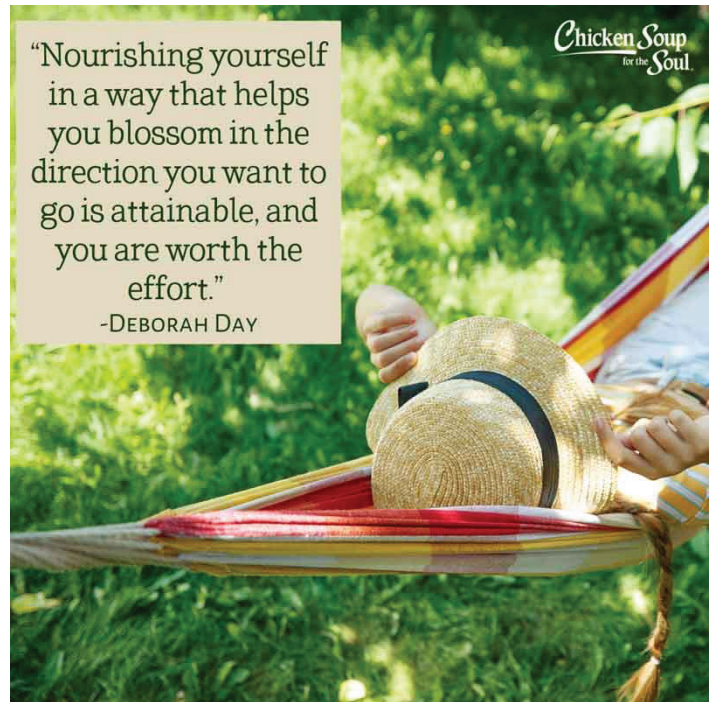


Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 1 of 54

- [1- GDILIVE.COM Update](#)
- [2- Cyclones edge past Groton Area in opening game](#)
- [2- Girls soccer go 2-0 with win over Belle Fourche](#)
- [2- Flihs places 10th at Milbank golf meet](#)
- [3- Governor Noem to Appeal District Court Decision in Planned Parenthood v. Noem](#)
- [3- South Dakota Requests ARPA Funding](#)
- [4- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [5- Weather Pages](#)
- [8- Daily Devotional](#)
- [9- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [10- News from the Associated Press](#)



GDILIVE.COM Update

We will be livestreaming the girls soccer game today at 1 p.m. Please check the GDILIVE.COM page for the link to the game.



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 2 of 54

Cyclones edge past Groton Area in opening game

It was a field goal that sealed the win for Clark/Willow Lake as the Cyclones edged past Groton Area, 10-8, in the opening season game played Friday in Groton.

According to veteran stats guy, Tom Woods, the last time Groton Area played Clark was in 2010 as Clark/Willow Lake was playing nine-man football up until this year when they were put back to 11-man.

Clark/Willow Lake scored first with 2:46 left in the first period on a nine yard run by Gage Burke. Tyson Huber kicked the PAT and it was 7-0.

On fourth down with 9:14 left in the game, Tyson Huber would kick a 25-yard field goal to make it 10-0.

Taylor Diegel found an opening and scampered 50 yards to score for the Tigers with one second left in the game. The PAT was good on a throw from Kaden Kurtz to Jackson Cogley and the final score was 10-8.

Everything that Clark/Willow Lake done was on the ground as they attempted no passing. Groton Area had four opportunities to score within the 20 yard line but the passing defense foiled those opportunities.

Groton Area had 10 first downs while the Cyclones had 11. Groton Area was 20 of 86 in rushing with Kaden Kurtz being nine for 46 yards, Favian Sanchez three for 19 yards, Andrew Marzahn six for 14 yards and Pierce Kettering two for seven yards. The Cyclones had 39 carries for 188 yards with Trey Huber having 21 carries for 89 yards, Tyson Huber had eight carries for 64 yards, Gage Burke had six carries for five yards, Griffin Musser had one carry for 16 yards and Turner Fjelland had two carries for five yards.

Kaden Kurtz did all of the passing, completing 16 of 29 passes for 156 yards with one interception. Pass receivers were Pierce Kettering with one catch for 57 yards, Jordan Bjerke had five for 35 yards, Jackson Cogley had six catches for 31 yards, Favian Sanchez had two for 20 yards, Ethan Gengerke had one for 10 yards and Andrew Marzahn had one for three yards.

Groton Area had one fumble, with was the first play of the game, but it was recovered. Both teams had five penalties with Groton having 35 yards and Clark/Willow Lake 25.

Defensive leaders for the Tigers were Pierce Kettering with eight tackles, Jackson Cogley seven, Kaden Kurtz seven, Favian Sanchez and Andrew Marzahn each had six.

Cole Brenden had eight tackles to lead the Cyclones while Lucas Kannegieter and Mitchell Larson each had seven and Tate Burke had six.

Groton Area, 0-1, will host Redfield on Friday while Clark/Willow Lake, 1-0, will host Dakota Hills (Waubay/Wilmot/Summit).

Girls soccer go 2-0 with win over Belle Fourche

The Groton Area girls soccer team went to 2-0 on the season with a 6-0 win over Belle Fourche on Friday. The game was played in Groton and the soccer teams will host St. Thomas More today with the girls playing at 1 p.m. followed by the boys game. The boys lost their game to Belle Fourche, 11-1.

Brooklyn Hanson scored first for the Tigers with 37:17 left in the first half. Laila Roberts added a goal just two minutes later. Riley Leicht added two goals, scoring at the 26:18 mark and the 22:49 mark to make it 4-0 at half time. Sydney Leicht scored both goals in the second half. The first was a header with 32:29 left and she kicked the second one in with 23:46 left.

Flihs places 10th at Milbank golf meet

The Groton Area boys golf team took part in a meet on Aug. 19 at the Whetstone Creek Golf Course in Milbank. Brevin Flihs medaled with a 10th place finish, shooting identical 45 scores for a total of 90.

Carter Simon shot a 51 and a 59 for a score of 110. Cole Simon shot a 53 and a 61 for a score of 114. Logan Pearson shot a 57 and a 63 for a score of 120 and Jayden Schwan shot a 60 and a 68 for a score of 128.

In the junior varsity meet, Tate Larson shot a 51 and a 53 for a score of 104.

Governor Noem to Appeal District Court Decision in Planned Parenthood v. Noem

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, following the District Court ruling in Planned Parenthood v. Noem, Governor Kristi Noem announced that the State of South Dakota will appeal the ruling to the United States 8th Circuit Court of Appeals.

"All life is precious. Mothers should have the opportunity to hear all relevant information before they are faced with the 'choice' of whether to end their unborn child's life," said Governor Kristi Noem. "I look forward to the day when all life – born and unborn – is protected by law. Given that the US Supreme Court will soon decide on the constitutionality of prohibiting abortion before 'viability,' we are asking the 8th Circuit to recognize that the people's legislators should have the ability to pass pro-life laws."

The District Court had previously enjoined the provision in South Dakota state law requiring that a pregnant woman consult with a pregnancy help center, ensuring that she had all facts available, before deciding whether to abort her unborn child.

Today's decision by the District Court refused to dissolve the injunction, so the law passed by the people's representatives is suspended until a final court decision is rendered. In doing so, the Court rejected the will of the people when it comes to protecting unborn life.

The State of South Dakota will appeal to ensure that women considering an abortion have all of the facts regarding their unborn child and the potential risks of an abortion procedure.

South Dakota Requests ARPA Funding

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem announced that South Dakota has requested the state's allocation from the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF). As part of the American Recovery Plan Act, the SLFRF provides an allocation of \$974.5 million to the state. An additional \$65.2 million dollars will flow through state government to non-metropolitan cities within South Dakota.

"The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds allow broad flexibility in deciding how best to use this funding to meet the needs of our communities," said Governor Noem. "I look forward to working with the legislature to find ways we might use much of these funds to invest in water, sewer, and broad-band infrastructure."

Sioux Falls, Rapid City, and each county in the state will receive their share of the SLFRF directly from the federal government. Other South Dakota cities will need to request their share of the funding through the state, following the same process the state used to request funding from the US Treasury.

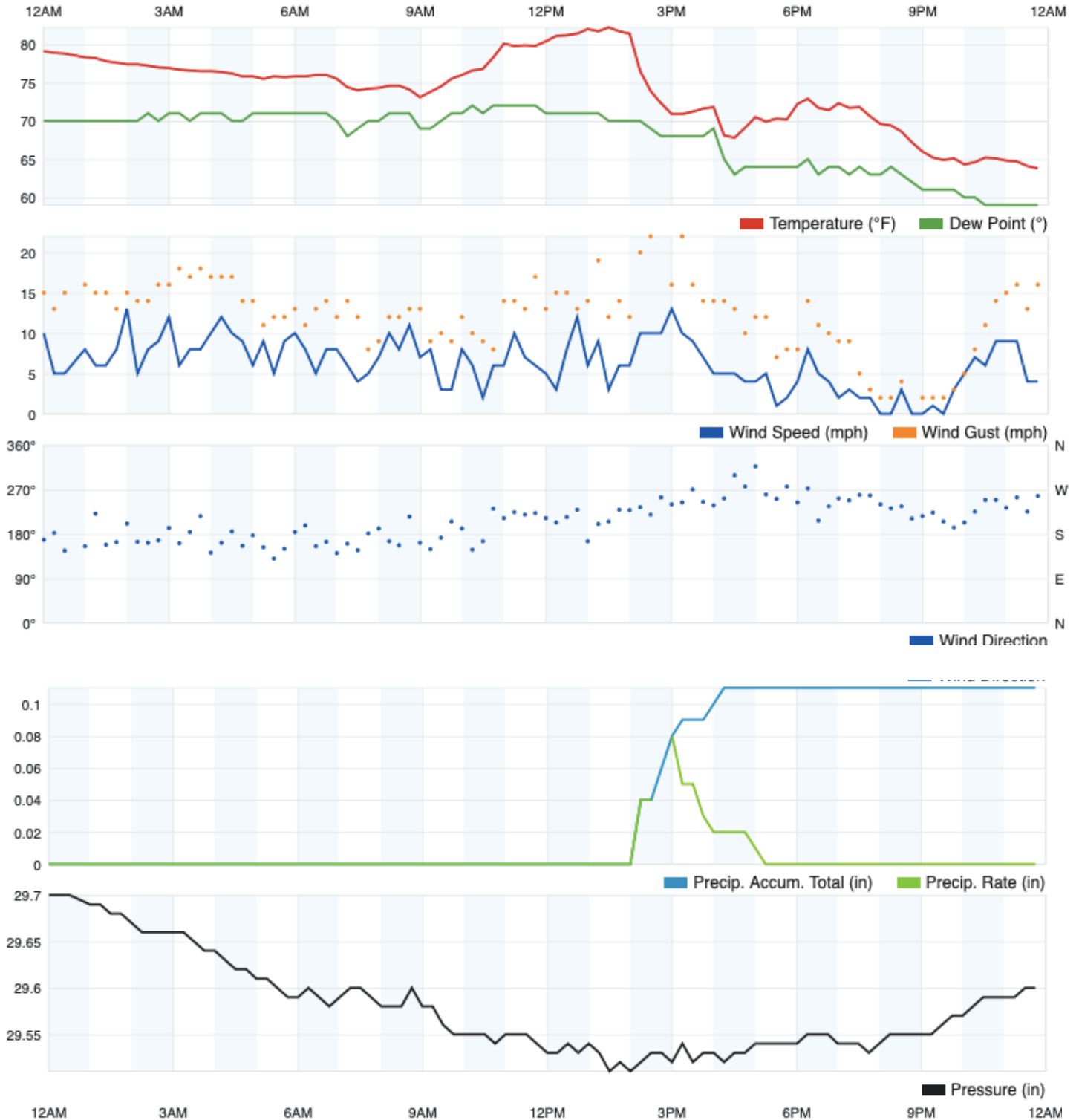
Under the law, Treasury has the authority to split the funding into two equal payments for state governments except where the unemployment rate is 2.0 or more percentage points above the pre-pandemic level. This means South Dakota will get half the funding in 2021 and the other half in 2022. The non-metropolitan city funding will also be provided in two tranches.

To assist cities, the state has compiled information on the Bureau of Finance and Management's website at <https://bfm.sd.gov>. A list of each city's allocation can be found there, as well.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 4 of 54

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 5 of 54

Today



Becoming
Sunny

High: 76 °F

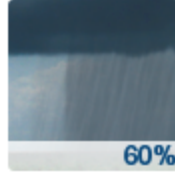
Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 55 °F

Sunday



Heavy Rain
and Breezy

High: 81 °F

Sunday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 55 °F

Monday



Sunny

High: 87 °F

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
Updated: 8/21/2021 3:42 AM Central



Sunny Today
Stormy Sunday

Today



Highs: Mid 70s

Sunday



Highs:

Northeast SD & Western MN - Mid 70s
Southwest SD - Low 90s

Milder temperatures are expected today, however a quick moving system will bring storms to the area Sunday. Storms will be fast moving so not a lot of widespread moisture, however there is a risk that some storms will be severe.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 6 of 54

Today in Weather History

August 21, 1989: Baseball size hail caused near 100 percent crop damage to Correll in Big Stone County to 10 miles north of Appleton. Most of Swift County also received 4 to 8 inches of rain.

August 21, 2007: Thunderstorms produced large hail in southeastern South Dakota, mainly near the Missouri River, during the late afternoon and early evening of August 21st. Enormous hail fell in the Dante area in Charles Mix County, including a state record size hailstone certified as 6 and 7/8 inches in diameter, with a circumference of 18 inches and a weight of one pound. The most massive stone was verified at 6 1/8 inches in diameter with a weight of 1.25 lbs. Damage included holes in roofs, broken rafters, broken awnings, numerous broken windows and dented vehicles, damaged siding, divots in the ground up to 12 inches long and 3 inches deep, and damaged crops. The state record hailstone was broken on July 23rd, 2010 with the United States record hailstone in Vivian. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the NWS office in Sioux Falls.

1856: The Charter Oak was an unusually large white oak tree growing from around the 12th or 13th century until it fell during a windstorm on this day in 1856. According to tradition, Connecticut's Royal Charter of 1662 was hidden within the hollow of the tree to thwart its confiscation by the English governor-general. The oak became a symbol of American independence and is commemorated on the Connecticut State Quarter.

1883: An estimated F5 tornado caused extensive damage to Rochester Minnesota on this day. The enormous roar was said to have warned most Rochester residents, as the massive funnel cut through the north side of town. Over 135 homes were destroyed, and another 200 damaged. Many of the 200 plus injuries were severe, and other deaths probably occurred but not listed as part of the 37 total mentioned. This damaging tornado eventually led to the formation of the Mayo Clinic.

1883 - A tornado hit Rochester, MN, killing 31 persons and wrecking 1351 dwellings. (David Ludlum)

1888 - A tornado swarm occurred in Maryland and Delaware. Many waterspouts were seen over Chesapeake Bay. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1918 - A tornado struck Tyler, MN, killing 36 persons and destroying most of the business section of the town resulting in a million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1983 - The temperature at Fayetteville, NC, soared to 110 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Early morning thunderstorms produced severe weather in eastern Iowa and west central Illinois. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 82 mph at Moline IL, and tennis ball size hail at Independence IA. Rock Island IL was drenched with 3.70 inches of rain. Total damage for the seven county area of west central Illinois was estimated at twelve million dollars. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms spawned several tornadoes in Iowa, produced wind gusts to 63 mph in the Council Bluffs area, and drenched Sioux Center IA with up to 6.61 inches of rain. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather from Kansas to Minnesota and North Dakota. Thunderstorms in Minnesota produced baseball size hail from Correll to north of Appleton. Thunderstorms in north central Kansas produced wind gusts higher than 100 mph at Wilson Dam. Thunderstorms around Lincoln NE produced baseball size hail and up to five inches of rain, and Boone NE was deluged with five inches of rain in an hour and a half. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent

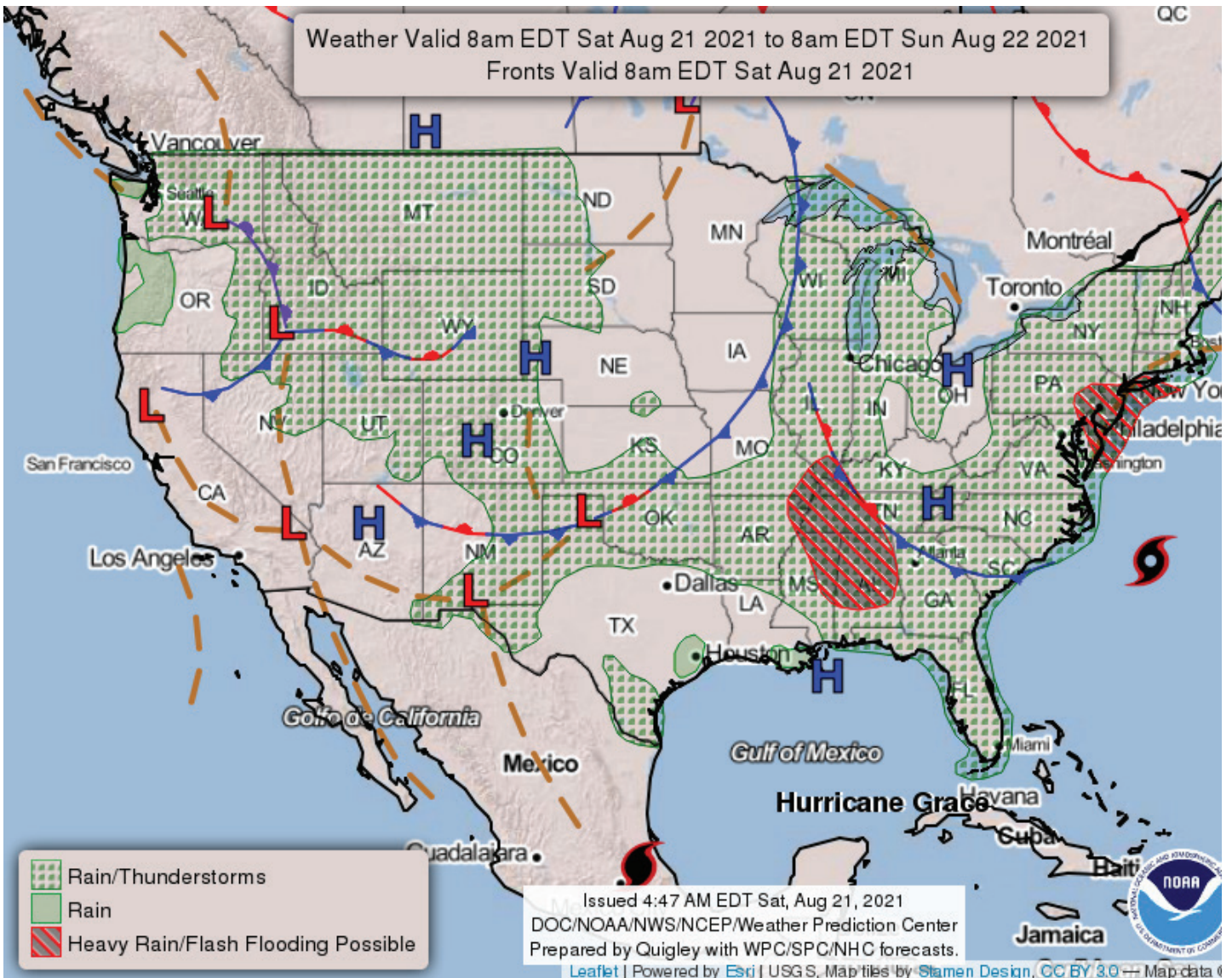
Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 7 of 54

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 82 °F at 1:26 PM
Low Temp: 64 °F at 11:51 PM
Wind: 22 mph at 2:24 PM
Precip: 0.11

Today's Info

Record High: 105° in 1947
Record Low: 37° in 2004
Average High: 82°F
Average Low: 56°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 1.44
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.23
Average Precip to date: 15.54
Precip Year to Date: 8.50
Sunset Tonight: 8:30 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:43 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 8 of 54



PASS IT ON

Goethe is recognized as one of the greatest German politicians and authors. Having keen insight into the life and future of his nation he wrote, "The destiny of our nation can be determined by the opinions of our youth!" Few would disagree with his observation.

The statesmen of our nation say the same: "The future lies with our youth." If that is true, and it is, we must admit that "the future of our youth lies with us!" And since that is true, and it is, we must ask ourselves, "What are we doing to prepare our youth to lead our nation?" Will they know the God of the Prophets and the Christ of the Apostles and disciples of the early church? Will they learn and follow and lead with the "faith that was once delivered to the saints?" Or will they surrender their lives to the attractions of materialism and self-centeredness?

Recent studies reveal that 60% of our youth will no longer attend church when they turn twenty. And even though some churches have vibrant youth programs, they are having no long lasting influence on their lives. Few make a lifelong commitment to Christ, to serving Him. It seems obvious that we are entertaining but not educating.

What needs to be done? Moses, once again, provides insight and advice: "May Your deeds be shown to Your servants, Your splendor to their children."

The fact of the matter is that His deeds and splendor can only be seen in our lives. If our faith does not work for us, "why" they will ask, "should we believe in Your God?"

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to live a faith that demonstrates Your deeds and splendor that will attract others to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 90:16 May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 9 of 54

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
10/29/2021 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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 10 of 54

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

41-43-51-57-70, Mega Ball: 1, Megaplier: 2

(forty-one, forty-three, fifty-one, fifty-seven, seventy; Mega Ball: one; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$256 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$290 million

Friday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli 31, St. Thomas More 10

Avon 56, Corsica/Stickney 22

Baltic 22, Parker 6

Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 20, Sioux Valley 16

Burke 40, Irene-Wakonda 14

Castlewood 40, North Central Co-Op 7

Chester 51, Arlington/Lake Preston 0

Clark/Willow Lake 10, Groton Area 8

Dakota Hills 31, Redfield 6

DeSmet 30, Wolsey-Wessington 20

Dell Rapids St. Mary 42, Gayville-Volin 8

Deubrook 40, Florence/Henry 6

Deuel 28, Webster 3

Elk Point-Jefferson 48, Miller/Highmore-Harrold 6

Faulkton 36, Potter County 18

Garretson 43, Viborg-Hurley 42, OT

Great Plains Lutheran 41, Sunshine Bible Academy 8

Hamlin 66, Britton-Hecla 12

Hanson 24, Parkston 16

Herreid/Selby Area 76, Newell 16

Hitchcock-Tulare 55, Waverly-South Shore 0

Hot Springs 54, Hill City 0

Howard 55, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 0

Ipswich 50, Langford 8

Jim River 32, Flandreau 13

Kimball/White Lake 48, Colman-Egan 0

Lead-Deadwood 52, Bennett County 0

Lemmon/McIntosh 54, Lyman 8

Leola/Frederick 20, Warner 8

McCook Central/Montrose 22, Beresford 13

New Underwood 34, White River 16

Northwestern 36, Estelline/Hendricks 20

Philip 50, Jones County 0

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 11 of 54

Platte-Geddes 16, Canistota 8
Sully Buttes 52, Colome 0
Timber Lake 40, Stanley County 0
Wall 19, Gregory 6
Winner 57, Tripp-Delmont/Armour/Andes Central/Dakota Christian 6

Some high school football scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Federal judge rules against South Dakota in abortion lawsuit

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A federal judge Friday ruled against South Dakota's attempt to lift a decade-old injunction that nullified part of a state law requiring women to consult with a crisis pregnancy center before having an abortion.

Planned Parenthood sued the state in 2011 after lawmakers passed a law requiring a three-day wait period for women seeking an abortion, as well as a consultation with a pregnancy center that often discourages women from having an abortion. Judge Karen Schreier ordered a temporary injunction that kept the law from taking effect. The three-day wait period eventually became law, but the consultation requirement has not.

South Dakota last year asked the court to allow the consultation requirement to take effect, arguing the situation in the state had changed since 2011. But Schreier, who was appointed under President Bill Clinton, ruled that the legal situation has not changed since the original injunction stopped the consultation requirement.

"It continues to likely infringe on women's right to free speech secured in the First Amendment, and it presents an undue burden on a woman's right to access abortion," she wrote in her order.

Gov. Kristi Noem said she would appeal the ruling, arguing the law was necessary to make sure women have the opportunity to hear relevant information about their pregnancy.

"I look forward to the day when all life — born and unborn — is protected by law," she said in a statement.

Noem to focus federal coronavirus relief on infrastructure

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said Friday she is planning to focus on water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure projects as the state plans to spend nearly \$1 billion in federal funds meant to help towns and cities recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

The state government is readying to receive \$974.5 million from the federal government over the next year and a half. Over the course of the pandemic, South Dakota has been allotted over \$4.8 billion in federal relief funds — a windfall that nearly matches the state's annual budget.

Under the American Rescue Plan Act passed by Congress, state and local governments must use the funds to respond to COVID-19. They can use the money for public health programs, addressing the financial fallout of the pandemic, replacing lost revenues, pay for essential workers, or on infrastructure. The governor said the state has "broad flexibility" in using the money.

"I look forward to working with the legislature to find ways we might use much of these funds to invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure," Noem said in a statement.

South Dakota cities and counties will also receive \$275 million from the federal government.

Daily virus cases reach 6-month high in South Dakota

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Daily coronavirus cases on Friday topped 300 for the first time in over six months in South Dakota as a fresh pandemic wave appeared to build.

The Department of Health reported 304 virus cases, while hospitalizations and deaths remained the same from Thursday. COVID-19 hospitalizations — currently at 125 — have roughly tripled in the last two weeks. Over that time period, the state has seen case counts spike by 270%, according to Johns Hopkins

researchers. However, the number of cases per capita in that time has remained one of the lowest in the country.

Health officials said they were not surprised to see cases rise in the state after they had dropped during the spring and early summer, the Argus Leader reported.

"To see the trends come from the East Coast, down to the southern parts of the country and then up the middle of the country, we did expect to see the virus spread that way," Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said.

About 56% of people eligible for a vaccine have completed their immunization, health officials reported.

In Kabul, a fearful wait for US to deliver on evacuation vow

By AHMAD SEIR, RAHIM FAIEZ, KATHY GANNON and CARA ANNA Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Tens of thousands of people in Afghanistan waited nervously on Saturday to see whether the United States would deliver on President Joe Biden's new pledge to evacuate all Americans and all Afghans who aided the war effort. Meanwhile, the Taliban leader arrived in Kabul for talks with the group's leadership on forming a new government.

Time is running out ahead of Biden's Aug. 31 deadline to withdraw most remaining U.S. troops, and the president on Friday night did not commit to extending it. He faces growing criticism as videos depict pandemonium and occasional violence outside the airport, and as vulnerable Afghans who fear the Taliban's retaliation send desperate pleas not to be left behind.

The Gulf nation of Bahrain on Saturday announced it was allowing flights to use its transit facilities for the evacuation, an option that should ease pressure after the U.S. faced issues Friday with its facilities at Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar rapidly filling up. The backlog forced flights from the Kabul international airport to stop for several hours. The United Arab Emirates, meanwhile, said it would host up to 5,000 Afghans "prior to their departure to other countries."

Tens of thousands of Afghan translators and others, and their close family members, seek evacuation after the Taliban's shockingly swift takeover of Afghanistan in a little over a week's time. The fall of Kabul marked the final chapter of America's longest war, which began after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who negotiated the religious movement's 2020 peace deal with the U.S., is in Kabul for meetings with the group's leadership, a Taliban official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media. Baradar's presence is significant because he has often held talks with former Afghan leaders like ex-president Hamid Karzai.

Afghan officials familiar with the many talks held in the capital say the Taliban have said they will not make announcements on their government until the Aug. 31 deadline for the troop withdrawal passes.

Abdullah Abdullah, a senior official in the ousted government, tweeted that he and Karzai met Saturday with Taliban's acting governor for Kabul, who "assured us that he would do everything possible for the security of the people" of the city.

On Friday, a defense official said about 5,700 people, including about 250 Americans, were flown out of Kabul aboard 16 C-17 transport planes, guarded by a temporary U.S. military deployment that's building to 6,000 troops. On each of the previous two days, about 2,000 people were airlifted.

Officials also confirmed that U.S. military helicopters flew beyond the Kabul airport to scoop up 169 Americans seeking to evacuate. No one knows how many U.S. citizens remain in Afghanistan, but estimates have ranged as high as 15,000.

So far, 13 countries have agreed to host at-risk Afghans at least temporarily, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. Another 12 have agreed to serve as transit points for evacuees, including Americans and others. About 300 evacuees arrived Friday night from Qatar at the U.S. Ramstein Air Base in Germany, one transit point for people being taken to the U.S., the American military said.

But the growing question for many other Afghans is, where will they finally call home? Already, European leaders who fear a repeat of the 2015 migration crisis are signaling that fleeing Afghans who didn't help Western forces during the war should stay in neighboring countries instead. The desperate scenes of

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 13 of 54

people clinging to aircraft taking off from Kabul's airport have only deepened Europe's anxiety.

Remaining in Afghanistan means adapting to life under the Taliban, who say they seek an "inclusive, Islamic" government, offer full amnesty to those who worked for the U.S. and the Western-backed government and claim they have become more moderate since they last held power from 1996 to 2001. They say they'll honor women's rights within the norms of Islamic law, without elaborating.

But many Afghans fear a return to the Taliban's harsh rule in the late 1990s, when the group barred women from attending school or working outside the home, banned television and music, chopped off the hands of suspected thieves and held public executions.

"Today some of my friends went to work at the court and the Taliban didn't let them into their offices. They showed their guns and said, 'You're not eligible to work in this government if you worked in the past one,'" one women's activist in Kabul told The Associated Press on Saturday. She spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.

With a Turkish visa but no way to safely reach the airport, the activist described the gap between the Taliban's words and actions "very alarming." She said she was holed up in the city with a colleague, eating food delivered by a friend.

Taliban now operate in a very different Afghanistan, facing far closer scrutiny this time around as Afghans share updates on social media. Some Afghans however fear retaliation, and are hurriedly wiping out their online presence instead.

For US military leaders, Afghan news strikes personal chord

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For senior military and Pentagon leaders, this week's news was profoundly personal.

The photos and videos pouring out of Afghanistan hit a nerve, and triggered searingly vivid flashbacks to battles fought, troops lost and tears shed during their own deployments there. And in a response shaped by their memories and experiences in the war, they urged troops to check in on their buddies, talk to each other and seek help and solace if they need it.

The top two Pentagon leaders made it clear that the scenes unfolding in Afghanistan, as citizens frantically tried to get out of the country and escape the new Taliban rule, were tough for them to watch. And they knew that the visions of Afghans struggling to get on flights — so desperate that some clung to an aircraft as it lifted off — were painful for troops to see.

"All of this is very personal for me. This is a war that I fought in and led. I know the country, I know the people, and I know those who fought alongside me," said Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, a retired four-star Army general who served as a commander in Afghanistan in the early years and then led U.S. Central Command overseeing the Middle East wars as his final post from 2013-16. "We have a moral obligation to help those who helped us. And I feel the urgency deeply."

Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, commanded troops in Afghanistan and has talked often about how deeply he felt the loss of each soldier under his watch.

"For more than 20 years, we have prevented an attack on the U.S. homeland. 2,448 lost our lives, 20,722 were wounded in action, and many others suffered the unseen wounds of war. To each of them, I want you to know, personally, that your service matters," said Milley. "As the Secretary said, for both he and I, this is personal. And I know it's personal for each and every one of you."

Austin said troops have a wide range of views on the issue and he urged them to work through it in their own way. "We need to respect that and we need to give one another the time and space to help do it," he said.

Across the military, many senior officers have done tours in Afghanistan. They led troops in battle. They trained Afghan forces. And they relied heavily on the Afghan interpreters now at risk of violence from the Taliban, and begging for help to leave the country.

In recent days, those leaders have talked privately with their staffs and sent heartfelt public messages to their forces who they know are struggling with a range of emotions: frustration with the Taliban take-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 14 of 54

over after two decades of blood and loss; fears that Afghans they worked with won't get out safely; and questions about whether their time in the country mattered.

On Friday morning, Gen. Richard Clarke, head of U.S. Special Operations Command, addressed his entire headquarters staff about the situation in Afghanistan. Clarke, who has deployed to Afghanistan several times, has commandos who have done multiple tours in the last two decades and he noted this is an emotional time for them. Speaking over the intercom, he pressed them to reach out to their battle buddies and seek other resources if they need someone to talk to.

In a blunt letter to his force this week, Gen. David Berger, the Marine Corps commandant, said now is the time to come together. "You should take pride in your service — it gives meaning to the sacrifice of all Marines who served, including those whose sacrifice was ultimate," said the letter, co-signed by Marine Sgt. Maj. Troy Black.

Berger, who deployed to Afghanistan in 2012 as commander of the 1st Marine Division, has also made sure his Marines have information to give interpreters they worked with in Afghanistan who are asking for help evacuating.

And he noted in his message that Marines may be struggling with a simple question: "Was it all worth it?" The answer, he and Black said, is yes.

Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, went to his Facebook page to post a note to his commando forces who have gone in and out of Afghanistan for the past 20 years. And he recalled the first troops he lost in battle.

"From the very beginning to the very present, I have been responsible for sending countless Airmen into harm's way there, not all of whom returned to their families," said Slife. "In November 2003, I sent home the remains of my teammates and friends in the aftermath of the first fatalities I experienced as a commander. In May of 2011, we killed Osama bin Laden. Highs and lows ... lows and highs ... I've felt it all."

He warned of many hard days and years ahead as troops reflect on their Afghanistan experiences while dealing with physical, psychological and moral wounds.

"If, like me, you find yourself trying to put your own experiences into some context which will allow you to move forward positively and productively, I urge you to talk about it," and seek out a wide range of resources for help, he said.

Gen. James McConville, chief of staff of the Army, penned a letter to his personnel offering solace. Their sacrifices, he said, will be a lasting legacy of honor. And he also plead with troops to seek help and reach out to their comrades.

"I'd ask that you check in on your teammates as well as our Soldiers for Life, who may be struggling with the unfolding events," said McConville, who commanded troops in Afghanistan. At the bottom of the letter he scrawled in marker, "Proud to serve with you!"

Adm. Mike Gilday, chief of naval operations, sent a message to sailors with a similar request.

"Reach out to those who may be struggling, and remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to a grateful nation," he said. "I want to be very clear, your service was not in vain, and it made a difference."

More than 50 organizations signed a letter offering help to those in need, and said people can call the Veterans Crisis Line and Military Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255.

Biden's view of job comes into focus after Afghan collapse

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden made up his mind about Afghanistan months — really years — ago.

For more than a decade, Biden advocated for an end to American involvement in Afghanistan. But he did so as something of an outsider, a senator whose ultimate power came in the form of a single vote on Capitol Hill or a vice president who advised another president.

But authority over America's longest war finally fell into Biden's hands this year and he insisted that the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 15 of 54

U.S. withdraw from Afghanistan, settling on an August 31 deadline. And despite the rapid collapse of the Afghan government, spurring a humanitarian crisis and searing criticism at home and from traditional allies, he was resolute, at times defiant. He took responsibility and in turns leveled blame at his predecessor.

After months of largely focusing on quelling the pandemic and stimulating the economy, the chaos in Afghanistan triggered the first foreign policy crisis of Biden's presidency, temporarily drowning out his other priorities. His response offers a fuller picture of how Biden approaches his job, relying on a political sensibility he built as a veteran of the Senate who has weathered decades of Washington tumult and scandal.

How Biden is handling the weight of his decision to end the war is a product of his 40 years in public life, many of them spent studying the world. He sold voters on his experience and this is the first time he is offering decisions, not mere opinions in a Senate hearing — and he will be judged by the outcome, which is far from clear at this point. Americans are seeing a different side of Biden during this crisis, a sterner, sometimes testy man known much better for his empathy.

In the face of setbacks that would prompt most politicians to step back and offer some level of contrition, Biden has only grown firmer in his position this week. He has acknowledged that the Taliban advanced faster than expected but has said, both privately to aides and in a pair of public addresses to the American people, that the swift collapse of the Afghan government proved correct his longstanding skepticism of the war effort.

"If anything, the developments of the past week reinforced that ending U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan now was the right decision," he said Monday, as he sought to sidestep blame for the disorderly withdrawal.

Biden's decision laid bare a cold realism in his view of American military power: American forces shouldn't be used to promote the nation's ideals abroad.

Troops, in Biden's estimation, should be focused more narrowly on threats to the homeland, and the nation's diplomatic and economic might are the proper tools to uphold its values overseas. It's a sentiment the White House believes Americans agree with after nearly two decades of endless conflicts, but one that comes with painful cost for tens of thousands of Afghans who assisted the U.S. occupation or thrived under it.

To advisers, he's reiterated that his opposition to the 2009 surge in Afghanistan ordered by President Barack Obama was one of his proudest moments in government.

That confidence, which even some allies say sometimes borders on obstinance, has been a defining force in Biden's political life and now his presidency. When he believes he is in the right, current and former aides say, there is little talking him out of it.

His commitment to causes has been evident throughout his career, according to his former Senate colleague Trent Lott, underscored even by the length of his speeches.

"He was prone to making long speeches on the Senate and I used to joke, 'We can go get something to eat, this is going to be a while,' but they were good speeches and it's what he believed in," Lott, a Mississippi Republican, said.

That sense of clarity, sometimes bordering on rigidity, helped Biden overcome a childhood stutter and sustained his sagging third presidential campaign through the doldrums of 2019 to an upset nomination a year ago. In the White House, it was his own zeal to reach a bipartisan infrastructure accord that propelled the legislation through the divided Senate earlier this month.

It was on display again Friday as Biden insisted, despite a mounting chorus of condemnation from allies abroad, that the haphazard American withdrawal from Afghanistan was improving the country's stature overseas.

"The fact of the matter is I have not seen that," Biden maintained when asked about allies from the United Kingdom to Germany that have publicly questioned America's credibility. "Matter of fact, the exact opposite. I've got the exact opposite thing as we're acting with dispatch, we're acting, committing to what we said we would do."

Biden acknowledged for the first time at length the heart-wrenching scenes of confusion as Americans, allies and Afghans struggle to flee the Taliban. But he was adamant that his decision was the right one,

saying he always envisioned some amount of chaos in the pullout.

"There's no way in which you'd be able to leave Afghanistan without there being some of what you're seeing now," Biden said.

Despite Biden's confidence, the administration's initial public response was faltering.

The president was at Camp David as part of his summer vacation but scrambled back to the White House on Monday, the day after Kabul fell. In his first public remarks on the situation, he admitted no fault for the chaotic drawdown.

Subsequent briefings at the White House, Pentagon and State Department raised as many questions as they answered, with officials being unable to say how many Americans remained in Afghanistan and how they, and their Afghan allies, would be lifted to safety. An image released of Biden sitting alone at a Camp David situation room was widely panned and later regretted within the White House, the officials said.

In a televised interview Wednesday, Biden said flatly "no" when asked if it could have been handled better or if the administration made any mistakes.

"The idea that somehow there's a way to have gotten out without chaos ensuing, I don't know how that happens," he told ABC.

The moment has created a political opportunity for his opponents, who have otherwise struggled to find much of an opening to hit Biden since he took office.

Republicans sought to use the blundered withdrawal to deem Biden weak and ineffective. Some Democrats questioned the evacuation process and worried that it could damage the party's chances of holding onto its congressional majorities next year. Lawmakers in both parties promised to launch investigations of the failures that led to the chaotic exit.

The White House has pointed to public polling that consistently shows that the majority of American people were in favor of ending the nation's presence in Afghanistan. Roughly two-thirds of Americans said they did not think the war in Afghanistan was worth fighting, according to a poll released this week by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Aides believe that, particularly if the evacuation process at the airport improves, the story will fade from the headlines and Biden will eventually get credit for ending the war, something his predecessors could not do.

Biden vows to evacuate all Americans — and Afghan helpers

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, ROBERT BURNS, JAMES LAPORTA and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has pledged firmly to bring all Americans home from Afghanistan — and all Afghans who aided the war effort, too — as officials confirmed that U.S. military helicopters flew beyond the Kabul airport to scoop up 169 Americans seeking to evacuate.

Biden's promises came Friday as thousands more Americans and others seeking to escape the Taliban struggled to get past crushing crowds, Taliban airport checkpoints and sometimes-insurmountable U.S. bureaucracy.

"We will get you home," Biden promised Americans who were still in Afghanistan days after the Taliban retook control of Kabul, ending a two-decade war.

The president's comments, delivered at the White House, were intended to project purpose and stability at the conclusion of a week during which images from Afghanistan more often suggested chaos, especially at the airport.

His commitment to find a way out for Afghan allies vulnerable to Taliban attacks amounted to a potentially vast expansion of Washington's promises, given the tens of thousands of translators and other helpers, and their close family members, seeking evacuation.

"We're making the same commitment" to Afghan wartime helpers as to U.S. citizens, Biden said, offering the prospect of assistance to Afghans who largely have been fighting individual battles to get the documents and passage into the airport that they need to leave. He called the Afghan allies "equally important" in the evacuations.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 17 of 54

Meanwhile, Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass., said Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin had disconcerting news for the lawmakers he briefed Friday, confirming that Americans are among those who have been beaten by the Taliban at airport checkpoints.

Biden is facing continuing criticism as videos and news reports depict pandemonium and occasional violence outside the airport.

"I made the decision" on the timing of the U.S. withdrawal, he said, his tone firm as he declared that it was going to lead to difficult scenes, no matter when. Former President Donald Trump had set the departure for May in negotiations with the Taliban, but Biden extended it.

Thousands of people remain to be evacuated ahead of Biden's Aug. 31 deadline to withdraw most remaining U.S. troops. Flights were stopped for several hours Friday because of a backup at a transit point for the refugees, a U.S. airbase in Qatar, but they resumed in the afternoon, including to Bahrain.

Still, potential evacuees faced continuing problems getting into the airport. The Belgian foreign ministry confirmed that one of its planes took off empty because the people who were supposed to be aboard couldn't get in.

A defense official said about 5,700 people, including about 250 Americans, were flown out of Kabul aboard 16 C-17 transport planes, guarded by a temporary U.S. military deployment that's building to 6,000 troops. On each of the previous two days, about 2,000 people were airlifted.

Biden said 169 Americans had been brought to the airport from beyond its perimeter, but he provided no details. Later, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said the 169 had gathered at the Baron Hotel near the airport and were flown across the airport perimeter to safety Thursday. He said they were transported by three U.S. military CH-47 helicopters.

Kirby said the helicopters took no hostile fire. He added that the Americans initially were going to walk the short distance from the hotel to an airport gate, but a crowd outside the gate changed the plan.

Separately, senior American military officials told The Associated Press that a U.S. helicopter picked up Afghans, mostly women and children, and ferried them to the airport Friday. The 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the Army's 82nd Airborne Division airlifted the Afghans from Camp Sullivan, near the Kabul airport. Those officials commented only on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations.

Kirby said he was not aware of any such Friday helicopter mission.

For those living in cities and provinces outside Kabul, CIA case officers, special operation forces and agents from the Defense Intelligence Agency on the ground are gathering some U.S. citizens and Afghans who worked for the U.S. at predetermined pick-up sites.

The officials would not detail where these airlift sites were for security reasons. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss ongoing operations.

In Washington, some veterans in Congress were calling on the Biden administration to extend a security perimeter beyond the Kabul airport so more Afghans could get through.

The lawmakers also said they want Biden to make clearer that the Aug. 31 deadline for withdrawing U.S. troops is not a firm one.

The deadline "is contributing to the chaos and the panic at the airport because you have Afghans who think that they have 10 days to get out of this country or that door is closing forever," said Rep. Peter Meijer, R-Mich., who served in Iraq and also worked in Afghanistan to help aid workers provide humanitarian relief.

With mobs of people outside the airport and Taliban fighters ringing its perimeter, the U.S. renewed its advisory to Americans and others that it could not guarantee safe passage for any of those desperately seeking seats on the planes inside. The Taliban are regularly firing into the air to try to control the crowds, sending men, women and children running.

The advisory captured some of the pandemonium, and what many Afghans and foreigners see as their life-and-death struggle to get inside. It said: "We are processing people at multiple gates. Due to large crowds and security concerns, gates may open or close without notice. Please use your best judgment and attempt to enter the airport at any gate that is open."

While Biden has previously blamed Afghans for the U.S. failure to get out more allies ahead of this month's sudden Taliban takeover, U.S. officials told The AP that American diplomats had formally urged weeks ago

that the administration ramp up evacuation efforts.

Biden said Friday he had gotten a wide variety of time estimates, though all were pessimistic about the Afghan government surviving.

He has said he was following the advice of Afghanistan's U.S.-backed president, Ashraf Ghani, in not earlier expanding U.S. efforts to fly out translators and other endangered Afghans. Ghani fled the country last weekend as the Taliban seized the capital.

Biden has also said many at-risk Afghan allies had not wanted to leave the country. But refugee groups point to yearslong backlogs of applications from thousands of those Afghans for visas that would let them take refuge in the United States.

Afghans and the Americans trying to help them also say the administration has clung to visa requirements for would-be evacuees that involve more than a dozen steps, and can take years to complete. Those often have included requirements that the Taliban sweep has made dangerous or impossible — such as requiring Afghans to go to a third country to apply for a U.S. visa, and produce paperwork showing their work with Americans.

New England preps for 1st hurricane in 30 years with Henri

By PHILIP MARCELO and PAT EATON-ROBB Associated Press

PLYMOUTH, Mass. (AP) — New Englanders bracing for their first hurricane in 30 years began hauling boats out of the water and taking other precautions Friday as Tropical Storm Henri barreled toward the Northeast coast.

Henri was expected to intensify into a hurricane by Saturday, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said. Impacts could be felt in New England states by Sunday, including on Cape Cod, which is teeming with tens of thousands of summer tourists.

Henri's track was imprecise, but as of 5 p.m. EDT Friday, the National Weather Service suggested it might make landfall first in eastern Long Island before careening further north. The White House said President Joe Biden was briefed on the storm's track.

Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker on Friday urged people vacationing on the Cape to leave well before Henri hits, and those who planned to start vacations there to delay their plans. "We don't want people to be stuck in traffic on the Cape Cod bridges when the storm is in full force on Sunday," he said.

Baker said up to 1,000 National Guard troops were on standby to help with evacuations if needed.

"This storm is extremely worrisome," said Michael Finkelstein, police chief and emergency management director in East Lyme, Connecticut. "We haven't been down this road in quite a while and there's no doubt that we and the rest of New England would have some real difficulties with a direct hit from a hurricane."

Finkelstein said he's most concerned about low-lying areas of town that could become impossible to access because of flooding and a storm surge.

Thursday marked exactly 30 years since Hurricane Bob came ashore in Rhode Island as a Category 2 storm, killing at least 17 people and leaving behind more than \$1.5 billion worth of damage. Bob, which left streets in coastal towns littered with boats blown free of their moorings, knocked out power and water to hundreds of thousands for days.

Large swaths of the Eastern seaboard were mopping up on Friday from the effects of Henri's predecessor, Tropical Depression Fred. In North Carolina, Haywood County Sheriff Greg Christopher said four people died and five individuals remained unaccounted for, down from around 20 people reported missing on Thursday.

The weather service warned of the potential for damaging winds and widespread coastal flooding from Henri, and officials in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York cautioned that people could lose power for a week or even longer. Authorities urged people to secure their boats, fuel up their vehicles and stock up on canned goods.

The system was centered in the Atlantic Ocean late Friday about 230 miles (370 kilometers) south-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 19 of 54

southeast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and about 615 miles (990 kilometers) south of Montauk Point, New York. It had maximum sustained winds of 70 mph (110 kph).

A hurricane warning stretched across the South Shore of Long Island from Fire Island Inlet to Montauk, and the North Shore from Port Jefferson Harbor to Montauk.

The main threats were expected to be storm surge, wind and rain, forecasters said. Storm surge between 3 and 5 feet (1 to 1.5 meters) was possible from Flushing, New York, to Chatham, Massachusetts; and parts of the North Shore and South Shore of Long Island.

Rainfall between 3 to 6 inches (7.5 to 15 centimeters) was expected Sunday through Monday over the region.

Henri was heading north Friday night, and forecasters expected it to approach the coastlines of New York's Long Island or southern New England by Sunday. New York hasn't had a direct hit from a major hurricane season storm since Superstorm Sandy wreaked havoc in 2012.

At Safe Harbor Marina in coastal Plymouth, Massachusetts, Steve Berlo was among the many boaters having their vessels pulled out of the water ahead of the storm.

"It's rare, but when it happens, you want to be sure you're ready," said Berlo, 54. "Got to protect our second home. So that's that. Now I can sleep tonight."

In the Hamptons, the celebrity playground on Long Island's east end, officials warned of dangerous rip currents and flooding that's likely to turn streets, like mansion-lined Dune Road on the Atlantic coast, into lagoons.

Ryan Murphy, the emergency management administrator for the Town of Southampton, said that while the storm's track continues to evolve, "we have to plan as if it's going to be like a Category 1 hurricane that would be hitting us."

The National Weather Service also warned residents and beachgoers on the North Carolina coast of rip currents and rough surf associated with Henri. Meteorologist Steven Pfaff of the weather service's Wilmington office said swells from Henri were expected to create hazardous surf conditions beginning Friday and continuing on Saturday.

At the U.S. Navy's submarine base in Groton, Connecticut, personnel on Friday were securing submarine moorings, installing flood gates in front of doors on some waterfront buildings, and doubling up lines on small boats, officials said. Families were being encouraged to watch the forecast and make any necessary preparations.

The Coast Guard urged boaters to stay off the water, saying in a statement: "The Coast Guard's search and rescue capabilities degrade as storm conditions strengthen. This means help could be delayed."

At the Port Niantic marina in Niantic, Connecticut, Debbie Shelburn and her employees were already busy Friday hauling boats out of the water and into a large storage building.

"Basically, it's become all hands on deck. No matter your position — mechanic, whatever — everybody is out there helping with the logistics of moving the boats and getting them secure on land," she said.

Explosive California wildfires could burn into December

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Smoke from California's wildfires choked people on the East Coast. Flames wiped out a gold rush-era town. Ash covers area that would dwarf Rhode Island.

Images of homes engulfed in flames and mountains glowing like lava would make it easy to conclude the Golden State is a charred black landscape.

That's hardly the case, but the frightening reality is that the worst may be yet to come.

California has already surpassed the acreage burned at this point last year, which ended up setting the record. Now it's entering a period when powerful winds have often driven the deadliest blazes.

"Here we are — it's not the end of August and the size and distribution and the destruction of summer 2021 wildfires does not bode well for the next months," said Bill Deverell, a University of Southern California history professor who teaches about fire in the West. "The suggestion of patterns across the last two

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 20 of 54

decades in the West is deeply unsettling and worrisome: hotter, bigger, more fires.”

More than a dozen large wildfires are burning in California grass, brush and forest that is exceptionally dry from two years of drought likely exacerbated by climate change.

The fires, mainly in the northern part of the state, have burned nearly 1.5 million acres, or roughly 2,300 square miles (6,000 square kilometers).

Firefighters are witnessing extreme fire behavior as embers carried miles by gusts are igniting vegetation ripe for burning in rugged landscapes, where it's hard to attack or build a perimeter to prevent it from spreading. Fires that in the past would cool down at night are sometimes surging miles in the dark.

The Dixie Fire, the largest currently burning and second biggest on record, wiped out the historic town of Greenville and continues to threaten thousands of homes about 175 miles (282 kilometers) northeast of San Francisco. The Caldor Fire, burning about 100 miles (161 kilometers) to the south, blew up since Aug. 14, torched parts of the hamlet of Grizzly Flat and is chewing through dense forest.

Gusts and low humidity in the forecast that could vastly expand the blaze led to the closure Friday of a 40-mile (64 kilometers) stretch of highway that runs along the fire's perimeter and links Sacramento to Lake Tahoe.

John Hawkins, a retired fire chief for the state and now wildland fire consultant, said he hadn't seen such explosive fire behavior in 58 fire seasons.

A fire 60 years ago that torched 100 homes and killed two people near Yosemite National Park once had the record for fastest expansion, covering nearly 31 square miles (80 square kilometers) in two hours. But that kind of spread is becoming more common today.

“The Harlow Fire of 1961 was one of a kind in its day,” Hawkins said. “As we draw a comparison today, it's not one of a kind, it's one after another. Something has changed.”

Hawkins said he saw similarly rapid growth in the Caldor Fire.

Dramatic time lapse video showed a massive plume growing above thick forest. The column rose up and dark smoke poured across the sky before the cloud erupted in flames shooting hundreds of feet in the air.

“It wasn't a slow deal,” Hawkins said. “When you see one of those develop that fast in heavy timber and already see another dozen fires in California running crazy it doesn't take much to light your lightbulb or ring your bell.”

Ten of the state's largest and 13 of the most destructive wildfires in the top 20 have burned in the last four years.

The largest of those fires, the August Complex, a group of lightning-sparked blazes that merged, began a year ago this week. The deadliest and most destructive, the Camp Fire, killed 85 and destroyed nearly 19,000 buildings in November 2018.

In the past, forest fires have been dominant in late summer and fires in the fall have burned in chaparral and woodlands, driven by powerful dry winds created by high pressure over the Great Basin, said Malcolm North, a research ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service.

The offshore winds, known as Diablos in Northern California and Santa Anas in Southern California, usually have powered some of the worst blazes as they sap vegetation of moisture and pick up speed as they squeeze through mountain passes and canyons, becoming warmer and even drier.

With much of California experiencing exceptional drought, the highest intensity, according the U.S. Drought Monitor, large fires in the north could burn into early December, said Anthony Scardina, deputy regional forester for the Forest Service. Southern California could expect to see fires in September that could last to the end of the year.

Erratic infernos like the Creek Fire last year, the fifth-biggest ever, could be blamed in part on a 2012-16 drought. It is estimated to have killed more than 100 million trees in the Sierra Nevada, the state's largest mountain range and the setting for many of the fires, North said.

North was co-author of a 2018 scientific paper that predicted Sierra wildfires could burn at the intensity of blazes lit by fire bombings in Dresden, Germany and Tokyo during World War II.

“I do think that's what we're seeing,” said North. “The current models we have for how fires are going

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 21 of 54

to behave don't cover this because it's just off the charts. It's hazardous to firefighters and hard as hell to predict what it's going to do."

Fires have intensified across the entire West, creating a nearly year-round season that has taxed firefighters. Fire patterns used to migrate in seasons from the Southwest to the Rockies, to the Pacific Northwest and then California, allowing fire crews to move from one place to the next, Scardina said.

"But the problem is all of those seasons are starting to overlap," Scardina said. "We start to get stretched thin."

As the Caldor inferno erupted, firefighters were diverted from the Dixie Fire. Repositioning crews, fire engines, and water- and flame retardant-dropping aircraft takes time, allowing newer blazes to advance and leaving communities near older ones vulnerable.

"Every time a new one starts it's like going to Toys R Us on Christmas Eve expecting to get a gift," Hawkins said, "and finding nothing on the shelf."

Judge: California ride-hailing law is unconstitutional

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A judge Friday struck down a California ballot measure that exempted Uber and other app-based ride-hailing and delivery services from a state law requiring drivers to be classified as employees eligible for benefits and job protections.

Alameda County Superior Court Judge Frank Roesch ruled that Proposition 22 was unconstitutional.

Voters approved the measure in November after Uber, Lyft and other services spent \$200 million in its favor, making it the most expensive ballot measure in state history.

Uber said it planned to appeal, setting up a fight that could likely end up in the California Supreme Court.

"This ruling ignores the will of the overwhelming majority of California voters and defies both logic and the law," company spokesman Noah Edwardsen said. "You don't have to take our word for it: California's attorney general strongly defended Proposition 22's constitutionality in this very case."

He said the measure will remain in force pending the appeal.

The judge sided with three drivers and the Service Employees International Union in a lawsuit that argued the measure improperly removed the state Legislature's ability to grant workers the right to access to the state workers' compensation program.

"For two years, drivers have been saying that democracy cannot be bought. And today's decision shows they were right," said Bob Schoonover, president of the SEIU California State Council.

Proposition 22 shielded app-based ride-hailing and delivery companies from a labor law that required such services to treat drivers as employees and not independent contractors, who don't have to receive benefits such as paid sick leave or unemployment insurance.

Uber and Lyft threatened to leave the state if voters rejected the measure.

Labor spent about \$20 million to challenge the proposition.

The state Supreme Court initially declined to hear the case in February — mainly on procedural grounds — but left open the possibility of a lower court challenge.

Biden vows to evacuate all Americans — and Afghan helpers

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, ROBERT BURNS, JAMES LAPORTA and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden pledged firmly Friday to bring all Americans home from Afghanistan — and all Afghans who aided the war effort, too — as officials confirmed that U.S. military helicopters flew beyond the Kabul airport to scoop up 169 Americans seeking to evacuate.

Biden's promises came as thousands more Americans and others seeking to escape the Taliban struggled to get past crushing crowds, Taliban airport checkpoints and sometimes-insurmountable U.S. bureaucracy.

"We will get you home," Biden promised Americans who were still in Afghanistan days after the Taliban retook control of Kabul, ending a two-decade war.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 22 of 54

The president's comments, delivered at the White House, were intended to project purpose and stability at the conclusion of a week during which images from Afghanistan more often suggested chaos, especially at the airport.

His commitment to find a way out for Afghan allies vulnerable to Taliban attacks amounted to a potentially vast expansion of Washington's promises, given the tens of thousands of translators and other helpers, and their close family members, seeking evacuation.

"We're making the same commitment" to Afghan wartime helpers as to U.S. citizens, Biden said, offering the prospect of assistance to Afghans who largely have been fighting individual battles to get the documents and passage into the airport that they need to leave. He called the Afghan allies "equally important" in the evacuations.

Meanwhile, Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass., said Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin had disconcerting news for the lawmakers he briefed Friday, confirming that Americans are among those who have been beaten by the Taliban at airport checkpoints.

Biden is facing continuing criticism as videos and news reports depict pandemonium and occasional violence outside the airport.

"I made the decision" on the timing of the U.S. withdrawal, he said, his tone firm as he declared that it was going to lead to difficult scenes, no matter when. Former President Donald Trump had set the departure for May in negotiations with the Taliban, but Biden extended it.

Thousands of people remain to be evacuated ahead of Biden's Aug. 31 deadline to withdraw most remaining U.S. troops. Flights were stopped for several hours Friday because of a backup at a transit point for the refugees, a U.S. airbase in Qatar, but they resumed in the afternoon, including to Bahrain.

Still, potential evacuees faced continuing problems getting into the airport. The Belgian foreign ministry confirmed that one of its planes took off empty because the people who were supposed to be aboard couldn't get in.

A defense official said about 5,700 people, including about 250 Americans, were flown out of Kabul aboard 16 C-17 transport planes, guarded by a temporary U.S. military deployment that's building to 6,000 troops. On each of the previous two days, about 2,000 people were airlifted.

Biden said 169 Americans had been brought to the airport from beyond its perimeter, but he provided no details. Later, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said the 169 had gathered at the Baron Hotel near the airport and were flown across the airport perimeter to safety Thursday. He said they were transported by three U.S. military CH-47 helicopters.

Kirby said the helicopters took no hostile fire. He added that the Americans initially were going to walk the short distance from the hotel to an airport gate, but a crowd outside the gate changed the plan.

Separately, senior American military officials told The Associated Press that a U.S. helicopter picked up Afghans, mostly women and children, and ferried them to the airport Friday. The 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the Army's 82nd Airborne Division airlifted the Afghans from Camp Sullivan, near the Kabul airport. Those officials commented only on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations.

Kirby said he was not aware of any such Friday helicopter mission.

For those living in cities and provinces outside Kabul, CIA case officers, special operation forces and agents from the Defense Intelligence Agency on the ground are gathering some U.S. citizens and Afghans who worked for the U.S. at predetermined pick-up sites.

The officials would not detail where these airlift sites were for security reasons. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss ongoing operations.

In Washington, some veterans in Congress were calling on the Biden administration to extend a security perimeter beyond the Kabul airport so more Afghans could get through.

The lawmakers also said they want Biden to make clearer that the Aug. 31 deadline for withdrawing U.S. troops is not a firm one.

The deadline "is contributing to the chaos and the panic at the airport because you have Afghans who think that they have 10 days to get out of this country or that door is closing forever," said Rep. Peter Meijer,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 23 of 54

R-Mich., who served in Iraq and also worked in Afghanistan to help aid workers provide humanitarian relief.

With mobs of people outside the airport and Taliban fighters ringing its perimeter, the U.S. renewed its advisory to Americans and others that it could not guarantee safe passage for any of those desperately seeking seats on the planes inside. The Taliban are regularly firing into the air to try to control the crowds, sending men, women and children running.

The advisory captured some of the pandemonium, and what many Afghans and foreigners see as their life-and-death struggle to get inside. It said: "We are processing people at multiple gates. Due to large crowds and security concerns, gates may open or close without notice. Please use your best judgment and attempt to enter the airport at any gate that is open."

While Biden has previously blamed Afghans for the U.S. failure to get out more allies ahead of this month's sudden Taliban takeover, U.S. officials told The AP that American diplomats had formally urged weeks ago that the administration ramp up evacuation efforts.

Biden said Friday he had gotten a wide variety of time estimates, though all were pessimistic about the Afghan government surviving.

He has said he was following the advice of Afghanistan's U.S.-backed president, Ashraf Ghani, in not earlier expanding U.S. efforts to fly out translators and other endangered Afghans. Ghani fled the country last weekend as the Taliban seized the capital.

Biden has also said many at-risk Afghan allies had not wanted to leave the country. But refugee groups point to yearslong backlogs of applications from thousands of those Afghans for visas that would let them take refuge in the United States.

Afghans and the Americans trying to help them also say the administration has clung to visa requirements for would-be evacuees that involve more than a dozen steps, and can take years to complete. Those often have included requirements that the Taliban sweep has made dangerous or impossible — such as requiring Afghans to go to a third country to apply for a U.S. visa, and produce paperwork showing their work with Americans.

Florida mayor urges water limits because of COVID-19 surge

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The mayor of the Florida city of Orlando asked residents on Friday to stop watering their lawns and washing their cars immediately, saying water usage needed to be cut back because of the recent surge of COVID-19 hospitalizations.

The Orlando Utility Commission treats the city's water with liquid oxygen and supplies that ordinarily go toward water treatment have been diverted to hospitals for patients suffering from the virus, Mayor Buddy Dyer said.

"We acknowledge that the No. 1 priority for the liquid oxygen should be for hospitals," Dyer said at a news conference.

The city-owned utility typically goes through 10 trucks of liquid oxygen a week but its supplier recently said that it would be cut back to five to seven trucks a week to accommodate hospitals, said Linda Ferrone, OUC's chief customer and marketing officer.

About 40% of the utility commission's potable water is used for irrigation so any strains on the water supply will be greatly reduced if residents stop watering their lawns, washing their cars or using pressure washers, she said.

On its website, the utility said residents should prepare to follow the conservation measures for at least two weeks.

"We realize this is drastic and unprecedented," Ferrone said. "If worse came to worse, we would have to look at a boil water alert."

Since the 1990s, the utility has used liquid oxygen to remove the slight discoloration and rotten-egg smell that is found naturally in Florida's water supply.

Officials at one of the Orlando area's largest health care systems said this week that they had 1,620

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 24 of 54

patients hospitalized with COVID-19, twice the level of what it was during last winter's peak high for AdventHealth.

"This is unfortunately a crisis of unprecedented proportions," said Dr. Vincent Hsu, executive director of infection prevention and epidemiologist at AdventHealth.

Country singer Tom T. Hall dies; wrote 'Harper Valley PTA'

By KRISTIN M. HALL AP Entertainment Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tom T. Hall, the singer-songwriter who composed "Harper Valley P.T.A." and sang about life's simple joys as country music's consummate blue collar bard, has died. He was 85.

His son, Dean Hall, confirmed the musician's death on Friday at his home in Franklin, Tennessee. Known as "The Storyteller" for his unadorned yet incisive lyrics, Hall composed hundreds of songs.

Along with such contemporaries as Kris Kristofferson, John Hartford and Mickey Newbury, Hall helped usher in a literary era of country music in the early '70s, with songs that were political, like "Watergate Blues" and "The Monkey That Became President," deeply personal like "The Year Clayton Delaney Died," and philosophical like "(Old Dogs, Children and) Watermelon Wine."

"In all my writing, I've never made judgments," he said in 1986. "I think that's my secret. I'm a witness. I just watch everything and don't decide if it's good or bad."

Singer-songwriter Jason Isbell performed Hall's song "Mama Bake A Pie (Daddy Kill A Chicken)" when Hall was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2019.

"The simplest words that told the most complicated stories. Felt like Tom T. just caught the songs as they floated by, but I know he carved them out of rock," Isbell tweeted on Friday.

Hall, the fourth son of an ordained minister, was born near Olive Hill, Kentucky, in a log cabin built by his grandfather. He started playing guitar at age 4 and wrote his first song by the time he was 9.

Hall began playing in a bluegrass band, but when that didn't work out he started working as a disc jockey in Morehead, Kentucky. He joined the U.S. Army in 1957 for four years including an assignment in Germany. He turned to writing when he got back stateside and was discovered by Nashville publisher Jimmy Key.

Hall settled in Nashville in 1964 and first established himself as a songwriter making \$50 a week. He wrote songs for Jimmy C. Newman, Dave Dudley and Johnny Wright, but he had so many songs that he began recording them himself. The middle initial "T" was added when he got his recording contract to make the name catchier.

His breakthrough was writing "Harper Valley P.T.A.," a 1968 international hit about small-town hypocrisy recorded by Jeannie C. Riley. The song about a mother telling a group of busybodies to mind their own business was witty and feisty and became a No. 1 country and pop hit. It sold millions of copies and Riley won a Grammy for best female country vocal performance and an award for single of the year from the Country Music Association. The story was so popular it even spawned a movie of the same name and a television series.

"Suddenly, it was the talk of the country," Hall told The Associated Press in 1986. "It became a catch phrase. You'd flip the radio dial and hear it four or five times in 10 minutes. It was the most awesome time of my life; I caused all this stir."

His own career took off after that song and he had a string of hits with "Ballad of Forty Dollars" (which also was recorded by Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings); his first career No. 1 hit "A Week in a Country Jail," and "Homecoming," in the late 1960s.

Throughout the '70s, Hall became one of Nashville's biggest singer-songwriters, with multiple hit songs including, "I Love," "Country Is," "I Care," "I Like Beer," and "Faster Horses (The Cowboy and The Poet.)" He was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1978.

"Tom T. Hall's masterworks vary in plot, tone and tempo, but they are bound by his ceaseless and unyielding empathy for the triumphs and losses of others," said Kyle Young, CEO, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, in a statement. "He wrote without judgment or anger, offering a rhyming journalism of the heart that sets his compositions apart from any other writer."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 25 of 54

He also penned songs for children on his records "Songs of Fox Hollow (for Children of All Ages)" in 1974 and "Country Songs for Kids," in 1988. He also became an author, writing a book about songwriting, "The Songwriter's Handbook," and an autobiography, "The Storyteller's Nashville," as well as fiction novels.

He was host of the syndicated TV show "Pop Goes the Country" from 1980 to 1983 and even dabbled in politics. Hall was close to former President Jimmy Carter and Carter's brother, Billy, when Carter was in the White House. Tennessee Democrats urged Hall to run for governor in 1982, but he declined.

For his 1985 album "Songs in a Seashell," he spent six months walking up and down Southern beaches to get inspiration for the summer mood of the LP.

He was inducted in the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2008 and in 2012, he was honored as the BMI Icon of the year, with artists such as the Avett Brothers, bluegrass stars Daily & Vincent, Toby Keith and Justin Townes Earle paying tribute to the songwriting legend.

"I think a song is just a song," Hall said at the ceremony in 2012. "They can do it with all kinds of different bands. It's just a lyric and a melody. I was talking to Kris Kristofferson one time. They asked him what was country, and he said, 'If it sounds country, it's country.' So that's my philosophy."

He married English-born songwriter Dixie Deen in 1968, and the two would go on to write hundreds of bluegrass songs after Hall retired from performing in the 1990s, including "All That's Left" which Miranda Lambert covered on her 2014 album, "Platinum." Dixie Hall died in 2015.

In 2015, music legend Bob Dylan singled out Hall for some harsh criticism in a rambling speech at a MusiCares event. He called Hall's song, "I Love," "a little overcooked," and said that the arrival of Kristofferson in Nashville "blew ol' Tom T. Hall's world apart."

The criticism apparently confused Hall, as he considered Kristofferson a friend and a peer, and when asked about Dylan's comments in an 2016 article for "American Songwriter" magazine, he responded, "What the hell was all that about?"

Harris' Asia trip carries new urgency after Afghan collapse

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan has given new urgency to Vice President Kamala Harris' tour of Southeast Asia, where she will attempt to reassure allies of American resolve following the chaotic end of a two-decade war.

The trip, which began Friday and has stops in Singapore and Vietnam, will provide a forum for Harris to assert herself more directly in foreign affairs. She will have opportunities to affirm what she and President Joe Biden view as core American values, like human rights. That's especially important given concerns about the future for women and girls in Afghanistan with the Taliban back in power.

"A particular high priority is making sure that we evacuate American citizens, Afghans who worked with us, Afghans at risk, including women and children," Harris told reporters before her departure.

But there are also substantial risks. A longtime district attorney and former senator, Harris is largely untested in diplomacy and foreign policy. Her swing through Vietnam could draw unwanted comparisons between the humiliating withdrawal of U.S. troops there in 1975 and the tumultuous effort this week to evacuate Americans and allies from Afghanistan. And it's all happening in the shadow of China, whose growing influence worries some U.S. policymakers.

"She's walking into a hornet's nest, both with what's taking place in Afghanistan, but also the challenge of China that looms particularly large in Vietnam," said Brett Bruen, who was global engagement director during the Obama administration and a longtime diplomat. "On a good day, it's walking a tightrope. On a not so good day, it's walking a tightrope while leading an elephant across. There's just an enormous set of issues that she will run into from the moment that Air Force Two touches down."

Harris said Friday that the nations she will visit "are the seat of the Indo-Pacific region. We have interests there that relate to both security interests, economic interests and, more recently, global health interests."

Harris struggled at points in June when her first major trip abroad took her to Guatemala and Mexico. Her unequivocal warning to migrants not to come to the U.S. angered some liberal Democrats while doing

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 26 of 54

little to mollify Republican critics who said the administration wasn't doing enough to address a growth of crossings at the southern border.

She'll have a fresh chance to make a global impression when she arrives in Singapore, anchor of the U.S. naval presence in Southeast Asia.

On Monday, Harris will speak with Singapore President Halimah Yacob over the phone, participate in a bilateral meeting with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and deliver remarks on a U.S. combat ship visiting Singapore.

On Tuesday, she plans to deliver a speech outlining the U.S. vision for engagement in the region, and participate in an event with business leaders focused on supply chain issues.

Harris then heads to Vietnam, a country that holds both strategic and symbolic significance for the U.S. Leaders there have echoed U.S. concerns about the rise of neighboring China and the threat that could pose to global security. But it's also a nation etched into American history as the site of another bloody, costly war with an ignominious end.

The vice president will almost certainly address that parallel when she takes questions in Singapore during a joint press conference with the prime minister Monday. It's a potentially awkward position for Harris because Biden expressly rejected comparisons between Afghanistan and Vietnam in July, insisting there would be "no circumstance" where the world would see people being lifted off the roof of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, a reference to historic images of a helicopter evacuating the U.S. Embassy in Saigon in 1975.

The harried effort to get Americans to the airport in Kabul this week defied that prediction.

While the disorderly conclusion of the Afghan war dominated Washington in recent days, China may be a bigger priority for Harris' trip. Biden has made countering Chinese influence globally a central focus of his foreign policy. Relations between the U.S. and China deteriorated sharply under Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, and the two sides remain at odds over a host of issues including technology, cybersecurity and human rights.

And with Beijing's incursions in the disputed South China Sea, engagement with Vietnam and Singapore is key to the Biden administration's diplomatic and military goals in the region.

David Shear, a former U.S. ambassador to Vietnam, said Harris must be careful to offer a "positive" message to the nations, and avoid focusing entirely on China during her trip.

"Our relationships with these countries are important in themselves, and they don't want to be thought of solely as a pawn in a U.S-China chess game," he said. "They want to be thought of on their own terms, and they want their interests to be considered on their own terms."

Instead, analysts say they hope Harris will focus in particular on trade issues. The White House has been considering a new digital trade deal with countries in the region, which would allow for the free flow of data and open opportunities for U.S. companies for greater cooperation on emerging technologies in a fast-growing region of the world.

And COVID-19 is certain to be top of mind in two countries facing starkly divergent virus trends. Singapore has experienced just a few dozen pandemic-related deaths and has a relatively high vaccination rate. It's getting ready to ease travel and economic restrictions this fall. Vietnam, meanwhile, is facing record-high coronavirus infections driven by the delta variant and low vaccination rates.

The U.S. has provided more than 23 million vaccine doses to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and tens of millions of dollars in personal protective equipment, laboratory equipment and other supplies to fight the virus.

During her visit to Vietnam, Harris is planning to hold a virtual meeting with ASEAN health ministers and cite the launch of a regional office of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Gregory Poling, a senior fellow for Southeast Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said showing a commitment to the region on the pandemic is key for Harris' trip.

"I think on COVID, the administration realizes that this is the singular issue," he said. "If they're not seen as leading vaccine distribution in the region, then nothing else they do in Asia matters, or at least nothing else they do is going to find a willing audience."

GM extends recall to cover all Chevy Bolts due to fire risk

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — General Motors said Friday it is recalling all Chevrolet Bolt electric vehicles sold worldwide to fix a battery problem that could cause fires.

The recall and others raise questions about lithium ion batteries, which now are used in nearly all electric vehicles. Ford, BMW and Hyundai all have recalled batteries recently.

President Joe Biden will need electric vehicles to reach a goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions in half 2030 as part of a broader effort to fight climate change.

The GM recall announced Friday adds about 73,000 Bolts from the 2019 through 2022 model years to a previous recall of 69,000 older Bolts.

GM said that in rare cases the batteries have two manufacturing defects that can cause fires.

The Detroit-based automaker said it will replace battery modules in all the vehicles. In older versions, all five modules will be replaced.

The latest recall will cost the company about \$1 billion, bringing the total cost of the Bolt battery recalls to \$1.8 billion.

GM said owners should limit charging to 90% of battery capacity. The Bolts, including a new SUV, also should be parked outdoors until the modules are replaced.

The original recall was blamed on a manufacturing defect at a South Korean factory run by LG Chemical Solution, GM's battery supplier. But the company said an investigation showed that the defects are possible in batteries made at other sites. Most newer Bolt batteries are made at an LG plant in Holland, Michigan.

GM issued the first Bolt recall in November after getting reports of five of them catching fire. Two people suffered smoke inhalation and a house was set ablaze.

At first the company didn't know what was causing the problem, but it determined that batteries that caught fire were near a full charge. It traced the fires to what it called a rare manufacturing defect in battery modules. It can cause a short in a cell, which can trigger a fire.

GM said it began investigating the newer Bolts after a 2019 model that was not included in the previous recall caught fire a few weeks ago in Chandler, Arizona. That raised concerns about newer Bolts.

That fire brought the total number of Bolt blazes to 10, company spokesman Dan Flores said.

GM says it is working with LG to increase battery production. The company says owners will be notified to take their cars to dealers as soon as replacement parts are ready.

Flores said he is not sure when that will be.

The company said it will not produce or sell any more Bolts until it is satisfied that problems have been worked out in LG batteries, Flores said.

"Our focus on safety and doing the right thing for our customers guides every decision we make at GM," Doug Parks, GM product development chief, said in a statement.

Batteries with the new modules will come with an eight year, 100,000 mile (160 kilometer) warranty, the company said. GM will replace all five battery modules in 2017 to 2019 Bolts. Defective modules will be replaced in newer models.

GM said it will pursue reimbursement from the LG.

The Bolts are only a tiny fraction of GM's overall U.S. sales, which run close to 3 million vehicles in a normal year. But they are the first of an ambitious rollout of electric models as GM tries to hit a goal of selling only electric passenger vehicles by 2035.

Other automakers are also announcing additional electric models worldwide to cut pollution and meet stricter government fuel economy standards.

Shares in General Motors Co. were down about 2% in extended trading following the recall announcement.

US appeals court refuses to end CDC's eviction moratorium

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal appeals court on Friday said a pause on evictions designed to curb the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 28 of 54

spread of the coronavirus can remain in place for now, setting up a battle before the nation's highest court.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia rejected a bid by Alabama and Georgia landlords to block the eviction moratorium reinstated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention earlier this month.

The landlords filed an emergency motion hours later with the Supreme Court, urging the justices to allow evictions to proceed.

The Supreme Court voted 5-4 in June to allow the moratorium to continue through the end of July. But Justice Brett Kavanaugh — who joined the majority — warned the administration not to act further without explicit congressional approval.

"As five Members of this Court indicated less than two months ago, Congress never gave the CDC the staggering amount of power it claims," attorneys for the landlords told the Supreme Court on Friday.

In a short written decision, the appeals court panel said the court had rejected a similar bid and a lower court also declined to overturn the moratorium.

"In view of that decision and on the record before us, we likewise deny the emergency motion directed to this court," the judges said in the ruling.

The Biden administration allowed an earlier moratorium to lapse on July 31, saying it had no legal authority to allow it to continue. But the CDC issued a new moratorium days later as pressure mounted from lawmakers and others to help vulnerable renters stay in their homes as the coronavirus' delta variant surged. The moratorium is scheduled to expire Oct. 3.

As of Aug. 2, roughly 3.5 million people in the United States said they faced eviction in the next two months, according to the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey.

The new moratorium temporarily halted evictions in counties with "substantial and high levels" of virus transmissions and would cover areas where 90% of the U.S. population lives.

The Trump administration initially put a nationwide eviction moratorium in place last year out of fear that people who can't pay their rent would end up in crowded living conditions like homeless shelters and help spread the virus.

President Joe Biden acknowledged there were questions about the legality of the new eviction freeze. But he said a court fight over the new order would buy time for the distribution of some of the more than \$45 billion in rental assistance that has been approved but not yet used.

In urging the appeals court to keep the ban in place, the Biden administration noted that the new moratorium was more targeted than the nationwide ban that had lapsed, and that landscape had changed since the Supreme Court ruling because of the spread of the highly contagious delta variant.

The landlords accused Biden's administration of caving to political pressure and reinstating the moratorium even though it knew it was illegal.

"In light of the Executive Branch's statement that its litigation efforts are designed to buy time to achieve its economic policy goals — and the fact that landlords are now subject to federal criminal penalties for exercising their property rights depending on where they do business — applicants respectfully ask this Court to issue relief as soon as possible," their lawyers told the Supreme Court.

A lower court judge ruled earlier this month that the freeze is illegal, but rejected the landlords' request to lift the moratorium, saying her hands were tied by an appellate decision from the last time courts considered the eviction moratorium in the spring.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement Friday that the rise of the delta variant made the continuing moratorium "vitaly important" and she praised the appeals court decision. Psaki called on state and local officials to "move more aggressively" in distributing rental assistance funds and urged state and local courts to issue their own moratoriums to "discourage eviction filings" until landlords and tenants have sought the funds.

Taliban killings fuel fear, drive more chaos outside airport

By AHMAD SEIR, TAMEEM AKHGAR and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Reports of targeted killings in areas overrun by the Taliban mounted Friday, fueling fears that they will return Afghanistan to the repressive rule they imposed when they were last in power, even as they urged imams to push a message of unity at weekly prayers.

Terrified that the new rulers would commit such abuses and despairing for their country's future, thousands have raced to Kabul's airport, where chaotic scenes continued unabated. People seeking to escape struggled to get past crushing crowds, Taliban airport checkpoints and U.S. bureaucracy. Video images showed crowds gathered in the dark outside the barbed-wire topped walls. Occasionally someone shot a stream of gunfire into the air.

What appeared to be American troops stood in the distance. In one dramatic image, a U.S. Marine reached over the razor wire atop a barrier and plucked a baby by the arm from the crowd and pulled it up over the wall.

Reports of planes leaving at least partly empty underscored how difficult it still is for people to get into the airport. In an indication of the extent of the chaos, the Belgian foreign affairs ministry confirmed that one of its aircraft took off from Kabul without a single passenger because the people who were supposed to be on board got stuck outside the airport.

Also Friday, American officials confirmed to The Associated Press that U.S. military helicopters flew into Taliban-held Kabul to scoop up would-be evacuees, and President Joe Biden pledged to bring all Americans back from Afghanistan — and Afghans who aided the war effort, too.

"We will get you home," Biden said from the White House.

The Taliban say they have become more moderate since they last ruled Afghanistan in the late 1990s and have pledged to restore security and forgive those who fought them in the 20 years since a U.S.-led invasion toppled them from power.

But many Afghans are skeptical, fearing that the Taliban will erase the gains, especially for women, achieved in the past two decades. Opposition to the takeover has included street protests — acts of defiance that Taliban fighters have violently suppressed.

An Amnesty International report provided more evidence Friday that undercut the Taliban's claims they have changed.

The rights group said that its researchers spoke to eyewitnesses in Ghazni province who recounted how the Taliban killed nine ethnic Hazara men in the village of Mundarakht from July 4 to July 6. It said six of the men were shot, and three were tortured to death. Hazaras are Shiite Muslims who were previously persecuted by the Taliban and who made major gains in education and social status in recent years.

Amnesty International warned that more killings may have gone unreported because the Taliban cut cellphone services in many areas they captured.

Separately, Reporters without Borders expressed alarm at the news that Taliban fighters killed a family member of an Afghan journalist working for Germany's Deutsche Welle on Wednesday. The broadcaster said fighters conducted house-to-house searches for their reporter, who had already relocated to Germany.

Meanwhile, a Norway-based private intelligence group that provides information to the United Nations said it obtained evidence that the Taliban have rounded up Afghans on a blacklist of people they believe worked in key roles with the previous Afghan administration or with U.S.-led forces.

In an email, the executive director of the RHIPTO Norwegian Center for Global Analyses said the organization knew about several threat letters sent to Afghans.

A report from the group that was obtained by the AP included one of the letters, but the AP could not independently verify the group's claims.

It's not clear whether the reports of abuses indicate that Taliban leaders are saying one thing but doing another or whether they simply do not have full control over their forces. The scale and speed of their takeover seems to have challenged the leadership's ability to control their fighters.

Under the Taliban's previous rule, women were largely confined to their homes, television and music

were banned, and public executions were held regularly.

Amid the uncertainty, thousands have tried to flee the country.

Mohammad Naim, who said he used to be an interpreter for U.S. forces, has been in the airport crowd for four days trying to escape. He said he put his children on the roof of a car on the first day to save them from being crushed by the mass of people. He saw other children killed who were unable to get out of the way.

He urged others not to come to the airport.

"It is a very, very crazy situation right now," he said.

A widely seen video shared on social media showed some of the chaos when a U.S. Marine at the airport pulled a baby out of the crowd. A spokesman from the Marine Corps, Maj. Jim Stenger, confirmed that the Marine was a member of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit and said the baby was "cared for by medical professionals." The child was later reunited with its father, and they are safe at the airport, Stenger said.

It was not clear when the incident happened.

The United States is struggling to pick up the pace of evacuations. American military planes paused flights from the airport for six to seven hours Friday due to a lack of places available to take evacuees, but they later resumed.

So far, 13 countries have agreed to host at-risk Afghans at least temporarily, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. Another 12 have agreed to serve as transit points for evacuees, including Americans and others.

Biden's pledge to bring home all Americans and to evacuate all Afghans who assisted the war effort represented a potentially vast expansion of the administration's commitments on the airlift so far. Tens of thousands of Afghan translators and others, and their close family members, are seeking evacuation.

European countries are also working to bring out their citizens and those who have worked with them. But Spanish Defense Minister Margarita Robles said Friday that the country's military transport planes are leaving Kabul partly empty in the tumult.

"Nobody's in control of the situation," Robles told Spanish public radio RNE.

Germany was sending two helicopters to Kabul to help bring small numbers of people from elsewhere in the city to the airport, officials said.

Senators question DOJ funding for AI-powered policing tech

By MARTHA MENDOZA and MICHAEL TARM Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A Democratic senator said the U.S. Justice Department needs to look into whether the algorithm-powered police technologies it funds contribute to racial bias in law enforcement and lead to wrongful arrests.

Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, was responding to an investigation by The Associated Press published Thursday about the possibility of bias in courtroom evidence produced by an algorithm-powered gunshot detection technology called ShotSpotter. The system, which can be funded by Justice Department grants, is used by law enforcement in more than 110 U.S. communities to detect gunfire and respond to crime scenes faster.

"While there continues to be a national debate on policing in America, it's become increasingly clear that algorithms and technologies used during investigations, like ShotSpotter, can further racial biases and increase the potential for sending innocent people to prison," Wyden said.

Chicago prosecutors relied on audio evidence picked up by ShotSpotter sensors to charge 65-year-old Michael Williams with murder last year for allegedly shooting a man inside his car. ShotSpotter has said their system has trouble identifying gunshots in enclosed spaces. Williams spent nearly a year in jail, until late last month a judge dismissed the case against him at the request of prosecutors, who said they had insufficient evidence.

"Fundamentally, these tools are outsourcing critical policing decisions, leaving the fate of people like Michael Williams to a computer," Wyden said.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 31 of 54

In Chicago, where Williams was jailed, community members rallied in front of a police station on Thursday, demanding the city end its contract with ShotSpotter, a system they said "creates a dangerous situation where police treat everyone in the alert area as an armed threat."

The Chicago Police Department on Friday defended the technology in response to calls to end the city's ShotSpotter contract. Chicago is ShotSpotter's largest customer.

"ShotSpotter has detected hundreds of shootings that would have otherwise gone unreported," it said in a statement emailed to the AP, adding that the technology is just one of many tools the department relies on "to keep the public safe and ultimately save lives."

It said real-time ShotSpotter alerts about gunshots mean officers respond faster and more consistently than when depending on someone to call 911 to report gunfire.

"The system gives police the opportunity to reassure communities that law enforcement is there to serve and protect them and helps to build bridges with residents who wish to remain anonymous," the department said.

ShotSpotter uses a secret algorithm to analyze noises detected by sensors mounted on light poles and buildings. Employees at the company's Incident Review Centers in Washington, D.C., and Newark, California, look at the wavelengths and listen to sounds that the computer deems possible gunshots to make a final determination before alerting police.

"The point is anything that ultimately gets produced as a gunshot has to have eyes and ears on it," said CEO Ralph Clark in an interview. "Human eyes and ears, OK?"

Civil rights advocates say the human reviews can introduce bias.

Wyden said he and seven other Democratic lawmakers are still waiting for a Justice Department response to their April letter raising concerns about federal funds going to local law enforcement agencies to buy a variety of artificial intelligence technologies, including some that integrate gunshot detection data. In addition to Wyden, the letter was signed by Sens. Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Alex Padilla of California, Raphael Warnock of Georgia, and Jeff Merkley of Oregon, and U.S. Reps. Yvette Clarke of New York and Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas.

"These algorithms, which automate policing decisions, not only suffer from a lack of meaningful oversight regarding whether they actually improve public safety, but it is also likely they amplify biases against historically marginalized groups," they wrote to Attorney General Merrick Garland.

The Justice Department did not respond to AP's request for comment.

Biden backs end to wolf protections but hunting worries grow

By MATTHEW BROWN and JOHN FLESHER Associated Press

FARIBAULT, Minn. (AP) — President Joe Biden's administration is sticking by the decision under former President Donald Trump to lift protections for gray wolves across most of the U.S. But a top federal wildlife official on Friday told The Associated Press there is growing concern over aggressive wolf hunting seasons adopted for the predators in the western Great Lakes and northern Rocky Mountains.

Wolves under federal protection made a remarkable rebound in parts of the U.S. over the past several decades, after being driven from the landscape by excessive hunting and trapping in the early 1900s.

States took over wolf management last decade in the Northern Rockies and in January for the remainder of the Lower 48 states, including the Great Lakes and Pacific Northwest.

The removal of Endangered Species Act protections had been in the works for years and was the right thing to do when finalized in Trump's last days, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Assistant Director for Ecological Services Gary Frazer told AP.

On Friday, attorneys for the administration asked a federal judge in California to reject a lawsuit from wildlife advocates that seeks to restore protections, signaling the conclusion of Biden's promise on his first day in office to review the Trump move.

But wolf management policies in place at the state level have shifted dramatically since protections were lifted, and Frazer suggested the federal government could take steps to restore protections if population

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 32 of 54

declines put wolves back on the path to extinction.

"Certainly some of the things we're seeing are concerning," he said.

Wisconsin moved quickly to reduce the state's wolf numbers, after a pro-hunting group with close ties to conservative Republicans won a court order that allowed hunters — some using hounds — to kill 218 wolves in four days.

Meanwhile, Republican-dominated legislatures in Idaho and Montana loosened hunting rules to allow tactics shunned by many wildlife managers, including hunting wolves at night and from the air and payments for dead wolves reminiscent of bounties that drove them to near-extinction.

Frazer said the different states showed a common approach: legislatures and politically appointed wildlife commissions taking determined steps to reduce populations.

"We're aware that circumstances have changed and we'll be watching closely to see how the population responds," he added.

The lead attorney in the lawsuit to restore protections for wolves outside of the Northern Rockies said he was disappointed in the Biden administration for not responding immediately to the push by states to cull more packs.

"Why should we hammer the population back down and lose all the gains that have been made before any kind of remedial action?" asked Tim Preso with the environmental law firm Earthjustice. "The writing's on the wall. Montana and Idaho are clear on what they're intending and Wisconsin is right behind them."

Montana wildlife commissioners on Friday adopted hunting rule changes in accordance with new state laws that allow the use of snares to kill wolves, night hunting and use of bait — methods criticized as unethical by some hunters and former officials. The new rules went further than recommended by state wildlife experts, who for example wanted to limit snare use to private land only.

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission Vice Chair Patrick Tabor, a hunting outfitter from the Whitefish area, said in voting in favor of the changes that he was proud of his hunting ethics. Tabor said the loosened rules "allow more opportunity for hunters, to give them in essence better odds in trying to be successful because they (wolves) are an incredibly difficult animal to hunt."

Defenders of the move to lift federal protections noted efforts to put wolves under state management enjoyed bipartisan support in Washington going back to President Barack Obama.

Yet the policies adopted by the states reflect an increasingly partisan approach to predator management in legislatures dominated by Republicans.

The wolf population in the Midwest has grown to more than 4,400 wolves, according to government figures disputed by some scientists who say officials undercount wolves killed by poachers.

There's been growing frustration in recent years among livestock producers and hunters over attacks on cattle and big game. In Wisconsin, a Republican-controlled board set the state's fall hunt quota at 300 animals, rejecting a 130-animal limit recommended by state wildlife managers.

Wisconsin's Democratic attorney general is seeking a court order to oust the board's chairman, whose term expired in May. Democratic Gov. Tony Evers has appointed a successor, but the incumbent is refusing to step down until the Senate confirms the appointment. The Senate, dominated by Republicans, hasn't held a hearing on the appointment.

Hundreds of wolves are now killed annually by hunters and trappers in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. The Northern Rockies' population has remained strong — more than 3,000 animals, according to wildlife officials — because wolves breed so successfully and can roam huge areas of wild land in the sparsely populated region.

Some state officials are intent on reducing those numbers to curb livestock attacks and protect the big game herds that wolves prey upon. Supporters of restoring protections warn that will tip the scales and reduce wolf numbers to unsustainable levels, while also threatening packs in nearby states that have interconnected populations.

An indication of how deeply federal officials are worried about the states' wolf policies is expected in the next several weeks, when they respond to petitions filed in June to again put wolves in the U.S. West

under federal protections.

Texas GOP voting bill on fast track after standstill ends

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The sudden end of Texas Democrats' 38-day walkout has put Republicans back on a fast track to pass a sweeping voting bill and is causing rifts among some Democrats who said Friday they felt "betrayed" by colleagues who returned to the state Capitol.

Texas is the last big GOP-controlled state that has not passed more restrictive voting laws driven by former President Donald Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen. But it is now likely only a matter of weeks after enough Democratic lawmakers ended their holdout Thursday to restore a quorum — by the slimmest of margins — in the state House of Representatives.

It broke a stalemate that brought the Texas Capitol to a standstill, and already Republicans are working fast to advance a sweeping bill to the House floor as early as Monday. The collapse of Democrats' holdout frustrated a faction that appeared ready to torpedo the bill for a third time in Texas, even though a commanding GOP majority in the Texas statehouse made it unlikely that Democrats could permanently stop the bill from passing.

Nearly three dozen Democrats — which amounts to more than half the group that fled to Washington, D.C., in July — signed onto a statement that did not say whether they would now return but took aim at the few who already did.

"We are disappointed that a few Democrats chose to return to the floor. We feel betrayed and heartbroken, but our resolve is strong and this fight is not over," the statement read.

Not all Democrats took part in the walkout, but the return of three Houston lawmakers Thursday is what finally pushed the House back to a quorum, which is normally 100 representatives. In a statement Thursday, the three lawmakers — Armando Walle, Ana Hernandez and Garnet Coleman — defended their return by saying they had pushed Congress on voting rights legislation while pointing to the growing urgency of surging COVID-19 caseloads in Texas.

For months, Texas Republicans have tried to pass measures that would prohibit 24-hour polling sites, ban drive-through voting and give partisan poll watchers more access. Those elements remain in a bill that was already passed by the Senate, and while the House may make changes, Republicans have shown no indication that they will remove some of the most hotly contested provisions.

The bill must reach Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's desk by Sept. 5. If it doesn't, Republicans will have to start over and try again for a fourth time.

"I think that bill will be back and forth between us and the Senate a little bit," said state Rep. Jim Murphy, chairman of the Republican House Caucus.

R. Kelly sex trafficking trial: What to know and expect

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Here's what to know about R. Kelly's criminal trial in New York, which began Wednesday:

WHAT IS R. KELLY KNOWN FOR?

You've probably heard "I Believe I Can Fly" at an inspirational moment or "Ignition (Remix)" at a college party. That's R. Kelly. The 54-year-old is an R&B superstar whose heyday was in the '90s and early 2000s when he racked up a slew of awards, including multiple Grammys.

WHERE IS R. KELLY CHARGED?

New York, Illinois and Minnesota, all sex-related cases. The trial now underway is in a federal court in Brooklyn. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

WHAT IS THIS SPECIFIC TRIAL ABOUT?

This is a racketeering case. Prosecutors say R. Kelly physically, sexually and psychologically dominated children — girls and boys — and women, often recording sex acts with minors, and using a cadre of loyalists to do his bidding and recruit victims. Kelly's lawyers have pushed back, calling the accusers groupies

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 34 of 54

who "were dying to be with him."

CAN I WATCH THE R. KELLY TRIAL LIVE?

No. No cameras are allowed in federal court.

COULD R. KELLY SERVE PRISON TIME IF CONVICTED?

The top count of racketeering carries a sentence of up to 20 years in prison if convicted. He also faces charges under the Mann Act.

WHAT IS THE MANN ACT?

The Mann Act is a 1910 law that forbids transporting "any woman or girl" over state lines for "immoral" acts.

WAS R. KELLY CHARGED WITH A CRIME WHEN HE MARRIED 15-YEAR-OLD AALIYAH IN 1994?

Not at the time. Aaliyah, an R&B superstar whose career was cut short by a fatal plane crash in 2001, worked with Kelly. He produced her debut album, which happened to be named "Age Ain't Nothing But A Number." They married in secret that same year, but it was annulled months later because she was underage.

HOW OLD WAS R. KELLY WHEN HE MARRIED AALIYAH?

27.

DOES AALIYAH HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS CASE?

Yes. This is the first time R. Kelly has faced charges in connection with his marriage to Aaliyah. Federal prosecutors charged Kelly with obtaining a fake ID for a minor the day before their wedding. Kelly's attorneys have long said he didn't know how old she was. Their Illinois marriage license said she was 18.

IS R. KELLY IN JAIL RIGHT NOW?

When he isn't in court, he's at the Metropolitan Detention Center, a federal lockup in Brooklyn. That's the same jail currently holding Ghislaine Maxwell, the British socialite awaiting trial on charges that she procured young victims for the sex-abusing millionaire Jeffrey Epstein.

HOW LONG HAS R. KELLY BEEN IN JAIL?

He's been held since July 2019, when federal indictments were announced in Chicago and New York. But he's only been in New York since June. His lawyer says he's gained a lot of weight and run out of money while in jail.

WAS R. KELLY ATTACKED IN JAIL?

Yeah, almost exactly a year ago, in Chicago. A convicted member of the Latin Kings gang says he beat Kelly up — repeatedly hitting him on the head — because he wanted attention on his own case. Kelly's lawyers tried to use the attack as justification for releasing him on bail, to no avail.

WHO IS ON THE JURY?

Seven men, five women. We don't know who the jurors are — the judge ordered their names and other details that could identify them withheld.

HOW LONG IS THE TRIAL EXPECTED TO LAST?

About a month or so.

WHO HAS TESTIFIED SO FAR?

Jerhonda Pace, who testified she was 16 when she met Kelly. She said he beat and choked her and gave her herpes. An ex-employee, Anthony Navarro, said he never saw any sexual abuse but testified that R. Kelly's home was like a "Twilight Zone" where everyone — including "girls" — was under his thumb, needing to seek permission to eat or leave.

IS THERE ANYTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT THE TRIAL?

Well, media and the public are barred from the courtroom and have to watch a video feed of the witnesses from an overflow room, where no phones or computers are allowed. The judge cited coronavirus concerns in decreeing the viewing accommodations, but other recent trials in New York have permitted access to the courtroom.

THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME R. KELLY'S BEEN IN LEGAL HOT WATER, RIGHT?

He was acquitted in a 2008 child pornography case in Chicago. He's also been embroiled in many lawsuits.

Demand for COVID antibody drugs soars in hard-hit states

By KELLI KENNEDY and MATTHEW PERRONE Associated Press

People infected with COVID-19 were captured in a photo this week lying on the floor in pain while waiting for antibody infusions at a treatment site set up inside the library in Jacksonville, Florida.

The image has become a vivid illustration of the huge demand for the once-neglected COVID-19 drugs in the states hit hardest by a summer surge of infections being driven by the highly contagious delta variant.

"They were moaning and obviously in a lot of pain. They were miserable," said Louie Lopez, who shot the photograph as he waited for more than two hours to receive the treatment.

Antibody treatments remain one of a handful of therapies that can blunt the worst effects of COVID-19, and they are the only option available to people with mild-to-moderate cases who aren't yet in the hospital.

They have risen in demand in states seeing a spike in infections, including Florida, Louisiana and Texas, where hospitalizations among the unvaccinated are overwhelming the health care system.

White House officials reported recently that federal shipments of the drugs increased five-fold last month to nearly 110,000 doses, with the vast majority going to states with low vaccination rates.

"They are safe, they are free, they keep people out of the hospital and help keep them alive," said Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, a senior adviser to the White House's COVID-19 response team.

The main drug in use is Regeneron's dual-antibody cocktail, which has been purchased in mass quantities by the U.S. government. It's the same drug former President Donald Trump received when he was hospitalized with COVID-19 last October.

The drugs are laboratory-made versions of virus-blocking antibodies that help fight off infections. The treatments help the patient by supplying concentrated doses of one or two antibodies.

The drugs are only recommended for people at the highest risk of progressing to severe COVID-19, but regulators have slowly broadened who can qualify. The list of conditions now includes older age, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, pregnancy and more than a half-dozen other issues.

With expanded eligibility and skyrocketing caseloads across the country, more people are getting the treatments.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, who this week tested positive for the virus and is himself receiving the treatments, said five state-run COVID-19 antibody infusion centers opened last week and that another four would open by Monday. At least 140 providers across Texas are offering the antibodies treatment, his office said.

In Florida, where more than 20,000 people a day on average are testing positive for the virus, the rising demand created a scene at the Jacksonville center that resembled an overwhelmed emergency room.

At one point, Lopez said staff brought out paper hospital gowns and covered a woman on the floor. It took more than half an hour for staff to bring out enough wheelchairs for people to sit in.

"They poured them into the wheelchairs," he said. "They were just so sick."

After the photo was published Wednesday, Florida health officials said they had increased the number of wheelchairs at the facility. They also said it is open seven days a week and has plenty of cots, as well as ambulances on standby to transfer the sickest patients to the hospital.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said during a news conference Friday that the woman in the photo is fine and feeling great after the treatment.

"None of our sites are having a capacity issue," said Weesam Khoury, spokesperson for the Florida Department of Health. "We have the resources and if we need more we can quickly get them."

But she cautioned, "This is a site where people are going to be very ill."

That's why state health officials are urging patients who test positive for COVID to get the antibody treatment immediately instead of waiting until they are extremely sick, which many patients are doing.

Florida over the past week has set up about a dozen monoclonal antibody clinics typically serving 300 patients per day, with an online portal for appointments, and plans to stand up more, as DeSantis has traveled around the state to promote them.

Getting the drugs involves a number of steps.

A positive test for COVID-19 is required, which must be reviewed by a physician or health professional.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 36 of 54

They then decide whether to recommend an antibody treatment for the patient, which usually means scheduling an appointment at a local administration site.

To be effective, the drugs are supposed to be given within 10 days of initial symptoms. That's the time-frame in which they have been shown to cut rates of hospitalization and death by roughly 70%.

Medical experts agreed that the drugs should not be seen as the first line of defense against the virus or a substitute for wearing a mask and getting vaccinated.

"I see the monoclonal antibodies as a short-term bridge to get us to the point where enough people are fully vaccinated," said Dr. James Cutrell of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. "We definitely need to keep vaccinating as many people as possible."

Joyce Wachsmuth, of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and her husband were infected with COVID-19 in January. A breast cancer survivor, she had never felt so much pain.

"I actually thought to myself if 10 days of this is what COVID people go thru, I don't know if I want to live," she said.

When doctors at the local Mayo Clinic told the 67-year-old that she and her 70-year-old husband were prime candidates for experimental drug treatment, she jumped at the opportunity.

She said she felt relief just two hours after the one-hour, drip treatment.

"It did wonders. It kept us off the hospital and off the ventilators," said Wachsmuth, who has since been vaccinated.

The federal government has been distributing monoclonal antibody drugs to the states since last winter but the treatments were underused due to lack of awareness from physicians, low interest among the public and the logistics of setting up areas to give them to patients via IV infusion.

Also, persistent testing delays meant many people didn't even get their results for seven days or longer, and clinics were focused on the upcoming vaccines or managing the winter surge of cases.

Since then, many cities have set up alternative locations to administer the drugs and offer vaccines. The treatments are free for most patients, largely because the federal government has been actively involved in securing and distributing them.

"There was less urgency at that time — the important thing was to get people vaccinated to crush the curve," said Dr. Arturo Casadevall of Johns Hopkins University. "But the delta variant has changed the equation."

Scottish Greens agree to back pro-independence government

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Scottish National Party and the Scottish Greens agreed Friday on a power-sharing deal that falls short of a coalition government but could pave the way to another referendum on Scotland's independence from the U.K. in the coming couple of years.

The two parties, which have been locked in negotiations since May after the SNP fell one seat short of an overall majority in the Scottish elections, will cement the pro-independence majority in the devolved Edinburgh-based parliament over the coming five years.

The SNP has been in power since 2007 and its leader Nicola Sturgeon has been Scotland's first minister since late 2014 following the lost independence vote earlier that year.

"The publication of this agreement today undoubtedly marks a historic moment," she said. "Working together to build a greener, fairer, independent Scotland is ground-breaking."

Though the Scottish parliament has an array of powers, such as in health, education and energy matters, many economic and security matters remain within the orbit of the British government in London.

Under the terms of the agreement, two Green lawmakers will be nominated to become ministers — the first time the party has had such power anywhere in the United Kingdom. In return, Green lawmakers will support Sturgeon's government in confidence votes, as well as in annual budgets.

Scottish Greens co-leader Patrick Harvie said the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic requires a change in the way of doing politics.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 37 of 54

"We must build a fairer, compassionate country and we must do everything in our power to tackle the climate and nature emergencies and deliver a just transition for all of Scotland," he said.

The agreement will likely set the stage for a confrontation with the British government over Scottish independence. Sturgeon reiterated her view that she wants to hold another referendum on the issue in the first half of this parliament — in essence before the end of 2024 — provided the pandemic is in the past.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the leader of the Conservative Party, would have the ultimate authority whether or not to permit another referendum on Scotland gaining independence. Johnson appears intent on resisting another vote, setting up the possibility of renewed tensions between his government and Sturgeon's devolved administration.

He has consistently argued that the issue was settled in a September 2014 referendum, when 55% of Scottish voters favored remaining part of the U.K. Proponents of another vote say the situation has changed fundamentally because of Brexit, with Scotland taken out of the European Union against its will. In the 2016 Brexit referendum, 52% of the U.K. voted to leave the EU while 62% of Scots voted to remain.

Sturgeon said it would be wrong for Johnson to stand in the way of a referendum and that the timing is a matter for the Scottish Parliament.

There's been growing talk that the whole issue may end up going to court, but Sturgeon has said any attempt by the British government to thwart the democratic will of Scotland would only fuel the desire for independence.

Scott Smith, AP reporter in Venezuela, dies at 50

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Scott Smith, a correspondent for The Associated Press who traveled across Venezuela to document personal stories of desperation and hope in the troubled country, has died. He was 50.

Smith was diagnosed in February with brain cancer and was evacuated from the capital, Caracas, in a rare show of cooperation between the U.S. and Venezuelan governments amid the coronavirus pandemic and a strict American ban on all flights to the country in place since 2019.

He died Thursday at Stanford Medical Center in Palo Alto, California, his family said.

Smith arrived in Caracas in 2017 amid a wave of deadly anti-government unrest spurred in part by growing pressure from the Trump administration, which was seeking to force President Nicolás Maduro from power.

Smith's easygoing demeanor, boundless curiosity and immense pride at being a foreign correspondent won him the trust and respect of government supporters and opponents alike.

"Even while sick, he was asking when he could go back to Caracas or what his onward assignment might be elsewhere in the world once better," said Ian Phillips, AP's head of international news.

Smith looked through the polarizing rhetoric of Venezuela's political crisis and gave voice to all he encountered: oil-covered fishermen eking out a hellacious existence in a polluted lake, street gangsters hurt by the rising price of bullets or the families of victims of a fire at an overcrowded prison.

He also eschewed facile explanations for the nation's woes.

"He used to joke that a small-town kid who showed steers at the county fair wasn't supposed to be a foreign correspondent writing the first draft of history," said Kelly Scott, his sister. "He never took himself too seriously."

For all the humor, he took on challenging assignments with an understated bravery.

A story on COVID patients at a hospital mirroring the nation's ruinous health care system required putting his own wellbeing on the line way before there was a vaccine, and with few means of leaving Venezuela if he had gotten sick.

His last AP article revealed the previously unknown saga of Carlos Marrón, an exiled businessman lured back home by his father's kidnapping only to end up beaten and asphyxiated in one of Maduro's jails. His alleged crime: running a website that published the black-market exchange rate.

Smith joined the AP in 2014, reporting from Fresno, California, not far from where he grew up. He documented California's battle with drought and its impacts on farmers and poor communities that struggled

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 38 of 54

as hundreds of wells ran dry.

Prior to the AP, Smith spent more than a decade at The Record newspaper in Stockton, California. His reporting on the so-called "Speed Freak" serial killings led authorities to unearth five victims, including the remains of three women.

He volunteered for the Peace Corps after graduating from California State University, Chico, where he earned a master's degree in literature. He was sent to Uzbekistan, then emerging from Soviet rule, where he taught English. Later he ran a non-profit training Uzbek journalists on how to gather news free of government censors.

A common love of music — he played trumpet in several bands — endeared him to Hugo Méndez, a taxi driver the AP hired to pick Smith up at the airport upon his arrival in Caracas. Méndez was listening to jazz and Smith took note.

"Miles Davis?" was about all Méndez could understand of Smith's then-rusty Spanish. Despite the language barrier, within a few hours the two were eating pork rinds and greasy soup at a food stall in one of Caracas' toughest neighborhoods — Smith betraying none of the nervousness he surely felt in what was then dubbed the world's most violent city. Over time, he'd develop a deep affection for his new home.

"I thought to myself, this gringo is crazy," remembers Méndez. "I knew right away we were going to be buddies, but I never thought he'd end up becoming my brother."

Smith is survived by his parents, Scott and Lorene Smith, sisters Kelly Scott and Kristy Bean and their spouses, as well as two nephews and a niece.

Democrats face new hurdles in legal fight over redistricting

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

The fight over redrawing political maps is just ramping up in state legislatures and nonpartisan commissions around the country. But both Republicans and Democrats already are planning for major showdowns in the courts.

For months, Democrats and Republicans have been laying the groundwork for a complex, 50-state legal battle over the once-a-decade process of redistricting. Both parties are preparing for a changed legal climate — where federal courts are newly hostile to claims of unconstitutional partisan gerrymandering and state courts could create a patchwork of rulings. And it will all play out in a tightened timeframe, thanks to pandemic-related delays.

Experts say that adds up a challenging landscape for Democrats, who have in the past won major court victories by proving Republicans deliberately used maps to disenfranchise Democratic voters. Some are predicting far fewer dramatic court interventions, despite plans for a more aggressive strategy.

"There will be a lot of litigation, but in a lot of ways the tools will be less sharp than they used to be," said Michael Li of the Brennan Center for Social Justice in New York City.

Democrats began filing preemptive lawsuits in April, well ahead of last week's release of the Census' detailed population data used to draw the lines for Congress, statehouses and school districts around the country. Still, the most significant lawsuits are yet to come, and probably won't be filed until states begin to produce maps over the next few months.

After the 2010 redistricting cycle, courts eventually tossed out maps drawn by Republicans in four states. The courts found Republicans improperly used voters' race and party affiliations to draw lines that favored their candidates — a practice known as gerrymandering. The judges redrew the maps in Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Texas to give Democrats a better chance of winning congressional seats. Without that intervention, the GOP would currently control the House of Representatives.

But legal experts are skeptical there will be such dramatic reversals in court this time. They note that the conservative majority on the U.S. Supreme Court has already cut off one avenue for legal challenges, ruling that striking down partisan gerrymanders is no longer the role of federal courts. That makes it less likely that courts intervene, experts said.

The one way the dynamic could change is if Congress passes an ambitious election bill known as the For

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 39 of 54

the People Act, which would, among other provisions, outlaw partisan gerrymandering. But the legislation is stuck in the Senate, where Democrats have been reluctant to change rules to eliminate the 60-vote threshold needed to overcome a Republican filibuster blocking the measure.

The longer odds of litigation are particularly ominous for Democrats, who start the process at a significant disadvantage. They control line-drawing in states with 75 House seats, while the GOP controls the process in states with 187 seats.

Democrats "have a lot more incentive to litigate because they would have a lot more to gain," said Jason Torchinsky, general counsel to the National Republican Redistricting Trust.

Kelly Ward Burton, executive director of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, which coordinates litigation for that party, agreed that Democrats will be aggressive. "We fully anticipate being in court in the states where Republicans control the redistricting process and where they intend to gerrymander," she said.

Burton said she's not too concerned about the Supreme Court's 2019 ruling that federal courts cannot overturn partisan gerrymandering, because racial gerrymandering remains illegal under federal law. In the states Democrats are most worried about where the GOP controls the process — Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Texas — party affiliation often runs along racial lines, with Black, Latino and Asian American voters more likely to be Democratic and white voters more likely to be Republican.

But Li warned that's a double-edged sword. Democrats can argue Republican gerrymanders are racial, rather than partisan, but GOP lawyers can just tell judges they were following the Supreme Court's direction and looking only at party, not race. "The Supreme Court has created this weird binary — if it's on the racial side, it's bad, but if it's on the partisan side, it's okay," he said.

Republicans in the North Carolina legislature — who have complete control over the process because the state's Democratic governor cannot veto a redistricting bill — have already taken advantage of that dynamic by formally declaring they won't use racial data in drawing lines.

Tom Saenz, president of the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, said he still expects there to be plenty of successful racial gerrymandering cases, especially because populations of voters of color swelled so significantly in the recent census data. The Voting Rights Act still requires the creation of majority-minority districts in areas where a compact legislative district could be drawn that way, and due to the continued growth of several racial and ethnic groups there are more of those places than ever before, Saenz said.

That won't always help Democrats — Saenz notes that, in some states like California, his group has fought with white Democrats over the creation of majority Latino districts. And he noted another obstacle — the tight timelines of redistricting this decade. The Census data used to draw the maps was released six months late due to COVID-19 and legal disputes over how the Trump administration ran the survey. That means courts may only have a few weeks to act before the 2022 elections formally kick off with deadlines to file to run in state primaries. Often, redistricting cases take months if not years to decide.

"We have to engage in triage," Saenz said. "In some cases we may have to allow an election to go by with bad lines."

Though several lawsuits have already been filed, they're mainly opening salvos trying to gain advantage before line-drawing begins in earnest. Democrats have sued in Louisiana, Minnesota and Pennsylvania, arguing that deadlock is inevitable between those states' GOP-controlled legislatures and Democratic governors, so courts need to get ready to draw lines. Republicans are filing public records requests to see if they can challenge the way the Census calculated people living in college dorms and other large residential areas.

Still, the only significant litigation so far has come in Illinois, where the Democratic-controlled state legislature redrew its own state maps without waiting for the Census data so as not to miss a legal deadline and have redistricting power handed to the courts. Republicans and civil rights group are suing to overturn those maps.

Though federal courts will no longer be able to strike down gerrymanders due to reliance on partisan-

ship, state courts remain free to. The willingness of state judges to do that may depend on their party, legal analysts say. "It depends on who your state judges are," said Edward Foley, a law professor at The Ohio State University.

In the Southern states where redistricting legal battles are likely to run hottest, the state supreme courts are largely controlled by Republicans. Florida's was Democratic in the previous decade and overturned the GOP redistricting plan then, but it is now majority Republican. North Carolina's, once solidly Democratic, is now more evenly divided.

"Absent congressional action it's going to be a decade of extreme gerrymandering," Foley said. "I doubt that you'll get much judicial relief."

This story corrects the name of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, not the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund

Imagination, Skittles help boy, 5, conquer Appalachian Trail

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Harvey Sutton, or "Little Man," as he is known on the Appalachian Trail, won't have long to bask in the glory of hiking its full length. After all, he starts kindergarten Friday.

At 5 years old, Harvey is one of the youngest — and the latest of several youngsters in recent years — to complete the trail, after tagging along with his parents over more than 2,100 miles in 209 days.

It was hard work, but it was fun checking out frogs, lizards and other wildlife. So was sprinkling Skittles onto peanut butter tortillas as fuel for the walk, he said.

"The rock scrambles were really fun and hard. We were not bored," he said cheerfully in a phone interview from Virginia, where he lives with his parents, Josh and Cassie Sutton.

His parents were so busy keeping him engaged and entertained that it distracted them from the physical pain of trudging over so many miles.

"It gave us a bond and a strength that we hadn't realized before," Cassie Sutton said.

Other youngsters have hiked the 2,193-mile (3,530 kilometers) trail that starts at Springer Mountain, Georgia, and ends atop Maine's Mount Katahdin. Some babies have even been carried in backpacks by their determined parents.

Harvey was 4 years old when he and his parents began their walk in January and he turned 5 before the family completed the journey last week in Maine.

He's several months younger than "Buddy Backpacker," a boy who held the record for youngest to complete the trail in 2013, Harvey's parents say.

But the youngest of all may be Juniper Netteburg, who finished the trail at age 4, wearing a Wonder Woman costume, with her parents and three siblings on Oct. 13, 2020, said her parents, who are missionary doctors.

Her family hiked sections over a period of months, but that still counts as long as they didn't skip any part of the trail, said Ken Bunning, president of Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association.

It may seem extreme for a kid, but a pediatrician sees no harm.

Kids are resilient enough to handle the experience as long as parents keep their social and emotional development in mind and scale the hike to kids' abilities, said Dr. Laura Blaisdell, a pediatrician and medical adviser to the American Camp Association.

For Harvey's hike, his parents decided to take a "mini retirement" from their real estate jobs in Lynchburg, Virginia. They'd been hiking with Harvey since he was 2, so the Appalachian Trail made sense to them.

It was mostly smooth sailing after a snowstorm in the Smoky Mountains forced them to backtrack more than 30 miles (48 kilometers) to safety over 2 1/2 days.

The family became accustomed to sleeping in a tent, waking at 5:30 a.m. and hiking all day. There was a simplicity to the routine and a camaraderie with other "thru hikers" that kept it from getting boring, Josh Sutton said.

Karl Donus Sakas, a hiker known as "Sugar Man" who accompanied the Suttons from Pennsylvania to

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 41 of 54

the end in Maine, said Harvey had boundless energy.

"He's pretty strong and tough. So often we'd get to camp and I'd be beaten and tired. And Little Man would say, 'Let's play freeze tag!'" he said.

The parents said the biggest challenge was keeping their son's imagination engaged. Harvey made plans to build homes, construct space ships and host a lava party in discussions over miles and hours of hiking, Sakas said.

Sakas helped out by setting up a treasure hunt with faux maps, hidden toys and glow sticks on the trail over several days in New Jersey.

Some other thru hikers gave Little Man toys, including a pet rock, Hot Wheels and a pocket watch. At a Dollar General store, the boy bought a calculator to keep track of the miles.

The hike showed the strength of teamwork and further solidified the Suttons' relationship, Cassie Sutton said. "We're closer than ever before," she said.

They completed the hike Aug. 9 atop Mount Katahdin. Now it's off to kindergarten for Little Man and back to work for his parents.

Harvey's journey earned accolades from another hiking legend, Dale "Greybeard" Sanders, the oldest person to hike the trail, at age 82 in 2017.

"It's going to change his life forever, and his parents' life, too. The kid went through some hardships, but don't we all? Hardships make us stronger," said Sanders, now 86, of Bartlett, Tennessee. "That kid is going to smile through life."

Some governors use federal virus aid to expand school choice

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

When Congress sent states billions of dollars early in the coronavirus pandemic to help make schools safe, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee saw an opportunity.

He used part of the windfall to further his goal of offering school choice options for parents, sending millions to charter schools that operate without traditional public oversight. That included funneling more than \$4 million to new charters that are not scheduled to open until at least next year.

It was an easy way for the Republican governor to advance a long-held priority. For Lee and some other GOP governors, the discretionary money was a chance to sidestep their state legislatures and advance school choice, which typically involves funding charter schools or offering vouchers so parents can use taxpayer money to pay private school tuition.

Teachers unions and other critics view the efforts as a way to siphon money away from traditional public schools.

"This feels like he's taking advantage of the pandemic and the pandemic relief to further his ideological goal of defunding the traditional public schools," said state Rep. Gloria Johnson, a Democrat and retired teacher.

In a series of bills since the COVID-19 outbreak began last year, Congress has allocated \$190 billion to help public and private schools weather the pandemic. Although there is no centralized way to see how districts and private schools are spending the aid, The Associated Press tracked most of that money to determine how much was received by virtually every school district in the country and to analyze the ways governors distributed the assistance they were free to dole out as they wished.

In the initial wave of funding, governors were given \$3 billion with few strings attached but the expectation that it be used to help schools and colleges "most significantly impacted by coronavirus."

They used that money in a variety of ways: New Jersey supported colleges. Oregon used it to make sure even tiny rural districts received minimum amounts of aid. States including Indiana and Colorado established competitive grant programs for school districts.

This week, Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey announced he was using a separate pot of federal pandemic aid to create a \$10 million grant initiative similar to the state's existing private school voucher program. It was the Republican governor's latest attempt to push back against public school districts that are defying a state

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 42 of 54

ban on mask mandates. The funding allows grants up to \$7,000 per student if their public school requires masks, orders quarantines due to COVID-19 exposure or gives different treatment to vaccinated students.

In Tennessee, Lee has long been an advocate of launching more charter schools -- institutions that are publicly funded but operate outside traditional school districts. In a feature that appeals to many conservatives, they usually do not have unionized teachers.

Of the nearly \$64 million in discretionary pandemic education money that came to his office, Lee dedicated \$10 million to charters. The governor used it to make sure every charter received some aid and to help existing schools add grades. He reserved a chunk of it — \$4.4 million — to help launch new charters, none of which is scheduled to welcome students until at least 2022.

Lee spokeswoman Casey Black did not directly respond to a question from the AP about funding for charter schools that are not yet open but said the use of the money would help provide families with access to a high-quality education. Brian Blackley, a spokesman for Lee's state Department of Education, said the charter school funding is meant to give families more options.

"Education is not one size fits all, and the pandemic showed us just how important it is to provide families with better access to high-quality school options," he said in an email.

Beth Brown, president of the Tennessee Education Association, criticized the spending.

"Using pandemic relief money to open new charter schools is an insult to the public school teachers who have worked tirelessly since March 2020 to keep public schools open," said Brown, a high school English teacher in rural Grundy County.

U.S. Rep. Bobby Scott, a Virginia Democrat who serves as chair of the House Labor and Education Committee, said the federal money was not intended to be used that way.

"The 5% or 10% that end up in charters may or may not improve their education situation," he said. "It's hard to make an argument that reducing the money available to public schools helps the 90% to 95% of those who are in public schools."

Oklahoma's GOP governor, Kevin Stitt, used \$10 million of the nearly \$40 million in his governor-controlled fund to create a stay-in-school program that funded scholarships for lower-income students who already attend private schools.

The state education secretary, Ryan Walters, said the state was hearing from parents who lost income early in the pandemic and could not keep paying private-school tuition.

"Moving them in the middle of a pandemic to a brand-new school would create even more trauma for them," he said.

Most Oklahoma private schools are religious. One exception is Positive Tomorrows, an Oklahoma City school exclusively for students in families experiencing homelessness.

The school usually costs around \$3 million a year to run, with many expenses paid through donations. It got about \$350,000 from Stitt's program, plus another \$250,000 in forgivable Paycheck Protection Program loans from the federal government to keep paying teachers and staff. Public schools did not have access to the forgivable loans.

"Because of the role that we serve, I think we deserve some government funding," said Susan Agel, president of the school. "This is a kind of thing that I'd really like to see more of, particularly for our school."

State Rep. Jacob Rosecrants, a Democrat who was a public school teacher until he was elected in 2017, said there are still major needs in public schools that should be met before taxpayer money is considered for private schools.

"If you want to go to a private school, you have that choice," he said. "You're private for a reason."

Governors in Florida and New Hampshire also used portions of their discretionary money for private-school scholarship programs.

A South Carolina program championed by GOP Gov. Henry McMaster was larger — \$32 million — and scholarships were planned for students who were not already in private schools. But the scholarships were never awarded because the program was blocked unanimously by the state Supreme Court.

Shaunette Parker, board chairwoman for the Second Baptist Christian Preparatory School in Aiken, said

McMaster's proposal could have been a toehold for establishing a broader voucher program in South Carolina, something that has never been adopted in the Legislature.

"We were hoping the success of that one-year funding would have shown people how this wasn't going to create a mass exodus of the public schools," Parker said. "It would have improved education all around."

After the court rejected McMaster's effort, he redirected the money to other programs, including launching regional computer labs, boosting technical colleges, funding summer and extended-day programs for 4-year-olds — and helping helping public charter schools where enrollments have risen.

Do I need a booster if I got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Do I need a booster if I got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

Probably at some point, but health officials still are collecting the data needed to decide.

With boosters being planned in the U.S. as early as the fall for those who got the two-shot Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, recipients of the single-dose J&J jab might be wondering just how well their protection is holding up.

All the vaccines used in the U.S. — including the J&J vaccine — still are doing their job of preventing hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19.

"I don't think there's any signal that the J&J vaccine is failing at its primary task," said Dr. Amesh Adalja, an infectious disease specialist at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Despite continued protection against severe disease, U.S. officials are planning to offer Pfizer and Moderna boosters eight months after the second shot based on evidence that effectiveness against infection wanes over time. Adding to the decision, the vaccines don't appear quite as strong against the highly contagious delta variant as they were against earlier versions of the virus.

U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy said boosters "will likely be needed" for the J&J vaccine. Authorities expect more data to decide in the coming weeks.

That's in part because the J&J rollout didn't start until March, several months after Pfizer and Moderna vaccinations began. The J&J shot is made differently. And there's more data about how the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines fare against delta because they're more widely used in countries where the variant struck before its U.S. surge.

There is some real-world data showing J&J's shot holds up against the delta variant. A huge study of health workers in South Africa showed the vaccine remained 71% protective against hospitalization from the variant and between 91% and 96% effective against death. And the researchers said the vast majority of so-called "breakthrough" infections in vaccinated people were mild.

J&J has also presented lab data on virus-fighting antibodies that indicates its vaccine protects against the delta variant for eight months and counting. Another small lab study has raised questions about whether a two-dose approach would work better, an option J&J is studying.

A separate issue is whether people with severely weakened immune systems should get extra shots as part of their original vaccinations, since they don't respond as well to any vaccines. The government now recommends a third shot of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines for organ transplant recipients and others in this group. But it's still collecting data before making a similar recommendation for another dose of the J&J vaccine.

Taliban took Afghanistan but face cash squeeze

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Taliban face a frontal challenge in cementing control of Afghanistan: Money.

Despite their dominant military blitz over the past week, the Taliban lack access to billions of dollars from their central bank and the International Monetary Fund that would keep the country running during a turbulent shakeup. Those funds are largely controlled by the U.S. and international institutions, a possible leverage point as tense evacuations proceed from the airport in the capital of Kabul. Tens of thousands

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 44 of 54

of people remain to be evacuated ahead of the United States' Aug. 31 deadline to withdraw its troops from the country.

But the Taliban also do not currently have institutional structures to receive the money — a sign of the challenges it might confront as it tries to govern an economy that has urbanized and tripled in size since they were last in power two decades ago. The shortfall could lead to an economic crisis that would only fuel a deeper humanitarian one for the roughly 36 million Afghans expected to stay in the country.

"If they don't have jobs, they don't get fed," said Anthony Cordesman, who advised the U.S. government on Afghan strategy and works at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "The Taliban has to find an answer."

The stranded funds are one of the few potential sources of pressure that the U.S. government has over the Taliban. But Cordesman added, "To have a pressure point, you have to be willing to negotiate in ways the Taliban can accept."

As of now, the Taliban government cannot access almost all of the Afghanistan central bank's \$9 billion in reserves, most of which is held by the New York Federal Reserve. Afghanistan was also slated to access about \$450 million on Aug. 23 from the International Monetary Fund, which has effectively blocked the release because of a "lack of clarity" regarding the recognition of a new Afghan government.

While the money would make it easier for the Taliban to govern, government officials have indicated that it's unclear who would be the points of contact within Afghanistan on financial issues. President Joe Biden conceded that he doesn't know whether the Taliban want to be part of the broader global economy — which means it might be comfortable going without any funds.

"I think they're going through sort of an existential crisis about do they want to be recognized by the international community as being a legitimate government," Biden told ABC News Wednesday. "I'm not sure they do."

Even if the Taliban could get money from the IMF, Douglas Rediker, a fellow at the Brookings Institution, said the process "would take, I think, months at the earliest, if at all." But he also anticipates that the United States would find a way to block the release of any money through the IMF system.

"The U.S. still retains a lot of political heft in the global, political and economic systems to twist some arms," Rediker said. "The Taliban are not going to be popular."

When the Taliban last ran Afghanistan two decades ago, the average Afghan survived on less than a dollar a day. Per capita gross domestic product has increased nearly three-fold during the war, according to the World Bank. Afghanistan gained mobile phones, Coca-Cola and Airbnb listings — all of which need access to global economic institutions. The war effort also left the country highly dependent on trade with imports of \$8 billion annually, almost 10 times more than what was being exported.

The extent of the problem could be seen at the shuttered Afghan money exchange market. Currency trading stopped Sunday when the Taliban took control of Kabul. Without the ability to exchange or the backing of dollars flowing into the country, the value of the Afghan currency could collapse, inflation could accelerate and the mix of violence and chaos could be prolonged.

Aminullah Amin, a currency changer, said Friday there are concerns about looters and the structure of the new government. That sense of insecurity felt by Afghans would flow through the economy like a virus.

"We have not decided to reopen the markets yet," said Amin, who witnessed the looting of a district police headquarters in northern Kabul after the seizure of the capital by the Taliban.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid on Thursday reaffirmed that the group wants good relations with other countries and will not allow Afghanistan to be a base for attacks. But he said the Taliban would not tolerate any threat to "our principles and our independence."

Laurel Miller, director of the Asia program at the Crisis Group, an international think tank, said Afghanistan remains "a very poor country suffering a complex set of humanitarian issues and challenges."

The Taliban still have access to revenue streams that sustained the insurgency, but that won't be enough for a centralized government that can assert fuller control on the country. The movement has to balance its image globally with maintaining support among their own rank-and-file, the ultraconservative Muslim

fighters who brought them to power.

"There are reasons to think that when push comes to shove the internal dimensions of this are going to be prioritized over the external dimensions," Miller said.

The Taliban could have more success with other nations eager to project influence in the region. China wants stability in Afghanistan and also maintains close relations with neighboring Pakistan, which itself has long worked to shape events there. A 2010 U.S. government report estimated that Afghanistan contained about \$1 trillion worth of metals and minerals, including lithium and rare earths that are valuable in an increasingly computerized world.

"I think a real question mark in the financial picture is what is China going to do," Miller said.

Not just K-pop: Korean TV shows gaining US popularity

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Most nights around 10 p.m. when her family heads off to bed, Carol Holaday signs onto her computer. She's not falling down Internet rabbit holes of random information or combing through social media at her San Diego home. Holaday is signing on to volunteer with the subtitle translation of Korean TV shows — often referred to as K-dramas — on the streaming platform Rakuten Viki.

"It's my secret treat," said Holaday, who has helped to subtitle 200 titles for Rakuten Viki, commonly just called Viki.

Viki has both original and licensed content from Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan and subscribers around the globe. Its largest audience is from the U.S., 75% of which is non-Asian. It offers a tiered subscription, or limited content is available for free with ads.

The translator program enlists volunteers from beginners to contributors designated as gold status based on the quality and quantity of their contributions.

Holaday, who doesn't speak Korean, is an editor of subtitles. She looks at portions of video that have already been translated to English, and checks the grammar, word placement and spelling. Besides translators and editors, there are also "segmenters" who separate portions of video to be subtitled, so one person is not translating an entire episode.

Another proud, qualified contributor is retired attorney Connie Meredith. She even enrolled at the University of Hawaii to study Korean to become a better translator.

"The grammatical structure is so different from English that it's really, really difficult," said Meredith, who has worked on more than 500 titles for Viki. She said translating a 10-minute segment can take about two hours.

"It's like a hobby to me. People say, 'You've done that much for free?' And I say, 'Why not?' I have nothing better to do with my time. And it's like doing a New York Times crossword puzzle for me, to solve the puzzle of language."

Makoto Yasuda, Rakuten Viki's chief operating officer believes using a crowd-source method for its subtitles only helps with accuracy.

"If you have hundreds of people contributing to the quality of subtitles, then it becomes much better than a single professional translator working on the topics that they are not really familiar with."

He says the company's name Viki is derived from the words video and Wikipedia, the crowdsourced online encyclopedia site.

"Sites like Viki use fan translations, which is great, but it can be done in a hurry because people are anxious to see the dramas. So it's probably not as polished as you might get elsewhere," said Joan MacDonald, a Forbes contributor who covers Korean media.

Viki translations aren't just to English. "A drama can translate into 20 different languages within 24 hours," said Yasuda. He said there's also often waiting lists to help translate on more popular shows. There are a small number of translators who do get paid, if it's on a show that doesn't have volunteers or a licensed series that already has subtitles.

The awareness of K-dramas outside Korea seems to be growing, said MacDonald. "The number of

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 46 of 54

people that contacted me in the last year and a half to say, 'Oh, I just discovered K-dramas, what do you recommend?' It's significant."

Other streaming sites are also adding more Korean content to their offerings.

Apple TV+ has two Korean language projects in the works: one based on the animation series "Dr. Brain," and an adaptation of Min Jin Lee's novel "Pachinko" about four generations of a Korean immigrant family. That series will be available in Korean, Japanese and English.

This year, Netflix is investing nearly \$500 million to produce Korean content and has partnered with big studios there including Studio Dragon and JTBC.

Some of Netflix's popular 2020 series included "Start-Up," "It's Okay to Not Be Okay," and "What's Wrong With Secretary Kim?"

Another that caused a sensation is "Crash Landing on You" starring actors Hyun bin and Son Ye-jin. The romance about a North Korean and South Korean aired on the paid channel tvN in South Korea and also on Netflix. Fans found their chemistry so believable, many believed there had to be a real relationship off-screen. The actors' representatives confirmed they were dating on New Year's Day.

MacDonald laughingly recalls hearing the news of the coupledom and thinking, "Wow, I am irrationally excited about this."

Streaming services have made television more globalized where it's easy to watch a show from another country, but MacDonald believes one reason for the popularity of K-dramas is because they blend genres like K-pop does.

"It's kind of an overall thing like pop is not really one sound. A lot of things fit into it. You will have something like a horror, rom-com that starts out as a gangster story but it's really a black comedy that keeps changing genres all the way through."

MacDonald says K-pop fans also gravitate to K-dramas because "a lot of K-pop stars are in dramas and a lot of actors that are in dramas sometimes go on to have singing careers."

"There's a band that's very popular, Astro, and one of the singers, Cha Eun-woo, was in a drama earlier this year called 'True Beauty,' said MacDonald. "I saw 'True Beauty' and thought, 'Wow, he is great and he's in a band. I have to check that band out.'" Another example: Bae Suzy, formerly of the girl group Miss A, starred in "Start-Up."

Sara Wagner of South Lyon, Michigan, grew up surrounded by Korean culture because her best friend of more than 40 years is Korean.

"I would hang out at their house a lot and eat Korean food. ... With the internet, it became a lot more accessible to watch dramas."

Wagner also believes "Parasite" winning best picture at the 2020 Academy Awards increased interest in Korean cinema. "People ask, 'What else would you recommend' and I say 'Train to Busan.'"

She even keeps an Excel spreadsheet tracking K-drama storylines, themes, featured food, weather and endings of the shows she watches so she can recommend them to others.

A note by Wagner for "What's Wrong with Secretary Kim?" says: "There's a kiss in episode 12 that'll knock your socks off."

MLB to end 70-year partnership with Topps trading cards

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

Major League Baseball is ending a 70-year relationship with trading card company Topps after signing a new partnership with a rival company.

The loss of the MLB partnership immediately scuttled a deal announced earlier this year that would have made Topps a publicly traded company.

The special-purpose acquisition company Mudrick Capital Acquisition Corporation II said Friday that its agreement to merge with Topps to take the company public was terminated by mutual agreement after it found out that MLB and the league's players' union would not be renewing their respective agreements with The Topps Co. when they come up for renewal at the end of 2025 and 2022, respectively.

ESPN reported on Thursday that it obtained a memo from the Major League Baseball Players Associa-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 47 of 54

tion that a company created by the sports merchandise company Fanatics that has yet to be named will be the exclusive licensee for baseball cards once its current licensing agreements expire at the end of next year. The Fanatics deal also includes the players' unions for the National Basketball League and the National Football League, ESPN reported.

Fanatics did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The proposed deal with Mudrick would've made Topps a public company. Topps, which was bought in 2007 by former Disney CEO Michael Eisner through his firm, The Tornante Co., said in a prepared statement on Friday that it will now remain private.

Topps said that it expects to be able to make substantially all its current licensed baseball products through 2025.

The company, created in 1938, is best known for baseball cards. But Topps also makes products for Major League Soccer, UEFA Champions League, Bundesliga, National Hockey League, Formula 1, Star Wars and WWE and Garbage Pail Kids. Its confections division has brands including Ring Pop, Push Pop and Bazooka bubble gum.

NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

Photo from Iraq altered to create fake image of chained Afghan women

CLAIM: A photo shows three Afghan women chained to one another, walking behind a man who holds the end of the chain.

THE FACTS: The photo is fake. It was based on an old photo, and the chains were digitally added. Photographer Murat Düzyol told The Associated Press he took the original photo in Erbil, Iraq, in February 2003. Tweets sharing the altered photo were among several misleading social media posts that began to emerge after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan on Sunday. Twitter users posted the manipulated photo and suggested that it showed women in Afghanistan walking behind a man. In the edited photo, chains were digitally added onto the ankles of the women, with the man holding the chain. There was no chain in the original photo. Also, it was taken in Iraq, not Afghanistan. "#AfghanWomen. God protect women and children because an institution like the United Nations has become impotent," said a Twitter user who tweeted the altered photo. Over the years, the photo has been misrepresented and posted multiple times. One blog falsely stated the photo was taken in Afghanistan and said it showed an example of women walking about five paces behind their husbands. Düzyol, who lives in Istanbul, told AP he took the photo in 2003. Around that time, he often visited Iraq and took photos. The day the photo was taken, there was a ceremony commemorating Iraqi civilians who were killed in the city of Erbil, he said. "As people were returning to their homes after the ceremony, such a composition randomly appeared on the street. It's a completely instant snapshot and completely natural," Düzyol explained in an email. "The women obviously knew each other, but I'm not sure they knew the man." Many fear the Taliban will reimpose a strict interpretation of Islamic law that was practiced when they ran Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. At the time, women were barred from attending school and having jobs outside the home. They had to wear burqas and be accompanied by a male relative when they were in public. After taking over, the Taliban said they promise to honor women's rights within the norms of Islamic law, but many Afghans are skeptical.

— Associated Press writer Arijeta Lajka in New York contributed this report.

Photo of Afghan men on plane is from 2018

CLAIM: A photo shows a plane full of Afghan refugees being evacuated from the country this week, with not a single woman or child among them.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 48 of 54

THE FACTS: In fact, this photo appeared online as early as 2018. It shows Afghan refugees being sent back to their country from Turkey, according to a story at the time from Turkey's state-run news agency, the Anadolu Agency. The photo looks down the aisle of an airplane filled with men, some of them waving at the camera. Social media users are sharing it as new this week with claims it shows only men, with no women and children, being evacuated from Kabul after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan. "And not a single woman or child among them!" one Facebook user wrote alongside the picture. "As if the invasion of our southern border weren't enough of a challenge. Now the Biden Administration is flying in hardened, fighting-aged men from Afghanistan." Another Facebook user wrote, "Another wave of 'refugees' is already heading to Europe, this time from Afghanistan." But a reverse-image search reveals the picture does not show recent evacuation efforts from Afghanistan. The photo showed some 324 Afghan refugees who had entered Turkish territory illegally and were detained and sent back to Afghanistan in April 2018, according to an article on the Spanish-language version of the Anadolu Agency's website. Photos captured this week show that hundreds of Afghan men, women and children have been evacuated from Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover.

— Associated Press writer Ali Swenson in New York contributed this report.

Photo digitally altered to show Taliban flag on Afghan presidential palace

CLAIM: A photo shows the Taliban flag flying on the tower of the Afghanistan presidential palace in Kabul on Sunday night.

THE FACTS: The photo is fake — an old photo was digitally altered to make it appear that the Taliban flag was flying above the palace. On Sunday, Taliban forces seized the presidential palace. The Associated Press took photos and video Tuesday showing that the Afghan flag was still flying from the building. The photo that was manipulated was first shared in 2020 and originally showed the palace adorned with Afghan flags. In the manipulated version, the Taliban flag replaces the Afghan flag. It looks clearly altered -- the flag appears too rectilinear and the script too flat to be on a moving flag. The edited photo was shared across social media and by some media outlets, with captions saying it showed the fall of Afghanistan. The Taliban took over Afghanistan two weeks before the U.S. was supposed to fully withdraw its troops from the country. President Ashraf Ghani has fled the country. AP photos showed the Taliban inside the presidential palace on Sunday.

Video claiming to show Taliban fighters on trampoline is more than a year old

CLAIM: A video shows Taliban fighters jumping on a trampoline this week as they celebrate their return to power in Afghanistan.

THE FACTS: This video is not current and has circulated online for more than a year. In the days since the Taliban seized power across Afghanistan, capturing all major cities in less than a week, social media users have shared videos of the insurgents allegedly celebrating their victory in gyms, amusement parks and presidential suites. One such video, which social media users claim shows Taliban fighters rejoicing on a trampoline, has circulated since at least March 2020. The video of four men jumping on an expansive trampoline and one standing to the side was shared with captions like "Taliban's terrorists right now" and "Taliban fighters celebrating their takeover of Kabul by Jumping on a Trampoline." But it appeared on Facebook as early as March 31, 2020. It was also shared on YouTube on Aug. 28, 2020, with the caption, "Taliban first time trampoline." It wasn't clear who captured the original video or who was featured in it.

— Ali Swenson

Video showing shaking house is from Alaska, not Haiti

CLAIM: Video from a camera inside a home shows the house shaking from a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti on Saturday.

THE FACTS: The video being shared online shows an earthquake that struck nearly three years ago in Alaska, not Haiti. As images and videos emerged from Haiti following Saturday's earthquake, social media

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 49 of 54

users began misrepresenting the Alaska video from 2018 to suggest it showed the earthquake rumbling through a home in Haiti. More than 2,000 people have been reported dead in Haiti following the earthquake that struck the southwestern part of the Island. In 2010, an earthquake of similar magnitude left more than 300,000 dead in the country. Posts online Saturday shared the video showing the Alaska earthquake, with wording that suggested it showed the power of the earthquake in Haiti. The posts sharing the video said to pray for Haiti. The original video was shared to Twitter by James Easton on Nov. 30, 2018, when Alaska was hit with a 7.0-magnitude earthquake. At the time, The Associated Press reported that the earthquake left thousands without power and buckled roadways in some places. Easton told the AP via email that the video showed his home in Alaska. Easton tweeted the video, saying that he was "just a little bit shaken" by the earthquake. The video showed the house violently shaking and the camera footage soon being cut off by the quake. "It's amusing to see the video pop up every so often, but the focus should really be on the actual damage in Haiti," he said.

US keeps ban on nonessential border crossings to slow COVID

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government on Friday extended a ban on nonessential travel along the borders with Canada and Mexico to slow the spread of COVID-19 despite increasing pressure to lift the restriction.

U.S. border communities that are dependent on shoppers from Mexico and Canada and their political representatives have urged the Biden administration to lift the ban. In addition, Canada recently began letting fully vaccinated U.S. citizens enter the country.

But the Department of Homeland Security said in a tweet Friday that the restrictions on nonessential travel were still needed to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and the delta variant. It extended the ban until at least Sept. 21.

DHS said it is working with public health and medical experts to determine how to "safely and sustainably resume normal travel."

The travel restrictions have been in place since early in the pandemic in March 2020 and repeatedly extended while allowing commercial traffic and essential crossings to continue.

COVID anxiety rising amid delta surge, AP-NORC poll finds

By JAMES ANDERSON and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Anxiety in the United States over COVID-19 is at its highest level since winter, a new poll shows, as the delta variant rages, more states and school districts adopt mask and vaccination requirements and the nation's hospitals once again fill to capacity.

The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research also finds that majorities of American adults want vaccination mandates for those attending movies, sports, concerts and other crowded events; those traveling by airplane; and workers in hospitals, restaurants, stores and government offices.

The poll shows that 41% are "extremely" or "very" worried about themselves or their family becoming infected with the virus. That is up from 21% in June, and about the same as in January, during the country's last major surge, when 43% were extremely or very worried.

"I wouldn't have said this a couple of years ago, but I'm not as confident as I was in America's ability to take care of itself," said David Bowers, a 42-year-old business analyst in the Phoenix suburb of Peoria.

Bowers, a Democrat, and his wife, a public school teacher, got vaccinated early. But they fret once again about their daughters, ages 7 and 9, attending school in a state whose Republican governor, Doug Ducey, signed a law to block school districts from mandating masks, let alone vaccines.

A brief summer respite from COVID-19 fatigue included a family trip to New York. "COVID was pretty much out of mind," Bowers said. "Now it feels like we're going backward."

Close to 6 in 10 Americans say they favor requiring people to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to travel on an airplane or attend crowded public events. Only about a quarter of Americans oppose such measures.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 50 of 54

Roughly 6 in 10 also support vaccine mandates for hospital or other health care workers, along with government employees, members of the military and workers who interact with the public, such as in restaurants and stores. Support is slightly lower for requiring vaccinations to go out to a bar or restaurant, though more are in favor than opposed, 51% to 28%.

Nearly 200 million people, or just over 60% of the U.S. population, had received at least one vaccine dose as of Thursday, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Just over half of the population was fully vaccinated.

Hospitals across the U.S. had more than 75,000 coronavirus patients as of last week, a dramatic increase from a few weeks ago but still well below the winter surge records. Florida, Arkansas, Oregon, Hawaii, Louisiana and Mississippi have set records for COVID-19 hospitalizations in recent weeks, and the surge in the delta variant, combined with low vaccination rates, has produced a scramble to find beds for patients.

The poll suggests that despite increasing cases and greater concern about the virus, Americans have not stepped up their own precautionary behavior since June, though at least half still say they always or often wear a mask around other people, stay away from large groups and avoid nonessential travel.

Confidence in vaccines to withstand virus variants has not waned, either, as U.S. health officials this week announced plans to dispense booster shots to all Americans to shore up their protection. The doses could begin next month.

Carla Jones, 37, of Lafayette, Louisiana, is a paraplegic with immunity problems and uses a wheelchair after she was severely injured in a car accident. Because of her health, she has been told by her doctor she cannot get the vaccine. She gets anxious visiting the doctor or when her grandchildren visit.

"I see someone next to me at the doctor's without a mask, it makes my heart rapidly beat faster," Jones said.

Jones, a Democrat, strongly favors vaccination and mask mandates, and not just for herself. "For the good of all," she said. "I don't have the shot, but I definitely wouldn't want to pass it on to anyone else."

The poll shows that 55% support requiring Americans to wear masks around other people outside their homes, while 62% support mask mandates specifically for workers who interact with the public, such as at restaurants and stores. Eighty-five percent of Democrats and 39% of Republicans are in favor of mask mandates for public-facing workers.

Robbie Allen, a 63-year-old retiree from Clifton, Texas, is fully vaccinated and will wear a mask when required by stores or other places. But the self-described independent who leans Republican insists it is a matter of personal choice, and he sees mandates as taking the joy out of life.

"The COVID is not going away very quickly, but I don't think people should live in fear," said Allen, who motorcycled with his girlfriend to this month's Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, which attracted hundreds of thousands to the South Dakota city. "People are going to die, but if we all hunker down, life gets miserable."

Partisan gaps are also wide on vaccination requirements. In Arizona, Bowers has already taken time off work to pick up his daughter from school after she developed a high fever. They spent hours last week looking for a drive-thru COVID-19 testing site that wasn't overcrowded. She tested negative. But the worries persist.

"My thinking is, the people who don't want mandates are the people who need to be regulated," Bowers said. "There's a slim majority in this country making the right decisions. If it wasn't for a slim majority as a country, we'd be in trouble."

In Haiti, close relation between the living and the dead

By MARK STEVENSON and EVENS SANON Associated Press

LES CAYES, Haiti (AP) — Haiti's unusually close relationship between the living and the dead has helped hide, in part, the huge toll of Saturday's earthquake: People in Haiti want to be close to their deceased relatives, to the point of sometimes burying them in their front yards.

Haiti's Civil Protection Agency puts the number of dead from the quake at almost 2,200. Questions had arisen about how such a large number of dead could have been handled or buried so quickly, but amateur

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 51 of 54

burials and overflowing private funeral parlors may explain where all the bodies went.

The magnitude 7.2 earthquake injured more than 12,000 people, destroyed or damaged more than 100,000 homes and left about 30,000 families homeless, officials said. Schools, offices and churches — and even funeral homes and cemeteries — were demolished or badly damaged.

The quake also brought the living and the dead even closer in a nation which, like Mexico, celebrates a Day of the Dead holiday: In the countryside outside the city of Les Cayes, some of the frontyard burial crypts were broken open by the force of the quake, exposing coffins inside.

And some of the living came closer to the grave than anyone should: Serge Chery, the head of civil defense for the Southern Province, which covers Les Cayes, said that his officers had found two women buried in the rubble of a two-story apartment building because they had been able to communicate with the outside world via cellphones.

Such stories are common rumors in disaster zones. Chery said his department received innumerable false reports of such calls. "We dialed one number that people said was sending messages from a collapsed house, and a living person answered it in Jeremie," a nearby city.

But Chery refused to call the real cellphone rescue a miracle.

"The only miracle was that they had their phones charged and in their hands at the time of the quake, and they had sufficient room to dial afterward," Chery said.

Government hospital morgues, like the one at the Les Cayes' general hospital, are almost empty. That's because, as the hospital's director admits, they haven't had working refrigeration at the morgue for at least three months due to problems with the electrical equipment.

Instead, local residents know they have to take deceased to one of the dozens of small, modest private funeral homes in the area.

There, at least air-conditioned rooms mean the bodies won't decompose while relatives struggle to come up with enough money to meet burial costs that can run around \$500, a fortune for people in the hemisphere's poorest country.

Jean Eddy Montezima runs one such parlor, the St. Jaques funeral home in Les Cayes, on a shoestring, and he is overworked and fed up. As he spoke with journalists, another rickety, informal "ambulance" — actually just an SUV with a folding stretcher in the back — pulled up with another body, a woman who died of natural causes at a local hospital.

That's good, because Montezima says he is no longer accepting the bodies of quake victims. He has 15 corpses crowding his small, air-conditioned rooms. The woman's body was carried into the parlor and relatives promised to come back later to make arrangements.

Montezima says he has taken in the bodies of at least 50 quake victims since Saturday at his small building, where a noisy generator growls 24 hours a day to keep air conditioners running so the bodies won't decompose.

"A lot of people may not have the money to bury them," Montezima said. "If the families don't come back, I will probably have to do a mass grave with them." Such a solution is little short of a sacrilege in Haiti, but the beleaguered funeral home director has little choice.

"I was already working eight hours a day, and now I have to work 24," he said. "I am burning \$50 in gas every day. We need an institution or a charity to donate to help with the costs."

"In some cases, the bodies were in such bad condition, we had to bury them immediately," he said, adding he can't hand that task off to the government. "If the body is badly decomposed, they won't accept them at the morgue."

Eventually, though, the dead and the living have to part ways.

Chery has the painful task of deciding, along with other authorities, when to send in heavy machinery to clear the rubble, though he acknowledges it will "inevitably" result in churning up more bodies. Chery said that in the Les Cayes area alone, 300 people are still missing; many are probably still under tons of broken concrete and brick.

"We are planning a meeting to start clearing all of the sites that were destroyed because that will give the owner of that site at least the chance to build something temporary, out of wood, to live on that site,"

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 52 of 54

Chery said, noting that "it will be easier to distribute aid if people are living at their addresses, rather than in a tent."

He stressed the need to start engineering inspections of buildings to find out which are safe. "If we want the schools and banks and hotels to start working, we have to give people confidence, because they don't want to go back into those buildings now," Chery said.

"In Haiti, it is something cultural; families are attached to their dead," Chery said. "Culturally, even with cholera or COVID-19, people want their relatives to be buried in a nice grave." But due to the mangled condition of many quake victims, many were buried immediately.

That attitude is on display at the Marc Dor Lebrun funeral home, which he touts as the city's cleanest and best equipped. Here grieving families can rent a 30-foot-long stretch Humvee limousine to carry the funeral cortege.

Stainless steel refrigerated body cabinets line one room and an air-conditioned preparation room lies nearby. But with the bodies of 17 earthquake victims, and 22 others, already filling his facilities, Lebrun says he cannot take any more.

"It's because we're honest. We're telling people we are not receiving any more bodies," Lebrun said. "I don't know about the rest of them," he said, referring to less well-equipped homes.

"We got three bodies that were so badly destroyed that we put them in zippered body bags and gave them to relatives and they buried them on their own," Lebrun said.

For the rest — families who can't meet the costs of burials — Lebrun said he won't turn them away or set a fixed price. "This is the situation," he said, referring to Haiti's grinding poverty. "If a family can't pay, we'll help them out."

UK jury says south London attack last year was preventable

LONDON (AP) — A jury concluded Friday that a terror attack on a busy street in south London last year could have been prevented had the perpetrator been recalled to prison after he bought items that were used in a fake suicide belt.

Sudesh Amman, 20, was shot dead by armed undercover officers after he stole a knife from a hardware shop and randomly stabbed a man and a woman in Streatham on Feb. 2, 2020, before turning to charge at the two armed police officers who gave chase. The injured people survived the attack.

After 11 hours of consideration, the jurors at Britain's high court returned a conclusion of lawful killing but said the probation services "missed an opportunity" to send him back to prison.

Over more than three weeks, jurors heard how authorities had grown increasingly concerned about Amman and how his extremist mindset developed during his time in prison.

They heard that police and security officers from the MI5 intelligence agency had been so concerned about Amman two days before the atrocity that they held an emergency meeting to discuss the prospect of returning him to prison following his recent release.

However, HM Prison and Probation Service opted against recalling him, even though undercover officers had spotted him buying four small bottles of carbonated soft drink Irn-Bru, kitchen foil and parcel tape two days before the attack — items they rightly feared could be used to make a hoax suicide belt.

Amman was kept under around-the-clock armed surveillance instead.

At the inquest's conclusion, Judge Nicholas Hilliard praised the police for their bravery.

"Amman was prepared to risk his life," he said. "In stark contrast, the Metropolitan Police surveillance teams were prepared to put themselves in harm's way."

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Dean Haydon, senior national coordinator for counter-terrorism policing, echoed the judge's remarks.

"Lethal force is rare in this country but as you have heard the evidence in this case, once the attack had started, lethal force was one of the most effective ways of stopping the attack," he said outside the Met's New Scotland Yard headquarters in central London.

Amman was said to have plotted to kill Queen Elizabeth II and to have pledged allegiance to the Islamic

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 53 of 54

State group. While in prison, Amman was also said to have reveled in his perceived notoriety as a young terrorist, and was said to have mixed with other high-profile offenders including the brother of Manchester Arena bomber Salman Abedi.

He was automatically released from Belmarsh jail in London on Jan. 23, 2020, halfway through his 40-month sentence for obtaining and distributing material used for terror-related purposes, despite pleas to the prison governor to keep him in custody for longer after a police officer feared an attack would be "when, not if."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Aug. 21, the 233rd day of 2021. There are 132 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 21, 1991, the hard-line coup against Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev collapsed in the face of a popular uprising led by Russian Federation President Boris N. Yeltsin.

On this date:

In 1831, Nat Turner launched a violent slave rebellion in Virginia, resulting in the deaths of at least 55 whites; scores of Blacks were killed in retribution in the aftermath of the rebellion. (Turner was later captured and executed.)

In 1911, Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" was stolen from the Louvre Museum in Paris. (The painting was recovered two years later in Italy.)

In 1959, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed an executive order making Hawaii the 50th state.

In 1986, more than 1,700 people died when toxic gas erupted from a volcanic lake in the West African nation of Cameroon.

In 1987, Sgt. Clayton Lonetree, the first Marine court-martialed for spying, was convicted in Quantico, Va., of passing secrets to the KGB. (Lonetree ended up serving eight years in a military prison.)

In 1992, an 11-day siege began at the cabin of white separatist Randy Weaver in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, as government agents tried to arrest Weaver for failing to appear in court on charges of selling two illegal sawed-off shotguns; on the first day of the siege, Weaver's teenage son, Samuel, and Deputy U.S. Marshal William Degan were killed.

In 1993, in a serious setback for NASA, engineers lost contact with the Mars Observer spacecraft as it was about to reach the red planet on a \$980 million mission.

In 2000, rescue efforts to reach the sunken Russian nuclear submarine Kursk ended with divers announcing none of the 118 sailors had survived.

In 2010, Iranian and Russian engineers began loading fuel into Iran's first nuclear power plant, which Moscow promised to safeguard to prevent material at the site from being used in any potential weapons production.

In 2013, an Army private now known as Chelsea Manning was sentenced at Fort Meade, Maryland, to up to 35 years in prison for spilling an unprecedented trove of government secrets. (The sentence for the former intelligence analyst was commuted by President Barack Obama in his final days in office.)

In 2014, Gov. Jay Nixon ordered the Missouri National Guard to begin withdrawing from Ferguson, where nightly scenes of unrest had erupted since a white police officer fatally shot a Black 18-year-old nearly two weeks earlier.

In 2015, a trio of Americans, U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Spencer Stone, National Guardsman Alek Skarlatos and college student Anthony Sadler, and a British businessman, Chris Norman, tackled and disarmed a Moroccan gunman on a high-speed train between Amsterdam and Paris.

Ten years ago: Euphoric Libyan rebels raced into Tripoli and took control of the center with little resistance as Moammar Gadhafi's defenses collapsed and his four-decade regime appeared to be crumbling.

Five years ago: Shaking to samba and sharing reflections in uniquely Brazilian words, Olympians and

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Aug. 21, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 045 ~ 54 of 54

fans said goodbye to the Rio Games with one last big bash inside Maracana Stadium. Earlier in the day, Kevin Durant scored 30 points and helped the Americans rout Serbia 96-66 for their third straight gold medal, capping an Olympics in which the U.S. dominated the medal tables, both the gold (46) and overall totals (121).

One year ago: Michigan's appeals court said Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's emergency declarations and orders to curb the coronavirus clearly fell within the scope of her legal powers. Police in Lafayette, Louisiana, shot and killed a Black man, Trayford Pellerin, outside a convenience store; they said he was carrying a knife and ignored commands to drop it. (A grand jury declined charges against the officers.) A spokeswoman for Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny said he was in a coma in a hospital in Siberia after falling ill from a suspected poisoning. A former police officer who became known as the Golden State Killer, Joseph James DeAngelo, told victims in a Sacramento courtroom that he was "truly sorry" before he was sentenced to multiple life prison sentences for a decade-long string of rapes and murders. "Full House" star Lori Loughlin and her fashion designer husband, Mossimo Giannulli, were sentenced to prison for paying half a million dollars in bribes to get their daughters into USC as crew recruits. (Giannulli would spend more than four months behind bars, Loughlin served two months.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor-director Melvin Van Peebles is 89. Rock-and-roll musician James Burton is 82. Singer Jackie DeShannon is 80. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Willie Lanier is 76. Actor Patty McCormack is 76. Pop singer-musician Carl Giammarese (jee-ah mah-REE'-see) is 74. Actor Loretta Devine is 72. NBC newsman Harry Smith is 70. Singer Glenn Hughes is 69. Actor Kim Cattrall is 65. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL quarterback Jim McMahon is 62. Actor Cleo King is 59. Rock singer Serj Tankian (TAN'-kee-ahn) (System of a Down) is 54. Figure skater Josee Chouinard is 52. Actor Carrie-Anne Moss is 51. MLB player-turned-manager Craig Counsell is 51. Rock musician Liam Howlett (Prodigy) is 50. Actor Alicia Witt is 46. Singer Kelis (kuh-LEES') is 42. TV personality Brody Jenner is 38. Singer Melissa Schuman is 37. Olympic gold medal sprinter Usain (yoo-SAYN') Bolt is 35. Actor Carlos Pratts is 35. Actor-comedian Brooks Wheelan is 35. Actor Cody Kasch is 34. Country singer Kacey Musgraves is 33. Actor Hayden Panettiere (pan'-uh-tee-EHR') is 32. Actor RJ Mitte is 29. Actor Maxim Knight is 22.