

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 1 of 65

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)
- [4- Prairie Doc: Kidney's Don't Get No Respect](#)
- [5- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [6- Weather Pages](#)
- [9- Daily Devotional](#)
- [10- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [11- News from the Associated Press](#)

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, Sept. 7

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m., at City Hall
Cross Country at Britton, 4 p.m.
JV Football hosts Webster, 5 p.m.
Volleyball at Webster: C/7th at 5 p.m., JV/8th at 6 p.m. with varsity to follow.

Thursday, Sept. 9

Boys Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course, 10 a.m.
Boys Soccer at James Valley Christian, 4 p.m.
Volleyball at Sisseton: 7th/C at 5 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m. with varsity to follow.

Friday, Sept. 10

Girls Soccer hosting West Central, 4 p.m.
Football vs. Deuel at Clear Lake, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 11

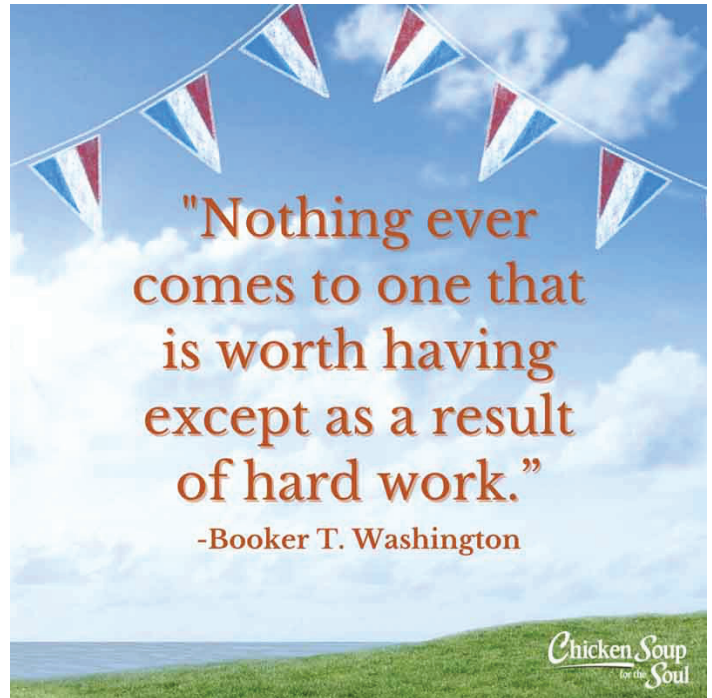
Groton City-Wide Rummage Sales, 8-3
Junior High Football Jamboree at Warner, 10 a.m.
Soccer at Sioux Falls Christian: Girls at 1 p.m., Boys at 3 p.m.

Sunday Sept. 12

Sunflower Classic Golf Tourney

Monday, Sept. 13

Cross Country at Webster, 4 p.m.
School Board Meeting, 6 p.m.
Homecoming Coronation, 8 p.m.



Tuesday, Sept. 14

Boys Golf at Redfield, 10 a.m.

Thursday, Sept. 16

Boys Golf at Dakota Magic Golf Course, 11 a.m.
Cross Country at Lee Park Golf Course, 4 p.m.
Volleyball hosting Mobridge-Pollock: 7th/C at 4 p.m., 8th/JV at 5 p.m., Varsity to follow

Friday, Sept. 17

Homecoming Parade, 1 p.m.
TigerPalooza at GHS Gym, 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Football hosting Mobridge-Pollock, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 18

Girls Soccer at Garretson, 1 p.m.
Boys Soccer at Freeman Academy, 5 p.m.
Groton Fly-In/Drive-In at Groton Airport

Sunday, Sept. 19

Groton Fly-In/Drive-In at Groton Airport

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

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 2 of 65

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

53 Man Roster and Season Review

On Tuesday, the Vikings needed to cut the roster down to 53 players. But as Zimmer indicated in a press conference, the latest team roster is very fluid. As of Sunday at 7:00 pm, here is a breakdown by position. Currently, the Vikings are sitting at 51 players and looking to add two more to fill the team.

Offense:

Quarterbacks: (2) In: Cousins & Mond - Out: Browning & Stanley - Practice Squad: Sean Mannion

Notes: It appeared early on that Browning was going to earn a spot, but rough performances in all three preseason games may have sealed his fate as an NFL QB. The Vikings brought back a familiar face last week, signing Mannion to the practice squad.

Running Backs: (3) In: Cook, Mattison, & Ham - Out: Smith - Practice Squad: Abdullah, Rose Jr. & Bargas

Notes: Iowa State speedy rookie Nwangwu must miss the first three games due to being placed on injured reserve.

Wide Receivers: (5) In: Thielen, Jefferson, Westbrook, Smith-Marsette, & Osborn - Out: Beebe - Practice Squad: Jackson, Philoyor & Mitchell

Notes: With a strong showing and an injury to Beebe, rookie Smith-Marsette makes the team. It appears he will be heavily used as a return specialist if preseason dictates his opportunity. Chisena is currently on IR and will contribute to special teams upon his return.

Tight Ends: (4) In: Conklin, Dillon, Ellefson & Herndon - Out: Zylstra - Practice Squad: Davidson

Notes: Irv Smith Jr, looking to take over for Kyle Rudolph this season, was put on injured reserve and will likely miss the entire season. To fill the void at TE, the Vikings traded for Chris Herndon, who has shown flashes of great play throughout his first three seasons in the NFL.

Offensive Linemen: (9) In: Cleveland, Darrisaw, Brandel, Hill, O'Neill, Udoh, Bradbury, Cole, & Davis - Out: Ksierzarczyk, Samia - Practice Squad: Bailey, Dozier & Hinton

Notes: Former starter Dozier struggled in the preseason was initially cut and brought back to the practice squad.

Defense

Defensive Linemen: (9) In: Hunter, Griffen, Jones II, Weatherly, Wonnum, J Lynch, Pierce, Richardson, Tomlinson & Watts - Out: Holmes, Mata'afa, Brailford & Johnson - Practice Squad: Willekes

Notes: Holmes made the initial roster but was cut due to roster moves at tight end. Griffen was cut in a procedural move by the Vikings but quickly re-signed to the full roster.

Linebackers: (7) In: Kendricks, Barr, Connelly, Dye, B Lynch, Surratt & Vigil - Out: none - Practice Squad: Borland

Notes: It's a good sign that despite not practicing or playing in the preseason, Barr remained on the roster and was not moved to the injured reserve.

Cornerbacks:(6) In: Peterson, Dantzler, Alexander, Breeland, Boyd, & Hand - Out: Mabin - Practice Squad: Nickerson & T Smith

Notes: In true Mike Zimmer fashion, he kept 6 cornerbacks.

Safeties: (4) In: H Smith, Woods, Metellus & Bynum - Out: Kirk - Practice Squad: Dorn

Notes: The Vikings are keeping 4 safeties this year after only keeping 2 in previous seasons.

Special Teams: (3) Kicker: Joseph - Punter: Colquitt - Long Snapper: DePaola

Notes: Both Colquitt and DePaola were cut but then added back to the roster on Wednesday.

Week 1 Preview (Minnesota Vikings @ Cincinnati Bengals)

The Minnesota Vikings' 2021 NFL season kicks off this Sunday at Paul Brown Stadium against the Cincinnati Bengals. The Vikings will hope to get off to a hot start as they play a Bengals team that has a lot of issues surrounding them. The main issue for the Bengals will be protecting their young, franchise QB in Joe Burrow, whose promising rookie season came to an abrupt end due to a severe knee injury in week 11. Many reports out of Bengals' camp indicate that Joe Burrow still might not be fully comfortable taking

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 3 of 65

on an aggressive pass rush with his recovering knee. Thus, look for Danielle Hunter to likely have some success against a Bengals offensive line that gave up a total of 48 sacks last year.

In order to combat their offensive line issues, the Bengals signed former Viking, Riley Reiff, to become their new starting right tackle. However, many around the league felt that this wasn't enough and called for the Bengals to take an offensive lineman in the first round of the 2021 NFL Draft. Nevertheless, the Bengals ignored such suggestions and took wide receiver, Ja'Marr Chase, in the first round of the draft. Chase, who played alongside Justin Jefferson at LSU, was projected to become an immediate star for the Bengals. But after a rough preseason that saw Chase drop a total of 4 passes, many are starting to wonder if the Bengals will soon be regretting their draft decision.

The Vikings come into week 1 with a fair number of questions themselves. After missing the playoffs last year, the team looks to see if they can continue what has become a routine in the Mike Zimmer era of making the playoffs in the years ending in odd numbers.

One of the biggest factors that will determine whether this routine continues will be the newly revamped Minnesota Vikings defense. After giving up the 4th most points in the NFL last year, the Vikings defense will look a lot different than it did last year. Longtime Arizona Cardinal, Patrick Peterson, and NFL journeyman, Bashaud Breeland, will make up the starting cornerbacks of the Vikings' secondary. Newly acquired Xavier Woods will be Harrison Smith's new partner at the safety position. The defensive line, which looked like the worst d-line unit in Vikings' history last year, will have some new faces in the interior in Dalvin Tomlinson and Michael Pierce, as well as a return of pass-rushing star, Danielle Hunter, who was kept out all last season with a neck injury. The linebacking core of Eric Kendricks and Anthony Barr will be the only familiar tandem on this Vikings defense. However, it is important to note that Barr may miss week 1 with a knee injury that has held him out of practice for the last few weeks.

The Vikings offense, on the other hand, returns many of the same players that helped them finish 11th in scoring in the 2020 season. Of all those returning players, none will be more important than Dalvin Cook, who has shown over his career that the Vikings offense runs through him. Cook will hope to take advantage of a Bengals defense that was one of the worst in stopping the run last year. It will be interesting to see if newly appointed Offensive Coordinator, Klint Kubiak, will look to give Cook as many carries as possible or instead limit Cook's touches in order to preserve him for the entire season. Nonetheless, having Cook in at running back will likely offer a significant boost to a Vikings starting offense that failed to score a single touchdown in the preseason without him.

Ultimately, this Week 1 game will be a great indicator of how the Vikings' season will go. If the Vikings come out and struggle against a Bengals team that has no chance at making the playoffs, it will undoubtedly signal that this is not as great of a Vikings team as many fans had hoped. However, if the Vikings show up and manhandle the lowly Bengals, watch out, we might have ourselves a fun team this year!

Kidney's Don't Get No Respect

The kidneys may be called the Rodney Dangerfield of the body, as they often "don't get no respect." The National Kidney Foundation estimates that one in three adult Americans are at risk for kidney disease, yet these organs are mostly ignored unless they develop stones or stop working.

When healthy, kidneys work continuously at their main job of filtering blood to remove unwanted products and help produce urine. Kidneys clean approximately 200 liters of blood each day removing up to two liters of toxins, waste, and water in the process. Perhaps less well known is the fact that the kidneys are essential for many other functions in the body as well, including managing blood pressure and preventing anemia.

Kidneys release the hormone renin which is part of the complex renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system, or RAAS, instrumental in helping regulate blood pressure. RAAS regulates sodium and potassium absorption in the kidneys and balances fluid and electrolyte levels in the body, all of which have a direct impact on blood pressure.

When treating patients whose blood pressure does not respond to medications, heart doctors will examine RAAS function. They may also order an ultrasound of the kidneys. Sometimes this reveals a narrowing of the artery going into the kidneys which may be responsible for treatment-resistant high blood pressure.

Kidneys also secrete a hormone called erythropoietin which acts on bone marrow to help the body produce red blood cells. Without this hormone, people can develop anemia.

Vitamin D is converted to its active form by the kidneys allowing the body to use the vitamin to its advantage. Thanks to the kidneys, vitamin D helps balance calcium and phosphorus absorbed from the foods we eat. Without enough calcium, people can develop weakening of the bones and muscles.

Kidneys complete these and many other functions so efficiently that a healthy person can donate one and the remaining kidney will do the work of two. They work hard to help us, so let's do our fair share to help them. If you have diabetes, work to control it as best you can because high blood sugars can damage your kidneys. And one thing all of us can do for our kidneys is to stay hydrated.

There is no doubt that kidneys deserve more respect. Talk to your doctor about blood tests or urine tests to check your kidney's health and functionality. Kidneys...let's show them some respect!

Jill Kruse, D.O. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show celebrating its twentieth season of truthful, tested, and timely medical information, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

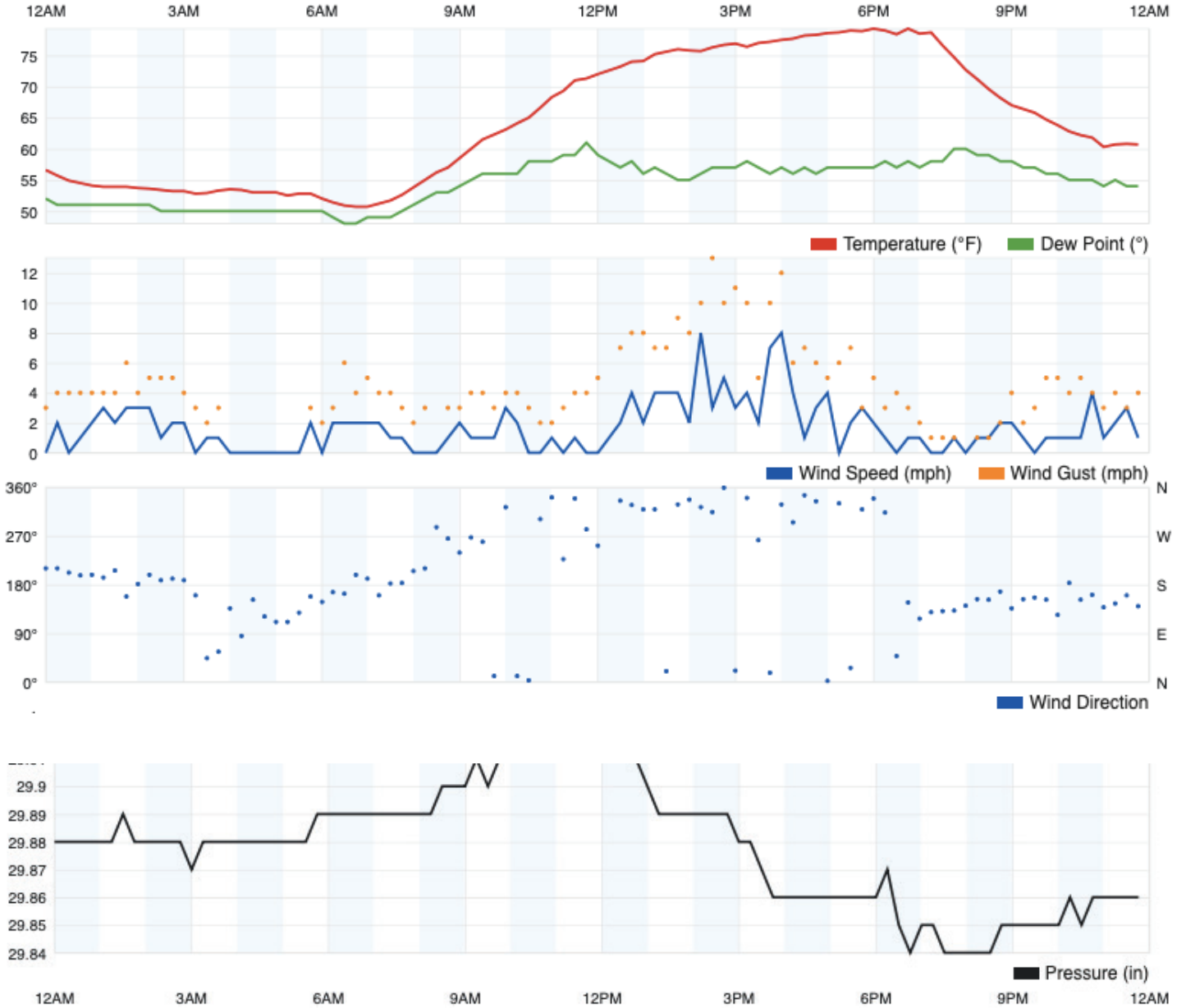


By Jill Kruse, D.O.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 5 of 65

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 6 of 65

Labor Day



Hot

High: 93 °F

Tonight



Increasing Clouds

Low: 56 °F

Tuesday



Sunny then Sunny and Breezy

High: 78 °F

Tuesday Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 50 °F

Wednesday



Sunny

High: 75 °F



A Hot Labor Day on Tap!

September 6, 2021

2:01 AM

Turning cooler later this week



Today:

Mostly Sunny & Hot
Highs 85-97°F



Tonight:

Mostly Clear
Lows in the 50s



Tuesday:

Mostly Sunny & Cooler
Highs in the 70s/Around 80°

Grassland fire danger will be high to very high over the Missouri River valley this afternoon/evening



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

A very warm air mass will move into the region today, with very warm to hot temperatures. The heat will be short lived as cooler air moves into the area on Tuesday. #sdwx #mnwx

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 7 of 65

Today in Weather History

September 6, 2000: Eight miles southwest of Miller, ninety mph winds destroyed three barns and a small garage along with severely damaging a creeper feeder and an enclosed trailer. Another building was moved from its foundation and damaged. An empty school bus was rolled several times before it came to rest atop a fence. Also, a window was broken out of the house.

1667: The "dreadful hurricane of 1667" is considered one of the most severe hurricanes ever to strike Virginia. On the first, this same storm was reported in the Lesser Antilles. The hurricane devastated St. Christopher as no other storm had done before. The "great storm" went on to strike the northern Outer Banks of North Carolina and southeastern Virginia. Area crops (including corn and tobacco) were beaten into the ground.

1776: Called the Pointe-à-Pitre hurricane, this storm is one of the deadliest Atlantic hurricanes on record. While the intensity and complete track are unknown, this storm struck Guadeloupe on this day, killing 6,000.

1881: Forest fires in "The Thumb" of Michigan and Ontario resulted in "Yellow Day" over the New England states. Twenty villages and over a million acres burned in Michigan. The smoke from these fires caused the sky to appear yellow over several New England cities. Twilight appeared at noon on this day.

1929 - Iowa's earliest snow of record occurred as a few flakes were noted at 9 AM at Alton. (The Weather Channel)

1933: The remnant low of the Treasure Coast Hurricane dumped 10.33" of rain in Charleston, which is the second-highest 24-hour rainfall total on record for the downtown station. The storm produced wind gusts of 51 mph and also spawned a tornado near the city.

1987 - Thunderstorms produced more than seven inches of rain in Georgia. Four persons drowned, and two others suffered injury, as three couples attempted to cross Mills Stone Creek at Echols Mill in their automobile. Smoke from forest fires in California and Oregon spread across Utah into western Colorado. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Unseasonably cool weather prevailed across the north central and northeastern U.S. Thirty cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Saint Joseph MO with a reading of 38 degrees. A low of 44 degrees at Indianapolis IN was their coolest reading of record for so early in the season. The mercury dipped to 31 degrees at Hibbing MN and Philips WI. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - An early afternoon thunderstorm produced wind gusts to 104 mph at Winterhaven, FL, flipping over four airplanes, and damaging five others. The high winds also damaged a hangar and three other buildings. A cold front produced strong winds and blowing dust in the Northern High Plains, with gusts to 54 mph reported at Buffalo SD. Powerful Hurricane Gabrielle and strong easterly winds combined to create waves up to ten feet high along the southern half of the Atlantic coast. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003: Hurricane Isabel was first named on September 6th, 2003. It would reach Category 5 status and eventually make landfall in North Carolina as a Category 2.

2017: Category 5 Hurricane Irma affected the US Virgin Island and Puerto Rico. Maximum sustained winds were at 180 mph when the storm hit St. Thomas & St. John. Catastrophic damage was reported over the US Virgin Island & significant damage over Puerto Rico, especially over Culebra.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 9 of 65



Does God Really Care?

"You know, Larry," he began in a soft voice, "I'm troubled by the fact that all of the horrible things I see on TV or hear over the radio when I travel don't bother me as much as they once did. What's happening to me?" he asked.

We all wonder, at one time or another, how a group of people can watch a person being beaten or robbed or fall ill in a crowded mall or on a busy street corner, and no one responds and gives help. We see the ravages of war, watch people die on a battlefield, see disabled veterans trying to adjust to life with artificial limbs, and seem to accept it as "normal" in today's culture. It seems as though the pain and suffering of others matter little to anyone except the one enduring the hardships.

The Psalmist who wrote Psalm 94 was troubled by the evil in the world. He looked around and saw people oppressed. He was aware of calloused leaders whose only concern was for themselves. He was troubled by the lack of concern for widows and children, and asked, "God, if You created ears for people to hear, and eyes for people to see, why don't You hear the cries and see the suffering of those whom You created?" Where are You, God? Do something, God!

So, has God, like us, become insensitive to the needs of people and the condition of the world? Does He not care about what is happening to His creation? Indeed, He does. That is why He has entrusted the care of His creation to us!

"He will repay them and destroy them for their wickedness," says the Psalmist. But until He does, we are responsible to bring His hope and healing to those suffering.

Prayer: Please, Lord, soften our hardened hearts and open our calloused minds to see, reach out, and help those who are suffering. It's our duty! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: How long, Lord, will the wicked, how long will the wicked be jubilant? He will repay them for their sins and destroy them for their wickedness; the Lord our God will destroy them. Psalm 94:3 and 23

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 10 of 65

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
Cancelled 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

News from the Associated Press

Lead-Deadwood girl, looking for challenge, chooses football

By JASON GROSS Black Hills Pioneer

LEAD, S.D. (AP) — Lead-Deadwood sophomore Winter McMahon added her name to the short list of girls suiting up for South Dakota high school football teams and there is one reason above all else.

"Most of it was meeting a challenge from other sports in general," McMahon said of her decision to join the Goldiggers this fall. "I feel like I've conquered all the other sports I've tried."

Her other sports include taekwondo and snocross racing. She said she wanted to do something a bit different.

McMahon wears jersey number 86 and is listed as a wide receiver-defensive back. She was not able to play in Lead-Deadwood's 52-0 win over Bennett County in last week's season opener.

The known list of girls playing on South Dakota High School football teams is rather short, the Black Hills Pioneer reported.

Terre Vocu played for Little Wound in 2015. Bailee Schultz did so from 2013-15 as flanker/tight end/defensive back and was crowned 2015 homecoming queen at Bridgewater/Emery-Ethan. Jenna Van Holland is a placekicker for Garretson this season.

McMahon added some questioned her playing football. A lot of people told her she was going to get badly hurt, and her size, 5 feet 6 inches, would also hold her back.

"Other than that, I was like, 'let's go for it.' I think this is going to be fun, and a great challenge," McMahon said.

She faced skepticism at early meetings because having a girl on a boys' team was unexpected. McMahon said they now accept her as a team member, on and off the field.

This is the first chance McMahon has had to play on a football team. She said she gets knocked down in practices but gets back up again, with teammates helping her.

"They treat her like any other teammate," Lead-Deadwood head coach Kyle Kooima said. "She's a part of this team, so we'll treat her as part of the family."

Football is a new sport to McMahon. Her biggest appeal comes from the game's nuances: linemen hitting hard while their teammates block, a well-thrown ball, and a receiver running for a touchdown.

Early-season preparation includes morning practices, followed by weightlifting session. She makes sure to eat the proper foods and stay healthy.

What has McMahon enjoyed the most during her time on the team?

"The leadership that is shown at practice and on the field," McMahon said. She added everyone has a fresh start because of the coaching change for this year.

Her biggest challenge centers on trying to keep up with the different ways of practice. She said she has had to get her body used to doing things that she is not used to doing.

Kooima was happy to learn of McMahon's interest in joining the team and did not give her any special treatment.

"I didn't offer her too much more than I would any other student new to the game," Kooima said. "I just encourage her to ask questions and make sure she's getting repetitions in."

McMahon said she has received a lot of support after people found out she would try football.

McMahon was nervous in the days before official practice sessions began. She experienced the emotional range all new athletes do.

Part of her did not know what to do and was worried she would make mistakes. "Another part of me was like, 'OK, I can do this. I just have to keep my chin up, smile, and get through practice,'" she said.

Kooima said McMahon has put forth a lot of effort to learn the game and how to play it. He added McMahon is still learning but rapidly improving.

"Her strength is that she's not afraid," Kooima said. "She's not afraid to ask and not afraid to step out

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 12 of 65

of her comfort zone.”

Playing in a game is McMahon’s biggest goal for this season. Lead-Deadwood has a varsity team along with sub-varsity squads, which will give her plenty of chances to play.

McMahon also wants to support and cheer for her teammates.

Kooima said McMahon is very willing to ask about the game. He has not had to make too many adjustments, and he leans on past experience.

“I’ve coached girls in other sports over the years,” Kooima said. “The biggest thing is being a listener, and making sure to stay calm and have a conversation first.”

Changing of clothes for games naturally requires some adjustments.

Home games provided no issues, as team members changed at the school that has separate locker rooms for boys and girls.

Kooima said he needs to stay aware McMahon doesn’t get placed into uncomfortable situations where locker rooms and restrooms are concerned. He added he reaches out to opposing athletic directors to make sure there is a place for McMahon.

She has made it clear she is in this for the long run.

“If I’m going to do it now, I have to do it next year,” she said. “I don’t really like quitting on things; I like to see it all the way through.”

South Dakota says it’s managing COVID-19 patients, for now

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are on the rise again in South Dakota, although hospital officials say they’re still holding their own on capacity.

The western part of the state is seeing the biggest spike in numbers, though cases in northeastern South Dakota are also on the rise. The South Dakota Department of Health on Friday reported 230 hospitalizations due to the coronavirus, the highest number since January.

Information released by Sanford Health, the state’s largest hospital system, shows that as of Tuesday, there were 136 patients hospitalized throughout its network of 22 hospitals in South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa. Of those people, 37 were in the intensive care and 19 were on ventilators. All but seven of those patients were unvaccinated.

Other hospitals are also seeing similar trends. According to Avera media relations, Avera hospitals admitted 100 COVID-19 patients in August and 87 were unvaccinated, the Aberdeen American News reported.

Sanford Aberdeen Executive Director Ashley Erickson said the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 is increasing locally, but the hospital is ready.

Avera St. Luke’s President and CEO Todd Forkel said while the hospital is “at our near capacity many days,” no changes have been made to routine services because of COVID-19 cases. He said they still have the option to “slow” elective surgeries.

“We haven’t had to go very deep yet,” he said.

South Dakota lake closed to swimming due to harmful bacteria

HARRISBURG, S.D. (AP) — A popular lake for water enthusiasts in southeastern South Dakota has been closed indefinitely to swimmers due to harmful bacteria, Game Fish and Parks Department officials said.

Routine water testing at the the Lake Alvin Recreation Area near Harrisburg showed that the bacteria could pose a health problem for people submerging and ingesting the water, District Park Supervisor Jason Baumann said.

“Following heavy rains, we often see an increase in the amount of runoff into our lakes and streams. That runoff picks up contaminants along the way, and deposits them into the water,” Baumann wrote in an email. “Higher levels of contaminants are seen initially, but they usually dissipate pretty quickly thanks to the natural filtration provided by the lake.”

Baumann said the lake remains safe for fishing, the Argus Leader reported. The lake water will continue to be regularly tested and the beach will reopen when the water is safe, he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 13 of 65

Harrisburg is about 10 miles southeast of Sioux Falls.

Oil boom remakes N. Dakota county with fastest growth in US

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

WATFORD CITY, N.D. (AP) — First came the roughnecks and other oil field workers, almost all men.

Lured by steady wages as the nation climbed out of the Great Recession, they filled McKenzie County's few motel rooms, then began sleeping in cars, tents, trailers — anything to hide from the cold wind cutting across the North Dakota prairie. Once empty dirt roads suddenly were clogged with tanker trucks. Crime rates spiked.

Soon everything shifted yet again: The workers' spouses and children arrived. Classrooms swelled. Apartment buildings cropped up beside oil rigs. And the newcomers made this Northern Plains community their own.

The growth made McKenzie the nation's fastest-growing county during the past decade, according to the Census Bureau. It swept through like a twisting dust devil, shattering the rural innocence of a region known for inhospitable winters and long summer days perfect for growing crops. But it also brought youth, diversity and better wages — breathing new life into somnolent towns that had been losing population since the 1930s.

Dana Amon, who grew up in a double-wide trailer on a farm on the edge of the county seat, Watford City, remembers riding her horse across fields now dotted with tracts of modest housing lit up at night by flares from nearby oil wells.

"Our little town just blew up at the seams," she said.

FIGHTS AND FRENZY

Since the boom began in 2010, jobs in McKenzie County have come and gone with oil's changing fortunes. Crude prices peaked last decade at more than \$130 a barrel, fell below \$40, then rebounded before falling again when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

McKenzie just kept growing.

Watford City — perched on a bluff, its skyline defined by a pair of grain elevators — spilled out onto surrounding farmland. The flat, largely barren landscape of Amon's childhood now features mile after mile of worker camps, shopping centers, subdivisions, hotels, truck yards and warehouses.

When fights became frequent in bars along Main Street and fatal wrecks commonplace on the highways, people like Amon started to lock their doors at night.

Ten years on, the frenzy has settled. The wariness locals and newcomers held for one another eased. Along the way, lives got stitched together through school events, church services and along the sidelines of youth football games.

"I tell the locals, 'If you guys kick me out, I'm not leaving. It's my town,'" said Yolanda Rojas, a Tucson, Arizona, native who followed her husband to McKenzie County with their five children a year after he got a job in the oil fields.

From 2010 to 2014, the amount of crude produced in the county grew 1,800%. By the end of the decade, census figures show, its population more than doubled, to 14,704 residents.

Rojas and her husband, Ruben Vega, saved enough money to open a Mexican restaurant in March 2020 — just as the pandemic arrived. The business was teetering on failure when Rojas reached out to the community on social media. People in Watford City rallied to help, regularly ordering takeout to keep the family afloat.

Many of the customers were Hispanic and unknown to Rojas. Only when the census data came out did she learn that the number of Hispanics increased tenfold over the decade, a stark cultural shift for a community long dominated by farmers of northern European descent.

Hispanics now make up about 10% of the population — a share roughly equal to American Indians in the county, which includes part of the Fort Berthold Reservation. The reservation's three tribes — the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara — trace their roots in the area to long before the first European settlers.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 14 of 65

'A BIG, EXTENDED FAMILY'

Oil was first discovered in McKenzie County in the 1950s, but it was the industry's fracking revolution that opened once inaccessible crude reserves and transformed North Dakota into a global energy player. Tens of billions of barrels of oil have yet to be tapped, according to government estimates, and new wells keep getting drilled.

County officials say the growth is far from over. School enrollment tripled over the past decade and is expected to double again by 2030.

Pump jacks pulling oil from the ground dot the landscape across the county's 2,860 square miles (7,400 square kilometers). Bordered by the Yellowstone River to the north, Lake Sakakawea to the east and Montana to the west, McKenzie is larger in land mass than Delaware.

Howdy Lawlar, who chairs the McKenzie County Commission and whose family has grown wheat and raised cattle northwest of Watford City for five generations, recalled widespread frustration among farmers as thousands of oil trucks clogged roads not designed for such traffic.

Leaving his farm and trying to turn left into Watford City, Lawlar could wait for an hour for a gap in traffic.

Bypasses were built to ease congestion. Pipelines went in to replace tanker trucks. At the height of the boom, almost 4,000 trucks daily crawled through Watford City. Recent counts tallied just over 320 trucks a day.

More police officers were hired to keep order and new schools built to get students out of temporary trailers.

"I feel like we're becoming a big, extended family," Lawlar said. "It's a good thing."

But while most families age, this one has become younger, with a median age of 30 compared to 39 in 2010. It's also more prosperous, with median household income increasing 61% to almost \$78,000, according to census data.

The money lured J.T. Smith, a 31-year-old native of the Fort Worth, Texas, area who took an oil field job in McKenzie County six years ago. His parents had moved to North Dakota for oil work several years before. At first he found the region bleak and uninviting.

Smith went back to Texas, where his wife and two children had remained, swearing he'd never come back.

STAYING FOR COMMUNITY

A few years later, another job offer in North Dakota came his way, so he decided to try again. This time he brought his family, and the rhythms of their lives have grown comfortable.

J.T. Smith leaves before dark for his job as an oil field safety adviser, climbing into a white company pickup and joining throngs of near-identical pickups that fan out every morning to drilling rigs, gas processing plants and pipeline construction projects across western North Dakota.

An hour later, the Smiths' 10-year-old son climbs onto a school bus that falls in with dozens of others funneling students to a gleaming new elementary and high school complex at the edge of town.

Smith and his wife, Virginia, have become deeply involved with the Assembly of God church, which doubled in size in recent years to about 400 members. Their children have made friends through a mixed martial arts gym.

Now when the Smiths go to the grocery store, they're bound to run into a half-dozen friends. It's one of many glimpses of lingering small-town charm.

"You're here for a month and everybody knows you," Virginia Smith said.

Despite the drastic changes over the last decade, the open landscape around Watford City retains a feeling of remoteness.

As Lawlar, the county commission chairman, worked recently to replace a barbed-wire fence bordering wheat fields that stretched to the horizon, the only sign of industry was the occasional truck rumbling on a distant road.

Grasshoppers sprung up ahead of Lawlar as he silently walked the fence line. His farmhand, Charlie Lewis, lumbered along in a Bobcat they used to push steel fenceposts into the dry dirt.

Lewis came for oil field work, then took a job with Lawlar during a downturn in crude prices. He plans to make this place his home and start a family.

"People come for the work and stay for the community," Lewis said. "The only time I think of going back is when it's 40 below."

Follow Matthew Brown on Twitter: @MatthewBrownAP

Belarus court gives opposition activists lengthy sentences

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A court in Belarus on Monday sentenced two leading opposition activists to lengthy prison terms, the latest move in the relentless crackdown that Belarusian authorities have unleashed on dissent in the wake of last year's anti-government protests.

Maria Kolesnikova, a top member of the opposition Coordination Council, has been in custody since her arrest last September. A court in Minsk found her guilty of conspiring to seize power, creating an extremist organization and calling for actions damaging state security and sentenced her to 11 years in prison.

Lawyer Maxim Znak, another leading member of the Coordination Council who faced the same charges, was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Kolesnikova, who helped coordinate monthslong opposition protests that erupted after an August 2020 presidential vote, resisted authorities' attempts to force her to leave the country.

Kolesnikova and Znak went on trial behind closed doors, with their families only allowed to be present at the sentencing hearing on Monday.

"For many, Maria has become an example of resilience and the fight between good and evil. I'm proud of her," Kolesnikova's father, Alexander, told The Associated Press on Monday. "It's not a verdict, but rather the revenge of the authorities."

Belarus was rocked by months of protests fueled by President Alexander Lukashenko's being awarded a sixth term after the August 2020 presidential vote that the opposition and the West denounced as a sham. He responded to the demonstrations with a massive crackdown that saw more than 35,000 people arrested and thousands beaten by police.

Kolesnikova, 39, has emerged as a key opposition activist, appearing at political rallies and fearlessly walking up to lines of riot police and making her signature gesture — a heart formed by her hands. She spent years playing flute in the nation's philharmonic orchestra after graduating from a conservatory in Minsk and studying Baroque music in Germany.

In 2020, she headed the campaign of Viktor Babariko, the head of a Russian-owned bank who made a bid to challenge Lukashenko, but was barred from the race after being jailed on money laundering and tax evasion charges that he dismissed as political. Babariko was sentenced to 14 years in prison two months ago.

Kolesnikova then joined forces with former English teacher Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who was running in place of her jailed husband Sergei, an opposition blogger, as the main candidate standing against Lukashenko, and Veronika Tsepkalo, wife of another potential top contender who had fled the country fearing arrest.

The three appeared together at colorful campaign events that were in stark contrast to Lukashenko's Soviet-style gatherings.

Shortly after the election, Tsikhanouskaya left Belarus under pressure from the authorities and is currently in exile in Lithuania.

In September 2020, as Belarus was shaken by mass protests, the largest of which drew up to 200,000 people, KGB agents drove Kolesnikova to the border between Belarus and Ukraine in an attempt to expel her. In the neutral zone between the two countries, Kolesnikova managed to rip up her passport, broke out of the car and walked back into Belarus, where she was immediately arrested.

Just before the start of her trial last month, Kolesnikova said in a note from prison that authorities of-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 16 of 65

ferred to release her from custody if she asks for a pardon and gives a repentant interview to state media. She insisted that she was innocent and rejected the offer.

Speaking to the AP on Monday, Tsikhanouskaya described Kolesnikova's ripping up her passport as "a historic deed."

"Along with it (her passport), she tore apart all the plans of the regime," Tsikhanouskaya said.

"The regime would want to see Maxim and Maria broken and weakened. But we see our heroes and strong and free inside. They will be free much earlier. Prison terms invented for them shouldn't scare us — Maxim and Maria wouldn't want that. They would want us to remember how Maria smiles, and to listen to Maxim singing," Tsikhanouskaya added.

Western officials denounced the sentences issued Monday. U.K. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said "the sentencing of Maria Kolesnikova and Maxim Znak shows the Belarusian authorities continuing their assault on the defenders of democracy and freedom."

"Locking up political opponents will only deepen the pariah status of the Lukashenko regime," Raab said.

In Brussels, European Commission spokesman Peter Stano said that "the EU ... reiterates its demands for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners in Belarus (now numbering more than 650)," including Kolesnikova and Znak.

The verdicts Monday are "a symbol of the ruthless methods, the repression and intimidation by the Belarusian regime of opposition politicians and civil society," German Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Andrea Sasse said in Berlin.

—
Associated Press writers Lorne Cook in Brussels, Geir Moulson in Berlin and Danica Kirka in London contributed.

Florida gunman killed 4, including mom still holding baby

By KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

A man wearing full body armor fatally shot four people, including a mother and the 3-month-old baby she was cradling, and engaged in a massive gunfight with police and deputies before he was wounded and surrendered in Lakeland, Florida, a sheriff said Sunday. An 11-year-old girl who was shot seven times survived.

Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd said during a press conference that even after 33-year-old Bryan Riley was arrested Sunday morning, he was so aggressive that he tried to wrestle a gun from police as he lay on his hospital gurney.

Judd said Riley, a former Marine who served as a sharpshooter in both Iraq and Afghanistan, seemed to have targeted his victims at random and appeared to be suffering from mental health issues. Judd said Riley's girlfriend told authorities Riley had been slowly unraveling for weeks and repeatedly told her that he could communicate directly with God.

"They begged for their lives and I killed them anyway," Judd said Riley told them during an interrogation.

Investigators said preliminary evidence shows 40-year-old Justice Gleason just happened to be an unlucky stranger out mowing his lawn Saturday night when Riley drove by his home in Lakeland, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) east of Tampa, saying God told him to stop because Gleason's daughter was going to commit suicide.

A second, unidentified person also confronted Riley, telling him that story wasn't true and warned they'd call police if he didn't leave, Judd said. He referred to the person as a victim but declined to clarify which one.

Authorities responded to the scene but never found Riley.

About nine hours later, around 4:30 a.m. Sunday, Riley returned to the home, laying out glowsticks to create a path leading to the house to draw officers "into an ambush," Judd said.

Randomly, a lieutenant far in the distance heard popping noises and immediately put the agency on active-shooter mode, bringing all state and local law enforcement in the area to the scene.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 17 of 65

Following the sounds of gunfire, authorities arrived at the home and found Riley's white truck ablaze and an unarmed Riley outside, dressed in camouflage.

Riley immediately ran inside, where authorities heard another round of gunfire, "a woman scream and a baby whimper," Judd said.

Officers tried to enter the front of the house, but it was barricaded. When they circled to the back, they encountered Riley, who appeared to have put on full body armor including head and knee coverings and a bulletproof vest.

Authorities exchanged heavy gunfire, with dozens "if not hundreds of rounds" fired, before Riley retreated back into the home, according to the sheriff.

Everything fell silent, Judd said, until a helicopter unit alerted authorities on the ground that Riley was coming out. He had been shot once and was ready to surrender.

Meanwhile, officers heard cries for help inside the home, but were unsure whether there were additional shooters and feared the home was booby-trapped. A brave sergeant rushed in and grabbed the 11-year-old girl who had been shot at least seven times.

She told deputies there were three dead people inside, Judd said, adding that she was rushed into surgery and was expected to survive.

Deputies sent robots into the home to check for explosives and other traps. When it was clear, they found the bodies of Gleason; the 33-year-old mother; the baby; and the baby's 62-year-old grandmother, who was in a separate home nearby. Authorities released only Gleason's name, and did not say if or how he was related to the other victims.

Authorities declined to say how many times the victims had been shot or where they were in the home, but said they were all hiding and huddling in fear. The family dog also was shot to death.

Authorities said Riley's girlfriend of four years, whom he lived with, had been cooperative and was shocked, saying he was never violent but suffered from PTSD and had become increasingly erratic.

She said he'd spent the previous week on what he called a mission from God, stockpiling supplies that he said were for Hurricane Ida victims, including \$1,000 worth of cigars.

"Prior to this morning, this guy was a war hero. He fought for his country in Afghanistan and Iraq," said Judd. "And this morning he's a cold-blooded killer."

Riley, who had no criminal history, also told authorities he was on methamphetamines. His vehicle had also been stocked with supplies for a gunfight, authorities said, including bleeding control kits.

While being treated at the hospital, Riley jumped up and tried to grab an officer's gun.

"They had to fight with him again in the emergency room," Judd said, adding that Riley was ultimately tied down and medicated.

He is expected to recover and will be transferred to jail to face charges.

"The big question that all of us has is, 'Why?'" State Attorney Brian Haas said. "We will not know today or maybe ever."

This story corrects a reference to the number of people killed. There were four, not three. It also clarifies a reference to one of victims. The infant's grandmother was 62 years old and lived in a nearby home.

Israeli police launch manhunt after 6 prisoners break out

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israeli forces on Monday launched a massive manhunt in northern Israel and the occupied West Bank after six Palestinian prisoners escaped overnight from a high-security facility in an extremely rare breakout.

Officials said they have erected roadblocks and are conducting patrols in the area. Israel's Army Radio also said 400 prisoners are being moved as a protective measure against any additional escape attempts. The radio said the prisoners escaped through a tunnel from the Gilboa prison, which is supposed to be one of Israel's most secure facilities. The men reportedly appeared to have received some outside help.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 18 of 65

Israel's prime minister, Naftali Bennett, called it a "grave incident" that required maximum effort by Israel's various security branches.

He said he was receiving constant updates on the prison break, which occurred just hours before Israel was to mark the Jewish New Year. Authorities apparently did not believe the escaped prisoners posed a threat to the general public, and there were no instructions for people to alter their routines. The prison is about 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) from the West Bank border.

Police commander Shimon Ben Shabo said officials have reinforced emergency response call centers in the area to respond to any reports about the prisoners and there are "forces available to arrive at any location."

The escapees were believed to have been headed for Jenin, where the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority wields little control and where militants in recent weeks have openly clashed with Israeli forces. Israeli helicopters were seen flying over Jenin on Monday morning.

The Palestinian Prisoners' Club, which represents both former and current prisoners, identified the men as ranging in age from 26 to 49 years old. They include Zakaria Zubeidi, 46, who has been detained since 2019. Zubeidi was a leader in the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, affiliated with the Fatah movement, during the second Palestinian uprising over 20 years ago.

Four of the other prisoners had been serving life sentences, the prisoners' group said.

Photos appearing in Israeli media show what was purported to be the end of the escape tunnel, with one image showing an Israeli security man in a black T-shirt inspecting a hole in the ground.

Palestinian militant groups swiftly praised the breakout.

"This is a great heroic act, which will cause a severe shock to the Israeli security system and will constitute a severe blow to the army and the entire system in Israel," said Daoud Shehab, a spokesman for Islamic Jihad.

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum cast the escape similarly, saying it shows "that the struggle for freedom with the occupier is continuous and extended, inside prisons. and outside to extract this right."

Associated Press writers Josef Federman in Jerusalem and Jack Jeffery in Ramallah, West Bank, contributed to this report.

Ida's ravages force apartment complex tenants to pack, plan

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

HOUMA, La. (AP) — Allison Smith wasn't thinking about where she'd go next. She'd kept the boxes from when she moved into her 2-bedroom apartment at the Chateau Creole complex a year ago and was planning to fill them with her clothes and other belongings, load them into a U-Haul along with her bed and sofa, and drive it to the closest storage unit she'd found — two hours away. Then she'd think about where to live.

"I haven't even thought that far," said Smith, as she and her boyfriend packed.

The residents of the apartment complex loaded up moving trucks, packed up what belongings could be salvaged and contemplated what to do next after Hurricane Ida's devastating winds and lashing rains rendered what had been home unlivable. For many, there weren't a lot of good options.

Ida swept ashore Aug. 29 and Houma, a town of about 33,000 residents, was the first major population center in its path. Power isn't expected to be restored to the parish until Sept. 29, and that's only for homes and businesses structurally sound enough to take power. Many aren't.

At the apartment complex, shingles littered the parking garage and pink tufts of insulation stuck to the exterior walls. Some of the buildings had lost large sections of siding. In others, the roof decking had ripped off and rain soaked the pink insulation that fell into the apartments below.

When the storm came through, Smith was inside a bedroom in her apartment — K26 — videoing the raging storm outside when her ceiling collapsed on top of her. The bedroom is now carpeted with wet insulation above which you can see the building's frame and blue sky. She spent a hot night in her other

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 19 of 65

bedroom slapping away mosquitos. Now she worries another storm will come and ruin what possessions she has left.

She filed a claim with the Federal Emergency Management Agency; they've given her enough money to pay for a hotel for a week — "That's a start" — and then she'll figure out her next steps.

"I'm mentally drained, just exhausted," she said.

At apartment M22, Jordan Howard and his boyfriend had just returned home after evacuating to Texas. They had heard about the complex's damage and that they'd have to move out through other tenants on Facebook but found that their apartment had escaped without any damage.

After making an initial survey their plan was to come back with a moving truck, pack and start over. Before the storm, Howard worked as a front desk clerk at a hotel but said it was now closed. They're weighing what to do next — stay in Houma where Howard has family or start over somewhere else — somewhere with electricity. It was a decision he thought a lot of people might also be making considering how extensive the damage was in Houma.

"So many people are going to have to leave, and I don't think a lot of them are going to come back," he said.

When Hurricane Ida swept through Houma, Jason Cole was in his first floor apartment — J17 — looking at the damage happening outside. After the storm, he and his son and some other relatives went to Morgan City, about 35 miles (56 kilometers) away, and rented a hotel room. But they had to leave when the hotel gave the room to workers coming to restore the electricity. On the way back, his car broke down and he had it towed back to the apartment complex where a friend was making repairs.

He and his son were currently living with his godchild across the street, but storm damage might force her to move out as well. Cole was also without a job after the hurricane destroyed the shrimping business where he used to be a driver.

He had been able to salvage some clothes from his apartment, and like many in the Houma apartment complex he was trying to figure out what to do. He'd heard from other residents that they had to be out by Tuesday, and he knows how extensive the damage is across town. If nearby hotels do have rooms, he said, they're not doing weekly rates so there's always the concern he'd find a room only to have to move out the next day.

"It's just rough," he said. "It's rough for a lot of people."

Follow Santana on Twitter @ruskygal.

After unrelenting summer, Biden looks to get agenda on track

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The collapse of the Afghan government, a surge of COVID-19 cases caused by the delta variant, devastating weather events, a disappointing jobs report. What next?

After a torrent of crises, President Joe Biden is hoping to turn the page on an unrelenting summer and refocus his presidency this fall around his core economic agenda.

But the recent cascade of troubles is a sobering reminder of the unpredictable weight of the office and fresh evidence that presidents rarely have the luxury of focusing on just one crisis at a time. Biden's unyielding summer knocked his White House onto emergency footing and sent his own poll numbers tumbling.

"The presidency is not a job for a monomaniac," said presidential historian Michael Beschloss. "You have to be multitasking 24 hours a day."

Never has that been more true than summer 2021, which began with the White House proclamation of the nation's "independence" from the coronavirus and defying-the-odds bipartisanship on a massive infrastructure package. Then COVID-19 came roaring back, the Afghanistan pullout devolved into chaos and hiring slowed.

Biden now hopes for a post-Labor Day reframing of the national conversation toward his twin domestic

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 20 of 65

goals of passing a bipartisan infrastructure bill and pushing through a Democrats-only expansion of the social safety net.

White House officials are eager to shift Biden's public calendar toward issues that are important to his agenda and that they believe are top of mind for the American people.

"I think you can expect the president to be communicating over the coming weeks on a range of issues that are front and center on the minds of the American people," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki.

"Certainly you can expect to hear from him more on his Build Back Better agenda, on COVID and his commitment to getting the virus under control, to speak to parents and those who have kids going back to school."

During the chaotic Afghanistan evacuation, the White House was central in explaining the consequences of Biden's withdrawal decision and the effort to evacuate Americans and allies from the country. Now, officials want to put the State Department and other agencies out front on the efforts to assist stranded Americans and support evacuees, while Biden moves on to other topics.

It's in part a reflection of an unspoken belief inside the White House that for all the scenes of chaos in Afghanistan, the public backs his decision and it will fade from memory by the midterm elections.

Instead, the White House is gearing up for a legislative sprint to pass more than \$4 trillion in domestic funding that will make up much of what Biden hopes will be his first-term legacy before the prospects of major lawmaking seize up in advance of the 2022 races.

On Friday, in remarks on August's disappointing jobs report, Biden tried to return to the role of public salesman for his domestic agenda and claim the mantle of warrior for the middle class.

"For those big corporations that don't want things to change, my message is this: It's time for working families — the folks who built this country — to have their taxes cut," Biden said. He renewed his calls for raising corporate rates to pay for free community college, paid family leave and an expansion of the child tax credit.

"I'm going to take them on," Biden said of corporate interests.

While Biden may want to turn the page, though, aides are mindful that the crises are not done with him.

Biden is planning to speak this week on new efforts to contain the delta variant and protect kids in schools from COVID-19. And his administration continues to face criticism for his decision to pull American troops from Afghanistan before all U.S. citizens and allies could get out.

"President Biden desperately wants to talk about anything but Afghanistan, but Americans who are hiding from the Taliban, ISIS, and the Haqqani network don't give a damn about news cycles, long weekends, and polling — they want out," said Republican Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska. He called on the Biden White House on Friday to provide a public accounting of the number of Americans and their allies still stuck inside Afghanistan.

Biden also will soon be grappling with fallout from the windup of two anchors of the government's COVID-19 protection package: The federal moratorium on evictions recently expired, and starting Monday, an estimated 8.9 million people will lose all unemployment benefits.

The president also is still contending with the sweeping aftereffects of Hurricane Ida, which battered the Gulf states and then swamped the Northeast. After visiting Louisiana last week, he'll get a firsthand look at some of the damage in New York and New Jersey on Tuesday.

Already, he is trying to turn the destruction wrought by the hurricane into a fresh argument for the infrastructure spending he's been pushing all along, telling local officials in Louisiana, "It seems to me we can save a whole lot of money and a whole lot of pain for our constituents — if when we build back, we build it back in a better way."

According to White House officials, even as other issues dominated headlines, Biden and his team have maintained regular conversations with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., about the president's legislative agenda. His legislative team held more than 130 calls and meetings with members of Congress, their chiefs of staff and aides on the infrastructure bill and spending package, and his administration has held over 90 meetings with legislative staff on crafting

the reconciliation bill.

Responding to concerns raised by pivotal Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., over the price tag on the roughly \$3.5 trillion social spending package, White House chief of staff Ron Klain told CNN on Sunday that he was convinced that the Democrat was "very persuadable" on the legislation.

Cabinet officials have also been engaged with lawmakers, officials said, and traveled to 80 congressional districts to promote the agenda across the country while Biden was kept in Washington.

Biden, said Beschloss, may have a leg up on some of his predecessors at moving beyond the crises to keep his legislative agenda on track, given his 50 years of experience in national politics.

"If there's anyone who has a sense of proportion and distance and perspective at a time like this, he does," Beschloss told The Associated Press. "For someone who's been in national life much more briefly and was new to the presidency, you're being stunned by things all the time."

How 9/11 changed air travel: more security, less privacy

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Ask anyone old enough to remember travel before Sept. 11, 2001, and you're likely to get a gauzy recollection of what flying was like.

There was security screening, but it wasn't anywhere near as intrusive. There were no long checkpoint lines. Passengers and their families could walk right to the gate together, postponing goodbye hugs until the last possible moment. Overall, an airport experience meant far less stress.

That all ended when four hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Center towers, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania.

The worst terror attack on American soil led to increased and sometimes tension-filled security measures in airports across the world, aimed at preventing a repeat of that awful day. The cataclysm has also contributed to other changes large and small that have reshaped the airline industry — and, for consumers, made air travel more stressful than ever.

Two months after the attacks, President George W. Bush signed legislation creating the Transportation Security Administration, a force of federal airport screeners that replaced the private companies that airlines were hiring to handle security. The law required that all checked bags be screened, cockpit doors be reinforced, and more federal air marshals be put on flights.

There has not been another 9/11. Nothing even close. But after that day, flying changed forever.

NEW THREATS, PRIVACY CONCERNS

Here's how it unfolded.

Security measures evolved with new threats, and so travelers were asked to take off belts and remove some items from bags for scanning. Things that clearly could be wielded as weapons, like the box-cutters used by the 9/11 hijackers, were banned. After "shoe bomber" Richard Reid's attempt to take down a flight from Paris to Miami in late 2001, footwear started coming off at security checkpoints.

Each new requirement seemed to make checkpoint lines longer, forcing passengers to arrive at the airport earlier if they wanted to make their flights. To many travelers, other rules were more mystifying, such as limits on liquids because the wrong ones could possibly be used to concoct a bomb.

"It's a much bigger hassle than it was before 9/11 — much bigger — but we have gotten used to it," Ronald Briggs said as he and his wife, Jeanne, waited at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport for a flight to London last month. The north Texas retirees, who traveled frequently before the pandemic, said they are more worried about COVID-19 than terrorism.

"The point about taking shoes off because of one incident on a plane seems somewhat on the extreme side," Ronald Briggs said, "but the PreCheck works pretty smoothly, and I've learned to use a plastic belt so I don't have to take it off."

The long lines created by post-attack measures gave rise to the PreCheck and Global Entry "trusted-traveler programs" in which people who pay a fee and provide certain information about themselves pass through checkpoints without removing shoes and jackets or taking laptops out of their bag.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 22 of 65

But that convenience has come at a cost: privacy.

On its application and in brief interviews, PreCheck asks people about basic information like work history and where they have lived, and they give a fingerprint and agree to a criminal-records check. Privacy advocates are particularly concerned about ideas that TSA has floated to also examine social media postings (the agency's top official says that has been dropped), press reports about people, location data and information from data brokers including how applicants spend their money.

"It's far from clear that that has any relationship to aviation security," says Jay Stanley, a privacy expert at the American Civil Liberties Union.

More than 10 million people have enrolled in PreCheck. TSA wants to raise that to 25 million.

The goal is to let TSA officers spend more time on passengers considered to be a bigger risk. As the country marks the 20th anniversary of the attacks, the TSA's work to expand PreCheck is unfolding in a way privacy advocates worry could put people's information at more risk.

At the direction of Congress, the TSA will expand the use of private vendors to gather information from PreCheck applicants. It currently uses a company called Idemia, and plans by the end of the year to add two more — Telos Identity Management Solutions and Clear Secure Inc.

Clear, which recently went public, plans to use PreCheck enrollment to boost membership in its own identity-verification product by bundling the two offerings. That will make Clear's own product more valuable to its customers, which include sports stadiums and concert promoters.

"They are really trying to increase their market share by collecting quite a lot of very sensitive data on as many people as they can get their hands on. That strikes a lot of alarm bells for me," says India McKinney, director of federal affairs for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, an advocacy group for digital rights.

TSA Administrator David Pekoske, though, sees Clear's strategy as helping TSA. Says Pekoske: "We have allowed the vendors to bundle their offerings together with the idea that would be an incentive for people to sign up for the trusted-traveler programs."

The TSA is testing the use of kiosks equipped with facial-recognition technology to check photo IDs and boarding passes rather than having an officer do it. Critics say facial-recognition technology makes errors, especially on people of color.

TSA officials told privacy advocates earlier this year that those kiosks will also pull photos taken when the traveler applied for PreCheck, McKinney says. That concerns her because it would mean connecting the kiosks to the internet — TSA says that much is true — and potentially exposing the information to hackers.

"They are totally focusing on the convenience factor," McKinney says, "and they are not focusing on the privacy and security factors."

'SECURITY THEATER?'

Despite the trauma that led to its creation, and the intense desire to avoid another 9/11, the TSA itself has frequently been the subject of questions about its methods, ideas and effectiveness.

Flight attendants and air marshals were outraged when the agency proposed in 2013 to let passengers carry folding pocket knives and other long-banned items on planes again. The agency dropped the idea. And after another outcry, the TSA removed full-body scanners that produced realistic-looking images that some travelers compared to virtual strip searches. They were replaced by other machines that caused fewer privacy and health objections. Pat-downs of travelers are a constant complaint.

In 2015, a published report said TSA officers failed 95% of the time to detect weapons or explosive material carried by undercover inspectors. Members of Congress who received a classified briefing raised their concerns to Pekoske, with one lawmaker saying that TSA "is broken badly."

Critics, including former TSA officers, have derided the agency as "security theater" that gives a false impression of safeguarding the traveling public. Pekoske dismisses that notion by pointing to the huge number of guns seized at airport checkpoints — more than 3,200 last year, 83% of them loaded — instead of making it onto planes.

Pekoske also ticked off other TSA tasks, including vetting passengers, screening checked bags with 3-D

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 23 of 65

technology, inspecting cargo and putting federal air marshals on flights.

"There is an awful lot there that people don't see," Pekoske says. "Rest assured: This is not security theater. It's real security."

Many independent experts agree with Pekoske's assessment, though they usually see areas where the TSA must improve.

"TSA is an effective deterrent against most attacks," says Jeffrey Price, who teaches aviation security at Metropolitan State University of Denver and has co-authored books on the subject. "If it's security theater, like some critics say, it's pretty good security theater because since 9/11 we haven't had a successful attack against aviation."

This summer, an average of nearly 2 million people per day have flowed through TSA checkpoints. On weekends and holidays they can be teeming with stressed-out travelers. During the middle of the week, even at big airports like DFW, they are less crowded; they hum rather than roar. Most travelers accept any inconvenience as the price of security in an uncertain world.

Travel "is getting harder and harder, and I don't think it's just my age," said Paula Gathings, who taught school in Arkansas for many years and was waiting for a flight to Qatar and then another to Kenya, where she will spend the next several months teaching. She blames the difficulty of travel on the pandemic, not the security apparatus.

"They are there for my security. They aren't there to hassle me," Gathings said of TSA screeners and airport police. "Every time somebody asks me to do something, I can see the reason for it. Maybe it's the schoolteacher in me."

THREATS FROM WITHIN

In 2015, a Russian airliner crashed shortly after taking off from Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt. American and British officials suspected it was brought down by a bomb.

It was, however, the exception rather than the rule. Even outside the United States, terror attacks on aviation since Sept. 11, 2001 have been rare. Is that because of effective security? Proving a negative, or even attributing it directly to a certain flavor of prevention, is always a dicey exercise.

And then there are the inside jobs.

— In 2016, a bomb ripped a hole in a Daallo Airlines plane shortly after takeoff, killing the bomber but 80 other passengers and crew survived. Somali authorities released video from Mogadishu's airport that they said showed the man being handed a laptop containing the bomb.

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— The following year, an American Airlines mechanic with Islamic State videos on his phone pleaded guilty to sabotaging a plane full of passengers by crippling a system that measures speed and altitude. Pilots aborted the flight during takeoff in Miami.

Those incidents highlight a threat that TSA needs to worry about — people who work for airlines or airports and have security clearance that lets them avoid regular screening. Pekoske says TSA is improving its oversight of the insider threat.

"All those folks that have a (security) badge, you're right, many do have unescorted access throughout an airport, but they also go through a very rigorous vetting process before they are even hired," Pekoske says. Those workers are typically reviewed every few years, but he says TSA is rolling out a system that will trigger immediate alerts based on law enforcement information.

With all the different ways that deadly chaos could happen on airplanes after 9/11, the fact remains: Most of the time, it hasn't. The act of getting on a metal machine and rising into the air to travel quickly across states and countries and oceans remains a central part of the 21st-century human experience, arduous though it may be.

And while the post-9/11 global airport security apparatus has grown to what some consider unreasonable proportions, it will never neutralize all threats — or even be able to enforce the rules it has written. Just ask Nathan Dudney, a sales executive for a sporting goods manufacturer in Nashville who says he

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 24 of 65

occasionally forgets about ammunition in his carry-on bag.

Sometimes it's discovered, he says, and sometimes not. He understands.

"You can't catch everything," Dudney says. "They're doing things to the best of their ability."

David Koenig, based in Dallas, covers air travel and the airline industry for The Associated Press. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/airlinewriter>

Guinea's new junta leaders seek to tighten grip on power

By BOUBACAR DIALLO and KRISTA LARSON Associated Press

CONAKRY, Guinea (AP) — Guinea's new military leaders sought to tighten their grip on power after overthrowing President Alpha Conde, warning local officials that refusing to appear at a meeting convened Monday would be considered an act of rebellion against the junta.

After putting the West African nation back under military rule for the first time in over a decade, the junta said Guinea's governors were to be replaced by regional commanders. A nightly curfew was put in place, and the country's constitution and National Assembly were both dissolved.

The military junta also refused to issue a timeline for releasing Conde, saying the 83-year-old deposed leader still had access to medical care and his doctors. The West African regional bloc known as ECOWAS, though, called for his immediate release and threatened to impose sanctions if the demand was not met.

Conde's removal by force Sunday came after the president sought a controversial third term in office last year, saying the term limits did not apply to him. While the political opposition and the junta both sought his ouster, it remained unclear Monday how united the two would be going forward.

It also was unknown how much support the junta leader Col. Mamadi Doumbouya had within the larger military. As the commander of the army's special forces unit he directed elite soldiers but it was still possible that others who remained loyal to the ousted president could mount a counter coup in the coming hours or days.

In announcing the coup on state television, Doumbouya cast himself as a patriot of Guinea, which he said had failed to progress economically since gaining independence from France decades earlier. Observers, though say the tensions between Guinea's president and the army colonel stem from a recent proposal to cut some military salaries.

"We will no longer entrust politics to one man. We will entrust it to the people," he said, draped in a Guinean flag with about a half dozen other soldiers flanked at his side.

The junta later announced plans to replace Guinea's governors with regional commanders at a public event Monday and warned: "Any refusal to appear will be considered rebellion."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres tweeted that he strongly condemned "any takeover of the government by force of the gun."

On Sunday morning, heavy gunfire broke out near the presidential palace and went on for hours, sparking fears in a nation that already has seen multiple coups and presidential assassination attempts. The Defense Ministry initially claimed that the attack had been repelled by security forces, but uncertainty grew when there was no subsequent sign of Conde on state television or radio.

The developments that followed closely mirrored other military coup d'états in West Africa: The army colonel and his colleagues seized control of the airwaves, professing their commitment to democratic values and announcing their name: The National Committee for Rally and Development.

It was a dramatic setback for Guinea, where many had hoped the country had turned the page on military power grabs.

Conde's 2010 election victory — the country's first democratic vote ever — was supposed to be a fresh start after decades of corrupt, authoritarian rule and political turmoil. In the years since, though, opponents said Conde, too, failed to improve the lives of Guineans, most of whom live in poverty despite the country's vast mineral riches of bauxite and gold.

The year after Conde's first election he narrowly survived an assassination attempt when gunmen sur-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 25 of 65

rounded his home overnight and pounded his bedroom with rockets. Rocket-propelled grenades landed inside the compound and one of his bodyguards was killed.

Violent street demonstrations broke out last year after Conde organized a referendum to modify the constitution. The unrest intensified after he won the October election, and the opposition said dozens were killed during the crisis.

In neighboring Senegal, which has a large diaspora of Guineans who opposed Conde, news of his political demise was met with relief.

"President Alpha Conde deserves to be deposed. He stubbornly tried to run for a third term when he had no right to do so," said Malick Diallo, a young Guinean shopkeeper in the suburbs of Dakar.

"We know that a coup d'etat is not good," said Mamadou Saliou Diallo, another Guinean living in Senegal. "A president must be elected by democratic vote. But we have no choice. We have a president who is too old, who no longer makes Guineans dream and who does not want to leave power."

Guinea has had a long history of political instability. In 1984, Lansana Conte took control of the country after the first post-independence leader died. He remained in power for a quarter-century until his death in 2008 and was accused of siphoning off state coffers to enrich his family and friends.

The country's second coup soon followed, putting army Capt. Moussa "Dadis" Camara in charge. During his rule, security forces opened fire on demonstrators at a stadium in Conakry who were protesting his plans to run for president. Human rights groups have said more than 150 people were killed and at least 100 women were raped. Camara later went into exile after surviving an assassination attempt, and a transitional government organized the landmark 2010 election won by Conde.

Larson reported from Dakar, Senegal. Associated Press writers Babacar Dione in Dakar, Senegal, and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Taliban say they took Panjshir, last holdout Afghan province

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Taliban said on Monday they have taken control of Panjshir province north of Kabul, the last holdout of anti-Taliban forces in the country and the only province the Taliban had not seized during their blitz across Afghanistan last month.

Thousands of Taliban fighters overran eight districts of Panjshir overnight, according to witnesses from the area who spoke on condition of anonymity, fearing for their safety. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid issued a statement, saying Panjshir was now under control of Taliban fighters.

"We tried our best to solve the problem through negotiations, and they rejected talks and then we had to send our forces to fight," Mujahid told a press conference in Kabul later Monday.

The anti-Taliban forces had been led by the former vice president, Amrullah Saleh, and also the son of the iconic anti-Taliban fighter Ahmad Shah Massoud who was killed just days before the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

Meanwhile in northern Balkh province, at least four planes chartered to evacuate several hundred people seeking to escape the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan have been unable to leave the country for days, officials said Sunday, with conflicting accounts emerging about why the flights weren't able to take off as pressure ramps up on the U.S. to help those left behind to leave.

An Afghan official at the airport in the city of Mazar-e-Sharif, the provincial capital, said that the would-be passengers were Afghans, many of whom did not have passports or visas, and thus were unable to leave the country. Speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to reporters, he said they had left the airport while the situation was being sorted out.

The top Republican on the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, however, said that the group included Americans and that they had boarded planes but the Taliban were not letting them take off, effectively "holding them hostage." Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas told "Fox News Sunday" that American citizens and Afghan interpreters were being kept on six planes. He did not say where that information came from.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 26 of 65

and it was not immediately possible to reconcile the two accounts.

The final days of America's 20-year war in Afghanistan were marked by a harrowing airlift at Kabul's airport to evacuate tens of thousands of people — Americans and their allies — who feared what the future would hold, given the Taliban's history of repression, particularly of women. When the last American troops pulled out on Aug. 30, though, many were left behind.

The U.S. promised to continue working with the new Taliban rulers to get those who want to leave out, and the militants pledged to allow anyone with the proper legal documents to leave.

Experts had doubted that resistance to the Taliban in Panjshir, the last holdout province, could succeed long-term despite the area's geographical advantage.

Nestled in the towering Hindu Kush mountains, the Panjshir Valley has a single narrow entrance. Local fighters held off the Soviets there in the 1980s and also, for a brief time, the Taliban a decade later under the leadership of Massoud. He was one of several former mujahedeen leaders who had ruled Kabul between 1992-96 but turned their guns on each other, leading to the 1996 arrival of the Taliban.

Massoud's son Ahmad, in a statement Sunday called for an end to the fighting. The young British-schooled Massoud said his forces were ready to lay down their weapons but only if the Taliban agreed to end their assault. Late on Sunday dozens of vehicles loaded with Taliban fighters were seen swarming into the Panjshir Valley.

There has been no statement from Saleh, Afghanistan's former vice president who had declared himself the acting president after President Ashraf Ghani fled the country on Aug. 15 as the Taliban reached the gates of the capital. The Taliban subsequently entered the presidency building that day.

The Taliban's lightning blitz across the country took less than a week to overrun some 300,000 Afghan government troops, most of whom surrendered or fled.

The whereabouts of Saleh and the young Massoud were not immediately known Monday.

Mujahid, the Taliban spokesman, sought to assure residents of Panjshir that they would be safe — even as scores of families reportedly fled into the mountains ahead of the Taliban's arrival.

"There is no need for any more fighting," Mujahid said at the press conference. "All Panjshir people and those who live in Panjshir are our brothers and they are part of our country."

The Taliban had stepped up their assault on Panjshir on Sunday, tweeting that their forces overran Rokha district, one of the largest in the province. Several Taliban delegations have attempted negotiations with the holdouts, but talks failed.

Fahim Dashti, the spokesman for the anti-Taliban group and a prominent media personality during previous governments, was killed in battle Sunday, according to the group's Twitter account. He was also the nephew of Abdullah Abdullah, a senior Kabul official of the former government involved in negotiations with the Taliban on the future of Afghanistan.

Mujahid denied Dashti died in battle with the Taliban, and claimed he was killed in an "internal dispute among two commanders in Panjshir," without offering any evidence to support that claim.

Mujahid also told reporters that the Taliban would announce a new government "within days" — one that would be inclusive, he said, without elaborating. Once the government is formed, members of the former Afghan army and security forces would be asked to return to work, he added.

"We need their expertise," he said. Members of the previous Afghan security forces would then join with Taliban fighters to form a single army, Mujahid added. Taliban fighters in civilian clothes riding in pickup trucks through Kabul would be replaced with Taliban men in uniform.

Asked what rights women would have under the Taliban, Mujahid promised all women would eventually be "asked to return" to their jobs.

The Taliban have claimed unspecified "security reasons" are behind the current slow pace of return of Afghan women to their workplace and also behind restricting women to their homes, unless accompanied by a male guardian. But many who remember their rule are skeptical.

Associated Press writer Rahim Faiez in Istanbul contributed to this report.

How 9/11 changed air travel: more security, less privacy

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Ask anyone old enough to remember travel before Sept. 11, 2001, and you're likely to get a gauzy recollection of what flying was like.

There was security screening, but it wasn't anywhere near as intrusive. There were no long checkpoint lines. Passengers and their families could walk right to the gate together, postponing goodbye hugs until the last possible moment. Overall, an airport experience meant far less stress.

That all ended when four hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Center towers, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania.

The worst terror attack on American soil led to increased and sometimes tension-filled security measures in airports across the world, aimed at preventing a repeat of that awful day. The cataclysm has also contributed to other changes large and small that have reshaped the airline industry — and, for consumers, made air travel more stressful than ever.

Two months after the attacks, President George W. Bush signed legislation creating the Transportation Security Administration, a force of federal airport screeners that replaced the private companies that airlines were hiring to handle security. The law required that all checked bags be screened, cockpit doors be reinforced, and more federal air marshals be put on flights.

There has not been another 9/11. Nothing even close. But after that day, flying changed forever.

NEW THREATS, PRIVACY CONCERNS

Here's how it unfolded.

Security measures evolved with new threats, and so travelers were asked to take off belts and remove some items from bags for scanning. Things that clearly could be wielded as weapons, like the box-cutters used by the 9/11 hijackers, were banned. After "shoe bomber" Richard Reid's attempt to take down a flight from Paris to Miami in late 2001, footwear started coming off at security checkpoints.

Each new requirement seemed to make checkpoint lines longer, forcing passengers to arrive at the airport earlier if they wanted to make their flights. To many travelers, other rules were more mystifying, such as limits on liquids because the wrong ones could possibly be used to concoct a bomb.

"It's a much bigger hassle than it was before 9/11 — much bigger — but we have gotten used to it," Ronald Briggs said as he and his wife, Jeanne, waited at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport for a flight to London last month. The north Texas retirees, who traveled frequently before the pandemic, said they are more worried about COVID-19 than terrorism.

"The point about taking shoes off because of one incident on a plane seems somewhat on the extreme side," Ronald Briggs said, "but the PreCheck works pretty smoothly, and I've learned to use a plastic belt so I don't have to take it off."

The long lines created by post-attack measures gave rise to the PreCheck and Global Entry "trusted-traveler programs" in which people who pay a fee and provide certain information about themselves pass through checkpoints without removing shoes and jackets or taking laptops out of their bag.

But that convenience has come at a cost: privacy.

On its application and in brief interviews, PreCheck asks people about basic information like work history and where they have lived, and they give a fingerprint and agree to a criminal-records check. Privacy advocates are particularly concerned about ideas that TSA has floated to also examine social media postings (the agency's top official says that has been dropped), press reports about people, location data and information from data brokers including how applicants spend their money.

"It's far from clear that that has any relationship to aviation security," says Jay Stanley, a privacy expert at the American Civil Liberties Union.

More than 10 million people have enrolled in PreCheck. TSA wants to raise that to 25 million.

The goal is to let TSA officers spend more time on passengers considered to be a bigger risk. As the country marks the 20th anniversary of the attacks, the TSA's work to expand PreCheck is unfolding in a

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 28 of 65

way privacy advocates worry could put people's information at more risk.

At the direction of Congress, the TSA will expand the use of private vendors to gather information from PreCheck applicants. It currently uses a company called Idemia, and plans by the end of the year to add two more — Telos Identity Management Solutions and Clear Secure Inc.

Clear, which recently went public, plans to use PreCheck enrollment to boost membership in its own identity-verification product by bundling the two offerings. That will make Clear's own product more valuable to its customers, which include sports stadiums and concert promoters.

"They are really trying to increase their market share by collecting quite a lot of very sensitive data on as many people as they can get their hands on. That strikes a lot of alarm bells for me," says India McKinney, director of federal affairs for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, an advocacy group for digital rights.

TSA Administrator David Pekoske, though, sees Clear's strategy as helping TSA. Says Pekoske: "We have allowed the vendors to bundle their offerings together with the idea that would be an incentive for people to sign up for the trusted-traveler programs."

The TSA is testing the use of kiosks equipped with facial-recognition technology to check photo IDs and boarding passes rather than having an officer do it. Critics say facial-recognition technology makes errors, especially on people of color.

TSA officials told privacy advocates earlier this year that those kiosks will also pull photos taken when the traveler applied for PreCheck, McKinney says. That concerns her because it would mean connecting the kiosks to the internet — TSA says that much is true — and potentially exposing the information to hackers.

"They are totally focusing on the convenience factor," McKinney says, "and they are not focusing on the privacy and security factors."

'SECURITY THEATER'?

Despite the trauma that led to its creation, and the intense desire to avoid another 9/11, the TSA itself has frequently been the subject of questions about its methods, ideas and effectiveness.

Flight attendants and air marshals were outraged when the agency proposed in 2013 to let passengers carry folding pocket knives and other long-banned items on planes again. The agency dropped the idea. And after another outcry, the TSA removed full-body scanners that produced realistic-looking images that some travelers compared to virtual strip searches. They were replaced by other machines that caused fewer privacy and health objections. Pat-downs of travelers are a constant complaint.

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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 29 of 65

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David Koenig, based in Dallas, covers air travel and the airline industry for The Associated Press. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/airlinewriter>

Volunteers help poorest survive Thailand's worst COVID surge

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — For two months, carpenter Tun Nye hasn't been able to send any money home to his parents in Myanmar to help them care for his 11-year-old son, after authorities in Thailand shut down his construction site over coronavirus concerns.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 30 of 65

No work has meant no income for him or his wife, who have been confined to one of more than 600 workers' camps dotted around Bangkok, living in small room in a ramshackle building with boards and blankets to cover missing windows.

In Thailand's worst virus surge yet, lockdown measures have reduced what little Bangkok's have-nots had to zero. Volunteer groups are working to ensure they survive.

For Tun Nye, 31, the bag of rice, canned fish and other staples dropped off by Bangkok Community Help volunteers meant not having to go hungry that week.

"It's been three or four months with no money and we don't have enough to eat," he said after collecting his supplies. "And there's no option to go home to Myanmar, it's worse there."

The government shut down the camps at the end of June after clusters of delta-variant infections spread among the workers living in the close quarters, further escalating a COVID-19 spike in Thailand. Many lost all income, and while employers were supposed to ensure all had enough food and water, many didn't.

"You would have one camp that had a lot of supplies, they were provided for, and you'd walk 30 meters (yards) to another and they hadn't seen their boss in two weeks and were told to go fish for food," said Greg Lange, one of the co-founders of Bangkok Community Help, which delivers about 3,000 hot meals a day and up to 600 "survival bags" like the one Tun Nye got.

Founded early in the pandemic last year, the organization has grown to more than 400 Thai and foreign volunteers like Lange, a 62-year-old native of Florida in the restaurant business who has lived in Thailand for two decades, and relies heavily on social media to spread the word and solicit help.

Donations come from corporations, individuals and even governments. Some give meals they've prepared themselves, others packaged goods or cash. Rice in survival packages recently distributed in the slums near Bangkok's main commercial port facilities was paid for through Australian Aid; apples were donated by the New Zealand-Thai Chamber of Commerce.

When hospitals became so overcrowded that COVID-19 patients couldn't get admitted, volunteer doctors and others brought oxygen to their homes, hoping to keep them alive long enough for an ICU bed to become free.

"We were mostly dealing with helping people get through this time with food supplies, necessities, but suddenly we were dealing with lives, people were dying in our arms — literally," said Lange's co-founder, Friso Poldervaart, a Dutchman who has lived in Thailand for more than a third of his 29 years.

"That situation is luckily a little bit better now, more beds are free and the home isolation program of the government works better, but we're still sending 20 to 30 people to the hospital every day, we're still administering oxygen," he said.

Thailand's new infections have ranged around 15,000 in recent days after peaking above 23,400 in mid-August, while deaths from COVID-19 have remained high, with 224 reported Sunday. The country has confirmed 1.2 million cases and more than 12,800 deaths in the pandemic.

The government hopes the country is now on its way out of this deadliest wave of the pandemic, which has accounted for 97% of Thailand's total cases and more than 99% of its deaths.

After a much-criticized slow start to vaccinations, some 35% of the population has now had at least one shot and about 12% are fully vaccinated. In Bangkok, more than 90% have had one shot and more than 22% have had two.

"In terms of the number of cases, we see that it's still in the high numbers but the trend is getting better," said Dr. Taweessap Siraprasasiri, an epidemiologist who is a senior adviser at the government's Disease Control Department.

Lockdown restrictions were relaxed last week, and many construction projects have been green-lighted to resume work, under tight supervision.

Taweessap said many of the construction workers have now received at least a first vaccine dose, and that many worksites have begun operating under what authorities have dubbed "bubble and seal" regulations — a "bubble" of workers are kept together and sealed off from outside contact to prevent COVID-19 from entering the site, or spreading beyond it.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 31 of 65

"We are also applying this concept to other workplaces like factories," he said.

When the camps were first shut, a group of Bangkok residents formed the We Care For Ourselves group, saying it was immediately evident to them that many workers had been left in crisis situations.

They created an online platform to match needs in the camps with donations available to better target the help, sharing their information with Bangkok Community Help and other groups.

Even though things are improving, group member Yuwadee Assavasrisilp said many unregistered workers still aren't vaccinated and as word has spread about their group, they're beginning to hear more about ongoing needs in the city's slums.

When people test positive, they're forced to isolate in their own homes, which usually means the virus spreads to family members, she said. And many are so poor they sneak out of isolation to work just so they can feed their families.

"Without the volunteers, we would have seen many more people die because they could not access the government's system in time," said 32-year-old Yuwadee. "The number of volunteers in Thailand has been surging — this shows the generosity of people in Thailand during the crisis — but at the same time, it reflects the government's big failure in handling this pandemic."

A recent outbreak in Tun Nye's camp, housing a 112-person crew building a mansion for an oil tycoon, meant that it had to stay shut longer than most but the worksite was approved for reopening last week. He and his wife both had the virus, but without serious symptoms and a negative test about a week ago means he can now get back on the job.

"Everyone's looking forward to it," he said, his smile broad enough to be visible through his surgical mask. "We've been without an income for so long."

For the volunteer groups, it's just another phase of a long pandemic.

Bangkok Community Help, in conjunction with the local government, last week opened a 52-bed isolation center in a primary school, unused due to the pandemic. And over the weekend volunteers comprehensively tested an entire neighborhood to get better data on infection rates.

"We don't stop," said Poldervaart. "We just adapt."

Associated Press journalists Chalida Ekvitthayavechnukul and Tassanee Vejpongsa contributed to this report.

Evacuations lifted for thousands in Tahoe as wildfire stalls

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Calif. (AP) — Tens of thousands of people who fled South Lake Tahoe in the teeth of a wildfire were returning home as crews finally managed to stall the advance of flames scant miles from the resort.

But authorities warned that residents of the scenic forest area on the California-Nevada state line weren't out of the woods yet, with risks ranging from smoky, foul air to belligerent bears.

Evacuation orders for South Lake Tahoe and other lakeside areas were downgraded to warnings on Sunday afternoon and California Highway Patrol officers began removing roadblocks along State Highway 50 from Nevada to the city limits.

The threat from the Caldor Fire hasn't entirely vanished but downgrading to a warning meant those who wish could return to their homes in what had been a smoke-choked ghost town instead of a thriving Labor Day getaway location.

"So far it hasn't been a mad rush of cars," South Lake Tahoe Fire Chief Clive Savacool said at an evening briefing. "We're happy to see that people are slowly trickling in, just because the city does need time to get ready."

Savacool said officials hoped to have the local hospital emergency room open within 24 hours and said paramedics were staffing fire engines for emergency medical care.

However, he said people with health problems might want to consider staying away because of the smoky air.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 32 of 65

People who do return should have enough medication and groceries and a full gas tank in order to be self-sufficient, Savacool said.

Law enforcement was still patrolling so "your home will still be safe," Savacool said.

However, authorities also warned that in the absence of humans, bears had gone to town, spreading trash everywhere that must be picked up.

"The delicate balance between humans and bears has been upset," and anyone who thinks a bear may have entered their home should call law enforcement, El Dorado County sheriff's Sgt. Simon Brown said.

The lifting of mandatory evacuation orders for the Tahoe area marked a milestone in the fight against the fire, which erupted on Aug. 14 and spread across nearly 340 square miles (880 square kilometers) of dense national parks and forests, tree-dotted granite cliffs and scattered cabins and hamlets in the northern Sierra Nevada.

At its peak, the fire had burned as much as 1,000 acres an hour and last month virtually razed the small community of Grizzly Flats.

But in recent days the winds had eased and thousands of firefighters took advantage of the better weather to hack, burn and bulldoze fire lines, managing to contain 43% of the perimeter.

Most of the western and southern sides of the fire had been corralled, although some areas still were off-limits.

No homes had been lost on the northeastern side of the fire nearest to the lake, and crews managed to carve more fire line along one edge of a fiery finger.

The fire hadn't made significant progress for days but there were still sections where crews were struggling to expand safe areas and mop up hot spots, allowing evacuation orders there to be lifted.

"We're up into the wilderness area," said Jake Cagle, a fire operations section chief. "It's just a tough piece of ground. We're in there beating it up. It's over a two-hour hike to get in there."

Mandatory evacuation orders on the Nevada side of the state line were lifted Saturday, although Douglas County authorities urged residents to stay alert, saying the fire still has the potential to threaten homes.

California and much of the U.S. West have seen dozens of wildfires in the past two months as the drought-stricken region sweltered under hot, dry weather and winds drove flames through bone-dry vegetation.

In California, nearly 14,500 firefighters were battling 13 large, active fires. Since the year began, more than 7,000 wildfires have devoured 3,000 square miles (nearly 8,000 square kilometers), Cal Fire said.

No deaths had been reported specifically from the fires. However, authorities said two people assigned to fire-related duties died from illness this week, officials said.

Marcus Pacheco, an assistant fire engine operator for Lassen National Forest with 30 years of experience, died on Thursday. He was assigned to the Dixie Fire burning north of the Caldor Fire, authorities said.

Other details weren't immediately released.

The Dixie Fire began in mid-July in the northern Sierra Nevada and is the second-largest wildfire in recorded state history. It has burned nearly 1,400 square miles (3,625 square kilometers) in five counties and three national parks and forests, according to Cal Fire.

A retired firefighter who was hired to help with the French Fire died from complications of COVID-19, authorities said. He was identified as Allen Johnson.

"Our team, the firefighting community and the world lost a great friend, mentor, teacher and comrade last night," said a Facebook posting last Wednesday from California Interagency Incident Management Team 14.

The French Fire in Kern County was 52% contained after burning about 41 square miles (106 square kilometers).

Fire concerns have shut down all national forests in the state.

California has experienced increasingly larger and deadlier wildfires in recent years as climate change has made the West much warmer and drier over the past 30 years. Scientists have said weather will continue to be more extreme and wildfires more frequent, destructive and unpredictable.

Treasured US West trout streams wither amid heat, drought

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

SARATOGA, Wyo. (AP) — The North Platte River in southern Wyoming has been so low in places lately that a toddler could easily wade across and thick mats of olive-green algae grow in the lazy current.

Just over two years ago, workers stacked sandbags to protect homes and fishing cabins from raging brown floodwaters, the highest on record.

Neither scene resembles the proper picture of a renowned trout fishing destination, one where anglers glide downstream in drift boats, flinging fly lures in hope of landing big brown and rainbow trout in the shadow of the Medicine Bow Mountains.

But both torrent and trickle have afflicted storied trout streams in the American West in recent years amid the havoc of climate change, which has made the region hotter and drier and fueled severe weather events. Blistering heat waves and extended drought have raised water temperatures and imperiled fish species in several states.

In the Rocky Mountains, the attention is on trout fishing, a big part of both the United States' \$1-billion-a-year fly fishing industry and the region's over \$100-billion-a-year outdoor recreation industry.

"It seems the extremes are more extreme," said Tom Wiersema, who's fished the upper North Platte as a guide and trout enthusiast for almost half a century.

Some years, Wiersema has been able to put in and float a section of river about 10 miles (16 kilometers) north of the Colorado line all summer. This year, Wiersema hasn't bothered to float that stretch since late June, lest he have to drag a boat over wet, algae-covered rocks.

"That's what the river is at that point. Round, slippery bowling balls," he said.

In nearby Saratoga, population 1,600, leaping trout adorn light posts and the sign for Town Hall. The North Platte gurgles past a public hot spring called the Hobo Pool, and trout fishing, along with the fall elk hunt, are big business.

Phil McGrath, owner of Hack's Tackle & Outfitters on the river, said low flows haven't hurt his business of guided fishing trips on drift boats, which launch from deeper water in town. The fishing has been excellent, he said.

"You want to go easy on the little guys in the afternoon," he urged a recent group of customers who asked where they could wet a line before a guided trip the next morning.

It's basic trout fishing ethics when temperatures get as high as they were that day, 85 degrees (29 Celsius), and water temperatures aren't far enough behind.

The problem: Water above 68 degrees (20 C) can be rough on trout caught not for dinner but sport — and release to fight another day. Low water warms up quickly in hot weather, and warm water carries less oxygen, stressing fish and making them less likely to survive catch-and-release fishing, especially when anglers don't take several minutes to release fish gently.

As air temperatures soared into the mid 80s and beyond this summer, Yellowstone National Park shut down stream and river fishing from 2 p.m. until sunrise for a month. Montana imposed similar "hoot owl" restrictions — so called because owls can be active early in the morning — on fabled trout rivers including the Madison flowing out of Yellowstone.

Low, warm water prompted Colorado for a time to impose voluntary fishing restrictions on the Colorado River's upper reaches — even as spasms of flash floods and mudslides choked the river and closed Interstate 70.

In rivers like the upper North Platte, which flows north out of Colorado, low water runs not only warm but slow and clear, cultivating algae. Mats of algae can collect insects while offering trout shade and cover from predators, but they're also a symptom of warm and stressful conditions, said Jeff Streeter, who guided on the upper North Platte before becoming a local representative for the fishing-oriented conservation group Trout Unlimited.

"Where that threshold is, I'm not sure. I worry about it a little bit," he said.

Like Colorado, Idaho and Wyoming didn't order anglers to stop fishing. Such an order was unlikely to

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 34 of 65

have much benefit, Idaho officials decided.

Wyoming's rivers would be difficult to monitor for enforcing closures because temperatures fluctuate widely throughout the day and from riffle to hole, said David Zafft, fish management coordinator for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

Drought and heat — beneath skies smudged by wildfire smoke — also have varying effects from one big Western river to the next. Many are dammed, including the North Platte as it begins a 100-mile-wide (160-kilometer-wide), 180-degree loop through a series of reservoirs that serve farmers and ranchers in Wyoming and Nebraska.

The largely predictable, cold flows out of Seminoe Reservoir make the North Platte's "Miracle Mile" section just upstream of Pathfinder Reservoir a trout fishing paradise.

Upstream of Seminoe, however, the river is more subject to the vagaries of nature. For trout fishing, mountain snows are at least as important as rain patterns in warmer months but expectations based on decades of snowpack records have come under doubt.

"Things have changed too much and too rapidly," said Zafft. "We are in the midst of figuring out how this climate is going to impact our snow, our runoff and temperatures. I don't think we can really answer those questions yet."

Records going back to 1904 back up Wiersema's suspicions about extremes on the upper North Platte.

In 2011, high flows smashed all previous monthly averages for June and July. The 2019 flood was the worst by a more than 20% margin over the 1923 runner-up.

Yet since 2000, the river has had eight of its lowest-flowing Augusts on record. They included the sixth-lowest in 2012, 12th lowest in 2018, and third-lowest in 2020.

August 2021 verges on the 10 lowest on average. Mountain snow last winter and spring was about normal, but the ground was so dry from last year that much of this year's melt soaked in without contributing to the flow.

The pattern is becoming more common in the West, said David Gochis, a hydrometeorologist with the Boulder, Colorado-based National Center for Atmospheric Research.

"A greater fraction of the snowpack, even if it's an average snowpack year, is just going into replenishing the water in the landscape — in the shallow aquifer, in the soils — versus that water fully filling up the soils and then filling up the streams," Gochis said.

Yet no heavy rain might not be all bad for the river's trout, given a massive 2020 wildfire that charred a vast area just east of the upper North Platte, in Medicine Bow National Forest.

In July, a mudslide in a burn area just 50 miles (80 kilometers) away in Colorado killed three people and clogged the Cache la Poudre River with silt. That hasn't happened on the North Platte, but the West's ever-hotter wildfire seasons are a threat to trout populations, said Helen Neville, senior scientist with Trout Unlimited.

"Fire is of course a natural process and something to which Western trout and salmon are well-adapted to, but the scale and intensity of recent fires may be pushing beyond their natural resilience in some cases," Neville said by email.

Climate change is especially worrisome for cutthroat trout, which unlike brown, rainbow and brook trout are native to the Rockies, according to Neville.

What's in store for the North Platte will depend on future rain, snow and melt patterns, not to mention ever-growing human demand for water. McGrath, the fly-fishing guide and tackle store owner, didn't doubt climate change is at work and that it's human caused. But he didn't seem to be losing sleep over it.

"If the world continues to get warmer, is trout fishing going to get worse? Yeah, of course. Trout is a cold-water animal, right?" said McGrath. "But is this going to happen tomorrow? No."

Follow Mead Gruver at <https://twitter.com/meadgruver>

Follow AP's complete drought coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/droughts>.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 35 of 65

A hurricane-hardened city coping 'the New Orleans way'

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS. (AP) — Shrimp and grits served for breakfast on the sidewalk at El Pavo Real. "Super Secret" seasoned pork and braised greens handed out at the door of the Live Oak Café. Spicy jambalaya dished out under a canopy erected on the empty sun-scorched streetcar tracks by a couple who just wanted to help.

The hearty fare is being served up from neighbor to neighbor, free for the asking and badly needed in a city where the lunchtime conversation topic is often the dinner menu and where camaraderie flourishes over Monday plates of rice and beans.

In New Orleans, food is just one of the many ways that residents help each other during hard times. And it's been no different in the days after Hurricane Ida, which flooded or destroyed homes, tore up trees and knocked out the entire city's power grid.

While chefs and amateur cooks alike piled plates high with comfort food, residents with generators charged their neighbors' cellphones and revved up chain saws to clear downed trees, while volunteers at a local church handed out bags of cleaning supplies and boxes of diapers.

"In times of crisis ... we all join together," said City Council member Jay Banks, one of several people at the Israelites Baptist Church who distributed donated goods in the low-income neighborhood of Central City on Thursday.

New Orleans' problems echo those of much of urban America: dismaying bursts of violent crime, ingrained poverty, a dearth of affordable housing for the poor. Throw in a decrepit drainage system in one of America's rainiest cities, and a dispiriting vulnerability to hurricanes as climate change contributes to more severe and frequent storms — and one could forgive anyone here who wants to give up and get out.

Some do. The population here has shrunk over the years. But many stay, and not just those who lack the means to relocate. They do so to nurture beloved neighborhood traditions: second-line parades, jazz funerals, century-old "social aid and pleasure clubs" — and good food.

In Treme, a cradle of Black culture and New Orleans brass band music, Backatown Coffee Parlor owners Jessica and Alonzo Knox couldn't cook in their all-electric kitchen but gave away salad makings, pastries and rapidly thawing bags of frozen, precooked crawfish tails.

El Pavo Real restaurant owner Lindsey McLellan used food preserved "with ice and prayer" to whip up a free steak taco meal Wednesday afternoon, using herbs and peppers salvaged from a hurricane-mangled community garden by neighbor Jelagat Cheruiyot, a professor in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Tulane University.

The garden is a project of the venerable Broadmoor Improvement Association, which rose to prominence advocating for the preservation of the working-class Broadmoor neighborhood after levee failures during Hurricane Katrina inundated homes there in 2005.

Refreshment-related relief efforts weren't limited to those with culinary skills.

"Take all you want. Leave what you can," read the hand-scrawled sign taped to a box of potato chip and snack mix bags on a little folding table in front of a "shotgun" cottage near the Mississippi River. Also available: bottled water, Pop-Tarts and granola bars.

Jessica Knox, a Mississippi native and 18-year resident of New Orleans, said she and her husband were in Washington during the 9/11 terrorist attacks and she knows from that experience that disaster brings people together, no matter where they are.

Still, New Orleans residents have had to display a certain resiliency many others haven't, she said. "You'd think we'd be weary at this point," she said. And yet, she senses a spirit of hope and resolve when she sits outside her powerless house and chats with folks who pass by. "I guess we're over the complaining part," she said.

El Pavo Real owner Lindsey McLellan is an area native and Katrina veteran who remembers dishing up free food after that killer storm when she was a restaurant employee. She's lived in New York and Washington and said she's seen examples of post-trauma camaraderie there, too, but — with a native's pride — she questions whether it's as baked into the culture elsewhere as it is in New Orleans.

"I mean, you definitely can find it," she said. "But it's just, sort of, the New Orleans way."

Hank Fanberg knew he was facing days without power as he gathered tree limbs and trash in the yard of his home in the Carrollton area Monday, the day after Ida hit. But he took comfort knowing that neighbors on either side of him had generators and were happy to help.

Friends of Bette Matheny helped her remove sodden carpets and other water-damaged debris from her recently renovated ranch house in Lakeview, an area devastated during the levee failures of Katrina and hit by flash flooding on Sunday.

"Every single person we know has offered us anything they can," Matheny said.

Matheny, who was 13 when she evacuated during Katrina 16 years ago, noted that people often remark on the storms that strike with such frequency in New Orleans and ask, "Why would you stay there? Does this make you want to move?"

She responded with emotion, her voice breaking.

"No. Why would I want to move? People are so amazing. You don't find this anywhere else, you know?"

This story removes an incorrect reference to Hurricane Katrina happening in 2016 and corrects the spelling of Bette Matheny's last name.

Brazil-Argentina qualifier suspended in coronavirus dispute

By MAURICIO SAVARESE AP Sports Writer

SAO PAULO (AP) — A World Cup qualifier between Brazil and Argentina was suspended amid chaotic scenes after local health officials walked onto the pitch on Sunday in a bid to remove three players who didn't comply with coronavirus restrictions.

The match featuring Argentina's Lionel Messi and Brazil's Neymar was stopped in the 7th minute because of the extraordinary interruption. The referee eventually suspended the game with the score at 0-0 after players, coaches, football officials and local authorities argued for several minutes on the field at NeoQuimica Arena.

Brazil's health agency said three of Argentina's England-based players should have been in quarantine instead of playing in the match. FIFA will have to determine what happens next with the qualifier.

Antonio Barra Torres, the president of Brazil's health agency, Anvisa, said four Argentina players would be fined and deported for breaching Brazil's COVID-19 protocols.

The four had been ordered to quarantine by Brazil's health agency ahead of the match. Despite that order, three of the four started for Argentina.

Aston Villa's Emiliano Martinez and Emiliano Buendia and Tottenham's Giovanni Lo Celso and Cristian Romero joined the Argentina squad despite the Premier League not wanting players to be released for international duty because of the need to quarantine for 10 days in a hotel on their return. Brazil's quarantine restrictions have added another complicating factor.

The Argentina football federation on Sunday night tweeted the message "We are going home!" along with a picture of the squad, including Emiliano Martinez and Buendia, boarding a flight for Buenos Aires.

TV Globo reported that the four England-based players told Brazilian police at the airport they did not fill their entry forms upon arrival. The report said the footballers were not deported and received permission to fly back with their team.

Brazil's health agency said all four allegedly told immigration officers that in the previous 14 days they hadn't been to Britain or anywhere else that Brazil puts on its own red list for COVID-19 risks. Those who have been in countries on the so-called red list face a 14-day quarantine in Brazil.

Martinez, Romero and Lo Celso started the match.

Anvisa there'd been a meeting Saturday involving regional and national football representatives to discuss the quarantine situation.

"At that meeting, Anvisa and local health authorities determined the players should quarantine," Anvisa said. "However, even after the meeting and the report to authorities, the players took part of Saturday

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 37 of 65

evening's training session."

The agency added that attempts earlier Sunday to remove the players and take them to the airport were frustrated.

"The decision to interrupt the match was never within Anvisa's reach. However, fielding players who did not comply with Brazilian laws and health norms, and also offered false information to authorities did require the agency to act, at its time and its way," the Brazilian agency said.

Brazilian TV showed several exchanges between players and coaches during the chaos. Brazil coach Tite seemed to be the most upset.

"They had 72 hours before the match. They had to do it at the time of the match!" Tite shouted to the Anvisa agents.

Lionel Messi also sounded irritated. "They did not talk to us before this," the Argentine captain repeated.

Brazil called up nine Premier League players for the World Cup qualifiers in September but none of them traveled to South America because of the restrictions.

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said both teams would have liked to play the game.

"A match between some of the best in the world ends like this. I would like people in Argentina to understand that as a coach I have to take care of my players. If people come and say they have to deport them, I will not allow," Scaloni told channel TyC Sports. "We wanted to play the match, so did the Brazilians."

Both national soccer associations issued statements to criticize the move by Brazil's health agency. Brazil players stayed on the field after Argentina left, and started doing training exercises. Argentinians, including those considered to be a COVID-19 risk, stayed for more than three hours in their dressing room until they left for the airport.

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

South Lake Tahoe residents can return as fire threat eases

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Calif. (AP) — Tens of thousands of people forced to flee South Lake Tahoe could begin returning to their homes after evacuation orders were downgraded to warnings Sunday afternoon as crews made progress against a massive wildfire.

The orders that sent 22,000 people in and around the resort fleeing last week were reduced to warnings as the fire virtually stalled a few scant few miles from the forest areas straddling the California-Nevada border.

California Highway Patrol officers began taking down roadblocks on State Route 50 at Stateline, Nevada, KCRA-TV reported. Members of the National Guard who had helped on the fire had left the area.

The threat from the Caldor Fire hasn't entirely vanished but downgrading to a warning meant those who wish could return to their homes in what had been a smoke-choked ghost town instead of a thriving Labor Day getaway location.

"So far it hasn't been a mad rush of cars," South Lake Tahoe Fire Chief Clive Savacool said at an evening briefing. "We're happy to see that people are slowly trickling in, just because the city does need time to get ready."

Savacool said officials hoped to have the local hospital emergency room open within 24 hours and said paramedics were staffing fire engines for emergency medical care.

However, he said people with health problems might want to consider staying away because of the smoky air.

People who do return should have enough medication and groceries and a full gas tank in order to be self-sufficient, Savacool said.

Law enforcement was still patrolling so "your home will still be safe," Savacool said.

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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 38 of 65

have entered their home should call law enforcement, El Dorado County sheriff's Sgt. Simon Brown said.

Mandatory evacuation orders on the Nevada side of the state line were lifted Saturday, although Douglas County authorities urged residents to stay alert, saying the fire still has the potential to threaten homes.

The wind-driven fire, which at its peak had burned as much as 1,000 acres an hour in the northern Sierra Nevada, was mainly held within current containment lines overnight and was now 43% contained, according to Cal Fire.

Most of the western and southern sides of the fire had been corralled, although some areas still were off-limits.

No homes had been lost on the eastern side of the fire nearest to the lake and crews managed to carve more fire line along one edge of a fiery finger, which hadn't moved east, Tim Ernst, a fire operations chief, said at a morning briefing.

"Everything has held real well" despite some flareups among timber and some hot spots in the west and southeastern sections of the nearly 340-square-mile (880-square-kilometer) blaze, Ernst said.

Winds that drove the flames through tinder-dry trees, grass and granite outcroppings eased in recent days, and fire crews were able to double down on bulldozing, burning or hacking out fire lines.

The fire that began on Aug. 14 has destroyed more than 700 homes, razed much of small hamlet of Grizzly Flats and injured nine firefighters and civilians, Cal Fire reported.

California and much of the U.S. West have seen dozens of wildfires in the past two months as the drought-stricken region sweltered under hot, dry weather and winds drove flames through bone-dry vegetation.

In California, nearly 14,500 firefighters were battling 13 large, active fires. Since the year began, more than 7,000 wildfires have devoured 3,000 square miles (nearly 8,000 square kilometers), Cal Fire said.

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Soldiers detain Guinea's president, dissolve government

By BOUBACAR DIALLO and KRISTA LARSON Associated Press

CONAKRY, Guinea (AP) — Mutinous soldiers in the West African nation of Guinea detained President Alpha Conde on Sunday after hours of heavy gunfire rang out near the presidential palace in the capital, then announced on state television that the government had been dissolved in an apparent coup d'état.

The country's borders were closed and its constitution was declared invalid in the announcement read aloud on state television by army Col. Mamadi Doumbouya, who told Guineans: "The duty of a soldier is

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 39 of 65

to save the country.”

“We will no longer entrust politics to one man. We will entrust it to the people,” said Doumbouya, draped in a Guinean flag with about a half dozen other soldiers flanked at his side.

It was not immediately known, though, how much support Doumbouya had within the military or whether other soldiers loyal to the president of more than a decade might attempt to wrest back control.

The junta later announced plans to replace Guinea’s governors with regional commanders at an event Monday and warned: “Any refusal to appear will be considered rebellion” against the country’s new military leaders.

The West African regional bloc known as ECOWAS quickly condemned the developments, threatening sanctions if Conde was not immediately released. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres tweeted that he strongly condemned “any takeover of the government by force of the gun.”

The U.S. State Department warned against violence and urged authorities in Guinea to avoid “extra-constitutional” actions that “will only erode Guinea’s prospects for peace, stability, and prosperity.” Spokesman Ned Price added in a statement that the junta’s “actions could limit the ability of the United States and Guinea’s other international partners to support the country.”

Conde’s whereabouts had been unknown for hours after the intense fighting Sunday in downtown Conakry until a video emerged showing the 83-year-old leader tired and disheveled in military custody.

The junta later released a statement saying Conde was in contact with his doctors. But they gave no timeline for releasing him other than to do say: “Everything will be fine. When the time comes, we will issue a statement.”

Conde, in power for more than a decade, had seen his popularity plummet since he sought a third term last year, saying that term limits did not apply to him. Sunday’s dramatic developments underscored how dissent had mounted within the military as well.

Doumbouya, who had been the commander of the army’s special forces unit, called on other soldiers “to put themselves on the side of the people” and stay in their barracks. The army colonel said he was acting in the best interests of the nation, citing a lack of economic progress by leaders since the country gained independence from France in 1958.

“If you see the state of our roads, if you see the state of our hospitals, you realize that after 72 years, it’s time to wake up,” he said. “We have to wake up.”

Observers, though say the tensions between Guinea’s president and the army colonel stemmed from a recent proposal to cut some military salaries.

On Sunday morning, heavy gunfire broke out near the presidential palace and went on for hours, sparking fears in a nation that already has seen multiple coups and presidential assassination attempts. The Defense Ministry initially claimed that the attack had been repelled by security forces, but uncertainty grew when there was no subsequent sign of Conde on state television or radio.

The developments that followed closely mirrored other military coup d’etats in West Africa: The army colonel and his colleagues seized control of the airwaves, professing their commitment to democratic values and announcing their name: The National Committee for Rally and Development.

It was a dramatic setback for Guinea, where many had hoped the country had turned the page on military power grabs.

Conde’s 2010 election victory — the country’s first democratic vote ever — was supposed to be a fresh start for a country that had been mired by decades of corrupt, authoritarian rule and political turmoil. In the years since, though, opponents said Conde too failed to improve the lives of Guineans, most of whom live in poverty despite the country’s vast mineral riches of bauxite and gold.

The year after his first election he narrowly survived an assassination attempt after gunmen surrounded his home overnight and pounded his bedroom with rockets. Rocket-propelled grenades landed inside the compound and one of his bodyguards was killed.

Violent street demonstrations broke out last year after Conde organized a referendum to modify the constitution. The unrest intensified after he won the October election, and the opposition said dozens

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 40 of 65

were killed during the crisis.

In neighboring Senegal, which has a large diaspora of Guineans who opposed Conde, news of his political demise was met with relief.

"President Alpha Conde deserves to be deposed. He stubbornly tried to run for a third term when he had no right to do so," said Malick Diallo, a young Guinean shopkeeper in the suburbs of Dakar.

"We know that a coup d'état is not good," said Mamadou Saliou Diallo, another Guinean living in Senegal. "A president must be elected by democratic vote. But we have no choice. We have a president who is too old, who no longer makes Guineans dream and who does not want to leave power."

Guinea has had a long history of political instability. In 1984, Lansana Conte took control of the country after the first post-independence leader died. He remained in power for a quarter century until his death in 2008, accused of siphoning off state coffers to enrich his family and friends.

The country's second coup soon followed, putting army Capt. Moussa "Dadis" Camara in charge. During his rule, security forces opened fire on demonstrators at a stadium in Conakry who were protesting his plans to run for president. Human rights groups have said more than 150 people were killed and at least 100 women were raped. Camara later went into exile after surviving an assassination attempt, and a transitional government organized the landmark 2010 election won by Conde.

Larson reported from Dakar, Senegal. Associated Press writers Babacar Dione in Dakar, Senegal, and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Divers identify broken pipeline as source of Gulf oil spill

By MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Divers at the site of an ongoing oil spill that appeared in the Gulf of Mexico after Hurricane Ida have identified the apparent source as one-foot diameter pipeline displaced from a trench on the ocean floor and broken open.

Talos Energy, the Houston-based company currently paying for the cleanup, said in a statement issued Sunday evening that the busted pipeline does not belong to them.

The company said it is working with the U.S. Coast Guard and other state and federal agencies to coordinate the response and identify the owner of the ruptured pipeline.

Two additional 4-inch pipelines were also identified in the area that are open and apparently abandoned. The company's statement did not make clear if oil was leaking from the two smaller pipelines, but satellite images reviewed by The Associated Press on Saturday appeared to show at least three different slicks in the same area, the largest drifting more than a dozen miles (more than 19 kilometers) eastward along the Gulf coast.

The AP first reported Wednesday that aerial photos showed a miles-long brown and black oil slick spreading about 2 miles (3 kilometers) south of Port Fourchon, Louisiana. The broken pipe is in relatively shallow water, at about 34 feet (10 meters) of depth.

Talos said the rate of oil appearing on the surface had slowed dramatically in the last 48 hours and no new heavy black crude had been seen in the last day.

So far, the spill appears to have remained out to sea and has not impacted the Louisiana shoreline. There is not yet any estimate for how much oil was in the water.

The Coast Guard said Saturday its response teams are monitoring reports and satellite imagery to determine the scope of the discharge, which is located in Bay Marchand, Block 4. Talos previously leased Bay Marchand, Block 5, but ceased production there in 2017, plugged its wells and removed all pipeline infrastructure by 2019, according to the company.

The area where the spill is located has been drilled for oil and gas for decades. Federal leasing maps show it contains a latticework of old pipelines, plugged wells and abandoned platforms, along with newer infrastructure still in use.

With the source of the oil unclear, Talos hired Clean Gulf Associates to respond to the spill. Clean Gulf,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 41 of 65

a nonprofit oil-spill response cooperative that works with the energy exploration and production industry, has had two 95-foot vessels at the scene of the spill since Wednesday attempting to contain and recover crude from the water.

The Bay Marchand spill is one of dozens of reported environmental hazards state and federal regulators are tracking in Louisiana and the Gulf following the Category 4 hurricane that made landfall at Port Fourchon a week ago. The region is a major production center of the U.S. petrochemical industry.

The AP also first reported Wednesday on images from a National Atmospheric and Oceanic Survey that showed extensive flooding and what appeared to be petroleum in the water at the sprawling Phillips 66 Alliance Refinery located along the Mississippi River south of New Orleans.

After AP published the photos, the Environmental Protection Agency tasked a specially outfitted survey aircraft to fly over that refinery on Thursday, as well as other industrial sites in the area hardest hit by the hurricane's 150-mph (240-kph) winds and storm surge.

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality said a state assessment team sent to the Alliance Refinery observed a spill of heavy oil being addressed with booms and absorbent pads. A levee meant to protect the plant had breached, allowing floodwaters to flow in during the storm and then back out as the surge receded.

State environmental officials said there was also no estimate yet available for how much oil might have spilled from the Phillips 66 refinery.

Follow AP Investigative Reporter Michael Biesecker at <http://twitter.com/mbieseck>

Contact AP's global investigative team at Investigative@ap.org.

Taliban stop planes of evacuees from leaving but unclear why

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — At least four planes chartered to evacuate several hundred people seeking to escape the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan have been unable to leave the country for days, officials said Sunday, with conflicting accounts emerging about why the flights weren't able to take off as pressure ramps up on the United States to help those left behind to flee.

An Afghan official at the airport in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif said that the would-be passengers were Afghans, many of whom did not have passports or visas, and thus were unable to leave the country. He said they had left the airport while the situation was sorted out.

The top Republican on the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, however, said that the group included Americans and they were sitting on the planes, but the Taliban were not letting them take off, effectively "holding them hostage." He did not say where that information came from. It was not immediately possible to reconcile the accounts.

The final days of America's 20-year war in Afghanistan were marked by a harrowing airlift at Kabul's airport to evacuate tens of thousands of people — Americans and their allies — who feared what the future would hold, given the Taliban's history of repression, particularly of women. When the last troops pulled out on Aug. 30, though, many were left behind.

The U.S. promised to continue working with the new Taliban rulers to get those who want to leave out, and the militants pledged to allow anyone with the proper legal documents to leave. But Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas told "Fox News Sunday" that American citizens and Afghan interpreters were being kept on six planes.

"The Taliban will not let them leave the airport," he said, adding that he's worried "they're going to demand more and more, whether it be cash or legitimacy as the government of Afghanistan." He did not offer more details.

The Afghan official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject, said it was four planes, and their intended passengers were staying at hotels while authorities worked out

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 42 of 65

whether they might be able to leave the country. The sticking point, he indicated, is that many did not have the right travel papers.

Residents of Mazar-e-Sharif also said the passengers were no longer at the airport. At least 10 families were seen at a local hotel waiting, they said, for a decision on their fates. None of them had passports or visas but said they had worked for companies allied with the U.S. or German military. Others were seen at restaurants.

The State Department has no reliable way to confirm information about such charter flights, including how many American citizens might be on them, since it no longer has people on the ground, according to a U.S. official. But the department will hold the Taliban to their pledges to let people travel freely, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly on the matter.

The small airport at Mazar-e-Sharif only recently began to handle international flights and so far only to Turkey. The planes in question were bound for Doha, Qatar, the Afghan official said. It was not clear who chartered them or why they were waiting in the northern city. The massive airlift happened at Kabul's international airport, which initially closed after the U.S. withdrawal but where domestic flights have now resumed.

Searing images of that chaotic evacuation — including people clinging to an airplane as it took off — came to define the final days of America's longest war, just weeks after Taliban fighters retook the country in a lightning offensive.

Since their takeover, the Taliban have sought to recast themselves as different from their 1990s incarnation, when they last ruled the country and imposed repressive restrictions across society. Women and girls were denied work and education, men were forced to grow beards, and television and music were banned.

Now, the world is waiting to see the face of the new government, and many Afghans remain skeptical. In the weeks since they took power, signals have been mixed: Government employees including women have been asked to return to work, but some women were later ordered home by lower-ranking Taliban. Universities and schools have been ordered open, but fear has kept both students and teachers away.

Women have demonstrated peacefully, some even having conversations about their rights with Taliban leaders. But some have been dispersed by Taliban special forces firing in the air.

Among the promises the Taliban have made is that once the country's airports are up and running, Afghans with passports and visas would be allowed to travel. More than 100 countries issued a statement saying they would be watching to see that the new rulers held to their commitment.

Technical teams from Qatar and Turkey arrived in recent days and are working to get the civilian airport operational.

On Saturday, state-run Ariana Airlines made its first domestic flights, which continued on Sunday. The airport is without radar facilities, so flights are restricted to daylight hours to allow for visual landing, said official Shershah Stor.

Several countries have also been bringing in humanitarian supplies. The Gulf state of Qatar, where the Taliban maintained a political office since 2013, is making daily flights into Kabul, delivering humanitarian aid for the war-weary nation. Bahrain also announced humanitarian assistance deliveries.

Meanwhile, the Taliban stepped up an assault on the last remaining pocket of resistance being led by fighters opposed to their rule.

The anti-Taliban fighters in Panjshir province, north of the Afghan capital, are being led by former vice president Amrullah Saleh, who has appealed for humanitarian aid to help the thousands of people displaced by the fighting.

A senior Taliban spokesman tweeted Sunday that Taliban troops had overrun Rokha district, one of largest of eight districts in Panjshir. Several Taliban delegations have attempted negotiations with the holdouts there, but talks have failed to gain traction.

Fahim Dashti, the spokesman for the group that is fighting the Taliban, was killed in a battle on Sun-

day, according to the group's Twitter account. Dashti was the voice of the group and a prominent media personality during previous governments.

He was also the nephew of Abdullah Abdullah, a senior official of the former government who is involved in negotiations with the Taliban on the future of Afghanistan.

Saleh fled to Panjshir after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani quit Afghanistan as the Taliban marched on the capital. The fighters' lightning blitz across the country took less than a week to overrun some 300,000 government troops, most of whom surrendered or fled.

Associated Press writers Rahim Faiez and Tameem Akhgar in Istanbul and Ellen Knickmeyer in Oklahoma City contributed to this report.

Search resumes for 2 missing after car swept away in storm

By DAVID PORTER and CRAIG RUTTLE Associated Press

PASSAIC, N.J. (AP) — As residents and businesses across New Jersey spent the holiday weekend trying to clean up damage from last week's storm, rescue workers resumed the search for two friends whose car was caught up in the floodwaters.

Nidhi Rana, 18, and Ayush Rana, 21, were last seen Wednesday evening when their car began floating toward a spot where the water flows underground toward the Passaic River. Passaic Mayor Hector Lora said in a text Sunday that a dozen search boats were taking part in the search with the aid of a state police air unit.

Gov. Phil Murphy, who said Saturday night the death toll in the Garden State had reached 27, said at least four people remained missing following what he called a "historic" storm. He said he had already sought federal assistance and would continue to ask for more "because we need it."

"We had rain in many communities in two or three hours that were equivalent to what they normally get in a month or two," Murphy told CBS's "Face The Nation" on Sunday. "This, sadly, we think is part of what we're going to be facing, more frequency and more intensity."

The remnants of Hurricane Ida killed at least 50 people in six Eastern states after it brought historic rain Wednesday that led to deadly flooding and sudden storm waters.

President Joe Biden is scheduled to be in New Jersey and New York City on Tuesday to survey storm damage, according to the White House.

Appearing Sunday at a New York City subway stop that sustained heavy flooding, Democratic New York Sen. Chuck Schumer renewed the call for Congress to pass a bipartisan infrastructure bill and a reconciliation bill that would dedicate billions to improving flood resiliency and addressing the broader effects of climate change.

"Ida was yet another wake-up call for New York and a nation where too many are hitting the snooze button on big and bold change," Schumer said at the 28th Street station. Videos showed rivers of water cascading from the street down onto the station's platform and tracks.

"Each of these hurricanes gets a name," Schumer said. "It's time to make one for ourselves as a nation that can keep doing the big things and the hard work that saves the planet and grows our economy."

In New Jersey, one victim who died the day after the storm was apparently electrocuted while trying to plug in a generator, authorities said. Aventino Soares, 58, of Bloomfield, was found by police officers around 11:30 p.m. Thursday on the side of an Ampere Parkway house, Bloomfield police told NJ.com.

According to his obituary, Soares was a founding member of a nonprofit trying to repair a church in Portugal, the country of his birth. He came to the United States in 1986 and lived in Newark before settling in Bloomfield in 1997. He is survived by his wife of 41 years, three children and several grandchildren, his obituary said.

In Connecticut, friends and colleagues remembered State Police Sgt. Brian Mohl as a caring and generous person who acted as a father figure to younger troopers and reveled in his son's exploits on the soccer field.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 44 of 65

Mohl's cruiser was swept away around 3:30 a.m. Thursday near the Pomperaug River in Woodbury. Dive teams initially found the empty car and then found Mohl's body further down the river.

"He would take guys in if they needed a place to stay," State Police Sgt. Corey Craft told the Hartford Courant. "He was a behind-the-scenes guy with a heart of gold. The world lost a good person."

A wake for Mohl is scheduled for Sept. 8 at the Xfinity Theater in Hartford, and his funeral will be held there the following day.

One New Jersey school damaged by flooding will likely remain closed for the remainder of the calendar year, an official told NJ Advance Media for NJ.com.

Superintendent Michael Burke said there was little chance that the Cresskill Middle/High School in Bergen County, which houses about 1,000 students, will be "even close to being ready until 2022, at the earliest."

The district has gotten permission from state education officials to conduct virtual classes when the school year starts Wednesday, he said. Officials are looking for off-campus locations to serve as classrooms and hopes to have in-person learning for "at least some grades" by November, he said.

Porter reported from New York.

Migrant caravan broken up again in southern Mexico

By MARCO UGARTE Associated Press

HUIXTLA, Mexico (AP) — Mexican border agents and police broke up a caravan of hundreds of migrants Sunday who had set out from southernmost Mexico — the fourth such caravan officials have raided in recent days.

The group of about 800 — largely Central Americans, Haitians, Venezuelans and Cubans — had spent then night at a basketball court near Huixtla, some 40 kilometers (25 miles) up the road from the border city of Tapachula where they had been kept awaiting processing by Mexican immigration officials.

But shortly before dawn, immigration agents backed by police with anti-riot gear went into the crowd, pushing many into trucks.

Hundreds of the migrants escaped running toward a river and hid in the vegetation.

"They began to hit me all over," a woman said amid tears, alleging that police also beat her husband and pulled one of her daughters from her arms.

"Until they give me my daughter, I'm not leaving," she told an Associated Press camera crew. But immigration agents surrounded the woman, her husband and other child and detained them.

The group was at least the fourth to be broken up over the past week after heading out in a caravan north, frustrated by the slow pace of of

The government has insisted that excessive force against a Haitian migrant caught on camera the past weekend was an aberration and two immigration agents were suspended.

Mexico has faced immigration pressures from the north, south and within its own borders in recent weeks as thousands of migrants have crossed its southern border, the United States has sent thousands more back from the north and a U.S. court has ordered the Biden administration to renew a policy of making asylum seekers wait in Mexico for long periods of time.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Thursday the strategy of containing migrants in the south was untenable on its own and more investment is needed in the region to keep Central Americans from leaving their homes.

Thousands of mostly Haitian migrants stuck in Tapachula have increasingly protested in recent weeks. Many have been waiting there for months, some up to a year, for asylum requests to be processed.

Mexico's refugee agency has been overwhelmed. So far this year, more than 77,000 people have applied for protected status in Mexico, 55,000 of those in Tapachula, where shelters are full.

Unable to work legally and frustrated by the delay and poor conditions, hundreds have set out north.

Miami teen's football game honors dad who died from COVID

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 45 of 65

By KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — The night before Alan Arellano died of COVID-19, his wife recorded a short audio message with their two youngest sons. Miami doctors had placed the 49-year-old man in a coma after he suffered a heart attack while being treated for the virus.

His family wasn't allowed to visit him, but after nearly 20 years of marriage Karyn Arellano knew the love of her life could still hear their voices, even in a coma.

"I know that you're going to get out of there very soon. Tomorrow's my game against Benedictine and I'm gonna play really good for you dad," his 16-year-old son and namesake Alan 'A.J.' Arellano said in the message, trying to sound upbeat.

His 14-year-old brother Evan chimed in, "I'm here for you. I love you."

Karyn Arellano, a kindergarten teacher, was weary and worried. Though she tried to sound positive on the recording, she'd struggled to sleep in the nearly two weeks since Alan's hospitalization and frequently called the nurses for middle-of-the-night updates.

The day after the family recorded the message, the doctor called her at school. Alan had suffered another heart attack and they were trying to resuscitate him. Karyn was hysterical.

"Please keep working on him. Don't give up on him. He's strong, he's a fighter," she recalled.

As they rushed to the hospital, a nurse held the audio message close to Alan's ear. "We love you daddy ... I'm here with you honey," their words echoed as a team of doctors worked frantically but ultimately fruitlessly to save him.

"While he was taking his last breaths, he was able to hear myself and my boys over and over again," she said. "I have peace knowing that his final moments were hearing his family's voices."

When Arellano married Karyn she already had a 2- and 5-year-old. He loved them as his own. Together, they had two more boys. Their family was his world.

He attended football and baseball games and practices, chauffeuring the children in his red pickup truck, blasting "Cheeseburger in Paradise," and pressing them about school and career goals.

As a college admissions counselor, he helped new students, many of them from low-income backgrounds and some of them adults struggling to turn their lives around. He spoke of them at the dinner table, and followed up to see how their classes were going.

He pushed the same message about education and working hard with his children, spending hours counseling 26-year-old Elyssa Hernandez, who is applying to medical school now. He often made Hernandez and her 28-year-old brother Erick dress up for mock interviews, peppering them with questions.

"We didn't really have a father figure," Erick Hernandez said, about when his mom married Alan. "He was always so selfless with us."

Erick Hernandez recently began college. He couldn't wait to tell Alan he'd gotten straight A's.

He was "a big teddy bear," Erick said, teaching him "how to take care of my brothers, respect your mom, just every lesson that a father would teach their son."

He preferred doing everything together as a family. Trips were based around the kids, including two expeditions to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in New York state, always eager to build memories.

Date nights were rare. But he told his wife there would be plenty of time for romantic vacations when the kids were grown.

"We're going to have our turn later," Karyn said. "We just wanted to make sure as husband and wife that we were always present and giving our children lessons that they can take with them."

Alan delighted in picking out the best baseball bat or football cleats for his younger sons, new clothes for an interview for his older children. When you are out in the world, you are representing the family, he often said.

When he tested positive for COVID-19 and quarantined in the family bedroom, aspiring doctor Elyssa brought him three meals a day while Karyn and Evan were at a baseball tournament.

Alan, meanwhile, was growing increasingly lethargic, with a troubling cough. His oxygen levels were

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 46 of 65

extremely low when he was taken to the ER. Ten days later he had a heart attack.

The doctors wanted to put him in a coma. Karyn was terrified. She remembers him trying to reassure her over the phone.

"Babe, I just want to let you know, I gave consent to intubate me and they're gonna fix me, they're going to fix my heart," he told her. "I love you."

It was their last conversation. He never regained consciousness.

The children have been inconsolable, the center of their family suddenly gone.

"I can't believe he won't be able to see me go to medical school," Elyssa sobbed.

Yet even in death, Alan's legacy is ever present.

During funeral preparations, Karyn says, A.J. pulled her aside, reminding her of his football game Friday night in Jacksonville, nearly six hours away.

"Buddy, you know it's OK to miss that football game. Your coaches aren't going to be upset."

But she says he was resolute.

"Mom, now more than ever I have to play every single game because I know how much daddy loved to watch me play football," he told her. "And I know daddy will be with me and he can see me."

In Jacksonville Friday night, Alan's 16-year-old namesake put on his navy football helmet. Even though they lost, it was never about the game. His mom and siblings all made the lengthy trip and Karyn set a gold-framed photo of Alan beside them in the stands.

On Monday, A.J. will put on a suit and tie and, along with his siblings, bury his hero.

Hospitals in crisis in least vaccinated state: Mississippi

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press/Report for America

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — As patients stream into Mississippi hospitals one after another, doctors and nurses have become all too accustomed to the rampant denial and misinformation about COVID-19 in the nation's least vaccinated state.

People in denial about the severity of their own illness or the virus itself, with visitors frequently trying to enter hospitals without masks. The painful look of recognition on patients' faces when they realize they made a mistake not getting vaccinated. The constant misinformation about the coronavirus that they discuss with medical staff.

"There's no point in being judgmental in that situation. There's no point in telling them, 'You should have gotten the vaccine or you wouldn't be here,'" said Dr. Risa Moriarity, executive vice chair of the University of Mississippi Medical Center's emergency department. "We don't do that. We try not to preach and lecture them. Some of them are so sick they can barely even speak to us."

Mississippi's low vaccinated rate, with about 38% of the state's 3 million people fully inoculated against COVID-19, is driving a surge in cases and hospitalizations that is overwhelming medical workers. The workers are angry and exhausted over both the workload and refusal by residents to embrace the vaccine.

Physicians at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, the only level one trauma center in all of Mississippi, are caring for the sickest patients in the state.

The emergency room and intensive care unit are beyond capacity, almost all with COVID patients. Moriarity said it's like a "logjam" with beds in hallways, patients being treated in triage rooms. Paramedics are delayed in responding to new calls because they have to wait with patients who need care.

In one hospital in Mississippi, four pregnant women died last week, said state health officer Dr. Thomas Dobbs. Three of the cases required emergency C-sections and babies were born severely premature.

"This is the reality that we're looking at and, again, none of these individuals were vaccinated," Dobbs said.

Moriarity said it's hard to put into words the fatigue she and her colleagues feel. Going into work each day has become taxing and heartbreaking, she said.

"Most of us still have enough emotional reserve to be compassionate, but you leave work at the end of the day just exhausted by the effort it takes to drug that compassion up for people who are not taking

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 47 of 65

care of themselves and the people around them," she said.

During a recent news conference, UMMC's head, Dr. LouAnn Woodward, fought back tears as she described the toll on healthcare workers.

"We as a state, as a collective, have failed to respond in a unified way to a common threat," Woodward said.

As the virus surges, hospital officials are begging residents to get vaccinated. UMMC announced in July that it will mandate its 10,000 employees and 3,000 students be vaccinated, or wear a N95 mask on campus. By the end of August, leaders revised that policy, vaccination is the only option.

Morarity said this surge has taken a toll on morale more than previous peaks of the virus. Her team thought in May and June that despite Mississippi's low vaccination rate, there was an end in sight. The hospital's ICUs were empty and they had few COVID patients. Then cases surged with the delta variant of the virus, swamping the hospital.

Numbers of total coronavirus hospitalizations in Mississippi have dipped slightly, with just under 1,450 people hospitalized for coronavirus on Sept. 1, compared with around 1,670 on Aug. 19. But they are still higher than numbers during previous surges of the virus.

In the medical center's children's hospital, emergency room nurse Anne Sinclair said she is tired of the constant misinformation she hears, namely that children can't get very ill from COVID.

"I've seen children die in my unit of COVID, complications of COVID, and that's just not something you can ever forget," she said.

"It's very sobering," continued Sinclair, who is the parent of a 2-year-old and a 5-year-old and worries for their safety. "I just wish people could look past the politics and think about their families and their children."

To deal with overflow COVID patients, Christian relief charity Samaritan's Purse set up an emergency field hospital in the parking garage of UMMC's children's hospital.

The hospital is treating an average of 15 patients a day, with the capacity for seven ICU patients.

Nurse Kelly Sites, who has also treated COVID patients in hotspots like California and Italy, said it's heartwrenching to know that some of the severe cases could have been prevented with the vaccine. Many patients are so sick they can't talk. Nurses walk around with scripture verses on duct tape on their scrubs and will recite them to their patients.

Samaritan's Purse is an international disaster relief organization with missions spanning multiple continents. Sites has responded to 20 missions, in Haiti, the Philippines, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and other places.

"To respond to the United States is quite surreal for us," she said. "It's a challenge because usually, home is stable. And so when we deploy, we're just going to the disaster. This is the first time where home is a disaster."

Leah Willingham is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Police clash with opponents of Serbian church in Montenegro

By PREDRAG MILIC Associated Press

CETINJE, Montenegro (AP) — Arriving in a military helicopter, the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro was inaugurated in the state's old capital on Sunday amid clashes between police and protesters who oppose continued Serb influence in the tiny Balkan nation.

Hospital officials in the city of Cetinje said at least 60 people were injured, including 30 police officers, in clashes that saw police launch tear gas against the demonstrators, who hurled rocks and bottles at them and fired gunshots into the air. At least 15 people were arrested.

Sunday's inauguration ceremony angered opponents of the Serbian church in Montenegro, which declared independence from neighboring Serbia in 2006. Since Montenegro split from Serbia, pro-independence

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 48 of 65

Montenegrins have advocated for a recognized Orthodox Christian church that is separate from the Serbian one.

Evading road blockades set up by the demonstrators, the new head of the Serbian church in Montenegro, Metropolitan Joanikije, arrived in Cetinje by a helicopter along with the Serbian Patriarch Porfirije. TV footage showed the priests being led into the Cetinje monastery by heavily armed riot police holding a bulletproof blanket to shield their bodies.

Patriarch Porfirije later wrote on Instagram that he was happy that the inauguration was held, but added that he was "horrified by the fact" that someone near the monastery wanted to prevent the ceremony "with a sniper rifle." The claim could not be immediately independently verified.

The demonstrators set up barriers with trash bins, tires and large rocks to try to prevent church and state dignitaries from coming to the inauguration. Chanting "This is Not Serbia!" and "This is Montenegro!," many of the protesters spent the night at the barriers amid reports that police were sending reinforcements to break through the blockade. Tires at one blockade were set on fire.

Montenegrins remain deeply divided over their country's ties with neighboring Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is the nation's dominant religious institution. Around 30% of Montenegro's 620,000 people consider themselves Serb.

Metropolitan Joanikije said after the ceremony that "the divisions have been artificially created and we have done all in our power to help remove them, but that will take a lot of time."

In a clear demonstration of the sharp political divide in Montenegro, President Milo Djukanovic, the architect of the state's independence from Serbia, visited Cetinje while the current pro-Serb Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapic went to Podgorica to welcome the Serbian patriarch.

While Krivokapic branded the protests as "an attempted terrorist act," Djukanovic said the protesters in Cetinje were guarding national interests against the alleged bid by the much larger Serbia to impose its influence in Montenegro through the church.

Djukanovic accused the current Montenegrin government of "ruthlessly serving imperial interests of (Serbia) and the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is a striking fist of Serbian nationalism, all against Montenegro."

Montenegro's previous authorities led the country to independence from Serbia and defied Russia to join NATO in 2017. Montenegro also is seeking to become a European Union member.

In Serbia, President Aleksandar Vucic, who has been accused by the opposition in Montenegro of meddling in its internal affairs in conjunction with Russia, congratulated Joanikije on his inauguration and praised the government for going ahead with the ceremony despite the clashes.

"Cetinje is a town where some 90% of the people are against the Serbian Orthodox Church, where there is hate towards everyone who is not Montenegrin," Vucic said in Belgrade. "This is not a real hate, its hate that is induced by certain politicians in Montenegro, so it was quite logical to expect what happened there."

The U.S. government urged all sides "to urgently de-escalate the situation."

"Religious freedom and the freedom of expression, including to peacefully assemble, must be respected," the U.S. Embassy said.

Joanikije's predecessor as church leader in Montenegro, Amfilohije, died in October after contracting COVID-19.

Dusan Stojanovic and Jovana Gec contributed from Belgrade, Serbia.

'Shang-Chi' blasts Labor Day records with \$71.4M debut

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — On what's traditionally one of the sleepest weekends at the movies, the Marvel film "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" smashed the record for Labor Day openings with an estimated \$71.4 million in ticket sales, giving a box office reeling from the recent coronavirus surge a huge

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 49 of 65

lift heading into the fall season.

The Friday-to-Sunday gross for "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings," Marvel's first film led by an Asian superhero, ranks as one of the best debuts of the pandemic, trailing only the previous Marvel film, "Black Widow" (\$80.3 million in July). Overseas, it pulled in \$56.2 million for a global three-day haul of \$127.6 million. Disney anticipates "Shang Chi," made for about \$150 million, will add \$12.1 million domestically on Monday.

The Walt Disney Co. opted to release "Shang-Chi" only in theaters where it will have an exclusive 45-day run. Some of the studio's releases this year, including "Black Widow," have premiered day-and-date in theaters and on Disney+ for \$30.

The strong opening of "Shang-Chi" — forecasts had been closer to \$50 million — was a major relief for Hollywood, which had seen jittery releases the last few weeks during rising COVID-19 cases driven by the delta variant. Several upcoming films have recently postponed out of the fall, including Paramount Pictures' "Top Gun: Maverick," "Jackass Forever" and "Clifford the Big Red Dog." Disney's weekend, though, should lend confidence to upcoming big-budget releases such as the James Bond film "No Time to Die" from MGM and United Artists Releasing, and Sony Pictures' "Venom: Let There Be Carnage."

"Shang-Chi" is the ultimate confidence-builder for the theatrical movie industry," said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for data firm Comscore. "This was a very important film. This was the first Marvel movie that's opened exclusively theatrically since 'Spider-Man: Far From Home' in July 2019. 'Shang-Chi' is a real testament of the power of a theatrical-first strategy to drive huge numbers of moviegoers to the multiplex."

Perhaps nobody was celebrating Sunday more than theater owners. Exhibitors have argued day-and-date releases significantly cannibalize ticket sales. Warner Bros., which is putting all of its 2021 releases simultaneously on HBO Max, has vowed to end the practice next year.

Adding to that argument is the continuing strong performance of "Free Guy," from Disney's 20th Century Studios. "Free Guy," contractually obligated to be released only in theaters, has grossed \$239.2 million globally. Without an in-home option, the Ryan Reynolds film has held especially strongly; it added \$8.7 million in North America over the weekend, good for third place. In China, "Free Guy" has made \$57 million in less than two weeks. ("Shang-Chi" doesn't yet have a China release date.)

Last week's top film, the Universal horror remake "Candyman," slid to second place with \$10.5 million. After the holiday weekend, Universal pegs its two-week total at \$41.9 million.

Still, you could also read a case for streaming in Disney's figures Sunday. "Shang-Chi," the studio noted, premiered roughly similarly to "Black Widow," which debuted with about \$160 million globally, but took in an additional \$60 million on Disney+ Premier Access. "Black Widow," a much more well-known property, launched before the delta variant was widespread in North America. Its release prompted a lawsuit from star Scarlett Johansson, who argued the day-and-date approach breached her contract and deprived her of potential earnings. Disney has said the release complied with Johansson's contract and called the suit without merit.

Disney has so far declined to telegraph its future theatrical intentions, including for its next Marvel movie, "Eternals" (due out Nov. 5). Bob Chapek, Disney's chief executive, earlier called the theatrical release of "Shang-Chi" "an interesting experiment" — a label that Canadian actor Simu Liu, who plays Shang-Chi took exception with. "We are not an experiment," Liu wrote on Twitter. "We are the underdog; the underestimated. We are the ceiling-breakers. We are the celebration of culture and joy that will persevere after an embattled year."

At the recent exhibitor convention CinemaCon, where some studios pledged faith in the big screen, Disney didn't make a presentation and instead simply screened "Shang-Chi." Directed by Destin Daniel Cretton, the film is based on a relatively little-known comic and features a largely Asian or Asian American cast, including Tony Leung, Awkwafina and Michelle Yeoh. Audiences and critics have heartily endorsed it. It has a 92% fresh score on Rotten Tomatoes and an "A" CinemaScore from moviegoers.

The success of "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" came on a typically quiet weekend for

Hollywood — one that would never normally feature the premiere of a new Marvel movie. The previous record over Labor Day weekend was \$30.6 million for 2007's "Halloween." But the pandemic has upended once-orderly release schedules. "Shang-Chi" drove moviegoing overall not to just radically higher levels than the pandemic-marred Labor Day weekend last year, but far above attendance in 2019.

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

After Ida's fury, infrastructure key in preventing misery

By LISA RATHKE and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

Deadly flooding delivered to the Northeast by the torrential rains of what remained of Hurricane Ida has brought a new urgency and a fresh look to how roads, sewers, bridges and other infrastructure must be improved to prevent such a catastrophe from happening again.

The world is changing and "our whole mindset, the playbook that we use," must change too, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy said Thursday as he toured Mullica Hills, New Jersey, where a 150-mph (241 kph) tornado splintered homes. "We have got to leap forward and get out ahead of this."

The devastation exposed flaws in preparation plans even after New Jersey and New York spent billions of dollars to prevent a reoccurrence of Superstorm Sandy's destruction in 2012, with much spent to protect coastal communities.

"Flash floods are now coming. It's not waves off the ocean or the sound," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said soon after last week's storm swept through.

Hochul and Murphy, both Democrats, agreed that the increasing frequency and intensity of storms demand a new approach that factors in flash floods.

The storm dumped so much rain so fast that a record 3 inches (7.5 centimeters) fell in an hour in New York Wednesday, overwhelming drainage systems. Some lives were lost when water flooded basement apartments, subway stations and vehicles. At least 50 people died in five northeastern states.

"I don't think many people could have predicted the severity of the loss of life and damage done by the flash rains," said Dr. Irwin Redlener, founding director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University. "People drowning in their basement apartments, in cars and so on is not something we typically would ever see in New York."

Hochul promised new answers to pressing questions, like whether warnings were clear enough and communications with the weather service were flawed as well as if subways needed a faster shutdown.

The effects of climate change are "happening right now," Hochul said. "It is not a future threat."

Warnings of worsening storm damage are not new.

In August 2011, the aftermath of Hurricane Irene killed six in Vermont, left thousands homeless, and damaged or destroyed over 200 bridges and 500 miles of highway. Of the state's 251 towns, 225 had infrastructure damage. Thirteen communities were severed from the outside world after flooding washed out roads, electricity and telephone communication. National Guard helicopters ferried supplies to stranded residents for days.

More than half a billion dollars was spent by the state and federal governments, and in donations by private individuals, to help Vermont recover.

To weaken effects of future storms, New York and other areas can learn from other cities like Singapore, Copenhagen and Amsterdam, where solutions included turning asphalt parking lots and schoolyards into spaces that can retain water, said Amy Chester, managing director for the nonprofit Rebuild by Design.

"Climate change is expensive. We're going to have to spend money on it and every single dollar we spend in any type of infrastructure needs to take into consideration the future," she said.

Redlener, the disaster preparedness expert, said New York City and other communities need to rethink warning systems and consider reengineering drainage, electrical and storm warning systems.

He noted that the city's aging subway system has long been relied upon to absorb excess water from heavy rains, but that was before record rainfalls set off unprecedented flooding.

"That can't work because there's people in the subways and we have to think about their safety also," he said.

And he said the future of New York City's basement apartments, which could number in the thousands, must be reconsidered.

"What are we going to do for them now and what are we gonna do for people in the future? Are we going to even permit people legally to live in basement apartments, and if not, do we have the capacity and the resources to have other alternatives? I don't know that we do," he said.

The system for warning people in areas threatened must be rethought and plans should be in place for what people should do and where they should go, he said.

Linda Shi, an assistant professor in the department of city and regional planning at Cornell University, said there are limits to what infrastructure improvements such as larger storm pipes and road elevation can bring.

She said most planners agree the strategies only buy time.

If the worsening storm trends continue, she said, ultimately there will be increased conversations about "managed retreat."

"If you want to make space for water, that means making space for water by moving people out of those places," Shi said.

Associated Press reporters Larry Neumeister in New York City, Wayne Parry in Piscataway, New Jersey, and Michael Hill in Albany, New York, contributed to this story.

After escape, Afghan director mourns her 'lost country'

By ANGELA CHARLTON and ALEX TURNBULL Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — As a filmmaker, Shahrbanoo Sadat watched with fascination as Taliban fighters took over her city and terrified crowds animated the streets. But as an Afghan woman, she also watched the scene through another prism and knew: It was time to flee.

After her family's harrowing escape from Kabul, Sadat is now warning world governments: "The Taliban is a terrorist group and the world should realize they are dangerous," she told The Associated Press in Paris on Sunday.

"I'm losing my belief in democracy, in human rights, in women's rights," she said, because she feels that Western countries aren't doing enough to defend these things in Afghanistan.

Sadat, whose first film "Wolf and Sheep" won an award linked to the 2016 Cannes Film Festival, and nine family members were among thousands of Afghans brought out by foreign governments before the last U.S. troops pulled out last week.

They spent 72 hours in line at the Kabul airport, fighting to get out. The first night, Afghan troops "were very aggressive, shooting from 6 p.m. until 10 a.m. We couldn't go forward, even a few meters." So the family tried another gate.

"We slept in a queue, moving every five minutes a few centimeters," she said.

Taliban forces pulled out the corpses of 11 people who had been crushed to death in the desperate crowd, she said.

Once in France, she was taken to an abandoned building in a Paris suburb that the government hastily converted into temporary shelter for those fleeing Afghanistan.

"For three days, we were in complete quarantine so we couldn't go anywhere. I didn't have internet," she said. "When they released us, we had only two hours and I ran to the mobile shop to get a SIM card. But other people, they went to the Eiffel Tower," she said.

"I was angry because ... we lost a country and people seemed to me very careless," thinking about tourism instead of their homeland, she said. "But on the other hand, we already lost it, so what is the point of crying?"

Sadat joined a protest Sunday by aid groups and others demanding that Western governments do more

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 52 of 65

to help those left behind and put pressure on the Taliban. Some Afghans who have been struggling for years to get asylum joined the demonstration, along with those who recently arrived.

Sadat is worried about relatives still in Afghanistan — and about one of her actors, who stayed in his native Panjshir province to try to defend Afghanistan's last remaining pocket of resistance to the Taliban, which stepped up its assault of the region Sunday.

The Taliban have sought to recast themselves as different from when they ruled in the 1990s, when they blocked women and girls from working and education and banned television and music. But many are skeptical that will hold true.

Sadat said differences were palpable before she left. She described a vendor refusing to sell her ice cream because Taliban fighters stood nearby — enjoying the same ice cream she was denied.

"They didn't look at me but I looked at them ... like a film director doing a casting," she said. "But as an individual, I was so scared."

Fellow female Afghan filmmakers who fled the Taliban begged the world not to forget the Afghan people, warning at the Venice Film Festival on Saturday that a country without culture will eventually lose its identity.

Sadat hopes to join her sister and partner in Germany, and revive work on her latest film, a romantic comedy. She remains determined to make films despite her exile.

"It's important to talk about Afghanistan's war from an Afghan perspective, and a feminine perspective," she said.

Follow all AP stories on developments in Afghanistan at <https://apnews.com/hub/Afghanistan>.

Wildfires, smoke snuff out outdoor adventures across US

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Andy Farquhar's plans for an outdoor adventure have gone up in smoke twice this summer.

The retired attorney and teacher from the Philadelphia area had planned to hike with a friend for several weeks on the Pacific Crest Trail north of Lake Tahoe until the second-largest fire in California history stampeded across the Sierra Nevada, closing a 160-mile (257-kilometer) stretch of the trail and blanketing the region in thick smoke.

"I saw a satellite view of where we were going, and all it was was fire," he said.

The two scrambled and chose a seemingly fireproof backup plan: canoeing a massive network of lakes and bogs on the Minnesota-Canada border. That plan went poof when lightning-sparked fires forced the closure of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

"We're batting zero now," Farquhar said.

Untold numbers of camping, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, rafting and biking adventures have been scrapped as U.S. wildfires have scorched nearly 7,900 square miles (20,460 square kilometers) this year in forests, chaparral and grasslands ravaged by drought. The vast majority are on public lands in the West that also serve as summer playgrounds.

More than 24,000 camping reservations out of 3.2 million so far this year have been canceled due to wildfires, according to data kept by Recreation.gov, which books campsites on most federal lands. That does not account for no-shows or people who left early.

All national forests are closed in California to prioritize fighting blazes, including the Caldor Fire near Lake Tahoe, a year-round outdoor paradise that attracts skiers, hikers, mountain bikers, boaters and paddleboarders.

Lassen Volcanic National Park also is closed because of the Dixie Fire, the blaze that forced Farquhar to cancel his plan to hike from the Lake Tahoe area to the Oregon border.

In June, fires closed several national forests in Arizona, derailing plans Kristin Clark made with family to camp by Lynx Lake in Prescott National Forest for her mother's 70th birthday.

She reserved the campsite in February. As the vacation neared, she watched as wildfires grew, bringing

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 53 of 65

new closures. She knew her trip was over before it began.

"That is the reality in Arizona. More and more frequently, we get wildfires," Clark said. "I was bummed. My husband was bummed. We were really looking forward to a week in nature to kind of disconnect."

Intense wildfires have coincided with a sharp uptick in people trying to find serenity in the wild after being cooped up during the coronavirus pandemic. Competition for online campground and backpacking permit reservations is stiff, and they can fill up six months in advance, leaving less flexibility for spontaneous trips or easy rescheduling.

One of the toughest tickets to score in California is a pass to summit Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the contiguous United States. Hundreds who managed to win a permit and trained for the arduous hike were foiled in June when a fire broke out near the main trailhead in the Inyo National Forest.

The trail was closed 10 days, preventing up to 1,850 people from hiking, said Debra Schweizer, a forest spokeswoman.

In addition to forest and park closures that have required people to cancel or change plans, plenty of other trips have been altered by approaching fires and the omnipresent pall of smoke that has created a respiratory hazard for millions nationwide.

Kerry Ellis of Boise, Idaho, and her family didn't do anything last summer because of COVID-19. So they were excited for a July rafting trip on the Salmon River with friends.

After a daylong drive, they arrived to find the area blanketed in smoke that made it uncomfortable for Ellis, who has asthma, to breathe. The outfitter described scenarios of the fire jumping the river, embers flying and smoke making it impossible for guides to see.

"They pointed out that once you push off, you're committed for the entire six days," Ellis said. "You have no cell service. It's Idaho backcountry. With that level of wildfire and smoke, the chances of evacuation would be difficult."

The outfitter canceled the trip. It was disappointing, but Ellis said it was the right decision.

Wildfire smoke has increasingly become a fixture on the Western landscape, ranging from a strong campfire odor in its most mild form to a serious health hazard that causes coughing fits and headaches. Satellite images show plumes from fires pouring into the sky and spreading widely, even reaching the East Coast.

For many, though, smoke appears to be an irritating but tolerable inconvenience when pricey or hard-to-get plans have been made.

Even as smoke shrouded the Tahoe basin last week — before evacuations were ordered at the south end of the lake — people in masks walked the beach or pedaled bikes along the shore.

A study of 10 years of campground bookings on federal land found relatively few cancellations or departures when smoke was present. The study by Resources for the Future, an independent nonprofit research institution, suggested campers were less likely to pull out of popular destinations like Glacier National Park in Montana or Yosemite National Park in California.

"Limited visitation seasons at northern parks like Glacier, as well as competitive reservations at popular parks like Yosemite, could lead campers to brave the smoky conditions rather than forego a trip altogether," the authors said.

Those patterns could change, particularly after the past two years of severe, pervasive fires that were not accounted for in the study, said Margaret Walls, a senior fellow with Resources for the Future who co-authored the study. She thinks the potential for smoke could factor into future plans.

"In the past, maybe you just went. You didn't think about the smoke," Walls said. "You used to be able to say, it'll be all right around the Grand Canyon. Not anymore."

When the Boundary Waters in Minnesota's Superior National Forest was closed last month, Farquhar was one of hundreds of paddlers who lost out. The outfitters who rent canoes, sell supplies and help them plan their trips also were hit hard.

Typically, the parking lot of Sawbill Canoe Outfitters is full of cars in August and all its roughly 200 canoes are in the wilderness, said Clare Shirley, the third-generation owner. Despite a blue sky and no smell of smoke recently, the boats were all on their racks late last month and the parking lot was nearly empty.

"It's very, very quiet around here, which is eerie," said Shirley, who estimated she was losing tens of thousands of dollars. "We're definitely missing out on a big chunk of our peak season."

Farquhar has pivoted once again. He and his friend were fixing up a canoe last week for a trip to the Debsconeag Lakes Wilderness Area in Maine. The state's forest service designated that area with its lowest rating for fire danger.

Two anchors of COVID safety net ending, affecting millions

By ASHRAF KHALIL and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mary Taboniar went 15 months without a paycheck, thanks to the COVID pandemic. A housekeeper at the Hilton Hawaiian Village resort in Honolulu, the single mother of two saw her income completely vanish as the virus devastated the hospitality industry.

For more than a year, Taboniar depended entirely on boosted unemployment benefits and a network of local foodbanks to feed her family. Even this summer as the vaccine rollout took hold and tourists began to travel again, her work was slow to return, peaking at 11 days in August — about half her pre-pandemic workload.

Taboniar is one of millions of Americans for whom Labor Day 2021 represents a perilous crossroads. Two primary anchors of the government's COVID protection package are ending or have recently ended. Starting Monday, an estimated 8.9 million people will lose all unemployment benefits. A federal eviction moratorium already has expired.

While other aspects of pandemic assistance including rental aid and the expanded Child Tax Credit are still widely available, untold millions of Americans will face Labor Day with a suddenly shrunken social safety net.

"This will be a double whammy of hardship," said Jamie Contreras, secretary-treasurer of the SEIU, a union that represents custodians in office buildings and food service workers in airports. "We're not anywhere near done. People still need help. ... For millions of people nothing has changed from a year and a half ago."

For Taboniar, 43, that means her unemployment benefits will completely disappear — even as her work hours vanish again. A fresh virus surge prompted Hawaii's governor to recommend that vacationers delay their plans.

"It's really scaring me," she said. "How can I pay rent if I don't have unemployment and my job isn't back?"

She's planning to apply for the newly expanded SNAP assistance program, better known as food stamps, but doubts that will be enough to make up the difference. "I'm just grasping for anything," she said.

President Joe Biden's administration believes the U.S. economy is strong enough not to be rattled by evictions or the drop in unemployment benefits. Officials maintain that other elements of the safety net, like the Child Tax Credit and the SNAP program (which Biden permanently boosted earlier this summer) are enough to smooth things over. On Friday, a White House spokesperson said there were no plans to reevaluate the end of the unemployment benefits.

"Twenty-two-trillion-dollar economies work in no small part on momentum and we have strong momentum going in the right direction on behalf of the American workforce," said Jared Bernstein, a member of the White House Council of Economic Advisers.

Labor Secretary Marty Walsh said he believed the country's labor force was ready for the shift.

"Overall the economy is moving forward and recovering," Walsh said in an interview. "I think the American economy and the American worker are in a better position going into Labor Day 2021 than they were on Labor Day 2020."

Walsh and others point to encouraging job numbers; as of Friday the unemployment rate was down to a fairly healthy 5.2%. But Andrew Stettler, a senior fellow with the Century Foundation, a left-leaning think tank, says the end of the expanded unemployment benefits is still coming too early.

Rather than setting an arbitrary deadline, Stettler says the administration should have tied the end of

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 55 of 65

the the protections to specific economic recovery metrics. He suggests three consecutive months with nationwide unemployment below 5% as a reasonable benchmark to trigger the end of the unemployment benefits.

"This does seem to be the wrong policy decision based on where we are," Stettler said.

The end to these protections while the economic crisis persists could have a devastating impact on lower-middle class families that were barely holding on through the pandemic. Potentially millions of people "will have a more difficult time regaining the foothold in the middle class that they lost," Stettler said.

Biden and the Democrats who control Congress are at a crossroads, allowing the aid to expire as they focus instead on his more sweeping "build back better" package of infrastructure and other spending. The \$3.5 trillion proposal would rebuild many of the safety net programs, but it faces hurdles in the closely divided Congress.

In the meantime, families will have to make do.

"These are two very important things that are expiring. There's no doubt that there will be families impacted by their expiration and that they will have additional hardship," Sharon Parrott, the president of the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, said in an interview.

The COVID-19 response has been sweeping in its size and scope, some \$5 trillion in federal expenditures since the virus outbreak in 2020, an unprecedented undertaking.

Congressional Republicans had supported some of the initial COVID-19 outlays, but voted lockstep against Biden's \$1.9 trillion recovery package earlier this year as unnecessary. Many argued against extending another round of unemployment aid, and Republicans vow to oppose Biden's \$3.5 trillion package lawmakers are expected to consider later this month.

There are still multiple avenues of support available, although in some cases the actual delivery of that support has been problematic.

States with higher levels of unemployment can use the \$350 billion worth of aid they received from the relief package to expand their own jobless payments, as noted by an Aug. 19 letter by Walsh and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen.

Federal rental assistance funds remain available, though the money has been slow to get out the door, leaving the White House and lawmakers pushing state and local officials to disperse funds more quickly to both landlords and tenants.

The investment bank Morgan Stanley estimated Thursday that the economy will grow at an annual pace of 2.9% in the third quarter, down sharply from its prior forecast of 6.5%. That decline largely reflects a pullback in federal aid spending and supply chain bottlenecks.

And the economy still faces hurdles. Union officials says sectors like hotel housekeepers and office janitorial staffs have been the slowest to recover.

"Our industry is the tip of the spear when it comes to COVID," said D. Taylor, president of UNITE HERE, a union that represents hotel housekeepers — a field that is "primarily staffed by women and people of color."

Many of those housekeepers never returned to full employment even as Americans resumed traveling and hotel occupancy rates swelled over the summer.

Taylor said several major hotel chains have moved to permanently cut down on labor costs by reducing levels of service under the guise of COVID. Taboniar's hotel in Hawaii for example has shifted to cleaning rooms every five days unless the guest specifically requests otherwise in advance. Even as the hotel was at more than 90% occupancy in August, she was only employed for half her usual pre-pandemic number of days.

The delta variant of the coronavirus also poses a challenge, threatening future school closures and the delay of plans to return workers to their offices.

Walsh called the delta variant "an asterisk on everything."

The sudden lapse of a crucial element of the pandemic safety net has fueled calls for a re-evaluation of the entire unemployment benefits system. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., the chairman of the Finance Committee, said in an interview it's crucial that Congress modernizes the unemployment insurance system

as part of the package.

"It's heartbreaking to know it didn't have to be this way," Wyden said.

One of the changes he proposes is to have jobless benefits more linked to economic conditions, so they won't expire in times of need. "We got to take the unemployment system into the 21st century," he said.

Associated Press writer Josh Boak contributed to this report.

Girls Aloud star Sarah Harding dies at 39 after cancer fight

LONDON (AP) — Singer Sarah Harding of the British pop group Girls Aloud has died after a battle with breast cancer, her mother said Sunday. She was 39.

The singer said last August that she had been diagnosed with breast cancer and it had spread to other parts of her body. On Sunday, her mother Marie said on Instagram: "It's with deep heartbreak that today I'm sharing the news that my beautiful daughter Sarah has sadly passed away."

"Many of you will know of Sarah's battle with cancer and that she fought so strongly from her diagnosis until her last day. She slipped away peacefully this morning," she wrote. She added that Harding was a "bright shining star" and would have wanted to be remembered for that, rather than for her fight against cancer.

Harding said earlier this year that she was told by a doctor that she will likely not be alive next Christmas. In her autobiography, released in March, she said she decided to announce her illness in the hope that others who have concerns would seek medical help and not leave a cancer diagnosis until it's too late.

Harding found fame in 2002 as a contestant on the ITV talent show "Popstars: The Rivals," which paved the way for her joining Girls Aloud alongside Nicola Roberts, Kimberley Walsh, Cheryl Tweedy and Nadine Coyle.

The group had several hits including "Sound of the Underground," "Love Machine" and "The Promise" before it split up in 2013.

After Girls Aloud, Harding appeared in several movies and television shows as well as a stage adaptation of "Ghost" the movie. She won the reality show "Celebrity Big Brother" in 2017.

Women say they met porn actor Jeremy for fun; rape came next

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Adult film actor Ron Jeremy leveraged the novelty of his celebrity to meet and often isolate women whom he raped and sexually assaulted, using the same tactics for years, according to grand jury testimony from 21 women that was unsealed Saturday.

"Wouldn't it be funny if we got a picture and an autograph from him?" one woman, identified only as Jane Doe 8, said she remembered telling her friend when they saw Jeremy in 2013 at a West Hollywood bar and grill. He would sexually assault her minutes later, testified the woman, one of several who said their attacks came in the same small bathroom.

"I was like, wow, you know, this is Ron Jeremy, I mean, I was kind of impressed. I'm like he's — I don't want to say 'celebrity,' but you know, he kind of was," said another woman, Jane Doe 7, when Jeremy came to the door of the Hollywood hotel room she was sharing with friends, where the porn actor would rape her soon after, according to her testimony.

Jeremy, 68, whose legal name is Ronald Jeremy Hyatt, pleaded not guilty to more than 30 counts of sexual assault, including 12 counts of rape, when the Los Angeles County grand jury returned an indictment against him on Aug. 25. He has been in jail since his arrest in June 2020. His attorney, Stuart Goldfarb, has said he is "innocent of all the charges" and they would prove it. An email seeking further comment from Goldfarb on Saturday was not immediately returned.

Nicknamed "The Hedgehog," Jeremy has been among the best-known and most prolific performers in the porn industry for decades, and became a recognizable pop cultural novelty through reality shows, public appearances and music videos. He has long been a magnet for seekers of autographs and selfies,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 57 of 65

which is how most of the women and girls aged 15 to 51 he is accused of assaulting first met him.

Some didn't even recognize him initially, but they came into his orbit because of the air of fame around him. A woman whom Jeremy is charged with sexually assaulting when she was 15 in 2004 said she approached him at a rave he was hosting in Santa Clarita, California.

"I didn't know who he was, but I just — everyone told me he was famous so I was excited to meet a celebrity," said the woman, now 33, known as Jane Doe 5.

After they met, he invited her backstage, where he asked her if she wanted to see "something cool," then lifted her in the air, put his hand under her skirt and molested her, she said.

Many women described Jeremy using the same methods in the same places.

He was a popular regular at the Rainbow Bar and Grill on the Sunset Strip in West Hollywood, where he had permission to use the employee bathroom.

He would lure women there by offering to show them the kitchen where the restaurant made its famous pizzas, or by telling them he knew a bathroom they could use when the public restrooms were closed after last call.

He would follow them into the small space, lock the door behind them, use his considerable size to block them from leaving, then rape them or engage in other sexual assault, several women testified.

Jane Doe 8 said that before her assault, she told Jeremy they were staying at the Loew's Hollywood Hotel but did not tell him the room number.

He appeared at the door the next day.

"I have connections all over this town," she remembered him saying when she asked how he found them. She had not told her friend, Jane Doe 7, about the assault, and failed in her attempts to get her out of the room, where Jeremy would rape her, according to their testimony.

Several women said Jeremy asked them to write a note about their experience on a napkin or scrap of paper in what prosecutors called an attempt to gain evidence of consent after the fact. The women, under duress and looking to get away, often complied.

Jeremy also gave some victims cash after the attacks for what prosecutors said were similar reasons.

"He just out of nowhere just tossed money at me," said a woman who got a \$100 bill from Jeremy after she said he raped her in 2019 in the Rainbow Bar and Grill's bathroom.

The woman's boyfriend and brother had warned her to stay away from Jeremy earlier in the evening when she asked who he was, but she took a picture with him anyway when she saw several others doing it.

She testified that she got into the car with them holding the cash and said, "This came from that guy you guys told me to stay away from. He just raped me in the bathroom."

The woman went to the police about an hour later, becoming one of the few who reported their assaults immediately. Some said Jeremy's status as a porn performer kept them from going to the authorities for years.

"He's a celebrity and what he's known for is having sex with people on camera for money," said Jane Doe 7, who like many of the accusers came forward only after Jeremy was arrested last year. "I thought there is no way anyone is going to believe me, and I just wanted to get out of there and forget all about it."

Associated Press writer Kathleen Foody contributed to this story from Chicago.

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton>

Oil boom remakes N. Dakota county with fastest growth in US

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

WATFORD CITY, N.D. (AP) — First came the roughnecks and other oil field workers, almost all men.

Lured by steady wages as the nation climbed out of the Great Recession, they filled McKenzie County's few motel rooms, then began sleeping in cars, tents, trailers — anything to hide from the cold wind cutting across the North Dakota prairie. Once empty dirt roads suddenly were clogged with tanker trucks. Crime rates spiked.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 58 of 65

Soon everything shifted yet again: The workers' spouses and children arrived. Classrooms swelled. Apartment buildings cropped up beside oil rigs. And the newcomers made this Northern Plains community their own.

The growth made McKenzie the nation's fastest-growing county during the past decade, according to the Census Bureau. It swept through like a twisting dust devil, shattering the rural innocence of a region known for inhospitable winters and long summer days perfect for growing crops. But it also brought youth, diversity and better wages — breathing new life into somnolent towns that had been losing population since the 1930s.

Dana Amon, who grew up in a double-wide trailer on a farm on the edge of the county seat, Watford City, remembers riding her horse across fields now dotted with tracts of modest housing lit up at night by flares from nearby oil wells.

"Our little town just blew up at the seams," she said.

FIGHTS AND FRENZY

Since the boom began in 2010, jobs in McKenzie County have come and gone with oil's changing fortunes. Crude prices peaked last decade at more than \$130 a barrel, fell below \$40, then rebounded before falling again when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

McKenzie just kept growing.

Watford City — perched on a bluff, its skyline defined by a pair of grain elevators — spilled out onto surrounding farmland. The flat, largely barren landscape of Amon's childhood now features mile after mile of worker camps, shopping centers, subdivisions, hotels, truck yards and warehouses.

When fights became frequent in bars along Main Street and fatal wrecks commonplace on the highways, people like Amon started to lock their doors at night.

Ten years on, the frenzy has settled. The wariness locals and newcomers held for one another eased. Along the way, lives got stitched together through school events, church services and along the sidelines of youth football games.

"I tell the locals, 'If you guys kick me out, I'm not leaving. It's my town,'" said Yolanda Rojas, a Tucson, Arizona, native who followed her husband to McKenzie County with their five children a year after he got a job in the oil fields.

From 2010 to 2014, the amount of crude produced in the county grew 1,800%. By the end of the decade, census figures show, its population more than doubled, to 14,704 residents.

Rojas and her husband, Ruben Vega, saved enough money to open a Mexican restaurant in March 2020 — just as the pandemic arrived. The business was teetering on failure when Rojas reached out to the community on social media. People in Watford City rallied to help, regularly ordering takeout to keep the family afloat.

Many of the customers were Hispanic and unknown to Rojas. Only when the census data came out did she learn that the number of Hispanics increased tenfold over the decade, a stark cultural shift for a community long dominated by farmers of northern European descent.

Hispanics now make up about 10% of the population — a share roughly equal to American Indians in the county, which includes part of the Fort Berthold Reservation. The reservation's three tribes — the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara — trace their roots in the area to long before the first European settlers.

'A BIG, EXTENDED FAMILY'

Oil was first discovered in McKenzie County in the 1950s, but it was the industry's fracking revolution that opened once inaccessible crude reserves and transformed North Dakota into a global energy player. Tens of billions of barrels of oil have yet to be tapped, according to government estimates, and new wells keep getting drilled.

County officials say the growth is far from over. School enrollment tripled over the past decade and is expected to double again by 2030.

Pump jacks pulling oil from the ground dot the landscape across the county's 2,860 square miles (7,400 square kilometers). Bordered by the Yellowstone River to the north, Lake Sakakawea to the east and Montana to the west, McKenzie is larger in land mass than Delaware.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 59 of 65

Howdy Lawlar, who chairs the McKenzie County Commission and whose family has grown wheat and raised cattle northwest of Watford City for five generations, recalled widespread frustration among farmers as thousands of oil trucks clogged roads not designed for such traffic.

Leaving his farm and trying to turn left into Watford City, Lawlar could wait for an hour for a gap in traffic. Bypasses were built to ease congestion. Pipelines went in to replace tanker trucks. At the height of the boom, almost 4,000 trucks daily crawled through Watford City. Recent counts tallied just over 320 trucks a day.

More police officers were hired to keep order and new schools built to get students out of temporary trailers.

"I feel like we're becoming a big, extended family," Lawlar said. "It's a good thing."

But while most families age, this one has become younger, with a median age of 30 compared to 39 in 2010. It's also more prosperous, with median household income increasing 61% to almost \$78,000, according to census data.

The money lured J.T. Smith, a 31-year-old native of the Fort Worth, Texas, area who took an oil field job in McKenzie County six years ago. His parents had moved to North Dakota for oil work several years before. At first he found the region bleak and uninviting.

Smith went back to Texas, where his wife and two children had remained, swearing he'd never come back.

STAYING FOR COMMUNITY

A few years later, another job offer in North Dakota came his way, so he decided to try again. This time he brought his family, and the rhythms of their lives have grown comfortable.

J.T. Smith leaves before dark for his job as an oil field safety adviser, climbing into a white company pickup and joining throngs of near-identical pickups that fan out every morning to drilling rigs, gas processing plants and pipeline construction projects across western North Dakota.

An hour later, the Smiths' 10-year-old son climbs onto a school bus that falls in with dozens of others funneling students to a gleaming new elementary and high school complex at the edge of town.

Smith and his wife, Virginia, have become deeply involved with the Assembly of God church, which doubled in size in recent years to about 400 members. Their children have made friends through a mixed martial arts gym.

Now when the Smiths go to the grocery store, they're bound to run into a half-dozen friends. It's one of many glimpses of lingering small-town charm.

"You're here for a month and everybody knows you," Virginia Smith said.

Despite the drastic changes over the last decade, the open landscape around Watford City retains a feeling of remoteness.

As Lawlar, the county commission chairman, worked recently to replace a barbed-wire fence bordering wheat fields that stretched to the horizon, the only sign of industry was the occasional truck rumbling on a distant road.

Grasshoppers sprung up ahead of Lawlar as he silently walked the fence line. His farmhand, Charlie Lewis, lumbered along in a Bobcat they used to push steel fenceposts into the dry dirt.

Lewis came for oil field work, then took a job with Lawlar during a downturn in crude prices. He plans to make this place his home and start a family.

"People come for the work and stay for the community," Lewis said. "The only time I think of going back is when it's 40 below."

Follow Matthew Brown on Twitter: @MatthewBrownAP

Until 2023? Parts shortage will keep auto prices sky-high

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — Back in the spring, a shortage of computer chips that had sent auto prices soar-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 60 of 65

ing appeared, finally, to be easing. Some relief for consumers seemed to be in sight.

That hope has now dimmed. A surge in COVID-19 cases from the delta variant in several Asian countries that are the main producers of auto-grade chips is worsening the supply shortage. It is further delaying a return to normal auto production and keeping the supply of vehicles artificially low.

And that means, analysts say, that record-high consumer prices for vehicles — new and used, as well as rental cars — will extend into next year and might not fall back toward earth until 2023.

The global parts shortage involves not just computer chips. Automakers are starting to see shortages of wiring harnesses, plastics and glass, too. And beyond autos, vital components for goods ranging from farm equipment and industrial machinery to sportswear and kitchen accessories are also bottled up at ports around the world as demand outpaces supply in the face of a resurgent virus.

“It appears it’s going to get a little tougher before it gets easier,” said Glenn Mears, who runs four auto dealerships around Canton, Ohio.

Squeezed by the parts shortfall, General Motors and Ford have announced one- or two-week closures at multiple North American factories, some of which produce their hugely popular full-size pickup trucks.

Late last month, shortages of semiconductors and other parts grew so acute that Toyota felt compelled to announce it would slash production by at least 40% in Japan and North America for two months. The cuts meant a reduction of 360,000 vehicles worldwide in September. Toyota, which largely avoided sporadic factory closures that have plagued rivals this year, now foresees production losses into October.

Nissan, which had announced in mid-August that chip shortages would force it to close its immense factory in Smyrna, Tennessee, until Aug. 30, now says the closure will last until Sept. 13.

And Honda dealers are bracing for fewer shipments.

“This is a fluid situation that is impacting the entire industry’s global supply chain, and we are adjusting production as necessary,” said Chris Abbruzzese, a Honda spokesman.

The result is that vehicle buyers are facing persistent and once-unthinkable price spikes. The average price of a new vehicle sold in the U.S. in August hit a record of just above \$41,000 — nearly \$8,200 more than it was just two years ago, J.D. Power estimated.

With consumer demand still high, automakers feel little pressure to discount their vehicles. Forced to conserve their scarce computer chips, the automakers have routed them to higher-priced models — pickup trucks and large SUVs, for example — thereby driving up their average prices.

The roots of the computer chip shortage bedeviling auto and other industries stem from the eruption of the pandemic early last year. U.S. automakers had to shut factories for eight weeks to help stop the virus from spreading. Some parts companies canceled orders for semiconductors. At the same time, with tens of millions of people hunkered down at home, demand for laptops, tablets and gaming consoles skyrocketed.

As auto production resumed, consumer demand for cars remained strong. But chip makers had shifted production to consumer goods, creating a shortage of weather-resistant automotive-grade chips.

Then, just as auto chip production started to rebound in late spring, the highly contagious delta variant struck Malaysia and other Asian countries where chips are finished and other auto parts are made.

In August, new vehicle sales in the U.S. tumbled nearly 18%, mainly because of supply shortages. Automakers reported that U.S. dealers had fewer than 1 million new vehicles on their lots in August — 72% lower than in August 2019.

Even if auto production were somehow to immediately regain its highest-ever level for vehicles sold in the U.S., it would take more than a year to achieve a more normal 60-day supply of vehicles and for prices to head down, the consulting firm Alix Partners has calculated.

“Under that scenario,” said Dan Hearsch, an Alix Partners managing director, “it’s not until early 2023 before they even could overcome a backlog of sales, expected demand and build up the inventory.”

For now, with parts supplies remaining scarce and production cuts spreading, many dealers are nearly out of new vehicles.

On a recent visit to the “Central Avenue Strip” in suburban Toledo, Ohio, a road chock-full of dealerships, few new vehicles could be found on the lots. Some dealers filled in their lots with used vehicles.

The supply is so low and prices so high that one would-be buyer, Heather Pipelow of Adrian, Michigan, said she didn't even bother to look for a new SUV at Jim White Honda.

"It's more than I paid for my house," she said ruefully.

Ed Ewers of Mansfield, Ohio, traveled about two hours to a Toledo-area Subaru dealer to buy a used 2020 four-door Jeep Wrangler. He considered buying new but decided that a used vehicle was more in his price range to replace an aging Dodge Journey SUV.

Mears, whose Honda dealership is running short of new inventory, said dealers are managing to survive because of the high prices consumers are having to pay for both new and used vehicles.

He doesn't charge more than the sticker price, he said — enough profit to cover expenses and make money. Nor does he have to advertise as much or pay interest on a large stock of vehicles. Many vehicles, he said, are sold before they arrive from the factory.

Chip orders that were made nine months ago are now starting to arrive. But other components, such as glass or parts made with plastic injection molds, are depleted, Hearsch said. Because of the virus and a general labor shortage, he said, auto-parts makers might not be able to make up for lost production.

Some tentative cause for hope has begun to emerge. Siew Hai Wong, president of the Malaysia Semiconductor Industry Association, says hopefully that chip production should start returning to normal in the fall as more workers are vaccinated.

Though Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Singapore and the United States all produce semiconductors, he said, a shortage of just one kind of chip can disrupt production.

"If there is disruption in Malaysia," Wong said, "there will be disruption somewhere in the world."

Automakers have been considering shifting to an order-based distribution system rather than keeping huge supplies on dealer lots. But no one knows whether such a system would prove more efficient.

Eventually, Hearsch suggested, the delta variant will pass and the supply chain should return to normal. By then, he predicts, automakers will line up multiple sources of parts and stock critical components.

"There will be an end to it, but the question is really when," said Ravi Anupindi, a professor at the University of Michigan who studies supply chains.

AP Writer Yuri Kageyama contributed to this report from Tokyo.

Nissan

Paralympic closing marks end of Tokyo's 8-year Olympic saga

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — The final act of the delayed Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics came Sunday, almost eight years to the day after the Japanese capital was awarded the Games.

The Paralympics ended a 13-day run in a colorful, circus-like ceremony at the National Stadium overseen by Crown Prince Akishino, the brother of Emperor Naruhito. The Olympics closed almost a month ago.

These were unprecedented Olympics and Paralympics, postponed for a year and marked by footnotes and asterisks. No fans were allowed during the Olympics, except for a few thousand at outlying venues away from Tokyo. A few thousand school children were allowed into some Paralympic venues.

"There were many times when we thought these games could not happen," Andrew Parsons, president of the International Paralympic Committee, said on Sunday. "There were many sleepless nights."

The closing ceremony was entitled "Harmonious Cacophony" and involved both able-bodied actors and others with disabilities. The theme was described by organizers as a "world inspired by the Paralympics, one where differences shine."

Like the Olympics, the Paralympics went ahead as Tokyo was under a state of emergency due to the pandemic. Like the Olympics, testing athletes frequently and isolating them in a bubble kept the virus largely at bay, though cases surged among a Japanese population that is now almost 50% fully vaccinated.

"I believe that we have reached the end of games without any major problems," said Seiko Hashimoto, the president of the Tokyo organizing committee.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 62 of 65

But there was fallout, however. Lots of it.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announced Friday — two days before the closing — that he would not continue in office. Suga hoped to get a reelection bump from the Olympics. He got the opposite as his approval rating plummeted after a slow vaccine rollout in Japan, and a contentious decision to stage the Games during the pandemic.

Suga succeeded Shinzo Abe, who resigned a year ago for health reasons. It was Abe who celebrated in the front row of a Buenos Aires hotel ballroom on Sept. 7, 2013, when then-IOC President Jacques Rogge announced Tokyo as the 2020 host — ahead of Istanbul and Madrid.

In a sad coincidence, Rogge died a week ago at 79 after being in poor health.

“Now that Prime Minister Suga is forced out, taking the blame for his failure to combat the coronavirus, it would be impossible to claim that the Olympics and Paralympics were successful, a unifying moments for Japan,” Koichi Nakano, a political scientist at Sophia University, wrote in an email to The Associated Press.

The Paralympics may leave a more tangible legacy in Japan than the Olympics, raising public awareness about people with disabilities and the provision of accessible public space.

The Paralympics involved a record number of athletes — 4,405 — and a record number of countries won medals. They also saw two athletes from Afghanistan compete, both of whom arrived several days late after fleeing Kabul.

“The Tokyo Games were a model of efficiency and friendliness,” Olympic historian David Wallechinsky said in an email to The Associated Press. “If it hadn’t been for the COVID-related difficulties, these would be right at or near the top of the best-organized of the 19 Olympics — Summer and Winter — I have attended.”

The costs also set records.

A study by the University of Oxford found these to be the most expensive Games on record. Japan officially spent \$15.4 billion to organize the Olympics and Paralympics, double the original estimate. Several government audits suggested the real costs are twice that. All but \$6.7 billion is public money.

The pandemic probably cost organizers almost \$800 million in lost ticket sales, a budget shortfall that will have to be made up by more government funds. In addition, local sponsors contributed more than \$3 billion to the operating budget, but got little return with few fans.

Toyota, a major Olympics sponsor, pulled its Games-related television advertising in Japan because of public opposition to the Games.

Toshiro Muto, the CEO of the organizing committee and a former deputy governor of the Bank of Japan, framed the costs as an investment. He acknowledged that it’s difficult to sort out what are — and what are not — Olympic costs.

“It has to be scrutinized further to segregate which part is investment and which part is expenditure,” Muto said in an interview last week. “It’s difficult to define the difference.”

Tokyo was also haunted by a vote-buying scandal during the bid process that forced the resignation 2 1/2 years ago of Japanese Olympic Committee president Tsunekazu Takeda. He was also an International Olympic Committee member.

Next up are the Beijing Winter Olympics, opening in five month. They have been billed as the “Genocide Games” by rights groups that want the Games pulled from China because of the reported internment of at least 1 million Uyghurs and other largely Muslim ethnic groups in Xinjiang in northwestern China.

The US Department of State and several other governments have called the human rights violations in Xinjiang a genocide, and one major IOC sponsor — Intel — has said it agrees with the characterization.

“The COVID-related restrictions that were imposed in Tokyo are like a dream come true for the Chinese dictatorship,” Wallechinsky said. “No foreign spectators, fewer foreign media; just what the Communist Party leadership would want. Will athletes protest, and if they do, what will the Chinese do? Deport them? Arrest them? We don’t know.”

The IOC, which pushed for Tokyo to go ahead and generated about \$3 billion-\$4 billion in television income, has already lined up the next three Summer Olympics; Paris in 2024, Los Angeles in 2028, and

Brisbane, Australia, in 2032.

The Winter Olympics after Beijing are in Milan-Cortina in Italy in 2026.

"I believe the IOC has to be greatly relieved that the next Games will be in France, Italy and the United States," Wallechinsky said. "Both Paris and Los Angeles are cities with venues and infrastructure that are already well in place."

Hashimoto, the head of the organizing committee, indicated Sunday that Sapporo would bid for the 2030 Winter Olympics. It was the host city in 1972.

"For 2030, Sapporo will definitely become a candidate," Hashimoto said. "I would hope this would become a reality."

More AP Olympics: <https://apnews.com/hub/2020-tokyo-olympics> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Crash victim recalls terror after Mississippi road collapse

Associated Press undefined

LUCEDALE, Miss. (AP) — A teenager said she could hear the terrifying sounds of other vehicles crashing around — and on top of — the pickup truck where she and her mother were trapped after the truck plunged into a dark, muddy pit when a Mississippi highway collapsed during torrential rain brought by Hurricane Ida.

"I saw a black hole, then I blacked out and I woke up and my mom was leaned over toward me. She was choking on her blood and she couldn't breathe or anything," 16-year-old Emily Williams of Wiggins, Mississippi, told WLOX-TV in a video call from her hospital room.

Williams managed to sit her 39-year-old mother, Amanda Williams, upright and stop her from choking. But, she said, she could still hear the chaos outside her family's truck.

"I remember hearing a car coming and then I heard a crash and I heard an engine going from a car because it was on top of us," Emily Williams said. "It didn't really move us really much, but then I heard the screeching of another car's tires. I heard people screaming and then it crashed."

Two people were killed and nine were injured late Monday when seven vehicles plunged, one after another, into a deep hole where a section of the two-lane Mississippi Highway 26 collapsed outside Lucedale. The Mississippi Highway Patrol initially said 10 were injured, but later released a list of nine names.

Amanda Williams also remains hospitalized.

Layla Jamison of Lucedale, a 17-year-old senior at George County High, was in the car that landed on the Williams' truck. Emily's aunt, Shanna Bordelon, said Jamison's car landed without crushing the cab where Emily and Amanda sat.

Emily Williams said waiting in the collapse zone for help was terrifying.

"In all honesty, I was ready to give up," she said. "I was like, 'We're not going to make it out of here. No one is going to find us. Everybody is just going to keep piling in.'"

Emily's father arrived, and she said once she heard him screaming from above, she knew she would be rescued. She is recovering from a torn colon, a broken leg and other injuries. Still, she said: "I feel so lucky."

Mississippi Highway Patrol Cpl. Cal Robertson said some of the vehicles ended up stacked on top of each other as they crashed into the abyss, which opened up in an area without street lights. Ida dumped as much as 13 inches (33 centimeters) of rain as it blew through Mississippi, the National Weather Service said.

State troopers, emergency workers and rescue teams responded to the crash site about 60 miles (95 kilometers) northeast of Biloxi, to find both the east and westbound lanes collapsed. Robertson said the hole removed about 50 to 60 feet (15 to 18 meters) of roadway, and was 20 to 30 feet (6 to 9 meters) deep.

The vehicles were later lifted out by a crane. A drone video published by the Sun Herald showed how a raised berm beneath the road washed away, leaving a red-clay scar that runs for hundreds of feet, from

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 64 of 65

a cemetery on one side into a wooded area on the other.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Sept. 6, the 249th day of 2021. There are 116 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Sept. 6, 2006, President George W. Bush acknowledged for the first time that the CIA was running secret prisons overseas and said tough interrogation had forced terrorist leaders to reveal plots to attack the United States and its allies.

On this date:

In 1901, President William McKinley was shot and mortally wounded by anarchist Leon Czolgosz (CHAWL-gawsh) at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. (McKinley died eight days later; Czolgosz was executed on Oct. 29.)

In 1909, American explorer Robert Peary sent a telegram from Indian Harbor, Labrador, announcing that he had reached the North Pole five months earlier.

In 1943, 79 people were killed when a New York-bound Pennsylvania Railroad train derailed and crashed in Philadelphia.

In 1972, the Summer Olympics resumed in Munich, West Germany, a day after the deadly hostage crisis that claimed the lives of eleven Israelis and five Arab abductors.

In 1975, 18-year-old tennis star Martina Navratilova of Czechoslovakia, in New York for the U.S. Open, requested political asylum in the United States.

In 1991, the Soviet Union recognized the independence of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

In 1995, Baltimore Orioles shortstop Cal Ripken broke Lou Gehrig's record by playing his two-thousand-131st consecutive game.

In 1997, a public funeral was held for Princess Diana at Westminster Abbey in London, six days after her death in a car crash in Paris. In Calcutta, India, weeping masses gathered to pay homage to Mother Teresa, who had died the day before at age 87.

In 2002, meeting outside Washington, D.C. for only the second time since 1800, Congress convened in New York to pay homage to the victims and heroes of September 11.

In 2007, opera star Luciano Pavarotti died in Modena, Italy, at the age of 71.

In 2017, Hurricane Irma, the most powerful hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic, pounded Puerto Rico with heavy rain and powerful winds; authorities said more than 900,000 people were without power. (Hurricane Maria, which would destroy the island's power grid, arrived two weeks later.)

In 2019, Zimbabwe's president announced that Robert Mugabe, the country's former leader who was forced to resign after a 37-year rule, had died at the age of 95; he had taken power after white minority rule ended in 1980.

Ten years ago: A man with a rifle opened fire in an IHOP restaurant in Carson City, Nevada, killing three uniformed National Guard members and a woman having breakfast with her husband; gunman Eduardo Sencion also shot himself and died in the parking lot. Convoys of Moammar Gadhafi loyalists, including his security chief, fled Libya, crossing the Sahara into Niger.

Five years ago: On the campaign trail, Democrat Hillary Clinton accused Republican Donald Trump of insulting America's veterans and pressing dangerous military plans, while Trump declared "our country is going to hell" because of policies he said Clinton would make even worse.

One year ago: Rescuers in military helicopters finished airlifting 207 people to safety after an explosive wildfire trapped them in a popular camping area in California's Sierra National Forest. Temperatures reached 111 degrees in downtown Los Angeles and a record-shattering 121 degrees in the nearby Woodland Hills neighborhood of the San Fernando Valley, the highest temperature ever recorded in Los Angeles County. San Francisco set a record for the date with a high of 100 degrees, smashing the previous mark by 5

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 06, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 061 ~ 65 of 65

degrees. Top-seeded Novak Djokovic was defaulted from his fourth-round match at the U.S. Open after he accidentally hit a line judge with a tennis ball; he had smacked the ball behind him after falling behind in the first set.

Today's Birthdays: Comedian JoAnne Worley is 85. Country singer David Allan Coe is 82. Rock singer-musician Roger Waters (Pink Floyd) is 78. Actor Swoosie Kurtz is 77. Comedian-actor Jane Curtin is 74. Rock musician Mick Mashbir is 73. Country singer-songwriter Buddy Miller is 69. Actor James Martin Kelly is 67. Country musician Joe Smyth (Sawyer Brown) is 64. Actor-comedian Jeff Foxworthy is 63. Actor-comedian Michael Winslow is 63. Rock musician Perry Bamonte is 61. Actor Steven Eckholdt is 60. Rock musician Scott Travis (Judas Priest) is 60. Pop musician Pal Waaktaar (a-ha) is 60. Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is 59. Television journalist Elizabeth Vargas is 59. Country singer Mark Chesnutt is 58. Actor Betsy Russell is 58. Actor Rosie Perez is 57. R&B singer Macy Gray is 54. Country songwriter Lee Thomas Miller (Songs: "The Impossible" "You're Gonna Miss This") is 53. Singer CeCe Peniston is 52. Actor Daniele Gaither is 51. Actor Dylan Bruno is 49. Actor Idris Elba is 49. Actor Justina Machado is 49. Actor Anika Noni (ah-NEE'-kuh NOH'-nee) Rose is 49. Rock singer Nina Persson (The Cardigans) is 47. Actor Justin Whalin is 47. Actor Naomie Harris is 45. Rapper Noreaga is 44. Actor Natalia Cigliuti is 43. Rapper Foxy Brown is 43. Actor Howard Charles is 38. Actor/singer Deborah Joy Winans is 38. Actor Lauren Lapkus is 36. Rock singer Max George (The Wanted) is 33.