken just over a week, the Taliban has defeated, co-opted or sent Afghan security forces fleeing from wide swaths of the country, even though they had some air support from the U.S. military.

On Sunday, they reached Kabul. Three Afghan officials told The Associated Press that the Taliban were in the districts of Kalakan, Qarabagh and Paghman in the capital.

Later, Afghan forces at Bagram air base, home to a prison housing 5,000 inmates, surrendered to the Taliban, according to Bagram district chief Darwaish Raufi. The prison housed both Taliban and Islamic State group fighters.

The lightning speed of the push has shocked many and raised questions about why Afghan forces crumbled despite years of U.S. training and billions of dollars spent. Just days ago, an American military assessment estimated it would be a month before the capital would come under insurgent pressure.

Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen told Qatar's Al-Jazeera English satellite news channel that the insurgents are "awaiting a peaceful transfer of Kabul city." He declined to offer specifics on any possible negotiations between his forces and the government.

But when pressed on what kind of agreement the Taliban wanted, Shaheen acknowledged that they were seeking an unconditional surrender by the central government.

Taliban negotiators headed to the presidential palace Sunday to discuss the transfer, said an Afghan official who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals. It remained unclear when that transfer would take place.

The negotiators on the government side included former President Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, the head of the Afghan National Reconciliation Council, an official said. Abdullah long has been a vocal critic of President Ashraf Ghani, who long refused giving up power to get a deal with the Taliban.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details of the closed-doors negotiations, described them as "tense."

Acting Defense Minister Bismillah Khan sought to reassure the public in a video message.

"I assure you about the security of Kabul," he said.

Earlier, the insurgents also tried to calm residents of the capital.

"No one's life, property and dignity will be harmed and the lives of the citizens of Kabul will not be at risk," the insurgents said in a statement.

However, a voice message circulating social media purportedly from a Taliban commander also warned "no one is allowed to enter into Kabul province."

Despite the pledges, panic set in as many rushed to leave the country through the Kabul airport, the last route out of the country as the Taliban now hold every border crossing. Rapid shuttle flights of Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopters near the embassy began a few hours later after the militants seized the nearby city of Jalalabad. Diplomatic armored SUVs could be seen leaving the area around the post.

The U.S. State Department did not immediately respond to questions about the movements. However, wisps of smoke could be seen near the embassy's roof as diplomats urgently destroyed sensitive docu-

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ments, according to two American military officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the situation. The smoke grew heavier over time in the area, home to other nation's embassies as well.

Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, which typically carry armed troops, later landed near the embassy as well. At least one attack helicopter could be seen overhead as helicopters launched flares to distract possible missile fire. The U.S. decided a few days ago to send in thousands of troops to help evacuate some personnel from its embassy.

Thousands of civilians now live in parks and open spaces in Kabul itself, fearing a Taliban government that could reimpose a brutal rule that all but eliminated women's rights. Some ATMs stopped distributing cash as hundreds gathered in front of private banks, trying to withdraw their life savings.

At Kabul International Airport, Afghan forces abandoned the field to Western militaries, said a pilot who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss security matters. An Afghan flight earlier landed at the airport from Kandahar loaded with troops who surrendered to the Taliban, even after taking shrapnel damage from a mortar attack, the pilot said.

Ghani, who spoke to the nation Saturday for the first time since the offensive began, appears increasingly isolated as well. Warlords he negotiated with just days earlier have surrendered to the Taliban or fled, leaving Ghani without a military option. Ongoing negotiations in Qatar, the site of a Taliban office, also have failed to stop the insurgents' advance.

Jalalabad, Afghanistan's last major city besides the capital not held by the militants, fell to the Taliban earlier Sunday. Militants posted photos online showing them in the governor's office in Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province.

Abrarullah Murad, a lawmaker from the province told The Associated Press that the insurgents seized Jalalabad after elders negotiated the fall of the government there. Murad said there was no fighting as the city surrendered.

The militants took also Maidan Shar, the capital of Maidan Wardak, on Sunday, only some 90 kilometers (55 miles) from Kabul, Afghan lawmaker Hamida Akbari and the Taliban said. Another provincial capital in Khost also fell to the Taliban, said a provincial council member who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

The fall Saturday of Mazar-e-Sharif, the country's fourth largest city, which Afghan forces and two powerful former warlords had pledged to defend, handed the insurgents control over all of northern Afghanistan.

Atta Mohammad Noor and Abdul Rashid Dostum, two of the warlords Ghani tried to rally to his side days earlier, fled over the border into Uzbekistan on Saturday, said officials close to Dostum. They spoke on condition of anonymity as they weren't authorized to publicly speak about his movements.

Writing on Twitter, Noor alleged a "conspiracy" aided the fall of the north to the Taliban, without elaborating.

"Despite our firm resistance, sadly, all the government and the Afghan security forces equipment were handed over to the Taliban as a result of a big organized and cowardly plot," Noor wrote. "They had orchestrated the plot to trap Marshal Dostum and myself too, but they didn't succeed."

The Taliban also insisted their fighters wouldn't enter people's homes or interfere with businesses. They also said they'd offer an "amnesty" to those who worked with the Afghan government or foreign forces.

"The Islamic Emirate once again assures all its citizens that it will, as always, protect their life, property and honor and create a peaceful and secure environment for its beloved nation," the militants said. "In this regard, no one should worry about their life."

Despite the pledge, those who can afford a ticket have been flocking to Kabul International Airport, the only way out of the country after the Taliban took the last border crossing still held by the government Sunday at Torkham. Pakistan's Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed told local broadcaster Geo TV that Pakistan halted cross-border traffic there after the militants seized it.

Akhgar and Faiez reported from Istanbul and Gambrell from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated

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Press writers Kathy Gannon in Guelph, Canada, Joseph Krauss in Jerusalem and James LaPorta in Washington contributed to this report.

The Latest: Germany, Italy lift personnel out of Afghanistan

The Latest developments on Afghanistan, where a Taliban blitz has taken large swaths of territory just weeks before the final pullout of American and NATO troops:

BERLIN — Germany is sending military transport planes to Kabul to begin the evacuation of its embassy staff Monday.

The German news agency dpa reported Sunday that the mission will include the evacuation of local Afghan staff working for the German embassy. A German official, speaking on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to be quoted, told The Associated Press that paratroopers will secure the operation.

The military planes are expected to ferry evacuees from Kabul to a base in Central Asia, from where charter planes will bring them to

— Frank Jordans in Berlin.

MILAN — Italian media reported Sunday that most personnel at the Italian Embassy in Kabul are being transferred to the Afghan capital's airport in preparation for evacuation.

The report Sunday by Corriere della Sera said the move affects some 50 Italian staffers and 30 Afghan employees and their families, along with Carabinieri paramilitary police protecting the embassy.

The Foreign Ministry confirmed that staff were being transferred to the airport, as other nations were in the process of doing, but could not give numbers or timing.

Italy's defense minister has said that 228 Afghans and their families have already been transferred to Italy, calling it a "moral duty" to protect those who had worked with Italy and who would face reprisals by the Taliban.

The Italian agency LaPresse reported a flight carrying Italian embassy staff would depart Kabul Sunday evening.

MOSCOW — Russia's state news agency reported Sunday that the Taliban promised to guarantee the safety of the Russian embassy in Kabul.

Tass quoted Suhail Shaheen, a spokesman for the Taliban's political office, as saying that the organization has "good relations with Russia" and a "policy in general to ensure safe conditions for the functioning of the Russian and other embassies."

The Kremlin's envoy on Afghanistan said Sunday that there are no plans to evacuate the Russian embassy in Kabul. Zamir Kabulov told the Interfax news agency that Russia's ambassador and its staff are "calmly carrying out their duties."

The reports came as Taliban fighters entered Kabul after a week-long blitz ahead of the final pullout of American and NATO troops. The Taliban said they don't plan to take the capital city by force.

MOSCOW -- Uzbekistan's Foreign Ministry reported Sunday that 84 Afghan servicemen crossed the border into Uzbekistan asked for assistance.

Uzbek guards detained the group of Afghan military when they crossed the border. The group included three wounded soldiers that needed medical help, the ministry said. The men were offered food and temporary accommodation in Uzbekistan, and the ministry was in touch with Afghan officials regarding the return of Afghan soldiers to their home country.

The announcement Sunday came as Taliban fighters entered Kabul after a week-long blitz ahead of the final pullout of American and NATO troops. The Taliban said they don't plan to take the capital city by force.

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TIRANA, Albania — Albania's prime minister says his country will temporarily shelter hundreds of Afghans who worked with the Western peacekeeping military forces and are now threatened by the Taliban.

On his Facebook page, Edi Rama said the U.S. government had asked Albania to serve as a "transit place for a certain number of Afghan political emigrants who have the United States as their final destination."

"No doubt we shall not say no," he said.

He added that the Albanian government has also responded positively to requests from two U.S. NGOs to shelter hundreds of Afghan intellectuals and women activists who have been threatened with execution by the Taliban.

The Albanian prime minister said that his country stands alongside the United States "not only when we need them for our problems ... but even when they need us, any time."

LONDON — British media are reporting that the U.K.'s ambassador to Afghanistan is to be airlifted out of the country by Monday evening amid fears that the Taliban could seize the airport imminently.

The Foreign Office had intended for Laurie Bristow and a small team of officials to remain at the airport with other international diplomats. But the Sunday Telegraph reported that their departure had been brought forward. The Foreign Office declined comment.

Last week the defense ministry said 600 British troops were being deployed to Kabul to help evacuate some 3,000 British nationals and about 2,000 Afghans who worked with British forces.

A Royal Air Force Hercules aircraft was reported to have flown out of the airport on Saturday carrying diplomats and civilians.

Defense Secretary Ben Wallace defended Britain's move to pull troops out of the country. Writing in the Sunday Telegraph, he said "we have not betrayed Afghanistan."

He wrote that the U.K. could not "go it alone" after the U.S. announced its plans to withdraw. "It would be arrogant to think we could solve Afghanistan unilaterally," he said.

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan has closed the Torkham border point with Afghanistan after the Taliban took control of the Afghan border facility, the interior minister said Sunday.

Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said the decision to close the Torkhan border was taken due to an extraordinary situation on the other side. Ahmed told the local Geo television that the border was closed when Afghan police surrendered to the Taliban.

Ahmed said the Chaman border point with Afghanistan remains open.

Pakistan has already said that it cannot bear any load of new Afghan refugees in the wake of crisis in the war-torn country. Pakistan is about to complete fencing along the long, porous border, saying the step has been taken to check the militants' movement across the border.

ISTANBUL — An Afghan official and the Taliban say the militants have seized the provincial capital of Khost.

The capture Sunday makes the capital the latest to fall to the militants since they began their advance over a week ago.

A provincial council member confirmed the capture to the AP. The official spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

It leaves Afghanistan's central government in control of just Kabul and five other provincial capitals out of the country's 34.

— By Rahim Faiez

TREBON, Czech Republic — Czech leaders have approved a plan to evacuate Afghan staffers at the Czech embassy in Kabul.

The Czechs already had evacuated their own diplomats from the embassy and transported them to Kabul's international airport.

Czech Foreign Minister Jakub Kulhanek said Afghan staffers are at risk of "death and torture" if they stay,

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adding, "We simply can't allow that to happen."

The announcement Sunday came as the Taliban seized the last major city outside of Kabul held by the country's central government, cutting off the capital to the east.

Defense Minister Lubomir Metnar said the Czechs will help those Afghans who worked with Czech troops during their deployment in NATO missions.

Metnar said his country is ready to take care of Afghan interpreters and their families. "We will relocate those who have asked, to the Czech Republic," Metnar said.

The evacuation flights should take place in next days.

Japan marks 76th anniversary of WWII defeat; no Suga apology

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan marked the 76th anniversary of its World War II surrender on Sunday with a somber ceremony in which Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga pledged for the tragedy of war to never be repeated but avoided apologizing for his country's aggression.

Suga said Japan never forgets that the peace the country enjoys today is built on the sacrifices of those who died in the war.

"We will commit to our pledge to never repeat the tragedy of the war," he said in his first speech at the event since becoming prime minister.

Suga did not offer an apology to the Asian victims of Japanese aggression across the region in the first half of the 20th century — a precedent set by the country's previous leader, Shinzo Abe, who was frequently accused of trying to whitewash Japan's brutal past.

In a largely domestic-focused speech, Suga listed damage inflicted on Japan and its people, including the U.S. atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the firebombing of Tokyo and other cities and the fierce battle of Okinawa, and mourned for them.

Emperor Naruhito, in contrast, expressed "deep remorse" over his country's wartime actions in a carefully nuanced speech that followed the footsteps of his father, who devoted his 30-year career to making amends for a war fought in the name of Hirohito, the current emperor's grandfather. Naruhito also said he hoped that people can put their hearts together to overcome the difficulty of the pandemic while seeking happiness and peace for all.

Amid Tokyo's surging coronavirus infections, about 200 participants, reduced from about 6,000 before the pandemic, mourned for the dead with a minute of silence. Masks were required, and there was no singing of the national anthem.

Suga vowed to cooperate with the international community in tackling global issues under "proactive pacifism," a vision that Abe promoted to allow Japan to play a greater military role in international conflicts.

Beginning 2013, Abe stopped acknowledging Japan's wartime hostilities or apologize in his Aug. 15 speeches, scrapping a nearly 20-year tradition that began with the 1995 apology of Socialist leader Tomichi Murayama.

On Sunday, before attending the ceremony at Tokyo's Budokan hall, Suga laid flowers at a nearby national cemetery for unknown soldiers. While Suga stayed away from controversial Yasukuni shrine, he did send a religious offering to the shrine, Japanese media reported.

Victims of Japanese actions during the first half of the 20th century, especially the Koreans and China, see the shrine as a symbol of Japanese militarism because it honors convicted war criminals among about 2.5 million war dead.

Abe, who stepped down as prime minister last year, prayed at the shrine Sunday, and so did three other members of Suga's Cabinet. Two other ministers visited the shrine Friday.

The visits sparked criticism from China and South Korea.

On Sunday, South Korea's Foreign Ministry in a statement urged Japanese officials to show "sincere remorse through action" so that the countries could develop "future-oriented ties."

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also said they had lodged "stern representations" with the Japanese

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side in Tokyo and in Beijing over the visits to the Yasukuni shrine, noting Suga's religious offering. Spokeswoman Hua Chunying called on Japan to take actions that would "win the trust" of its neighbors.

Associated Press writer Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul, South Korea, and Huizhong Wu in Taipei, Taiwan, contributed to this report.

Follow Mari Yamaguchi on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/mariyamaguchi>. Kim Tong-hyung at <https://www.twitter.com/kimtonghyung>

After UN climate report, individuals seek to do their part

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

HOBOKEN, Belgium (AP) — Young urban shepherd Lukas Janssens guides his flock among the graves in Schoonselhof, one of Belgium's iconic cemeteries, knowing sheep are kinder to nature than lawnmowers.

Limiting emissions of carbon dioxide, a key contributor to climate change, and promoting biodiversity are two key goals of De Antwerpse Stadsherder — The Antwerp City Shepherd, Janssens' company of one human and 270 sheep.

"We won't stave it off with a flock of sheep," Janssens said of global warming. "But it is another step to build an more ecological society."

Only days after the alarming U.N. report on climate change, the message of U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres was still stuck in his head — "code red for humanity," with global warming threatening to choke the planet.

Even if Guterres's words were aimed primarily at governments, investment managers and asset owners, some citizens have known this day would come for decades.

Janssens is one of many who have taken on a very personal commitment to do something, along with those who refuse to fly, adapt their personal diet or stay off school to protest on Fridays.

"I started as a shepherd because, together with the small sheep, I wanted to commit myself to society, to have a social goal beyond the production of meat, milk or wool. I want them to be useful," he said of his flock as they grazed the steep banks of a ditch running through the massive cemetery.

None of this might matter unless nations show similar commitment when they meet in Glasgow, Scotland, in November for the COP26 UN meeting on climate change.

Participants will seek to agree to measures to try to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above levels in the late 19th century. The figure has already reached 1.1 degrees (2 degrees Fahrenheit).

Which begs the question: Are Janssens and his ilk 21st century Don Quixotes or the vanguard of a global Green revolution, that might help keep the planet from overheating?

At 24, Janssens has already seen his 3-year-old business expand rapidly as his venture has proved ripe for the climate conscious times. "It cannot get bigger any faster than this," he said. "It is more than a full-time profession."

His choice of action might not be the one taken by all, but activists say as long as people do something, they can make a difference.

"Not everyone is going to become a shepherd of course. But it is great that there is such a variety of initiatives," said bio-engineer Benjamin Clarysse of BBL, a confederation of environmental groups in northern Belgium.

And all together, he insisted, individuals might amount to more than the sum of their parts.

The challenges raised in the U.N. report are huge. It gives a guarantee that warming will get worse and insists it is "an established fact" that climate change clearly was human-caused. If that were not enough, a summer of exceptional floods, heatwaves and wildfires from the U.S. west over much of Europe and north Africa to Siberia has added to that sinking feeling. Some of the flooding came as close as 35 miles (60 kilometers) to Janssens' city pastures.

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"I can imagine there was a sense of hopelessness among people," said Pim Nusselder of the Dutch Milieu Centraal, a group promoting sustainable choices on anything from energy to waste and shopping. "Yet the longer we wait, the bigger and more expensive the challenge will become."

He insisted small actions, if taken by enough people, could grow well beyond expectations, taking the population of the Netherlands as a cue. "I often get the question: What I do, is that not a tiny drop on a boiling plate? Well we have 17 million drops and if each does 10 sustainable things, you have 170 million drops on a hot plate. That is how you extinguish wildfires."

Underscoring his view, a report this year by the EU's statistical agency showed that people taking some personal action to combat climate change, whether on food or transport, has reached its highest level since 2011.

Greta Thunberg at first was a lonely teenager with her solo protests outside Sweden's parliament in Stockholm. Now, she addresses political and business leaders at U.N. conferences and is feted by world leaders like European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen — even if they stop well short of following much of her advice.

Activists warn, though, that politicians should not shrug off responsibility on the individual. "They cannot just say that everyone should just do a little bit of the work. Depending on just the good will of people won't get you there," said bio-engineer Clarysse.

Virginia Mayo in Hoboken and Frank Jordans in Berlin contributed.

Fuel explosion in Lebanon kills 20, wounding dozens

By BASSEM MROUE and ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A warehouse where fuel was illegally stored exploded in northern Lebanon early Sunday, killing 20 people and burning dozens more in the latest tragedy to hit the Mediterranean country in the throes of a devastating economic and political crisis.

It was not immediately clear what caused the explosion near the border with Syria. Fuel smuggling operations have been ongoing for months.

The Lebanese Red Cross said a fuel tanker exploded and its teams recovered 20 bodies from the site in the border village of Tleil. In a statement, it said it evacuated 79 people who were injured or suffered burns in the blast. Hours after the blast, Lebanese Red Cross members were still searching the area for more victims as Lebanese soldiers cordoned the area.

A Lebanese military official said the explosion occurred after the army confiscated a warehouse in Tleil where about 60,000 liters of gasoline were stored and the order was given to distribute the fuel to residents of the area. Residents had gathered to acquire the scarce commodity, available only on the black market at exorbitant prices or not at all.

It was not clear what caused it, the official said told The Associated Press. He spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Outside the Salam hospital in the northern city of Tripoli, a woman collapsed after she was told her son succumbed to his wounds.

"Oh my God. He has little kids," said the woman as she wept. "Why did you leave me Ahmad?"

A young man standing nearby cried: "We will go to your homes and burn you there," a reference to Lebanon's political leaders, blamed for decades of corruption and mismanagement that has led the country to bankruptcy.

At a hospital in Beirut, where some of the burn victims were brought, Marwa el-Sheikh from Tleil was waiting for word about her brother who was being treated for burns, and her brother-in-law, a retired soldier, who was still missing.

"Some people were burned beyond recognition," she told the AP. "They are the victims of the shortcomings and carelessness of our politicians who led us to this."

A nighttime video circulating online showed residents gathered at the site before the explosion, filling

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up gallons with fuel. AP footage showed the charred remains of what appears to be part of a tanker that exploded. Lebanese soldiers, a Red Cross vehicle and other trucks could be seen in the area.

Hospitals in northern Lebanon were calling for blood donations of all types. Lebanese Health Minister Hamad Hassan called on hospitals in northern Lebanon and the capital, Beirut, to receive those injured by the explosion, adding that the government will pay for their treatment.

The explosion comes as Lebanon faces a severe fuel shortage that has been blamed on smuggling, hoarding and the cash-strapped government's inability to secure deliveries of imported fuel.

The shortages have paralyzed the country long dependent on private generators to light up their homes. Most of those generators have now turned off their engines because of the crippling diesel shortages. The American University Medical Center on Saturday warned it may be forced to shut down in less than 48 hours due to fuel shortages, which would threaten the lives of its critically ill patients.

Tleil is about 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) from the Syrian border, but it was not immediately clear if the fuel in the tanker was being prepared to be smuggled to Syria, where prices are much higher compared to those in Lebanon.

The fuel crisis deteriorated dramatically this week after the central bank decided to end subsidies for fuel products — a decision that will likely lead to price hikes of almost all commodities in Lebanon, already in the throes of soaring poverty and hyperinflation.

On Saturday, Lebanese troops deployed to petrol stations, forcing owners to sell fuel to customers. Some gas station owners have been refusing to sell, waiting to make gains when prices increase with the end of subsidies.

The Lebanese army also has been cracking down on smugglers active along the Syrian border, confiscating thousands of liters of gasoline over the past days. El-Sheikh said residents had gathered around the confiscated petrol at Tleil, where the army was giving it for free, when the explosion happened.

Lebanon has for decades suffered electricity cuts, partly because of widespread corruption and mismanagement in the small Mediterranean nation of 6 million, including 1 million Syrian refugees.

Sunday's explosion was the deadliest in the country since an Aug. 4, 2020, blast at Beirut's port killed at least 214, wounded thousands and destroyed parts of the capital.

Amid shortages, Africans scramble to be fully immunized

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — At a COVID-19 vaccination site in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, tempers flared among those waiting for scarce AstraZeneca jabs, with some accusing others of trying to jump the queue.

Nurses intervened, telling them the accused had been waiting since the previous day and averting violence in what has become a tense atmosphere as Ugandans jostle for vaccinations.

In the aftermath of a brutal wave of infections driven by the delta variant, many Ugandans seeking a first dose of vaccine are competing with hundreds of thousands who have waited months for a second dose. But the country now has only 285,000 shots donated by Norway.

The delta surge has touched off a vaccination rush across Africa that the slow trickle of donated doses can't keep up with, compounding the continent's vaccine disadvantage compared with the rest of the world. The urgency to obtain a second dose across much of the world's least vaccinated continent contrasts sharply with rich countries now beginning to authorize third doses.

Dr. Alfred Driwale, the top official with Uganda's immunization program, said ruefully that the small number of doses will do little to remedy the situation as the 5 million Ugandans eligible for vaccination — everyone from soldiers to health workers — scramble for shots under a first-come, first-serve system.

"You can't make a policy when there is no certainty of supply," Driwale said.

Health officials throughout Africa's 54 nations have repeatedly expressed disappointment over what they see as vaccine nationalism as rich nations appear to hoard doses while poor countries lag far behind. In June, amid severe shortages, the World Health Organization warned that vaccination campaigns in Africa

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had come "to a near halt," underscoring the continent's plight at a time when many countries faced deadly surges.

Less than 2% of the continent's 1.3 billion people are fully vaccinated and African countries have received just over 100 million vaccine doses, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Donations of AstraZeneca from countries such as France are not considered large amounts in efforts to vaccinate 60% of Africa's population by the end of 2022, said John Nkengasong, the group's director. He told reporters Thursday that large shipments of AstraZeneca are not expected anytime soon until the situation with an Indian manufacturer changes.

"The best vaccine to use as a second dose is any vaccine that's available," he added, using the example of getting the first AstraZeneca dose and then the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which has begun arriving in African countries after the continent purchased 400 million doses. Uganda recently received 300,000 doses of China's Sinovac vaccine that authorities insist cannot be used in combination with AstraZeneca.

In Congo, health experts are awaiting a Sunday shipment of more COVID-19 second doses, said Dr. Jean-Jacques Muyembe, who is coordinating the government's pandemic response. Some 81,910 people have been vaccinated with AstraZeneca since the start of the vaccination campaign in April, and more than 4,000 people have returned for the second dose. AstraZeneca is out of stock there.

The scarcity of AstraZeneca is causing anxiety in countries that used it widely while hoping substantial shipments would continue arriving. Some health workers, teachers and others who spoke to The Associated Press said their second dose has been due for several weeks, leaving them feeling unsafe.

"We are told that (the delta variant) is very deadly and we are all scared. So most of my colleagues have taken the first AstraZeneca vaccine, but we are unable to the second jab now," said Ifeoluwa Oluseyi, a teacher in the Nigerian capital of Abuja.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation with more than 210 million people, earlier this month received 4 million Moderna doses donated by the U.S. and expects a delivery of more than 29 million Johnson & Johnson doses purchased by the government through the African Union.

Oso Kowe, a Nigerian physician who is among many yet to be fully vaccinated, said she considers herself lucky to have escaped COVID-19 as she waits to get a second dose after a first one received on May 7. Kowe, of the Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital, said she has tried three times to get her second dose.

"My not getting the second dose wasn't really my fault," she said. "So, I will just try my best and hope for the best that I won't contract the virus."

Dr. Misaki Wayengera, head of a technical committee advising Uganda's pandemic response, said it was inevitable that "some, unfortunately, are going to have to wait longer" for doses.

A Ugandan teacher, waiting her turn at a crowded vaccination site on a recent morning, said she would not leave until she got her second shot, due since June 2.

"My question is, does that first dose still work? I mean, was it wasted? Will I need to get a third shot? There are questions in the air and no one is giving me answers," Racheal Nambuya said. "I am trying my best to get this shot and, as you can see, I am not the only one."

There have been reports of fake vaccination certificates issued to people who got jabs outside designated centers — and some even paying bribes to get jabs — adding to the confusion surrounding a vaccination campaign that teeters on availability. And because of logistical challenges, vaccines take even longer to reach remote places outside urban centers.

With some vaccination sites allocated about 100 doses per day, the struggle for vaccines can literally be physical.

"Some people almost exchanged blows here this morning," said Robinah Wataba after getting a second dose that had been due for several days. "There was too much disorganization here. More than you can imagine."

She felt discouraged the previous day when she came to Kampala's City Hall and witnessed the clamorous crowd.

"This second dose — everyone wants it. I was asking myself, 'What is the probability that I will be among

those people who will be able to get it?" she said. "I pity those who haven't gotten it because from now on it's going to be even harder."

Associated Press writers Chinedu Asadu in Lagos, Nigeria, Krista Larson in Dakar, Senegal, and Cara Anna in Nairobi, Kenya, contributed to this report.

D-backs' Gilbert throws no-hitter in first career start

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — There was Theodore, Bumpus and Bobo. Now there's Tyler Gilbert.

An aspiring electrician, the Diamondbacks left-hander delivered a shocker for the history books Saturday night.

Gilbert became the fourth pitcher — and first in 68 years — to throw a no-hitter in his initial big league start, leading Arizona over the San Diego Padres 7-0 with the record-tying eighth no-hitter in the majors this season.

The last to accomplish the feat in his first start was Bobo Holloman of the St. Louis Browns on May 6, 1953. Bumpus Jones also did it in his major league debut with the Cincinnati Reds on Oct. 15, 1892, and Theodore Breitenstein threw one in his first start for the Browns on Oct. 4, 1891.

The eight no-hitters matched the mark set in 1884, the first year overhand pitching was allowed.

Gilbert struck out Trent Grisham and Ha-Seong Kim in the ninth inning before Tommy Pham lined out to center fielder Ketel Marte. Joyous Diamondbacks players threw their gloves in the air and rushed the mound, mobbing the surprising hero who spent six seasons in the minors and was selected in the Triple-A portion of the Rule 5 draft last winter.

He had pitched three times in relief for a total of 3 2/3 innings since making his major league debut this month.

"Crazy," Gilbert said. "It's not going to hit me for probably another day. I don't know what just happened."

The 27-year-old Gilbert threw 102 pitches, including 64 strikes, against a San Diego lineup missing injured star Fernando Tatis Jr. Gilbert rarely delivered his fastball above 90 mph, but he effectively peppered the Padres with breaking pitches and leaned on his defense, which bailed him out on several hard-hit balls.

Pavin Smith caught a liner from Adam Frazier and then stepped on first to double off Pham in the fourth. There was a line drive snagged by Gilbert off Eric Hosmer to end the fifth. Third baseman Drew Ellis made a diving catch in the seventh. David Peralta made a leaping grab at the wall on Austin Nola's long fly ball in the eighth.

Gilbert needed just three pitches to get through the eighth, setting up a dramatic ninth. Marte caught a line drive for the final out while charging from center field.

"I tried to tune out as much as I could," Gilbert said. "But that last inning, I heard everything."

Among those celebrating the first Diamondbacks no-hitter at home was Gilbert's family. They were also on hand for his debut in relief on Aug. 3.

Gilbert didn't play baseball in 2020 after the minor league season was wiped out by the pandemic. He spent the summer learning to be an electrician from his dad, making some extra money while occasionally crawling around attics and in between walls.

"I'd rather be doing this than pulling wires," Gilbert said with a grin. "No offense, Dad."

It was a stunning performance for the Diamondbacks, who have the worst record in the big leagues this season. It's the third no-hitter in franchise history and first since Edwin Jackson on June 25, 2010.

Second-year catcher Daulton Varsho caught Gilbert one night after hitting a game-winning homer.

"That was so fun to do that tonight," Varsho said.

Gilbert (1-1) struck out five and walked two. The sixth-round pick out of Southern California in 2015 had spent his entire career in the minor leagues until being called up a few weeks ago. He was making his fourth appearance.

"It was weird, I wasn't nervous at all," Gilbert said. "I felt like I should have been. I don't know why. I

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just kept going out there and doing my thing. I was really nervous before the game, leading up to the game. But after the three-pitch eighth inning, I was like, 'This is possibly going to happen.'"

The Chicago Cubs threw the majors' most recent no-hitter with a combined effort June 24. The other no-hitters this year were thrown by San Diego's Joe Musgrove (April 9), Carlos Rodón of the Chicago White Sox (April 14), Baltimore's John Means (May 5), Cincinnati's Wade Miley (May 7), Detroit's Spencer Turnbull (May 18) and the New York Yankees' Corey Kluber (May 19).

In addition, Arizona's Madison Bumgarner pitched a seven-inning hitless game in a doubleheader on April 25 that is not recognized as a no-hitter by Major League Baseball.

Most of those gems were thrown before MLB cracked down on the use of sticky foreign substances by pitchers in late June.

It's been a brutal series for the Padres, who are struggling to keep up in the playoff race. San Diego still occupies the second NL wild-card spot but has fallen 10 games behind the NL West-leading San Francisco Giants.

"You've got to tip the cap to Gilbert. It was obviously a special night for him," Padres manager Jayce Tingler said. "We've been a part of two of them this year, and it's a lot funner being on the other side, that's for sure. Frustrating night. The balls we did hit hard were right at guys or they made really good plays or fly balls were on the track."

The Diamondbacks jumped out to a 5-0 lead in the first inning off Musgrove (8-8), who needed 39 pitches to slog through nine batters. Josh VanMeter doubled to lead off the game and Marte brought him home with another double.

David Peralta had an RBI single and then the 25-year-old Ellis had the big blow when he smacked Musgrove's hanging breaking ball into the left field seats.

REVOLVING DOOR

Gilbert was the 15th different Diamondbacks starting pitcher this season, which extends a club record. The previous high was 12, which has happened four times. The last occurrence was 2019.

UP NEXT

The Padres and Diamondbacks wrap up the four-game series Sunday. Arizona sends RHP Zac Gallen (1-6, 4.87 ERA) to the mound to face RHP Craig Stammen (5-3, 3.31).

More AP MLB: <https://apnews.com/hub/mlb> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Biden orders 1,000 more troops to aid Afghanistan departure

By ROBERT BURNS and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden authorized an additional 1,000 U.S. troops for deployment to Afghanistan, raising to roughly 5,000 the number of U.S. troops to ensure what Biden called an "orderly and safe drawdown" of American and allied personnel.

U.S. troops will also help in the evacuation of Afghans who worked with the military during the nearly two-decade war.

The last-minute decision to re-insert thousands of U.S. troops into Afghanistan reflected the dire state of security as the Taliban seized control of multiple Afghan cities in a few short days. The militant and fundamentalist movement gained control of key parts of the country it governed until being ousted by U.S. and coalition forces after the Sept. 11 attacks. Biden had set an Aug. 31 deadline for fully withdraw combat forces before the 20th anniversary of the attacks.

Biden attributed much of the chaos unfolding in Afghanistan to former President Donald Trump's efforts to end the war, which Biden said created a blueprint that put U.S. forces in a difficult spot with an emboldened Taliban challenging the Afghan government.

"When I came to office, I inherited a deal cut by my predecessor — which he invited the Taliban to discuss at Camp David on the eve of 9/11 of 2019 — that left the Taliban in the strongest position militarily since 2001," Biden said in a statement Saturday. "I was the fourth president to preside over an American

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troop presence in Afghanistan — two Republicans, two Democrats. I would not, and will not, pass this war onto a fifth.”

In his statement Biden didn't explain the numerical breakdown of the 5,000 troops he said had been deployed. But a defense official said in a media statement that the president had approved Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's recommendation that the lead battalion of the 82nd Airborne Brigade Combat Team assist in the State Department's drawdown.

Initially 1,000 troops were in place to aid with the withdrawal, and administration officials quickly judged that total to be insufficient. An additional contingent of Marines arrived in Kabul as part of a 3,000-troop force intended to secure an airlift of U.S. Embassy personnel and Afghan allies as Taliban insurgents approached the outskirts of the capital. The additional 1,000 troops approved Saturday appeared to bring the total to 5,000.

Officials have stressed that the newly arriving troops' mission was limited to assisting the airlift of embassy personnel and Afghan allies, and they expected to complete it by month's end. But they might have to stay longer if the embassy is threatened by a Taliban takeover of Kabul by then.

In a sign of fears that the Taliban could soon capture Kabul, U.S. Embassy personnel were urgently destroying sensitive documents, according to two U.S. military officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the actions.

As the situation in Afghanistan rapidly worsened, Biden, who was spending the weekend at Camp David, and Vice President Kamala Harris held a secure video conference on Saturday morning with national security officials before Biden announced the additional troops.

On Saturday, the Taliban captured Mazar-e-Sharif, a large heavily defended city in northern Afghanistan, and closed in on Kabul by taking the Logar province just to the south. The Taliban have made major advances in recent days, including capturing Herat and Kandahar, the country's second- and third-largest cities.

“Clearly from their actions, it appears as if they are trying to get Kabul isolated,” Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said, referring to the Taliban's speedy and efficient takedown of major provincial capitals this past week.

Biden had given the Pentagon until Aug. 31 to complete the withdrawal of the 2,500 to 3,000 troops that were in Afghanistan when he announced in April that he would end U.S. involvement in the war. That number has dropped to just under 1,000, and all but about 650 were scheduled to be gone by the end of the month; the 650 were to remain to help protect the U.S. diplomatic presence, including with aircraft and defensive weapons at the Kabul airport.

But the decision in recent days to dispatch 4,000 fresh troops suggested that American forces and their allies were at risk. There was no discussion of rejoining the war, but the number of troops needed for security will depend on decisions about keeping the embassy open and the extent of a Taliban threat to the capital in coming days.

Having the Aug. 31 deadline pass with thousands of U.S. troops in the country could be problematic for Biden, who said he had no regrets about stopping the U.S. war by that date. Republicans criticized the withdrawal as a mistake and ill-planned, though there was little political appetite by either party to send fresh troops to fight the Taliban.

The president said Saturday his administration had conveyed to Taliban representatives in Qatar that any actions in Afghanistan that harm U.S. personnel will be met by a “swift and strong” military response. Biden also directed Secretary of State Antony Blinken to support Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and engage with regional leaders in the pursuit of a political settlement with the Taliban.

Ghani delivered a televised speech Saturday, his first public appearance since the recent Taliban gains, and pledged not to give up the “achievements” of the 20 years since the U.S. toppled the Taliban.

Despite the Taliban's gains, the Biden administration has said that Afghan security forces' air force and superior numbers could give them an edge against the insurgents. The statement served to highlight the lack of morale by Afghan forces to fight in a situation where the Taliban seemed to be speeding forward.

The State Department said the embassy in Kabul would remain partially staffed and functioning, but

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Thursday's decision to evacuate a significant number of staff suggested concerns about protecting American and Afghan lives as the Taliban progressed through the country. The Biden administration has not publicly ruled out a full embassy evacuation or possibly relocating embassy operations to the Kabul airport.

Powerful quake adds to Haiti's misery, killing at least 304

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and EVENS SANON Associated Press

LES CAYES, Haiti (AP) — A powerful magnitude 7.2 earthquake added to the misery in Haiti, killing at least 304 people, injuring a minimum of 1,800 others and destroying hundreds of homes. People in the Caribbean island nation rushed into the streets to seek safety and to help help rescue those trapped in the rubble of collapsed homes, hotels and other structures.

Saturday's earthquake struck the southwestern part of the hemisphere's poorest nation, almost razing some towns and triggering landslides that hampered rescue efforts in two of the hardest-hit communities. The disaster also added to the plight of Haitians, who were already grappling with the coronavirus pandemic, a presidential assassination and deepening poverty.

The epicenter of the quake was about 125 kilometers (78 miles) west of the capital of Port-au-Prince, the U.S. Geological Survey said. The widespread damage could worsen by early next week, with Tropical Storm Grace predicted to reach Haiti late Monday or early Tuesday.

Aftershocks were felt throughout the day and late into the night, when many people now homeless or frightened by the possibility of their fractured homes collapsing on them stayed in the streets to sleep — if their nerves allowed them.

In the badly damaged coastal town of Les Cayes, under darkness that was only punctured by flashlights, some praised God for surviving the earthquake.

"We are alive today because God loves us," said Marie-claire Jean-Pierre, whose home collapsed a moment after she and her son stepped outside when they felt the ground begin to shake.

Prime Minister Ariel Henry said he was rushing aid to areas where towns were destroyed and hospitals overwhelmed with incoming patients. A former senator rented a private airplane to move injured people from Les Cayes to Port-au-Prince for medical assistance.

Henry declared a one-month state of emergency for the whole country and said he would not ask for international help until the extent of the damages was known.

"The most important thing is to recover as many survivors as possible under the rubble," said Henry. "We have learned that the local hospitals, in particular that of Les Cayes, are overwhelmed with wounded, fractured people."

Jerry Chandler, director of Haiti's Office of Civil Protection, told reporters that the death toll stood at 304 Saturday night. Rescue workers and bystanders were able to pull many people to safety from the rubble.

Chandler said a partial count of structural damage included at least 860 destroyed homes and more than 700 damaged. Hospitals, schools, offices and churches were also affected.

On the tiny island of Ile-a-Vache, about 6.5 miles (10.5 kilometers) from Les Cayes, the quake damaged a seaside resort popular with Haitian officials, business leaders, diplomats and humanitarian workers. Fernand Sajous, owner of the Abaka Bay Resort, said by telephone that nine of the hotel's 30 rooms collapsed, but he said they were vacant at the time and no one was injured.

"They disappeared — just like that," Sajous said.

People in Les Cayes tried to pull guests from the rubble of a collapsed hotel, but as the sun set, they had only been able to recover the body of a 7-year-old girl whose home was behind the facility.

"I have eight kids, and I was looking for the last one," Jean-Claude Daniel said through tears. "I will never see her again alive. The earthquake destroyed my life. It took a child away from me."

The reports of overwhelmed hospitals come as Haiti struggles with the pandemic and a lack of resources to deal with it. Just last month, the country of 11 million people received its first batch of U.S.-donated coronavirus vaccines, via a United Nations program for low-income countries.

The earthquake also struck just over a month after President Jovenel Moïse was shot to death in his

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home, sending the country into political chaos. His widow, Martine Moïse, who was seriously wounded in the attack, posted a message on Twitter calling for unity among Haitians: "Let's put our shoulders together to bring solidarity."

As he boarded a plane bound for Les Cayes, Henry said he wanted "structured solidarity" to ensure the response was coordinated to avoid the confusion that followed the devastating 2010 earthquake, when aid was slow to reach residents after as many as 300,000 Haitians were killed.

U.S. President Joe Biden authorized an immediate response and named USAID Administrator Samantha Power as the senior official coordinating the U.S effort to help Haiti. USAID will help to assess damage and assist in rebuilding, said Biden, who called the United States a "close and enduring friend to the people of Haiti."

Argentina and Chile also were among the first nations to promise help.

Humanitarian workers said gang activity in the seaside district of Martissant, just west of the Haitian capital, also was complicating relief efforts.

"Nobody can travel through the area," Ndiaga Seck, a UNICEF spokesman in Port-au-Prince, said by phone. "We can only fly over or take another route."

Seck said information about deaths and damage was slow coming to Port-au-Prince because of spotty internet service, but UNICEF planned to send medical supplies to two hospitals in the south, in Les Cayes and Jeremie.

People in Port-au-Prince felt the tremor and many rushed into the streets in fear, although there did not appear to be damage there.

Haiti, where many live in tenuous circumstances, is vulnerable to earthquakes and hurricanes. It was struck by a magnitude 5.9 earthquake in 2018 that killed more than a dozen people.

By late Saturday, the island had experienced six aftershocks stronger than 5.0 and nine above 4.0.

Claude Prepetit, a Haitian civil engineer and geologist, warned of the danger from cracked structures.

"More or less intensive aftershocks are to be expected for a month," he said, cautioning that some buildings, "badly damaged during the earthquake, can collapse during aftershocks."

Associated Press writer Regina Garcia Cano reported this story from Mexico City and AP writer Evens Sanon reported in Les Cayes. AP writer Tammy Webber in Fenton, Michigan, Josh Boak in Washington and Trenton Daniel in New York contributed to this report.

Thunderstorms, heat fuel wildfires burning across West

By EUGENE GARCIA and DAISY NGUYEN Associated Press

QUINCY, Calif. (AP) — The danger of new fires erupting across the West because of unstable weather conditions added to the burden already faced by overstretched crews battling blazes across the region.

Thunderstorms pushed flames in Northern California on Saturday closer to two towns not far from where the Dixie Fire last week destroyed much of the small town of Greenville, a gold rush-era community.

The thunderstorms, which began Friday, didn't produce much rain but whipped up wind and created lightning strikes, forcing crews to focus on using bulldozers to build lines and keep the blaze from reaching Westwood, a town of about 1,700 people. Westwood was placed under evacuation orders Aug. 5.

Wind gusts of up to 50 mph (80 kph) also pushed the fire closer to Janesville, a town of about 1,500 people, east of Greenville, said Jake Cagle, the operations chief at the east zone of the fire.

"Very tough day in there yesterday in the afternoon and the night (crew) picked up the pieces and tried to secure the edge the best they could with the resources they had," he said in a briefing Saturday.

The fire was among more than 100 large wildfires burning in more than a dozen states in the West, a region seared by drought and hot, bone-dry weather that turned forests, brushlands, meadows and pastures into tinder.

The U.S. Forest Service said Friday it is operating in crisis mode, fully deploying firefighters and maxing out its support system.

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The roughly 21,000 federal firefighters working on the ground is more than double the number of firefighters sent to contain forest fires at this time a year ago, said Anthony Scardina, a deputy forester for the agency's Pacific Southwest region.

More than 6,000 firefighters alone were battling the Dixie Fire, which has ravaged nearly 845 square miles (2,100 square kilometers) — an area the size of Tokyo — and was 31% contained.

"The size is unimaginable, its duration and its impact on these people, all of us, including me, is unbelievable," said Johnnie Brookwood, who was staying in her third evacuation center.

Brookwood had never heard of a road named Dixie when the wildfire began a month ago in the forestlands of Northern California.

Within three weeks, it exploded into the largest wildfire burning in the U.S., destroying more than 1,000 homes and businesses including a lodge in Greenville where she was renting a room for \$650 per month.

"At first (the fire) didn't affect us at all, it was off in some place called Dixie, I didn't even know what it means," Brookwood, 76, said Saturday. "Then it was 'Oh no we have to go too?' Surely Greenville won't burn. But then it did — and now all we can see are ashes."

The cause of the fire has not been determined. Pacific Gas and Electric has said the fire may have been started when a tree fell on its power line.

A fast-moving fire broke out Saturday afternoon east of Salt Lake City, shutting down Interstate 80 and prompting the evacuation of Summit Park, a mountain community of 6,600 people. Fire officials said the blaze was burning about 3 square miles (8 square kilometers) and threatening thousands of homes and power lines.

In southeastern Montana, firefighters were gaining ground on a pair of fires that chewed through vast rangelands and at one point threatened the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation.

The fires were caused by heat from coal seams, the deposits of coal found in the ground in the area, said Peggy Miller, a spokeswoman for the fires.

Mandatory evacuation for the tribal headquarters town of Lame Deer remained in place because of poor air quality, she added.

Smoke also drove air pollution levels to unhealthy or very unhealthy levels in parts of Northern California, Oregon and Idaho.

In southeastern Oregon, two wildfires started by lightning Thursday near the California border spread rapidly through juniper trees, sagebrush and evergreen trees.

The Patton Meadow Fire about 14 miles (23 kilometers) west of Lakeview, near the California border, exploded to 11 square miles (28 square kilometers) in less than 24 hours in a landscape sucked dry by extreme drought. It was 10% contained.

Hot weather and bone-dry conditions in Oregon could increase fire risks through the weekend.

Nguyen reported from Oakland, California. Matthew Brown in Billings, Montana, Olga R. Rodriguez in San Francisco and Sara Cline in Portland, Oregon, contributed to this report.

Virus claims more young victims as deaths climb yet again

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON, KELLI KENNEDY and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A young mother had just celebrated her first wedding anniversary and was one of six members of a Jacksonville church to die over a 10-day span.

Another Florida woman had just given birth to her first child, but was only able to hold the newborn girl for a few moments before dying.

A California man died a few weeks shy of his 53rd birthday while his wife was on a ventilator at the same hospital in Oakland, unaware of his passing on Aug. 4.

The COVID-19 death toll has started soaring again as the delta variant tears through the nation's unvaccinated population and fills up hospitals with patients, many of whom are younger than during earlier phases of the pandemic.

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The U.S. is now averaging about 650 deaths a day, increasing more than 80 percent from two weeks ago and going past the 600 mark on Saturday for the first time in three months.

Data on the the age and demographics of victims during the delta surge is still limited, but hospitals in virus hotspots say they are clearly seeing more admissions and deaths among people under the age of 65.

Florida hospital officials are seeing an influx of young, healthy adults filling their wards across the state, many requiring oxygen. In the past week in Florida, 36% of the deaths occurred in the under-65 population, compared with 17% in the same week last year when the state was experiencing a similar COVID surge. Florida is the national leader in coronavirus deaths, averaging more than 150 a day in the past week.

The younger patients mark a shift from the elderly and frail, many living in nursing homes, who succumbed to the virus a year ago before states made seniors a priority to get inoculated first. More than 90 percent of seniors have had at least one shot, compared to about 70 percent for Americans under 65.

At a predominantly Black church in Jacksonville with a hipster vibe, contemporary music, and a strong social media presence reflective of its young, energetic congregation, six members died over 10 days starting in late July. All were under the age of 35.

They were "all healthy, all unvaccinated," laments Pastor George Davis of Impact Church, who knew each one personally and has struggled with his own grief at the funerals. He's held two vaccination events for his congregation of about 6,000 where over 1,000 received shots.

Among the church members who died were a 24-year-old man Davis watched grow up since he was a toddler, and a woman from his worship team who celebrated her first wedding anniversary only weeks before she died. Her husband recovered.

Davis said the young woman was "just the picture of health, vibrant."

"There is a sense among younger people that they are somehow invincible," said Dr. Leana Wen, public health professor at George Washington University and former Baltimore Health Commissioner. "Unfortunately, though, some people who are hospitalized are going to die and that's going to mean some people who are younger; and as you've seen these are people in some cases who are leaving behind young children."

Among those parents are Kristen McMullen, who had decorated her baby's room with rainbows and suns, fully embracing her favorite season, summer — after which she would name her first child.

The 30-year-old woman fell ill three weeks before her due date and was admitted to a hospital in Melbourne, Florida, with COVID-19.

After an emergency cesarean section, McMullen was able to hold her baby girl for a few moments before being rushed off to an intensive care unit, where she later died.

"She would say that she was scared and that she didn't want to die," her aunt Melissa Syverson said, struggling to talk in between sobs. "She was fighting to get back to the baby."

McMullen's aunt said her family did not want to disclose whether McMullen was vaccinated.

Carlos Reyes was skeptical of the vaccine and so was his wife, Maria — until they and their two teenage children had to be rushed to the hospital in Oakland.

Their 14-year-old son, Sergio, did not need to stay after getting oxygen while 19-year-old Emma joined her parents in the intensive care unit. She was released after a few days, and the parents were put on ventilators.

Their 32-year-old daughter who has an auto-immune disease was the only one vaccinated when they fell ill.

"We were all just a little hesitant at the beginning," said the couple's oldest daughter, Jasmine Rivas Fierro, 34.

Their four children didn't want to break their mother's heart by telling her while she was still in intensive care that Carlos had died a day after their 22nd anniversary.

"She loved him so much," Rivas Fierro said of her mother, who is still in the hospital.

The family is telling people that they must be fully vaccinated to attend Carlos' funeral next week.

Cindy Dawkins also left behind four children, ranging in age from 12 to 24. She died Aug. 7, less than a week after she celebrated her 50th birthday with her family at Universal Studios in Orlando. She had a cough and seemed tired that day before her condition quickly deteriorated and she had to be rushed to

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the hospital in an ambulance.

Her family believes she contracted the virus at her waitressing job at a bistro in their hometown of Boynton Beach, Fla., where her coworkers have also tested positive. She was healthy and had been getting tested regularly but was still mulling over getting the vaccine.

"Maybe the vaccine would have helped fight it, but I don't know if it would have completely stopped it," her 20-year-old son, Tre Burrows, said.

As the family wrestles with grief and sorts out guardianship of Dawkins' youngest children, they are also saddened by what could have been. Dawkins came to the U.S. from the Bahamas when she was in high school and her children say she was close to becoming an American citizen, an event the family planned to celebrate with a trip over Thanksgiving.

"Everything was finally going right," her daughter Jenny Burrows said. "And then this happened."

This story has been updated to correct that the hospital where McMullen died is in Melbourne, Florida, not West Melbourne.

Dazio reported from Los Angeles.

Longest war: Were America's decades in Afghanistan worth it?

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

Here's what 19-year-old Lance Cpl. William Bee felt flying into southern Afghanistan on Christmas Day 2001: purely lucky. The U.S. was hitting back at the al-Qaida plotters who had brought down the World Trade Center, and Bee found himself among the first Marines on the ground.

"Excitement," Bee says these days, of the teenage Bee's thoughts then. "To be the dudes that got to open it up first."

In the decade that followed, three more deployments in America's longest war scoured away that lucky feeling.

For Bee, it came down to a night in 2008 in Afghanistan's Helmand province. By then a sergeant, Bee held the hand of an American sniper who had just been shot in the head, as a medic sliced open the man's throat for an airway.

"After that it was like, you know what — 'F—k these people,'" Bee recounted, of what drove him by his fourth and final Afghan deployment. "I just want to bring my guys back. That's all I care about. I want to bring them home."

As President Joe Biden ends the U.S. combat role in Afghanistan this month, Americans and Afghans are questioning whether the war was worth the cost: more than 3,000 American and other NATO lives lost, tens of thousands of Afghans dead, trillions of dollars of U.S. debt that generations of Americans will pay for, and an Afghanistan that in a stunning week of fighting appears at imminent threat of falling back under Taliban rule, just as Americans found it nearly 20 years ago.

For Biden, for Bee and for some of the American principals in the U.S. and NATO war in Afghanistan, the answer to whether it was worth the cost often comes down to parsing.

There were the first years of the war, when Americans broke up Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida in Afghanistan and routed the Taliban government that had hosted the terrorist network.

That succeeded.

The proof is clear, says Douglas Lute, White House czar for the war during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, and a retired lieutenant general: Al-Qaida hasn't been able to mount a major attack on the West since 2005.

"We have decimated al-Qaida in that region, in Afghanistan and Pakistan," Lute says.

But after that came the grinding second phase of the war. U.S. fears of a Taliban rebound whenever Americans eventually pulled out meant that service members such as Bee kept getting sent back in, racking up more close calls, injuries and dead comrades.

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Lute and some others argue that what the second half of the war bought was time — a grace period for Afghanistan's government, security forces and civil society to try to build enough strength to survive on their own.

Quality of life in some ways did improve, modernizing under the Western occupation, even as the millions of dollars the U.S. poured into Afghanistan fed corruption. Infant mortality rates fell by half. In 2005, fewer than 1 in 4 Afghans had access to electricity. By 2019, nearly all did.

The second half of the war allowed Afghan women, in particular, opportunities entirely denied them under the fundamentalist Taliban, so that more than 1 in 3 teenage girls — their whole lives spent under the protection of Western forces — today can read and write.

But it's that longest, second phase of the war that looks on the verge of complete failure now.

The U.S. war left the Taliban undefeated and failed to secure a political settlement. Taliban forces this past week have swept across two-thirds of the country and captured provincial capitals, on the path of victory before U.S. combat forces even complete their pullout. On many fronts, the Taliban are rolling over Afghan security forces that U.S. and NATO forces spent two decades working to build.

This swift advance sets up a last stand in Kabul, where most Afghans live. It threatens to clamp the country under the Taliban's strict interpretation of religious law, erasing much of the gains.

"There's no 'mission accomplished,'" Biden snapped last month, batting down a question from a reporter.

Biden quickly corrected himself, evoking the victories of the first few years of the war. "The mission was accomplished in that we ... got Osama bin Laden, and terrorism is not emanating from that part of the world," he added.

Richard Boucher, assistant secretary of state for Central Asia during much of the war's first decade, says the criticism was largely not of the conflict itself but because it went on so long.

"It was the expansion of war aims, to try to create a government that was capable of stopping any future attacks," Boucher said.

America expended the most lives, and dollars, on the most inconclusive years of the war.

The strain of fighting two post-9/11 wars at once with an all-volunteer military meant that more than half of the 2.8 million American servicemen and women who deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq served two or more times, according to the Costs of War project at Brown University.

The repeated deployments contributed to disability rates in those veterans that are more than double that of Vietnam veterans, says Linda Bilmes, a senior lecturer in public policy at Harvard University.

Bilmes calculates the U.S. will spend more than \$2 trillion just caring for and supporting Afghanistan and Iraq veterans as they age, with costs peaking 30 years to 40 years from now.

That's on top of \$1 trillion in Pentagon and State Department costs in Afghanistan since 2001. Because the U.S. borrowed rather than raised taxes to pay for the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, interest payments are estimated to cost succeeding generations of Americans trillions of dollars more still.

Annual combat deaths peaked around the time of the war's midpoint, as Obama tried a final surge of forces to defeat the Taliban. In all, 2,448 American troops, 1,144 service members from NATO and other allied countries, more than 47,000 Afghan civilians and at least 66,000 Afghan military and police died, according to the Pentagon and to the Costs of War project.

All the while, a succession of U.S. commanders tried new strategies, acronyms and slogans in fighting a Taliban insurgency.

Kandahar's airstrip, where Bee was quickly put to work digging a foxhole for himself over Christmas 2001, grew into a post for tens of thousands of NATO troops, complete with Popeyes and Burger Kings and a hockey rink.

Over the years, fighting forces such as Bee's 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit moved into hot spots to fight the Taliban and build ties with local leaders, often only to see gains lost when their unit rotated out again. In Helmand province, which proved the turning point for Bee in 2008, hundreds of U.S. and other NATO forces died fighting that way. Taliban fighters recaptured the province on Friday.

Bee's Afghanistan tours finally ended in 2010, when an improvised explosive device exploded 4 feet from

him, killing two fellow service members who had been standing with him. It was Bee's third head injury, and for a time left him unable to walk a block without falling down.

Was it worth it?

"The people whose lives we affected, I personally think we did them better, that they're better off for it," answered Bee, who now works for a company that provides autonomous robots for Marine training at North Carolina's Camp Lejeune and is co-writing a book about his time in Afghanistan.

"But I also wouldn't trade a handful of Afghan villages for one Marine," he added.

Ask the same question in Afghanistan, though, and you get different answers.

Some Afghans — asked that question before the Taliban's stunning sweep last week — respond that it's more than time for Americans to let Afghans handle their own affairs.

But one 21-year-old woman, Shogufa, says American troops' two decades on the ground meant all the difference for her.

The Associated Press is using her first name only, given fears of Taliban retribution against women who violate their strict codes.

When still in her infancy, she was pledged to marry a much older cousin in the countryside to pay off a loan. She grew up in a family, and society, where few women could read or write.

But as she grew up, Shogufa came across a Western nonprofit that had come to Kabul to promote health and leadership for Afghan girls. It was one of a host of such development groups that came to Afghanistan during the U.S.-led war.

Shogufa thrived. She deflected her family's moves to marry her off to her cousin. She got a job and is pursuing a bachelor's degree in business administration.

For Shogufa today, the gratitude for what she's gained is shadowed by her fears of all that she stands to lose.

Her message to Americans, as they left and the Taliban closed in on Kabul? "Thank you for everything you have done in Afghanistan," she said, in good but imperfect English. "The other thing was to request that they stay with us."

Knickmeyer covered the 2001 Afghan Northern Alliance and U.S. air campaign that routed the Taliban, and the first weeks of the U.S. military presence at Kandahar in 2002.

At least 304 dead, 1,800 hurt as powerful quake slams Haiti

By EVENS SANON and TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — A powerful magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck southwestern Haiti on Saturday, killing at least 304 people and injuring at least 1,800 others as buildings tumbled into rubble. Prime Minister Ariel Henry said he was rushing aid to areas where towns were destroyed and hospitals overwhelmed with incoming patients.

The epicenter of the quake was about 125 kilometers (78 miles) west of the capital of Port-au-Prince, the U.S. Geological Survey said, and widespread damage was reported in the hemisphere's poorest nations as a tropical storm also bore down.

Haiti's civil protection agency said on Twitter that the death toll stood at 304, most in the country's south. Rescue workers and bystanders were able to pull many people to safety from the rubble. The agency said injured people were still being delivered to hospitals.

Henry declared a one-month state of emergency for the whole country and said he would not ask for international help until the extent of the damages was known. He said some towns were almost completely razed and the government had people in the coastal town of Les Cayes to help plan and coordinate the response.

"The most important thing is to recover as many survivors as possible under the rubble," said Henry. "We have learned that the local hospitals, in particular that of Les Cayes, are overwhelmed with wounded, fractured people."

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He said the International Red Cross and hospitals in unaffected areas were helping to care for the injured, and appealed to Haitians for unity.

"The needs are enormous. We must take care of the injured and fractured, but also provide food, aid, temporary shelter and psychological support," he said.

Later, as he boarded a plane bound for Les Cayes, Henry said he wanted "structured solidarity" to ensure the response was coordinated to avoid the confusion that followed the devastating 2010 earthquake, when aid was slow to reach residents after as many as 300,000 were killed.

U.S. President Joe Biden authorized an immediate response and named USAID Administrator Samantha Power as the senior official coordinating the U.S effort to help Haiti. USAID will help to assess damage and assist in rebuilding, said Biden, who called the United States a "close and enduring friend to the people of Haiti."

A growing number of countries offered help, including Argentina and Chile, which said it was preparing to send humanitarian aid. "Once again, Haiti has been hit by adversity," Chilean President Sebastian Piñera said.

Among those killed in the earthquake was Gabriel Fortuné, a longtime lawmaker and former mayor of Les Cayes. He died along with several others when his hotel, Le Manguier, collapsed, the Haitian newspaper Le Nouvelliste reported.

Philippe Boutin, 37, who lives in Puerto Rico but visits his family annually in Les Cayes, said his mother was saying morning prayers when the shaking began, but was able to leave the house.

The earthquake, he said, coincided with the festivities to celebrate the town's patron saint, adding that the hotel likely was full and the small town had more people than usual.

"We still don't know how many people are under the rubble," he said.

On the tiny island of Ile-a-Vache, about 6.5 miles (10.5 kilometers) from Les Cayes, the quake damaged a seaside resort popular with Haitian officials, business leaders, diplomats and humanitarian workers. Fernand Sajous, owner of the Abaka Bay Resort, said by telephone that nine of the hotel's 30 rooms collapsed, but he said they were vacant at the time and no one was injured.

"They disappeared — just like that," Sajous said.

People in Les Cayes tried to pull guests from the rubble of a collapsed hotel, but as the sun set, they had only been able to recover the body of a 7-year-old girl whose home was behind the facility.

"I have eight kids, and I was looking for the last one," Jean-Claude Daniel said through tears. "I will never see her again alive. The earthquake destroyed my life. It took a child away from me."

The reports of overwhelmed hospitals come as Haiti struggles with the pandemic and a lack of resources to deal with it. Just last month, the country of 11 million people received its first batch of U.S.-donated coronavirus vaccines, via a United Nations program for low-income countries.

Richard Hervé Fourcand, a former Haitian senator, rented a private plane to move injured people from Les Cayes to Port-au-Prince for medical assistance. He told The Associated Press that Les Cayes' hospital was at capacity.

The earthquake also struck just over a month after President Jovenel Moïse was killed, sending the country into political chaos. His widow, Martine Moïse, posted a message on Twitter calling for unity among Haitians: "Let's put our shoulders together to bring solidarity."

Rescue efforts were hampered by a landslide triggered by the quake that blocked a major road connecting the hard-hit towns of Jeremie and Les Cayes, according to Haiti's civil protection agency.

Agency director Jerry Chandler told reporters that a partial count of structural damage included at least 860 destroyed homes and more than 700 damaged. Hospitals, schools, offices and churches were also affected.

The National Hurricane Center has forecast that Tropical Storm Grace will reach Haiti late Monday or early Tuesday.

"This is likely to make matters worse since the country is on the verge of suffering the effects of two disasters in quick succession, a magnitude 7 earthquake and a looming storm," Chandler said.

Humanitarian workers said gang activity in the seaside district of Martissant, just west of the Haitian

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capital, also was complicating relief efforts.

"Nobody can travel through the area," Ndiaga Seck, a UNICEF spokesman in Port-au-Prince, said by phone. "We can only fly over or take another route."

Seck said information about deaths and damage was slow coming to Port-au-Prince because of spotty internet service, but UNICEF planned to send medical supplies to two hospitals in the south, in Les Cayes and Jeremie.

People in Port-au-Prince felt the tremor and many rushed into the streets in fear, although there did not appear to be damage there.

Naomi Verneus, a 34-year-old resident of Port-au-Prince, said she was jolted awake by the earthquake and that her bed was shaking.

"I woke up and didn't have time to put my shoes on. We lived the 2010 earthquake and all I could do was run. I later remembered my two kids and my mother were still inside. My neighbor went in and told them to get out. We ran to the street," Verneus said.

Paul Caruso, a geophysicist with the USGS, said aftershocks likely would continue for weeks or months, with the largest so far registering magnitude 5.2.

The impoverished country, where many live in tenuous circumstances, is vulnerable to earthquakes and hurricanes. It was struck by a magnitude 5.9 earthquake in 2018 that killed more than a dozen people, and a vastly larger magnitude 7.1 quake that damaged much of the capital in 2010 and killed an estimated 300,000 people.

By Saturday night, the island had experienced four aftershocks stronger than 5.0 and nine above 4.0.

Claude Prepetit, a Haitian civil engineer and geologist, warned of the danger from cracked structures.

"More or less intensive aftershocks are to be expected for a month," he said, cautioning that some buildings, "badly damaged during the earthquake, can collapse during aftershocks."

Associated Press writer Tammy Webber reported from Fenton, Michigan. AP writers Josh Boak in Washington, Trenton Daniel in New York and Regina Garcia Cano in Mexico City contributed to this report.

Crews battle largest US wildfire, threats grow across West

By EUGENE GARCIA and DAISY NGUYEN Associated Press

QUINCY, Calif. (AP) — Johnnie Brookwood had never heard of a road named Dixie when a wildfire began a month ago in the forestlands of Northern California.

Within three weeks, it exploded into the largest wildfire burning in the U.S., destroying more than 1,000 homes and businesses including a lodge in the gold rush-era town of Greenville where she was renting a room for \$650 per month.

"At first (the fire) didn't affect us at all, it was off in some place called Dixie, I didn't even know what it means," Brookwood, 76, said Saturday. "Then it was 'Oh no we have to go too?' Surely Greenville won't burn, but then it did and now all we can see are ashes."

Firefighters faced "another critical day" as thunderstorms pushed flames closer to two towns not far from where the Dixie Fire destroyed much of Greenville last week.

The thunderstorms, which began Friday, didn't produce much rain but whipped up wind and created lightning strikes, forcing crews to focus on using bulldozers to build lines and keep the blaze from reaching Westwood, a town of about 1,700 people. Westwood was placed under evacuation orders Aug. 5.

Wind gusts of up to 50 mph (80 kph) also pushed the fire closer to Janesville, a town of about 1,500 people, east of Greenville, said Jake Cagle, the operations chief at the east zone of the fire.

"Very tough day in there yesterday in the afternoon and the night (crew) picked up the pieces and tried to secure the edge the best they could with the resources they had," he said in a briefing Saturday.

With a similar forecast of thunderstorms Saturday, firefighters faced "another critical day, another challenging day," Cagle said.

The fire was among more than 100 large wildfires burning in more than a dozen states in the West seared

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by drought and hot, bone-dry weather that turned forests, brushlands, meadows and pastures into tinder. The U.S. Forest Service said Friday it's operating in crisis mode, fully deploying firefighters and maxing out its support system.

The roughly 21,000 federal firefighters working on the ground is more than double the number of firefighters sent to contain forest fires at this time a year ago, said Anthony Scardina, a deputy forester for the agency's Pacific Southwest region.

More than 6,000 firefighters alone were battling the Dixie Fire, which has ravaged nearly 845 square miles (2,100 square kilometers) — an area the size of Tokyo — and was 31% contained.

"The size is unimaginable, its duration and its impact on these people, all of us, including me, is unbelievable," Brookwood said while staying in her third evacuation center.

The cause of the fire has not been determined. Pacific Gas and Electric has said the fire may have been started when a tree fell on its power line.

There also was a danger of new fires erupting because of unstable weather conditions, including extreme heat across the northern half of the West and a chance of thunderstorms that could bring lightning to Northern California, Oregon and Nevada, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

A fast-moving fire broke out Saturday afternoon east of Salt Lake City, shutting down Interstate 80 and prompting the evacuation of Summit Park, a mountain community of 6,600 people. Fire officials said the blaze was burning about 3 square miles (8 square kilometers) and threatening thousands of homes and power lines.

In southeastern Montana, firefighters were gaining ground on a pair of fires that chewed through vast rangelands and at one point threatened the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation.

The fires were caused by heat from coal seams, the deposits of coal found in the ground in the area, said Peggy Miller, a spokeswoman for the fires.

Mandatory evacuation for the tribal headquarters town of Lame Deer remained in place due to poor air quality, she added.

Smoke also drove air pollution levels to unhealthy or very unhealthy levels in parts of Northern California, Oregon and Idaho, according to the U.S. Air Quality Index.

Hot, dry weather with strong afternoon winds also propelled several fires in Washington state, and similar weather was expected into the weekend, fire officials said.

In southeastern Oregon, two new wildfires started by lightning Thursday near the California border spread rapidly through juniper trees, sagebrush and evergreen trees.

The Patton Meadow Fire about 14 miles (23 kilometers) west of Lakeview, near the California border, exploded to 11 square miles (28 square kilometers) in less than 24 hours in a landscape sucked dry by extreme drought. It was 10% contained.

Triple-digit temperatures and bone-dry conditions in Oregon could increase fire risks through the weekend.

Climate change has made the U.S. West warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make the weather more extreme and wildfires more destructive, according to scientists.

Dozens of fires also are burning in western Canada and in Europe, including Greece, where a massive wildfire has decimated forests and torched homes.

This story was corrected to show the Dixie Fire was likely caused by a tree falling onto a power line, according to PG&E, not by lightning.

Nguyen reported from Oakland, California. Matthew Brown in Billings, Montana, Olga R. Rodriguez in San Francisco and Gillian Flaccus in Portland, Oregon, contributed to this report.

Police: School shooting victim went to aid boy being bullied

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN and PAUL DAVENPORT Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — It's only a few days into the new school year, but New Mexico's largest

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district is reeling from a shooting that left one student dead and another in custody after, according to police, the victim tried to protect another boy who was being bullied.

The gunfire at Washington Middle School during the lunch hour Friday marked the second shooting in Albuquerque in less than 24 hours. With the city on pace to shatter its homicide record this year, top state officials said they were heartbroken by what they described as a scourge.

"These tragedies should never occur. That they do tells us there is more work to be done," Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said.

The boy who was killed, identified by police on Saturday as 13-year-old Bennie Hargrove, was a hero, Police Chief Harold Medina said Friday night in a brief statement.

"He stood up for a friend and tried to deescalate a violent confrontation between classmates," Medina said. He said the incident was "a tragedy that has shaken our community."

A probable-cause statement released Saturday said the 13 year-old boy was charged with one count each of open murder and unlawfully carrying a deadly weapon on school premises. The Associated Press does not generally identify juvenile crime suspects.

A witness, a third 13-year-old boy, told detectives after the shooting that the shooting occurred after Hargrove approached the suspect to tell him to stop bullying and punching a smaller boy.

The witness said the suspect held a gun behind his leg so Hargrove couldn't see it when he approached and the suspect then chambered a round and shot at Hargrove multiple times, according to the probable-cause statement.

A police officer assigned to the school heard the shooting, ran over to the boys and handcuffed the suspect to a fence before radioing for help and tending to the injured boy until medical personnel arrived, the statement said.

Police later learned that the suspect's father right before the shooting had discovered that his gun was missing and went to the school, where he arrived to see his son in handcuffs, the statement said.

The 13-year-old witness also told police that the suspect had been a nice boy but recently picked on other boys and acted as if he was a gang member, the statement said.

It wasn't immediately known whether the suspect has a lawyer who could speak on his behalf.

Friday marked the third day of classes for Albuquerque's public school district. While students won't return until Tuesday, Superintendent Scott Elder said the staff will be making preparations to ensure students have access to counseling and any other support services they need.

"Of course it's extremely difficult," he said of something like this happening so early in the school year. "There's a lot of pressure in the community. People are nervous. It was a terrible incident that happened between two people. It should have never happened. ... This shouldn't happen in the community. It certainly shouldn't happen at a school."

Police said more officers will be present when students return, hoping to provide a sense of security and in case students have any more information about the shooting they want to share.

Gunfire also rang out Thursday night at a sports bar and restaurant near a busy Albuquerque shopping district. Police said one person was killed and three were injured after someone pulled out a gun during a fight.

No arrests have been made in that case. Investigators were reviewing surveillance video and interviewing witnesses.

Authorities identified the man who was killed as Lawrence Anzures, a 30-year old boxer from Albuquerque.

A makeshift memorial of flowers and candles grew Friday outside the restaurant, providing more evidence of the frustration that families having been feeling.

The shootings come as Mayor Tim Keller convened his latest session with other officials to talk about curbing violence and crime in the city. His administration is hoping to come up with recommendations for improving the criminal justice system and addressing the problem of repeat offenders. The mayor's office noted that for most Albuquerque homicides this year, more than 45% of charged offenders and nearly 60% of suspects have criminal records.

"For low-level offenders, we need to bolster diversion programs and real access to resources to change

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their lives," Keller said in a statement. "But for violent offenders, we have to stop the revolving door."

Davenport reported from Phoenix.

Biden calls school chiefs, lauds defiance of anti-mask rules

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — President Joe Biden called school district superintendents in Florida and Arizona to praise them for doing "the right thing" after their respective boards implemented mask requirements in defiance of their Republican governors amid growing COVID-19 infections.

The White House said in a Saturday statement that the Democratic president had spoken with interim Broward Superintendent Vickie Cartwright in Florida and Phoenix Union High School District Superintendent Chad Gestson in Arizona "to thank them for their leadership and discuss their shared commitment to getting all students back in safe, full-time in-person learning this school year."

"The President commended their leadership and courage to do the right thing for the health and well-being of their students, teachers, and schools," the statement said.

Biden's phone calls of support come as tensions build over whether local school districts can and should require face coverings for students and school staff as in-person classes resume. In Texas, several school districts — along with the state's most populous county — won temporary legal victories Friday in seeking to override Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's ban on mask mandates, which they argued is making the COVID-19 pandemic worse.

Similar lawsuits by school districts in other states have also been filed.

Clashes over mandatory mask-wearing have already occurred. Officials at a suburban Chicago high school on Friday sent a freshman student home for refusing to put on a face covering, a decision her mother contends violates her 14-year-old daughter's rights.

Sheri Urlacher said her daughter was sent home from Fremd High School in Palatine after officials at the door of the school handed her a mask and asked her to put it on. She told the Chicago Tribune she was called after her daughter "politely declined" to pull the mask up over her mouth and nose. While the girl was back in school wearing a mask later in the day, Urlacher said she was bothered by the school's initial decision to send her daughter home.

"She's OK, but she knows she has the right to make decisions about her own body, and it's not the right of the school and government," she said.

The incident comes days after Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, a Democrat, ordered face coverings for all school children from preschool through 12th grade in the hopes of slowing the spread of a virulent delta variant of the virus, which has surged in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, Biden's call to the leader of the Broward County schools in Florida escalated the president's partisan battle with Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis over how his state's schools should operate as the COVID-19 pandemic worsens in the state. The Biden administration has promised Broward federal money if Florida's governor carries out a threat to withhold some state funds from any school district that imposes a mask mandate.

Using a law passed this year, DeSantis has barred schools and other local governments from imposing mask mandates. The governor has said he believes masks are not needed for children, who are less likely than adults to catch the coronavirus, and that they interfere with learning. He also has said it should be up to parents to determine if their child wears a mask. The state's board of education recently said students forced to wear masks over their parents' objections could be eligible for a voucher that would pay for their transfer to a private school.

Broward school officials did not respond to an email Saturday seeking comment. Earlier this week, its school board voted 8-1 to impose the mask mandate over DeSantis' objection.

DeSantis is running for reelection next year and is considering a 2024 run against Biden, with the two sniping at each other in recent weeks. His press office also did not respond to a call and email Saturday seeking comment.

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Meanwhile, Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey in June signed into law budget legislation enacted by the Republican-led Legislature to prohibit school districts from requiring mask-wearing.

Phoenix Union is one of Arizona's largest school districts with about 28,000 students and 4,000 employees. After its governing board decided to enforce indoor mask-wearing when classes resumed Aug. 2, six elementary school districts that feed students to the high school districts followed its lead.

The Arizona legislation that includes the prohibition on mask-wearing mandates by districts takes effect Sept. 29. It includes a clause making it retroactive to July 1 but Phoenix Union contends it isn't binding yet and that's being argued in court.

Arizona on Saturday reported more than 3,000 additional COVID-19 cases for the second straight day. The state last reported that many additional cases six months ago as the winter surge wound down.

Associated Press Writer Paul Davenport in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Taliban capture key northern city, approach Afghan capital

By AHMAD SEIR, TAMEEM AKHGAR, RAHIM FAIEZ and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Taliban on Saturday captured a large, heavily defended city in northern Afghanistan in a major setback for the government, and were approaching the capital of Kabul, less than three weeks before the U.S. hopes to complete its troop withdrawal.

The fall of Mazar-e-Sharif, the country's fourth largest city, which Afghan forces and two powerful former warlords had pledged to defend, hands the insurgents control over all of northern Afghanistan, confining the Western-backed government to the center and east.

Abas Ebrahimzada, a lawmaker from the Balkh province where the city is located, said the national army surrendered first, which prompted pro-government militias and other forces to lose morale and give up in the face of a Taliban onslaught launched earlier Saturday.

Ebrahimzada said Abdul Rashid Dostum and Ata Mohammad Noor, former warlords who command thousands of fighters, had fled the province and their whereabouts were unknown.

Noor said in a Facebook post that his defeat in Mazar-e-Sharif was orchestrated and blamed the government forces, saying they handed their weapons and equipment to the Taliban. He did not say who was behind the conspiracy, nor offer details, but said he and Dostum "are in a safe place now"

The Taliban have made major advances in recent days, including capturing Herat and Kandahar, the country's second- and third-largest cities. They now control about 24 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, leaving the Western-backed government with a smattering of provinces in the center and east, as well as the capital, Kabul.

On Saturday, the Taliban captured all of Logar province, just south of Kabul, and detained local officials, said Hoda Ahmadi, a lawmaker from the province. She said the Taliban have reached the Char Asyab district, just 11 kilometers (7 miles) south of the capital.

Later, the insurgents took over Mihterlam, the capital of Laghman province, northeast of Kabul, without a fight, according to Zefon Safi, a lawmaker from the province.

On Saturday, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani delivered a televised speech, his first public appearance since the recent Taliban gains. He vowed not to give up the "achievements" of the 20 years since the U.S. toppled the Taliban after the 9/11 attacks.

The U.S. has continued holding peace talks between the government and the Taliban in Qatar this week, and the international community has warned that a Taliban government brought about by force would be shunned. But the insurgents appear to have little interest in making concessions as they rack up victories on the battlefield.

"We have started consultations, inside the government with elders and political leaders, representatives of different levels of the community as well as our international allies," Ghani said. "Soon the results will be shared with you," he added, without elaborating further.

Hours later, his forces suffered one of the biggest setbacks since the Taliban offensive began.

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Mazar-e-Sharif, home to a famous blue-tiled Muslim shrine, was a stronghold of the Northern Alliance, ethnic militias who helped the U.S. topple the Taliban in 2001.

In 1997, as many as 2,000 Taliban fighters were captured and killed by forces loyal to Mohammed Mohaqiq, a Shiite Hazara leader, and his ethnic Uzbek allies. The following year, the Taliban returned and killed thousands of Hazaras in Mazar-e-Sharif in a revenge attack.

Several makeshift camps had sprung up around Mazar-e-Sharif where mostly ethnic Hazaras had taken shelter after fleeing their homes in outlying areas. They said the Taliban had detained relatives who sought to leave their districts and in some cases burned schools.

Tens of thousands of Afghans have fled their homes, with many fearing a return to the Taliban's oppressive rule. The group had previously governed Afghanistan under a harsh version of Islamic law in which women were forbidden to work or attend school, and could not leave their homes without a male relative accompanying them.

Salima Mazari, one of the few female district governors in the country, expressed fears about a Taliban takeover earlier Saturday in an interview from Mazar-e-Sharif, before it fell.

"There will be no place for women," said Mazari, who governs a district of 36,000 people near the northern city. "In the provinces controlled by the Taliban, no women exist there anymore, not even in the cities. They are all imprisoned in their homes."

The Taliban appointed hard-line cleric Mujeeb Rahman Ansari as women's affairs minister in Herat, according to a prominent women's activist from the city who did not want to be identified because she fears for her safety. She described Ansari as being "strongly against women's rights." He rose to prominence about 2015 and became infamous for dozens of billboards he installed in Herat that told women to wear Islamic hijab and demonized those who would promote women's rights.

The Taliban also captured Paktika province and small Kunar province, both bordering Pakistan, as well as Faryab province in the north and the central province of Daykundi, lawmakers from those areas said Saturday.

Sayed Hussan Gerdezi, a lawmaker from Paktia province, said the Taliban seized most of its local capital, Gardez, but battles with government forces were still underway. The Taliban said they controlled the city.

The withdrawal of foreign troops and the swift collapse of Afghanistan's own forces — despite hundreds of billions of dollars in U.S. aid over the years — has raised fears the Taliban could return to power or that the country could be shattered by factional fighting, as it was after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. It's also prompted many American and Afghan veterans of the conflict to question whether two decades of blood and treasure was worth it.

Afghans have been streaming into Kabul's international airport in recent days, desperate to fly out, even as more American troops have arrived to help partially evacuate the U.S. Embassy.

U.S. President Joe Biden has authorized an additional 1,000 U.S. troops for deployment to Afghanistan, according to a statement from a defense official. That raises to roughly 5,000 the number of U.S. troops to ensure what Biden calls an "orderly and safe drawdown" of American and allied personnel. U.S. troops will also help in the evacuation of Afghans who worked with the military during the nearly two-decade war.

The first Marines arrived Friday. The rest are expected by Sunday, and their deployment has raised questions about whether the administration will meet its Aug. 31 withdrawal deadline.

The U.S. Air Force has carried out several airstrikes to aid its Afghan allies on the ground but they appear to have done little to stem the Taliban's advance. A B-52 bomber and other warplanes traversed the country's airspace Saturday, flight-tracking data showed.

The U.S. invaded shortly after the Sept. 11 attacks, which al-Qaida planned and carried out while being sheltered by Taliban. After rapidly ousting the Taliban, the U.S. shifted toward nation-building, hoping to create a modern Afghan state after decades of war and unrest.

Earlier this year, Biden announced a timeline for the withdrawal of all U.S. troops by the end of August. His predecessor, President Donald Trump, had reached an agreement with the Taliban to pave the way for a U.S. pullout.

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Biden's announcement set the latest offensive in motion. The Taliban, who have long controlled large parts of the Afghan countryside, moved quickly to seize provincial capitals, border crossings and other key infrastructure.

"The security situation in the city is getting worse," said Kawa Basharat, a resident in Mazar-e-Sharif, hours before the city fell. "I want peace and stability; the fighting should be stopped."

Rahim and Akhgar reported from Istanbul and Krauss reported from Jerusalem. Associated Press writers Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Kathy Gannon in Guelph, Canada; and Robert Burns and Josh Boak in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

The Latest: Biden sending 1,000 more troops to Afghanistan

By The Associated Press undefined

The Latest developments on Afghanistan, where a weeklong Taliban offensive is now approaching the outskirts of the capital, Kabul, after the insurgents captured most of the north, west and south of the country, just weeks ahead of the final pullout of all U.S. and NATO troops:

WASHINGTON — A defense official says President Joe Biden has authorized an additional 1,000 U.S. troops for deployment to Afghanistan.

That raises to roughly 5,000 the number of U.S. troops to ensure what Biden calls an "orderly and safe drawdown" of American and allied personnel. U.S. troops will also help evacuate Afghans who worked with the military during the nearly two-decade war.

The Pentagon said earlier that 3,000 troops are being sent to Kabul to join the nearly 1,000 already there. Biden's statement on Saturday didn't explain the breakdown of the 5,000 troops he said had been deployed.

But a defense official tells The Associated Press that the president has approved Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's recommendation that the lead battalion of the 82nd Airborne Brigade Combat Team assist in the State Department's drawdown.

The situation in Afghanistan has worsened in recent days with the Afghan government losing control of many parts of the country.

The statement also says Biden has directed Secretary of State Antony Blinken to support Afghan President Asraf Ghani and engage with regional leaders in the pursuit of a political settlement with the Taliban.

The administration also conveyed to Taliban representatives in Qatar, where the insurgents maintain a political office, that any actions in Afghanistan that harm U.S. personnel will be met by a "swift and strong" military response.

-- Robert Burns and Josh Boak in Washington;

MORE ON THE CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN:

- Taliban approach Kabul's outskirts, attack north Afghan city
- As Taliban tighten their grip, Kabul airport only way out
- Longest war: Were America's decades in Afghanistan worth it?
- More Marines arrive in Kabul to aid urgent embassy airlift
- Costs of the Afghanistan war, in lives and dollars

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban have appointed a hard-line cleric as the women's affairs minister in Herat, a province they captured earlier in the week in their blitz across Afghanistan.

The development indicates Taliban intentions to install Islamic rule, or Sharia, in the part of Afghanistan under their control. The Taliban offensive has been unstoppable and they are now approaching the

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country's capital, Kabul.

A prominent women's activist told The Associated Press that the insurgents named Mujeeb Rahman Ansari to the post on Saturday. The activist, who declined to be identified by her name for fear for her safety, spoke from Kabul.

She described Ansari as an extremist cleric who had some following in western Herat.

She said he was "strongly against women's rights" after rising to prominence around 2015. The activist says Ansari became infamous for the dozens of billboards he installed all over Herat province demonizing those who would promote women's rights. His billboards told women to wear the Islamic headscarf, or hijab.

—Kathy Gannon in Guelph, Canada;

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have held a secure video conference on Saturday morning with national security officials in response to the worsening situation in Afghanistan.

A White House official says they discussed efforts to reduce the number of U.S. civilians in Afghanistan, evacuate Afghans who worked with the U.S. government and the fast-moving changes on the ground. The official insisted on anonymity to discuss private conversations.

The discussions came as a fresh contingent of Marines arrived in the Afghan capital on Saturday as part of a 3,000-troop force intended to secure an airlift of U.S. Embassy personnel and Afghan allies as Taliban insurgents approach the outskirts of the capital.

The last-minute decision to re-insert thousands of U.S. troops into Afghanistan reflects the dire state of security and calls into question whether Biden will meet his Aug. 31 deadline for fully withdrawing combat forces.

—Joshua Boak in Washington;

PRAGUE — Czech Republic's Foreign Minister Jakub Kulhanek says he has decided to immediately evacuate Czech diplomats from the Czech Embassy in the capital of Afghanistan to Kabul's international airport.

Kulhanek says the decision was based on information from the allies and the Czech ambassador.

Czech leaders will meet later on Saturday to discuss what to do next due to the serious situation in Afghanistan where a Taliban offensive has now encircled Kabul.

BERLIN — The Green party's candidate to succeed Angela Merkel as chancellor in next month's election has accused Germany's government of abandoning Afghans who worked for the German army.

Annalena Baerbock said during a campaign event in Hannover on Saturday, that "many people in Afghanistan did everything they could to support the Bundeswehr mission as interpreters, by building infrastructure or as drivers."

"It's really disastrous that these people have been abandoned in recent days," she said, calling for those Afghan workers now fearing for their lives to be rescued.

Germany's foreign minister announced on Friday that his country is preparing charter flights to bring German diplomats and local staff out of Afghanistan.

ROME — Italy is preparing for the possible evacuation of its embassy employees as the Taliban continue its advance, pushing closer to the Afghan capital of Kabul.

"If it is necessary, we will quickly bring everyone to safety in Italy, with the important help of the Defense Ministry," Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio told Corriere della Sera in an interview published Saturday.

In that case, he said that funds that so far have been used to secure Afghan operations could be redirected to provide protection to Afghans who have worked with Italian military and civilian officials there.

Di Maio acknowledged the specter of increased migration ahead of the Taliban's advance, as well as "the risk of terrorist infiltration." He said the threat needed to be managed by working with other countries to control flows.

Italy formally withdrew its troops from Afghanistan in June.

Turkish flood deaths hit 57; dozens still missing

By ZEYNEP BILGINSOY Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — The death toll from severe floods and mudslides along Turkey's Black Sea coast has climbed to at least 57, the country's emergency and disaster agency said Saturday, as authorities disputed reports that dozens more people were missing.

Torrential rains that pounded the Black Sea provinces of Bartın, Kastamonu and Sinop on Wednesday caused flooding that demolished homes, severed at least five bridges, swept away cars and rendered numerous roads unpassable. Turkish disaster agency AFAD said 48 people were killed in Kastamonu, eight in Sinop and one in Bartın.

Eight people remained hospitalized, according to the agency.

Speaking late Saturday in Kastamonu, Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu said 15 of the dead had not been identified yet. He slammed opposition parties, social media users and media for claims that hundreds could be missing. He said a total of 77 cases of missing persons remained in Kastamonu and Sinop but emphasized that doesn't necessarily mean they were dead. He added the previous number of missing persons was 143, including duplicate names and some reached alive.

The Kastamonu provincial governor's office also said reports that there were 250 to 300 unidentified bodies were untrue. It did not specifically address how many people could be missing in the flooding.

Some residents in Kastamonu shared names and photos of missing people on social media since the floods began. The deputy chairman of Turkey's main opposition party, Engin Altay, said he was informed there were more than 300 people reported missing, adding the official numbers appeared to be lower. "The state needs to be transparent," he said from Kastamonu hours before the interior minister spoke.

In Sinop, floodwaters almost completely wiped out the village of Babacay, leaving toppled homes, damaged bridges and rubble in their wake. A five-story apartment building constructed on a riverbed was destroyed, along with numerous homes.

Rescue teams and sniffer dogs kept up their painstaking task of trying to locate the missing. AFAD said 5,820 personnel, 20 rescue dogs, 20 helicopters and two search planes were at the disaster spots.

About 2,250 people were evacuated across the region amid the floods, scores of them lifted from rooftops by helicopters. Many are being temporarily housed in student dormitories.

Climate scientists unequivocally say that climate change is leading to more extreme weather events as the world warms because of the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

Experts in Turkey, however, said human interference with rivers and improper construction also contributed to the massive flood damage.

Geologists say construction narrowed the river bed and the surrounding alluvial flood plain of the Ezine stream in Kastamonu's Bozkurt district, where the damage was most severe, from 400 meters (1,312 feet) wide to 15 meters (49 feet). Residential buildings were also built along the waterfront.

During severe rains, the constricted stream can only overflow. Videos posted by residents showed water rushing downstream in Bozkurt as buildings and roads flooded. One geologist, Ramazan Demirtas, explained the river bed narrowing on Twitter and said humans were to blame for this week's disaster.

Across the Black Sea, days of heavy rain also produced flooding in broad areas of southern Russia. Authorities in the Krasnodar region said Saturday that more than 1,400 houses flooded following storms that swept the area this week. About 108,000 residents of 11 settlements were left without power.

The regional Russian emergency headquarters said over 1,530 people have been evacuated. The Black Sea resort city of Anapa was among the worst affected. Officials have warned that heavy rain was expected for another two days.

The floods struck on the heels of wildfires in southern Turkey that devastated forests in the seaside provinces of Mugla and Antalya, which are popular with tourists. At least 16 people died in those wildfires — including eight emergency workers as their firefighting plane crashed Saturday — and thousands of

residents and tourists were forced to flee.

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

Follow AP's coverage of climate change issues at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate-change>

Rich nations dip into COVAX supply while poor wait for shots

By MARIA CHENG and LORI HINNANT Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — An international system to share coronavirus vaccines was supposed to guarantee that low and middle-income countries could get doses without being last in line and at the mercy of unreliable donations.

It hasn't worked out that way. In late June alone, the initiative known as COVAX sent some 530,000 doses to Britain — more than double the amount sent that month to the entire continent of Africa.

Under COVAX, countries were supposed to give money so vaccines could be set aside, both as donations to poor countries and as an insurance policy for richer ones to buy doses if theirs fell through. Some rich countries, including those in the European Union, calculated that they had more than enough doses available through bilateral deals and ceded their allocated COVAX doses to poorer countries.

But others, including Britain, tapped into the meager supply of COVAX doses themselves, despite being among the countries that had reserved most of the world's available vaccines. In the meantime, billions of people in poor countries have yet to receive a single dose.

The result is that poorer countries have landed in exactly the predicament COVAX was supposed to avoid: dependent on the whims and politics of rich countries for donations, just as they have been so often in the past. And in many cases, rich countries don't want to donate in significant amounts before they finish vaccinating all their citizens who could possibly want a dose, a process that is still playing out.

"If we had tried to withhold vaccines from parts of the world, could we have made it any worse than it is today?" asked Dr. Bruce Aylward, a senior advisor at the World Health Organization, during a public session on vaccine equity.

Other wealthy nations that recently received paid doses through COVAX include Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, all of which have relatively high immunization rates and other means of acquiring vaccines. Qatar has promised to donate 1.4 million doses of vaccines and already shipped out more than the 74,000 doses it received from COVAX.

The U.S. never got any doses through COVAX, although Canada, Australia and New Zealand did. Canada got so much criticism for taking COVAX shipments that it said it would not request additional ones.

In the meantime, Venezuela has yet to receive any of its doses allocated by COVAX. Haiti has received less than half of what it was allocated, Syria about a 10th. In some cases, officials say, doses weren't sent because countries didn't have a plan to distribute them.

British officials confirmed the U.K. received about 539,000 vaccine doses in late June and that it has options to buy another 27 million shots through COVAX.

"The government is a strong champion of COVAX," the U.K. said, describing the initiative as a mechanism for all countries to obtain vaccines, not just those in need of donations. It declined to explain why it chose to receive those doses despite private deals that have reserved eight injections for every U.K. resident.

Brook Baker, a Northeastern University law professor who specializes in access to medicines, said it was unconscionable that rich countries would dip into COVAX vaccine supplies when more than 90 developing countries had virtually no access. COVAX's biggest supplier, the Serum Institute of India, stopped sharing vaccines in April to deal with a surge of cases on the subcontinent.

Although the number of vaccines being bought by rich countries like Britain through COVAX is relatively small, the extremely limited global supply means those purchases result in fewer shots for poor countries. So far, the initiative has delivered less than 10% of the doses it promised.

COVAX is run by the World Health Organization, the vaccine alliance Gavi and the Coalition for Epidemic

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Preparedness Innovations, a group launched in 2017 to develop vaccines to stop outbreaks. The program is now trying to regain credibility by getting rich countries to distribute their donated vaccines through its own system, Baker said. But even this effort is not entirely successful because some countries are making their own deals to curry favorable publicity and political clout.

"Rich countries are trying to garner geopolitical benefits from bilateral dose-sharing," Baker noted.

So far, with the exception of China, donations are coming in tiny fractions of what was pledged, an Associated Press tally of vaccines promised and delivered has found.

Dr. Christian Happi, an infectious diseases expert at Nigeria's Redeemer's University, said donations from rich countries are both insufficient and unreliable, especially as they have not only taken most of the world's supplies but are moving on to vaccinate children and considering administering booster shots.

Happi called on Africa, where 1.5 percent of the population is fully vaccinated, to increase its own vaccine manufacturing rather than rely on COVAX.

"We cannot just wait for them to come up with a solution," he said.

COVAX is well aware of the problem. During its last board meeting in late June, health officials conceded they had failed to achieve equitable distribution. But they still decided against blocking donor countries from buying up supplies themselves.

At a subsequent meeting with partners, Gavi CEO Dr. Seth Berkley said COVAX intended to honor the agreements it had made with rich countries but would ask them in the future to "adjust" their allocated doses to request fewer vaccines, according to a meeting participant who spoke about the confidential call on condition of anonymity.

Among the reasons Berkley cited for Gavi's reluctance to break or renegotiate contracts signed with rich countries was the potential risk to its balance sheet. In the last year, Britain alone has given more than \$860 million to COVAX.

Meeting notes from June show that Gavi revised COVAX's initial plan to split vaccines evenly between rich and poor countries and proposed that poor countries would receive about 75% of COVID-19 doses in the future. Without rich countries' involvement in COVAX, Gavi said "it would be difficult to secure deals with some manufacturers."

In response to an AP request for comment, Gavi said the initiative is aiming to deliver more than 2 billion doses by the beginning of 2022 and described COVAX as "an unprecedented global effort."

"The vast majority of the COVAX supply will go to low- and middle-income countries," Gavi said in an email about its latest supply forecast. For many countries, it said, "COVAX is the main, if not the only source of COVID-19 vaccine supply."

Spain's donation to four countries in Latin America – its first via COVAX – reflects how even rich countries with a lot of vaccines are donating a minimum. Spain, which has injected 57 million doses into its own residents, shipped 654,000 the first week in August. The delivery totals 3% of the 22.5 million doses Spain has promised, eventually, to COVAX.

Gavi said COVAX now has enough money and pledged donations to one day cover 30% of the population of the world's poorest countries. But it has made big promises before.

In January, COVAX said it had "secured volumes" totaling 640 million doses to deliver by July 2021, all of them under signed agreements, not donations. But by last month, COVAX had only shipped 210 million doses, 40% of which were donated.

With COVAX sidelined, vaccine donations have become something of a political contest. China has already exported 770 million doses and last week announced its own goal of sending 2 billion doses to the rest of the world by the end of the year — exactly the same amount as COVAX's initial plan.

That's far ahead of the rest of the world, according to the AP tally of doses. Britain has delivered just 4.7 million, far short of the 30 million pledged, and the European Union has given 7.1 million and another 55 million through COVAX contracts.

"If the donors are not stepping forward, the people who continue to die are our people," Strive Masiyiwa, the African Union special envoy on COVID-19 vaccine procurement, said.

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The United States has so far delivered 111 million doses, less than half of what was promised. Several U.S. lawmakers from both parties argued Wednesday that the government should seize the opportunity for diplomacy by more aggressively seeking credit for the doses it ships overseas.

"I think we should make vaccines available throughout the Middle East, but I also think we should have the American flag on every vial," said Rep. Juan Vargas, a Democrat from California, at a hearing on the state of the pandemic in the Middle East.

Even the European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, recently decried Europe's lagging in donations in geopolitical terms as a loss to China. U.S. President Joe Biden, in announcing the U.S. donations that have finally come through, similarly described the doses as a way to counter "Russia and China influencing the world with vaccines." The White House said the United States has donated more than 110 million vaccine doses, some via COVAX.

In addition to its planned vaccine exports, China announced plans to donate \$100 million to COVAX to buy more doses for developing countries.

"The key to strengthening vaccine cooperation and building the Great Wall of immunization is to ensure equitable access," said Wang Xiaolong of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, speaking Friday after China hosted an online forum on fair vaccine distribution.

The COVAX board has agreed to go back to its basic assumptions about vaccinating the world before the end of the year. High on its list: "An updated definition of fair and equitable access."

Hinnant reported from Paris. Ken Moritsugu in Beijing; Huizhong Wu in Taipei; Cara Anna in Nairobi; Jon Gambrell in Dubai; and Zeke Miller in Washington contributed.

This version corrects the affiliation of law professor to Northeastern University, not Northwestern.

High heat: Spain clocks prelim record of 47.2 C (116.96 F)

By JENNIFER O'MAHONY Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Spain set a new provisional heat record of 47.2 degrees Celsius (116.96 Fahrenheit) on Saturday as Southern Europe sweltered under a relentless summer sun. Italy put 16 cities on red alert for health risks and Portugal warned 75% of its regions that they faced a "significantly increased risk" of wildfires.

Data from Spain's State Meteorological Agency said the potential new record was recorded at Montoro, Cordoba, at 5:10 p.m. If confirmed, that would exceed the country's previous record of 46.9 degrees Celsius (116.42 F), set nearby in July 2017.

The high heat comes only days after Sicily reported a temperature of 48.8 degrees Celsius (119.84 Fahrenheit) on Wednesday, which is also awaiting verification and would be the highest ever recorded in Europe. Europe's current heat record came in 1977 when Athens hit 48.0 Celsius (118.4 F).

In the southern Spanish province of Granada, where the mercury rose to 45.4 Celsius (113.7 F), few people ventured outside. Those who did sought shade and stopped to take photos of public thermometers displaying the rocketing temperatures. Ice cream parlors did a brisk trade and some restaurants installed sprinklers to spray mists of water over their guests.

Miriam García, a student, wished she hadn't braved the heat.

"It is very hot, we have to drink water and put on sun cream all the time, stopping to have a drink at a bar every so often," she said. "It would be better to be at home than in the street, it's so hot!"

Dominic Royé, a climate scientist at the University of Santiago de Compostela, said the hot air from the Sahara Desert that has brought days of heat and fueled hundreds of wildfires across Mediterranean nations shows no signs of ending anytime soon.

"The heat wave we are experiencing now is very extreme and a lot of people are saying that it's normal, as we are in summer. But it's not, not this hot," Royé said.

The World Meteorological Organization said temperatures being recorded in the Mediterranean region

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go well beyond the typical hot, dry August weather and instead "are extreme, and what we might expect from climate change."

With night-time temperatures forecast to exceed 25 degrees Celsius (77 F) in much of Spain, Royé worried about residents who cannot afford air conditioning and other vulnerable people, like the homeless or outdoor workers.

Spain's State Meteorological Agency noted that 24 heat waves have been recorded over the last decade, twice the number in each of the previous three decades.

"It is important to stay in cool places and to stay hydrated, and to special attention to babies and elderly, vulnerable or otherwise dependent people. Extreme precautions should be taken to avoid starting forest fires," said Rubén del Campo, spokesman for the Spanish meteorological service.

Elsewhere on the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal's government placed 14 of the country's 18 districts on a state of alert through Monday night due to the "significantly increased risk" of wildfires, as temperatures were forecast to surpass 40 degrees Celsius. That would still fall short of Portugal's highest ever recorded temperature of 47.3 degrees Celsius (117.1 F) in the inland Alentejo region in 2003.

Italians sought respite at the sea and in the mountains from the aptly named Lucifer anti-cyclone that was bringing hot air from Africa during Italy's peak summer holiday weekend. Authorities raised concerns about older adults and other people at risk as they expanded heat warnings to 16 cities.

Temperatures in Italy rose as high as 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 F) in Rome, Florence and Bologna, all places that the Health Ministry put on red alert.

High temperatures were forecast to continue through Sunday, the traditional Ferragosto holiday on the religious feast of the Assumption of Mary, which marks the annual summer holiday exodus from Italian cities.

In Rome, drinking fountains provided relief, while authorities kept tourists away from ornamental fountains like the famed Trevi Fountain, fearing imitators of Anita Ekberg's soaking in "La Dolce Vita."

"I put my head under the water at each fountain, drinking a lot, staying in the shade as much as I can," said Alessia Pagani, who was visiting from the northern city of Brescia.

Storms in the north were forecast to bring the first signs of relief starting Monday.

"More than anything else, fresh air from the Atlantic will bring a coolness and greater ventilation that will sweep away the humidity and make the air much more breathable," Lt. Col. Filippo Petrucci of the Italian air force's weather service told RAI state TV.

The heat wave has aggravated wildfires that have consumed forests in southern Italy, Greece, Turkey and North Africa.

Across the Mediterranean Sea, North Africa has been sizzling for days. Algeria's National Office of Meteorology issued a special bulletin on Saturday saying temperatures in numerous regions across the north were above 44 C (115 F) with spikes up to 47 C (116.6 F), the online TSA news agency reported.

Climate scientists say there is little doubt that climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas is driving extreme events, such as heat waves, droughts, wildfires, floods and storms.

Colleen Barry in Milan, Fanuel Morelli in Rome, Elaine Ganley in Paris and Helena Alves in Lisbon contributed.

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Celebrations as Zambian opposition candidate leads in count

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

LUSAKA, Zambia (AP) — Supporters of Zambian opposition candidate Hakainde Hichilema have begun celebrating Saturday as early election results show him leading in the tightly-fought, tense presidential race.

Ignoring calls by the Electoral Commission for people to wait peacefully for the final official results, young opposition supporters drove through the streets of the capital, Lusaka, playing music and singing. They gathered at the headquarters of Hichilema's United Party for National Development.

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But signaling that he may not accept defeat, President Edgar Lungu asserted that the elections had not been free and fair in three provinces seen as opposition strongholds, citing violence and killings of his supporters, allegedly by the opposition. Lungu claimed that ruling party polling agents had been brutalized and chased away from voting stations, leaving his party's votes "unprotected."

Lungu said that although he notified the electoral commission of his concerns, "they have continued announcing the results." His Patriotic Front party is "consulting on the next decision we have to make," he said in a statement released by his office.

Lungu's statement indicates that he may challenge the validity of the election in order to stay in power, said analysts.

"It is now looking worryingly like he will refuse to stand down and push for the election to be canceled," tweeted Nic Cheeseman, professor of politics at the University of Birmingham, who is in Zambia to follow the elections.

Voter turnout was 15% higher than in the 2016 polls and the early results show a "big swing" in favor of Hichilema and his UPND, Cheeseman told The Associated Press.

Results from 31 of the country's 156 constituencies has Hichilema in the lead with 449,699 votes to President Edgar Lungu's 266,202. The commission said it will update the results as votes from the constituencies are tabulated and expects to announce the final results by Monday.

An overwhelming turnout, particularly by youthful Zambians who make up a majority of registered voters, saw long lines in front of polling stations on election day, Thursday. Many polling stations had to close late to accommodate the voters, said the electoral commission, which noted that the large turnout was unprecedented.

Sixteen candidates ran for president and some of them have already conceded defeat and congratulated Hichilema on victory, citing results posted at polling centers where votes were counted.

Hichilema's party has claimed victory based on the results displayed at polling centers. However, Lungu's Patriotic Front claimed that the incumbent would win.

Votes in Zambia are counted at polling centers and then posted for the public to see. The results from the polling stations are sent to the national election center in the capital, Lusaka, where the final results are announced.

Zambia's military was on the streets of Lusaka and other parts of the country Saturday. The president deployed the military ahead of the election saying it was to curb some outbreaks of violence. Lungu ordered more troops to be deployed in some restive parts of the country after there were two killings on election day.

The opposition alleges the troop rollout is an intimidation tactic by Lungu.

Arriving in trucks, cars and on foot, jubilant Hichilema supporters sang and danced at his party's headquarters in Lusaka.

There was a brief tense moment when two truckloads of government troops arrived. A few soldiers disembarked and chatted with leaders of the opposition supporters. Cheers followed as the soldiers returned into their trucks and eventually left.

Many of the opposition supporters, referring to Hichilema by his initials HH, said they are looking forward his presidency and have little patience to wait for the official results.

"HH has to fulfill his promises, especially for the youths who have been struggling with no jobs," said 29-year old Mwinga Haajanzi, who said he is an unemployed Hichilema supporter.

"Nurses, teachers have to be paid well. There should be jobs for us," said Haajanzi. "He should know that leadership is not about arresting or intimidating people, it is about using our copper and other resources to uplift the people's lives."

Others opposition supporters were seen pulling down Lungu's posters that are plastered all over the capital.

Zambia's newspapers showed the divide between the opposition and Lungu.

"HH gets it" and "HH takes lead" trumpeted the banner headlines of two privately owned newspapers.

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In contrast, the state-run Zambia Daily Mail ran with the headline "Lungu set for victory-PF," citing an official of the ruling Patriotic Front party.

Lungu won power in 2015 in a snap election after the previous president, Michael Sata, died in office. Lungu narrowly defeated Hichilema, whom he again beat with a small margin for a full term in 2016. Hichilema alleged fraud in both polls and has warned of rigging in these elections.

Critics accuse Lungu of trying to reverse Zambia's record of holding regular, credible elections and peaceful transfers of power since 1991 when the country returned to multi-party democracy after being a one-party state for more than two decades.

Lungu's party on Friday said it had written to the electoral commission, also alleging the election wasn't free and fair, citing alleged violence by the opposition.

Both Lungu and Hichilema have expressed concern that the election could result in post-election instability.

Census data puts target on rural, Rust Belt House districts

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

While suburban congressional districts are swelling with new residents, lawmakers in large swaths of rural America and some Rust Belt cities are in need of more people to represent.

In rural Illinois, Republican Rep. Mary Miller's district is short 73,000 people. In northeastern Ohio, Democratic Rep. Tim Ryan needs an additional 88,000 people. And the Detroit-area district of Democratic Rep. Rashida Tlaib lacks over 100,000 people — one of the biggest shortfalls in the country.

That makes them all potential targets for map makers — and possibly vulnerable to job loss — as their districts are redrawn in the coming months to rebalance the nation's shifting population.

The numbers come from an Associated Press analysis of new 2020 census data revealing the boom of urban and suburban America, at the expense of small towns. The emptying out of rural areas was particularly rough news for Republicans, who have increasingly relied on rural voters to win seats in Congress. Of the 61 U.S. House districts that lost population, 35 are held by Republicans.

The party needs to net just five seats to win control of the House in 2022. But it is guaranteed to lose a seat in West Virginia, and likely to take hits in Illinois and New York.

However, Republicans are well positioned to make up those seats -- and possibly more -- in the growing states of Texas, Florida and North Carolina, where they control the mapmaking process. Fast growing areas, such as Republican-held congressional districts in suburban Texas, are fertile ground for adding new districts or spreading surplus Democratic voters among neighboring districts.

That tactic is among those certain to be contested both in the legislatures and in courts. Democrats on Friday wasted no time filing a fresh lawsuit challenging the current maps in Wisconsin, anticipating a redistricting stalemate in the divided state government and arguing the courts should intervene.

The political parties will be battling not just over where they can gain seats but also where they can eliminate seats held by their opponents. That means some of the toughest battles for mapmakers will occur over districts that have fewer residents than a decade ago, like those in Illinois, Michigan and Ohio — all states that will be losing a U.S. House seat because of lagging population.

Ohio will drop from 16 to 15 U.S. House seats with redistricting. Among the 10 districts with the largest population shortfalls, three were in Ohio, according to the AP analysis, based on the number of residents required per district.

That included Ryan's district as well as Republican Rep. Bill Johnson's eastern Ohio district and the Cleveland-area district of former Democratic Rep. Marcia Fudge, who resigned to join President Joe Biden's administration. Fudge's district, where Democrat Shontel Brown recently won the primary, is on the hunt for 94,000 more people.

Ryan's district, though still voting for Democrats, has been trending toward Republicans in recent presidential elections.

Republicans, who control redistricting in Ohio, could "sort of dismember" Ryan's district and place its residents in other nearby districts, said Paul Beck, a retired political science professor from Ohio State

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University. "I think that district is going to be on the cutting boards."

Ryan has announced his plans to run for the U.S. Senate.

A lost Democratic district in Ohio wouldn't necessarily result in a Republican gain, because the GOP still would have to defend 12 seats that it already holds.

Republicans are guaranteed to lose a congressional seat in West Virginia. That's because they currently hold all three seats, and one must be eliminated in redistricting.

Another blow may be awaiting Republicans in Illinois, which must trim its congressional delegation from 18 to 17. Democrats who control redistricting there are almost certain to try to eliminate a district in heavily Republican areas of central and southern Illinois. All five of Illinois' congressional districts held by Republicans lost population between 2010 and 2020, according to the census, giving Democrats the justification to get rid of one.

"I don't think there's going to be anything Republicans can do to stop that," said Alvin Tillery Jr., an associate professor of political science and director of the Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy at Northwestern University.

A similar scenario could play out in New York, where Democrats also control redistricting and thus will hold sway over which seat must be eliminated.

The fight could be messier in Pennsylvania, where the state's congressional delegation currently is split 9-9 between Democrats and Republicans. The GOP controls the Legislature, which will draft a new map eliminating one seat, but Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf holds veto power.

The rural Pennsylvania district of Republican Rep. Glenn Thompson ranks among the top 10 nationally in population shortfalls, needing to pick up over 90,000 people to meet the redistricting target. It's one of six Pennsylvania districts that lost population in the 2020 census, all but one of which are held by Republicans.

Citizens' commissions will be responsible for deciding how to eliminate one district each in California and Michigan. After the 2010 census, Michigan's districts were drawn by a Republican-led Legislature and governor and provided the GOP one of the most enduring advantages in the nation, according to an AP analysis.

Michigan lost population in the 2020 census in some rural areas as well as in Detroit and Flint, which was scarred by a tainted water crises this past decade. The districts of Democratic Reps. Dan Kildee, who represents Flint, and Rashida Tlaib of Detroit each are more than 100,000 people short of the redistricting target — the largest gaps nationally outside of West Virginia.

If Republicans were still drawing the maps, one of those districts might be a likely target for elimination. But the state constitution says the citizens' redistricting commission can neither favor nor disfavor incumbents. That means the new map could look significantly different.

"The commission is very unlikely to just sort of start from the current map and make small adjustments," said Matt Grossmann, a political scientist who directs the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research at Michigan State University. "I really think they're going to be closer to starting from scratch."

Associated Press writer Sara Burnett contributed to this report from Chicago.

This story has been corrected to reflect that Shontel Brown, not Shontel Turner, recently won the Democratic primary in a Cleveland-area House district.

UK killings suspect got seized gun, license back last month

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's police watchdog says it has launched an investigation into why a 22-year-old man who fatally shot five people in southwestern England on Thursday was given back his confiscated gun and gun license last month.

Police have said Jake Davison killed his mother and four other people, including a 3-year-old girl, before taking his own life in the port city of Plymouth. It was Britain's first mass shooting in over a decade. Firearm crimes are rare in Britain, which has strict gun control laws and regulations.

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The Independent Office for Police Conduct said late Friday it would investigate the Devon and Cornwall police department's decision-making in relation to Davison's possession of a shotgun and the license. The watchdog said it was not yet known whether the shotgun returned to Davison was the same one he used in Thursday's shootings.

Police took away the gun and the certificate in December 2020 following an allegation of assault three months earlier, the watchdog office said. They were returned to Davison last month.

"We will examine what police actions were taken and when, the rationale behind police decision-making and whether relevant law, policy and procedures were followed concerning Mr. Davison's possession of a shotgun," said the office's regional director, David Ford.

"The investigation will also consider whether the force had any information concerning Mr. Davison's mental health, and if so, if this information was appropriately considered," Ford said.

Overall, guns are strictly controlled in Britain.

Hundreds attended a candlelit vigil Friday close to where the killings took place in Plymouth, and dozens of bouquets, balloons and soft toys were left in a memorial.

Police said Friday the motive for the shootings was unclear but there were no immediate signs they were an act of terrorism or that Davison had connections to extremist groups.

They said Davison shot and killed his 51-year-old mother, Maxine Davison, also known as Maxine Chapman, at a house before going into the street and killing 3-year-old Sophie Martyn and her father, Lee Martyn, 43. According to police, Davison next killed Stephen Washington, 59, in a nearby park, before fatally shooting Kate Shepherd, 66, on a nearby street.

Two other people were wounded.

Shaun Sawyer, chief constable for Devon and Cornwall police, told reporters that investigators think the crimes started as "domestically related" and "spilled into the street." He said the investigators were keeping open minds but do not think extremist ideology prompted the attack.

"Let's see what's on his hard drive, let's see what's on his computer, let's see what's on social media," Sawyer said.

Davison appeared to have shown interest in "incel" — shorthand for "involuntarily celibate" — forums on social media. The "incel" movement justifies violence against women as revenge for men who are rejected as sexual partners. The online subculture has been linked to deadly attacks in California, Toronto and Florida.

Davison has posted online that while he wouldn't describe himself as an "incel," they are "people similar to me, they've had nothing but themselves, and then they've socially had it tough."

In a YouTube video posted in late July, he spoke about how he was "beaten down and defeated by...life." He spoke of struggling to stay motivated to lose weight and work out, and working as a scaffolder at 17 and 18 years old. He talked about lacking a love life, referring to "people who are incels."

The account has been taken down and replaced with a notice saying it violated the site's community guidelines.

The killings in Britain have raised questions about whether authorities are treating the "incel" ideology and extreme misogyny seriously enough.

Jonathan Hall, the U.K. government's independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, said the issue is "really whether or not the authorities want to treat the 'incel' phenomenon as a terrorist risk."

"That would involve diverting resources or putting resources into it," Hall told BBC radio on Saturday. "If we see more of these sorts of attacks, then I have got no doubt that it will be treated more seriously as terrorism."

Peter Fahy, a retired chief constable, said there's a debate in policing about "extreme misogyny" and how it interacts with right-wing extremism. But he maintained that the threat "mustn't be taken out of context."

He told the BBC the "overall threat and risk to women" comes more from partners and ex-partners than "incels."

Fahy also warned against giving too much attention to the ideology, saying: "We must be careful we

don't build these people up too much."

Last year, Canada charged a Toronto teenager accused of killing a woman at a massage parlor with "incel"-related terrorism for the first time. Police said they uncovered evidence the attack was inspired by an online community of sexually frustrated men.

The last mass shooting in the U.K. was in 2010, when taxi driver Derrick Bird killed 12 people in Cumbria, northwest England.

Russia's Putin urges stronger response to Siberian wildfires

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday urged authorities to strengthen their efforts to fight wildfires across northeastern Siberia, calling the situation "unprecedented" as fires threatened people's homes.

Speaking in a video call with top officials, Putin noted that 13 forest fires in the Sakha-Yakutia region are raging within five kilometers (3 miles) of populated areas and emphasized the need to closely monitor the situation to protect residents.

Yakutia is the largest of Russia's 85 regions, a vast territory bigger than Argentina. It has faced a spell of particularly devastating wildfires this year following months of hot, dry weather and record-breaking temperatures. Flames previously threatened a dozen of villages, and several were evacuated. The provincial capital of Yakutsk, several other cities and hundreds of villages have been blanketed in choking smoke from the blazes.

Emergencies Minister Yevgeny Zinichev reported to Putin on Saturday that his ministry has deployed 5,000 personnel, 765 vehicles and 19 aircraft to combat the wildfires in Yakutia.

He said the thick smoke from wildfires has grounded firefighting planes, adding that efforts were being taken to relocate them to another base where they could operate again starting Monday. For now, firefighters have to rely exclusively on helicopters to fight the flames, Zinichev said.

On Saturday, officials reported 108 active forest fires burning across nearly 1.3 million hectares (3.2 million acres) in Yakutia. Authorities have expanded a state of emergency in Yakutia to help transfer in firefighting resources from other regions.

In recent years, Russia has recorded high temperatures that many scientists regard as a result of climate change. The hot weather coupled with the neglect of fire safety rules has caused a growing number of wildfires that authorities say have consumed 15 million acres this year in Russia.

Experts in Russia decry a 2007 decision to disband a federal aviation network tasked to spot and combat fires and turn over its assets to regional authorities. The much-criticized transfer led to the force's rapid decline.

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Secretive Israel-UAE oil deal endangers prized Eilat corals

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

EILAT, Israel (AP) — The Red Sea reefs off the Israeli resort of Eilat host some of the greatest coral diversity on the planet.

A symphony in splendid technicolor, the reefs are among the world's most resilient coral colonies against warming seas. They have also become an unlikely battleground, caught between Israeli diplomatic and business interests, and ecological groups that fear this natural treasure could be in danger.

A clandestine oil deal struck last year as part of the historic agreement establishing formal diplomatic ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates is turning Eilat into a waypoint for Emirati oil headed for Western markets.

Initially hailed as a move that could cement fledgling diplomatic ties and further Israel's energy ambi-

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tions, the deal is now in question after Israel's new government opened a review. The decision has upset investors and risks a diplomatic spat with Israel's Gulf allies.

The UAE and Israel, which normalized relations last year as part of the U.S.-brokered "Abraham Accords," have since signed over \$830 million in trade deals and inked numerous trade and cooperation agreements.

But the deal between the Europe-Asia Pipeline Company, an Israeli government-owned corporation, and MED-RED Land Bridge, a joint Israel-Emirati venture, remains a secret.

Senior officials in former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government — including his former energy, foreign and environment ministers — said they didn't know about the deal until it was announced last September, after the accords were signed at the White House.

The pipeline company, known as EAPC, was founded in the 1960s to bring Iranian oil to Israel when the countries had friendly relations. Its operations are shrouded in secrecy, ostensibly for security reasons.

Israeli environmental groups have asked the country's Supreme Court to halt oil shipments, citing EAPC's questionable safety record and the risk posed by parking supertankers alongside Eilat's fragile coral ecosystems.

As for an oil spill, it's "not a question of if it will happen, but when it will happen," said Assaf Zvuloni, a Nature and Parks Authority ecologist in Eilat. Even a small rupture or human error would have disastrous consequences, he said.

Israel suffered its worst ecological disaster in February, when a spill in the eastern Mediterranean coated virtually all of its 270-kilometer (170-mile) coastline with oil. The petitioners — three Israeli environmental groups — argued that incident would "be dwarfed alongside a massive oil spill" off Eilat.

Israel long lacked natural resources. But that began to change after the 2009 discovery of natural gas in the Mediterranean Sea and Israel's first exports.

The deal with the UAE would expand this fledgling energy sector, with oil shipped across Israel in a pipeline to the Mediterranean port of Ashkelon and on to European markets.

Yona Fogel, executive of one of the Israeli partners in the project, told public broadcaster Kan in June that the UAE deal "will produce for EAPC earnings of hundreds (of millions) and perhaps billions of dollars" without "raising the risk to the environment whatsoever."

Ksenia Svetlova, an ex-lawmaker and director of Mideast relations with the Mitvim Institute, an Israeli think tank, said the project is especially appealing because it provides an alternative to the Suez Canal. The canal, the main waterway for Gulf exports to the West, was paralyzed early this year when a massive tanker ran aground there.

The Emiratis are gaining "a cheaper, alternative route, something that they can use in case they need to divert some of the tankers to this direction," she said.

But opponents say the potential cost is irreversible damage to a natural wonder.

The EAPC terminal dominates a stretch of Eilat shoreline a kilometer (half mile) north of Israel's Coral Beach Nature Reserve. Its cranes and pipes jut into the Red Sea's aquamarine and navy blue waters. The air reeks of petroleum.

For now, multitudes of corals still bloom on neighboring reefs, attracting fish in kaleidoscopic abundance.

A senior government official said Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's office asked the Supreme Court for additional time to respond to the environmentalists' challenge. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to reporters.

Israel's new environment minister has pledged to scrap the pipeline altogether and her ministry has frozen the company's planned expansion of operations, pending a government decision.

"The Gulf of Eilat is in real danger because of the Med-Red pipeline, and the state of Israel doesn't need to be the oil bridge for other countries," Tamar Zandberg said upon taking office in June. Her office declined interview requests.

No less important is a future spill's impact on tourism, Eilat's lifeblood. Meir Yitzhak Halevi, a freshman lawmaker who was Eilat's mayor from 2003 until June, said he was left in the dark about EAPC's operations and called for complete transparency.

An ecological disaster would also likely impact the ecosystems of Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, all of

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which share the gulf's waters.

"We have a real potential loss to humanity and to global biodiversity," said Gidon Bromberg, head of the cross-border EcoPeace environmental group.

EAPC dismissed environmental concerns as unfounded, claimed "the inherent danger in the arrival of tankers is zero" and contended that hundreds of tankers docked at the adjacent Jordanian port of Aqaba in the past decade.

The company refused interviews, as did Emirati officials. But Hebrew daily Israel Hayom recently quoted unnamed Emirati officials as saying canceling the deal "is definitely a violation" of diplomatic agreements and could damage relations.

Meanwhile, EAPC has confirmed it has initiated operations. At least eight oil tankers moored in Eilat in 2021, up from an average of one every five years, according to the court petition, which contends the agreement could bring over 100 oil vessels each year.

EAPC has had a poor safety record. A 2014 pipeline rupture spilled millions of gallons of crude oil in a desert nature reserve. In the 1970s, a series of spills nearly eradicated Eilat's coral reefs.

Yossi Loya, a marine biology professor at Tel Aviv University, said the reefs managed to recover over the past decade — a rare exception to the deterioration of reefs worldwide.

"This is one of the diamonds in the crown, and therefore it's very important to protect them," he said.

As Taliban tighten their grip, Kabul airport only way out

By TAMEEM AKHGAR and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — As a Taliban offensive encircles the Afghan capital, there's increasingly only one way out for those fleeing the war, and only one way in for U.S. troops sent to protect American diplomats still on the ground: Kabul's international airport.

A steady stream of people makes its way first to ticket sale counters set up on the parking lot outside the terminal. They push their luggage, load carts with carpets, television sets and mementos, stuff clothes inside purses to make their weight limit as they slowly inch forward.

The lucky ones, those who managed to get a ticket for a flight out to anywhere, then wait more than three hours to make it inside the terminal, bidding tearful goodbyes to loved ones they are leaving behind.

As the Taliban draw closer, the lines and the panic only grow.

"I packed whatever I could to start a new life away from this war," said Naweed Azimi, who flew to Istanbul with his wife and five children, fearful the Taliban would kill him for working with NATO as a subcontractor.

Kabul International Airport — formally known as Hamid Karzai International Airport, after the country's first president following the U.S.-led overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 — sits just northeast of the city. Its single runway is long enough to accommodate military aircraft; the airfield as a whole can accommodate over 100 planes on the ground.

Surrounded by perimeter fencing and secured by multiple checkpoints, the airport is in sight of the mountains ringing the Afghan capital. Those flying out have for years had to trudge with their luggage up to outdoor screening points before getting to the terminal — a precaution meant to prevent insurgent suicide bombings.

On an ordinary day, the terminal would be filled with Afghans in business suits and traditional dress, mingling with tattooed military contractors sporting wraparound sunglasses and aid workers from all corners of the world.

That sedate crowd has been replaced with panicked travelers scrambling to leave Kabul. Afghan airlines Ariana and Kam Air have every seat booked for at least the next week, airport workers said. Those with a plane ticket in hand also have to get a coronavirus test at a clinic amid the pandemic in order to leave.

"I had never see such a rush at the airport before," said Farid Ahmad Younusi, an Afghan businessman who said he abandoned a contracting firm worth \$1 million and fled Kandahar with the Taliban trying to find him. "Now Taliban have everything that I worked for over the past 20 years."

The airport rush is only expected to get worse — and even more complicated.

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Afghan security forces, who maintain bases at the airfield, were joined this week by some of the 3,000 American Marine and Army troops whose mission is to evacuate staff from the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. The Biden administration has not ruled out a full embassy evacuation. As of Thursday, there were roughly 4,200 staffers at the embassy, but most of those are Afghan nationals, according to the State Department.

"This is a specific, narrowly focused, tailored mission to help with the safe, secure movement of the reduction of civilian personnel in Kabul, as well as to help support the acceleration of the special immigrant visa process by the State Department," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Friday. Those visas are for Afghans who once worked for the U.S. government and feel threatened by the Taliban.

With the Taliban nearing Kabul's doorstep, Afghans and U.S. personnel can't count on driving out of the country. The Taliban on Saturday tightened their grip around Kabul by capturing all of Logar province, reaching just 11 kilometers (7 miles) south of the capital, Kabul.

Those at the airport on Friday night described paying \$375 and more for rides from the northern city of Kunduz on unpaved roads to avoid Taliban checkpoints, a trip that typically costs around \$40.

The cars "don't even take a break," said Yousuf Baghban as he waited for his flight out. "If you stop, you are gone."

Having abandoned Bagram Air Base — which served as the American military's main hub in Afghanistan — ahead of the final U.S. pullout at the end of the month, the U.S. military will now have to rely on flying people out of the Kabul airport.

"We will be able to move thousands per day but that's just the airlift capacity," Kirby said.

There may also be the need to move the operations of the U.S. Embassy to the airport as well, if the Taliban push into Kabul and begin battling for control of the city, though State Department spokesman Ned Price repeatedly declined to discuss that possibility. The Kabul airport also has Turkish troops guarding the facility.

The airport's history mirrors that of the country's troubled modern times. Soviet engineers built the airport in 1960 as a gift while America offered its own help developing Afghanistan's airfields during the Cold War. After the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the airport became a key military base for Moscow. It suffered damage during the intra-Afghan war that followed and became a target for airstrikes in the U.S.-led invasion in 2001.

The West gave tens of millions of dollars to rebuild the airport and clear it of mines and unexploded bombs. Japanese donations bought metal detectors and helped build the airport's new international terminal.

For now, commercial flights continue at the airport. Air India, Dubai-based carriers Emirates and FlyDubai, Pakistan International Airlines and Turkish Airlines all either have flights en route or planned to Kabul for the next days. Local Afghan airlines continue to fly as well.

But passengers worry that at any moment the Taliban could come, closing the country's airspace.

On Friday night, passengers pushed through security checkpoints, lines and more checks to board a Kam Air flight to Istanbul. One traveler, Tawfiq Beg, said the Taliban killed his uncle, a militia commander, three weeks ago. Beg's father sold some of the family's land — at half its value — to be able to afford his ticket out.

"Maybe this was the final goodbye," Beg said.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Costs of the Afghanistan war, in lives and dollars

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

At just short of 20 years, the now-ending U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan was America's longest war. Ordinary Americans tended to forget about it, and it received measurably less oversight from Congress than the Vietnam War did. But its death toll is in the many tens of thousands. And because the U.S. borrowed most of the money to pay for it, generations of Americans will be burdened by the cost of paying it off.

As the Taliban in a lightning offensive recapture much of the country before the United States' Aug. 31

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deadline for ending its combat role, and the U.S. speeds up American and Afghan evacuations, here's a look at the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, by the numbers.

Much of the data below is from Linda Bilmes of Harvard University's Kennedy School and from the Brown University Costs of War project. Because the United States between 2003 and 2011 fought the Afghanistan and Iraq wars simultaneously, and many American troops served tours in both wars, some figures as noted cover both post-9/11 U.S. wars.

THE LONGEST WAR:

Percentage of U.S. population born since the 2001 attacks plotted by al-Qaida leaders who were sheltering in Afghanistan: Roughly one out of every four.

THE HUMAN COST:

American service members killed in Afghanistan through April: 2,448.

U.S. contractors: 3,846.

Afghan national military and police: 66,000.

Other allied service members, including from other NATO member states: 1,144.

Afghan civilians: 47,245.

Taliban and other opposition fighters: 51,191.

Aid workers: 444.

Journalists: 72.

AFGHANISTAN AFTER NEARLY 20 YEARS OF U.S. OCCUPATION:

Percentage drop in infant mortality rate since U.S., Afghan and other allied forces overthrew the Taliban government, which had sought to restrict women and girls to the home: About 50.

Percentage of Afghan teenage girls able to read today: 37.

OVERSIGHT BY CONGRESS:

Date Congress authorized U.S. forces to go after culprits in Sept. 11, 2001, attacks: Sept. 18, 2001.

Number of times U.S. lawmakers have voted to declare war in Afghanistan: 0.

Number of times lawmakers on Senate Appropriations defense subcommittee addressed costs of Vietnam War, during that conflict: 42

Number of times lawmakers in same subcommittee have mentioned costs of Afghanistan and Iraq wars, through mid-summer 2021: 5.

Number of times lawmakers on Senate Finance Committee have mentioned costs of Afghanistan and Iraq wars since Sept. 11, 2001, through mid-summer 2021: 1.

PAYING FOR A WAR ON CREDIT, NOT IN CASH:

Amount President Harry Truman temporarily raised top tax rates to pay for Korean War: 92%.

Amount President Lyndon Johnson temporarily raised top tax rates to pay for Vietnam War: 77%.

Amount President George W. Bush cut tax rates for the wealthiest, rather than raise them, at outset of Afghanistan and Iraq wars: At least 8%.

Estimated amount of direct Afghanistan and Iraq war costs that the United States has debt-financed as of 2020: \$2 trillion.

Estimated interest costs by 2050: Up to \$6.5 trillion.

THE WARS END. THE COSTS DON'T:

Amount Bilmes estimates the United States has committed to pay in health care, disability, burial and other costs for roughly 4 million Afghanistan and Iraq veterans: more than \$2 trillion.

Period those costs will peak: after 2048.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Aug. 15, the 227th day of 2021. There are 138 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

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On August 15, 1945, in a pre-recorded radio address, Japan's Emperor Hirohito announced that his country had accepted terms of surrender for ending World War II.

On this date:

In 1057, Macbeth, King of Scots, was killed in battle by Malcolm, the eldest son of King Duncan, whom Macbeth had slain.

In 1914, the Panama Canal officially opened as the SS Ancon crossed the just-completed waterway between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

In 1935, humorist Will Rogers and aviator Wiley Post were killed when their airplane crashed near Point Barrow in the Alaska Territory.

In 1939, the MGM musical "The Wizard of Oz" opened at the Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood.

In 1944, during World War II, Allied forces landed in southern France in Operation Dragoon.

In 1947, India became independent after some 200 years of British rule.

In 1969, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair opened in upstate New York.

In 1971, President Richard Nixon announced a 90-day freeze on wages, prices and rents.

In 1998, 29 people were killed by a car bomb that tore apart the center of Omagh (OH'-mah), Northern Ireland; a splinter group calling itself the Real IRA claimed responsibility.

In 2003, bouncing back from the largest blackout in U.S. history, cities from the Midwest to Manhattan restored power to millions of people.

In 2015, Japanese Emperor Akihito expressed rare "deep remorse" over his country's wartime actions in an address marking the 70th anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, a day after the prime minister fell short of apologizing to victims of Japanese aggression. Civil rights leader Julian Bond, 75, died in Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

In 2017, President Donald Trump, who'd faced harsh criticism for initially blaming the deadly weekend violence in Charlottesville, Virginia on "many sides," told reporters that there were "very fine people on both sides" of the confrontation and that groups protesting against the white supremacists were "also very violent." (In between those statements, at the urging of aides, Trump had offered a more direct condemnation of white supremacists.)

Ten years ago: Hitting back against an emboldened GOP, President Barack Obama launched a rare direct attack on the Republican presidential field, criticizing his potential 2012 rivals for their blanket opposition to any deficit-cutting compromise involving new taxes. His comments came during a town hall-style meeting in Cannon Falls, Minnesota. Jim Thome (TOH'-mee) hit his 600th home run an inning after he hit No. 599 to help the Minnesota Twins outslug the Detroit Tigers 9-6. (Thome became the eighth major league player to reach 600.)

Five years ago: Republican Donald Trump called for "extreme" ideological vetting of immigrants seeking admission to the United States, vowing during a speech in Youngstown, Ohio, to significantly overhaul the country's screening process and block those who sympathized with extremist groups or didn't embrace American values. President Barack Obama, in Chilmark, Massachusetts, urged Democrats to campaign aggressively for the next 80 days to elect Hillary Clinton, saying that "if we do not do our jobs, then it's still possible for her to lose."

One year ago: President Donald Trump's younger brother, businessman Robert Trump, died after being hospitalized in New York; he was 71. Firefighters struggled to contain three wildfires near Los Angeles, as forecasters warned that the risk of new fires was high.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Jim Dale is 86. Actor Pat Priest is 85. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer is 83. U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., is 83. Musician Pete York (Spencer Davis Group) is 79. Author-journalist Linda Ellerbee is 77. Songwriter Jimmy Webb is 75. Rock singer-musician Tom Johnston (The Doobie Brothers) is 73. Actor Phyllis Smith is 72. Britain's Princess Anne is 71. Actor Tess Harper is 71. Actor Larry Mathews is 66. Actor Zeljko Ivanek (ZEHL'-koh eh-VON'-ehk) is 64. Actor-comedian Rondell Sheridan is 63. Rock singer-musician Matt Johnson (The The) is 60. Movie director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu (ih-NYA'-ee-tu) is 58. Philanthropist Melinda Gates is 57. Country singer Angela Rae (Wild Horses) is 55. Actor Peter Hermann is 54. Actor Debra Messing is 53. Actor Anthony Anderson is 51. Actor Ben Affleck is 49.

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Singer Mikey Graham (Boyzone) is 49. Actor Natasha Henstridge is 47. Actor Nicole Paggi is 44. Christian rock musician Tim Foreman (Switchfoot) is 43. Actor Emily Kinney is 37. Figure skater Jennifer Kirk is 37. Latin pop singer Belinda is 32. Actor Courtney Hope is 32. Rock singer Joe Jonas (The Jonas Brothers) is 32. Actor-singer Carlos PenaVega is 32. Actor Jennifer Lawrence is 31.