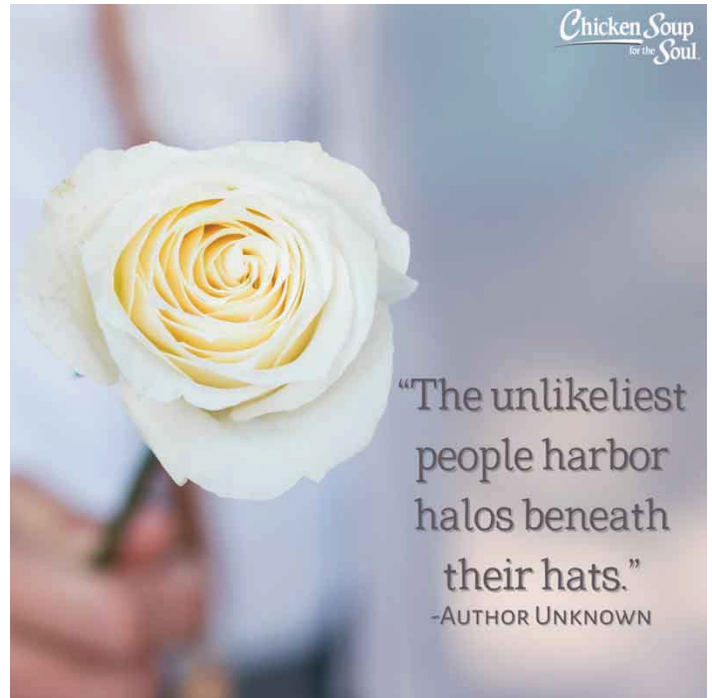


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Soccer Schedule Change for this weekend

The times are the same but the opponents are switched for this weekend's soccer schedule. Belle Fourche will be in Groton on Friday with the boys playing at 3 p.m. followed by the girls at 5 p.m. The girls game will be broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM.

On Saturday, St. Thomas More will come to town with the girls playing at 1 p.m. and the boys at 3 p.m. The girls game will be broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM.



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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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

August 17, 2021 – 7:00pm

120 N Main Street

(NOTICE ADDRESS)

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
2. Minutes
3. Bills
4. July Finance Report
5. 2018/2019 Final Audit Report
6. First Reading of Ordinance #750 Water Rates
7. Update Groton Hazard Mitigation Plan
8. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
9. Adjournment



The Life of Rosemary Belden



Funeral services for Rosemary Belden, 80, of Groton will be 11:00 a.m., Wednesday, August 18th at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Groton. Pastor Kari Foss will officiate. Burial will follow in Union Cemetery under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the church for one hour prior to services.

Rosemary passed away Saturday, August 14, 2021 at Avantara Groton.

Rosemary Gladys was born on July 17, 1941 to George and Rosemary (Hardesty) Beck. She was the second of four girls. The family moved to California when Rosemary was a young girl, and she grew up there. Rosemary later returned to South Dakota and began working for Kmart in Aberdeen before the store's opening. On August 23, 1975, she was united in marriage with Thomas Belden. They made their home in Groton, living in the same house from 1977 to 1992. That spring, they moved to the farm. Throughout the years, Rosemary did sewing work for others and had ceramics in her basement. She continued her ceramics business at the farm, and opened Rose Creations in Groton in the early 2000s.

She retired in 2008.

Rosemary was a member of Emmanuel Lutheran Church. She enjoyed attending craft shows and all types of handiwork. She made many quilts over the years, embroidered hand towels and did needlepoint. Rosemary liked to watch the deer and pheasants, among other wildlife in their farmyard. She also treasured time spent with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Celebrating her life is her husband, Tom of Groton, six daughters, one sister, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Preceding her in death were her parents, her son and two sisters.

Casketbearers will be Bob Osterman, Jason Osterman, Will Nordine, Richard Hoops, Greg Belden and Cal Belden.

www.paetznick-garness.com

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Week 0 SDFBCA Coaches Poll- Results

11AAA

Brandon Valley (13)
Harrisburg (8) 83
SF Roosevelt (2) 54
SF Washington 34
O'Gorman 32
Others: SF Lincoln 18, SF Jefferson 8

11AA

Pierre (19) 112
Brookings (2) 56
Tea Area (1) 51
Yankton 51
Aberdeen Central 39
Others: Watertown 28, Mitchell 10

11A

Canton (11) 76
Dell Rapids (1) 45
Madison (1) 45
Dakota Valley 41
West Central (1) 19
Others: Lennox 19, Milbank 14

11B

B-E/Ethan (10) 78
Winner (6) 57
Sioux Valley (1) 54
MC/Montrose 21
Mt. Vernon/Plank 13
Others: St Thomas More 12, Elk Point-Jefferson 12

9AA

Platte-Geddes (15) 87
Canistota/Freeman (4) 71
Hanson (1) 38
Hamlin 38
Viborg-Hurley 37
Others: Timber Lake 17, Chester Area 11

9A

Wolsey-Wessington (10) 70
Howard (6) 68
DeSmet (1) 62
Herreid/Selby Area 40
Wall (3) 38
Others: Warner 26, Colman-Egan 18

9B

Harding County/Bison (6) 68
DR St. Mary (8) 61
Faulkton Area (1) 51
Alcester-Hudson (2) 31
Sully Buttes (2) 25
Others: Faith 19, Langford Area 15

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Switching to new water tower delayed by a day

The plan was to start switching over to the new water tower today, but during the excavation to finish the piping, there were a couple of complications that pushed the switch back to tomorrow. Above left is Clint Jacobson (on ladder) of Jackson Electric working on tying the reservoir to the new pump room. Above right is the excavation site just north of the reservoir. (Photos by Paul Kosel)



Rubble site detour

If you need access to the rubble site, you will need to take a detour as the normal route off of Railroad Avenue is closed. The railroad is currently doing construction work in that area. Access to the rubble site can be obtained by going south of Groton to Aspen Avenue, and then go east. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT 06-6 2021-2022 Groton Area School District Back to School Information

Groton Area School District 06-6 – “Mission Statement”

Each school will foster a school climate conducive to learning by encouraging good behavior and citizenship, good attendance, a thirst for knowledge, and high academic standards. Teachers will employ strategies and approaches to instruction to meet the needs of all children assigned to them. With proper motivation and instruction, all children can learn!

Teacher Qualifications

All teachers of core academic subjects must hold at least a bachelor's degree, have full state certification, and demonstrate knowledge in the core academic subject they teach. For information regarding the qualifications of your child's teachers, you may contact the superintendent's office at 397-2351.

Registration

Anyone new to the District should contact the respective building principal(s) as soon as possible. Middle School and High School Schedule changes can be made on Wednesday, August 19, 2021 from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM.

School Supply Lists

Students' school supply lists for the elementary school (preschool – grade 5) are posted on the District's web site at www.grotonarea.com under the District Info Heading. Students in the middle school (grades 6-8) will be required to have the same color notebook, folder, and book cover for each class. Math will be green; English, blue; reading, red; science, purple; and social studies, black. The students can choose their own colors for PE, art, health, and computer classes.

6th Grade Welcome Walk – Monday, August 23

Groton Area Middle School is hosting a 6th Grade Welcome Walk on Monday, August 23 from 3:30 PM to 5:00 PM. Students and their parents are invited to come get a class schedule and other important information from the school office, find the student locker and classrooms, and begin to learn the new building.

Tablet PCs or Ipad's Issued to All Students

Prior to being issued their tablet PC, students and their parents must sign and return the following documents: Laptop Computer Protection Agreement, the Student Pledge, E-mail Acceptable Use Agreement, the Groton Area School District Network/Internet agreement, and the Parental Consent to Publish Student Photos/Work. Required forms can be picked up in the School Office or will be sent home with students on the first day of classes.

First Day of School – Wednesday, August 25

The first day of school is on Wednesday, August 25. Buses will run and school lunch will be served. Each route driver will contact parents to confirm bus arrival times. Other bus route questions may be referred to transportation supervisor, Loren Bahr, at (605) 397-8117. The GRASP (OST) program at the elementary school will be available on the first day of school.

Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten

The District offers all-day, every day kindergarten classes. Children may enter kindergarten if they are 5 years of age on or before September 1 of the year in which they are to enter school. The District offers a junior kindergarten program each day from 12:15PM – 3:22 PM for students that are eligible to attend kindergarten, but are not quite ready for kindergarten. Students enrolling in first grade must be 6 years of age on or before September 1 of that school year.

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Non-Resident Enrollment

For out-of-district students, applications to open enroll may be accepted throughout the school year. Applications are available from any school district administrative office. All open enrollment requests and related questions should be referred to school superintendent, Joe Schwan, at (605) 397-2351.

2021-2022 School Hours

Groton Area Elementary	8:15 AM	Arrival Time (Supervision)
	8:21 AM – 3:22 PM	Classes in Session
Groton Area MS/HS	8:25 AM	First Bell
	8:30 AM – 3:30 PM	Classes in Session

GRASP (OST) Program

The GRASP program services children in junior kindergarten through grade five with before and after-school homework help, supervised learning activities, and snacks. The GRASP program will be held in the Groton Area Elementary School from 7:00 AM - 8:00 AM and 3:22 PM – 6:00 PM each day that school is in session. Rates are \$2.75 per hour, per child. Any OST questions or registrations may be directed to Elementary Principal, Mr. Brett Schwan, at (605) 397-2317.

K-12 Breakfast and Lunch Program

The Groton Area School District will operate a School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program with adopted modifications to support a healthy environment for congregate eating.

Through a USDA program referred to as "Seamless Summer Option" and flexibilities provided as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, all students attending Groton Area School District are automatically eligible for free breakfast and lunch regardless of income. No application is necessary to participate in this program. Families may still choose to complete the application for free or reduced priced lunch if they so choose.

The District is still required to charge for second servings and extra milk. Second servings at the elementary are \$1.00 and second servings at the middle/high school are \$1.25.

Activity Tickets

Activity tickets are intended to admit all students to regularly scheduled home activities or events, with about the only exceptions being tournaments and the Pops Concert. Students in grades 1-5 may purchase an activity ticket, if they wish. All students who participate in activities for which an activity stipend is paid are required to purchase an activity ticket as a condition of participation since they are the primary beneficiaries of the activity programs. For example, staff activity stipends include: all sports, marching band, forensics, cheerleading, drama, oral interp, DI, FFA, FCCLA, FBLA etc.

Activity Ticket prices for 2021-2022 are as follows:

Grades 1-5	\$25.00
Grades 6-12	\$30.00
Adults	\$45 (10 events)
Adults – All Events	\$75.00

Admission Prices:

Adults = \$5.00; \$6.00 for double headers

Students, Grades 1-12 = \$4.00

School Cancellations

All school cancellations or early dismissals due to inclement weather or emergencies will be sent out via the Aptegey Messenger System. Within minutes, Aptegey automatically sends a pre-recorded message to every recipient on a selected list. Parents will be asked to provide phone numbers and e-mail addresses (when available) to the school so that a selected calling list can be created. Emergency cancellations will be broadcast over TV stations KSFY, KDLT, and KELO as well as the District Facebook page and website, www.grotonarea.com, and by push notifications on the District app (Groton Area Tigers, SD).

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Groton Area Tigers, SD Mobile App

The Groton Area School District has a mobile application available for both Apple and Android devices. Search "Groton Area Tigers, SD" in your app store and download the free app. Be sure to set up the app to allow push notifications to receive timely and important updates from your child's school. The app includes event calendars, athletics schedules, staff contacts, school menus, access to up-to-date news and information and access to archived documents.

Immunization Requirements (SDCL 13-28-7.1)

State law requires that any pupil entering school or an early childhood program in the state shall, prior to admission, be required to present the appropriate school authorities certification from a licensed physician that the new child has received or is in the process of receiving adequate immunization against poliomyelitis, diphtheria, pertussis, rubeola, rubella, mumps, tetanus, and varicella, according to recommendations provided by the Department of Health. The Department of Health may modify or delete any of the required immunizations. As an alternative to the requirement for a physician's certification, the pupil may present:

- 1) Certificate from a licensed physician stating the physical condition of the child would be such that immunization would endanger the child's life or health; or
- 2) A written statement signed by one parent or guardian that the child is adherent to a religious doctrine whose teachings are opposed to such immunization; or
- 3) A written statement signed by one parent or guardian requesting that the local health department give the immunization because the parents or guardians lack the means to pay for such immunization.

Students enrolling in 6th grade are required to get one dose of Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis (Tdap) vaccine and one dose of Meningococcal vaccine on or after their 11th birthday.

Harassment and Bullying Policies

The district has harassment & bullying policies in place in both buildings. Bullying among students can be defined as intentional, repeated hurtful acts, words or other behavior, such as name-calling, threatening and/or shunning committed by one or more students against another. This definition also includes "cyber-bullying" which is the sending or posting of cruel or harmful texts or images using the Internet or other digital media such as cell phones, etc. For a complete copy of the district's harassment or bullying policy, please contact the building principal.

Grievance Procedure

In an effort to maintain effective communications, if you have a particular concern about your child's progress or about what is happening on the bus, at school, in a class or activity, first discuss it with the driver, teacher, or director of the activity. If your concern or grievance remains unresolved at that level, or if there is a need to share your concern, contact the principal in charge of the school in which your child attends. If the concern/grievance remains unresolved at that level, contact the superintendent. If school policy is at issue or if the concern/grievance remains unresolved, you may request that the superintendent include the subject on the school board meeting agenda. To maintain confidentiality, student matters may be confined to an "executive session" with the Board and administration.

Complaint Policy for Federal Programs and Homelessness Policy

A parent, student, employee, or district stakeholder who has a complaint regarding the use of federal funds and is unable to solve the issue, may address the complaint in writing to the district's superintendent. Disputes addressing the enrollment, transportation, and other barriers to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness are also addressed under this procedure. For a copy of the complete policy, contact the school superintendent or refer to the District web site.

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Child Find

Parents or guardians are to be informed that the Groton Area School District 06-6 continuously conducts a "Child Find" search to identify and evaluate District children ages 0-21, with special education needs. Persons who know of a child with un-served education needs may refer the child, by name, to the appropriate building principal. With the parent or guardian's consent, an evaluation will be made. After the evaluation has been completed, a placement committee will meet with the parent or guardian to determine if special assistance is needed.

Title I

The federal government provides funding to states each year for Title I services. The goal of Title I is to provide extra help in math and reading for eligible students. Students are selected for the program based on information provided by classroom teachers, parents, and achievement test results. Title I services in our district are provided to students in grades K-5, with a strong emphasis on students in grades K-3.

Title I Right to Know – Teacher Certification

As a parent or guardian of a student attending a school that is receiving Federal Title I dollars (Groton Area Elementary), you have the right to know the professional qualifications of the teacher(s) and instructional paraprofessionals who instruct your child. We are happy to provide this information to you. At any time, you may ask:

1. Whether the teacher met state qualifications and certification requirements for the grade level and subject he/she is teaching;
2. Whether the teacher received an emergency or conditional certificate through which state qualifications were waived, and;
3. What undergraduate or graduate degrees the teacher holds, including graduate certificates and additional degrees, and major(s) or area(s) of concentration.

You may also ask whether your child receives help from a paraprofessional. If your child receives this assistance, we can provide you with information about the paraprofessional's qualifications.

Federal Compliance Notice

Students, their parents, and employees of the Groton Area School District #06-6 are hereby notified that this school district does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, national origin, color, age, disability or religion in employment practices and educational activities. To ensure compliance with Section 427 of GEPA, effective steps shall be taken to remove potential barriers so as to ensure equity of access and participation in grant programs and to achieve high standards. Any person having inquiries concerning compliance or application of Title VI, Affirmative Action, Title IX, Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act is directed to contact Federal Program compliance coordinator, Joe Schwan, Superintendent, Groton Area School District 06-6, Phone 397-2351 or, Department of Education, Civil Rights Office, 8930 Ward Parkway, Suite 2037, Kansas City, MO 64114; Phone: (816) 268-0550; TTD (800) 4370-0833; FAX: (816) 823-1404; Web link: <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html?src=mr>

FERPA Notification of Rights

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day the Groton Area School District receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should submit to the school principal a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The school official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the Groton Area School District to amend a record should write the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible

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student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the school board. A school official also may include a volunteer or contractor outside of the school who performs an institutional service of function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the Groton Area School District to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Student Directory Information

The Groton Area School District routinely discloses names, addresses, and telephone numbers to the South Dakota Board of Regents, South Dakota Technical Institutions, and upon request, to military recruiters, subject to a parent's or eligible student's request not to disclose such information without written consent. Parents or eligible students who wish to opt-out of the disclosure of this information may contact the school office for the appropriate document or may obtain it here: <https://bit.ly/3fFyC58>

Notice of Nondiscrimination

Applicants for admission and employment, students, parents, employees, and all professional organizations holding negotiated agreements or professional agreements with the school district are hereby notified that this district does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, age, gender, disability, national origin, or ancestry in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs and activities.

Section 504

Section 504 is the part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that applies to persons with disabilities. Section 504 is a civil rights act that protects the civil and constitutional rights of persons with disabilities. It states that no person with a disability can be excluded from or denied benefits of any program receiving federal financial assistance. Section 504 and special education are two separate services.

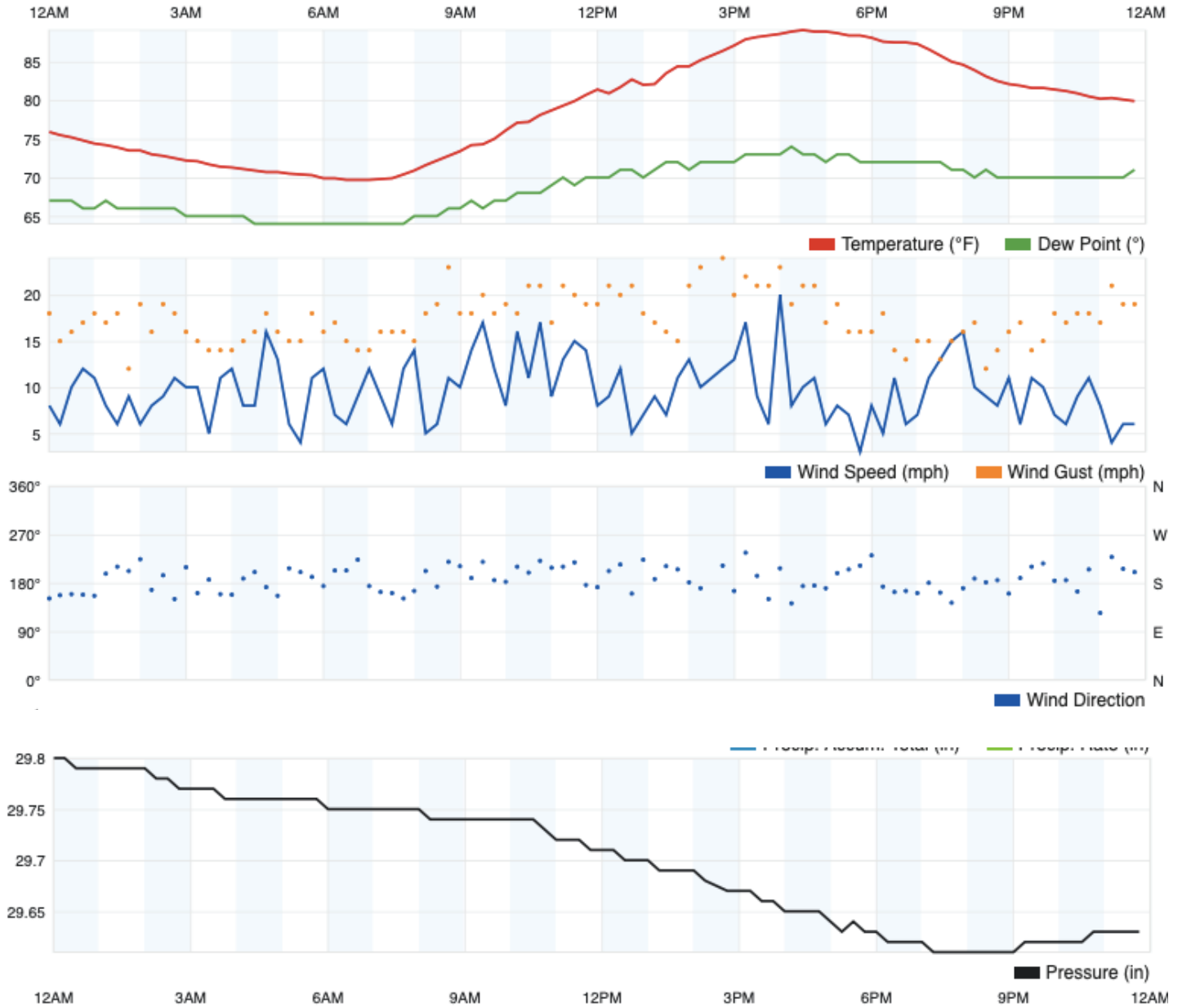
Notification of Asbestos in School Building(s)

In compliance with the Asbestos-Containing Materials in Schools Rule, the Groton Area School District had its school buildings inspected on 3/19/2019 by an asbestos inspector, accredited by the state of South Dakota. During that inspection, areas of suspected asbestos (ACBM) were identified and inspected. The Groton Area School District has an Asbestos Management Plan which provides information on the periodic monitoring of the condition of asbestos (ACBM) remaining in the school buildings. Anyone that would like to see the Asbestos Management Plan can contact a building principal or superintendent.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
Mostly Sunny then Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny then Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Breezy then Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny then Chance T-storms
High: 94 °F	Low: 72 °F	High: 95 °F	Low: 72 °F	High: 94 °F

Hot! Then Cooler Behind A Cold Front's Passage

Maximum Temperature Forecast

	8/17	8/18	8/19	8/20	8/21	8/22	8/23
	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon
Aberdeen	94	96	94	82	77	82	85
Britton	93	92	92	80	75	78	81
Eagle Butte	100	98	84	76	77	82	86
Eureka	98	99	92	78	77	81	85
Gettysburg	98	97	89	78	77	81	85
Kennebec	99	99	92	82	81	86	89
McIntosh	98	96	80	71	74	78	83
Milbank	93	92	92	81	75	78	81
Miller	97	96	93	80	79	83	87
Mobridge	99	99	91	80	80	85	88
Murdo	102	101	91	82	82	87	89
Pierre	103	100	91	82	82	86	90
Redfield	95	96	94	81	79	83	86
Sisseton	94	92	92	82	75	77	81
Watertown	92	91	91	80	75	79	82
Wheaton	92	92	92	82	74	76	81

* Table values in °F

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

The Best Rain Chances Are Tied To The Front's Passage

Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	8/17	8/18	8/19	8/20	8/21	8/22	8/23	8/24
	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
Aberdeen	1	12	56	62	44	31	23	26
Britton	2	10	45	67	51	35	28	30
Eagle Butte	2	33	75	75	40	25	17	17
Eureka	3	24	69	73	44	29	23	24
Gettysburg	1	24	73	73	40	25	19	19
Kennebec		21	69	69	34	23	16	20
McIntosh	6	33	74	74	46	28	22	22
Milbank	1	3	33	60	50	31	30	30
Miller		13	62	65	38	25	19	21
Mobridge	3	28	75	75	42	26	21	21
Murdo		33	72	72	34	24	14	16
Pierre		27	72	72	35	24	17	17
Redfield		10	58	61	40	27	22	23
Sisseton	1	5	37	62	51	33	29	29
Watertown		3	36	57	45	29	26	26
Wheaton	2	5	33	63	55	34	32	32

* Table values in %

Updated: 8/17/2021 4:27 AM Central

The hot and breezy conditions will continue for a couple more days until a strong cold front moves through the region late this week bringing precipitation chances mainly Thursday night and Friday, along with a cooler air mass for Friday and the weekend ahead. The hot and breezy conditions today are going to create a hazardous fire weather situation across central and north central South Dakota favorable for rapid fire growth, should a fire develop this afternoon. Avoid outdoor burning today.

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Today in Weather History

August 17, 1961: Intensive rainfall occurred during the overnight hours on the 17th through the early morning hours on the 18th. Some rainfall amounts include 4.13 inches in Clark, 2.52 inches 1 W of Summit, 2.50 in Andover, 2.20 in Waubay, 2.15 in Wilmot, 2.12 in Wheaton, and 2.10 in Clear Lake.

August 17, 2007: An estimated four to six inches of rain and hail to the size of baseballs caused localized flooding between Piedmont and Tilford in Meade County, especially near poor drainage areas and at a barricade along a frontage road. The water washed over several roads and was several inches deep on Interstate 90, forcing law enforcement officials to close it for a couple of hours. Torrential rains estimated at four to six inches fell west of Hermosa in Custer County between 6 pm and 8 pm MST. Battle and Grace Coolidge Creeks overflowed their banks and several dry canyons filled with water and drained into the creeks. State highways 40 and 36 were flooded in numerous spots. A river gauge on Battle Creek just east of Hermosa crested at 14.91 feet at 9 pm, rising from 2.63 ft at 7:30 pm and above the flood stage of 8.0 feet. About six inches of water covered Highway 79 at the Battle Creek bridge. A railroad bridge about 3/4 mile downstream became clogged with debris and water rose behind the embankment and flooded six homes. At about 8:30 pm MST, a section of the embankment failed, flooding a new subdivision on the other side. All of the approximately 20 houses were damaged; three homes were washed off their foundations, and one of those houses was carried a half a mile east of the subdivision by the flowing water. There were no injuries.

1899: Hurricane San Ciriaco set many records on its path. Killing nearly 3,500 people in Puerto Rico, it was the deadliest hurricane to hit the island and the strongest at the time, until 30 years later when the island was affected by the Hurricane San Felipe Segundo, a Category 5 hurricane, in 1928. It was also the tenth deadliest Atlantic hurricane ever recorded. San Ciriaco is also the longest lasting Atlantic hurricane in recorded history, continuing for 28 days. On August 17, the hurricane turned back to the northwest and made landfall near Hatteras, North Carolina on the following day. San Ciriaco remains the strongest hurricane to make landfall on the Outer Banks since 1899.

1915 - A hurricane hit Galveston, TX, with wind gusts to 120 mph and a twelve foot storm surge. The storm claimed 275 lives, including forty-two on Galveston Island, with most deaths due to drowning. Of 250 homes built outside the seawall (which was constructed after the catastrophic hurricane of 1900), just ten percent were left standing. (The Weather Channel)

1946: An estimated F-4 tornado killed 11 people and injured 100 others in the Mankato, Minnesota area around 6:52 PM. The deaths and most of the injuries occurred in the complete destruction of the 26 cabins at the Green Gables tourist camp, 3 miles southwest of Mankato. A 27-ton road grader was reportedly hurled about 100 feet. Another tornado an hour later destroys downtown Wells, Minnesota.

1969: The music festival, known as Woodstock, should have ended on this day. Jimi Hendrix, the last act to perform, was delayed due to rain on Sunday evening. Jimi Hendrix took the stage at 8:30 am Monday morning.

1969 - Camille, the second worst hurricane in U.S. history, smashed into the Mississippi coast. Winds gusted to 172 mph at Main Pass Block LA, and to 190 mph near Bay Saint Louis MS. The hurricane claimed 256 lives, and caused 1.3 billion dollars damage. Several ocean going ships were carried over seven miles inland by the hurricane. The hurricane produced winds to 200 mph, and a storm surge of 24.6 feet. Complete destruction occurred in some coastal areas near the eye of the hurricane. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Northern and Central Plains Region. One thunderstorm spawned a tornado near Fairbury NE, along with baseball size hail and wind gusts to 100 mph, causing severe crop damage west of town. Ten cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Syracuse NY hit 97 degrees for the first time in twenty-two years. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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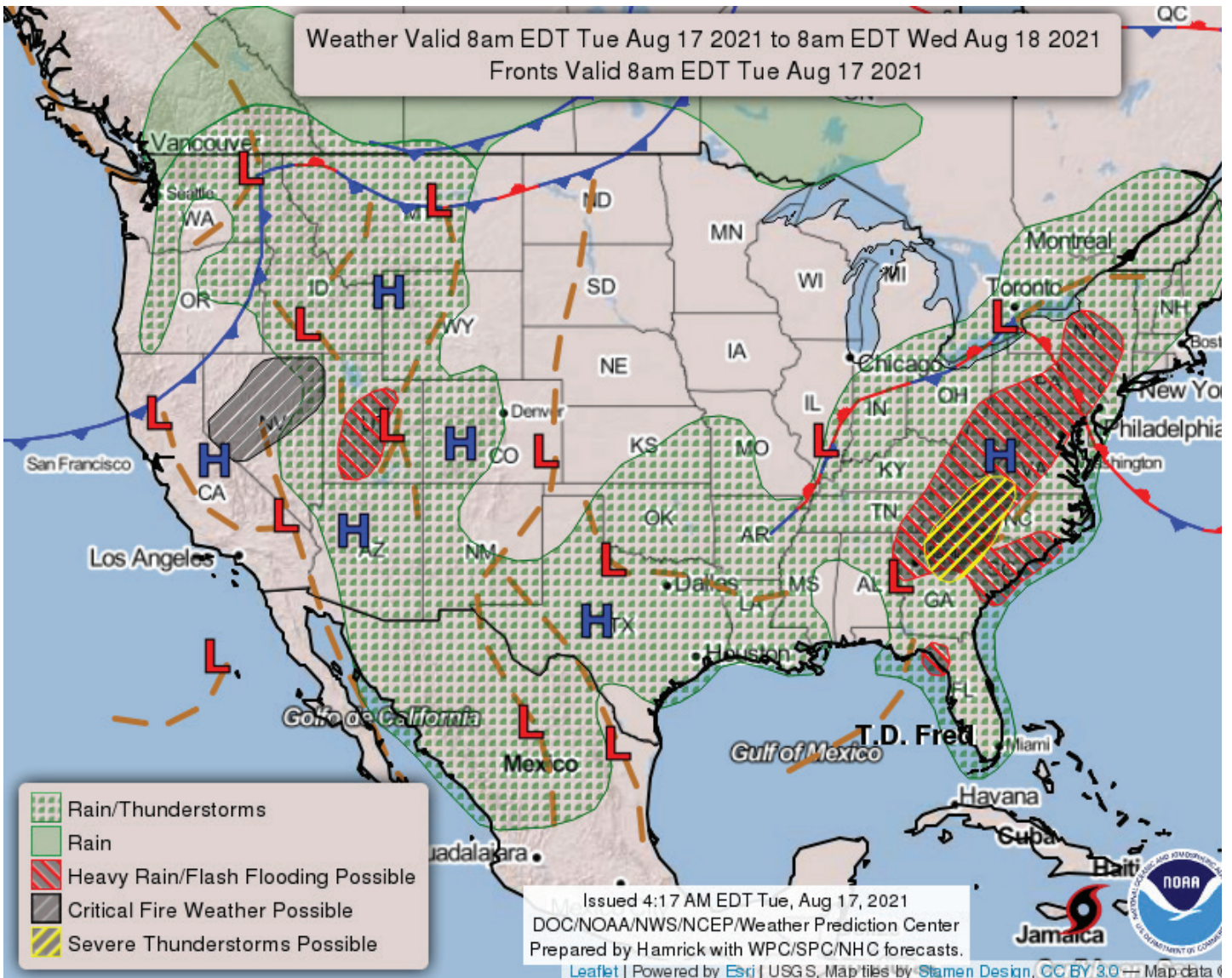
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 89.1 °F at 4:30 PM
Low Temp: 69.7 °F at 6:30 AM
Wind: 24 mph at 2:45 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 104° in 1976
Record Low: 39° in 2012
Average High: 83°F
Average Low: 57°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 1.15
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.12
Average Precip to date: 15.25
Precip Year to Date: 8.39
Sunset Tonight: 8:37 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:39 a.m.



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FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING

Who better to write of God than "the man of God?" Not only was Psalm 90 written by Moses, but beneath the number of the Psalm and before the verses in the Psalm are the words: "A Prayer of Moses - the Man of God."

What a powerful description of a Statesman and a servant-leader of God. Moses was not only God's lawgiver and leader, but was chosen by God to bring the Hebrews out of Egypt, mold them into a nation to serve and honor Him, but to lead them victoriously to within reach of the land He promised them.

There are marvelous statements made about Moses in Hebrews: He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter which himself at great risk. He chose to share the oppression of God's people when he could have lived a life of sin and worldly pleasure. He decided to suffer for the sake of the Lord rather than own the treasures of Egypt because he looked to his future with his King the Creator. He left the land of Egypt unafraid of the king's anger and wrath and never looked back because he kept his eyes on God who he knew would never leave or forsake him. In a bold move of leadership he commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and sprinkle blood on their doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons.

What gave him his vision, his focus, his strength, and his courage? What enabled him to look beyond the fleeting moments of pleasures in a palace to an eternity with God? Where did his wisdom and insight, patience and discipline come from? Why did he refuse worldly wealth and power?

Because of his faith in the God who is everlasting.

Prayer: Lord, give us a faith that will empower us to live a life that knows no fear or regrets as we trust and follow You. May we be "People of God." In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Scripture For Today: Psalm 90:2 Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

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2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament
06/19/2021 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament
08/28/2021 Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am Olive Grove Golf Course
08/29/2021 Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day at GHS Parking Lot (4-5 p.m.)
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/04/2021 Olive Grove Tour of Homes
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

News from the Associated Press

Sioux Falls police arrest man 'touching himself' near window

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police said Monday they have arrested a 71-year-old South Dakota man who was "touching himself" outside of a 10-year-old girl's bedroom window.

Sioux Falls Police spokesman Samuel Clemens said the man was arrested late Friday after the girl's mother reported the incident, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported. The mother followed the man until police arrived and arrested him.

The man was arrested for indecent exposure with previous felony convictions. He has been arrested for indecent exposure two other times since March of 2019.

South Dakota virus cases climb, hospitalizations dip

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Coronavirus cases climbed in South Dakota Monday, but the number of hospitalization from the virus took a dip.

The Department of Health reported 182 new cases, pushing the tally of people with active infections statewide to 1,355. People hospitalized with the virus dropped to 73 over the weekend. Over the past two weeks, the rolling average number of daily new cases has tripled.

However, more people are getting vaccinated as the delta virus variant threatens to power a fresh surge of cases. Over 2,500 more people received a vaccine, according to the Department of Health. Roughly 48% of the state's total population has been fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Health officials also reported another death from COVID-19 from a woman over the age of 79. Over the course of the pandemic, 2,053 people have died from the virus.

South Dakota Prep Polls

By The Associated Press

The preseason South Dakota Prep Media Football Poll is listed below, ranking the top-five teams, the team's record, and points received. First-place votes are listed in parentheses.

Class 11AAA

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP
1. Harrisburg	(8)	0-0	72
2. Brandon Valley	(7)	0-0	69
3. Sioux Falls Roosevelt	(1)	0-0	45
4. Sioux Falls O'Gorman	-	0-0	30
5. Jefferson -	0-0	10	

Receiving Votes: Washington 8, Lincoln 6.

Class 11AA

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP
1. Pierre (13)	0-0	76	
2. Brookings	(2)	0-0	48
3. Yankton -	0-0	39	
4. Tea Area (1)	0-0	37	
5. Watertown	-	0-0	14

Others receiving votes: Aberdeen Central 12, Mitchell 7, Sturgis 4, Huron 3.

Class 11A

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP
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1. Canton (9)	0-0	71	
2. Dell Rapids (6)	0-0	61	
3. Madison (1)	0-0	48	
4. West Central -	0-0	31	
5. Dakota Valley -	0-0	15	

Others receiving votes: Sioux Falls Christian 9, Milbank 4, Custer 1.

Class 11B

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP
1. Winner (16)	0-0	80	
2. Bridgewater-Emery-Ethan	-	0-0	58
3. Sioux Valley -	0-0	52	
4. St. Thomas More	-	0-0	21
5. Woonsocket5Wess Spr5Sanborn Cen.-	0-0	20	

Receiving votes: Elk Point-Jefferson 5, Mobridge-Pollock 3, McCook Central-Montrose 1.

Class 9AA

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP
1. Platt-Geddes (11)	0-0	75	
2. Canistota-Freeman	(5)	0-0	60
3. Hanson -	0-0	37	
4. Hamlin -	0-0	31	
5. Viborg-Hurley -	0-0	26	

Others receiving votes: Timber Lake 3, Lemmon-McIntosh 3, Florence-Henry 2, Chester Area 2, Parkston 1.

Class 9A

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP
1. Wolsey-Wessington	(12)	0-0	66
2. De Smet (1)	0-0	45	
3. Howard -	0-0	43	
4. Herreid-Selby Area	-	0-0	29
5. Warner (2)	0-0	23	

Others receiving votes: Wall 19, Colman-Egan (1) 5, Gregory 5, Britton-Hecla 2, Castlewood 1, Irene-Wakonda 1, Kadoka Area 1.

Class 9B

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP
1. Dell Rapids St. Mary (7)	0-0	66	
2. Harding County (6)	0-0	60	
3. Faulkton Area (2)	0-0	45	
4. Alcester-Hudson -	0-0	27	
5. Corsica-Stickney	-	0-0	17

Others receiving votes: Sully Buttes 7, Langford Area 6, Faith 5, Colome (1) 5, Potter County 2.

The Latest: Germany halts development aid to Afghanistan

The Latest on Afghanistan:

BERLIN — Germany has suspended its development aid to Afghanistan after the Taliban's takeover of the country.

German Development Minister Gerd Mueller told daily newspaper Rheinische Post on Tuesday that "the state-run development aid has currently been suspended."

Mueller added that all German and international employees of the German developmental agency GIZ had left the country and Germany was now trying to get local Afghan staff evacuated as well.

German news agency dpa reported that until now Afghanistan had been the country that received the most German developmental aid in world.

The agency reported that the German government had planned to give an estimated 250 million euros

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(\$294 million) in developmental aid in 2021, but that money had not been paid out.

Other financial aid, not directly linked to the development aid, would have included support for police training or humanitarian aid. It was not immediately clear how much of that aid had already been given to Afghanistan. Dpa reported that altogether all German financial aid for Afghanistan would have added up to 430 million euros in 2021.

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GENEVA — The United Nations is urging the Taliban to keep its “promises,” including its pledges to grant an amnesty to former government workers in Afghanistan, show inclusiveness for women and allow girls to remain in school.

“The Taliban have made a number of statements that on the surface are reassuring,” U.N. human rights office spokesman Rupert Colville told reporters Tuesday in Geneva. “But their actions speak deeper than words, and it’s very early now – it’s very fluid.”

He said the Taliban’s promises “need to be honored.”

“Understandably, given their past history, these declarations have been greeted with some skepticism,” Colville added. “Nevertheless, the promises have been made, and whether or not they are honored or broken will be closely scrutinized.”

Colville alluded to comments a day earlier from U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres about “chilling reports” of human rights abuses and restrictions on rights – especially those of women and girls – in areas captured by the Taliban in recent weeks.

He also called on U.N. member states to “use their influence” with the Taliban to protect civilian lives.

—
GUELPH, Canada — Talks to expand a future Afghan government beyond only Taliban members are continuing in Kabul.

Officials close to the discussions on Tuesday are hoping for “some good news” within a day or two. They spoke on condition of anonymity because until now no one wanted details of negotiations released to the media.

Senior Taliban leader Amir Khan Muttaqi has already held several rounds of talks with Kabul’s political leadership, including Abdullah Abdullah, who once headed the country’s negotiating council and former president Hamid Karzai.

At least one round of the talks went through the night. Discussion appeared to focus on how a Taliban-dominated government would respond to rights gained over the last 20 years.

The announcements of general amnesty and urging women to return to work appeared to indicate progress may have been made.

Muttaqi, a former higher education minister when the Taliban last ruled, began making contacts with Afghan political leaders even before President Ashraf Ghani secretly slipped away from the Presidential Palace on the weekend. Ghani’s departure left a devastating vacuum that Taliban who were surrounding the city strode in to fill.

Muttaqi had reached out to U.S.-allied warlords prior to Kabul’s collapse seemingly starting the process of greater inclusivity in their government.

The talks underway are aimed at bringing other non-Taliban leaders into the government, which Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen earlier said would be an “inclusive Afghan government.”

Shaheen earlier told The AP a government will be announced after negotiations were completed.

— Kathy Gannon

—
KATHMANDU, Nepal — A chartered flight has flown 127 Nepalese nationals from Afghanistan who were working at the embassy of the United States and allies.

They had been first flown to Kuwait and then taken chartered flight to Kathmandu arranged by the American government.

Officials said that in Kathmandu, U.S. embassy officials received them and the Nepalese nationals were

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escorted by soldiers. They were to be driven later to a holding center where they would be tested for COVID-19.

They are the first group of Nepalese nationals to be rescued from Afghanistan. It is estimated there are hundreds of Nepalese nationals working in there mostly doing security work.

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Denmark is giving 100 million kroner (\$16 million) for Afghanistan to be channeled through the Red Cross and the United Nations as “the situation is expected to worsen in the near future.”

Denmark’s Foreign Aid Minister Flemming Moeller Mortensen called the situation “deeply worrying.” He added in a statement Tuesday: “Even before the Taliban took power, almost half of the population was dependent on humanitarian aid, and the situation is expected to worsen in the near future.”

LONDON -- British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab says the government plans to increase humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, “probably by 10%.”

Raab said the aid budget will be reconfigured for development and humanitarian purposes in Afghanistan and that the Taliban will not get any of the money previously earmarked for security.

“I don’t think we will condition the humanitarian relief we provide to ordinary Afghans on what the Taliban does,” he said.

Raab added that the aid would not be based on the Taliban meeting certain criteria, such as on governance.

That the British government is planning an “open-hearted” and “bespoke” asylum policy for Afghan citizens. The details, he said, will be set out soon by Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Home Secretary Priti Patel.

NEW DELHI -- A military flight carrying Indian officials has landed in the western state of Gujarat after taking off from Kabul’s main airport.

The Press Trust of India reported the landing Tuesday after India’s foreign ministry had said the country was evacuating its ambassador and other Indian staff from Kabul. The announcement comes amid a scramble by many nations to get their diplomatic staff out of Afghanistan after the Taliban swept into power.

India’s public broadcaster reported that the plane carried more than 120 Indian officials. Another military aircraft brought home around 40 Indian diplomats and other staff on Monday, local media reported. However, India was forced to pause its repatriation efforts to bring back stranded citizens after Kabul suspended commercial operations at its airport.

The Indian government on Tuesday also announced a new electronic visa that would fast-track applications from Afghans who wish to escape to India. The foreign ministry had said it was in constant touch with Indian nationals in Afghanistan, especially those from the Afghan Sikh and Hindu communities.

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan says U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has called the country’s foreign minister to discuss the path forward in Afghanistan after the Taliban’s swift takeover.

The ministry’s statement Tuesday quotes Shah Mahmood Qureshi as telling Blinken by phone that an “inclusive political settlement was the best way forward” for resolving the current political impasse.

Qureshi said Pakistan would remain closely engaged with the U.S. and other international partners in promoting efforts in support of a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

The latest development comes hours after Pakistan’s political and military leadership called for a political settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan.

The Taliban have seized power in Afghanistan two weeks before the U.S. was set to complete its troop withdrawal after a costly two-decade war. A defiant U.S. President Joe Biden has stood by his decision to end America’s longest war.

The U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 ousted the insurgents from power, but they never left. After they blitzed across the country in recent days, the Western-backed government that has run the

country for 20 years collapsed. Afghans, fearing for the future, are racing to the airport, one of the last routes out of the country.

CANBERRA, Australia — Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison says his government will not be able to evacuate as many Afghans from Kabul as he wanted.

Australia is sending three transport and air-to-air refueling jets with 250 military personnel to repatriate more than 130 Australians and their families from Afghanistan.

Australia also wants to evacuate hundreds of Afghans who had worked for Australian troops and diplomats in roles such as interpreters.

Morrison said he is optimistic that Australia's evacuation operation would succeed despite the Taliban controlling Kabul.

"I want you to know that we will continue to do everything we can for those who have stood with us," Morrison said in a message to 39,000 Australian military personnel who served in Afghanistan.

He added that "support won't reach all that it should."

Foreign Minister Marise Payne said "several hundred" Afghans who had worked for Australia remained in Afghanistan. Australia has resettled 430 since April.

Taliban announces 'amnesty,' urges women to join government

By AHMAD SEIR, TAMEEM AKHGAR, KATHY GANNON and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Taliban declared an "amnesty" across Afghanistan and urged women to join their government Tuesday, seeking to convince a wary population that they have changed a day after deadly chaos gripped the main airport as desperate crowds tried to flee their rule.

Following a blitz across Afghanistan that saw many cities fall to the insurgents without a fight, the Taliban have sought to portray themselves as more moderate than when they imposed a brutal rule in the late 1990s. But many Afghans remain skeptical.

Older generations remember the Taliban's ultraconservative Islamic views, which included severe restrictions on women as well as stonings, amputations and public executions before they were ousted by the U.S.-led invasion that followed the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

While there were no major reports of abuses or fighting in the capital of Kabul as the Taliban now patrol its streets, many residents have stayed home and remain fearful after the insurgents' takeover saw prisons emptied and armories looted. Many women have expressed dread that the two-decade Western experiment to expand their rights and remake Afghanistan would not survive the resurgent Taliban.

Germany, meanwhile, halted development aid to Afghanistan over the Taliban takeover. Such aid is a crucial source of funding for the country — and the Taliban's efforts to project a milder version of themselves may be aimed at ensuring that money continues to flow.

The promises of amnesty from Enamullah Samangani, a member of the Taliban's cultural commission, were the first comments on how the Taliban might govern on a national level. His remarks remained vague, however, as the Taliban are still negotiating with political leaders of the country's fallen government and no formal handover deal has been announced.

"The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan with full dignity and honesty has announced a complete amnesty for all Afghanistan, especially those who were with the opposition or supported the occupiers for years and recently," he said.

Other Taliban leaders have said they won't seek revenge on those who worked with the Afghan government or foreign countries. But some in Kabul allege Taliban fighters have lists of people who cooperated with the government and are seeking them out.

Samangani also described women as "the main victims of the more than 40 years of crisis in Afghanistan."

"The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan doesn't want the women to be the victims anymore," he said. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is ready to provide women with environment to work and study, and the presence of women in different (government) structures according to Islamic law and in accordance with

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our cultural values.”

That would be a marked departure from the last time the Taliban were in power, when women were largely confined to their homes. Samangani didn't describe exactly what he meant by Islamic law, implying people already knew the rules. He added that “all sides should join” a government.

In another sign of the Taliban's efforts to portray a new image, a female television anchor on the private broadcaster Tolo interviewed a Taliban official on camera Tuesday in a studio — an interaction that once would have been unthinkable. Meanwhile, women in hijabs demonstrated briefly in Kabul, holding signs demanding the Taliban not “eliminate women” from public life.

Rupert Colville, a spokesman for the United Nations' high commissioner for human rights, noted both the Taliban's vows and the fear of those now under their rule.

“Such promises will need to be honored, and for the time being — again understandably, given past history — these declarations have been greeted with some skepticism,” he said in a statement. “There have been many hard-won advances in human rights over the past two decades. The rights of all Afghans must be defended.”

Germany suspended development aid to Afghanistan, estimated at 250 million euros (\$294 million) for 2021. The German news agency dpa described Afghanistan as the nation that received the most development aid from Berlin. Other funding separately goes to security services and humanitarian aid.

Swedish Development Aid Minister Per Olsson Fridh, meanwhile, said his government would slow down aid to the country in an interview with the Dagens Nyheter newspaper. But Britain committed to an increase.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said humanitarian aid could rise by 10%. He said the aid budget would be reconfigured for development and humanitarian purposes and that the Taliban would not get any money previously earmarked for security — but he said aid would not be conditioned on how the Taliban govern.

Meanwhile, Kabul's international airport, the only way out for many, reopened to military evacuation flights under the watch of American troops.

All flights were suspended on Monday when thousands of people rushed the airport, desperate to leave the country. In shocking scenes captured on video, some clung to a plane as it took off and then fell to their deaths. At least seven people died in chaos at the airport, U.S. officials said.

Stefano Pontecorvo, NATO's senior civilian representative to Afghanistan, posted video online Tuesday showing the runway empty with U.S. troops on the tarmac. What appeared to be a military cargo transport plane could be seen in the distance.

“I see airplanes landing and taking off,” he wrote on Twitter.

Overnight, flight-tracking data showed a U.S. military plane taking off for Qatar, home to the U.S. military Central Command's forward headquarters. A British military cargo plane, headed to Kabul, took off from Dubai.

Still, there were indications that the situation was still tenuous. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul, now operating from the airport, urged Americans to register online for evacuations but not come to the airport before being contacted.

The German Foreign Ministry said a first German military transport plane landed in Kabul, but it could only take seven people on board before it had to depart again due to continued chaos.

Across Afghanistan, the International Committee of the Red Cross said thousands had been wounded in fighting as the Taliban swept across the country in recent days. However, in many places, security forces and politicians handed over their provinces and bases without a fight, likely fearing what would happen when the last American troops withdrew as planned at the end of the month.

A resolute U.S. President Joe Biden on Monday said he stood “squarely behind” his decision to withdraw American forces and acknowledged the “gut-wrenching” images unfolding in Kabul. Biden said he faced a choice between honoring a previously negotiated withdrawal agreement or sending thousands more troops back to begin a third decade of war.

“After 20 years, I've learned the hard way that there was never a good time to withdraw U.S. forces,” Biden said in a televised address from the White House.

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Talks continued Tuesday between the Taliban and several Afghan government officials, including former President Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, who once headed the country's negotiating council. Discussions focused on how a Taliban-dominated government would operate given the changes in Afghanistan over the last 20 years, rather than just dividing up who controlled what ministries, officials with knowledge of the negotiations said. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss confidential details of the talks.

President Ashraf Ghani earlier fled the country amid the Taliban advance and his whereabouts remain unknown.

Tropical storm drenching earthquake-stricken Haiti

By MARK STEVENSON and EVENS SANON Associated Press

LES CAYES, Haiti (AP) — Tropical Storm Grace swept over Haiti with drenching rains just two days after a powerful earthquake battered the impoverished Caribbean nation, adding to the misery of thousands who lost loved ones, suffered injuries or found themselves homeless and forcing overwhelmed hospitals and rescuers to act quickly.

After nightfall, heavy rain and strong winds whipped at the country's southwestern area, hit hardest by Saturday's quake, and officials warned that rainfall could reach 15 inches (38 centimeters) in some areas before the storm moved on. Port-au-Prince, the capital, also saw heavy rains. Grace regained tropical storm status after previously falling to the level of a tropical depression.

The storm arrived on the same day that the country's Civil Protection Agency raised the death toll from the earthquake to 1,419 and the number of injured to 6,000, many of whom have had to wait for medical help lying outside in wilting heat.

Grace's rain and wind raised the threat of mudslides and flash flooding as it slowly passed by southwestern Haiti's Tiburon Peninsula overnight, before heading toward Jamaica and southeastern Cuba on Tuesday. Forecasters said it could be a hurricane before hitting Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.

The quake nearly wrecked some towns in the southwest in the latest disaster to befall the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation. Haitians already were struggling with the coronavirus pandemic, gang violence, worsening poverty and the July 7 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse.

"We are in an exceptional situation," Prime Minister Ariel Henry told reporters Monday afternoon as the storm approached.

A hospital in the badly damaged town of Les Cayes was so crowded with patients after the earthquake that many had to lie in patios, corridors, verandas and hallways, but the approaching storm had officials scrambling to relocate them as best they could.

"We had planned to put up tents (in hospital patios), but we were told that could not be safe," said Gede Peterson, director of Les Cayes General Hospital.

It is not the first time the hospital has been forced to improvise. The refrigeration in the hospital's morgue has not worked for three months, but after the earthquake struck Saturday, staff had to store as many as 20 bodies in the small space. Relatives quickly came to take most to private embalming services or immediate burial. By Monday, only three bodies were in the morgue.

"We are working now to ensure that the resources we have are going to get to the places that are hardest hit," said Civil Protection Agency head Jerry Chandler, referring to the hard-hit towns of Les Cayes and Jeremie and the department of Nippes.

Quake victims continued to stream to Les Cayes' overwhelmed general hospital, waiting on stair steps, in corridors and on an open veranda.

"After two days, they are almost always generally infected," said Dr. Paurus Michelete, who had treated 250 patients and was one of only three doctors on call when the quake hit. He added that pain killers, analgesics and steel pins to mend fractures were running out amid the crush of patients.

Meanwhile, rescuers and scrap metal scavengers dug into the floors of a collapsed hotel in the coastal town, where 15 bodies had already been extracted. Jean Moïse Fortunè, whose brother, the hotel owner and a prominent politician, was killed in the quake, believed there were more people trapped in the rubble.

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But based on the size of voids that workers cautiously peered into, perhaps a foot (30 centimeters) in depth, finding survivors appeared unlikely.

As work, fuel and money ran out, desperate Les Cayes residents searched collapsed houses for scrap metal to sell. Others waited for money wired from abroad, a mainstay of Haiti's economy even before the quake.

Anthony Emile waited six hours in a line with dozens of others trying to get money that his brother had wired from Chile, where he has worked since the 2010 quake that devastated Haiti's capital and killed tens of thousands.

"We have been waiting since morning for it, but there are too many people," said Emile, a banana farmer who said relatives in the countryside depend on him giving them money to survive.

In Jeremie, Police Commissioner Paul Menard denied a social media report about looting.

"If it were going to happen, it would have been on the first or second night," Menard said.

Officials said the magnitude 7.2 earthquake left more than 7,000 homes destroyed and nearly 5,000 damaged from the quake, leaving some 30,000 families homeless. Hospitals, schools, offices and churches also were destroyed or badly damaged.

Josil Eliophane, 84, crouched on the steps of Les Cayes General Hospital, clutching an X-ray showing his shattered arm bone and pleading for pain medication. Michelete said he would give one of his few remaining shots to Eliophane, who ran out of his house as the quake hit, only to have a wall fall on him.

Nearby, on the hospital's open-air veranda, patients were on beds and mattresses, hooked up to IV bags of saline fluid. Others lay in the garden under bed sheets erected to shield them from the sun. None of the patients or relatives caring for them wore face masks amid a coronavirus surge.

Structural engineers from Miyamoto International, a global earthquake and structural engineering firm, visited hard-hit areas Monday to help with damage assessment and urban search and rescue efforts. Chief among their duties was inspecting government water towers and the damaged offices of charities in the region, said CEO and president Kit Miyamoto.

Miyamoto said he has seen places devastated by earthquakes build back stronger. He said the destruction in Port-au-Prince from the 2010 tremor led masons and others to improve their building practices. People in the capital felt the Saturday morning tremor centered about 75 miles to the west and rushed into the streets in fear but there weren't any reports of damage there.

"Port-au-Prince building is much better than it was in 2010 — I know that," Miyamoto said. "It's a huge difference, but that knowledge is not widespread. The focus is definitely on Port-au-Prince."

Sources: US to recommend COVID vaccine boosters at 8 months

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. health experts are expected to recommend COVID-19 vaccine boosters for all Americans, regardless of age, eight months after they received their second dose of the shot, to ensure lasting protection against the coronavirus as the delta variant spreads across the country.

Federal health officials have been actively looking at whether extra shots for the vaccinated would be needed as early as this fall, reviewing case numbers in the U.S. as well as the situation in other countries such as Israel, where preliminary studies suggest the vaccine's protection against serious illness dropped among those vaccinated in January.

An announcement on the U.S. booster recommendation was expected as soon as this week, according to two people familiar with the matter who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

Doses would only begin to be administered widely once the Food and Drug Administration formally approves the vaccines. That action is expected for the Pfizer shot in the coming weeks.

Last week, U.S. health officials recommended boosters for some with weakened immune systems, citing their higher risk of catching the virus and evidence that the vaccines' effectiveness waned over time.

The director of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Francis Collins, said Sunday the U.S. could decide

in the next couple weeks whether to offer coronavirus booster shots to Americans this fall.

Among the first to receive them could be health care workers, nursing home residents and other older Americans, who were some of the first Americans to be vaccinated once the shots received emergency use authorization last December.

Since then, more than 198 million Americans have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with more than 168 million fully vaccinated. Still, the country is experiencing a fourth surge of virus cases due to the more transmissible delta variant, which is spreading aggressively through unvaccinated communities but is also responsible for an increasing number of so-called "breakthrough infections" of fully vaccinated people.

Israel, which exclusively administered the Pfizer shot, has been offering a coronavirus booster to people over 60 who were already vaccinated more than five months ago in an effort to control its own surge in cases from the delta variant.

For months, officials had said data still indicated that people remain highly protected from COVID-19, including the delta variant, after receiving the two-dose Pfizer or Moderna regimen or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine. But U.S. health officials made clear Sunday they are preparing for the possibility that the time for boosters may come sooner than later.

"There is a concern that the vaccine may start to wane in its effectiveness," Collins said. "And delta is a nasty one for us to try to deal with. The combination of those two means we may need boosters, maybe beginning first with health care providers, as well as people in nursing homes, and then gradually moving forward" with others, such as older Americans who were among the first to get vaccinations.

He said because the delta variant only started hitting the U.S. hard in July, the "next couple of weeks" of case data will help the U.S. make a decision.

Officials were continuing to collect information as well about the J&J vaccine, which was only approved in the U.S. in late February, to determine when to recommend boosters, one of the officials said.

The White House has said that even though the U.S. has begun sharing more than 110 million vaccine doses with the world, the nation has enough domestic supply to deliver boosters to Americans should they be recommended by health officials.

Global health officials, including the World Health Organization, have called on wealthier and more-vaccinated countries to hold off on booster shots to ensure the supply of first doses for people in the developing world.

GOP hits Biden despite divides over Afghanistan withdrawal

By WILL WEISSERT and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Joe Biden announced he would stick to his predecessor's plan to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan, Republican reaction was mixed and largely muted. Foreign policy had become so contentious that the party's own leaders had no single position on the end of the nation's longest war.

But the fall of the Afghan government and the Taliban's swift return to power have, at least for now, reunited Republicans in criticism of Biden. Longtime opponents of a withdrawal argued Monday that the president should have seen the disaster coming. Even those who cheered his decision to pull out troops turned to slamming him for doing it badly.

"An embarrassing spectacle, a diplomatic humiliation and a national security catastrophe," said Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas.

It was a rare moment of cohesion for a party that has been divided between an old guard that long pushed for U.S. military aggression and supporters of former President Donald Trump who prioritized "America First." As Republicans moved Monday to turn the chaos into a political opportunity, it was unclear how long they'd be able to paper over that split.

"If they're smart and say, 'Look, I wanted us out of Afghanistan, but not this way,'" Glen Bolger, a veteran

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GOP pollster who's worked on numerous congressional campaigns, said of Republicans potentially staying on the political offensive. "Not in a total surrender and not letting the Taliban just waltz in and take over everything, hurting women and taking the clock back to the 1400s."

The Taliban's entering Kabul doesn't change the fact that Republicans have essentially attempted a U-turn on foreign policy — the kind of about-face that likely muddles any case they can make for blaming Biden without drawing some political blowback themselves.

The party has moved sharply away from the hawkish days just after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, when President George W. Bush first led the invasion of Afghanistan and spent years pushing nation-building and aggressive military intervention abroad. The Trump administration agreed late in its term to withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan this past May, with the then-president saying last year, "Now it's time for somebody else to do that work."

"You know it's been 19 years and even they are tired of fighting," Trump said, though he added, "If bad things happen, we'll go back."

That agreement — it also entailed the Afghan government releasing 5,000 prisoners, some of whom may have joined the latest Taliban offensive — was supported by many Republicans. That endorsement didn't waver, even when Biden delayed sending home the roughly 2,500 U.S. troops remaining in Afghanistan until Sept. 11, so their departure would mark the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

Cruz was among those who welcomed that decision. He said in April he was "glad" troops were coming home.

"U.S. efforts at nation building actually makes things worse, not better," Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., a close ally of Trump, said on his podcast this week.

Biden returned to the White House from Camp David and tried to refocus the debate on whether the U.S. still belonged in Afghanistan, not how it exited.

"I'm now the fourth American president to preside over war in Afghanistan," he said. "I will not pass this responsibility on to a fifth."

Asked, meanwhile, if negotiating with the Taliban lent legitimacy to terrorists, Mike Pompeo, Trump's former secretary of state and a key architect of the Afghanistan peace agreements, insisted on "Fox News Sunday" that "we never trusted the Taliban."

Still, some of Pompeo's fellow Republicans say Trump shares the blame for what is now unfolding.

Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., who served in the Air Force in Afghanistan, faulted "Donald Trump's terrible deal he negotiated" but also Biden's "terrible execution of a deal he never should have followed through on."

"At this moment, people are super excited about, or super focused on, how can they blame the other side. How can they win this political back and forth," Kinzinger said. "I think Donald Trump bears huge blame and Joe Biden will ultimately bear the ultimate blame."

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, told reporters in Anchorage that she was among those who didn't anticipate U.S. troops would be or should be in Afghanistan forever. But, she said, "what we have seen play out, I think, is troubling at such a degree and such a level."

Murkowski added: "I think there's going to be a lot of review about how we came to be at this place at this moment."

Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., whose father helped shape Bush's foreign policy as his vice president and who herself is one of Trump's fiercest GOP critics, tweeted that the "calamity" in Afghanistan began "with the Trump administration negotiating with terrorists and pretending they were partners for peace."

Cheney added that it is "ending with American surrender as Biden abandons the country to our terrorist enemies."

Other Republicans have been more eager to paint what's unfolded as a Biden problem. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., called the events in Afghanistan an "unmitigated disaster" and said that the Biden administration "looks to me like it couldn't organize a two-car funeral."

"Simply the fact that President Trump announced we were going to leave in May didn't mean President Biden had to do that," McConnell said of withdrawing U.S. forces.

The National Republican Congressional Committee launched online attacks against Democrats looking at

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tough House reelection battles during next year's midterms for their past support of Biden's Afghanistan policy.

Others have gone further. Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, lumped the Afghanistan developments with what he called the president's failure to address rising inflation or secure the U.S.-Mexico border and wondered in a tweet, "Has time come to exercise the provisions of the 25th Amendment?" Those provisions could remove Biden from office.

"Democrats control the House, Senate & @WhiteHouse," tweeted Scott, who was traveling Monday and unavailable for further comment. "What in the world is Joe Biden doing?"

But Kinzinger countered that he thinks "both parties failed the American people."

"They were so eager to go out and just make statements that get applause at a rally like 'bring all the troops home,' without the adequate reality that leaders have got to lead and explain to the American people why the troops are there and why they're important," Kinzinger said. "Instead, we just get focused on the next election. This is the result of that."

Biden: Afghan chaos 'gut-wrenching' but stands by withdrawal

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, ROBERT BURNS and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A defiant President Joe Biden rejected blame for chaotic scenes of Afghans clinging to U.S. military planes in Kabul in a desperate bid to flee their home country after the Taliban's easy victory over an Afghan military that America and NATO allies had spent two decades trying to build.

At the White House, Biden on Monday called the anguish of trapped Afghan civilians "gut-wrenching" and conceded the Taliban had achieved a much faster takeover of the country than his administration had expected. The U.S. rushed in troops to protect its own evacuating diplomats and others at the Kabul airport.

But the president expressed no second thoughts about his decision to stick by the U.S. commitment, formulated during the Trump administration, to end America's longest war, no matter what.

"I stand squarely behind my decision" to finally withdraw U.S. combat forces, Biden said, while acknowledging the Afghan collapse played out far more quickly than the most pessimistic public forecasts of his administration. "This did unfold more quickly than we anticipated," he said.

Despite declaring "the buck stops with me," Biden placed almost all blame on Afghans for the shockingly rapid Taliban conquest.

His grim comments were his first in person to the world since the biggest foreign policy crisis of his still-young presidency. Emboldened by the U.S. withdrawal, Taliban fighters swept across the country last week and captured the capital, Kabul, on Sunday, sending U.S.-backed Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fleeing the country.

Biden said he had warned Ghani — who was appointed Afghanistan's president in a U.S.-negotiated agreement — to be prepared to fight a civil war with the Taliban after U.S. forces left. "They failed to do any of that," he said.

Internationally, the spectacle of the Taliban takeover and the chaos of the evacuation effort was raising doubts about America's commitments to its allies.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said it was "bitter" to watch the complete collapse in a war that Germany and other NATO partners had followed the U.S. into after the Sept. 11 attacks, which were plotted from Afghanistan. The humiliating scenes seemed certain to give comfort to American foes.

At home, it all sparked sharp criticism, even from members of Biden's own political party, who implored the White House to do more to rescue fleeing Afghans, especially those who had aided the two-decade American military effort.

"We didn't need to be seeing the scenes that we're seeing at Kabul airport with our Afghan friends climbing aboard C-17s," said Rep. Jason Crow, a Colorado Democrat and Iraq and Afghanistan military veteran.

He said that is why he and others called for the evacuations to start months ago. "It could have been done deliberately and methodically," Crow said. "And we think that that was a missed opportunity."

Besides the life-and-death situation in Kabul, the timing of the crisis was unfortunate for Biden's domestic

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efforts at home. It could well weaken his political standing as he works to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and build congressional support for a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill and an even larger expansion of the social safety net.

Still, the focus at home and abroad on Monday was on Kabul's airport, where thousands of Afghans trapped by the sudden Taliban takeover rushed the tarmac and clung to U.S. military planes deployed to fly out staffers of the U.S. Embassy, which shut down Sunday, and others.

At least seven people died in the chaos, including two who clung to the wheels of a C-17 and plunged to the tarmac as it flew away, and two others shot by U.S. forces. Americans said the men were armed but there was no evidence that they were Taliban.

With tens of thousands of U.S. citizens and others as well as Afghans desperate to escape, Biden insisted the U.S. had done all it could to plan.

In fact, Afghan leaders had asked the U.S. not to publicly play up any advance efforts to evacuate former military translators, female activists and others most at risk from the Taliban, saying that in itself could trigger what the Afghans said could be "a crisis of confidence," Biden said.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said late Monday that the U.S., which had taken charge of air traffic control at the Kabul airport, had resumed airlifts out after suspending them due to the morning's stampedes onto the runways by frightened Afghans.

Kirby said U.S. forces are planning to wrap up their oversight of the evacuation by Aug. 31, also the date Biden has set for officially ending the U.S. combat role in Afghanistan.

The U.S. hopes to fly out up to 5,000 people a day once more of 6,000 U.S. troops being deployed to secure the evacuation arrive, and once more transport planes can land, he said.

Biden pledged to work to also evacuate private U.S. citizens and citizens of foreign governments, as well as Afghans who formerly worked with Americans in the country, journalists, prominent women and other Afghans considered most at-risk of Taliban reprisal.

As of July, the U.S. had a visa application backlog of 18,000 former Afghan employees alone who were seeking a haven in the United States, and had been able to evacuate only a few thousand in what was meant to be a sped-up process over the last month.

Veterans groups and nonprofit groups that worked with Afghan women appealed to Biden on Monday to keep troops at the Kabul airport at least through the end of the month, to keep the escape route out of Taliban hands.

Sudoku maker Maki Kaji, who saw life's joy in puzzles, dies

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Maki Kaji, the creator of the popular numbers puzzle Sudoku whose life's work was spreading the joy of puzzles, has died, his Japanese company said Tuesday. He was 69 and had bile duct cancer.

Known as the "Godfather of Sudoku," Kaji created the puzzle to be easy for children and others who didn't want to think too hard. Its name is made up of the Japanese characters for "number" and "single," and players place the numbers 1 through 9 in rows, columns and blocks without repeating them.

Ironically, it wasn't until 2004 when Sudoku became a global hit, after a fan from New Zealand pitched it and got it published in the British newspaper The Times. Two years later, Japan rediscovered its own puzzle as a "gyakuyunyu," or "reimport."

Kaji was chief executive at his puzzle company, Nikoli Co., until July and died Aug. 10 at his home in Mitaka, a city in the Tokyo metro area.

Maki traveled to more than 30 countries spreading his enjoyment of puzzles. Sudoku championships have drawn some 200 million people in 100 countries over the years, according to Tokyo-based Nikoli.

Sudoku was also never trademarked except within Japan, driving its overseas craze, Nikoli said.

"Kaji-san came up with the name Sudoku and was loved by puzzle fans from all over the world. We are grateful from the bottom of our hearts for the patronage you have shown throughout his life," the company said in a statement.

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Originally, Sudoku was called "Suji-wa-Dokushin-ni-Kagiru," which translates to, "Numbers should be single, a bachelor." In recent years, Sudoku, believed to be the world's most popular pencil puzzle, has come out in digital versions.

Born in the main northern island of Hokkaido, Maki started Japan's first puzzle magazine after dropping out of Keio University in Tokyo. He founded Nikoli in 1983, and came up with Sudoku about the same time.

Yoshinao Anpuku, who succeeded Kaji as Nikoli's chief executive, said Kaji made friends easily and had a "unique and playful approach toward life."

"Our mission is to pursue Maki's vision and possibilities," Anpuku said.

Nikoli has provided original puzzles to more than 100 media companies, 10 of them foreign ones.

Major Japanese newspaper Mainichi in its obituary credited Kaji for starting the puzzle sections at bookstores, as well as introducing the word "Sudoku" into the Oxford English dictionary.

Kaji is survived by his wife Naomi and two daughters. Funeral services have been held among close family. A separate memorial service is being arranged by Nikoli, but details were still undecided.

Among France's poorest, once-lagging vaccine rates jump

By CONSTANTIN GOUVY Associated Press

LE BOURGET, France (AP) — The poorest region in mainland France has managed to dramatically speed up its COVID-19 vaccination campaign in recent weeks, notably by opening walk-in pop-up centers to reach out to people where they live and work.

The multicultural, working-class region of Seine-Saint-Denis, north of Paris, initially struggled in getting the word out about vaccines to a population where many are immigrants who don't speak French or lack access to regular medical care.

But offering vaccinations at a highly visible location with easy access seems to be doing the trick.

Manuela Buval, 53, was waiting for her teenage son, who was getting his first vaccine shot Friday in a public park in Le Bourget.

"Everybody in the neighborhood walks through the park ... whether on their way to work or to come play with their children," she said.

Without the Red Cross pop-up vaccination center, Mona Muhammad, 24, said she would have had to leave her children at her sister's on the other side of Paris in order to get to a large vaccination center outside of town.

"But thankfully, I can get my vaccine here in the city center while my kids play in the park," she said.

This region on Paris' northeast edge, where over a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line, had registered the highest rise in mortality in the country when COVID-19 first spread in France last year.

After trailing below the national vaccination rate average for months, the region is now three points above it, with 71% of its population having received at least a first dose. About 57% of people are fully vaccinated in France.

The success story is, in great part, the result of local initiatives. Since June, the Red Cross has vaccinated over 10,000 people at walk-in pop-up vaccination centers it set up across the region.

Immigrants and people staying in the country with no legal permission form a majority of those the Red Cross has vaccinated in its center in Le Bourget.

"Regular vaccination centers are like huge factories. We have a more local approach. Our goal is to bring the vaccine to people who would otherwise fall through the cracks of the system," explained Roger Fontaine, the president of the Red Cross in Seine-Saint-Denis.

For Le Bourget Mayor Jean-Baptiste Borsali, French President Emmanuel Macron's announcement on July 12 that a health pass would be required for many daily activities has been an important factor in driving up vaccination rates in the region.

The pass shows proof that people are fully vaccinated, have recently tested negative or have recovered from the virus. It is needed to enter restaurants, bars, sports arenas or get on long-distance trains, planes and buses, and many younger people have realized that the pass is vital to maintain a social life.

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"We saw a real difference from one day to the next," Borsali said, and many of those visiting the vaccination center last week confirmed that the new health pass requirement played a role in their decision to get a shot.

Up to 75% of the region's population are immigrants or have immigrant roots, and its residents speak 130 different languages. Le Bourget is no exception, being home to a large Sri Lankan community, some of whose members don't speak French.

Anandarajah Rishi, a 42-year-old insurance expert and Red Cross volunteer with Sri Lankan roots, was called in at the pop-up center over his lunch break on Friday to translate for those who needed help filling in their medical forms.

"I always keep my (Red Cross) uniform in my car, just in case," he explained. "When it comes to health, it's important that we are able to speak with them in their mother tongue, to establish trust and make sure that we get their correct medical information."

Anusuya Thangavel, a 32-year-old business manager also from Sri Lanka, acknowledged it was reassuring to her and her relatives that they could speak in their native tongue to medical workers.

Pop-up vaccination centers also play a crucial role in reaching people with no legal documents allowing them to stay in France. While the French health care system is meant to provide accessible medical treatment for all, those without a valid government-issued ID and proof of enrollment in the country's social security system cannot be vaccinated at regular centers.

Fontaine realized the scope of the problem after a person delivering food to the vaccination team initially turned down their offer to get the shot.

"We quickly understood he was staying illegally, but we vaccinated him regardless. The next day, he came back with all of his friends who were in the same situation," he recounted. "We don't turn anyone away here."

The Red Cross walk-in centers have also been a "game-changer" for people who work long or unusual hours and cannot make it to large vaccination facilities during traditional work hours, Borsali said.

Many, like Hibach Noureddine, a 50-year-old taxi driver, said taking time off work to go out of town and wait in line for a vaccine shot was a loss of income they simply could not afford.

For Macina Sira, a cleaner in her 40s, the pop-up center was a big relief. "For those who work long hours and have children like me, going to the larger vaccination centers is complicated," she said. "They're far away, and you can't bring your children out there."

While Seine-Saint-Denis is overcoming vaccination barriers, inoculation rates and demand for vaccines remain low in France's most impoverished lands of all: its overseas territories.

The French Caribbean islands, Martinique and Guadeloupe in particular, have seen sky-rocketing infections in recent weeks, mainly among the non-vaccinated, prompting France to send in more medical assistance to cope with the problem.

EXPLAINER: Western states face first federal water cuts

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. officials on Monday declared the first-ever water shortage from a river that serves 40 million people in the West, triggering cuts to some Arizona farmers next year amid a gripping drought.

Water levels at the largest reservoir on the Colorado River — Lake Mead — have fallen to record lows. Along its perimeter, a white "bathtub ring" of minerals outlines where the high water line once stood, underscoring the acute water challenges for a region facing a growing population and a drought that is being worsened by hotter, drier weather brought on by climate change.

States, cities, farmers and others have diversified their water sources over the years, helping soften the blow of the upcoming cuts. But federal officials said Monday's declaration makes clear that conditions have intensified faster than scientists predicted in 2019, when some states in the Colorado River basin agreed to give up shares of water to maintain levels at Lake Mead.

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"The announcement today is a recognition that the hydrology that was planned for years ago — but we hoped we would never see — is here," said Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Camille Touton.

Lake Mead was formed by building the Hoover Dam in the 1930s. It is one of several man-made reservoirs that store water from the Colorado River, which supplies household water, irrigation for farms and hydropower to Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming and parts of Mexico.

But water levels at Lake Mead and Lake Powell, the river's two largest reservoirs, have been falling for years and faster than experts predicted. Scorching temperatures and less melting snow in the spring have reduced the amount of water flowing from the Rocky Mountains, where the river originates before it snakes 1,450 miles (2,334 kilometers) southwest and into the Gulf of California.

"We're at a moment where we're reckoning with how we continue to flourish with less water, and it's very painful," said Sarah Porter, director of the Kyl Center for Water Policy at Arizona State University.

HOW IS THE RIVER WATER SHARED?

Water stored in Lake Mead and Lake Powell is divvied up through legal agreements among the seven Colorado River basin states, the federal government, Mexico and others. The agreements determine how much water each gets, when cuts are triggered and the order in which the parties have to sacrifice some of their supply.

Under a 2019 drought contingency plan, Arizona, Nevada, California and Mexico agreed to give up shares of their water to maintain water levels at Lake Mead. The voluntary measures weren't enough to prevent the shortage declaration.

WHO DOES LAKE MEAD SERVE?

Lake Mead supplies water to millions of people in Arizona, California, Nevada and Mexico.

Cuts for 2022 are triggered when predicted water levels fall below a certain threshold — 1,075 feet (328 meters) above sea level, or 40% capacity. Hydrologists predict that by January, the reservoir will drop to 1,066 feet (325 meters).

Further rounds of cuts are triggered when projected levels sink to 1,050, 1,045 and 1,025 feet (320, 318 and 312 meters).

Eventually, some city and industrial water users could be affected.

Lake Powell's levels also are falling, threatening the roughly 5 billion kilowatt hours of electricity generated each year at the Glen Canyon Dam.

Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming get water from tributaries and other reservoirs that feed into Lake Powell. Water from three reservoirs in those states has been drained to maintain water levels at Lake Powell and protect the electric grid powered by the Glen Canyon Dam.

WHICH STATES WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE CUTS?

In the U.S., Arizona will be hardest hit and lose 18% of its share from the river next year, or 512,000 acre-feet of water. That's around 8% of the state's total water use.

An acre-foot is enough water to supply one to two households a year.

Nevada will lose about 7% of its allocation, or 21,000 acre-feet of water. But it will not feel the shortage largely because of conservation efforts.

California is spared from immediate cuts because it has more senior water rights than Arizona and Nevada.

Mexico will see a reduction of roughly 5%, or 80,000 acre-feet.

WHO IN THOSE STATES WILL SEE THEIR WATER SUPPLY CUT?

Farmers in central Arizona, who are among the state's largest producers of livestock, dairy, alfalfa, wheat and barley, will bear the brunt of the cuts. Their allocation comes from water deemed "extra" by the agency that supplies water to much of the region, making them the first to lose it during a shortage.

As a result, the farmers will likely need to fallow land — as many already have in recent years because of persisting drought — and rely even more on groundwater, switch to water-efficient crops and find other ways to use less water.

Water suppliers have planned for the shortage declaration by diversifying and conserving their water supply, such as by storing water in underground basins. Still, water cuts make it harder to plan for the future.

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The Central Arizona Project, which supplies water to Arizona's major cities, will no longer bank river water or replenish some groundwater systems next year because of the cuts.

"It's a historic moment where drought and climate change are at our door," said Chuck Cullom of the Central Arizona Project.

Cities such as Las Vegas, Phoenix and Tucson, and Native American tribes are shielded from the first round of cuts.

CAN THE DECLINE OF LAKE MEAD BE REVERSED?

Water levels at the reservoir have been falling since 1999 due to the dry spell enveloping the West and increased water demand. With weather patterns expected to worsen, experts say the reservoir may never be full again.

Though Lake Mead and Lake Powell could theoretically be refilled, planning for a hotter, drier future with less river water would be more prudent, said Porter of Arizona State University.

Billions spent on Afghan army ultimately benefited Taliban

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Built and trained at a two-decade cost of \$83 billion, Afghan security forces collapsed so quickly and completely — in some cases without a shot fired — that the ultimate beneficiary of the American investment turned out to be the Taliban. They grabbed not only political power but also U.S.-supplied firepower — guns, ammunition, helicopters and more.

The Taliban captured an array of modern military equipment when they overran Afghan forces who failed to defend district centers. Bigger gains followed, including combat aircraft, when the Taliban rolled up provincial capitals and military bases with stunning speed, topped by capturing the biggest prize, Kabul, over the weekend.

A U.S. defense official on Monday confirmed the Taliban's sudden accumulation of U.S.-supplied Afghan equipment is enormous. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and so spoke on condition of anonymity. The reversal is an embarrassing consequence of misjudging the viability of Afghan government forces — by the U.S. military as well as intelligence agencies — which in some cases chose to surrender their vehicles and weapons rather than fight.

The U.S. failure to produce a sustainable Afghan army and police force, and the reasons for their collapse, will be studied for years by military analysts. The basic dimensions, however, are clear and are not unlike what happened in Iraq. The forces turned out to be hollow, equipped with superior arms but largely missing the crucial ingredient of combat motivation.

"Money can't buy will. You cannot purchase leadership," John Kirby, chief spokesman for Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, said Monday.

Doug Lute, a retired Army lieutenant general who help direct Afghan war strategy during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, said that what the Afghans received in tangible resources they lacked in the more important intangibles.

"The principle of war stands — moral factors dominate material factors," he said. "Morale, discipline, leadership, unit cohesion are more decisive than numbers of forces and equipment. As outsiders in Afghanistan, we can provide materiel, but only Afghans can provide the intangible moral factors."

By contrast, Afghanistan's Taliban insurgents, with smaller numbers, less sophisticated weaponry and no air power, proved a superior force. U.S. intelligence agencies largely underestimated the scope of that superiority, and even after President Joe Biden announced in April he was withdrawing all U.S. troops, the intelligence agencies did not foresee a Taliban final offensive that would succeed so spectacularly.

"If we wouldn't have used hope as a course of action, ... we would have realized the rapid drawdown of U.S. forces sent a signal to the Afghan national forces that they were being abandoned," said Chris Miller, who saw combat in Afghanistan in 2001 and was acting secretary of defense at the end of President Donald Trump's term.

Stephen Biddle, a professor of international and public affairs at Columbia University and a former adviser

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to U.S. commanders in Afghanistan, said Biden's announcement set the final collapse in motion.

"The problem of the U.S. withdrawal is that it sent a nationwide signal that the jig is up — a sudden, nationwide signal that everyone read the same way," Biddle said. Before April, the Afghan government troops were slowly but steadily losing the war, he said. When they learned that their American partners were going home, an impulse to give up without a fight "spread like wildfire."

The failures, however, go back much further and run much deeper. The United States tried to develop a credible Afghan defense establishment on the fly, even as it was fighting the Taliban, attempting to widen the political foundations of the government in Kabul and seeking to establish democracy in a country rife with corruption and cronyism.

Year after year, U.S. military leaders downplayed the problems and insisted success was coming. Others saw the handwriting on the wall. In 2015 a professor at the Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute wrote about the military's failure to learn lessons from past wars; he subtitled his book, "Why the Afghan National Security Forces Will Not Hold."

"Regarding the future of Afghanistan, in blunt terms, the United States has been down this road at the strategic level twice before, in Vietnam and Iraq, and there is no viable rationale for why the results will be any different in Afghanistan," Chris Mason wrote. He added, presciently: "Slow decay is inevitable, and state failure is a matter of time."

Some elements of the Afghan army did fight hard, including commandos whose heroic efforts are yet to be fully documented. But as a whole the security forces created by the United States and its NATO allies amounted to a "house of cards" whose collapse was driven as much by failures of U.S. civilian leaders as their military partners, according to Anthony Cordesman, a longtime Afghanistan war analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The Afghan force-building exercise was so completely dependent on American largesse that the Pentagon even paid the Afghan troops' salaries. Too often that money, and untold amounts of fuel, were siphoned off by corrupt officers and government overseers who cooked the books, creating "ghost soldiers" to keep the misspent dollars coming.

Of the approximately \$145 billion the U.S. government spent trying to rebuild Afghanistan, about \$83 billion went to developing and sustaining its army and police forces, according to the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, a congressionally created watchdog that has tracked the war since 2008. The \$145 billion is in addition to \$837 billion the United States spent fighting the war, which began with an invasion in October 2001.

The \$83 billion invested in Afghan forces over 20 years is nearly double last year's budget for the entire U.S. Marine Corps and is slightly more than what Washington budgeted last year for food stamp assistance for about 40 million Americans.

In his book, "The Afghanistan Papers," journalist Craig Whitlock wrote that U.S. trainers tried to force Western ways on Afghan recruits and gave scant thought to whether U.S. taxpayers dollars were investing in a truly viable army.

"Given that the U.S. war strategy depended on the Afghan army's performance, however, the Pentagon paid surprisingly little attention to the question of whether Afghans were willing to die for their government," he wrote.

Analysis: Defiant Biden is face of chaotic Afghan evacuation

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

Four presidents share responsibility for the missteps in Afghanistan that accumulated over two decades. But only President Joe Biden will be the face of the war's chaotic, violent conclusion.

The president fought that reality Monday as he spread blame for the Taliban's swift and complete re-capture of Afghanistan. He pointed to a previous agreement brokered by then-President Donald Trump, expressed frustration with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and lamented the performance of Afghan national security forces. Republicans overwhelmingly criticized Biden and he found few vocal backers among

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fellow Democrats.

The collapse of the Afghan government is the biggest foreign policy crisis of Biden's young presidency, recalling setbacks for past presidents such as the withdrawal from Vietnam and the botched Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba. The reverberations of the Taliban's success were startling, endangering Afghan women and girls, posing new security threats and threatening to undercut global views of America's reliability.

In the face of such stark consequences, Biden admitted no fault for the chaotic drawdown and instead forcefully defended his move to leave a nation the U.S. has tried to safeguard since it toppled the Taliban regime after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, when smoke still rose from the rubble of the World Trade Center.

"Here's what I believe to my core: It is wrong to order American troops to step up when Afghanistan's own armed forces would not," said Biden. "How many more generations of America's daughters and sons would you have me send to fight Afghanistan's civil war? I will not repeat the mistakes we made in the past."

When Biden took responsibility, it was more for ending the war than for the manner in which it happened.

"I know my decision will be criticized. But I would rather take that criticism than pass this on to a fifth president," said Biden. "I am the president of the United States, the buck stops with me."

His firm tone differed little from just five weeks ago, when he bullishly predicted what would happen as his August 31 deadline for withdrawal neared. He declared there was going to be no repeat of the humiliating U.S. evacuation from Vietnam nearly a half century ago and "no circumstance where you see people being lifted off the roof of an embassy of the United States from Afghanistan."

But Monday yielded devastating images from Kabul that rivaled anything witnessed in Saigon.

Thousands of Afghan citizens, many of whom worked as translators and other aides to American troops, thronged the Kabul airport, desperate to escape the Taliban. In heartbreaking footage, some tried to desperately board a U.S. military plane flying to safety, attempting to dash alongside as it raced down the runway.

A few managed to cling to the plane before it took off and video showed several falling through the air as the airplane rapidly gained altitude over the city.

The evacuation received condemnation at home and abroad, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel calling the latest developments "bitter, dramatic and awful." And security officials warned that Afghanistan would soon provide safe harbor for terrorist groups again.

The Taliban seemed poised to have total of control of Afghanistan on Sept. 11, just as they did on the date two decades earlier when al-Qaida terror attacks plotted from its soil toppled the World Trade Center and damaged the Pentagon. The fallout from 2001 attacks reshaped America's relationship with the Middle East, and more than 3,000 American and NATO forces died in the resulting combat in Afghanistan during the manhunt for Osama bin Laden and beyond.

Under the command of President George W. Bush, American forces stormed into Afghanistan soon after the terror attacks on a hunt for bin Laden while trying to disrupt al-Qaida's ability to conduct further assaults on the West. There was immediate success: The Taliban were routed, the terror group disrupted.

But after that came the grinding second phase of the war and a surge of troops from President Barack Obama in 2009. Though Obama later moved to reduce the number of troops, the volume of insurgent attacks and civilian casualties prevented a full drawdown.

Trump mulled meeting the Taliban at Camp David on an earlier Sept. 11 anniversary, only to back away from the idea amid an uproar. But he announced that the U.S. would pull all its forces out by May 2021, an agreement Biden honored and delayed only slightly.

Efforts were made, at great expense, across all the administrations to train and arm the Afghan forces once the U.S. departed. But that investment of American blood, time and treasure proved useless as the Taliban conquered much of the nation without a fight and Afghanistan's president fled the country as soon as the invading forces reached Kabul.

In the upper ranks of Biden's staff, the rapid collapse in Afghanistan only confirmed the decision to leave: If the meltdown of the Afghan forces would come so quickly after nearly two decades of American presence, another six months or a year or two or more would not have changed anything.

His move to withdraw troops this summer, though polarizing in the national security community, had

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been praised by some on both sides of the aisle as timely and appropriate. But on Monday, Republicans were eager to slam Biden's decision and blame him for the chaos, though many of them had supported a withdrawal when it had been proposed by Trump a year ago.

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, however, had consistently advocated keeping troops in Afghanistan, and he said the military briefings he attended suggested the Taliban would be able to quickly regain power.

"I think the president felt strongly about this, obviously," McConnell said. "He overruled his own military leaders to do it and he owns it."

Biden has argued for more than a decade that Afghanistan was a kind of purgatory for the United States. He found it to be corrupt, addicted to America's largesse and an unreliable partner that should be made to fend for itself. His goal was to protect Americans from terrorist attacks, not building a country, and his aides have pointed to polling — taken before the chaos of the last week — that shows that a majority of Americans favor bringing troops home.

But that political gamble could prove risky as the scenes of fear and violence from Afghanistan are broadcast around the globe, especially if the chaos in Kabul makes "Saigon look like Disney World," warned Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., a veteran who served in Afghanistan.

"The bottom line is that there's going to be a lot of people that are very let down by the United States of America," Kinzinger said in an interview. "We will inevitably, inevitably be in conflict again somewhere. How are we going to convince those locals that we're going to follow through when we've abandoned those in Afghanistan?"

Sources: US to recommend COVID vaccine boosters at 8 months

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. experts are expected to recommend COVID-19 vaccine boosters for all Americans, regardless of age, eight months after they received their second dose of the shot, to ensure lasting protection against the coronavirus as the delta variant spreads across the country.

Federal health officials have been actively looking at whether extra shots for the vaccinated would be needed as early as this fall, reviewing case numbers in the U.S. as well as the situation in other countries such as Israel, where preliminary studies suggest the vaccine's protection against serious illness dropped among those vaccinated in January.

An announcement on the U.S. booster recommendation was expected as soon as this week, according to two people familiar with the matter who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

Doses would only begin to be administered widely once the Food and Drug Administration formally approves the vaccines. That action is expected for the Pfizer shot in the coming weeks.

Last week, U.S. health officials recommended boosters for some with weakened immune systems, citing their higher risk of catching the virus and evidence that the vaccines' effectiveness waned over time.

The director of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Francis Collins, said Sunday the U.S. could decide in the next couple weeks whether to offer coronavirus booster shots to Americans this fall.

Among the first to receive them could be health care workers, nursing home residents and other older Americans, who were some of the first Americans to be vaccinated once the shots received emergency use authorization last December.

Since then, more than 198 million Americans have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with more than 168 million fully vaccinated. Still, the country is experiencing a fourth surge of virus cases due to the more transmissible delta variant, which is spreading aggressively through unvaccinated communities but is also responsible for an increasing number of so-called "breakthrough infections" of fully vaccinated people.

Israel, which exclusively administered the Pfizer shot, has been offering a coronavirus booster to people over 60 who were already vaccinated more than five months ago in an effort to control its own surge in

cases from the delta variant.

For months, officials had said data still indicated that people remain highly protected from COVID-19, including the delta variant, after receiving the two-dose Pfizer or Moderna regimen or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine. But U.S. health officials made clear Sunday they are preparing for the possibility that the time for boosters may come sooner than later.

"There is a concern that the vaccine may start to wane in its effectiveness," Collins said. "And delta is a nasty one for us to try to deal with. The combination of those two means we may need boosters, maybe beginning first with health care providers, as well as people in nursing homes, and then gradually moving forward" with others, such as older Americans who were among the first to get vaccinations.

He said because the delta variant only started hitting the U.S. hard in July, the "next couple of weeks" of case data will help the U.S. make a decision.

Officials were continuing to collect information as well about the J&J vaccine, which was only approved in the U.S. in late February, to determine when to recommend boosters, one of the officials said.

The White House has said that even though the U.S. has begun sharing more than 110 million vaccine doses with the world, the nation has enough domestic supply to deliver boosters to Americans should they be recommended by health officials.

Global health officials, including the World Health Organization, have called on wealthier and more-vaccinated countries to hold off on booster shots to ensure the supply of first doses for people in the developing world.

Haiti quake death toll rises to 1,419, injured now at 6,000

By MARK STEVENSON and EVENS SANON Associated Press

LES CAYES, Haiti (AP) — A hospital in southwestern Haiti, where a powerful earthquake flattened homes, shops and other buildings over the weekend, was so overwhelmed with patients that many had to lie in patios, corridors, verandas and hallways. Then the approach of a storm expected to drench the quake zone Monday night forced officials to relocate them as best they could given the hospital's poor conditions.

Even those patients were somewhat fortunate. Haiti's Civil Protection Agency on Monday raised the death toll from Saturday's earthquake to 1,419 and the number of injured to 6,000, many of whom have had to wait under the burning heat, even on an airport tarmac, for help.

"We had planned to put up tents (in hospital patios), but we were told that could not be safe," said Gede Peterson, director of Les Cayes General Hospital.

It is not the first time that staff has been forced to improvise. The refrigeration in the hospital's morgue has not worked for three months, but after the earthquake struck Saturday, staff had to store as many as 20 bodies in the small space. Relatives quickly came to take most to private embalming services or immediate burial. By Monday only three bodies were in the morgue.

The quake, centered about 125 kilometers (80 miles) west of the capital of Port-au-Prince, nearly razed some towns and triggered landslides that hampered rescue efforts in a country that is the poorest in the Western Hemisphere. Haiti already was struggling with the coronavirus pandemic, gang violence, worsening poverty and the political uncertainty following the July 7 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse when the earthquake sent residents rushing to the streets.

The devastation could worsen with Monday night's arrival of Tropical Depression Grace with its heavy rain and strong winds and the threat of mudslides and flash flooding. The Civil Protection Agency said rainfall could reach 15 inches (38 centimeters) in some areas before the storm moved away on Tuesday. Grace also drenched Port-au-Prince, the capital.

"We are working now to ensure that the resources we have are going to get to the places that are hardest hit," said agency head Jerry Chandler, referring to the towns of Les Cayes and Jeremie and the department of Nippes, which are in the country's southwestern portion.

Injured earthquake victims continued to stream into Les Cayes' overwhelmed general hospital, three days after the earthquake struck. Patients waited to be treated on stair steps, in corridors and the hos-

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pital's open veranda.

"After two days, they are almost always generally infected," said Dr. Paurus Michelete, who had treated 250 patients and was one of only three doctors on call when the quake hit.

Meanwhile, rescuers and scrap metal scavengers dug into the floors of a collapsed hotel Monday in this coastal town, where 15 bodies had already been extracted. Jean Moise Fortunè, whose brother, the hotel owner and a prominent politician, was killed in the quake, believed there were more people trapped in the rubble.

But based on the size of voids that workers cautiously peered into, perhaps a foot (0.3 meters) in depth, finding survivors appeared unlikely.

As work, fuel and money ran out, desperate Les Cayes residents searched collapsed houses for scrap metal to sell. Others waited for money wired from abroad, a mainstay of Haiti's economy even before the quake.

Anthony Emile waited six hours in a line with dozens of others trying to get money his brother had wired from Chile, where he has worked since Haiti's last quake.

"We have been waiting since morning for it, but there are too many people," said Emile, a banana farmer who said relatives in the countryside depend on him giving them money to survive.

Efforts to treat the injured were difficult at the general hospital, where Michelete said pain killers, analgesics and steel pins to mend fractures were running out amid the crush of patients.

"We are saturated, and people keep coming," he said.

Josil Eliophane, 84, crouched on the steps of the hospital, clutching an X-ray showing his shattered arm bone and pleading for pain medication.

Michelete said he would give one of his few remaining shots to Eliophane, who ran out of his house as the quake hit, only to have a wall fall on him.

Nearby, on the hospital's open-air veranda, patients were on beds and mattresses, hooked up to IV bags of saline fluid. Others lay in the garden under bed sheets erected to shield them from the brutal sun. None of the patients or relatives caring for them wore face masks amid a coronavirus surge.

Officials said the magnitude 7.2 earthquake left more than 7,000 homes destroyed and nearly 5,000 damaged from the quake, leaving some 30,000 families homeless. Hospitals, schools, offices and churches also were destroyed or badly damaged.

Underlining the dire conditions, local officials had to negotiate with gangs in the seaside district of Martissant to allow two humanitarian convoys a day to pass through the area, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported. The agency called Haiti's southern peninsula a "hot spot for gang-related violence," where humanitarian workers have been repeatedly attacked.

The agency said the area has been "virtually unreachable" over the past two months because of road blocks and security concerns. Agency spokeswoman Anna Jefferys said the first convoy passed through Sunday with government and U.N. personnel. and the U.N. World Food Program plans to send in food supplies via trucks Tuesday.

Prime Minister Ariel Henry declared a one-month state of emergency for the whole country and said the first government aid convoys had started moving help to areas where towns were destroyed and hospitals were overwhelmed.

UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said humanitarian needs were acute, with many Haitians urgently needing health care, clean water and shelter. Children separated from their parents also needed protection, she said.

"Little more than a decade on, Haiti is reeling once again," Fore said, referring to the 2010 earthquake that ravaged Haiti's capital, killing tens of thousands. "And this disaster coincides with political instability, rising gang violence, alarmingly high rates of malnutrition among children, and the COVID-19 pandemic — for which Haiti has received just 500,000 vaccine doses, despite requiring far more."

The country of 11 million people received its first batch of U.S.-donated coronavirus vaccines only last month via a United Nations program for low-income countries.

Medical workers from across the region were scrambling to help as hospitals in Les Cayes started run-

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ning out of space to perform surgeries.

"Basically, they need everything," said Dr. Inobert Pierre, a pediatrician with the nonprofit Health Equity International, which oversees St. Boniface Hospital, about two hours from Les Cayes.

Pierre's medical team was taking some patients to St. Boniface to undergo surgery, but with just two ambulances, they could transport only four at a time.

Working with USAID, the U.S. Coast Guard said a helicopter was transporting medical personnel from the Haitian capital to the quake zone and evacuating injured back to Port-au-Prince. Lt. Commander Jason Nieman, a spokesman, said other aircraft and ships were being sent.

At the Les Cayes hospital, Emma Cadet, 41, a carpenter's wife, hovered over her 18-year-old son, Charles Owen, as he awaited an operation on his broken arm. He was among the lucky patients to have received pain medication.

Worse off was Nerison Vendredi, 19, lying quiet but alert. No casts or splint would help her because she apparently had suffered internal injuries and could not move.

There were some stories of miracle survivals, but they were becoming fewer as the days passed.

Jacquelon Luxama was leading his goats to a watering hole Saturday when a hillside collapsed on him, trapping him amid boulders and a rockslide that stripped skin from his hip.

"I started yelling, and luckily some other farmers heard me, and they came and pulled me out," said Luxama, lying on a mattress at the Les Cayes hospital.

Biden: Afghan chaos 'gut-wrenching' but stands by withdrawal

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, ROBERT BURNS and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A defiant President Joe Biden rejected blame Monday for chaotic scenes of Afghans clinging to U.S. military planes in Kabul in a desperate bid to flee their home country after the Taliban's easy victory over an Afghan military that America and NATO allies had spent two decades trying to build.

At the White House, Biden called the anguish of trapped Afghan civilians "gut-wrenching" and conceded the Taliban had achieved a much faster takeover of the country than his administration had expected. The U.S. rushed in troops to protect its own evacuating diplomats and others at the Kabul airport.

But the president expressed no second thoughts about his decision to stick by the U.S. commitment, formulated during the Trump administration, to end America's longest war, no matter what.

"I stand squarely behind my decision" to finally withdraw U.S. combat forces, Biden said, while acknowledging the Afghan collapse played out far more quickly than the most pessimistic public forecasts of his administration. "This did unfold more quickly than we anticipated," he said.

Despite declaring "the buck stops with me," Biden placed almost all blame on Afghans for the shockingly rapid Taliban conquest.

His grim comments were his first in person to the world since the biggest foreign policy crisis of his still-young presidency. Emboldened by the U.S. withdrawal, Taliban fighters swept across the country last week and captured the capital, Kabul, on Sunday, sending U.S.-backed Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fleeing the country.

Biden said he had warned Ghani — who was appointed Afghanistan's president in a U.S.-negotiated agreement — to be prepared to fight a civil war with the Taliban after U.S. forces left. "They failed to do any of that," he said.

Internationally, the spectacle of the Taliban takeover and the chaos of the evacuation effort was raising doubts about America's commitments to its allies.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said it was "bitter" to watch the complete collapse in a war that Germany and other NATO partners had followed the U.S. into after the Sept. 11 attacks, which were plotted from Afghanistan. The humiliating scenes seemed certain to give comfort to American foes.

At home, it all sparked sharp criticism, even from members of Biden's own political party, who implored the White House to do more to rescue fleeing Afghans, especially those who had aided the two-decade American military effort.

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"We didn't need to be seeing the scenes that we're seeing at Kabul airport with our Afghan friends climbing aboard C-17s," said Rep. Jason Crow, a Colorado Democrat and Iraq and Afghanistan military veteran.

He said that is why he and others called for the evacuations to start months ago. "It could have been done deliberately and methodically," Crow said. "And we think that that was a missed opportunity."

Besides the life-and-death situation in Kabul, the timing of the crisis was unfortunate for Biden's domestic efforts at home. It could well weaken his political standing as he works to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and build congressional support for a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill and an even larger expansion of the social safety net.

Still, the focus at home and abroad on Monday was on Kabul's airport, where thousands of Afghans trapped by the sudden Taliban takeover rushed the tarmac and clung to U.S. military planes deployed to fly out staffers of the U.S. Embassy, which shut down Sunday, and others.

At least seven people died in the chaos, including two who clung to the wheels of a C-17 and plunged to the tarmac as it flew away, and two others shot by U.S. forces. Americans said the men were armed but there was no evidence that they were Taliban.

With tens of thousands of U.S. citizens and others as well as Afghans desperate to escape, Biden insisted the U.S. had done all it could to plan.

In fact, Afghan leaders had asked the U.S. not to publicly play up any advance efforts to evacuate former military translators, female activists and others most at risk from the Taliban, saying that in itself could trigger what the Afghans said could be "a crisis of confidence," Biden said.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said late Monday that the U.S., which had taken charge of air traffic control at the Kabul airport, had resumed airlifts out after suspending them due to the morning's stampedes onto the runways by frightened Afghans.

Kirby said U.S. forces are planning to wrap up their oversight of the evacuation by Aug. 31, also the date Biden has set for officially ending the U.S. combat role in Afghanistan.

The U.S. hopes to fly out up to 5,000 people a day once more of 6,000 U.S. troops being deployed to secure the evacuation arrive, and once more transport planes can land, he said.

Biden pledged to work to also evacuate private U.S. citizens and citizens of foreign governments, as well as Afghans who formerly worked with Americans in the country, journalists, prominent women and other Afghans considered most at-risk of Taliban reprisal.

As of July, the U.S. had a visa application backlog of 18,000 former Afghan employees alone who were seeking a haven in the United States, and had been able to evacuate only a few thousand in what was meant to be a sped-up process over the last month.

Veterans groups and nonprofit groups that worked with Afghan women appealed to Biden on Monday to keep troops at the Kabul airport at least through the end of the month, to keep the escape route out of Taliban hands.

US probing Autopilot problems on 765,000 Tesla vehicles

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — The U.S. government has opened a formal investigation into Tesla's Autopilot partially automated driving system after a series of collisions with parked emergency vehicles.

The investigation covers 765,000 vehicles, almost everything that Tesla has sold in the U.S. since the start of the 2014 model year. Of the crashes identified by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration as part of the probe, 17 people were injured and one was killed.

NHTSA says it has identified 11 crashes since 2018 in which Teslas on Autopilot or Traffic Aware Cruise Control have hit vehicles at scenes where first responders have used flashing lights, flares, an illuminated arrow board or cones warning of hazards. The agency announced the action Monday in a posting on its website.

The probe is another sign that NHTSA under President Joe Biden is taking a tougher stance on automated vehicle safety than under previous administrations. Previously the agency was reluctant to regulate the

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new technology for fear of hampering adoption of the potentially life-saving systems.

The investigation covers Tesla's entire current model lineup, the Models Y, X, S and 3 from the 2014 through 2021 model years.

The National Transportation Safety Board, which also has investigated some of the Tesla crashes dating to 2016, has recommended that NHTSA and Tesla limit Autopilot's use to areas where it can safely operate. The NTSB also recommended that NHTSA require Tesla to have a better system to make sure drivers are paying attention. NHTSA has not taken action on any of the recommendations. The NTSB has no enforcement powers and can only make recommendations to other federal agencies.

"Today's action by NHTSA is a positive step forward for safety," NTSB Chair Jennifer L. Homendy said in a statement Monday. "As we navigate the emerging world of advanced driving assistance systems, it's important that NHTSA has insight into what these vehicles can, and cannot, do."

Last year the NTSB blamed Tesla, drivers and lax regulation by NHTSA for two collisions in which Teslas crashed beneath crossing tractor-trailers. The NTSB took the unusual step of accusing NHTSA of contributing to the crash for failing to make sure automakers put safeguards in place to limit use of electronic driving systems.

The agency made the determinations after investigating a 2019 crash in Delray Beach, Florida, in which the 50-year-old driver of a Tesla Model 3 was killed. The car was driving on Autopilot when neither the driver nor the Autopilot system braked or tried to avoid a tractor-trailer crossing in its path.

"We are glad to see NHTSA finally acknowledge our long standing call to investigate Tesla for putting technology on the road that will be foreseeably misused in a way that is leading to crashes, injuries, and deaths," said Jason Levine, executive director of the nonprofit Center for Auto Safety, an advocacy group. "If anything, this probe needs to go far beyond crashes involving first responder vehicles because the danger is to all drivers, passengers, and pedestrians when Autopilot is engaged."

Autopilot has frequently been misused by Tesla drivers, who have been caught driving drunk or even riding in the back seat while a car rolled down a California highway.

A message was left seeking comment from Tesla, which has disbanded its media relations office. Shares of Tesla Inc., based in Palo Alto, California, fell 4.3% Monday.

NHTSA has sent investigative teams to 31 crashes involving partially automated driver assist systems since June of 2016. Such systems can keep a vehicle centered in its lane and a safe distance from vehicles in front of it. Of those crashes, 25 involved Tesla Autopilot in which 10 deaths were reported, according to data released by the agency.

Tesla and other manufacturers warn that drivers using the systems must be ready to intervene at all times. In addition to crossing semis, Teslas using Autopilot have crashed into stopped emergency vehicles and a roadway barrier.

The probe by NHTSA is long overdue, said Raj Rajkumar, an electrical and computer engineering professor at Carnegie Mellon University who studies automated vehicles.

Tesla's failure to effectively monitor drivers to make sure they're paying attention should be the top priority in the probe, Rajkumar said. Teslas detect pressure on the steering wheel to make sure drivers are engaged, but drivers often fool the system.

"It's very easy to bypass the steering pressure thing," Rajkumar said. "It's been going on since 2014. We have been discussing this for a long time now."

The crashes into emergency vehicles cited by NHTSA began on Jan. 22, 2018 in Culver City, California, near Los Angeles when a Tesla using Autopilot struck a parked firetruck that was partially in the travel lanes with its lights flashing. Crews were handling another crash at the time.

Since then, the agency said there were crashes in Laguna Beach, California; Norwalk, Connecticut; Cloverdale, Indiana; West Bridgewater, Massachusetts; Cochise County, Arizona; Charlotte, North Carolina; Montgomery County, Texas; Lansing, Michigan; and Miami, Florida.

"The investigation will assess the technologies and methods used to monitor, assist and enforce the driver's engagement with the dynamic driving task during Autopilot operation," NHTSA said in its investigation documents.

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In addition, the probe will cover object and event detection by the system, as well as where it is allowed to operate. NHTSA says it will examine "contributing circumstances" to the crashes, as well as similar crashes. An investigation could lead to a recall or other enforcement action by NHTSA.

"NHTSA reminds the public that no commercially available motor vehicles today are capable of driving themselves," the agency said in a statement. "Every available vehicle requires a human driver to be in control at all times, and all state laws hold human drivers responsible for operation of their vehicles."

The agency said it has "robust enforcement tools" to protect the public and investigate potential safety issues, and it will act when it finds evidence "of noncompliance or an unreasonable risk to safety."

In June, NHTSA ordered all automakers to report any crashes involving fully autonomous vehicles or partially automated driver assist systems.

Tesla uses a camera-based system, a lot of computing power, and sometimes radar to spot obstacles, determine what they are, and then decide what the vehicles should do. But Carnegie Mellon's Rajkumar said the company's radar was plagued by "false positive" signals and would stop cars after determining overpasses were obstacles.

Now Tesla has eliminated radar in favor of cameras and thousands of images that the computer neural network uses to determine if there are objects in the way. The system, he said, does a very good job on most objects that would be seen in the real world. But it has had trouble with parked emergency vehicles and perpendicular trucks in its path.

"It can only find patterns that it has been quote-unquote trained on," Rajkumar said. "Clearly the inputs that the neural network was trained on just do not contain enough images. They're only as good as the inputs and training. Almost by definition, the training will never be good enough."

Tesla also is allowing selected owners to test what it calls a "full self-driving" system. Rajkumar said that should be investigated as well.

Billions spent on Afghan army ultimately benefited Taliban

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Built and trained at a two-decade cost of \$83 billion, Afghan security forces collapsed so quickly and completely — in some cases without a shot fired — that the ultimate beneficiary of the American investment turned out to be the Taliban. They grabbed not only political power but also U.S.-supplied firepower — guns, ammunition, helicopters and more.

The Taliban captured an array of modern military equipment when they overran Afghan forces who failed to defend district centers. Bigger gains followed, including combat aircraft, when the Taliban rolled up provincial capitals and military bases with stunning speed, topped by capturing the biggest prize, Kabul, over the weekend.

A U.S. defense official on Monday confirmed the Taliban's sudden accumulation of U.S.-supplied Afghan equipment is enormous. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and so spoke on condition of anonymity. The reversal is an embarrassing consequence of misjudging the viability of Afghan government forces — by the U.S. military as well as intelligence agencies — which in some cases chose to surrender their vehicles and weapons rather than fight.

The U.S. failure to produce a sustainable Afghan army and police force, and the reasons for their collapse, will be studied for years by military analysts. The basic dimensions, however, are clear and are not unlike what happened in Iraq. The forces turned out to be hollow, equipped with superior arms but largely missing the crucial ingredient of combat motivation.

"Money can't buy will. You cannot purchase leadership," John Kirby, chief spokesman for Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, said Monday.

Doug Lute, a retired Army lieutenant general who help direct Afghan war strategy during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, said that what the Afghans received in tangible resources they lacked in the more important intangibles.

"The principle of war stands — moral factors dominate material factors," he said. "Morale, discipline, leadership, unit cohesion are more decisive than numbers of forces and equipment. As outsiders in Af-

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ghanistan, we can provide materiel, but only Afghans can provide the intangible moral factors.”

By contrast, Afghanistan’s Taliban insurgents, with smaller numbers, less sophisticated weaponry and no air power, proved a superior force. U.S. intelligence agencies largely underestimated the scope of that superiority, and even after President Joe Biden announced in April he was withdrawing all U.S. troops, the intelligence agencies did not foresee a Taliban final offensive that would succeed so spectacularly.

“If we wouldn’t have used hope as a course of action, ... we would have realized the rapid drawdown of U.S. forces sent a signal to the Afghan national forces that they were being abandoned,” said Chris Miller, who saw combat in Afghanistan in 2001 and was acting secretary of defense at the end of President Donald Trump’s term.

Stephen Biddle, a professor of international and public affairs at Columbia University and a former adviser to U.S. commanders in Afghanistan, said Biden’s announcement set the final collapse in motion.

“The problem of the U.S. withdrawal is that it sent a nationwide signal that the jig is up — a sudden, nationwide signal that everyone read the same way,” Biddle said. Before April, the Afghan government troops were slowly but steadily losing the war, he said. When they learned that their American partners were going home, an impulse to give up without a fight “spread like wildfire.”

The failures, however, go back much further and run much deeper. The United States tried to develop a credible Afghan defense establishment on the fly, even as it was fighting the Taliban, attempting to widen the political foundations of the government in Kabul and seeking to establish democracy in a country rife with corruption and cronyism.

Year after year, U.S. military leaders downplayed the problems and insisted success was coming. Others saw the handwriting on the wall. In 2015 a professor at the Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute wrote about the military’s failure to learn lessons from past wars; he subtitled his book, “Why the Afghan National Security Forces Will Not Hold.”

“Regarding the future of Afghanistan, in blunt terms, the United States has been down this road at the strategic level twice before, in Vietnam and Iraq, and there is no viable rationale for why the results will be any different in Afghanistan,” Chris Mason wrote. He added, presciently: “Slow decay is inevitable, and state failure is a matter of time.”

Some elements of the Afghan army did fight hard, including commandos whose heroic efforts are yet to be fully documented. But as a whole the security forces created by the United States and its NATO allies amounted to a “house of cards” whose collapse was driven as much by failures of U.S. civilian leaders as their military partners, according to Anthony Cordesman, a longtime Afghanistan war analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The Afghan force-building exercise was so completely dependent on American largesse that the Pentagon even paid the Afghan troops’ salaries. Too often that money, and untold amounts of fuel, were siphoned off by corrupt officers and government overseers who cooked the books, creating “ghost soldiers” to keep the misspent dollars coming.

Of the approximately \$145 billion the U.S. government spent trying to rebuild Afghanistan, about \$83 billion went to developing and sustaining its army and police forces, according to the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, a congressionally created watchdog that has tracked the war since 2008. The \$145 billion is in addition to \$837 billion the United States spent fighting the war, which began with an invasion in October 2001.

The \$83 billion invested in Afghan forces over 20 years is nearly double last year’s budget for the entire U.S. Marine Corps and is slightly more than what Washington budgeted last year for food stamp assistance for about 40 million Americans.

In his book, “The Afghanistan Papers,” journalist Craig Whitlock wrote that U.S. trainers tried to force Western ways on Afghan recruits and gave scant thought to whether U.S. taxpayers dollars were investing in a truly viable army.

“Given that the U.S. war strategy depended on the Afghan army’s performance, however, the Pentagon paid surprisingly little attention to the question of whether Afghans were willing to die for their govern-

ment," he wrote.

Mask disputes, outbreaks make for rocky start of school year

By JAMES ANDERSON Associated Press

The summer surge of the highly infectious delta variant of the coronavirus made for a disruptive start of the school year in many parts of the country Monday as hundreds of thousands of children returned to classrooms and parents, administrators and governors clashed over whether masks should be required.

Confusion reigned in several Texas school districts after the state Supreme Court stopped mask mandates in two of the state's largest districts, the day before the first day of school in Dallas. An Arizona judge upheld, at least temporarily, a mask mandate in a Phoenix district despite a new state law prohibiting such restrictions. One Colorado county posted sheriff's deputies in schools on the first day of classes as a precaution after parents protested a last-minute mask mandate.

Public school authorities are committed to making up lost ground after frequent disruptions, including on- and-off remote learning, in the pandemic's first year left millions of children behind in their studies, especially those of communities of color. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends masks in schools for students, staff and teachers.

Nowhere did Monday's battles play out greater than in Texas, where some counties and school districts kept in place mask mandates and others rescinded them as schools reopened after Sunday's court ruling.

The order by the state's highest court — entirely comprised of elected Republican justices — halts mask requirements that county leaders in Dallas and San Antonio, which are run by Democrats, put in place as new infections soared.

Dallas school officials said Monday that masks were still required on district property and that visitors weren't allowed in schools. The Austin school district and Harris County, which includes Houston, also said their mask mandates for schools remained in place.

The top elected official in Dallas County said in a tweet that the Supreme Court ruling did not strike down his mask order, and that it remained in effect.

"We're at war on behalf of moms and dads and kids against a deadly virus. I sure wish the Governor would join our side in the battle," said Dallas county Judge Clay Jenkins.

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott strongly opposes public school mask mandates, and students and parents gathered outside the governor's mansion in Austin to urge him to drop that opposition.

The start of the school year comes as the country is averaging more than 130,000 new infections a day and the number of people hospitalized with COVID-19 has soared to levels last seen in mid-February. The death toll has also risen to nearly 700 a day.

Hospitals in several virus hotspots say they are seeing an increase in infections and hospitalizations in children, bringing anxiety to families starting school. A handful of Republican-led states ban schools from requiring masks but many have defied the laws and are fighting them in the courts.

In West Texas, the Iraan-Sheffield Independent School District district, which began its school year Aug. 10, said Monday it was shutting down for two weeks so students and staff could quarantine. The district, which has about 380 students, provided no data about a virus outbreak, but said no remote learning would be available and urged students and staff to stay at home. Mask wearing was optional in the district.

Yellow school buses and parents snapping back-to-school pictures made the first day of school seem almost normal in Los Angeles, where many schools reopened Monday in the nation's second-largest school district.

In Los Angeles, like the rest of the state, students and teachers are required to wear masks in indoor settings, and teachers must show proof of vaccination or submit to weekly COVID-19 testing.

Los Angeles Unified School District, which serves about 600,000 K-12 students, is also requiring students and staff to get tested weekly for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status, and is conducting daily health checks.

"There is no substitute for in-person learning, friendship and physical activity, which is why we have com-

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mitted to putting into place the highest safety standards," LAUSD interim Superintendent Megan Reilly said.

San Francisco schools also reopened Monday to more than 50,000 students — many for the first time in 17 months. San Francisco Unified is recommending that students and staff get tested if they have symptoms, but is not requiring tests.

"It's been a long time coming," San Francisco Mayor London Breed said Monday morning as she joined city leaders on a tour of schools to welcome children back. At one elementary school, students walked along a red carpet into the school building as school staff cheered.

In South Carolina, one district has already moved to all-virtual classes after a rash of cases led to hundreds of students quarantined within the first two weeks of the fall semester. That decision has led to protests among parents in Pickens County.

In other South Carolina counties, officials considered joining Columbia, the capital, in requiring masks in schools despite a state budget requirement that bans districts from doing so without risking funding.

In Eagle County, Colorado, sheriff's deputies were posted to elementary and middle schools on the first day of class Monday after parents objected to a last-minute decision Friday by the county school district to require universal masking. No problems were immediately reported, but the potential for trouble is real.

In Los Angeles, a man was released from a hospital after being stabbed when an anti-vaccine protest turned violent Saturday. Dozens of people have protested outside the home of Jenkins, the Dallas County judge, over his emergency order requiring masks. Protesters also showed up over the weekend outside the home of Hawaii's lieutenant governor, an emergency room doctor who has warned that increasing hospitalizations, particularly among the unvaccinated, could lead to another lockdown.

An unruly crowd objecting to masks and vaccines hearing heckled and criticized Louisiana's chief public health adviser as he described to lawmakers the state's coronavirus surge.

Louisiana's health department announced that the state set another record for hospitalizations, with 2,956 people with COVID-19 filling up hospital beds.

"I pray we're close to the peak, I really do. I haven't seen any evidence in our data that suggests we're close," said Dr. Joe Kanter, the state's chief public health officer.

The University of Mississippi Medical Center was setting up a second emergency field hospital in a parking garage to handle some of the sickest COVID-19 patients. Mississippi's coronavirus numbers have doubled in the past two weeks and hospitalizations are the highest since the pandemic began.

The city of New Orleans started Monday requiring that people entering restaurants, bars, gyms and other indoor facilities be vaccinated or have a recent negative test for the coronavirus.

New York City prepared to require proof of COVID vaccinations starting Tuesday for anyone dining indoors at restaurants, working out at a gym or attending indoor performances. Enforcement of the requirement begins Sept. 13.

Analysis: Defiant Biden is face of chaotic Afghan evacuation

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

Four presidents share responsibility for the missteps in Afghanistan that accumulated over two decades. But only President Joe Biden will be the face of the war's chaotic, violent conclusion.

The president fought that reality Monday as he spread blame for the Taliban's swift and complete recapture of Afghanistan. He pointed to a previous agreement brokered by then-President Donald Trump, expressed frustration with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and lamented the performance of Afghan national security forces. Republicans overwhelmingly criticized Biden and he found few vocal backers among fellow Democrats.

The collapse of the Afghan government is the biggest foreign policy crisis of Biden's young presidency, recalling setbacks for past presidents such as the withdrawal from Vietnam and the botched Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba. The reverberations of the Taliban's success were startling, endangering Afghan women and girls, posing new security threats and threatening to undercut global views of America's reliability.

In the face of such stark consequences, Biden admitted no fault for the chaotic drawdown and instead

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forcefully defended his move to leave a nation the U.S. has tried to safeguard since it toppled the Taliban regime after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, when smoke still rose from the rubble of the World Trade Center.

"Here's what I believe to my core: It is wrong to order American troops to step up when Afghanistan's own armed forces would not," said Biden. "How many more generations of America's daughters and sons would you have me send to fight Afghanistan's civil war? I will not repeat the mistakes we made in the past."

When Biden took responsibility, it was more for ending the war than for the manner in which it happened.

"I know my decision will be criticized. But I would rather take that criticism than pass this on to a fifth president," said Biden. "I am the president of the United States, the buck stops with me."

His firm tone differed little from just five weeks ago, when he bullishly predicted what would happen as his August 31 deadline for withdrawal neared. He declared there was going to be no repeat of the humiliating U.S. evacuation from Vietnam nearly a half century ago and "no circumstance where you see people being lifted off the roof of an embassy of the United States from Afghanistan."

But Monday yielded devastating images from Kabul that rivaled anything witnessed in Saigon.

Thousands of Afghan citizens, many of whom worked as translators and other aides to American troops, thronged the Kabul airport, desperate to escape the Taliban. In heartbreaking footage, some tried to desperately board a U.S. military plane flying to safety, attempting to dash alongside as it raced down the runway.

A few managed to cling to the plane before it took off and video showed several falling through the air as the airplane rapidly gained altitude over the city.

The evacuation received condemnation at home and abroad, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel calling the latest developments "bitter, dramatic and awful." And security officials warned that Afghanistan would soon provide safe harbor for terrorist groups again.

The Taliban seemed poised to have total of control of Afghanistan on Sept. 11, just as they did on the date two decades earlier when al-Qaida terror attacks plotted from its soil toppled the World Trade Center and damaged the Pentagon. The fallout from 2001 attacks reshaped America's relationship with the Middle East, and more than 3,000 American and NATO forces died in the resulting combat in Afghanistan during the manhunt for Osama bin Laden and beyond.

Under the command of President George W. Bush, American forces stormed into Afghanistan soon after the terror attacks on a hunt for bin Laden while trying to disrupt al-Qaida's ability to conduct further assaults on the West. There was immediate success: The Taliban were routed, the terror group disrupted.

But after that came the grinding second phase of the war and a surge of troops from President Barack Obama in 2009. Though Obama later moved to reduce the number of troops, the volume of insurgent attacks and civilian casualties prevented a full drawdown.

Trump mulled meeting the Taliban at Camp David on an earlier Sept. 11 anniversary, only to back away from the idea amid an uproar. But he announced that the U.S. would pull all its forces out by May 2021, an agreement Biden honored and delayed only slightly.

Efforts were made, at great expense, across all the administrations to train and arm the Afghan forces once the U.S. departed. But that investment of American blood, time and treasure proved useless as the Taliban conquered much of the nation without a fight and Afghanistan's president fled the country as soon as the invading forces reached Kabul.

In the upper ranks of Biden's staff, the rapid collapse in Afghanistan only confirmed the decision to leave: If the meltdown of the Afghan forces would come so quickly after nearly two decades of American presence, another six months or a year or two or more would not have changed anything.

His move to withdraw troops this summer, though polarizing in the national security community, had been praised by some on both sides of the aisle as timely and appropriate. But on Monday, Republicans were eager to slam Biden's decision and blame him for the chaos, though many of them had supported a withdrawal when it had been proposed by Trump a year ago.

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, however, had consistently advocated keeping troops in Afghanistan, and he said the military briefings he attended suggested the Taliban would be able to quickly

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regain power.

"I think the president felt strongly about this, obviously," McConnell said. "He overruled his own military leaders to do it and he owns it."

Biden has argued for more than a decade that Afghanistan was a kind of purgatory for the United States. He found it to be corrupt, addicted to America's largesse and an unreliable partner that should be made to fend for itself. His goal was to protect Americans from terrorist attacks, not building a country, and his aides have pointed to polling — taken before the chaos of the last week — that shows that a majority of Americans favor bringing troops home.

But that political gamble could prove risky as the scenes of fear and violence from Afghanistan are broadcast around the globe, especially if the chaos in Kabul makes "Saigon look like Disney World," warned Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., a veteran who served in Afghanistan.

"The bottom line is that there's going to be a lot of people that are very let down by the United States of America," Kinzinger said in an interview. "We will inevitably, inevitably be in conflict again somewhere. How are we going to convince those locals that we're going to follow through when we've abandoned those in Afghanistan?"

Kabul airport plunges into chaos as Taliban patrol capital

By AHMAD SEIR, TAMEEM AKHGAR, KATHY GANNON and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Thousands of Afghans rushed into Kabul's main airport Monday, some so desperate to escape the Taliban that they held onto a military jet as it took off and plunged to their deaths. At least seven people died in the chaos, U.S. officials said, as America's longest war ended with its enemy the victor.

The crowds came while the Taliban enforced their rule over the capital of 5 million people after a lightning advance across the country that took just over a week to dethrone the country's Western-backed government. There were no major reports of abuses or fighting, but many residents stayed home and remained fearful after the insurgents' takeover saw prisons emptied and armories looted.

A resolute U.S. President Joe Biden said he stood "squarely behind" his decision to withdraw American forces and acknowledged the "gut-wrenching" images unfolding in Kabul. Biden said he faced a choice between honoring a previously negotiated withdrawal agreement or sending thousands more troops back to begin a third decade of war.

"After 20 years, I've learned the hard way that there was never a good time to withdraw U.S. forces," Biden said in a televised address from the White House.

The president said American troops should not be fighting and dying in a war "that Afghan forces are not willing to fight for themselves." He warned the Taliban not to interfere with the evacuation efforts.

Across Afghanistan, the International Committee of the Red Cross said thousands had been wounded in the fighting. Security forces and politicians handed over their provinces and bases without a fight, likely believing the two-decade Western experiment to remake Afghanistan would not survive the resurgent Taliban. The last American troops had planned to withdraw at the end of the month.

"The world is following events in Afghanistan with a heavy heart and deep disquiet about what lies ahead," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said.

As the U.S. military and others continued evacuation flights, Afghans swarmed over the international airport's tarmac. Some climbed into aircraft parked on the taxiway, while others dangled precariously off a jet bridge.

U.S. troops took positions to guard the active runway, but the crowd stormed past them and their armored vehicles. Gunshots rang out. As one U.S. Air Force Boeing C-17 Globemaster III tried to take off, a helicopter did low runs in front of it to try to drive people off the runway.

Videos showed a group of Afghans hanging onto the plane just before takeoff and several falling through the air as the airplane rapidly gained altitude over the city.

Senior American military officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing opera-

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tion, told The Associated Press that the chaos left seven dead, including several who fell from the flight. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said U.S. forces killed two people he described as carrying weapons in the melee. He said 1,000 more U.S. troops would be deployed to secure the airfield and back up the 2,500 already there.

All flights at the airport — both military and civilian — were halted until Afghan civilians could be cleared from the runway, Kirby added.

Late Monday night, hundreds of people remained trapped between American forces trying to push them out of the airport and Taliban forces trying to keep them in, witnesses said. An Associated Press journalist also saw what appeared to be an airstrike target two vehicles near the airport.

Earlier, more than 300 people were evacuated aboard a Turkish Airlines flight after Turkish soldiers cleared the runway. Senol Celik, who identified himself as a Turkish Embassy employee, said people “threw themselves in front of the plane.”

“They wanted to board the plane. They wanted to escape Afghanistan,” he said. “We were afraid that the plane would return and that we would enter that chaos. We were sad for those people.”

Shafi Arifi, who had a ticket to travel to Uzbekistan on Sunday, was unable to board his plane because it was packed with people who raced across the tarmac and climbed aboard, with no police or airport staff in sight.

“There was no room for us to stand,” said the 24-year-old. “Children were crying, women were shouting, young and old men were so angry and upset, no one could hear each other. There was no oxygen to breathe.”

After a woman fainted and was carried off the plane, Arifi gave up and returned home.

Other Afghans, like Rakhmatula Kuyash, are also trying to leave through land border crossings, all of which are now controlled by the Taliban.

“I’m lost and I don’t know what to do,” said Kuyash, who crossed into Uzbekistan on Sunday after leaving his children and relatives in Afghanistan. “I left everything behind.”

Others were not so lucky. Uzbekistan air defenses shot down an Afghan military aircraft that tried to enter the country without permission. The two pilots were reportedly injured and in custody.

Meanwhile, President Ashraf Ghani, who earlier left the country, faced Russian allegations he fled Kabul with four cars and a helicopter full of cash. His whereabouts remained unclear.

The U.S. Embassy has been evacuated and the American flag lowered, with diplomats relocating to the airport to help with the evacuation. Other Western countries also closed their missions and were flying out staff and their citizens.

In interviews with U.S. television networks, national security adviser Jake Sullivan blamed the Afghan military for the Taliban’s rapid takeover, saying it lacked the will to fight.

The Taliban offensive stunned American officials. Just days before the insurgents entered Kabul with little if any resistance, a U.S. military assessment predicted it could take months for the capital to fall.

The rout threatened to erase 20 years of Western efforts to remake Afghanistan that saw tens of thousands of Afghans killed as well as more than 3,500 U.S. and allied troops. The initial invasion in 2001 drove the Taliban from power and scattered al-Qaida, which had planned the 9/11 attacks while being sheltered in Afghanistan.

Under the Taliban, which ruled in accordance with a harsh interpretation of Islamic law, women were largely confined to their homes and suspected criminals faced amputation or public execution. The insurgents have sought to project greater moderation in recent years, but many Afghans remain skeptical.

Filippo Grandi, the United Nations’ high commissioner for refugees, separately described interactions with the Taliban as “relatively positive.”

On Monday, Nillan, a 27-year-old resident of Kabul who asked to be identified only by her first name for fear of reprisals, said she did not see a single woman out on the streets during a 15-minute drive, “only men and boys.”

“It feels like time has stopped. Everything’s changed,” she told the AP.

She added, "It feels like our life and our future has ended."

Afghan military plane crashes in Uzbekistan; cause disputed

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — An Afghan military plane crashed in Uzbekistan over the weekend, and Uzbek authorities on Monday issued conflicting reports on the cause. The wreckage came as dozens of Afghan military aircraft carrying hundreds of servicemen reportedly reached Uzbekistan, among the thousands fleeing the country after the Taliban recaptured the Afghan capital of Kabul.

The plane crash in southeastern Uzbekistan, in the Surkhandarya region on the border with Afghanistan, was first reported by local media. Uzbekistan's Defense Ministry initially said it was studying videos and reports of the crash, then confirmed that the plane did crash, without elaborating.

Later Monday, Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti reported that it was told by the Uzbek Defense Ministry that Uzbekistan's air defense system had downed the plane and "averted an attempt by an Afghan military plane to illegally cross Uzbekistan's air border." Two pilots, the agency said, were hospitalized in serious condition.

Within hours, the Prosecutor General's office in Uzbekistan issued a statement saying that an Afghan military plane had collided with an Uzbek plane that was scrambled to escort it to the airport at Termez, a city in Surkhandarya.

The office later retracted that statement, which also alleged that 22 warplanes and 24 military helicopters from Afghanistan carrying 585 servicemen "illegally crossed" into Uzbek airspace over the weekend and were forced by Uzbek authorities to land at Termez.

The Prosecutor General's office later apologized for a "hasty" statement on the messaging app Telegram and said it was not based "verified data from the relevant authorities."

The Associated Press couldn't immediately reconcile all the conflicting reports or independently verify them.

Reports of the plane crash in Uzbekistan appeared Monday as thousands of Afghans packed into the Kabul airport, rushing the tarmac and pushing onto planes in desperate attempts to flee the country a day after the Taliban overthrew the country's Western-backed government. U.S. troops fired warning shots as they struggled to manage the chaotic evacuation.

Caroline Tabler, a communications director for Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton, said the GOP lawmaker's office was working urgently to support Afghan pilots fleeing from the Taliban to Uzbekistan. She appeared to confirm that at least some Afghan military personnel had reached Uzbekistan.

"We're working with an intermediary who's been in touch with the pilots," she told the AP. "We have not heard from them since last night (Washington) time. We know Uzbekistan has taken their cellphones. Our primary concern is making sure Uzbekistan does not turn them over to the Taliban. We are frantically reaching out to the State Department on this case and trying to get them asylum and literally can't get a response."

A plane carrying more than 100 Afghan servicemen landed in Tajikistan on Monday, the Tajik Foreign Ministry said. Officials told Russia's state news agency Tass that Tajikistan received an SOS signal and allowed a plane bound from Afghanistan to land at an airport in the Khatlon province, which borders both Afghanistan and Uzbekistan's Surkhandarya region.

On Sunday, Uzbekistan's Foreign Ministry reported that 84 Afghan servicemen crossed the border into Uzbekistan, asking for assistance. The group was detained by border guards and included three wounded soldiers who needed medical help.

The men were offered food and temporary accommodation in Uzbekistan, and the ministry said it was in touch with Afghan officials regarding the return of the Afghan soldiers.

Haiti's troubled history may slow aid to earthquake victims

By HALELUYA HADERO and GLENN GAMBOA AP Business Writers

Humanitarian aid is flowing into Haiti following Saturday's deadly 7.2-magnitude earthquake. However, the Caribbean nation's political unrest, as well as an approaching tropical storm, is complicating efforts.

Nonprofit groups and philanthropy experts say the assassination last month of Haitian President Jovenel Moise, as well as accusations that money raised following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti never reached those in need, will make fundraising for the nation even tougher.

Art delaCruz, CEO of Team Rubicon, a nonprofit that deploys emergency response teams to work with first responders in disaster areas, said the first briefing his teams in Haiti and the Dominican Republic had with support teams in the United States was about security.

"The assassination of the president, the almost gang-like existence there, it really increases the risk to organizations like ours that deploy into this situation," delaCruz said. However, Team Rubicon, which was founded in 2010 by Marines Jake Wood and William McNulty in response to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, has experience on the ground in the country and in similar situations around the world.

"It's dicey for everyone because the information is incomplete and the situation is dynamic," delaCruz said. "One way we have a competitive advantage on this is we are an organization where 70% of the volunteers are veterans. They have seen this kind of an environment."

Nate Mook, CEO of World Central Kitchen, cited the need for adaptability as well. He was in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince on Monday, managing the nonprofit's efforts to combat food insecurity following the earthquake, but found that its transportation system was needed to bring injured people to the hospital.

"We've been really focusing, not just on food, but also how we can support our local partners," he said. "We've spent a lot of time here. We know how to navigate the complexities."

Haiti inspired chef Jose Andres to found World Central Kitchen following the 2010 earthquake and the nonprofit has maintained a presence there, opening a culinary school in 2015 that is now one of two bases of operations to provide thousands of meals a day.

"People are hungry and they're getting desperate and that creates instability and a lot of concerns, so we need to work with our partners to get them food, to make sure food is available," Mook said.

Skyler Badenoch, CEO of the Florida nonprofit Hope for Haiti, says the response has also been complicated because its staff has been directly affected by the disaster. The organization is now gearing up to distribute \$60 million worth of first aid supplies and medical equipment to help those affected, he said.

Aid to Haiti has been probed for years and scrutiny intensified in 2015 when an investigation from ProPublica and NPR questioned where \$500 million raised by the American Red Cross was spent.

The American Red Cross said in an emailed statement that it is not seeking donations for Haiti relief at this time, but will work with its partners — including the Haitian Red Cross and the Red Crescent — to respond to the earthquake. It also disputed the ProPublica/NPR findings. "Americans donated generously in the aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake to save lives — which is exactly what their donations did," it said in a statement.

Despite the criticisms the Red Cross has received, Maryam Zarnegar Deloffre, an expert in humanitarian aid and professor at George Washington University, said she believes donors will continue to rely on the organization because of its reputation.

"It has been resilient," she said, partly because the organization is easily recognized by donors for its work with blood drives, and other things.

This time around, Marleine Bastien, the executive director of the Family Action Network Movement, a social service organization based in the "Little Haiti" neighborhood in Florida, says her organization will devise a plan to hold accountable every group that's collecting donations for Haiti.

"We definitely do not want another film titled 'Where Did The Money Go?'" Bastien said, in reference to the 2012 documentary that looked at donations given to Haiti relief following the 2010 earthquake.

The deadly earthquake hit Haiti at the same time a growing humanitarian crisis is unfolding in Ethiopia, and instability is rocking Afghanistan. Deloffre, of George Washington University, said she believes fund-

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raising prospects for the country are bleak.

"I unfortunately do not expect broad global attention to the earthquake in Haiti," she said. "Or public giving, on the same scale as we saw in response to the 2010 earthquake."

Past allegations of misspent donations have created some hesitancy as well, said Badenoch, of Hope for Haiti, though the need following the most recent earthquake may be even more intense.

"It is quite possible that Haiti is going to need more help than ever before," said Akim Kikonda, Catholic Relief Services' country representative in Haiti.

Laura Durlington, Catholic Relief Services' director of annual giving, said the group, which has worked there for 50 years, is providing whatever help that it can. It started to distribute emergency supplies Monday because they had stockpiled tents and metal sheeting there previously.

"Yes, there have been some bad actors, but not giving because of that is short-sighted," Durlington said. "It's really frustrating, because every penny that was given to us for Haiti went to Haiti. There has been incremental, positive change. And Haiti's needs are so critical right now."

Video shows desperate Afghans climbing US jet to escape

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — In video footage that could become some of the defining images of the fall of Kabul, Afghans desperate to escape the Taliban takeover clung to the side of a departing U.S. military jet as it rolled down the tarmac Monday. Some of them apparently fell to their death as the aircraft gained altitude.

Scores of people ran alongside the giant U.S. Air Force plane at the Kabul airport, and some managed to get a foothold before it took off.

U.S. authorities said that all told, at least seven people died during the chaotic evacuation at the airport, including several who fell from a military jet.

Video apparently of the same aircraft from a distance showed people watching as one or more objects plummeted to the ground.

People could be heard saying, "Look, one fell" and then, "Ohhh, another also fell."

Chasing Tide: Alabama is No. 1 in preseason AP Top 25 again

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Another college football season will start with everyone chasing the Tide.

Alabama is No. 1 in The Associated Press Top 25 preseason poll for fourth time in the past six seasons.

Coming off its sixth national championship under Nick Saban, the Crimson Tide enters the season loaded with potential replacements for the record-breakers and NFL draft picks who have moved on, including Heisman Trophy winner DeVonta Smith.

Alabama received 47 of 63 first-place votes from the panel of sports writers and broadcasters in the poll presented by Regions Bank. Oklahoma is No. 2, just ahead of No. 3 Clemson (each received six first-place votes).

Ohio State, which lost to the Tide in last season's championship game, is No. 4 after receiving a first-place vote. Georgia received three first-place votes and rounds out the top five.

The 2020 Buckeyes were emblematic of a bizarre season played through the pandemic, suiting up for only eight games after the Big Ten didn't kickoff until late October. The season was riddled with postponements, cancellations, and players and coaches missing games across the country because of COVID-19. There was little nonconference play and none among Power Five conference teams.

Amid all the chaos and frustration was a familiar ending: The season came to a close with Alabama on top.

Last year's Tide staked a claim as the greatest team of the Saban dynasty. Alabama went 13-0, facing 11 Southeastern Conference teams and playoff showdowns with Notre Dame and Ohio State.

"The challenge is you've got to rebuild with a lot of new players who will be younger, have new roles, less experience, and how do they respond to these new roles?" Saban said. "That's why rebuilding is a tremendous challenge. That's why it's very difficult to repeat."

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The most powerful offense in the country lost Smith, quarterback Mac Jones and running back Najee Harris, all first-round NFL draft picks this year. The next wave of blue-chippers stepping into bigger roles includes running back Brian Robinson, receiver John Metchie and quarterback Bryce Young, a former five-star recruit from California.

"Bryce has endless potential," Saban said.

Since the AP started the preseason poll in 1950, only 11 teams that started No. 1 also ended the season as No. 1. Alabama was the last to do it, in 2017, the middle season of three straight in which the Crimson Tide took the preseason top spot. Alabama finished second in 2016 and '18.

No program faces higher expectations than Alabama going into any season: The Crimson Tide is the only team in the country to start each of the last 13 seasons ranked in the top five.

And no program has been better at meeting those expectations: Along with the six national titles, the Tide has three more top-four finishes over the previous 12 years and has never ended a season ranked lower than 10th.

POLL POINTS

— Alabama is now tied with Ohio State for the second-most preseason No. 1 rankings with eight. Oklahoma has the most with 10.

— Only two teams have gone wire-to-wire as the No. 1 team in the country during a season. Southern California was the last in 2004, with Heisman Trophy winner Matt Leinart. The first was undefeated Florida State in 1999, possibly the best team of the Bobby Bowden era. Bowden died earlier this month at 91.

— No. 8 Cincinnati of the American Athletic Conference is the first team from outside the Power Five leagues to be ranked in the preseason top 10 since Louisville started ninth in 2012. That was the Cardinals' final season as a member of the AAC before joining the Atlantic Coast Conference.

The defending AAC champion Bearcats have the best preseason ranking for a non-Power Five or BCS conference team since Boise State was No. 5 to begin 2011. The Broncos out of the Mountain West finished that season No. 8.

RARITIES AND FIRSTS

— Sun Belt rivals No. 22 Coastal Carolina and No. 23 Louisiana-Lafayette are ranked in the preseason poll for the first time. It's the first time the conference has had any teams ranked in the preseason.

— No. 7 Iowa State is ranked in the preseason for the third straight season after having only one previous appearance in the preseason poll (1978). The Cyclones had never been ranked better than 20th to begin a season. They also have never been ranked higher at any point than the No. 8 they reached last year on the way to finishing ninth.

— No. 10 North Carolina has its best preseason ranking since being No. 7 in 1997 during coach Mack Brown's first stint with the Tar Heels.

— No. 17 Indiana is ranked in the preseason poll for the first time since 1968. The Hoosiers finished last season at No. 12, the second-best final ranking in program history. Indiana has never started and finished a season ranked.

CONFERENCE CALL

No. 6 Texas A&M starts with its best preseason ranking since 1995 when the Aggies were No. 3. Coach Jimbo Fisher's team also gives the SEC three teams in the top six, joining Alabama and Georgia.

Breakdown by conference:

SEC — 5 (Nos. 1, 5, 6, 13, 16).

Big Ten — 5 (Nos. 4, 12, 17, 18, 19).

Pac-12 — 5 (Nos. 11, 15, 20, 24, 25).

ACC — 3 (Nos. 3, 10, 14).

Big 12 — 3 (No. 2, 7, 21).

Sun Belt — 2 (Nos. 22, 23).

American — 1 (No. 8).

Independent — 1 (No. 9).

Emaciated bear cub may have lost mom to California wildfire

By EUGENE GARCIA Associated Press

QUINCY, Calif. (AP) — Firefighters are keeping an eye on a lone, emaciated bear cub that may have lost its mother to the country's largest wildfire now burning in Northern California.

The pointy-eared cub is seen rambling solo along a mountain road burned by the Dixie Fire near Taylorsville, peering through brush and leaping through plants covered in fire retardant chemicals.

"Generally when you see them with a sow or a mother bear, they'll stay with the mother bear and run off," said firefighter Johnnie Macy, who was deployed from Golden, Colorado, to battle the fire. "This bear hasn't done that, so because of that we think that the bear's orphaned as a result of the fire."

Macy said on Sunday that they've been monitoring the cub for several days, to determine if it is an orphan. A wildlife rescue team was waiting to extract the emaciated cub from the burn-scarred area.

Macy called the situation "heartbreaking," but said it is "Mother Nature taking its course."

The Dixie Fire has been burning for more than a month and destroyed more than 1,000 homes and businesses with nearly 15,000 structures still under threat. Pacific Gas & Electric has said the fire may have been sparked when a tree fell on its power line.

A bear named "Smokey" is, of course, the most famous orphan cub in the country rescued from wildfire.

The badly burned bear was rescued from a New Mexico wildfire in 1950 and became the living, breathing embodiment of a national campaign launched in 1944 when the U.S. Forest Service and Ad Council agreed that a fictional bear would be the symbol for a fire prevention campaign.

Earlier this month, a bear cub with burns to its paws and nose was rescued from a fire in eastern Siskiyou County in California. Also this month, an injured cub tunneled out of a Lake Tahoe wildlife care center where he was being treated for burns sustained in a wildfire. The bear has since been spotted in the wild.

Europe urges unity on Taliban but is quiet on failed mission

By SYLVIA HUI and LORNE COOK Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — European leaders said Monday they will press for a unified international approach to dealing with a Taliban government in Afghanistan, as they looked on with dismay at the rapid collapse of two decades of a U.S.-led Western campaign in the country.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to French President Emmanuel Macron Monday, stressing the need for a common stand, both on recognizing any future Afghan government and to prevent a humanitarian and refugee crisis.

Both leaders agreed to cooperate at the U.N. Security Council, and Johnson also said he will host a virtual meeting of the Group of Seven leaders on Afghanistan in the next few days. Johnson said on Sunday, "We don't want anybody to bilaterally recognize the Taliban."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman echoed that sentiment Monday, saying the question of whether there can be a dialogue with the Taliban needs to be discussed internationally.

"We do not have any illusions about the Taliban and the essence of their movement," said Steffen Seibert, the spokesman.

The French leader said in a speech to the nation Monday night that the fight against "Islamist terrorism in all its forms" would not end.

"Afghanistan cannot again become the sanctuary for terrorism that it was," Macron said.

He stressed that the U.N. Security Council is the forum for a coordinated response, and added, "We will do everything so that Russia, the United States and Europe can cooperate efficiently because our interests are the same."

Macron also raised fears of uncontrolled migration to Europe by Afghans, saying that France, Germany and other European countries would work to swiftly develop a "robust, coordinated and united response."

As far as the crisis inside Afghanistan, European leaders' hands are tied in many ways: They have little leverage over the Taliban, and they are deeply reluctant to publicly criticize the withdrawal decision by the United States, their powerful NATO ally — or comment on their own role in the failed intervention.

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NATO countries were left with little choice but to pull out the roughly 7,000 non-American forces in Afghanistan after President Joe Biden announced in April that he was ending the U.S. involvement in the war by September, 20 years after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Malcolm Chalmers, deputy director-general of London's Royal United Services Institute, said that Britain -- which for much of the war contributed the second-largest number of troops to the mission -- "was especially upset that the Biden administration didn't consult it more fully about the decision to withdraw this summer."

"That is water under the bridge, but the fact that there wasn't a coordinated alliance approach to the withdrawal makes it even more important now to coordinate a Western response -- starting with the question of recognition" of a Taliban government, he said.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said last week that the Taliban "need to understand that they will not be recognized by the international community if they take the country by force." EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has also warned that the militant group would face "isolation" and "lack of international support."

Borrell is expected to chair an emergency meeting of EU foreign ministers to discuss Afghanistan on Tuesday, while NATO envoys will also hold talks.

Meanwhile, Russia's envoy on Afghanistan said that Moscow will decide whether to recognize the new Taliban government based on its conduct.

Chalmers said "Western influence on the Taliban is very limited" compared with that of Pakistan, Iran and China. And Kurt Volker, former U.S. ambassador to NATO, said that warning the Taliban that they face international isolation is a threat "unmoored from reality."

"It is part of the Taliban's ideology to reject modernism and the international community -- and the reputation won by forcing the U.S. to leave is worth far more than aid budgets," he wrote for the Center for European Policy Analysis think tank.

"Indeed, having earned a reputation for abandoning its mission, its friends, and its allies, it is the United States that may actually feel more isolated," Volker added.

The U.K. has repeatedly alluded to how it had been put in a "very difficult position" to continue the mission once the United States announced its decision to pull out, and British leaders have spoken with a tone of resignation as the situation deteriorated rapidly after NATO's exit.

"I think it's fair to say that the U.S. decision to pull out has accelerated things, but this has been in many ways something that has been a chronicle of an event foretold," Johnson said Sunday.

Other European allies have made veiled criticisms of NATO's most powerful member country.

Asked Monday whether France and the U.S. were responsible for the collapse of the armed forces and the unfolding humanitarian crisis, Defense Minister Florence Parly said "France hasn't been in Afghanistan since 2014. There's no parallel to make with the U.S. involvement."

Briefing reporters last week about the crisis in Afghanistan, a senior EU official said that "the decisions which were made in this respect were made in NATO." He did not single out the alliance's most influential member, but the criticism was implicit.

Italian far-right leader Giorgia Meloni was much more direct, saying: "Let's give a welcome back to the cynical Obama-Clinton-Biden doctrine: 'If you can't win, create chaos.'"

Western governments have also appeared to be caught off guard by the stunning speed of the Taliban's advance on Kabul.

For months, European ambassadors at NATO and the EU have been unable to answer questions from reporters about what security arrangements might be in place in Afghanistan should the situation deteriorate. Questions about how to protect embassies and the Kabul airport, where chaos reigned Monday as scores sought to flee the country, were never unanswered.

In the past few days, U.S., British and other Western governments have scrambled to evacuate their embassies, their citizens and Afghans who have helped with their military mission as the Taliban seized power.

"All of us, the government, the intelligence services, the international community, all of us misjudged the situation," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas admitted Monday. "Neither we nor our partners and

experts did foresee the speed with which the Afghan security forces withdrew and capitulated.”

British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace choked up during an interview as he expressed deep regret that some of those people will be left behind.

“It’s sad and the West has done what it’s done,” he acknowledged. “We have to do our very best to get people out and stand by our obligations and 20 years of sacrifice. ... It is what it is.”

US forward Carli Lloyd retiring after decorated career

By ANNE M. PETERSON AP Sports Writer

U.S. forward Carli Lloyd is retiring after a decorated career that included a pair of World Cup titles and two Olympic gold medals, as well as a bronze medal at the Tokyo Games.

The two-time FIFA World Player of the Year known for her dramatic hat-trick in the 2015 World Cup final will play four as-yet unannounced friendly matches this fall with the U.S., and finish out the season with her club team, Gotham FC. She hinted for more than a year that she was nearing the end of her career and made it official Monday.

“Through all the goals, the trophies, the medals and the championships won, what I am most proud of is that I’ve been able to stay unapologetically me,” said Lloyd, whose international career has spanned some 16 years. “My journey has been hard, but I can honestly say I’ve stayed true to myself, to my teammates, my coaches, the media and the fans throughout my entire career and that is what I am most proud of. Everyone sees the moments of glory, but I have cherished the work behind the scenes and the adversity that I’ve had to overcome to get to those glorious moments.”

The 39-year-old Lloyd scored a pair of goals in the United States’ 4-3 victory over Australia in the bronze medal game in Japan earlier this month. She became the first American to score in four different Olympics, and her 10 total goals in the event set a new record among U.S. players.

She ranks second on the national team’s all-time list with 312 appearances, and fourth with 128 goals.

Lloyd is probably best known for her three goals, all in the space of 16 minutes, to lead the United States to a 5-2 victory over Japan in the 2015 World Cup final. Her third goal in that match was a blistering strike from midfield.

At the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Lloyd scored in overtime in a 1-0 victory over Brazil in the final. Four years later, she scored both goals in the gold-medal match against Japan at Wembley Stadium, becoming the only player to score winning goals in consecutive Olympic finals.

“Carli Lloyd is a true legend,” U.S. coach Vlatko Andonovski said. “Her career was unique, and her success on the field is something all current and future National Team players should aspire to achieve. The way she approached her everyday training and career as a professional is truly impressive and I’ve been honored to coach her.”

A New Jersey native, Lloyd has played professionally for some 12 years, spanning time in the now-defunct Women’s Professional Soccer league and in the National Women’s Soccer League. She also had a brief stint with Manchester United in the Women’s Super League.

Known for her steely focus and competitiveness, Lloyd suggested after the United States’ run to the 2019 World Cup title that she would try to make the roster for the Tokyo Games, but it would likely be her last major tournament with the national team.

When the Olympics were pushed back a year because of the coronavirus pandemic, Lloyd underwent a knee procedure and worked her way back under a new trainer. She also took advantage of the downtime to reconnect with her family, from whom she’d been estranged for much of her career.

“To end my career knowing my family was able to be by my side and share this last chapter with me could not have been any more special,” she said. “We will all have a lot more time to spend together now, and especially with my husband Brian, who has been my rock and biggest support system for all these years. We are both looking forward to starting this next chapter of our lives without my everyday grind of training and playing, but I will most likely need to another outlet for my competitiveness! Perhaps that will be golf?”

Flooding death toll in Turkey climbs to 77; dozens missing

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Rescuers recovered more bodies Monday from the severe flooding that devastated parts of Turkey's Black Sea coast last week, bringing the death toll to 77, officials said.

Torrential rains battered the country's northwestern Black Sea provinces on Aug. 11, causing floods that demolished homes and bridges, swept away cars and blocked access to numerous roads.

The Turkish disaster management agency, AFAD, said at least 62 people were killed in the province of Kastamonu, 14 died in Sinop and one in Bartin.

Emergency crews on Monday pressed ahead with efforts to locate dozens of people who were still reported missing in Kastamonu and Sinop. AFAD said some 8,000 personnel, backed by 20 rescue dogs, are involved in the rescue and assistance efforts.

About 2,400 people were evacuated across the region amid the floods — scores of them lifted to safety by helicopters. Many are being temporarily housed in student dormitories.

Around 40 villages remain without power, according to AFAD.

Heavy rains along the northern coast of the Black Sea last week also forced 1,500 people to evacuate in Russia.

The heavy flooding came after Turkey endured a searing heat wave and as crews in the south were taming wildfires that raced across the country's Mediterranean coast.

Climate scientists say there's little doubt that climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas is driving more extreme events — such as heat waves, droughts, wildfires, floods and storms — as the planet warms.

Afghan woman in limbo at Kabul airport after Taliban sweep

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

With hundreds of Afghans rushing the tarmac of Kabul's international airport desperate to flee the return of the Taliban, a young Afghan woman stood in limbo between two worlds.

In one world, Massouma Tajik would board a flight to a country she did not know, destined to become a refugee. In another, she would stay in an Afghanistan under Taliban rule, forced to wipe out the last 20 years of all that she had built and achieved.

Sleepless, hungry and scared she has been waiting for hours at the airport for a flight she feared would never come with questions she could not answer.

"I am in the airport, waiting to get a flight but I don't know to where," she said, speaking to The Associated Press over the phone. "I am here, confused, hungry and hopeless. I don't know what is coming my way. Where will I go? How will I spend my days? Who will support my family?"

Tajik, a 22-year old data analyst working for a U.S. contractor helping Afghan businesses, had gotten the call on Sunday afternoon, informing her she had just 10 minutes to leave for the airport. She had been put on an evacuation list heading to the United States or Mexico — she was told nothing more. She did not have a visa in her passport.

She left a friend's apartment in Kabul with just the clothes on her back, a knapsack, laptop and her phone. "My dreams and my plans, are all inside this small backpack," she said.

As the Taliban swept into Kabul on Sunday after President Ashraf Ghani fled the country, bringing an end to a two-decade campaign in which the U.S. and its allies had tried to transform Afghanistan, Tajik and a group of Afghans working for U.S. media were rushed to the city's international airport by their American friends.

The speed of the Afghan government's collapse, the ensuing chaos and the near-complete takeover of the country — just two weeks before the final pullout of the last U.S. and NATO troops — has shocked many in Afghanistan and beyond. For Afghan women, it raised fears that all they had achieved in women's rights, the right to go to school and work, would be swiftly taken away.

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On the way to the airport, Tajik looked out the window, taking in the last glimpses of Kabul streets, "filled with a scary silence."

There was barely time to call her family in the western province of Herat, seized by the Taliban last week in the insurgents relentless sweep. Before the fall, Tajik had fled the city of Herat, the provincial capital and her hometown, for the Afghan capital, "with hope that Kabul would resist."

"But everything changed," she said. "Everything collapsed in front of my eyes."

Her family did not object to her leaving even though at 22, she was their breadwinner. That role brought her respect and pride — something the Taliban could take away. She also knew that by staying, she would become a liability for her loved ones — a young woman, educated at an international university and working with foreigners.

"When I left Herat I thought I cannot leave my family like this, but staying there I become a risk for them," she said. If the Taliban found out, she is convinced "they will hurt my family."

Before leaving Herat, she destroyed all evidence linking her with international organizations, including newspaper clippings. Apart from working as a U.S. contractor, in July she was also featured in a prominent U.S. paper.

"I burned them, I buried them, and I left," she said.

Once at the airport, she saw Afghans waiting desperately for a plane out, some breaking into tears. She was tired, she had not slept in three days. Rumors circulated that the planes may even be cancelled. Others asked why there was no security and who would protect them.

"The Taliban can come at any time," she said, her voice faltering.

Six hours passed. She heard shots ring out from the outside — was it the Taliban?

From where she was, she could see a plane on the tarmac, but it wasn't hers. A mad rush of men and women followed, people overtaking one another, desperate to get out. She watched from a cold steel bench, and for a moment, thought of the unknown that awaited her on the other side.

"I might end up on the other side of the world, in a refugee camp. I have no food, no money with me," she said. And she missed her family. "I am worried for their lives," she said. "All these years of education and hard work, in the hope of making a better life and helping other Afghans ended up being for nothing."

By midnight on Sunday, she thought of giving up and taking a taxi back to Kabul. Herat was out of the question. She got up, but just as quickly changed her mind again.

Sleep would not come. She said looters were causing havoc inside the terminal. She left with her travel companions to wait outside on the runway.

At daybreak, thousands of Afghans had streamed into the airport. Tajik said she saw U.S. soldiers fire shots in the air. Her flight would be here soon, she was told.

Later on Monday, U.S. military officials said the chaos at the Kabul airport had left seven people dead, including some who fell from a departing American military transport jet.

"I will never forgive the world for staying silent," she said. "I didn't deserve this. No one deserves this."

Many Bible Belt preachers silent on shots as COVID-19 surges

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

Dr. Danny Avula, the head of Virginia's COVID-19 vaccination effort, suspected he might have a problem getting pastors to publicly advocate for the shots when some members of his own church referred to them as "the mark of the beast," a biblical reference to allegiance to the devil, and the minister wasn't sure how to respond.

"A lot of pastors, based on where their congregations are at, are pretty hesitant to do so because this is so charged, and it immediately invites criticism and furor by the segment of your community that's not on board with that," Avula said.

Across the nation's deeply religious Bible Belt, a region beset by soaring infection rates from the fast-spreading delta variant of the virus, churches and pastors are both helping and hurting in the campaign to get people vaccinated against COVID-19.

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Some are hosting vaccination clinics and praying for more inoculations, while others are issuing fiery anti-vaccine sermons from their pulpits. Most are staying mum on the issue, something experts see as a missed opportunity in a swath of the country where church is the biggest spiritual and social influence for many communities.

That was on display recently in metro Birmingham, where First Baptist Church of Trussville had an outbreak following a 200th anniversary celebration that included a video greeting by Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey. The pastor promised more cleaning and face mask availability without uttering two words that health officials say could make a difference among people long on religion but short on faith in government: Get vaccinated.

A few outspoken religious leaders have garnered crowds or media attention for their opposition to the vaccines, such as Tony Spell, who repeatedly defied COVID-19 restrictions to hold in-person services at the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, church where he is pastor. He has preached that vaccinations are "demonic" and vowed that the government will not "force us to comply with your evil orders."

But they appear to be outliers, according to theologian Curtis Chang, with the majority of ministers avoiding the vaccine issue so as not to inflame tensions in congregations already struggling with the pandemic and political division.

"I would say that the vast majority are paralyzed or silent because of how polarized it has been," said Chang, who has pastored churches and is on the faculty at Duke Divinity School.

A survey by the National Association of Evangelicals found that 95% of evangelical leaders planned to get inoculated, but that number hasn't translated into widespread advocacy from the pulpit, he said.

The disparity matters because vaccination rates are generally low across the Bible Belt, where Southern and Midwestern churchgoers are a formidable bloc that has proven resistant to vaccination appeals from government leaders and health officials. While many Black and Latino people haven't been vaccinated, the large number of white evangelical resisters is particularly troubling for health officials.

A poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research in March showed that 40% of white evangelical Protestants said they likely would not get vaccinated, compared with 25% of all Americans, 28% of white mainline Protestants and 27% of nonwhite Protestants.

Some national voices including Black megachurch minister T.D. Jakes, evangelist Franklin Graham and former Southern Baptist Convention President J.D. Greear have taken public stances in favor of vaccinations. But there hasn't been a sustained, unified push that could give local pastors "cover" to speak out themselves, Chang said.

First Baptist Trussville has taken multiple steps to guard against spreading the virus, including following public health guidelines and limiting in-person events, according to spokesman and business manager Alan Taylor. Yet when it comes to the vaccines, church leaders consider them "a personal choice," he said.

"When I am asked personally, I say it was the right choice for me and my wife," said Taylor, who contracted a relatively rare breakthrough case of COVID-19 despite having been vaccinated. "I firmly believe it helped when I became infected."

The story is much the same in Mississippi and Georgia, where some churches are returning to online services and some pastors are quietly talking about the need for vaccination.

More than 200 pastors, priests and other church leaders from Missouri went further as cases exploded last month, signing a statement urging Christians to get vaccinated because of the biblical commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself." Springfield Mayor Ken McClure said the region saw a big jump in vaccinations after the pastor of a large church used his sermon to tell parishioners it was the right thing to do.

Dr. Ellen Eaton, an infectious disease specialist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, said churches could be effective at promoting vaccination as a way "to love your neighbors during this pandemic."

"Many Southerners are very close to their pastors and church communities. Next to their personal physician, many here in Alabama routinely turn to their church leaders with health issues," she said.

One pastor at a liberal United Methodist church in Birmingham issued a plea on social media for members to get vaccinated, while the minister at a moderate Baptist church nearby prayed during worship for

divine intervention for more vaccinations.

"We pray, Lord, that there will be good judgment used and that people would see the need for the vaccine and that it would be available not only here in our own country but around the world and that that might stem the tide of this terrible, terrible virus," said the Rev. Timothy L. Kelley of Southside Baptist Church.

Evangelical pastor Keven Blankenship was among those trying to walk that tightrope after COVID-19 invaded his independent church in suburban Birmingham, sickening three of his family members, among others. Initially he didn't preach about the vaccines, considering it a personal choice.

But on a recent Sunday, during the first in-person services in a month, Blankenship revealed he had gotten his first shot and was due for a second.

"If you feel comfortable receiving it, I want you to receive it. If you don't feel comfortable, I want you to talk to your doctor and you get your doctor's guidance," he told worshipers. "But I want you to do what you feel is the best thing for you and your family, and don't be bullied into anything."

Blankenship ended with an "Amen," said almost as if a question. He was met by silence.

Detainee says China has secret jail in Dubai, holds Uyghurs

By The Associated Press undefined

A young Chinese woman says she was held for eight days at a Chinese-run secret detention facility in Dubai along with at least two Uyghurs, in what may be the first evidence that China is operating a so-called "black site" beyond its borders.

The woman, 26-year-old Wu Huan, was on the run to avoid extradition back to China because her fiancé was considered a Chinese dissident. Wu told The Associated Press she was abducted from a hotel in Dubai and detained by Chinese officials at a villa converted into a jail, where she saw or heard two other prisoners, both Uyghurs.

She was questioned and threatened in Chinese and forced to sign legal documents incriminating her fiancé for harassing her, she said. She was finally released on June 8 and is now seeking asylum in the Netherlands.

While "black sites" are common in China, Wu's account is the only testimony known to experts that Beijing has set one up in another country. Such a site would reflect how China is increasingly using its international clout to detain or bring back citizens it wants from overseas, whether they are dissidents, corruption suspects or ethnic minorities like the Uyghurs.

The AP was unable to confirm or disprove Wu's account independently, and she could not pinpoint the exact location of the black site. However, reporters have seen and heard corroborating evidence including stamps in her passport, a phone recording of a Chinese official asking her questions and text messages that she sent from jail to a pastor helping the couple.

China's Foreign Ministry denied her story. "What I can tell you is that the situation the person talked about is not true," ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said Monday.

Dubai Police stated Monday that any claims of a Chinese woman detained by local authorities on behalf of a foreign country are false, and that Wu freely exited the country with her friend three months ago.

"Dubai does not detain any foreign nationals without following internationally accepted procedures and local law enforcement processes, nor does it allow foreign governments to run any detention centers within its borders," said a statement from the Dubai government media office. "Dubai also follows all recognized global norms and procedures set by international organizations like Interpol in the detainment, interrogation and transfer of fugitives sought by foreign governments."

Black sites are clandestine jails where prisoners generally are not charged with a crime and have no legal recourse, with no bail or court order. Many in China are used to stop petitioners with grievances against local governments, and they often take the form of rooms in hotels or guesthouses.

Yu-Jie Chen, an assistant professor at Taiwan's Academia Sinica, said she had not heard of a Chinese secret jail in Dubai, and such a facility in another country would be unusual. However, she also noted that it would be in keeping with China's attempts to do all it can to bring select citizens back, both through

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official means such as signing extradition treaties and unofficial means such as revoking visas or putting pressure on family back home.

"(China) really wasn't interested in reaching out until recent years," said Chen, who has tracked China's international legal actions. "This trend is increasingly robust."

Chen said Uyghurs in particular were being extradited or returned to China, which has been detaining the mostly Muslim minority on suspicion of terrorism even for relatively harmless acts like praying. The Uyghur Human Rights Project tracked 89 Uyghurs detained or deported from nine countries from 1997 to 2007 through public reports. That number steadily increased to reach 1,327 from 20 countries from 2014 until now, the group found.

Wu and her fiancé, 19-year-old Wang Jingyu, are not Uyghur but rather Han Chinese, the majority ethnicity in China. Wang is wanted by China because he posted messages questioning Chinese media coverage of the Hong Kong protests in 2019 and China's actions in a border clash with India.

Along with Uyghurs, China has been cracking down on perceived dissidents and human rights activists, and has launched a massive effort to get back suspect officials as part of a national anti-corruption campaign. Under President Xi Jinping, China's most authoritarian leader in decades, Beijing brought back 1,421 people in 2020 alone for alleged corruption and financial crime under Operation Skynet. However, the AP could not find comprehensive numbers for how many Chinese citizens overall have been detained or deported from overseas in recent years.

Dubai also has a history as a place where Uyghurs are interrogated and deported back to China. And activists say Dubai itself has been linked to secret interrogations involving other countries. Radha Stirling, a legal advocate who founded the advocacy group Detained in Dubai, said she has worked with about a dozen people who have reported being held in villas in the UAE, including citizens of Canada, India and Jordan but not China.

"There is no doubt that the UAE has detained people on behalf of foreign governments with whom they are allied," Stirling said. "I don't think they would at all shrug their shoulders to a request from such a powerful ally."

However, Patrick Theros, a former U.S. ambassador to Qatar who is now strategic advisor to the Gulf International Forum, called the allegations "totally out of character" for the Emiratis.

"They don't allow allies freedom of movement," he said. "The idea that the Chinese would have a clandestine center, it makes no sense."

The U.S. State Department had no comment on Wu's specific case or on whether there is a Chinese-run black site in Dubai.

"We will continue to coordinate with allies and partners to stand against transnational repression everywhere," it said in a statement to the AP.

HELD IN A VILLA

Wu, a Chinese millennial with cropped hair dyed blonde, never cared about politics before. But after her fiancé was arrested in Dubai on April 5 on unclear charges, she started giving interviews to media and getting in touch with overseas-based Chinese dissidents for help.

On May 27, Wu said, she was questioned by Chinese officials at her hotel, the Element al-Jaddaf, and then taken by Dubai police to the Bur Dubai police station. Staff for the hotel declined in a phone interview to confirm her stay or her departure, saying it was against company policy to disclose information about guests.

She was held for three days at the police station, she said, with her phone and personal belongings confiscated. On the third day, she said, a Chinese man who introduced himself as Li Xuhang came to visit her. He told her he was working for the Chinese consulate in Dubai, and asked her whether she had taken money from foreign groups to act against China.

"I said no, I love China so much. My passport is Chinese. I'm a Chinese person. I speak Chinese," she said. "I said, how could I do that?"

Li Xuhang is listed as consul general on the website of the Chinese consulate in Dubai. The consulate

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did not return multiple calls asking for comment and to speak with Li directly.

Wu said Li took her out of the police station along with another Chinese man who handcuffed her, and they put her in a black Toyota. There were multiple Chinese people in the car, but Wu was too scared to get a clear look at their faces.

Her heart thumping, they drove past an area where many Chinese lived and owned businesses in Dubai called International City, which Wu recognized from an earlier trip to Dubai.

After driving for half an hour, they stopped on a deserted street with rows of identical compounds. She was brought inside a white-colored villa with three stories, where a series of rooms had been converted into individual cells, she said.

The house was quiet and cold in contrast with the desert heat. Wu was taken to her own cell, a room which had been renovated to have a heavy metal door.

There was a bed in her room, a chair and a white fluorescent light that was on all day and night. The metal door remained closed except when they fed her.

"Firstly, there's no sense of time," Wu said. "And second, there's no window, and I couldn't see if it was day or night."

Wu said a guard took her to a room several times where they questioned her in Chinese and threatened that she would never be allowed to leave. The guards wore face masks all the time.

She saw another prisoner, a Uyghur woman, while waiting to use the bathroom once, she said. A second time, she heard a Uyghur woman shouting in Chinese, "I don't want to go back to China, I want to go back to Turkey." Wu identified the women as Uyghurs based on what she said was their distinctive appearance and accent.

Wu said she was fed twice a day, with the second meal a stack of plain flatbread. She had to ask the guards for permission to drink water or go to the bathroom. She was supposed to be allowed to go the bathroom a maximum of five times a day, Wu said, but that depended on the mood of the guards.

The guards also gave her a phone and a SIM card and instructed her to call her fiancé and pastor Bob Fu, the head of ChinaAid, a Christian non-profit, who was helping the couple.

Wang confirmed to the AP that Wu called and asked him for his location. Fu said he received at least four or five calls from her during this time, a few on an unknown Dubai phone number, including one where she was crying and almost incoherent. She again blamed Wang and said Fu should not help him.

The AP also reviewed text messages Wu sent to Fu at the time, which are disjointed and erratic.

"I could tell she was hiding from telling me her whereabouts," said Fu. "At that point we concluded that something has happened to her that prevented her from even talking."

Wu said towards the end of her stay, she refused meals, screamed and cried in an effort to be released. The last thing her captors demanded of her, she said, was to sign documents in Arabic and English testifying that Wang was harassing her.

"I was really scared and was forced to sign the documents," she told the AP. "I didn't want to sign them."

HUB FOR CHINESE INTELLIGENCE

Reports have emerged in recent years of Emiratis and foreigners being taken to villas, sometimes indefinitely.

Perhaps the best-known case involves Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the daughter of the ruler of Dubai. Sheikha Latifa tried to flee in 2018 by boat, but was intercepted by the Indian coast guard in the Arabian Sea and handed back to the UAE.

In videos published by the BBC in February, she claims she was held against her will in a villa in Dubai.

"I'm a hostage," she says in one of the videos. "This villa has been converted into jail." A statement since issued on behalf of Sheikha Latifa said she is now free to travel.

China and the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula, have deep economic and political ties and also work together on counterintelligence. China ratified an extradition treaty with the UAE in 2002 and a judicial cooperation treaty in 2008. The UAE was an experimental site for China's COVID vaccines and cooperated with China on making tests.

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Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and de facto ruler of the UAE, has said he was willing to work with China to "jointly strike against terrorist extremist forces", including the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, a militant group Beijing has accused of fostering Uyghur separatism. In late 2017 and early 2018, local authorities arrested and deported at least five Uyghurs to China, according to four friends and relatives who spoke by phone with the AP.

In one case, a long-time UAE resident, Ahmad Talip, was called in for questioning at a local police station and detained, according to his wife, Amannisa Abdullah, who is now in Turkey. In another case, eight plainclothes officers broke into a hotel room and arrested a 17-year-old boy who had just fled a police raid in Egypt.

The detentions were carried out by Arabs who appeared to be UAE police, not Chinese agents, the Uyghurs said. However, one of the detainees, Huseyin Imintohti, was sought by three Chinese agents at a Uyghur restaurant in Dubai before his deportation, according to his wife, Nigare Yusup.

Another Uyghur detainee, Yasinjan Memtimin, was interrogated twice by people in the UAE who appeared to be Chinese police, said his wife, who declined to be named out of fear of retribution. She said she had heard from a Uyghur who fled overseas of a detention facility in the UAE where Uyghurs were detained and interrogated, but she could not offer more details.

The UAE appears to be a hub for Chinese intelligence on Uyghurs in the Middle East, former Uyghur residents told The AP. A Uyghur linguist, Abduweli Ayup, said he had spoken with three Uyghurs coerced into working as spies in Turkey who passed through Dubai to pick up SIM cards and cash and meet Chinese agents.

Jasur Abibula, a former Xinjiang government worker, also told the AP that Chinese state security lured him from the Netherlands to the UAE in 2019 after his ex-wife, Asiye Abdulaheb, obtained confidential documents on internment camps in Xinjiang. He was greeted by a dozen or so people working for the Chinese government in Dubai, he said, including at least two who introduced themselves as working for China's Ministry of State Security.

One, a Uyghur man in his fifties who gave his name as Dolet, said he was stationed in Dubai. The other, a Han Chinese man who spoke fluent Uyghur, said he was on a mission to uncover the source of the leaks, according to Abibula.

The agents presented Abibula with a USB and asked him to insert it in his ex-wife's computer. They offered him money, put him up in a Hilton resort and bought toys for his kids. They also threatened him, showing him a video of his mother back in China. On a drive through dunes of sand, one said it reminded him of the deserts back in Xinjiang.

"If we kill and bury you here, nobody will be able to find your body," he recalled them telling him. Abibula is now back in the Netherlands, where the AP spoke to him by phone, and he sent photos of some of the agents, his hotel and his plane ticket to support his claims.

Besides the UAE, many other countries have cooperated with China in sending Uyghurs back. In 2015, Thailand repatriated over 100 Uyghurs to China. In 2017, Egyptian police detained hundreds of Uyghur students and residents and sent them back as well.

Rodney Dixon, a London-based rights lawyer representing Uyghur groups, said his team has filed a case against Tajikistan in the International Criminal Court, accusing local authorities of aiding China in deporting Uyghurs.

China isn't the first country to hunt people deemed terror suspects outside its borders. After 9/11, the U.S. government also operated and controlled a network of CIA clandestine detention facilities overseas in countries including Thailand, Lithuania and Romania. The CIA's detention and interrogation program ended in 2009.

"I'M AFRAID TO CALL YOU"

After Wu was released, she was taken back to the same hotel she had stayed at and given her personal belongings. She immediately reached out to Fu, apologized for her past calls and asked for help, in text messages seen by the AP.

"I'm afraid to call you," she told Fu in one message. "I'm afraid I will be overheard."

On June 11, she flew out of Dubai to Ukraine, where she was reunited with Wang.

After threats from Chinese police that Wang could face extradition from Ukraine, the couple fled again to the Netherlands. Wu said she misses her homeland.

"I've discovered that the people deceiving us are Chinese, that it's our countrymen hurting our own countrymen," she said. "That is the situation."

Staff writers Nomaan Merchant and Matthew Lee contributed to this report from Washington, D.C.

Super League rebels back in European soccer's top club body

By ROB HARRIS AP Global Soccer Writer

LONDON (AP) — Nine of the teams who were part of the ill-fated launch of a breakaway Super League have been welcomed back into the decision-making organization overseeing the European club game.

Six English clubs — Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham — will be members of European Club Association again along with AC Milan, Inter Milan and Atletico Madrid.

But Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus are refusing to giving up on the largely-closed breakaway competition to launch a rival to the Champions League, prolonging the rift with UEFA and their European counterparts.

All 12 founding Super League clubs quit the ECA in April when they reneged on previous commitments to UEFA to launch the Super League. The nine now reintegrated into the ECA collapsed the project when they abandoned the Super League amid a backlash from governing bodies and supporters — particularly in England.

The ECA is now chaired by Nasser Al-Khelaifi, the president of Paris Saint-Germain, which never signed up to the Super League that collapsed inside 48 hours. The ECA said there was "an exhaustive process of re-engagement by the clubs and re-assessment" before its executive board allowed them to withdraw their previous resignations.

"The ECA executive board took into consideration the clubs' acknowledgement that the so-called European Super League project was not in the interests of the wider football community and their publicly communicated decisions to abandon said ESL project completely," the ECA said in a statement on Monday. "The ECA board also acknowledged the clubs' stated willingness to engage actively with ECA in its collective mission to develop European club football — in the open and transparent interests of all, not the few."

The nine former rebel clubs have already agreed to a financial settlement with UEFA, accepting fines as an acknowledgement of wrongdoing for trying to split from existing competition structures. They made a combined payment of 15 million euros (\$18 million) and will give up 5% of revenue for one season playing in Europe.

In a move to prevent them deploying the Super League threat again, the clubs have also agreed to be fined 100 million euros if they seek again to play in an unauthorized competition or 50 million euros if they breach any other commitments to UEFA as part of the settlement.

Despite lacking the backing of their biggest European counterparts, Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus are still pursuing legal action to challenge what they called "UEFA's monopolistic position over European football." They hope the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg will rule in their favor and permit the concept of a Super League not run by UEFA being explored by teams.

EXPLAINER: Why Haiti is prone to devastating earthquakes

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

Earthquakes have been wreaking havoc in Haiti since at least the 18th century, when the city of Port-au-Prince was destroyed twice in 19 years. Saturday's powerful quake killed hundreds and injured thousands more. Eleven years earlier a temblor killed tens of thousands of people, if not hundreds of thousands.

Haiti sits near the intersection of two tectonic plates that make up the Earth's crust. Earthquakes can occur when those plates move against each other and create friction. Haiti is also densely populated.

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Plus, many of its buildings are designed to withstand hurricanes — not earthquakes. Those buildings can survive strong winds but are vulnerable to collapse when the ground shakes.

WHAT MAKES HAITI PRONE TO EARTHQUAKES?

The Earth's crust is made up of tectonic plates that move. And Haiti sits near the intersection of two of them — the North American plate and the Caribbean plate.

Multiple fault lines between those plates cut through or near the island of Hispaniola, which Haiti shares with the Dominican Republic. What's worse, not all of those fault lines behave the same way.

"Hispaniola sits in a place where plates transition from smashing together to sliding past one another," said Rich Briggs, a research geologist at the U.S. Geological Survey's Geologic Hazards Science Center.

"It's like a rock stuck in the track of a sliding glass door," he said. "It just does not want to move smoothly because it's got so many different forces on it."

WHAT CAUSED THE MOST RECENT QUAKE?

Saturday's magnitude 7.2 earthquake likely occurred along the Enriquillo-Plantain Garden fault zone, which cuts across Haiti's southwestern Tiburon Peninsula, according to the USGS.

It's the same fault zone along which the devastating 2010 earthquake occurred. And it's likely the source of three other big earthquakes in Haiti between 1751 and 1860, two of which destroyed Port-au-Prince.

Earthquakes are the result of the tectonic plates slowly moving against each other and creating friction over time, said Gavin Hayes, senior science adviser for earthquake and geologic hazards at USGS.

"That friction builds up and builds up and eventually the strain that's stored there overcomes the friction," Hayes said. "And that's when the fault moves suddenly. That's what an earthquake is."

WHY CAN EARTHQUAKES IN HAITI BE SO DEVASTATING?

It's a combination of factors that include a seismically active area, a high population density of 11 million people and buildings that are often designed to withstand hurricanes — not earthquakes.

Typical concrete and cinder block buildings can survive strong winds but are vulnerable to damage or collapse when the ground shakes. Poor building practices can also play a role.

The 2010 quake hit closer to densely populated Port-au-Prince and caused widespread destruction. Haiti's government put the death toll at more than 300,000, while a report commissioned by the U.S. government placed it between 46,000 and 85,000.

"I think it's important to recognize that there's no such thing as a natural disaster," said Wendy Bohon, a geologist with Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology. "What you have is a natural hazard that overlaps with a vulnerable system."

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Geologists say they cannot predict the next earthquake.

"But we do know that earthquakes like this can cause similar-sized earthquakes on the next portion of the fault," said Hayes of USGS. "And it's quite a significant hazard in places that don't have the construction practices to withstand the shaking."

Construction of more earthquake-resistant buildings remains a challenge in Haiti, which is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

Before Saturday's quake, Haiti was still recovering from the 2010 earthquake as well as Hurricane Matthew in 2016. Its president was assassinated last month, sending the country into political chaos.

And while there have been some success stories of Haitians building more earthquake-resistant structures, the country has lacked a centralized effort to do so, said Mark Schuller, a professor of anthropology and nonprofit and NGO studies at Northern Illinois University.

Haiti's government has become increasingly weak, while non-governmental organizations focus on their own compartmentalized projects.

"There is technical knowledge in Haiti. There are trained architects. There are city planners. That's not

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the problem," Schuller said. "The problem is a lack of funding for coordination, and lack of political will from donors (to organizations providing aid)."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Aug. 17, the 229th day of 2021. There are 136 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 17, 1915, a mob in Cobb County, Georgia, lynched Jewish businessman Leo Frank, 31, whose death sentence for the murder of 13-year-old Mary Phagan had been commuted to life imprisonment. (Frank, who'd maintained his innocence, was pardoned by the state of Georgia in 1986.)

On this date:

In 1807, Robert Fulton's North River Steamboat began heading up the Hudson River on its successful round trip between New York and Albany.

In 1863, federal batteries and ships began bombarding Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor during the Civil War, but the Confederates managed to hold on despite several days of pounding.

In 1942, during World War II, U.S. 8th Air Force bombers attacked German forces in Rouen, France. U.S. Marines raided a Japanese seaplane base on Makin Island.

In 1964, Teamsters union president Jimmy Hoffa was sentenced in Chicago to five years in federal prison for defrauding his union's pension fund. (Hoffa was released in 1971 after President Richard Nixon commuted his sentence for this conviction and jury tampering.)

In 1978, the first successful trans-Atlantic balloon flight ended as Maxie Anderson, Ben Abruzzo and Larry Newman landed their Double Eagle II outside Paris.

In 1982, the first commercially produced compact discs, a recording of ABBA's "The Visitors," were pressed at a Philips factory near Hanover, West Germany.

In 1983, lyricist Ira Gershwin died in Beverly Hills, Calif., at age 86.

In 1987, Rudolf Hess, the last member of Adolf Hitler's inner circle, died at Spandau Prison at age 93, an apparent suicide.

In 1988, Pakistani President Mohammad Zia ul-Haq and U.S. Ambassador Arnold Raphel (RAY'-feh1) were killed in a mysterious plane crash.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton gave grand jury testimony via closed-circuit television from the White House concerning his relationship with Monica Lewinsky; he then delivered a TV address in which he denied previously committing perjury, admitted his relationship with Lewinsky was "wrong," and criticized Kenneth Starr's investigation.

In 1999, more than 17,000 people were killed when a magnitude 7.4 earthquake struck Turkey.

In 2017, a van plowed through pedestrians along a packed promenade in the Spanish city of Barcelona, killing 13 people and injuring 120. (A 14th victim died later from injuries.) Another man was stabbed to death in a carjacking that night as the van driver made his getaway, and a woman died early the next day in a vehicle-and-knife attack in a nearby coastal town. (Six suspects in the attack were shot dead by police, two more died when a bomb workshop exploded.)

Ten years ago: Vice President Joe Biden arrived in Beijing to meet with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping.

Five years ago: Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump announced a shake-up of his campaign leadership, naming Steve Bannon of the conservative Breitbart News website as chief executive officer and promoting pollster Kellyanne Conway to campaign manager. Caster Semenya of South Africa made her debut at the Rio Olympics amid questions about how track and field can deal with hyperandrogenic women; Semenya qualified for the 800 semifinals, an event she won three days later. Movie director Arthur Hiller ("Love Story") died in Los Angeles at age 92.

One year ago: As Democrats opened their virtual national convention, Michelle Obama delivered a passionate condemnation of President Donald Trump, saying he was "clearly in over his head." Texas joined

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New York, New Jersey and California as states with at least 10,000 confirmed coronavirus deaths; about 80 percent of the Texas deaths were reported since June 1, after the state embarked on one of the fastest reopenings in the country. The University of North Carolina said it was switching all undergraduate classes to remote learning after the coronavirus spread in the first week since classes began. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Adern delayed the country's elections by four weeks because of a coronavirus outbreak in Auckland.

Today's Birthdays: Former Chinese president Jiang Zemin (jahng zuh-MEEN') is 95. Former MLB All-Star Boog Powell is 80. Actor Robert DeNiro is 78. Movie director Martha Coolidge is 75. Rock musician Gary Talley (The Box Tops) is 74. Actor-screenwriter-producer Julian Fellowes is 72. Actor Robert Joy is 70. International Tennis Hall of Famer Guillermo Vilas is 69. Rock singer Kevin Rowland (Dexy's Midnight Runners) is 68. Rock musician Colin Moulding (XTC) is 66. Country singer-songwriter Kevin Welch is 66. Olympic gold medal figure skater Robin Cousins is 64. Singer Belinda Carlisle is 63. Author Jonathan Franzen is 62. Actor Sean Penn is 61. Jazz musician Everette Harp is 60. Rock musician Gilby Clarke is 59. Singer Maria McKee is 57. Rock musician Steve Gorman (The Black Crowes) is 56. Rock musician Jill Cuniff (kuh-NIHF') is 55. Actor David Conrad is 54. Singer Donnie Wahlberg is 52. College Basketball Hall of Famer and retired NBA All-Star Christian Laettner is 52. Rapper Posdnuos (PAHS'-deh-noos) is 52. International Tennis Hall of Famer Jim Courier is 51. Retired MLB All-Star Jorge Posada is 50. TV personality Giuliana Rancic is 47. Actor Bryton James is 35. Actor Brady Corbet (kohr-BAY') is 33. Actor Austin Butler is 30. Actor Taissa Farmiga is 27. Olympic bronze medal figure skater Gracie Gold is 26.