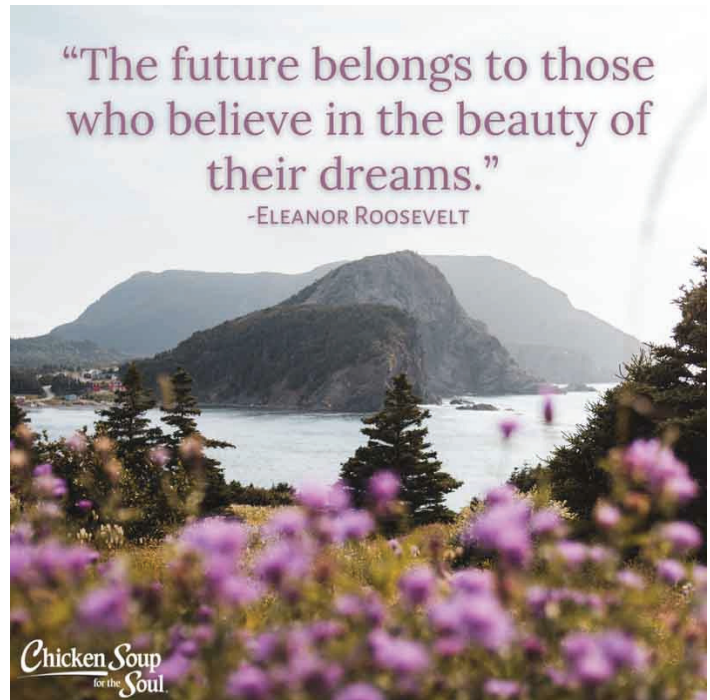


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Upcoming Events

Monday, Oct. 4

State Boys Golf Meet at Madison
Oral Interp at Milbank Invitational

Cancelled: Junior Varsity Football hosts Sisseton
(rescheduled from 9-20-21)

Tuesday, Oct. 5

State Boys Golf Meet at Madison
Soccer Playoffs for boys and girls
Junior High Volleyball at Redfield (7th at 4 p.m.,
8th at 5 p.m.)

Thursday, Oct. 7

10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: Flu Shot Clinic at Groton Area
1 p.m.: NEC Cross Country Meet at Webster
4 p.m. to 8 p.m.: Parent/Teacher Conferences
5 p.m.: Junior High Football hosting Webster Area

Friday, Oct. 8 - NO SCHOOL

8 a.m. to Noon: Parent/Teacher Conferences
10 a.m.: Lake Region Marching Festival in Groton
Noon to 3:30 p.m.: Faculty Inservice

Saturday, Oct. 9

Soccer Second Round Playoffs
Volleyball at Redfield Tourney
Pumpkin Fest in Groton

Monday, Oct. 11

No School - Native American Day

Tuesday, Oct. 12

12:43 p.m. to 2:43 p.m.: PSAT Pre-Administration
Volleyball at Tiospa Zina (7th/C match at 5 p.m.,
8th/JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow)
7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

Wednesday, Oct. 13

Elementary School LifeTouch Pictures, 8 a.m. to
11 a.m.
PSAT Testing for sophomores and juniors during
first hour

Thursday, Oct. 14

High School LifeTouch Pictures, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.
3:30 p.m.: Region 1A cross Country Meet in Web-
ster

4:00 p.m.: Junior High Football Jamboree in Groton
Volleyball hosts Milbank (7th/C match at 65 p.m.,
8th/JV at 6 p.m. with varsity to follow)

Friday, Oct. 15

7 p.m.: Football at Sisseton

Saturday, Oct. 16

Oral Interp at Florence
State Soccer in Sioux Falls
JV Volleyball Tourney in Milbank

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

The Minnesota Vikings fall to 1-3 as they struggle to contain the athletic and powerful Cleveland Browns pass rush, ultimately only doing enough offensively to put up a total of 7 points for the whole game.

First Half:

After losing the coin toss, the Vikings received the ball to start the game. It appeared early that the Viking offense was going to put on a show yet again as they marched down the field on their first drive easily using a total of 14 plays, none of which resulted in negative yardage. Thanks to a Justin Jefferson touchdown, the Vikings got off to an early 7-0 lead over the Browns. Amazingly, that would be the only points scored for a Minnesota Vikings team that came into the game averaging 29 points a game.

The Browns also came into this game with an explosive offense, averaging 28.6 points a game. However, unlike Minnesota's balanced offensive attack, the Cleveland offense relies much more heavily on the running game than on their quarterback, Baker Mayfield. It was never more evident than it was today, as the Browns' rushing attack ran for 184 yards while Baker Mayfield only passed for 155 yards.

Using a run-heavy approach, the Browns dominated the time of possession in the first half, controlling the ball for more than 7:10 than the Vikings. All that time on the field seemed to wear down the defense. On their lone touchdown drive, the Browns were able to run a total of 6 plays inside the red zone—thanks in part to a Vikings defensive holding call on a 4th down stop. Then at the goal line, the drive concluded with an easy Kareem Hunt 1-yard touchdown run.

After a successful 2-point conversion, the Vikings were down 8-7 with just 1:16 left in the first half.

The Vikings would go three and out, allowing Cleveland to drive back down the field to set up field-goal to end the half. Browns lead 11-7.

Second Half:

If you enjoy the punting game, the second half of this game was for you. The second half saw the Browns and the Vikings end eight consecutive drives with a punt. Not until the 6:21 mark of the 4th quarter did the punting streak end. A 53-yard field goal by Chase McLaughlin gave the Browns a 14-7 lead.

The Viking offense, which struggled mightily since their first drive, now saw themselves needing a touchdown to tie the game. That hope quickly evaporated as Kirk Cousins threw an interception on the first play of the drive. It was on a deep pass intended for Adam Thielen, his first interception of the season. The Vikings did get the ball back one more time but could not complete a hail mary pass as time expired.

The final score of the game: Browns 14 - Vikings 7.

Statistical Leaders:

Kirk Cousins 20 for 38, 203 yards, 1 TD

Dalvin Cook 9 carries for 34 yards rushing, 0 TDs

Justin Jefferson 6 catches for 84 yards, 1 TD

The highlight of the day:

The Viking defensive backs might have had their best game of the season, holding Baker Mayfield to a 45% completion percentage and 155 passing yards.

The irony of the day:

A week ago, it was a ball-controlled balanced attack by the Vikings that helped beat the Seahawks. Former offensive coordinator and now Cleveland head coach, Kevin Stefanski knew that was a recipe for success against his former mentor, Mike Zimmer.

Next game:

The Vikings now look to get back on track next week as they face the lowly 0-4 Detroit Lions. The Vikings have not lost to the Lions since 2017. For a Vikings team that on paper has talent, this Week 5 game against Detroit could be the perfect game that gives the team the confidence it needs moving forward.

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#472 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

I'm back early: Too much news to wait another couple of days; these little chats are long enough as it is. Although most of the news is good, I'm still looking for less news overall. I'd been hoping that by this point I would have wrapped this project up—or at least be doing only the most occasional check-in. Alas, no. At any rate, here we are, so let's get to work.

As of midday today, we were looking at a total of 43,627,419 cases reported in the US so far in the pandemic. That means we're likely to hit 44 million yet this week, possibly before the next time we get together. Seven-day new-case average is down to 108,009, so that's moving in the right direction fairly quickly. Needs to be maybe a tenth of that, but we're making progress.

In important news, the hospitalization crisis is easing across the country. There are still three clusters: (1) Mountain West, (2) Texas, (3) part of the Southeast (Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia) with serious trouble spots; but hospitalizations overall are way down. Two of our clusters, Texas and the Southeast except for West Virginia, are heading downward too, so that should be getting better soon. The seven-day average is 78,526, which is down a good 25 percent from its peak in mid-September. Good progress.

Deaths are coming down very slowly yet; the seven-day average is 1882 as of mid-day. Last time we talked, I said we were going to hit 700,000 deaths before we talked again. We did—did it that very night actually. I've been keeping track of the history here too. We should note that this last 100,000 (as well as a good chunk of the 100,000 before that) came after vaccines were widely available to everyone over the age of 16. That's depressing; most of those deaths were preventable. For what it's worth, have a look.

First death – February 6, 2020

100,000 – May 27 – 111 days

200,000 – September 23 – 119 days

300,000 – December 14 – 82 days

400,000 – January 19 – 36 days

500,000 – February 22 – 34 days

600,000 – June 16 – 114 days

700,000 – October 1 – 107 days

We should also note here an analysis of nursing home deaths published Friday by the Kaiser Family Foundation. You will recall that, early in the pandemic, the death rate in these facilities was horrifying, and then it declined as vaccines rolled out and an all-out effort was made to get this population covered. There was a spike in nursing home deaths again in July and August, coinciding with the spread of B.1.617.2 or Delta, the variant first identified in India. While vaccination rates are quite high (almost 85 percent) in residents, they are not (65 percent) among nursing home workers. The spikes occurred in communities with high transmission and low vaccination rates. We know the folks living in homes are among the most vulnerable, given elderly and ill people are less likely to have a robust immune response to vaccine and are far more at risk of severe disease if infected. Here is another way someone's personal decision not to be vaccinated turns out to be pretty personal for other folks who didn't get a vote. Getting booster doses into these residents should help; so should the vaccine mandate for nursing home workers. A further help would, of course, be the refuseniks getting on board, but we all know how likely that is.

The FDA has scheduled three meetings this month for its Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee. I wonder whether those scientists are exhausted yet; we've been working them pretty

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hard for most of a year now. These meetings give us target dates for various upcoming issues. I'll be following each of these for you. Here's the schedule:

October 14: Moderna booster doses

October 15: Janssen/Johnson & Johnson booster doses and mix-and-match boosters

October 26: Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) extension for Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for ages 5-11

More bad news for the unvaccinated—and by extension the rest of us. A new study published in *The Lancet Microbe* from a team at the Yale School of Public Health indicates that immunity resulting from natural infection may be very short-lived. This modeling project concluded that reinfection “would likely occur between 3 months and 5.1 years after peak antibody response,” with a median of 16 months. This means a good half of the folks infected early on are probably becoming very vulnerable to reinfection by now. Jeffrey Townsend, lead author on the study and professor of biostatistics at the School, said in a news release, “Reinfection can reasonably happen in three months or less. . . . Previous infection alone can offer very little long-term protection against subsequent infections.” We know what this means, right?

A friend put me on to another antiviral entering clinical trials. This one's most interesting because it is an existing approved drug, probenecid. It is used to treat gout, a type of arthritis characterized by the deposition of uric acid crystals in joints, resulting in pain and swelling. The drug treats gout by inhibiting the transfer of ions across cell membranes in the kidneys, which leads to uric acid being excreted in urine instead of making its way back into your bloodstream so it can later get deposited in joints. The National Center for Biological Innovation at the National Institutes of Health published a paper back in the summer of 2020 recommending several existing drugs for further study with respect to Covid-19, and this was one of them.

A team at the University of Georgia went to work on that and published a paper a couple of weeks ago in *Nature's Scientific Reports* that outlines their findings. Once again looking at the inhibition of ion transport across membranes, they targeted a particular ion transport protein called organic anion transporter-3 (OAT3). They discovered that OAT3 is essential for viral replication; inhibiting its action shuts the virus down. Findings from in vitro studies (lab studies in viral cultures), they established this inhibitory effect and determined that the concentrations of the drug required to inhibit replication could be achieved in lung tissue at dosages already established as safe in humans. This is an important point.

Here's why. Remember ivermectin? (How could any of us forget, with all the hollering from the sidelines?) Well, this is where the problem has arisen with that drug. It also inhibited the virus in vitro. The issue is that the concentrations required to do that were really high, and the only way to get that much of the drug into lung tissue would be to give enormous doses, doses far larger than anything that's been established as safe. That's why a drug that looked so good in the lab has turned out so far to be a bust. We do not have that problem with probenecid; the team established that normal safe dosages do yield the requisite amount of the drug in the tissues where it is needed.

The team followed up its in vitro studies with in vivo ones using a hamster model where they looked at both prophylactic (preventive) and post-infection use. Findings were that the numbers of viruses in the lung tissue were substantially (99.99+ percent) reduced by use of the drug compared with a saline placebo. The drug has an over-50-year history of use in the US with minimal adverse effects and can be administered orally. It also has an anti-inflammatory effect, something that could be useful in Covid-19 patients in addition to its antiviral activity. Looking around online, I discovered it sells, cash price to patients without insurance, for less than \$1 per pill, so it doesn't look as though cost will be an issue. Seems to me like there's a lot of promise here. The UGA team is currently investigating optimal dosage and has announced its intent to begin clinical trials within a year. We don't know at this point it's going to work,

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but it's looking good.

It appears other researchers have an interest in the drug as well; I ran across a project description from the University of British Columbia that aims to evaluate the drug using cell and mouse models and try to nail down the precise mechanism of action. While I am not clear about just where they are in this work, it looks to be quite similar to the UGA work. In science, having multiple research teams working on the same problem is considered to be a very good thing, not a waste of effort. This is one of the things that makes science self-correcting over time. So we'll see what this group comes up with too.

Early in this pandemic, almost all of the illness and dying in the US was in urban areas. That's no big surprise given the virus came to us from other countries and urban areas are centers for international travel. The virus came to them first. They also have high population densities, so simple transmission rate was a factor in case numbers. When you couple this with the fact that doctors didn't know how to treat this novel infection and a lot of patients died who wouldn't today with what we've learned since, there's no real surprise that urban deaths per capita were ridiculous compared with rural areas where case numbers were a shadow of those in the cities. Things changed as we went along. A lot.

By last winter we were seeing a shift. Today we are at a point where, while 1 in 513 urban people have died from Covid-19, 1 in 434 rural people have died. Rural mortality rates are more than twice as large as urban rates, and this gap is growing rapidly too even though we know so much more about treatment now than we once did. In rural areas, new case rates were 54 percent higher than in urban areas. Alan Morgan, leader of the National Rural Health Association, told NBC, "We've turned many rural communities into kill boxes. And there's no movement toward addressing what we're seeing in many of these communities, either among the public, or among governing officials."

For a while last winter the Dakotas (in one of which I happen to reside) had the highest per capita infection and death rates in the country. And today, rural Americans are dying at more than twice the rate of those in cities. In 39 states, this difference is stark. Even before the pandemic the death rate in rural areas was 20 percent higher than in urban areas. Things have gotten worse since the pandemic began.

Projections are that this gap will continue to widen as time goes on. Why? There is a number of factors operating here. I have a particular interest in this issue because I live on a farm in a decidedly rural area: Our nearest town has 80 people, I have to drive more than 30 miles to find a city with over 25,000 people, and my entire state is well under a million residents. If I want to visit a real city, I have to leave the state. That makes this personal for me; so let's delve into the factors that keep my friends and neighbors dying at rates far in excess of those my city friends are seeing.

(1) Our population is older, sicker, fatter, and poorer. We know the major risk factors for severe disease are age, co-morbidities including obesity, and poverty.

(2) We have worse access to medical care. Rural hospitals have been closing for 15 years, some 181 of them since 2005. More than half of the counties in the country, most of those rural, do not have a single hospital with any ICU beds at all. While staffing shortages are an issue across the country, they are particularly acute in rural areas. Rural hospitals have less money to pay for traveling health care workers to fill the gaps, and worse, their workers are leaving to join the agencies that provide travelers because the rates of pay are so much higher. Workers are exhausted and burnt out after months and months of stress and long hours and fear of infection and watching their neighbors die day after day; many of them are simply quitting. The remaining shorter-than-ever staffs are burning out more and more, driving more and more of them out of the profession, in a vicious cycle as hospitals are unable to accommodate those

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coming in for care even when real per capita case numbers are lower. More hospitals are expected to close under these burdens. Additionally, as the situation worsens, rural hospitals are less and less able to transfer patients they cannot accommodate or who are needing higher level care to more urban hospitals, formerly a mainstay of their operations, so the level of care relative to the patients' needs worsens. John Henderson, president and CEO of the Texas Organization of Rural & Community Hospitals, told NBC, there are rural nursing officers and CEOs sending messages out to their Listserv saying, "We've called 60 or 70 hospitals and can't get this heart attack or stroke patient or surgical patient out and they're going to get septic and die if it goes on much longer." Many of them are sending people home because they're out of choices. Nowhere really to turn.

(3) We remain resolutely undervaccinated. We started out in worse shape than urban areas, and the vaccination gap—large and growing—exacerbates the problem. About 41 percent of rural populations are vaccinated compared with 53 percent of urban populations. Most of what's responsible for this disparity are hesitancy, misinformation, and politics. Sometimes people move on vaccination when someone they know gets very sick or dies; sometimes that doesn't put a dent in things either. Every doctor and nurse caring for these folks has stories about being yelled at by family members—or even sick people—because Covid is a hoax and that can't be what's wrong.

I've stayed out of policy and politics in this work and am going to try to keep it that way, but we can't escape the fact that the single largest driver of whether a person is vaccinated or not is political affiliation. Pretty much every red state has a lower vaccination rate than pretty much every blue state. I've looked at map after map that shows counties who went for Donald Trump in the last election are starkly lower in vaccination rate than counties who went for President Joe Biden. And if you overlay an infection rate or death rate map over the election and vaccination maps, you see these all track remarkably the same. It's uncanny and unsettling. And I'm fairly sure, although I do not have the data, that mask-wearing would follow the very same pattern as transmissions and deaths. Charles Gaba, health care analyst, told The New York Times that in counties where Donald Trump received at least 70 percent of the vote, about 47 of every 100,000 people have died of Covid-19 since the end of June, but in counties where he received less than 32 percent of the vote, more like 10 out of 100,000 have died.

When you graph these relationships, there is almost no overlap between red states and blue states, whichever of these parameters we're looking at. I been looking at statistical analyses for years, and I can tell you the strength of the associations here are just about never seen in real life. I am not saying that, if you voted for Trump and you're sick with Covid-19, you deserve it; I am not assigning any value at all to anyone's personal political leanings or voting pattern. But here we have a fairly simple set of facts about the US today: Living in a county that voted for Trump is a bigger risk factor for dying of Covid-19 than any other single demographic fact about you. I bring this up, not to start a fight, but because this information may help us to target our efforts to bring this virus under control; and I suspect that's something we all want, however we voted.

There are two new studies that address transmission and may help us to understand why these last couple of variants have been so dangerous. Both of them have to do with B.1.1.7 or Alpha, the variant first identified in the UK, but seem as though they're going to apply to Delta as well.

One of these studies done at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and available in pre-print (so not peer-reviewed) looked at transmission via aerosols, those tiny particles that can waft about in the air and travel longer distances indoors than the larger respiratory droplets. The research team investigated patterns of infection following exposure of hamsters at a distance of two meters (about six feet) to donors infected with an older variant from lineage A (from prior to the first of the more-transmissible variants, D614G), infected with Alpha, and with a mixed infection with both variants. They were able to

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provide the first formal demonstration of long-distance transmission in the absence of other transmission routes. This is important because the tiny ($<5 \mu\text{m}$) aerosol particles can get past our various anatomical filtration systems and travel directly into the lower reaches of the lungs. (For the record, a μm , a micrometer or micron, is one-millionth of a meter. To visualize how small $5 \mu\text{m}$ is, consider that 15 aerosol particles this size, set side by side, would span the diameter of a human hair. That's small.) Current thinking is that particles in this size range that can be directly deposited into the bronchioles (tiny tubes) and alveoli (air sacs) of the lungs can probably infect with a lower dose (maybe because you have less attrition on the way in) and can cause more severe disease with a smaller inoculum.

Secondly, in the dual-infection experiment (where the donor was infected with both variants), Alpha showed increased airborne transmission competitiveness, that is, it caused infections in preference to the lineage A variant in the target animals. The reason for this competitive advantage is still not clear. It could be increased affinity for human ACE2, the binding site on human cells for the virus; Alpha (Delta too, for that matter) does have a mutation responsible for such an affinity. It could also be due to, in the words of the authors, "increased susceptibility due to better viral entry and/or decreased infectious dose." The authors point out the need to continue to implement non-pharmaceutical preemptive interventions—ventilation, air disinfection, face masks, and social distancing—in order to interrupt transmission. They recommend high-quality masks. They are currently working on tests involving the Delta variant; they expect to find it is even more efficient than Alpha. I'll watch for results.

The second paper from the University of Maryland School of Public Health's Public Health Aerobiology and Biomarker Laboratory at the Institute for Applied Environmental Health was published in Oxford Academic's Clinical Infectious Diseases a couple of weeks ago. The team worked with active Covid-19 cases, asking them to come into the lab for assessment of viral shedding. They collected paired breath samples, masked and unmasked, using both surgical masks and cloth masks. Cases were asked to repeat particular phrases (e.g., recite the alphabet three times, sing "Happy Birthday" loudly, etc.) Fomite (phone) and nasal swabs, as well as saliva, were also collected and evaluated. Contacts of cases were followed too. According to the authors, "All cases were asymptomatic or mild at the time of study." No participants were taking antiviral medications at the time of sample collection.

Findings were that people with Alpha infection exhaled far more—about 43 times more—viral RNA as aerosols in exhaled breath compared with earlier variants. The findings suggest that "evolutionary pressure is selecting for SARS-CoV-2 capable of more efficient aerosol generation." The researchers also found that "[l]oose-fitting face masks, including surgical masks and those in daily use by the study participants, produced significant, albeit modest, reductions in the amount of viral RNA in exhaled breath, supporting their use as source control." They also found that virus is shed more abundantly in aerosol than larger droplets and that masks were more effective at blocking the large droplets.

The viruses collected in samples were genotyped so comparisons among variants could be made, and the team found that masks worked equally well as source control for containing shedding of older (wild-type) and Alpha variants—about 50 percent efficacy. However, "With the dominance of newer, more contagious variants than those we studied, increased attention to improved ventilation, filtration, air sanitation, and use of high-quality tight-fitting face masks or respirators for respiratory protection will be increasingly important for controlling the pandemic. This will be especially true where vaccination rates are low, vaccine is not available, and for people with poor immune responses or waning immunity." The authors concluded that these data support community mask mandates.

These two studies, taken together, lead us toward understanding why Delta is even more contagious than Alpha, which is itself so much more contagious than prior variants. Linsey Marr, airborne virus expert

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at Virginia Tech, told the New York Times, "It really indicates that the virus is evolving to become more efficient at transmitting through the air. I wouldn't be surprised if, with Delta, that factor were even higher." What might be operating here is that these new variants, Delta for now, require lower doses for infection, that they replicate faster, or that more of them is exhaled as aerosols—or maybe all of the above. We want to get control of this before the next variant rears its ugly head. We really do.

What we have now on the individual decision-making level is the need to focus on masking, especially in indoor spaces and even for vaccinated people. The more efficient the virus becomes in transmitting, the more at-risk everyone is. In crowded spaces, we probably want to go with a more protective mask. That would be one which is tighter fitting and blocks more particles.

We talked a few days ago about some antiviral compounds that show promise as therapeutics for Covid-19. I've seen another round-up of some other candidates. Many, but not all, of these are things that can be taken at home. I'll do a quick review here.

Favipiravir is not new to our conversations. We first discussed it in my Update #40 posted April 3, 2020, at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3481855048497543>. (And yes, I found it sort of charming, looking back, that I was so startled to find myself at a 40th post. Who had any idea back then what was ahead?) The drug is an RNA polymerase inhibitor; RNA polymerase is an enzyme needed by RNA viruses like SARS-CoV-2 to replicate its genetic material in your cells. The drug is expected to be most useful early in infection, and phase 3 clinical trial results are expected relatively soon.

Synairgen has an antiviral inhaler originally developed to treat chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and delivered by nebulizer. The drug is based on interferon-beta which stimulates lung defenses and may work on more than one virus. It is in phase 3 trials.

Then there is the budesonide inhaler, a corticosteroid already in use to treat asthma and COPD. This one has only reduced the recovery time by three days, which doesn't seem like much. It has been used off-label in people with co-morbidities and those over 65, but is not standard treatment.

We talked a couple of days ago about Pfizer's PF-07321332 and Atea/Roche's AT-527. I'll link that discussion here and leave it at that: Update #471 posted October 1 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/5159554904060874>.

Others also discussed don't have much news to report. Dexamethasone has been in fairly regular use for months now for severely ill patients; remdesivir has EUA and, while benefits are controversial, is being used; and convalescent plasma has not shown to have benefit and is therefore declining in use.

And that's a wrap for today. Please take care. We can hope it will be a few days before we get together again, but whenever that is, I'll be back.

Reach Out for That Lifeline

Imagine yourself in a blizzard so thick and cold and blinding that you could not see your hands right in front of you. Such blizzards were common 150 years ago on the upper great plains. Without much for houses and trees, the wind blew the snow with such force that the little ice crystals were more like little knives making it hard to keep one's eyes open even if there was something to see. Thus, to get safely from the house to the barn, farmers often hung a rope between the two, to not get lost. It was literally a lifeline. Otherwise, one wrong turn and perhaps nothing would stop you from wandering across the frozen prairie.

As a sixth generation South Dakotan, I cannot imagine some of the hardships my forefathers had to endure to survive. How did they feed themselves when the rains did not come, or when the fires did? How did they heat the house when the wood or coal had run out? How did they fight the boredom of months in a single room, not to mention the isolation?

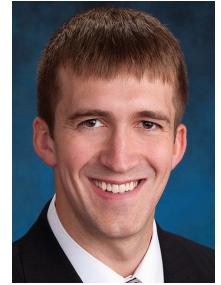
There are many who still face those questions. Farming still carries great risks with drought, floods, or financial stress. There is the chance of failure, of losing the family farm, of choosing the wrong crops or the wrong time to plant in unpredictable markets with trade wars, changing weather patterns, and other factors. One little mistake may ruin a million-dollar piece of equipment or result in a lifetime disabling accident.

Given these pressures, it may not come as any surprise that farming has one of the highest suicide rates in the nation, which has been rising over the last decade. Of course, you do not have to be a farmer to face financial, physical, or mental pressures that may contribute to feelings of helplessness, failure, loss of hope, and depression. You may be easily irritated and feel like sleeping all day, lack energy, and no longer enjoy what you once did.

If you or someone you know needs help, please reach out. Hotlines available for those in crisis or for those looking to help someone else are the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and the Avera Farm and Rural Stress Hotline at 1-800-691-4336.

Just as that rope was a lifeline from the barn back to the farmhouse years ago, a simple phone call can be a lifeline for those in need of help today. No matter your occupation or stage of life, please reach out if you need help. Even if it feels like you are in a blinding blizzard with nowhere to go, reach out and take hold of that rope, that lifeline, and make that phone call.

Andrew Ellsworth, M.D. 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.



Andrew Ellsworth, MD

Superintendent's Report to the Groton Area School District 06-6 Board of Education

September 27, 2021

COVID-19 Case Count. As of today, we've had four students diagnosed with COVID-19. There are currently no active cases of COVID-19 of students in our schools.

Over the past week, we've seen a decline in the two-week trend of new daily cases in Brown County and a leveling off of active cases. Interestingly, there was a similar data pattern in mid-September 2020 following by the rapid, steady increase through around mid-November. Note: Data sets are different year over year (e.g. testing levels are different/case data is not reported daily, etc).

COVID-19 Testing. We've received and distributed our initial supply of Quidel QuickVue OTC At-Home tests for families. Interest in the free, voluntary program has been strong. We believe we'll continue to receive a supply of tests weekly for distribution for those students or staff who've indicated they want to participate in weekly surveillance testing. We believe we'll be receiving 150 test kits/week for distribution and are still receiving participation forms back from students. We will update our request to DOE/DOH for their consideration as supplies allow.

ESSER Applications. We're anticipating the return of our ESSER application for further information, namely survey results from each defined stakeholder group. I've reached out to two mechanical engineering firms to begin exploring cost options for development of project plans for HVAC upgrades to the GHS Gym/Arena.

School Bus Extrication Drill. Next Tuesday evening, the Groton Fire/Rescue Squad will be conducting an extrication drill on a school bus. We're asking our drivers to attend as a training opportunity.

Staffing. We are still seeking applicants for a few positions within the district: Transportation Director, MS/HS Office Assistant/Study Hall, Substitute Bus Drivers, and Bus Route Drivers.

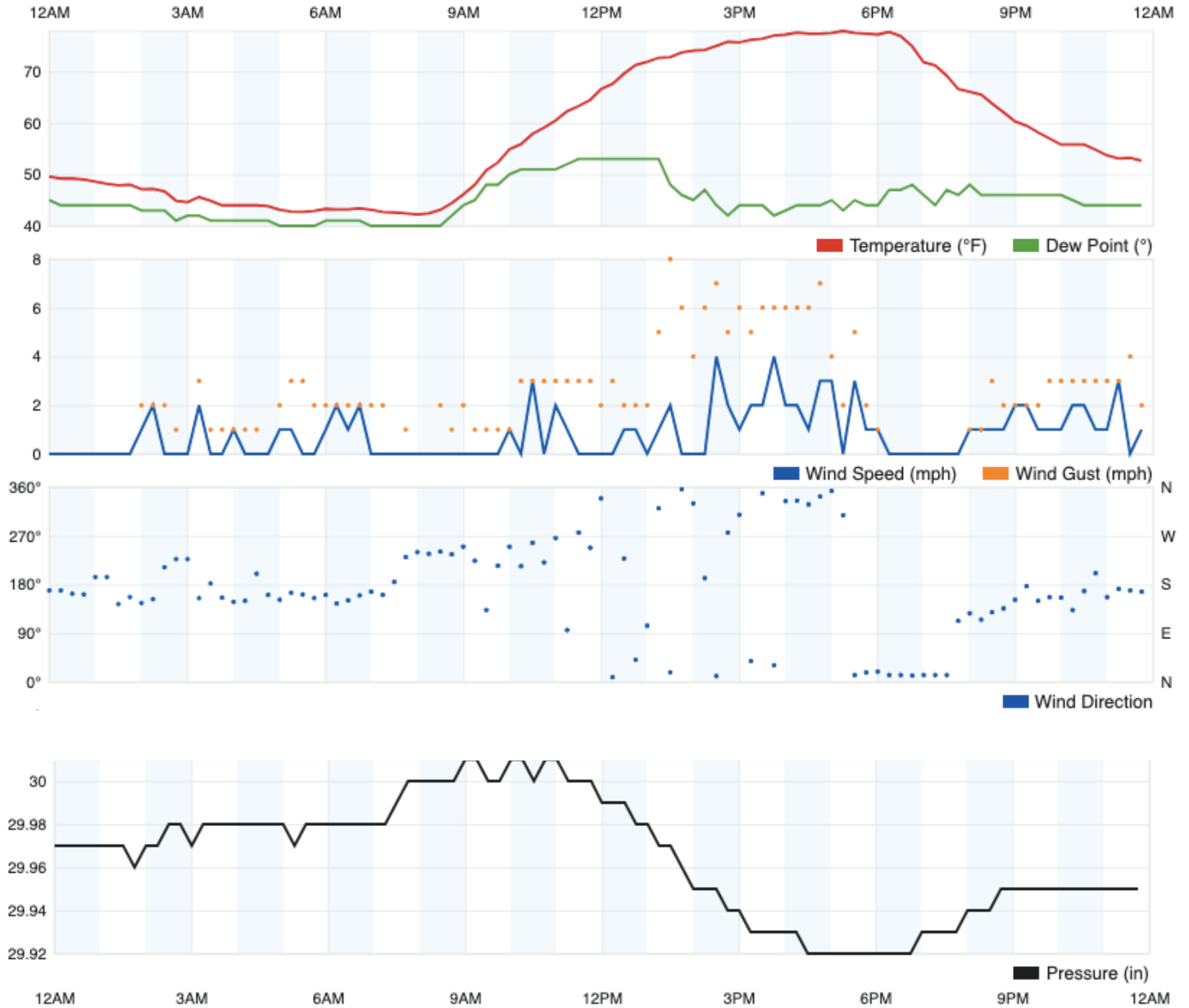
Flu Shot Clinics. We have a couple of flu shot clinics coming up – one for staff and families that are members of the district health fund pool. The other opportunity is for students and done with Day County Community Health and will be held Thursday, October 7 from 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Consent forms are available online.

Civil Rights Data Collection. In October, registration opens for the bi-annual Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) survey from the US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. Participation is required from every public school in the US, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico. Data collection is scheduled to begin in December.

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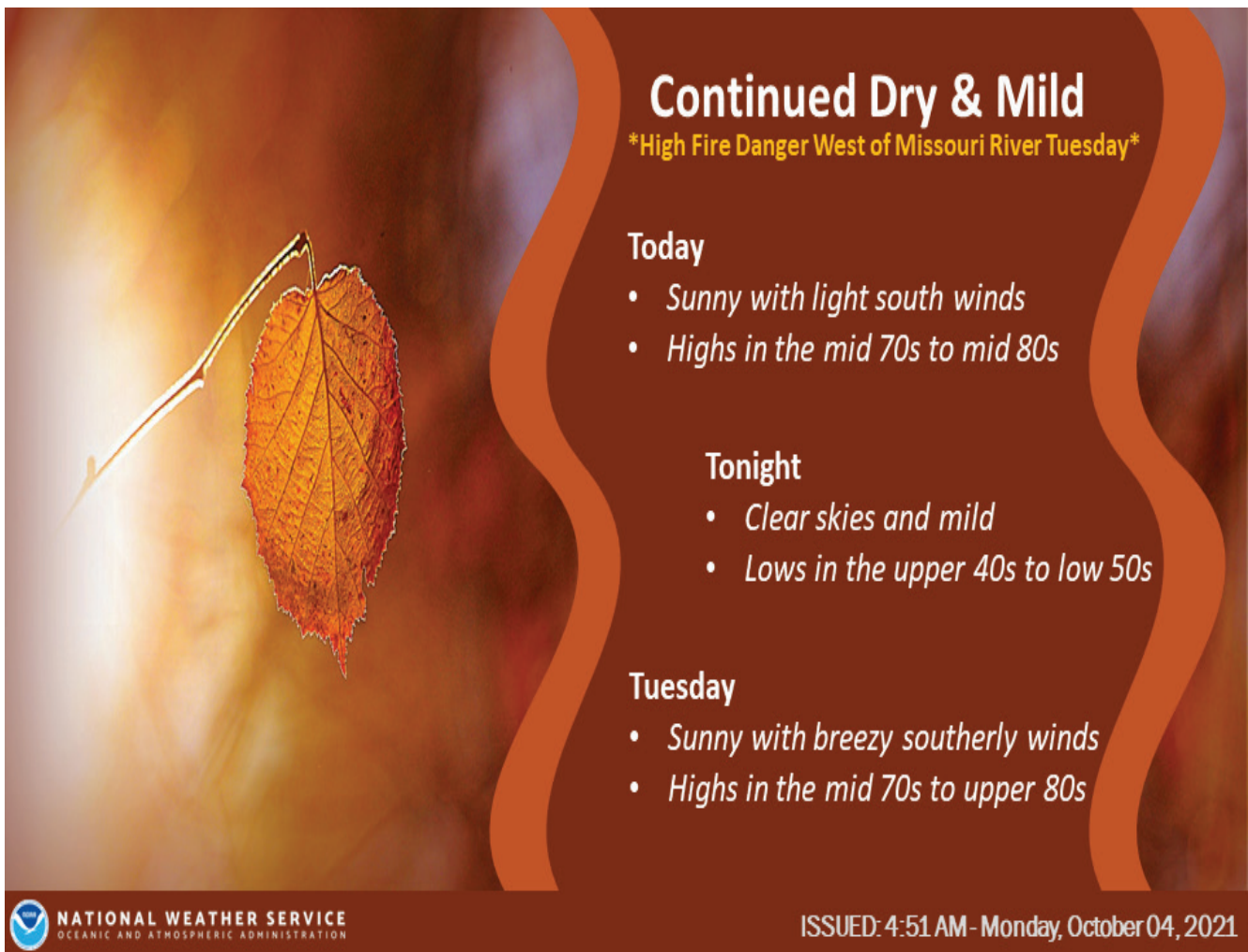
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny then Sunny and Breezy
High: 82 °F	Low: 48 °F	High: 81 °F	Low: 52 °F	High: 77 °F



Continued Dry & Mild

High Fire Danger West of Missouri River Tuesday

Today


- Sunny with light south winds
- Highs in the mid 70s to mid 80s

Tonight

- Clear skies and mild
- Lows in the upper 40s to low 50s

Tuesday

- Sunny with breezy southerly winds
- Highs in the mid 70s to upper 80s

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

ISSUED: 4:51 AM - Monday, October 04, 2021

Several days of sunshine and warm temperatures can be expected through this week. It will turn more breezy by Tuesday which will lead to high grassland fire danger for places along and west of the Missouri River.

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Today in Weather History

October 4, 2005: An intense low-pressure system developed over the Central Rockies and moved through the Northern Plains, bringing heavy snow to much of the northern Black Hills and far northwest South Dakota. Precipitation started as rain during the day and changed over to snow during the late afternoon and early evening, mixed with freezing rain and sleet. Heavy snow fell during the night and ended in the morning. Snowfall amounts were generally in the 6 to 12-inch range, with locally more substantial amounts across northern and western Harding County. The heavy, wet snow resulted in many downed trees, large branches, and power lines, which caused numerous power outages and some minor property damage. A few locations had some of the highest daily snowfall amounts ever recorded in October. Camp Crook received 12 inches of snow, which tied the daily record for snow in October. Redig also tied its record for most snowfall in one day in October with 9 inches. Lemmon had its second-highest daily total snowfall for October (6.5 inches). Bison received 6 inches, which was tied for the 3rd highest daily total in October. Spearfish tied for the 8th highest daily snow total for October with 7 inches.

1777: The Battle of Germantown was fought in a morning fog that grew denser with the smoke of battle, causing great confusion. Americans firing at each other contributed to the battle's loss.

1957: The world's first artificial satellite, Sputnik, was launched on October 4th, 1957 by the Soviet Union. Sputnik was about the size of a beach ball and weighed 183.9 pounds. It took about 98 minutes to orbit Earth on an elliptical path.

1987: A storm brought record snows to the northeastern U.S. Snowfall totals ranged up to 21 inches at North Springfield, VT. It was the earliest snow of record for some locations. The storm claimed 17 lives in central New York State, injured 332 persons, and in Vermont caused seventeen million dollars damage. The six-inch snow at Albany, NY, was their earliest measurable snow in 117 years of records.

2005: Hurricane Stan, a minimal Category 1 Hurricane with 75 mph maximum sustained surface winds, made landfall near Punta Roca Partida, Mexico, at 4 AM EDT on this day. While not a particularly strong hurricane, the torrential rains caused flooding and landslides, which resulted in 1,513 deaths in Guatemala.

2013: While western South Dakota was dealing with a crippling blizzard, the tri-state region of Nebraska, South Dakota, and Iowa saw several tornadoes, including an EF-4. This violent tornado started 2 miles southwest of Climbing Hill, Iowa, flattening corn crops and snapping tree trunks. As the tornado moved northeast, it intensified and struck a farmstead approximately 5 miles west-northwest of Correctionville, Iowa. Sheds and other buildings were severely damaged or destroyed, with the residence being severely damaged. The tornado continued to increase in both size and magnitude as it continued on its trek northeast. The tornado reached its maximum intensity 2.5 miles south of Pierson, Iowa, when this mile-wide tornado struck two farmsteads. Numerous outbuildings and barns were destroyed, with farm equipment being tossed over 400 yards. It was here that the tornado was rated EF-4. The tornado stayed southeast of Pierson, Iowa, and to the west of Washta, Iowa. Before lifting, the tornado produced more tree damage and downed power poles and lines 2 miles west of Washta, Iowa.

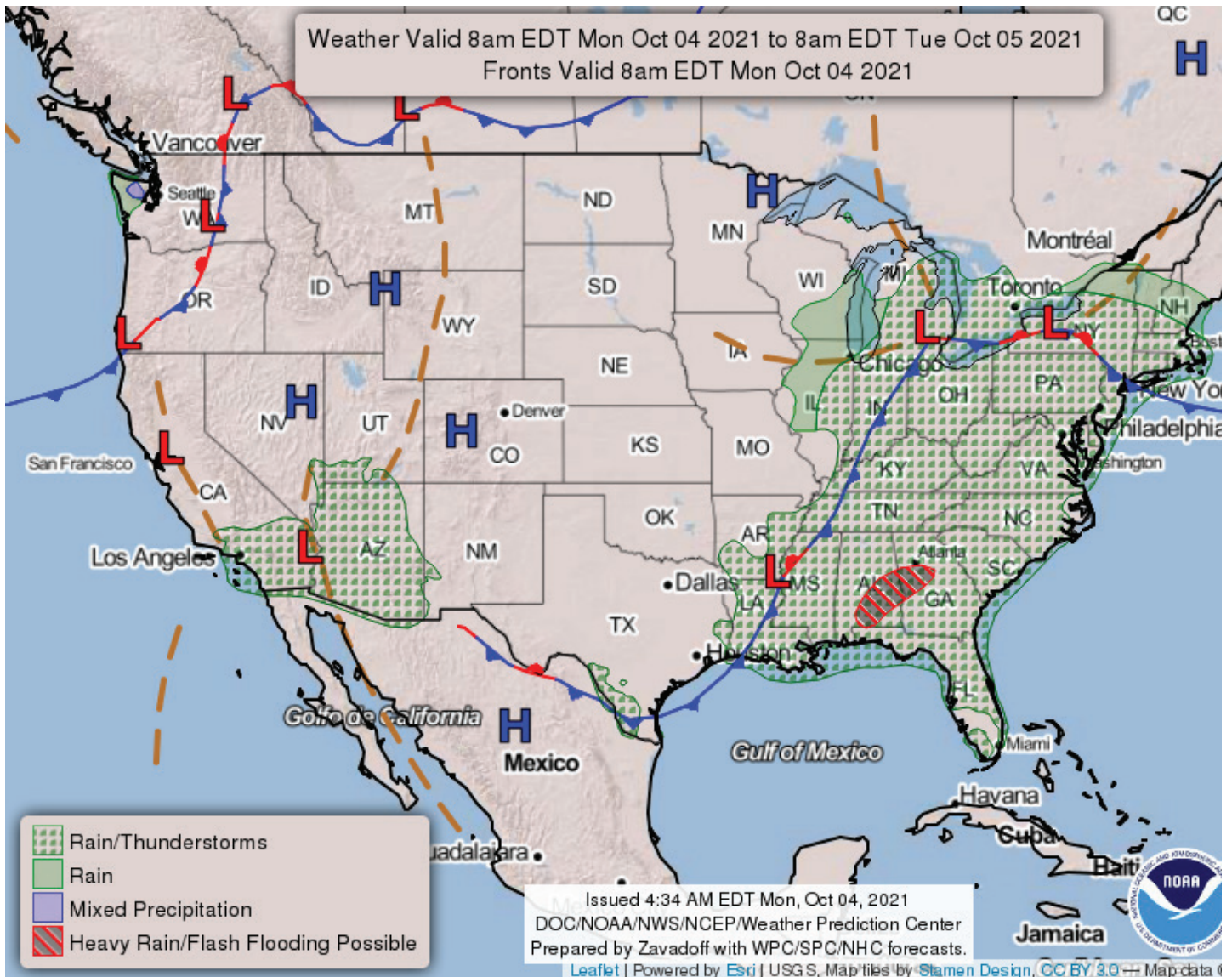
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 79 °F at 5:21 PM
Low Temp: 42 °F at 7:58 AM
Wind: 10 mph at 2:50 PM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 93° in 1975
Record Low: 13° in 1894
Average High: 66°F
Average Low: 39°F
Average Precip in Oct.: 0.32
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.28
Average Precip to date: 18.65
Precip Year to Date: 15.70
Sunset Tonight: 7:08:18 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:34:52 AM



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LIVE IT HERE!

He was one of those deacons who spoke much more than was necessary and did much less than was needed. There was always a discrepancy between the way he lived, and the way he worked for the Lord.

One day he stopped by his pastor's office in a state of great excitement. "Pastor," he shouted, "I'm going to the Holy Land. Isn't that wonderful? Aren't you happy for me?"

"Well, yes I am, at least I think so," said his pastor.

"Do you know what I'm going to do?" he asked.

"No, no I don't. But I'm sure you're going to tell me," came the reply.

"When my group gets to the top of the mountain where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, I'm going to have the group sit in front of me in a half circle while I read the Ten Commandments out loud. Isn't that exciting? I'm thrilled," he continued.

"Deacon," replied his pastor, "I think it would be much better for God and your group if you'd stay at home and lived them right here right now."

The Psalmist came straight to the point: "In keeping them, there is great reward."

Many of us have memorized them, given copies of them to others - perhaps even entered into arguments as to why or why not The Ten Commandments should be placed in public places where everyone could see and read them.

However, if God were involved in the conversation, I'm sure He'd be with the pastor and say, "Just live them!"

Prayer: Father, it's much easier to talk about You than live a life that is pleasing to You. Help us, please, to show others who You are by how we live. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Psalm 19:11

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2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament
06/19/2021 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament
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

AP: States and cities slow to spend federal pandemic money

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

As Congress considered a massive COVID-19 relief package earlier this year, hundreds of mayors from across the U.S. pleaded for “immediate action” on billions of dollars targeted to shore up their finances and revive their communities.

Now that they’ve received it, local officials are taking their time before actually spending the windfall.

As of this summer, a majority of large cities and states hadn’t spent a penny from the American Rescue Plan championed by Democrats and President Joe Biden, according to an Associated Press review of the first financial reports due under the law. States had spent just 2.5% of their initial allotment while large cities spent 8.5%, according to the AP analysis.

Many state and local governments reported they were still working on plans for their share of the \$350 billion, which can be spent on a wide array of programs.

Though Biden signed the law in March, the Treasury Department didn’t release the money and spending guidelines until May. By then, some state legislatures already had wrapped up their budget work for the next year, leaving governors with no authority to spend the new money. Some states waited several more months to ask the federal government for their share.

Cities sometimes delayed decisions while soliciting suggestions from the public. And some government officials — still trying to figure out how to spend previous rounds of federal pandemic aid — simply didn’t see an urgent need for the additional cash.

“It’s a lot of money that’s been put out there. I think it’s a good sign that it hasn’t been frivolously spent,” Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer said. He was president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors when more than 400 mayors signed a letter urging Congress to quickly pass Biden’s plan.

The law gives states until the end of 2024 to make spending commitments and the end of 2026 to spend the money. Any money not obligated or spent by those dates must be returned to the federal government.

The Biden administration said it isn’t concerned about the early pace of the initiative. The aid to governments is intended both “to address any crisis needs” and to provide “longer-term fire power to ensure a durable and equitable recovery,” said Gene Sperling, White House American Rescue Plan coordinator.

“The fact that you can spread your spending out is a feature, not a bug, of the program. It is by design,” Sperling told the AP.

The Treasury Department set an aggressive reporting schedule to try to prod local planning. It required states, counties and cities with estimated populations of at least 250,000 to file reports by Aug. 31 detailing their spending as of the previous month as well as future plans.

More than half the states and nearly two-thirds of the roughly 90 largest cities reported no initial spending. The governments reported future plans for about 40% of their total funds. The AP did not gather reports from counties because of the large number of them.

To promote transparency, the Treasury Department also required governments to post the reports on a “prominent public-facing website,” such as their home page or a general coronavirus response site. But the AP found that many governments ignored that directive, instead tucking the documents behind numerous navigational steps. Idaho and Nebraska had not posted their reports online when contacted by the AP. Neither had some cities.

Officials in Jersey City, New Jersey, required the AP to file a formal open-records request to get its report, though that shouldn’t have been necessary. City employees in Laredo, Texas, and Sacramento, California, also initially directed the AP to file open-records requests. Laredo later told the AP it had spent nothing. Sacramento relented and eventually provided a short report stating it had spent nothing but might put its entire \$112 million allocation toward replacing lost revenue and providing government services.

Among states, the largest share of initial spending went toward shoring up unemployment insurance

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trust funds that were depleted during the pandemic. Arizona reported pouring nearly \$759 million into its unemployment account, New Mexico nearly \$657 million and Kentucky almost \$506 million.

For large cities, the most common use of the money was to replenish their diminished revenue and fund government services. San Francisco reported using its entire initial allotment of \$312 million for that purpose.

Those reporting no initial spending included Pittsburgh, whose mayor joined with several other Pennsylvania mayors in February on a column urging Congress to pass "crucial" aid for state and local governments.

"Congress must act, and they must act soon. Our communities cannot wait another day," the Pennsylvania mayors wrote.

Pittsburgh ultimately ended up waiting to spend the money until the Treasury guidelines were released, community members had a chance to comment and the City Council could sign off on the spending plans. In the future, the city plans to use part of its federal windfall to buy 78 electric vehicles, build technology labs at recreation centers and launch a pilot project paying 100 low-income Black women \$500 a month for two years to test the merits of a guaranteed income program.

The federal money also will help pay the salaries of more than 600 city employees

"Even though the money hadn't technically been expended" by the Treasury Department's reporting timeline, "the receipt of the money was enough for us to hold off on major layoffs," said Dan Gilman, chief of staff to Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto.

Some officials are intentionally taking their time.

Missouri Gov. Mike Parson, a Republican, opted not to call a special session to appropriate money from the latest federal pandemic relief act. So far, he's publicly outlined just one proposal — \$400 million for broadband.

Parson's budget director said the administration will present more ideas to lawmakers when they convene for their regular session in January. Until then, the state should have enough money left from a previous federal relief law to cover the costs of fighting the virus, budget director Dan Haug said.

"We want to try to find things that are going to benefit Missouri not just next year or the year after, but 10 or 20 years down the road," Haug said. "That takes some thought and some planning."

Republican state Rep. Doug Richey, who leads a House panel on federal stimulus spending, said he's not convinced Missouri needs to spend all of its American Rescue Plan funds.

"To the extent that we spend these dollars, we are participating in an ever-increasing federal debt or bad monetary policy," Richey said.

Missouri was one several states that waited to request its initial allotment. Five other Republican-led states — Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee and Texas — waited so long that they weren't required to file reports by the Treasury's Aug. 31 deadline.

Tennessee wanted to make sure small cities were prepared for a 30-day clock that starts ticking for them to seek funding once the dollars arrive at the state, said Lola Potter, a spokesperson for the state Department of Finance and Administration. A South Dakota official cited similar reasoning for the delay. Financial Systems Director Colin Keeler said it's difficult for small towns to take the steps needed to apply.

"The state was in no rush at all," he said. "The cities wanted to get theirs, but we needed to be prepared."

Trial continues for teen accused of murder in Rapid City

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The trial of a man accused in a fatal shooting in Rapid City more than three years ago continues Monday in Pennington County.

Ronald Black Cloud, 17, is being tried in adult court for second-degree murder in the death of 43-year-old Nathan Graham.

The victim's widow, Shayla Colbert-Brown, testified Friday that her husband picked her up from work the night of Aug. 17, 2018 and they returned home to watch a movie, then heard a knock on their door.

Colbert-Graham said she thought the person at the door was her son, Kyliel Colbert, assuming that he may have locked himself out of the house. But, she said instead her son's acquaintances were standing outside, Ross Johnson and Black Cloud. Johnson had not been allowed on the property after he was caught

drinking with Colbert, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Graham came to the door and told the two to leave, then got into a shoving match with Johnson who lifted his shirt to reveal a gun, Colbert-Graham testified. Johnson gave the gun to Black Cloud and told him to shoot Graham. The victim was shot in the head and declared brain dead the following day.

Johnson was sentenced to 20 years in prison in June after he pleaded guilty to aggravated assault and being an accessory to the second-degree murder.

Dakotas Natives who died at Pennsylvania school coming home

By ELISA SAND Aberdeen American News

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — An effort to return the remains of young men and women who died at the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania will include those of two young men from the Sisseton area.

While Carlisle is just one of many Indian boarding schools used across the country starting before the 1900s, this cemetery is unique.

Unlike many of the school cemeteries, these grounds, which were once operated by the Department of Interior, are now under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army, which is working with tribes from across the country who are interested in claiming the remains of their ancestors and bringing them home. That process started in 2016, according to Justin Buller, an attorney with the U.S. Army General's office at a public meeting in Sisseton last week.

Tamara St. John, tribal historian for Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, has been looking into the lives of six children who left the Sisseton area in 1879. They're significant, she said, because these two girls and four boys were the first to leave the area. Of this group, three of the boys died at the school and two are buried in the school cemetery.

St. John's work has taken many twists and turns, and sparse documents available from that time period have made it a challenge, but through the help of the few documents she's found and local tribal veterans, she's been able to confirm the remains of two students buried in the school cemetery are local ancestors of significance, the Aberdeen American News reported.

Now, the Lake Traverse and Spirit Lake Indian reservations will be working together to bring these remains home next summer.

The remains belong to Amos LaFromboise and Edward Upwright, both of whom are descendants of tribal leaders.

LaFromboise went to school with his sister Emily, who completed her education at the boarding school and returned home. St. John said the fact that she completed her education at Carlisle was a point of pride for the family.

Amos, however, died Nov. 26, 20 days after his arrival in Pennsylvania. Their father, Joseph LaFromboise, was a founding father who helped set up the Lake Traverse Reservation government after the Sisseton Wahpeton treaty was signed in 1867.

"He's the first to die at Carlisle," St. John said, noting he was initially buried in the county cemetery, but the county residents objected to having a Native American buried there and Amos was ultimately moved onto the school grounds.

Though her research has been ongoing since 2016, St. John said only recently she was able to confirm Upwright's ancestry as the son of Waanatan II, an early tribal chief.

"We all as tribal nations have our historical figures, and American history doesn't even touch that," she said. "And so for us, our children here, we try to educate them."

Upwright died in March 1881.

St. John said limited information is available about the cause of death, but many at that time died from tuberculosis. In Upwright's case, he caught the measles.

When she thinks about bringing Upwright home, St. John said, "It would be much like the Lakota were bringing back a child of Sitting Bull."

The balance of the group included John Renville, his sister Nancy and George Walker.

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St. John said she's still piecing together Walker's story, and although he was the last of the four to die, she believes his health was failing and he left the school. That, she said, is supported by two letters written by Walker in the Dakota language.

"He's lonely," she said. "He wants to go home and he's very hopeful."

In one letter, St. John said, Walker talks about leaving the school with an agent and another student. This leads her to believe Walker died after leaving the school.

"I couldn't find any record after that," she said. "The idea that he wanted so desperately to come home, it speaks to the level of loneliness and sadness."

The Renville siblings were also the children of tribal chief Gabriel Renville.

"He was chief until 1892," St. John said. "The Renville family has a huge presence."

John Renville would have been the oldest son, who was 13 when he died. St. John said according to documentation at the school, Renville and his classmates were heading out to camp in the area and he became sick after drinking water from a stream.

When Gabriel Renville came to the school to pick up his son's body, St. John said, Nancy Renville returned home.

But, the fact that Gabriel Renville was able to come get his son and bring him home was a rare occurrence.

"Gabriel Renville had resources that many of our chiefs would not," she said. Raised by a fur trader, Renville's ancestry was a mix of both French and Sioux.

St. John said in the case of Waanatan, he had a signed pass that allowed him to go certain places.

"How do you go get your child if you needed a written document that says you have permission to go off the reservation?" she asked.

These six weren't the only Sisseton Wahpeton tribal members who attended Carlisle. St. John said there's a long list of youth who attended the school, but these six were the first to leave the area in 1879 and, within a very short period of time, the four boys were gone.

St. John said discussion about bringing these youth home started with a group of Rosebud youth who visited Carlisle, saw the graves and started asking about who they were.

"They looked at the kids... and realized that some were from Rosebud," she said. "They saw names that were familiar to them. That sparked something within them and they started to ask about their story."

In 2016, they met with them in Rosebud, St. John said. By then, she said, several tribes were looking at this cemetery to see if there was a way to bring their ancestors home.

These children arrived at Carlisle not long after the battle of Little Bighorn in 1876.

"I tried to remind people to take into consideration the political climate at the time," she said.

Through her research she found an article from the time that references a meeting of tribal chiefs in Washington, D.C. and how the chiefs were able to see their children while they were there.

"That says right there they were used as a pawn," she said.

While some didn't make it home, others did. St. John said her grandmother attended a boarding school in Rapid City.

"There are a lot of things that happened, but she said there's a lot of things a person could learn," St. John said. "The fact remains that those things are a part of people today."

The first meeting to discuss the process of digging up the remains from the cemetery was last week at the Sisseton Wahpeton College in Agency Village. That's when Buller explained how disinterment works.

Buller said the process requires a signed affidavit from the closest living relative, which is a determination made locally. This process is outlined in U.S. Army regulations for any family wishing to claim the remains of a relative in a military cemetery.

"The family and tribe can decide who is the closest living relative," he said.

Once that affidavit is received, he said, a notice about the planned disinterment is published in the federal register. If another tribe objects, Buller said, the tribes are asked to settle the dispute.

Some tribes have chosen to leave the remains where they are, he said. Others have asked for modified gravestones with the removal of the cross at the top of the headstone and corrections to the children's

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names.

Expenses for the disinterment process and gravestone modifications are covered by the U.S. Army, Buller said, but also limited. As an example, Buller said the U.S. Army will cover travel expenses of two family members and two tribal leaders for each disinterment.

Because the extended families of these two boys are significant, those limited travel expenses were a point of concern by tribal members who were at the meeting, which was recorded and posted on YouTube.

Buller said the graves have already been moved once in 1927. That's when the Army decided to move the cemetery, because it was next to a dump. In retrospect, he said officials should have moved the dump, but as early as 1927, families were asking for the return of family members.

Those requests went unanswered.

In 2016, notices were sent to every tribe giving them an opportunity to decide if they want to claim the remains of children in the cemetery. Since then, he said, 21 of the 188 Native American children buried there have been disinterred.

Buller said the original cemetery site has been subject to extensive excavation and no remains were found and documentation they have supports the fact that the cemetery was moved.

Once excavated, remains are evaluated to confirm they are the person who should be in that place. Buller said that's done by checking to make sure they are the correct gender and the size matches a person of that age.

The final resting place for Upwright and LaFramboise is yet to be determined, and is a decision that will be made by the families, but, St. John said, some possible sites are under discussion.

For example, Joseph Lafromboise is buried near Veblen in St. Matthew's cemetery. Waanatan is buried at St. Michael's cemetery in North Dakota.

Now, with the tribe's involvement and participation from family members who can help with the process, St. John said, she doesn't see any roadblocks.

"I don't see anything that would stop us from moving forward in their next cycle of disinterment," she said.

Leaked records open a 'Pandora' box of financial secrets

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE and JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

Hundreds of world leaders, powerful politicians, billionaires, celebrities, religious leaders and drug dealers have been hiding their investments in mansions, exclusive beachfront property, yachts and other assets for the past quarter-century, according to a review of nearly 12 million files obtained from 14 firms located around the world.

The report released Sunday by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists involved 600 journalists from 150 media outlets in 117 countries. It's being dubbed the "Pandora Papers" because the findings shed light on the previously hidden dealings of the elite and the corrupt, and how they have used offshore accounts to shield assets collectively worth trillions of dollars.

The more than 330 current and former politicians identified as beneficiaries of the secret accounts include Jordan's King Abdullah II, former U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair, Czech Republic Prime Minister Andrej Babis, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, Ecuador's President Guillermo Lasso, and associates of both Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The billionaires called out in the report include Turkish construction mogul Erman Ilıcak and Robert T. Brockman, the former CEO of software maker Reynolds & Reynolds.

Many of the accounts were designed to evade taxes and conceal assets for other shady reasons, according to the report.

"The new data leak must be a wake-up call," said Sven Giegold, a Green party lawmaker in the European Parliament. "Global tax evasion fuels global inequality. We need to expand and sharpen the countermeasures now."

Oxfam International, a British consortium of charities, applauded the Pandora Papers for exposing brazen examples of greed that deprived countries of tax revenue that could be used to finance programs and

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projects for the greater good.

"This is where our missing hospitals are," Oxfam said in a statement. "This is where the pay-packets sit of all the extra teachers and firefighters and public servants we need. Whenever a politician or business leader claims there is 'no money' to pay for climate damage and innovation, for more and better jobs, for a fair post-COVID recovery, for more overseas aid, they know where to look."

The Pandora Papers are a follow-up to a similar project released in 2016 called the "Panama Papers" compiled by the same journalistic group.

The latest bombshell is even more expansive, porting through nearly 3 terabytes of data — the equivalent of roughly 750,000 photos on a smartphone — leaked from 14 different service providers doing business in 38 different jurisdictions in the world. The records date back to the 1970s, but most of the files span from 1996 to 2020.

In contrast, the Panama Papers culled through 2.6 terabytes of data leaked by one now-defunct law firm called Mossack Fonseca that was located in the country that inspired that project's nickname.

The latest investigation dug into accounts registered in familiar offshore havens, including the British Virgin Islands, Seychelles, Hong Kong and Belize. But some of the secret accounts were also scattered around in trusts set up in the U.S., including 81 in South Dakota and 37 in Florida.

Some of the initial findings released Sunday painted a sordid picture of the prominent people involved.

For instance, the investigation found advisers helped King Abdullah II of Jordan set up at least three dozen shell companies from 1995 to 2017, helping the monarch buy 14 homes worth more than \$106 million in the U.S. and the U.K. One was a \$23 million California ocean-view property bought in 2017 through a British Virgin Islands company. The advisers were identified as an English accountant in Switzerland and lawyers in the British Virgin Islands.

Abdullah denied any impropriety in a comment Monday by the Royal Palace, citing security needs for keeping the transactions quiet and saying no public funds were used.

The details are an embarrassing blow to Abdullah, whose government was engulfed in scandal this year when his half brother, former Crown Prince Hamzah, accused the "ruling system" of corruption and incompetence. The king claimed he was the victim of a "malicious plot," placed his half brother under house arrest and put two former close aides on trial.

U.K. attorneys for Abdullah said he isn't required to pay taxes under his country's law and hasn't misused public funds, adding that there are security and privacy reasons for him to have holdings through offshore companies, according to the report. The attorneys also said most of the companies and properties are not connected to the king or no longer exist, though they declined to provide details.

Blair, U.K. prime minister from 1997 to 2007, became the owner of an \$8.8 million Victorian building in 2017 by buying a British Virgin Islands company that held the property, and the building now hosts the law firm of his wife, Cherie Blair, according to the the investigation. The two bought the company from the family of Bahrain's industry and tourism minister, Zayed bin Rashid al-Zayani. Buying the company shares instead of the London building saved the Blairs more than \$400,000 in property taxes, the investigation found.

The Blairs and the al-Zayanis both said they didn't initially know the other party was involved in the deal, the probe found. Cherie Blair said her husband wasn't involved in the purchase, which she said was meant to bring "the company and the building back into the U.K. tax and regulatory regime." She also said she did not want to own a British Virgin Islands company and that the "seller for their own purposes only wanted to sell the company," which is now closed.

A lawyer for the al-Zayanis said they complied with U.K. laws.

Khan, the Pakistani prime minister, is not accused of any wrongdoing. But members of his inner circle, including Finance Minister Shaukat Fayaz Ahmed Tarin, are accused of hiding millions of dollars in wealth in secret companies or trusts, according to the journalists' findings.

In a tweet, Khan vowed to recover the "ill-gotten gains" and said his government will look into all citizens mentioned in the documents and take action, if needed.

The consortium of journalists revealed Putin's image-maker and chief executive of Russia's leading TV

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station, Konstantin Ernst, got a discount to buy and develop Soviet-era cinemas and surrounding property in Moscow after he directed the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. Ernst told the organization the deal wasn't secret and denied suggestions he was given special treatment.

In 2009, Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis put \$22 million into shell companies to buy a chateau property in a hilltop village in Mougins, France, near Cannes, the investigation found. The shell companies and the chateau were not disclosed in Babis' required asset declarations, according to documents obtained by the journalism group's Czech partner, Investigace.cz.

A real estate group owned indirectly by Babis bought the Monaco company that owned the chateau in 2018, the probe found.

"I was waiting for them to bring something right before the election to harm me and influence the Czech election," Babis tweeted in his first reaction to the report.

The Czech Republic parliamentary election is being held on Friday and Saturday.

"I've never done anything illegal or wrong," Babis added.

Liedtke reported from San Ramon, California, and Mattise reported from Nashville, Tennessee. Associated Press writers Karel Janicek in the Czech Republic, Frank Jordans in Berlin, Josef Federman in Jerusalem, John Rice in Mexico City, Kathy Gannon in Islamabad, Pakistan, and Felicia Fonseca in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Koreas talk on hotline restored after North's missile tests

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea restored dormant communication hotlines with South Korea in a small, fragile reconciliation step Monday in an apparent hard push to win outside concessions with a mix of conciliatory gestures and missile tests.

It's unclear how substantially the move will improve ties between the Koreas, as Pyongyang has a history of using the hotlines as a bargaining chip in dealings with Seoul. It often unilaterally suspended then reactivated them when it needed better relations with its southern neighbor.

North Korean liaison officers answered phone calls by their South Korean counterparts over a set of cross-border government and military channels on Monday morning for the first time in nearly two months.

"Long time no talk. We're very pleased because the communication channels have been restored like this. We hope that South-North relations will develop into a new level," a Seoul official said during a phone conversation with his North Korean counterpart over one channel, according to video released by South Korea's Unification Ministry.

On a separate military channel, the Koreas exchanged information about fishing activities along their disputed western sea boundary — where several inter-Korean bloody naval battles have occurred in previous years — to prevent similar skirmishes, Seoul's Defense Ministry said. A ministry statement said Seoul hopes the hotlines' restoration would help reduce tensions on the peninsula.

The hotlines are phone and fax channels that the Koreas use to set up meetings, arrange border crossings and avoid accidental clashes. They've been largely stalled for more than a year as the North cut off them in protest of South Korean civilian leafleting campaigns. Communications were briefly revived for about two weeks this summer, but North Korea later refused to exchange messages again after Seoul staged annual military drills with Washington that Pyongyang views as an invasion rehearsal.

Last week, North Korea leader Kim Jong Un expressed his willingness to reactivate the communication channels, saying he wanted to realize the Korean people's wishes to promote peace. His influential sister, Kim Yo Jong, earlier said North Korea was open to restarting talks and cooperation steps if conditions are met.

Some experts question the sincerity of such an overture because it came as North Korea renewed missile tests after a six-month hiatus. Kim Yo Jong has also said South Korea must abandon "double-dealing standards" and a "hostile viewpoint" if it truly wants improved ties, a position largely echoed by her brother.

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The experts say North Korea is trying to use South Korea's desire to improve ties to pressure it to convince the United States to relax punishing economic sanctions on the North. Others say North Korea wants South Korea not to criticize its ballistic missile tests, which are banned by U.N. Security Council resolutions, in part of its efforts to receive an international recognition as a nuclear weapons state.

"The South Korean authorities should make positive efforts to put the North-South ties on a right track and settle the important tasks which must be prioritized to open up the bright prospect in the future, bearing deep in mind the meaning of the restoration of communication lines," the North's official Korean Central News Agency said ahead of the hotline's restoration.

Lee Jong-joo, a spokeswoman for the Unification Ministry, said Seoul hopes the two Koreas would reopen official talks soon on improving ties based on the stable operation of the hotlines.

It's not clear if the North will get what it wants from its pressure campaign. Kim Jong Un has said he won't return to talks with the United States unless it drops its "hostile policy," an apparent reference to the sanctions. The United States, for its part, has offered talks "anywhere and at any time" without pre-conditions, a stance that Kim last week described as a "cunning" attempt to conceal U.S. hostility against North Korea.

The nuclear diplomacy between Pyongyang and Washington collapsed in early 2019 due to disputes over exchanging sanctions relief with denuclearization steps. Despite its recent streak of weapons tests, North Korea still maintains a self-imposed 2018 moratorium on testing long-range missiles that directly threatens the U.S. mainland, an indication that it doesn't want to scuttle prospects for future diplomacy with the U.S.

What's old is new again: Justices back at court for new term

By MARK SHERMAN and JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is beginning a momentous new term with a return to familiar surroundings, the mahogany and marble courtroom that the justices abandoned more than 18 months ago because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Abortion, guns and religion all are on the agenda for a court with a rightward tilt, including three justices appointed by President Donald Trump.

The justices will meet in person for arguments Monday, although Justice Brett Kavanaugh will participate remotely from his home after testing positive for COVID-19 late last week. Kavanaugh, who was vaccinated in January, is showing no symptoms, the court said. All the other justices also have been vaccinated.

With a nod to the persistence of the virus, the court remains closed to the public. Only lawyers involved in the cases and reporters who regularly cover the court will be on hand, and anyone not arguing will have to wear a mask. The court is also requiring negative COVID-19 tests from lawyers and reporters who want to be in the courtroom.

Lawyers who test positive will be able to present their arguments via telephone, the court said. That's the way lawyers had been arguing before the court because of the pandemic.

The public will continue to be able to listen live to the proceedings, another change made during the pandemic, but Monday will be the first time live audio of courtroom proceedings will be available, via a link on the court's website.

Returning to the courtroom makes it much less likely that extraneous noises, like what sounded like a flushing toilet that could be heard during an argument last year, will intrude.

Monday's cases are not among the highly anticipated disputes the court will referee this term. One case is a fight between Mississippi and Tennessee over water in an underground aquifer that sits beneath parts of both states. The dispute stretches back to 2005 when Mississippi first claimed that Memphis is pumping water from the Mississippi portion of the aquifer. Tennessee says water doesn't work that way, saying the aquifer is an interstate resource that should be shared fairly.

The other involves a mandatory 15-year minimum prison sentence for a man with a prior criminal record who was convicted of having a gun. Federal law prevents felons from owning firearms.

The case arises under the Armed Career Criminal Act and the issue is whether the theft of items from 10

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units on the same day at a mini storage facility should count as one conviction or 10, which lower courts found made the man eligible for the longer prison sentence.

With the exception of Kavanaugh, the justices were in the courtroom together on Friday for the ceremonial swearing-in of Trump's third appointee, Justice Amy Coney Barrett. All the justices are tested regularly and all but Kavanaugh tested negative in advance of Friday's ceremony.

Only Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who has had diabetes since childhood, wore a mask during the brief ceremony.

Muslims recall questionable detentions that followed 9/11

By GARY FIELDS and NOREEN NASIR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Around New York City in the weeks after the Sept. 11 attacks, as an eerie quiet settled over ground zero, South Asian and Arab men started vanishing.

Soon, more than 1,000 were arrested in sweeps across the metropolitan area and nationwide.

Most were charged only with overstaying visas and deported back to their home countries. But before that happened, many were held in detention for months, with little outside contact, especially with their families. Others would live with a different anxiety, forced to sign what was effectively a Muslim registry with no idea what might follow.

While the remembrances and memorials of 9/11's 20th anniversary slip into the past, hundreds of Muslim men and their families face difficult 20-year anniversaries of their own.

In the attacks' aftermath, the immigrant advocacy group Desis Rising Up and Moving, or DRUM, anticipated a rise in hate crimes and harassment. So it set up a hotline and placed flyers primarily in South Asian neighborhoods.

"We started getting calls from women saying, 'Last night, law enforcement busted into our apartment and took my husband and my brother.' Children calling us and saying, 'My father left for work four days ago and he hasn't come home, and we haven't heard anything,'" executive director Fahd Ahmed recalls.

"There were people who were just disappearing from our communities," he says, "and nobody knew what was happening to them or where they were going."

They were, according to the 9/11 Commission report, arrested as "special interest" detainees. Immigration hearings were closed, detainee communication was limited and bond was denied until the detainees were cleared of terrorist connections. Identities were kept secret.

A review conducted by the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General said the Justice Department's "hold until cleared" policy meant a significant percentage of the detainees stayed for months despite immigration officials questioning the legality of the prolonged detentions and even though there were no indications they were connected to terrorism. Compounding that, they faced "a pattern of physical and verbal abuse" particularly at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, New York. Conditions were, the report said, "unduly harsh."

Detainees were swept up a myriad of ways, the report said. Three were stopped on a traffic violation and found with school drafting plans. Their boss explained they were working on a construction project and were supposed to have them, but authorities arrested and detained them anyway. Another was arrested because he seemed too anxious to buy a car.

Although many of those who were held had come into the U.S. illegally or overstayed visas, "it was unlikely that most if not all" would have been pursued if not for the attack investigation, the report said.

The "blunderbuss approach" of rounding up Muslims and presuming there would be terrorists among them was "pure racism and xenophobia in operation," says Rachel Meeropol, senior staff attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights, who filed a lawsuit in 2002 on behalf of several of the men and continues to fight for additional plaintiffs to this day.

"It shouldn't be a surprise to anyone that it didn't work," Meeropol says. "Of course, what it did do was

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destroy whole communities and not to mention the lives of all the individuals rounded up.”

Yasser Ebrahim, an original plaintiff in the lawsuit, was at a shop in his neighborhood and noticed people intently watching the television. “I saw these images on the screen, and for a moment there was like some kind of a movie or something,” he recalls. “I couldn’t believe what I was seeing.”

He had been in the United States since 1992 and enjoyed his life. “I loved everything about America,” he said by Zoom from Egypt. As a teenager, even before arriving, he idolized American popular culture. “The food, the music, the movies, everything was so attractive, and everybody wanted to go to America,” he said.

After learning the hijackers were Muslims, he reassured his mother in a phone call that he and his brother would be fine. In other countries there might be problems, but America was a place of legal rights, where evidence mattered, he said. “We still had faith in the system in America at that point,” he said.

That ended on Sept. 30, 2001. Several federal agents showed up at his door in Brooklyn. He says he had requested an extension of his tourist visa, but agents told him they had no record of it. He thought the matter would be straightened out quickly, or he would be deported. He stayed in custody until the following June.

For three months, his family did not know what happened to him or his brother. A neighbor ended that mystery, explaining they had been taken into custody. Even then there was little outside communication. And some officers at the facility in Brooklyn were physically and verbally abusive. It was months before he saw his brother. “There was the general feeling that we’re going to be here forever,” he says.

Ebrahim’s brother was deported first. When Ebrahim was finally allowed to leave, he was given clothes several sizes too big, including pants he had to physically hold up with his hands.

He was placed on a plane without knowing the destination. On board, he realized no one looked Egyptian. The plane went to Greece and after spending a night in the custody of Greek authorities, he boarded a flight for Cairo, with no money. Another Egyptian, deported from Texas, gave him \$20 to eat and contact his family to let them know he was home.

In 2009 he and four others, including his brother, reached a \$1.26 million settlement on the lawsuit. Though not an apology, he says, “we thought it was sort of admitting that something wrong was done to us.”

Umair Anser was 14 as he and math classmates watched on a classroom television as the twin towers fell. “You can’t accept something like that happening on American soil,” Anser says. “You know you’re safe in the U.S. ... but then something like that happens and you really question how safe you are, especially when you’re that young.”

His father, Anser Mehmood, left Pakistan in 1988 during a time of political turmoil, looking toward the safety and promise of the United States. He worked as a truck driver and sometimes drove a taxi. The family settled in Bayonne, New Jersey.

Anser came home from school on Oct. 3, 2001, and found his mom nearly catatonic, his home ransacked and the family’s computers and his father gone. His uncle had disappeared in a similar way days earlier.

“We didn’t know where our father was for the next three months,” Anser says.

He was, it turned out, in solitary confinement — in the special housing unit of Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, the same place chronicled by the inspector general, Anser says. When the family did see him again, they encountered a different man. “He was so weak ... I couldn’t see my dad like that,” Anser says. “It was very emotional for me.”

For the remainder of his detention, he wrote letters, talked about the difficulties and told his family to be strong and support their mother. “He told us, ‘Allah is there for us. He will be the provider; everything will be OK.’ I think he had to give us hope so we didn’t lose hope.”

Anser and his brothers attended protests with their mother organized by DRUM. But with their father gone, there was no financial support for the family. The sons were bullied at school; neighbors harassed them at home. It became untenable and the family returned to Pakistan, leaving Mehmood behind, in jail.

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"My mother was extremely heartbroken to leave the country because she knew the amount of effort and the amount of work that my father put in to make everything happen for us," Anser says.

Mehmood eventually pleaded guilty to working with an unauthorized Social Security number and was sentenced to eight months in prison. He was transferred to Passaic County Jail before finally being deported on May 10, 2002, to Pakistan, where the family now lives.

For Sultana Jahangir, there was a different anxiety.

It was one that intensified when her husband, Mohammed Alam, was called to register through the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, or NSEERS, a government policy introduced in 2002 as part of the war on terror. Some would call it a "Muslim registry."

It required all noncitizen males 16 or older from 25 countries to register with the U.S. government. The only country among them that did not have an Arab or Muslim majority was North Korea.

Jahangir, now living in Toronto with her husband and family, came to the U.S. in 1994 from Bangladesh to visit her sister. During their stay, her sister's husband died unexpectedly, and Jahangir and her husband stayed to help.

"We worked like crazy ... many days, I wouldn't see the sun," she says. "The evening comes, I don't see the sunset. My life was stuck in a dark place."

They worked quietly this way for years — Jahangir at a cafe, Alam driving taxis — all the while trying to apply for political asylum.

In the days that followed the Sept. 11 attacks, Jahangir's co-worker called her "Bin Laden's sister." Shortly after, her manager let her go. She struggled to find work after that. "Nobody," she says, "wanted to hire a Muslim then."

Meanwhile, she and her family would hear reports of Muslim men being taken off the street by law enforcement without explanation, and they worried for Alam.

When Alam responded to the call to register for NSEERS, he was held for hours and then released with a deportation order. Paranoid about what might follow, he retreated from public life. "It didn't feel safe for him to go out and drive the taxi," Jahangir says. "We discouraged him from going out. He stayed home with the children and I had to take on more responsibility."

Ultimately, the family was able to avoid being deported to Bangladesh by arranging a visa for Canada.

In the end, NSEERS resulted in no terrorism convictions. It was suspended in 2011 and completely dissolved in 2016. It did, however, land more than 13,000 boys and men in deportation proceedings.

Two decades later, no terror attack in the U.S. has come close to the scale of Sept. 11. The most serious threats have come from lone wolves. The most public of threats have been from Americans, not foreigners.

Joshua Dratel, co-chair of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers' national security committee, says the detentions are a foundational piece of something troubling — an acceptance of more invasive law enforcement for protection from terrorists.

Searches at airports, in buildings, even on subways — "these are things that were once exceptional and extraordinary, and now the exception has become the norm. I think that has put us in a position of vulnerability to more of it and a more malevolent version of it."

Shirin Sinnar, a law professor at Stanford University, says the extreme measures taken after 9/11 have been normalized to the point that "now we don't even talk about them. They've just become part of the kinds of surveillance and deprivation of rights and profiling that we expect to see."

The positive, she says: More people seem willing to challenge that.

To a degree, that is true. Attitudes have trended toward people being more wary of the government's counterterrorism efforts. But a recent poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows that a majority of Americans, 54%, still believe it is sometimes necessary to sacrifice rights and freedom to fight terrorism.

The long-running lawsuit in which additional plaintiffs were added after the first five were awarded a

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settlement has continued. It has ricocheted through the court system with mixed results. In 2017 the Supreme Court threw out parts of the suit but allowed one part to stand, sending it back to lower courts. Last month, a federal district court judge in Brooklyn dismissed the lawsuit.

Meeropol says the initial settlement was proof that the plaintiffs had a compelling case. She says no decision has been made yet on an appeal. That leaves a striking fact: Nearly 20 years later, no individuals have been held accountable for how the detainees were treated, she says.

For the families marking an ignominious anniversary, the question is basic and broad: What is different?

Jahangir runs a South Asian women's rights organization in Toronto, continuing her fight against systemic racism and discrimination. She misses seeing her sister but has no desire to step foot in America again. "I look at my 10 years in the U.S. as a black hole for me, (and) after 9/11, I found out that this is not a place to live."

Ebrahim, now 49 and owner of a company that provides coding and other outsource services to other companies, shared Jahangir's anger after he returned to Egypt. But two decades later, he would consider bringing his teenage son to New York City to see sights and sounds that he found "charming."

His advice for U.S. citizens: "Never twist the Constitution again. What makes America America is the freedom, and the Constitution."

Nasir reported from New York City.

Japan's parliament elects former diplomat Kishida as new PM

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's parliament on Monday elected Fumio Kishida, a former moderate turned hawk, as prime minister. He'll face an economy battered by the pandemic, security threats from China and North Korea and leadership of a political party whose popularity is sagging ahead of a fast-approaching crucial national election.

With his party and its coalition partner holding a majority in both houses, Kishida won by a comfortable margin against Yukio Edano, head of the largest opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan. After being sworn in at a ceremony in the royal palace, Kishida was to hold his first news conference as prime minister and chair his first Cabinet meeting later Monday.

He replaces Yoshihide Suga, who resigned after only one year in office as his support plunged over his government's handling of the pandemic and insistence on holding the Tokyo Olympics as the virus spread.

Kishida is expected to make a policy speech in parliament on Friday but is looking to dissolve the lower house to hold elections on Oct. 31, Japanese media reported. Observers see the early date as a move to take advantage of his government's fresh image to rally support.

Jun Azumi, senior Constitutional Democratic Party lawmaker, criticized Kishida over his plan to dissolve the house in just over a week. "It's like a delicatessen that forces customers to buy without a chance to try samples."

A former foreign minister, Kishida, 64, used to be known as a moderate but turned hawkish on security and more conservative on gender equality and other issues, apparently to show loyalty to influential conservatives in the Liberal Democratic Party and win their support. He is firmly entrenched in the conservative establishment, and his victory in last week's vote to replace Suga as the party's leader was a choice for continuity and stability over change.

Kishida replaced all but two of Suga's 20 Cabinet members and 13 will hold ministerial posts for the first time, according to the lineup announced by new Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno. Most of the posts went to powerful factions that voted for Kishida in the party election. Only three women are included, up from two in Suga's government.

Veteran female lawmaker Seiko Noda, one of four candidates who vied for the party leadership race, became the minister in charge of the nation's declining birthrate and local revitalization. Another woman, Noriko Horiuchi, became vaccinations minister, replacing Taro Kono, the runner-up in the party leadership

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race.

Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi, who is former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's younger brother, were retained, ensuring continuity of Japan's diplomacy and security policies as the country seeks to closely work with Washington under the bilateral security pact in the face of China's rise and growing tensions in the region, including around Taiwan.

Kishida supports stronger Japan-U.S. security ties and partnerships with other like-minded democracies in Asia, Europe and Britain, in part to counter China and nuclear-armed North Korea.

Kishida created a new Cabinet post aimed at tackling the economic dimensions of Japan's national security, appointing 46-year-old Takayuki Kobayashi, who is relatively new to parliament.

Finance Minister Taro Aso was shifted to a top party post and replaced by his 68-year-old relative, Shunichi Suzuki.

Japan faces growing nuclear and missile threats from North Korea, which last month test-fired ballistic missiles capable of hitting targets in Japan. Kishida also faces worsening ties with fellow U.S. ally South Korea over history issues even after he struck a 2015 agreement with Seoul to resolve a row over the issue of women who were sexually abused by Japan's military during World War II.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Monday sent a letter to Kishida, congratulating his election as prime minister and offering to work together to improve ties. In the letter, Moon said South Korea wants to strengthen cooperation on economy, culture, personnel exchanges and other sectors, Moon's office said.

An urgent task at home will be turning around his party's sagging popularity, hurt by Suga's perceived high-handedness on the pandemic and other issues.

He'll also have to ensure Japan's health care systems, vaccination campaign and other virus measures are ready for a possible resurgence of COVID-19 in winter, while gradually normalizing social and economic activity.

Kishida said last week that his top priority would be the economy. His "new capitalism" is largely a continuation of Abe's economic policies but he aims to raise incomes.

Voters welcomed new, and slightly younger, faces in the new government.

A 28-year-old designer Karen Einaka said she hoped the new government takes into consideration younger people's opinions and allows younger politicians to play important roles.

At least, "Kishida looks more energetic than Suga," said business owner Makoto Okubo.

Associated Press journalists Chisato Tanaka in Tokyo and Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea, contributed to this report.

Jordan's king denies impropriety in luxury home purchases

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and KARIN LAUB Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — Jordan's King Abdullah II on Monday denied any impropriety in his purchase of luxury homes abroad, citing security needs for keeping quiet about the transactions that are reportedly worth more than \$100 million. He said no public funds were used.

But in a sign the Royal Palace was concerned by the report of the purchases, Jordanian media, much of which is directly or indirectly controlled by the palace, made no mention of it. Even independent Jordanian media outlets engage in self-censorship, avoiding criticism of the king, the royal family and the security forces.

The revelations were first published Sunday by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, which reported that hundreds of world leaders, powerful politicians, billionaires, celebrities, religious leaders and drug dealers have been hiding their investments in mansions, exclusive beachfront property, yachts and other assets for the past quarter-century.

The report is based on a review of nearly 12 million files obtained from 14 firms located around the world, the consortium said. The report is being dubbed the "Pandora Papers" because the findings shed light on the previously hidden dealings of the elite and the corrupt, and how they have used offshore ac-

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counts to shield assets collectively worth trillions of dollars.

For instance, the investigation found advisers helped Jordan's king set up at least three dozen shell companies from 1995 to 2017, helping the monarch buy 14 homes worth more than \$106 million in the U.S. and the U.K. One was a \$23 million California ocean-view property bought in 2017 through a British Virgin Islands company. The advisers were identified as an English accountant in Switzerland and lawyers in the British Virgin Islands.

Abdullah denied there was anything untoward in the purchases, saying security required him to keep the transactions quiet. He said the properties were often used for official functions and said no public funds were used to buy them.

"These properties are not publicized out of security and privacy concerns, and not out of secrecy or an attempt to hide them, as these reports have claimed," the Royal Court statement said. "Measures to maintain privacy are crucial for a head of state of His Majesty's position."

The statement described the consortium's report on his real estate portfolio as a "flagrant security breach and a threat to His Majesty's and his family's safety."

Jordan is a key Western ally, seen as a voice of moderation and stability in a volatile region. But its economy has struggled during Abdullah's two-decade reign, hit recently by an influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees from neighboring Syria as well as the coronavirus crisis. Jordan has received billions of dollars in aid from the international community over the years to help stabilize its foundering economy.

The latest details are an embarrassing blow to Abdullah, whose government was engulfed in scandal this year when his half brother, former Crown Prince Hamzah, accused the "ruling system" of corruption and incompetence. The king claimed he was the victim of a "malicious plot," placed his half brother under house arrest and put two former close aides on trial.

Hamzah has been seen in public just once since the scandal erupted in April, and he remains out of touch under the king's "protection."

The new report could also potentially affect Jordan's relations with the community of international donor nations that have assisted his government.

It came Sunday as Abdullah was hosting the president of the World Bank, who was on an official visit to discuss the kingdom's economy. Earlier this year, the World Bank announced a \$1.1 billion package of loans and grants to assist Jordan in its response to the coronavirus pandemic. The health crisis has sent unemployment spiking to roughly 25%, according to official figures.

Amer Sabeileh, an independent Jordanian analyst, said Sunday's report did not look good for the king, given the kingdom's widespread economic hardship and the government's image and credibility problems following the Hamzah affair.

"It comes at a moment when frustration among the people is at a peak, and the government is suffering from a serious shortage of credibility in the whole political system," he said.

But Labib Kamhawi, another analyst, said it was still too early to draw any conclusions about whether there would be any long-term damage to the king.

"But the fact that the government is doing its utmost to block any flow of information into Jordan means that they are taking this issue seriously," he said.

Federman reported from Jerusalem.

Nobel Prize honors discovery of temperature, touch receptors

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Two U.S.-based scientists were awarded the Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine on Monday for their discovery of the receptors that allow humans to feel temperature and touch.

David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian focused their work on the field of somatosensation, that is the ability of specialized organs such as eyes, ears and skin to see, hear and feel.

"This really unlocks one of the secrets of nature," said Thomas Perlmann, secretary-general of the Nobel Committee, in announcing the winners. "It's actually something that is crucial for our survival, so it's a

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very important and profound discovery.”

The committee said Julius, 65, used capsaicin, the active component in chili peppers, to identify the nerve sensors that allow the skin to respond to heat.

Patapoutian found separate pressure-sensitive sensors in cells that respond to mechanical stimulation, it said.

The pair shared the prestigious Kavli Award for Neuroscience last year.

“Imagine that you’re walking barefoot across a field on this summer’s morning,” said Patrik Ernfors of the Nobel Committee. “You can feel the warmth of the sun, the coolness of the morning dew, a caressing summer breeze and the fine texture of blades of grass underneath your feet. These impressions of temperature, touch and movement are feelings relying on somatosensation.”

“Such information continuously flows from the skin and other deep tissues and connects us with the external and internal world. It is also essential for tasks that we perform effortlessly and without much thought,” said Ernfors.

Perlmann said he managed to get hold of both of the winners before the announcement.

“I (...) only had a few minutes to talk to them, but they were incredibly happy,” he said. “And as far as I could tell they were very surprised and a little bit shocked, maybe.”

Last year’s prize went to three scientists who discovered the liver-ravaging hepatitis C virus, a breakthrough that led to cures for the deadly disease and tests to keep the scourge from spreading through blood banks.

The prestigious award comes with a gold medal and 10 million Swedish kronor (over \$1.14 million). The prize money comes from a bequest left by the prize’s creator, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel, who died in 1895.

The prize is the first to be awarded this year. The other prizes are for outstanding work in the fields of physics, chemistry, literature, peace and economics.

Read more stories about Nobel Prizes past and present at <https://www.apnews.com/NobelPrizes>

Trading of China’s Evergrande shares in Hong Kong suspended

By ALICE FUNG and HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Shares in troubled real estate developer China Evergrande Group and its property management unit Evergrande Property Services were suspended from trading in Hong Kong on Monday as investors awaited the next steps in the saga of its debt crisis.

Cailian, a Chinese online news service affiliated with the state-run newspaper Securities Times, said another developer, Hopson Development Holdings, was planning to acquire a majority share in Evergrande Property Services Group.

Hopson suspended trading of its shares in Hong Kong on Monday. The suspension was “pending the release of announcement(s) in relation to a major transaction of the company under which the company agreed to acquire the shares of a company . . . listed on the stock exchange,” it said in a filing.

Hopson’s public relations department said the company would not comment on “market rumors.”

Evergrande Property Services said in its announcement to the Hong Kong exchange that its shares were suspended from trading pending an announcement related to a merger or takeover.

Phone calls to Evergrande’s PR office in Hong Kong rang unanswered and the company’s offices elsewhere in China were closed for a holiday.

Evergrande has been struggling to avoid defaulting on billions of dollars of debt. The company owes billions to banks, customers and contractors and has been selling off assets to resolve its cash crunch.

Analysts say the Chinese government was reluctant to be seen as bailing Evergrande out at a time when authorities are pushing companies to reduce debt levels. A takeover of the company’s property management arm would be one step in restructuring it by splitting it into smaller entities, said Francis Lun, CEO of Geo Securities in Hong Kong.

The central government might ask local governments in turn to provide funding for Evergrande to finish

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its many incompleting projects so that they can be delivered or sold to buyers, enabling the developer to pay its contractors, he said.

"As far as the Chinese government's concerned, this is the best way forward. And of course, in doing so, I think some creditors will be hurt, mostly overseas creditors," Lum said.

Evergrande is one of China's biggest private sector conglomerates, with more than 200,000 employees, 1,300 projects in 280 cities and assets of 2.3 trillion yuan (\$350 billion). It owes creditors some 2 trillion yuan (\$310 billion).

The company ran up billions of dollars in debt building apartment complexes, malls and office towers over the years. Its situation worsened after August 2020, when Beijing tightened controls on financing for China's 12 biggest developers, forcing them to reduce corporate debt loads that are seen as a threat to the economy.

Evergrande has been selling off various assets to try to alleviate the problem. Last week, it sold its \$1.5 billion stake in Shengjing Bank to cover its debt to the state-owned lender based in northeastern China.

China Evergrande Group's shares have lost more than 80% of their value this year and ratings agencies say it is at risk of defaulting on its debts.

Like Evergrande, Hopson, based in Guangdong adjacent to Hong Kong, is one of China's biggest property companies. Reports show it has a much lower debt to equity ratio than its larger rivals.

Jitters over a slowdown in China's economy and potential turmoil in its vital property industry have rattled world markets in the past few weeks.

The fear is that a default by Evergrande could cascade throughout the Chinese economy and even world financial markets.

"I think the government is really close to a resolution over the Evergrande problem because it cannot drag on forever, it will hurt everybody involved," Lum said.

Hong Kong's benchmark Hang Seng index dropped 2.2% Monday on heavy selling of real estate companies and banks.

Wu contributed from Taipei. AP researcher Henry Hou in Beijing and AP Business Writer Elaine Kurtenbach in Mito, Japan, also contributed.

Leaked records open a 'Pandora' box of financial secrets

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE and JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

Hundreds of world leaders, powerful politicians, billionaires, celebrities, religious leaders and drug dealers have been hiding their investments in mansions, exclusive beachfront property, yachts and other assets for the past quarter-century, according to a review of nearly 12 million files obtained from 14 firms located around the world.

The report released Sunday by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists involved 600 journalists from 150 media outlets in 117 countries. It's being dubbed the "Pandora Papers" because the findings shed light on the previously hidden dealings of the elite and the corrupt, and how they have used offshore accounts to shield assets collectively worth trillions of dollars.

The more than 330 current and former politicians identified as beneficiaries of the secret accounts include Jordan's King Abdullah II, former U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair, Czech Republic Prime Minister Andrej Babis, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, Ecuador's President Guillermo Lasso, and associates of both Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The billionaires called out in the report include Turkish construction mogul Erman Ilıcak and Robert T. Brockman, the former CEO of software maker Reynolds & Reynolds.

Many of the accounts were designed to evade taxes and conceal assets for other shady reasons, according to the report.

"The new data leak must be a wake-up call," said Sven Giegold, a Green party lawmaker in the European Parliament. "Global tax evasion fuels global inequality. We need to expand and sharpen the countermea-

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tures now.”

Oxfam International, a British consortium of charities, applauded the Pandora Papers for exposing brazen examples of greed that deprived countries of tax revenue that could be used to finance programs and projects for the greater good.

“This is where our missing hospitals are,” Oxfam said in a statement. “This is where the pay-packets sit of all the extra teachers and firefighters and public servants we need. Whenever a politician or business leader claims there is ‘no money’ to pay for climate damage and innovation, for more and better jobs, for a fair post-COVID recovery, for more overseas aid, they know where to look.”

The Pandora Papers are a follow-up to a similar project released in 2016 called the “Panama Papers” compiled by the same journalistic group.

The latest bombshell is even more expansive, porting through nearly 3 terabytes of data — the equivalent of roughly 750,000 photos on a smartphone — leaked from 14 different service providers doing business in 38 different jurisdictions in the world. The records date back to the 1970s, but most of the files span from 1996 to 2020.

In contrast, the Panama Papers culled through 2.6 terabytes of data leaked by one now-defunct law firm called Mossack Fonseca that was located in the country that inspired that project’s nickname.

The latest investigation dug into accounts registered in familiar offshore havens, including the British Virgin Islands, Seychelles, Hong Kong and Belize. But some of the secret accounts were also scattered around in trusts set up in the U.S., including 81 in South Dakota and 37 in Florida.

Some of the initial findings released Sunday painted a sordid picture of the prominent people involved.

For instance, the investigation found advisers helped King Abdullah II of Jordan set up at least three dozen shell companies from 1995 to 2017, helping the monarch buy 14 homes worth more than \$106 million in the U.S. and the U.K. One was a \$23 million California ocean-view property bought in 2017 through a British Virgin Islands company. The advisers were identified as an English accountant in Switzerland and lawyers in the British Virgin Islands.

There was no immediate comment from Jordan’s Royal Palace.

The details are an embarrassing blow to Abdullah, whose government was engulfed in scandal this year when his half brother, former Crown Prince Hamzah, accused the “ruling system” of corruption and incompetence. The king claimed he was the victim of a “malicious plot,” placed his half brother under house arrest and put two former close aides on trial.

U.K. attorneys for Abdullah said he isn’t required to pay taxes under his country’s law and hasn’t misused public funds, adding that there are security and privacy reasons for him to have holdings through offshore companies, according to the report. The attorneys also said most of the companies and properties are not connected to the king or no longer exist, though they declined to provide details.

Blair, U.K. prime minister from 1997 to 2007, became the owner of an \$8.8 million Victorian building in 2017 by buying a British Virgin Islands company that held the property, and the building now hosts the law firm of his wife, Cherie Blair, according to the the investigation. The two bought the company from the family of Bahrain’s industry and tourism minister, Zayed bin Rashid al-Zayani. Buying the company shares instead of the London building saved the Blairs more than \$400,000 in property taxes, the investigation found.

The Blairs and the al-Zayanis both said they didn’t initially know the other party was involved in the deal, the probe found. Cherie Blair said her husband wasn’t involved in the purchase, which she said was meant to bring “the company and the building back into the U.K. tax and regulatory regime.” She also said she did not want to own a British Virgin Islands company and that the “seller for their own purposes only wanted to sell the company,” which is now closed.

A lawyer for the al-Zayanis said they complied with U.K. laws.

Khan, the Pakistani prime minister, is not accused of any wrongdoing. But members of his inner circle, including Finance Minister Shaukat Fayaz Ahmed Tarin, are accused of hiding millions of dollars in wealth in secret companies or trusts, according to the journalists’ findings.

In a tweet, Khan vowed to recover the “ill-gotten gains” and said his government will look into all citizens

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mentioned in the documents and take action, if needed.

The consortium of journalists revealed Putin's image-maker and chief executive of Russia's leading TV station, Konstantin Ernst, got a discount to buy and develop Soviet-era cinemas and surrounding property in Moscow after he directed the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. Ernst told the organization the deal wasn't secret and denied suggestions he was given special treatment.

In 2009, Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis put \$22 million into shell companies to buy a chateau property in a hilltop village in Mougins, France, near Cannes, the investigation found. The shell companies and the chateau were not disclosed in Babis' required asset declarations, according to documents obtained by the journalism group's Czech partner, Investigace.cz.

A real estate group owned indirectly by Babis bought the Monaco company that owned the chateau in 2018, the probe found.

"I was waiting for them to bring something right before the election to harm me and influence the Czech election," Babis tweeted in his first reaction to the report.

The Czech Republic parliamentary election is being held on Friday and Saturday.

"I've never done anything illegal or wrong," Babis added.

Liedtke reported from San Ramon, California, and Mattise reported from Nashville, Tennessee. Associated Press writers Karel Janicek in the Czech Republic, Frank Jordans in Berlin, Josef Federman in Jerusalem, John Rice in Mexico City, Kathy Gannon in Islamabad, Pakistan, and Felicia Fonseca in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Taliban-style security welcomed by some, feared by others

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — It wasn't 7 a.m. yet and already the line outside the police station's gates was long, with men bringing their complaints and demands for justice to Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers.

Something new they immediately found: The Taliban fighters who are now the policemen don't demand bribes like police officers did under the U.S-backed government of the past 20 years.

"Before, everyone was stealing our money," said Hajj Ahmad Khan, who was among those in line at the Kabul District 8 police station on a recent day. "Everywhere in our villages and in government offices, everyone had their hands out," he said.

Many Afghans fear the harsh ways of the Taliban, their hard-line ideology or their severe restrictions of women's freedoms. But the movement does bring a reputation for not being corrupt, a stark contrast to the government it ousted, which was notoriously rife with bribery, embezzlement and graft.

Even residents who shudder at the potential return of punishments - such as chopping off the hands of thieves - say some security has returned to Kabul since the Taliban swept in on Aug. 15. Under the previous government, gangs of thieves had driven most people off the streets by dark. Several roads between cities are again open and have even been given the green light for travel by some international aid organizations.

Still, there are dangers. On Sunday, a bomb outside Kabul's Eid Gah mosque killed several civilians and targeted Taliban members attending a memorial service. No one took responsibility for the bombing but the rival Islamic State group has ramped up attacks against the Taliban in an IS stronghold in eastern Afghanistan.

During their last time in power in the late 1990s, the Taliban offered a trade-off: They brought a stability Afghans desperately sought and eliminated corruption, but they also imposed their harsh interpretation of Islamic law. That included punishments like the hand amputations, executions of murderers with a single bullet to the head, most often by a relative of the murder victim and all carried out in public. Religious police beat men for trimming their beards or for not attending prayers.

In the past week, the Taliban arrested 85 alleged criminals, some accused of petty crimes, and others of murder, kidnapping and robbery, said Noor Ahmad Rabbani of the Taliban's anti-crime department.

The Taliban say they will bring back their previous punishments. The only question is whether they will

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carry them out publicly, Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, former justice minister and current official in charge of prisons, told The Associated Press.

Some punishments have already reappeared. The bodies of four men were hung from cranes in the center of the city of Herat, after being killed by Taliban while allegedly attempting a kidnapping. On at least two occasions in Kabul, petty thieves were paraded around the streets to shame them, handcuffed, with their faces painted or with stale bread stuffed in their mouths.

Gun-toting Taliban have taken up positions at checkpoints across Kabul and gradually some have been made to wear uniforms -- the beginnings of a new national security force, officials say. For many Kabul residents -- particularly the young who grew up on horror stories about the previous period of Taliban rule -- the sight of the fighters is frightening as they roam the streets freely, with their signature long hair, traditional dress and Kalashnikov rifles hanging by their sides.

But so far, they appear to have brought relief from corruption. Before the Taliban takeover in August, people had to pay bribes simply to settle a utility bill. Rampant fraud in the military was one reason it collapsed so quickly in the face of the advancing Taliban. Despite the overt graft, the U.S. and Europe poured billions of dollars into the government with little oversight.

As in the past, the Taliban have turned to tribal elders to settle disputes. Last week, a group of elders gathered in a Kabul mosque to adjudicate a stabbing attack that caused minor injuries. The elders ordered the culprit's father to pay the victim the equivalent of nearly \$400, enough to cover the medical expenses.

Muhammed Yousef Jawid accepted his punishment.

"It's fast, and much less expensive than it was under the previous system," he said.

At the District 8 police station, the new commander, an affable Taliban named Zabihullah, said the Taliban had fought for 20 years to bring Islamic laws to Afghanistan. "Now people are safe under our government," he said.

Zabihullah, who like many Afghans goes by one name, is from central Ghazni province, where the insurgents waged some of their most bitter battles during the last two decades.

At 32, he said he hasn't trained to be a police commander, with most of his education at a madrassa, or religious school. But Zabihullah said his years at war and adherence to the Taliban interpretation of Islamic law had prepared him.

Outside the police station gates, the line was getting longer.

Sixty-year-old Khan had come from eastern Khost province to seek Taliban help in collecting an outstanding loan. He said he supported Taliban punishments like amputations, though not for petty thieves.

He said they have brought some security "because they treat the criminal under Islamic law."

A school principal, who didn't want to give his name fearing repercussions, had come to the police station to complain about parents who are months behind on school fees.

He said he wanted to give Taliban rule a chance. Under the previous government, he was charged bribes each time he went to the police to complain about delinquent payments.

"America invested lots of money in Afghanistan, but it was a mafia that was running the country," he said.

Another complainant, who gave his name only as Dr. Sharif, had returned recently from Saudi Arabia where he had worked for several years. He had no objection to Taliban-style punishments but argued strenuously against putting Taliban leaders and religious clerics in charge of government departments.

"We need professional people ... we need economic specialists, not a maulvi who has no idea about business," he said, using a word for a Muslim cleric.

Still, he welcomed having his complaint heard without any demand for a bribe from the Taliban police. Before, police demanded a bribe just to get into the station.

"The mistake of the past governments," he said, "was that they put all the money into their pockets."

Associated Press Writer Samya Kullab in Kabul contributed to this report.

New Zealand admits it can no longer get rid of coronavirus

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By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand's government acknowledged Monday what most other countries did long ago: It can no longer completely get rid of the coronavirus.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced a cautious plan to ease lockdown restrictions in Auckland, despite an outbreak there that continues to simmer.

Since early in the pandemic, New Zealand had pursued an unusual zero-tolerance approach to the virus through strict lockdowns and aggressive contact tracing.

Until recently, that elimination strategy had worked remarkably well for the country of 5 million, which has reported just 27 virus deaths.

While other nations faced rising death tolls and disrupted lives, New Zealanders went back to workplaces, school yards and sports stadiums safe from any community spread.

But that all changed when the more contagious delta variant somehow escaped from a quarantine facility in August after it was brought into the country from a traveler returning from Australia.

Despite New Zealand going into the strictest form of lockdown after just a single local case was detected, it ultimately wasn't enough to crush the outbreak entirely.

One factor may have been that the disease spread among some groups that are typically more wary of authorities, including gang members and homeless people living in transitional housing.

The outbreak has grown to more than 1,300 cases, with 29 more detected on Monday. A few cases have been found outside of Auckland.

Ardern said that seven weeks of lockdown restrictions in Auckland had helped keep the outbreak under control.

"For this outbreak, it's clear that long periods of heavy restrictions has not got us to zero cases," Ardern said. "But that is OK. Elimination was important because we didn't have vaccines. Now we do, so we can begin to change the way we do things."

New Zealand began its vaccination campaign slowly compared to most other developed nations. Rates rocketed in August after the outbreak began but have dropped off significantly again since then.

About 65% of New Zealanders have had at least one dose and 40% are fully vaccinated. Among people age 12 and older, about 79% have had at least a single jab.

Under Ardern's plan that starts Tuesday, Aucklanders will be able to meet outdoors with loved ones from one other household, early childhood centers will reopen and people will be able to go to the beach.

The dates for a phased reopening of retail stores and later bars and restaurants have yet to be decided.

Ardern said the elimination strategy had served the country incredibly well but the government always intended to eventually transition to the protection of vaccines, a change hastened by the delta variant "game changer."

The government's elimination approach had been broadly supported by New Zealanders but was facing increasing criticism. Over the weekend, hundreds of people turned out to rallies protesting the lockdown.

Opposition lawmaker Chris Bishop said the government had no clear strategy to deal with the outbreak other than total surrender.

But Ardern said that most measures would remain in place to keep the outbreak under control, including exhaustive contact tracing and isolating those who got infected.

"There's good cause for us to feel optimistic about the future," Ardern said. "But we cannot rush."

At Dubai's Expo, the world's problematic politics loom

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran wants you to put politics aside and marvel over its ornate carpets. Syria wants you to forget about its brutal war and learn about the world's first alphabet. Yemen, on the brink of famine, is very excited about its honey and coffee.

Welcome to Dubai's Expo 2020, the first world's fair in the Middle East that boasts over 190 participating countries — except Afghanistan, whose new Taliban rulers are a no-show.

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Dubai has gambled billions to make the built-from-scratch Expo village a triumphant tourist attraction and symbol of the United Arab Emirates itself — a feast for the eyes designed to be devoid of politics and built on the promise of globalization. But even as nations use their pavilions as benign infomercials, the political turbulence of the wider world manages to intrude.

"We had one bullet to shoot," said Manahel Thabet, Yemeni pavilion director. "We wanted to present Yemen in a different manner ... to demonstrate the people and not any political agenda."

But the winding journey the exhibit's handicrafts took from the nation's rebel-held north to the sleek Emirati-funded pavilion betrays a very different Yemen. Merchants described harrowing nights trekking with Expo-bound sacks of stones, spices and honey through the battlefields of Marib, Yemen's last government stronghold now under siege by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

The pavilion for Myanmar, where the army's seizure of power has spiraled into a bloody conflict, displays a golden chariot and beckons visitors to its pagoda-studded plains.

The previous government, which was toppled by a coup in February, had appointed a leading Burmese philanthropist to direct and sponsor the showcase years ago.

But a person familiar with pavilion's operations, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals, said Myanmar's military junta in recent weeks had been trying to overhaul the philanthropist's exhibit and change the event schedule, with hopes to host nationalist, military rallies over the fair's six months. Expo organizers, the person added, were trying to prevent the takeover, but the pavilion's fate remains uncertain.

After the UAE announced it would normalize relations with Israel last year, infuriating the Palestinians and upending a long-standing Arab consensus, the Palestinian Authority declared it would boycott Dubai's Expo.

And yet just a two-minute stroll from Israel's mirrored arch, Palestine's pavilion stands tall, its vast exterior painted with Arabic calligraphy reading: "Yesterday it was called Palestine. Today it is called Palestine."

The exhibit creates a full sensory experience, inviting visitors to touch handmade ceramic jugs, watch vendors slicing knafeh, a syrupy cheese-filled pastry, and smell oranges from Palestinian farms.

However, the Palestine pavilion has not officially opened to the public, as employees described a litany of headaches trying to get approval from Israeli authorities to get certain goods out of the occupied West Bank. When asked what prompted the about-face on Palestine's participation, staffers said it was decided that a Palestinian absence at the massive world's fair would be worse.

While many countries received invitations to participate in Expo almost immediately after Dubai won the bid in 2013, Syria said it was invited just two years ago — not long after the UAE reopened its embassy in Damascus in a sign of improved ties with President Bashar Assad following years of devastating civil war. It was the last nation to begin construction.

Staffers at the black box theater, replete with inspiring slogans like "we will rise together" and lengthy explanations of ancient Mesopotamia's written alphabet, lamented the last-minute scramble and lack of funds. Noting that Assad was focused on rebuilding Syria's shattered cities, pavilion designer Khaled Alshamaa said the government provided largely "moral support."

Illustrated wooden tablets sent in from 1,500 ordinary Syrians around the world blanket the pavilion's walls. But visitors won't find references to death or displacement — something that staff insists is a happy coincidence, not proof of free speech restrictions. Miniature portraits of Assad and his wife Asma stare down from the mosaic. Other postcard images show musical instruments, flower bouquets and sprawling Syrian breakfasts.

"The war is over," Alshamaa said. "Even though there are sanctions, we are alive. This is the message we want to show you."

A large mirror at the pavilion bears a more cryptic message: "What you see isn't all there is."

Other politically sensitive pavilions have struggled even to show up.

North Korea is nowhere to be found. The pavilion for Libya, which slid into violent chaos after a NATO-backed uprising toppled longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011, still reeks of fresh paint. Display cases sit empty but for layers of thick dust and TV screens flicker between children's cartoons and static scenes of Tripoli's beaches.

Signage points toward Afghanistan, but its pavilion appears closed — nothing more than a sparse show-

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room for office furniture. The country's previous government had arranged the pavilion before the Taliban overran Kabul in the final days of the U.S. troop withdrawal on Aug. 15, forcing President Ashraf Ghani into exile in the UAE and scrapping plans for an Expo showcase, among other things.

At the exhibit for the Islamic Republic of Iran, a female staffer beams at visitors, gushing that her trip to the surreal theme park is her first time out of the sanctions-hit country. Although the booth features portraits of Iran's past and current supreme leaders, the showcase for the Shiite powerhouse makes no mention of religion, nor the nation's other sources of pride like its contentious ballistic missile and nuclear programs.

Instead, Iran went for a hard-core handicraft spiel, pitching Persian carpets with no reference to the American sanctions crippling the trade. Merchants sell saffron candy. Chefs gently spice kebab. Businessmen extol economic free zones.

Perhaps the Iranian pavilion presents the most fitting metaphor for Expo. In one room, visitors must peer through tiny holes in the wall to view real-life scenes from Iran, where nameless people dig vast copper mines, stroll calmly along village roads and weave colorful textiles. The brief, optimistic glimpses offer nothing more or less than what the country wants you to see.

At Vatican trial, defense questions the legal system itself

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Defense lawyers are questioning the legitimacy of the Vatican tribunal where 10 people are on trial on finance-related charges, arguing their clients can't get a fair trial in an absolute monarchy where the pope has already intervened in the case and where prosecutors have failed to turn over key evidence.

In defense motions ahead of the trial's resumption on Tuesday, lawyers have alleged numerous procedural violations by prosecutors that they say should nullify the indictment. They have questioned what redress they have, since the Holy See has never signed any international convention guaranteeing fair trials or providing recourse to the European Court of Human Rights.

"These are harmful to the right of the defense that affect the right to a fair trial," said Fabio Viglione, attorney for Cardinal Angelo Becciu, the lone cardinal on trial.

The trial concerns the Holy See's 350 million euro investment in a London property deal but has expanded to include other alleged financial crimes. During the preliminary hearing in July, defense lawyers had balked that they had only had a few days to read the 28,000 pages of evidence gathered by prosecutors over two years to understand the accusations against their clients. Key documents were either missing or couldn't be accessed.

The tribunal president, Giuseppe Pignatone, ordered the pope's prosecutors to make the documents available as well as a key missing piece of evidence: the videotaped interrogations of the prosecutors' prime suspect-turned-star witness, Monsignor Alberto Perlasca. He was the Vatican official most intimately involved in the London real estate deal that lost the Holy See tens of millions of euros, much of it donations from the faithful, spent on fees to Italian brokers who are accused of defrauding the pope.

Perlasca's five spontaneous declarations were so important to the prosecution's case that they apparently spared him indictment and formed the basis of several charges against the defendants. One led to a witness-tampering charge against Becciu.

But the prosecutors refused to abide by Pignatone's order to produce Perlasca's videotaped testimony, citing his right to privacy. The defense has only seen a summary of Perlasca's account, and Becciu's legal team only learned of the witness-tampering accusation when the indictment was handed down on July 3.

In a defense memo submitted last week and obtained by The Associated Press, lawyers representing another defendant, Cecilia Marogna, said such behavior by prosecutors to refuse an order of the tribunal president would never be tolerated in an Italian court.

"In a normal situation, in all countries having a judicial system that could be considered autonomous and impartial and structured in a way to safeguard a fair trial, the refusal would have been immediately

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sanctioned," said the memo by international law expert, Riccardo Sindoca.

On Sept. 21, prosecutors also informed the defense and the tribunal that, due to "internal organizational problems," they couldn't meet Pignatone's deadline to provide forensic copies of data from cellphones, laptops and other electronic devices that had been seized from the defendants.

Sindoca's motion also argued that the tribunal judges can't be considered truly impartial or independent since Pope Francis hired them and can fire them, and that they took oaths to be "loyal to and obey" the pope, not the law as is the case for judges in Italy. As an absolute monarch, Francis wields supreme legislative, executive and judicial power in Vatican City.

The defense is not alone in finding structural problems in the Vatican tribunal. In June, the Council of Europe's Moneyval evaluators faulted the Vatican's reliance on part-time, temporary prosecutors and judges who also practice in Italy, warning that they might have conflicts of interest.

AP asked the prosecutors' office in January about possible conflicts of interest, and was told the question was "totally specious and devoid of any technical basis." Saying there had never been a conflict, the prosecutors said their work in Italy as registered lawyers "is only evidence of the professionalism they have achieved."

Francis, for his part, has insisted that the Vatican judiciary has "become more independent" in recent years and has pointed to the trial as evidence that his financial transparency reforms are working. Yet Francis also boasted that he personally intervened to encourage the two Vatican officials who raised red flags about irregularities in the London deal to make formal complaints to prosecutors.

In his zeal, Francis then issued four separate executive decrees during the two-year investigation giving prosecutors sweeping powers to investigate even "where necessary to derogate from" existing laws, to conduct wiretaps and to suspend Vatican confidentiality rules for documents.

Defense lawyer Luigi Panella, representing the Vatican's longtime money manager Enrico Crasso, argued during the opening hearing that such interference from the executive power, and the carte blanche Francis gave prosecutors to disregard existing laws, amounted to the creation of an ad hoc "special tribunal," which is expressly outlawed in Italy.

Prosecutors, for their part, insisted that the defense rights had all been respected, defended the legitimacy of the trial and Francis' executive decrees and reminded lawyers that the church's canon law forms the basis of Vatican law, not Italian legislation. Prosecutor Alessandro Diddi acknowledged during the July hearing that if there were procedural errors, he was ready to remedy them.

Backing him up, attorney Paola Severino, who is representing the Secretariat of State as an injured party in the case, called for the defense motions to be dismissed.

In addition to the executive decrees, Francis has also intervened personally in the case. He essentially declared Becciu guilty last year when he forced his resignation as head of the Vatican's saint-making office, citing a 100,000 euro transfer of Vatican money to a diocesan charity run by his brother.

Becciu is now on trial for that transfer, but Francis recently told the COPE broadcaster of the Spanish bishops conference he hopes "with all my heart," that Becciu is found innocent.

"He was a collaborator of mine and helped me a lot," Francis told COPE. " My wish is that it turns out well."

COVID vaccine mandate takes effect for NYC teachers, staff

By KAREN MATTHEWS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City teachers and other school staff members are supposed to be vaccinated against COVID-19 when the bell rings Monday morning, in one of the first school district mandates in the country requiring employees to be inoculated against the coronavirus.

Mayor Bill de Blasio gave a final warning to the city's roughly 148,000 public school staffers on Friday, saying unvaccinated employees would be placed on unpaid leave and not be allowed to work this week. The city planned to bring in substitutes where needed.

Implementing the mandate smoothly may be a challenge for de Blasio, a Democrat who has boasted of the city's record of keeping school buildings open during most of the last school year when other districts

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went to all-remote instruction. New York City is not offering a remote option this year.

De Blasio said 90% of Department of Education employees had received at least one vaccine dose, including 93% of teachers and 98% of principals, as of Friday.

The vaccination mandate in the nation's largest school system does not include a test-out option, but does allow for medical and religious exemptions. It was supposed to go into effect last week but was delayed when a federal appeals court granted a temporary injunction. An appeals panel reversed that decision three days later.

A similar mandate is set to go into effect in Los Angeles on Oct. 15.

Mark Cannizzaro, president of the Council of Schools Supervisors and Administrators, said that despite a surge in vaccinations last week, some principals can't find enough staff to replace unvaccinated workers.

"While we're thankful that the percentage of vaccinated staff has increased systemwide since the deadline was extended, there are still too many school leaders that have been unable to find qualified substitutes for Monday," Cannizzaro said.

A spokesperson for the United Federation of Teachers said the city "needs to work hard to make sure enough vaccinated personnel are in place to safely open the schools Monday morning."

Teachers and other school employees who had sued over the school vaccine mandate asked the U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday for an emergency injunction blocking its implementation. The request was denied on Friday.

Many students and parents support the vaccine mandate as the best way to keep schools open during the pandemic.

"It's safer for our kids," said Joyce Ramirez, 28, who was picking her three children up from a Bronx elementary school last week.

Ramirez said she hopes the requirement will lessen the chances of teachers contracting the virus and prompting classroom or school shutdowns.

Cody Miller, a 15-year-old sophomore at a high school in Manhattan, said teachers should all be vaccinated. "I think they should," said the teen, who got vaccinated himself as soon as the Pfizer shot was approved for people 12 and up. "It's so many kids, it's a big environment, you know?"

But Mally Diroche, another Bronx parent, had mixed feelings. "I kind of feel like that's a decision they should be able to make on their own," said the mom of three boys between 3 and 12. Diroche, 29, said she feels that masks and other precautions can check the virus' spread within schools.

Some educators have reservations about the mandate but are complying.

Maurice Jones, 46, a support staff member at a Manhattan middle school, said he got vaccinated months ago but he sympathizes with co-workers who have not gotten the shots. "If they've got to get tested more they've got to get tested more," Jones said. "I don't think they should lose their job."

Roxanne Rizzi, who teaches technology at an elementary school in Queens, waited until Friday to get her first coronavirus vaccine shot.

"I had to do it for the finances of my family," she said.

Rizzi, 55, had resisted the vaccine because she contracted COVID-19 in November and believed natural immunity would protect her. She said she would continue to protest the mandate.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people should get vaccinated even if they have already been infected by the virus. The agency says COVID-19 vaccines offer better protection than natural immunity and help prevent getting infected again.

Associated Press writer Jennifer Peltz contributed.

Tom Brady beats Patriots in New England return, 19-17

By KYLE HIGHTOWER AP Sports Writer

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) — Tom Brady brought two decades of touchdown passes, victories and championships to New England.

He returned and reminded his former team what they're missing.

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Brady rallied the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to a 19-17 victory over the Patriots on a rainy Sunday night, with Ryan Succop hitting the winning 48-yard field goal late in the fourth quarter.

Brady was 22 of 43 for 269 yards with no touchdowns, but engineered the fourth-quarter drive to beat the team he led to six Lombardi trophies. Ronald Jones added an 8-yard scoring run for defending Super Bowl champion Tampa Bay (3-1).

Brady said the Patriots made them earn the win on an emotional night for him.

"It's not that I would predict what would happen," Brady said. "There were a few emotional moments thinking about the people that meant so much in my life. My football journey took me somewhere else."

Brady broke Drew Brees' NFL career passing yardage record and became the fourth quarterback with victories against all 32 NFL teams, joining Brees, Brett Favre and Peyton Manning.

"In crunch time when we needed a field goal, he got us down the field," Bucs coach Bruce Arians said. "He wasn't going to make any mistakes that cost us the game."

New England had a chance to win, but Nick Folk's 56-yard field-goal try hit the left upright with less than a minute to play. The Patriots are 1-3 for the first time since 2001. Bill Belichick dropped to 8-12 since Brady left New England.

"The Bucs won this game," Arians said. "Everyone wanted to make this Brady versus Belichick. I don't think Bill took a snap."

Belichick said nothing Brady did surprised them.

"We went against Tom Brady every day, every day in practice defensively," Belichick said. "So it's not like we've never seen Tom Brady before."

Patriots rookie Mac Jones finished 31 of 40 for 275 yards and two touchdowns.

"I have a long way to go, and I just try to put my best foot forward every day, and we all want to win," Jones said.

The Buccaneers were hurt by multiple mistakes on defense and spotty special teams play — marked by poor punts, a missed early field goal and costly penalties.

But Tampa was able to come up with timely plays to stay in the game, including Antoine Winfield Jr. forcing a fumble by J.J. Taylor that was recovered by Richard Sherman — playing his first game since signing a one-year deal last week — to thwart a promising drive early in the third quarter.

Down 17-16, Brady and the Buccaneers took over on their own 25 and needed just seven plays drive to the Patriots 30. After Antonio Brown failed to hang onto a pass in the end zone Succop calmly connected on a 48-yarder with 2:02 left.

Leading 7-6, the Patriots punted and Matt Slater appeared to recover a fumble by Jaydon Mickens. But an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on Slater negated the play.

The Bucs took over and finished an eight-play, 52-yard drive with an 8-yard scoring run by Ronald Jones.

The Patriots responded on their next possession, using six straight completions by Jones to drive to the Bucs 1. Jones then found Jonnu Smith in back of the end zone for to put the Patriots back in front 14-13.

Tampa marched to the Patriots 8 on their ensuing drive before being forced to settle for Succop's third field goal to make it 16-14.

New England took back over with 7:58 left in the game and quickly moved down the field, getting into the red zone on a trick play that ended with receiver Jakobi Meyers throwing a 30-yard pass to Nelson Agholor. The drive stalled there and the Patriots nudged back in front 17-16 on Nick Folk's 27-yard field goal.

Brady was welcomed with cheers during the pregame before taking the field to a stream of boos on the Buccaneers' first drive of the night.

Some cheers returned on their second offensive series of the night when he completed a 28-yard pass to Mike Evans to surpass Brees's mark of 80,358 yards to become the NFL's career passing leader in the regular season.

The pass helped set up a 29-yard field goal to put the Bucs in front 3-0.

Tampa Bay's defense dialed up the pressure on Jones on the Patriots' next drive. Linebacker Devin White got a free run at Jones up the middle, forcing him to hurry a pass that was tipped by Ross Cockrell and intercepted by Winfield.

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The Patriots made the mistake moot, stopping the Buccaneers on third down just inside the red zone. The Buccaneers attempted another field goal, but this time Succop was wide right from 36 yards.

INJURIES

Buccaneers: Davis III was helped off the field in the second quarter with a quad injury and did not return. ... Winfield went into the locker room in the fourth quarter to be evaluated for a concussion.

Patriots: DE Henry Anderson left the game in the second quarter with a chest injury and did not return. ... RB Damien Harris was shaken up after a hit in the second quarter but was able to return. ... DB Cody Davis left the game in the third quarter with a knee injury. ... Jonathan Jones left the game late in the fourth quarter.

UP NEXT

Buccaneers: Host Dolphins on Sunday.

Patriots: At Texans on Sunday.

More AP NFL coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/nfl> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Response time questioned in Southern California oil spill

By AMY TAXIN and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

HUNTINGTON BEACH, Calif. (AP) — Some residents, business owners and environmentalists questioned whether authorities reacted quickly enough to contain one of the largest oil spills in recent California history, caused by a suspected leak in an underwater pipeline that fouled the sands of famed Huntington Beach and could keep the beaches there closed for weeks or longer.

Booms were deployed on the ocean surface Sunday to try to contain the oil while divers sought to determine where and why the leak occurred. On land, there was a race to find animals harmed by the oil and to keep the spill from harming any more sensitive marshland.

People who live and work in the area said they noticed an oil sheen and a heavy petroleum smell Friday evening.

But it wasn't until Saturday afternoon that the Coast Guard said an oil slick had been spotted and a unified command established to respond. And it took until Saturday night for the company that operates the pipeline believed responsible for the leak to shut down operations.

Rick Torgerson, owner of Blue Star Yacht Charter said on Friday evening "people were emailing, and the neighbors were asking, 'do you smell that?'" By Saturday morning boats were returning to the marina with their hulls covered in oil, he said.

Garry Brown, president of the environmental group Orange County Coastkeeper, decried a lack of initial coordination among the Coast Guard and local officials in dealing with the spreading oil slick.

"By the time it comes to the beach, it's done tremendous damage. Our frustration is, it could have been averted if there was a quick response," said Brown, who lives in Huntington Beach.

An estimated 126,000 gallons (572,807 liters) of heavy crude leaked into the water and some washed up on the shores of Orange County. The city and state beaches at Huntington Beach were closed, and late Sunday the city of Laguna Beach, just to the south, said its beaches also were shuttered.

Huntington Beach Mayor Kim Carr said the beaches of the community nicknamed "Surf City" could remain closed for weeks or even months. The oil created a miles-wide sheen in the ocean and washed ashore in sticky black globules.

"In a year that has been filled with incredibly challenging issues this oil spill constitutes one of the most devastating situations that our community has dealt with in decades," Carr said. "We are doing everything in our power to protect the health and safety of our residents, our visitors and our natural habitats."

Some birds and fish were caught in the muck and died, Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley said. But by early afternoon Saturday the U.S. Coast Guard said so far there was just one ruddy duck that was covered in oil and receiving veterinary care. "Other reports of oiled wildlife are being investigated," the Coast Guard said in a statement.

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The leaking pipeline connects to an oil production platform named Elly, which in turn is connected by a walkway to a drilling platform named Ellen. Those two platforms and another nearby platform are in federal waters and owned by Amplify Energy Corp.

Elly began operating in 1980 in an area called the Beta Field. Oil pulled from beneath the ocean and processed by Elly is taken by the pipeline to Long Beach.

Amplify CEO Martyn Willsher said the pipeline and three platforms were shutdown Saturday night. The 17.5-mile (28.16-kilometer) pipeline that is 80 to 100 feet (24 to 30 meters) below the surface was suctioned out so no more oil would spill while the location of the leak was being investigated.

Crews led by the Coast Guard-deployed skimmers laid some 3,700 feet (1,128 meters) of floating barriers known as booms to try to stop more oil from seeping into areas including Talbert Marsh, a 25-acre (10-hectare) wetland officials said.

A petroleum stench permeated the air throughout the area. "You get the taste in the mouth just from the vapors in the air," Foley said.

The oil will likely continue to wash up on the shore for several days and affect Newport Beach and other nearby communities, officials said.

The closure included all of Huntington Beach, from the city's north edge about 6 miles (9.6 kilometers) south to the Santa Ana River jetty. The shutdown came amid summerlike weather that would have brought big crowds to the wide strand for volleyball, swimming and surfing. Yellow caution tape was strung between lifeguard towers to keep people away.

Officials canceled the final day of the annual Pacific Air Show that typically draws tens of thousands of spectators to the city of about 200,000 residents south of Los Angeles. The show featured flyovers by the U.S. Navy Blue Angels and the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds.

Huntington Beach resident David Rapchun said he's worried about the impact of the spill on the beaches where he grew up as well as the local economy.

"For the amount of oil these things produce I don't think it's worth the risk," Rapchun said. He questioned whether drilling for oil was a wise idea along some of Southern California's most scenic beaches, noting the loss of the final day of the air show could deal a blow to the local economy.

"We need oil, but there's always a question: Do we need it there?" he said.

The spill comes three decades after a massive oil leak hit the same stretch of Orange County coast. On Feb. 7, 1990, the oil tanker American Trader ran over its anchor off Huntington Beach, spilling nearly 417,000 gallons (1.6 million liters) of crude. Fish and about 3,400 birds were killed.

In 2015, a ruptured pipeline north of Santa Barbara sent 143,000 gallons (541,313 liters) of crude oil gushing onto Refugio State Beach.

The area affected by the latest spill is home to threatened and endangered species, including a plump shorebird called the snowy plover, the California least tern and humpback whales.

"The coastal areas off of Southern California are just really rich for wildlife, a key biodiversity hot spot," said Miyoko Sakashita, director of the Center for Biological Diversity's oceans program.

The effects of an oil spill are wide-ranging, environmentalists said. Birds that get oil on their feathers can't fly, can't clean themselves and can't monitor their own temperatures, Sakashita said. Whales, dolphins and other sea creatures can have trouble breathing or die after swimming through oil or breathing in toxic fumes, she said.

"The oil spill just shows how dirty and dangerous oil drilling is and oil that gets into the water. It's impossible to clean it up so it ends up washing up on our beaches and people come into contact with it and wildlife comes in contact with it," she said. "It has long-lasting effects on the breeding and reproduction of animals. It's really sad to see this broad swatch oiled."

Associated Press reporters Felicia Fonseca in Phoenix and Julie Walker in New York contributed.

Taliban raid suspected IS hideout after bombing in capital

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KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Taliban forces raided an Islamic State affiliate's hideout in the Afghan capital and killed several insurgents, hours after a deadly bombing outside a mosque in Kabul, the Taliban said Monday.

Sunday's bombing outside the Eid Gah mosque killed five civilians, and while no claim of responsibility was made, suspicion quickly fell on the Islamic State group, which has ramped up attacks against its Taliban enemy since their takeover of Kabul in mid-August.

Taliban officials had gathered at the mosque to mourn the passing of Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid's mother.

In a statement Monday, Mujahid said Taliban forces raided an Islamic State operations center in the northern Kabul neighborhood of Khair Khana. It did not say how many IS insurgents killed or whether any Taliban were injured in the operation.

Sunday's bombing was the deadliest attack since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan with the chaotic departure of the last U.S. troops on Aug. 31.

The Islamic State group had claimed responsibility for the horrific bombing on Aug. 26 that killed more than 169 Afghans and 13 U.S. military personnel outside the Kabul airport, where thousands of people were trying to reach the airport to escape Taliban rule.

The Islamic State reemerged in Afghanistan in 2020 after being weakened by a heavy U.S. bombing campaign directed against them in the eastern part of the country in 2019. They were blamed for a horrific attack in 2020 on a maternity hospital that killed 24 people, including newborn babies. Earlier this year, they were held responsible for a brutal attack on a school in Afghanistan's mostly Shiite neighborhood of Dasht-e-Barchi that killed more than 80 students.

Sunday's bombing underscores the growing challenges for the Taliban. The group carried out frequent attacks during their 20-year insurgency, but are now faced with trying to contain rival militants who have used the same methods. And they are doing so during a national economic meltdown without the massive foreign aid given to U.S.-backed government they toppled.

Can Democrats hold together? Biden's agenda depends on it

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's one of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's favorite sayings, a guidepost for Democrats in trying times: "Our diversity is our strength. Our unity is our power."

But as Democrats try to usher President Joe Biden's expansive federal government overhaul into law, it's the party's diversity of progressive and conservative views that's pulling them apart.

And only by staying unified does their no-votes-to-spare majority have any hope of pushing his rebuilding agenda into law.

Biden will set traveling to Michigan on Tuesday to speak directly to the American people on his vision: It's time to tax big business and the wealthy and invest that money into child care, health care, education and tackling climate change — what he sees as some of the nation's most pressing priorities.

Together, Biden, Pelosi and other Democrats are entering a highly uncertain time, the messy throes of legislating, in what will now be a longer-haul pursuit that could stretch for weeks, if not months, of negotiations.

"Let me just tell you about negotiating: At the end, that's when you really have to weigh in," Pelosi said recently. "You cannot tire. You cannot concede."

"This," she added on a day when negotiations would stretch to midnight, "this is the fun part."

The product — or the colossal failure to reach a deal — will define not only the first year of Biden's presidency, but the legacy of Pelosi and a generation of lawmakers in Congress, with ramifications for next year's midterm elections. At stake is not only the scaled-back \$3.5 trillion plan, but also the slimmer \$1 trillion public works bill that is now stalled, intractably linked to the bigger bill.

As Democrats in Congress regroup, having blown Pelosi's self-imposed Friday deadline for passing legislation in the House amid bitter finger-pointing, they now face a new one, Oct. 31, to make gains on

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Biden's big plans. The \$3.5 trillion package is being chiseled back to around \$2 trillion and final approval of the Senate-passed \$1 trillion public works bill is on hold, for now.

Attention remains squarely focused on two key holdouts, Sen. Joe Manchin and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, who along with a small band of conservative House Democrats are the linchpins to any deal.

Biden is expected to be in touch as the senators return Monday to Washington. Pelosi has been in conversations with both West Virginia's Manchin and Arizona's Sinema.

"The president wants both bills and he expects to get both bills," Biden adviser Cedric Richmond said on "Fox News Sunday." "We're going to continue to work on both."

The inability to win over Manchin and Sinema to support Biden's broader vision contributed to the collapse last week of a promised House vote on their preferred \$1 trillion public works bill, which they had negotiated with Biden.

Tempers flared and accusations flew over who was to blame. Progressives lashed out at the two senators for holding up Biden's big agenda; the centrists blamed Pelosi for reneging on the promised vote; and progressives were both celebrated and scolded for playing hardball, withholding their votes on the public works bill to force a broader agreement.

Ultimately Biden arrived on Capitol Hill late Friday afternoon to deliver a tough-love message to all of them — telling centrists they would not get their vote on the bipartisan deal he helped broker until the progressives had a commitment on the broader package and warning progressives the big bill's price tag would likely come down to around \$2 trillion.

In many ways, the weeks ahead are reminiscent of the last big legislative undertaking by Democrats pushing the Affordable Care Act toward the finish line during the Obama administration.

No one doubts Pelosi — and Biden — can do it again. But the fight ahead is certain to be politically painful.

With no support from Republicans who deride Biden's vision as socialist-style big government, Democrats must decide among themselves what size package can win over support in the 50-50 Senate and narrowly held House.

Paid for by raising taxes on corporations and the wealthy, those individuals earning more than \$400,000 a year, or \$450,000 for couples, the measure, Biden insists, will carry an overall price tag of "zero."

Still, private discussions about trimming back various programs have now delved deeper into conversations over wholesale cuts that may need to be made. It's all on the table.

For example, will the push from Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., to expand Medicare to include dental, vision and other health care benefits survive? Or will those benefits have to be scrapped or reduced?

What about the new child care subsidies or COVID-19-related tax credits for families with children — will those be able to run for several years or have to be scaled back to just a few?

Will free community college be available to all, or only those of lower incomes, as Manchin proposes?

Can Biden's effort to tackle climate change be extended beyond the money already approved for electric vehicles and weather-resilient buildings in the public works bill?

"What we have said from the beginning is, it's never been about the price tag. It's about what we want to deliver," said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., a leader of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, in a Sunday interview on CNN.

"The president said this to us, too. He said don't start with the number. Start with what you're for," she said.

Pelosi has been working the phones to win over Manchin and Sinema, who in many ways are outliers among Democrats in the House and Senate who lean more progressive.

The two senators' prominence has morphed beyond the beltway into popular culture — Sinema was lampooned on "Saturday Night Live" over the weekend, while a flotilla of kayak-activists recently swarmed Manchin's D.C. houseboat.

Pelosi and Sinema had a prickly relationship when the Arizonan first joined Congress, but they now share a common interest in tackling climate change.

Manchin and Pelosi have a warmer alliance, and she showered the senator with praise as someone with

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whom she shared values as Italian Americans and Roman Catholics. "We're friends," she said.

But Pelosi has made it clear she is prepared to fight to the finish for a bill she called the "culmination of my service in Congress."

At a private caucus meeting last week, when one lawmaker suggested she had gone back on her word to have the infrastructure vote, she said that was before some among them were joining with the senators to reject Biden's broader plan, according to a person who requested anonymity to recount her private remarks.

"Let's try to at least stick together," Pelosi implored the Democrats.

Crews race to limit damage from major California oil spill

By AMY TAXIN and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

HUNTINGTON BEACH, Calif. (AP) — Crews on the water and on shore worked feverishly Sunday to limit environmental damage from one of the largest oil spills in recent California history, caused by a suspected leak in an underwater pipeline that fouled the sands of famed Huntington Beach and could keep the beaches there closed for weeks or longer.

Booms were deployed on the ocean surface to try to contain the oil while divers sought to determine where and why the leak occurred. On land, there was a race to find animals harmed by the oil and to keep the spill from harming any more sensitive marshland.

An estimated 126,000 gallons (572,807 liters) of heavy crude leaked into the waters off Orange County starting late Friday or early Saturday, when boaters began reporting a sheen in the water, officials said. The pipeline and operations at three off-shore platforms owned by Houston-based Amplify Energy Corp. were shut down Saturday night, CEO Martyn Willsher said.

He said the 17.5-mile (28.16-kilometer) pipeline that is 80 to 100 feet (24 to 30 meters) below the surface was suctioned out so no more oil would spill as the location of the leak was being investigated.

Huntington Beach Mayor Kim Carr said the beaches of the community nicknamed "Surf City" could remain closed for weeks or even months. The oil created a miles-wide sheen in the ocean and washed ashore in sticky, black globules.

"In a year that has been filled with incredibly challenging issues, this oil spill constitutes one of the most devastating situations that our community has dealt with in decades," Carr said. "We are doing everything in our power to protect the health and safety of our residents, our visitors and our natural habitats."

Some birds and fish were caught in the muck and died, Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley said. But by early afternoon Saturday the U.S. Coast Guard said there so far was just one ruddy duck that was covered in oil and receiving veterinary care. "Other reports of oiled wildlife are being investigated," the Coast Guard said in a statement.

Crews led by the Coast Guard-deployed skimmers laid some 3,700 feet (1,128 meters) of floating barriers known as booms to try to stop more oil from seeping into areas including Talbert Marsh, a 25-acre (10-hectare) wetland officials said.

A petroleum stench permeated the air throughout the area.

"You get the taste in the mouth just from the vapors in the air," Foley said.

The oil will likely continue to wash up on the shore for several days and affect Newport Beach and other nearby communities, officials said.

The closure included all of Huntington Beach, from the city's north edge about 6 miles (9.6 kilometers) south to the Santa Ana River jetty. The shutdown came amid summerlike weather that would have brought big crowds to the wide strand for volleyball, swimming and surfing. Yellow caution tape was strung between lifeguard towers to keep people away.

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The leaking pipeline connects to an oil production platform named Elly, which in turn is connected by

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a walkway to a drilling platform named Ellen. Those two platforms and another nearby platform are in federal waters.

Elly began operating in 1980 in an area called the Beta Field. Oil pulled from beneath the ocean and processed by Elly is taken by the pipeline to Long Beach.

Huntington Beach resident David Rapchun said he's worried about the impact of the spill on the beaches where he grew up as well as the local economy.

"For the amount of oil these things produce I don't think it's worth the risk," Rapchun said. He questioned whether drilling for oil was a wise idea along some of Southern California's most scenic beaches, noting the loss of the final day of the air show could deal a blow to the local economy.

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Associated Press reporters Felicia Fonseca in Phoenix and Julie Walker in New York contributed.

This story has been updated to correct the metric conversion in second paragraph to 572,807 liters, not 98,420 liters.

Threatened Swedish artist reportedly dead in road accident

STOCKHOLM (AP) — The Swedish artist Lars Vilks, who had lived under police protection since his 2007 sketch of the Prophet Muhammad with a dog's body brought death threats, died from a traffic accident Sunday, Swedish news media reported.

The accident reportedly involved a truck colliding with a civilian police car in which Lars Vilks and his police protection were traveling, news media said.

The Swedish news agency TT said police had confirmed that Vilks, 75, was traveling in the car with two police officers, and the newspaper Dagens Nyheter said the artist's partner confirmed his death.

The cause of the accident was under investigation.

Vilks was largely unknown outside Sweden before his Muhammad drawing. At home, he was best known for building a sculpture made of driftwood in a nature reserve in southern Sweden without permission, triggering a lengthy legal battle. He was fined, but the seaside sculpture — a jumble of wood nailed together in chaotic fashion — draws tens of thousands of visitors a year.

Vilks' life changed radically 13 years ago after he drew a sketch of Muhammad with a dog's body. Dogs are considered unclean by conservative Muslims, and Islamic law generally opposes any depiction of the prophet, even favorable, for fear it could lead to idolatry.

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Al-Qaida put a bounty on Vilks' head. In 2010, two men tried to burn down his house in southern Sweden. Last year, a woman from Pennsylvania pleaded guilty in a plot to try to kill him.

Ex-Facebook manager alleges social network fed Capitol riot

By DAVID BAUDER and MICHAEL LIEDTKE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A data scientist who was revealed Sunday as the Facebook whistleblower says that whenever there was a conflict between the public good and what benefited the company, the social media giant would choose its own interests.

Frances Haugen was identified in a "60 Minutes" interview Sunday as the woman who anonymously filed complaints with federal law enforcement that the company's own research shows how it magnifies hate and misinformation.

Haugen, who worked at Google and Pinterest before joining Facebook in 2019, said she had asked to work in an area of the company that fights misinformation, since she lost a friend to online conspiracy theories.

"Facebook, over and over again, has shown it chooses profit over safety," she said. Haugen, who will testify before Congress this week, said she hopes that by coming forward the government will put regulations in place to govern the company's activities.

She said Facebook prematurely turned off safeguards designed to thwart misinformation and rabble rousing after Joe Biden defeated Donald Trump last year, alleging that contributed to the deadly Jan. 6 invasion of the U.S. Capitol.

Post-election, the company dissolved a unit on civic integrity where she had been working, which Haugen said was the moment she realized "I don't trust that they're willing to actually invest what needs to be invested to keep Facebook from being dangerous."

At issue are algorithms that govern what shows up on users' news feeds, and how they favor hateful content. Haugen said a 2018 change to the content flow contributed to more divisiveness and ill will in a network ostensibly created to bring people closer together.

Despite the enmity that the new algorithms were feeding, Facebook found that they helped keep people coming back — a pattern that helped the Menlo Park, California, social media giant sell more of the digital ads that generate most of its advertising.

Facebook's annual revenue has more than doubled from \$56 billion in 2018 to a projected \$119 billion this year, based on the estimates of analysts surveyed by FactSet. Meanwhile, the company's market value has soared from \$375 billion at the end of 2018 to nearly \$1 trillion now.

Even before the full interview came out on Sunday, a top Facebook executive was deriding the whistleblower's allegations as "misleading."

"Social media has had a big impact on society in recent years, and Facebook is often a place where much of this debate plays out," Nick Clegg, the company's vice president of policy and public affairs wrote to Facebook employees in a memo sent Friday. "But what evidence there is simply does not support the idea that Facebook, or social media more generally, is the primary cause of polarization."

The "60 Minutes" interview intensifies the spotlight already glaring on Facebook as lawmakers and regulators around the world scrutinize the social networking's immense power to shape opinions and its polarizing effects on society.

The backlash has been intensifying since The Wall Street Journal's mid-September publication of an expose that revealed Facebook's internal research had concluded the social network's attention-seeking algorithms had helped foster political dissent and contributed to mental health and emotional problems among teens, especially girls. After copying thousands of pages of Facebook's internal research, Haugen leaked them to the Journal to provide the foundation for a succession of stories packaged as the "Facebook Files."

Although Facebook asserted the Journal had cherry picked the most damaging information in the internal documents to cast the company in the worst possible light, the revelations prompted an indefinite delay in the rollout of a kids' version of its popular photo- and video-sharing app, Instagram. Facebook currently requires people to be at least 13 years old to open an Instagram account.

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Clegg appeared on CNN's "Reliable Sources" Sunday in another pre-emptive attempt to soften the blow of Haugen's interview.

"Even with the most sophisticated technology, which I believe we deploy, even with the tens of thousands of people that we employ to try and maintain safety and integrity on our platform," Clegg told CNN, "we're never going to be absolutely on top of this 100% of the time."

He said that's because of the "instantaneous and spontaneous form of communication" on Facebook, adding, "I think we do more than any reasonable person can expect to."

By choosing to reveal herself on "60 Minutes," Haugen selected television's most popular news program, on an evening its viewership is likely to be inflated because, in many parts of the country, it directly followed an NFL matchup between Green Bay and Pittsburgh.

Haugen, 37, is from Iowa and has a degree in computer engineering and a Master's degree in business from Harvard University — the same school that Facebook founder and leader Mark Zuckerberg attended.

Haugen, 37, has filed at least eight complaints with U.S. securities regulators alleging Facebook has violated the law by withholding information about the risks posed by its social network, according to "60 Minutes." Facebook in turn could take legal action against her if it asserts she stole confidential information from the company.

"No one at Facebook is malevolent," Haugen said during the interview. "But the incentives are misaligned, right? Like, Facebook makes more money when you consume more content. People enjoy engaging with things that elicit an emotional reaction. And the more anger that they get exposed to, the more they interact and the more they consume."

Liedtke reported from San Ramon, California.

Democrats see political peril in replacing Minneapolis PD

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — As activists mobilized this summer to ask Minneapolis voters to replace their police department, one of the first prominent Democrats to slam the plan was a moderate congresswoman who doesn't even live in the city.

Angie Craig declared it "shortsighted, misguided and likely to harm the very communities that it seeks to protect." She warned that it could push out the city's popular Black police chief.

Craig's district covers a suburban-to-rural and politically divided region south of the city, but her willingness to jump into the fight next door highlights the political threat that Democrats like Craig see in the proposal.

As a city that has become synonymous with police abuse wrestles with police reform, the effort is sharply dividing Democrats along ideological lines. The state's best known progressives — U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar and Attorney General Keith Ellison — support the plan, which would replace the police department with a new Department of Public Safety. Other top Democrats, including Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Gov. Tim Walz, oppose it.

The debate is dominating the city's mayoral and City Council races, the first since a Minneapolis police officer killed George Floyd in May 2020 and sparked a global racial reckoning. Passing the amendment would be a major win for the reform movement — both in substance and symbolism. But many in the Democratic establishment believe calls to "dismantle" or "defund" police cost the party seats in statehouses and Congress last year. They're determined not to let that happen again next year. Defeating the Minneapolis measure has become a critical, high-profile test.

"If we talk about reforming the police, people are overwhelmingly in favor of it. When we say 'defund,' we lose the argument," said Colin Strother, a Texas-based Democratic strategist. "Democrats that keep using 'defund the police' are only hurting themselves and the cause, quite frankly."

The ballot proposal slated for the Nov. 2 election asks voters whether they want to replace the Minneapolis Police Department with a new Department of Public Safety that would take a "comprehensive public health approach" that "could include" police officers "if necessary." It doesn't use the word "defund," and

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critics say that was a deliberate attempt by a majority of City Council members to conceal their aims.

Ellison, a strong supporter of the proposal, said in an interview that amendment supporters simply want "more tools to guarantee public safety, more than just a police-only model. They want other people who have expertise in mental health, housing, violence reduction and intervention" who are better trained to handle situations that armed police now face alone.

But he's wary of the phrase "defund the police," which he called "a cry for reform" that comes from "young people who were absolutely outraged by what happened to George Floyd."

Ellison said he avoids using it, calling it "hot rhetoric, not a policy, not a program" that doesn't accurately describe what the amendment would do. And he downplayed the idea that Democrats should be afraid of supporting the amendment, saying Republicans will attack them no matter how the issue is framed.

Minister JaNaé Bates, a spokeswoman for the pro-amendment Yes 4 Minneapolis coalition, said she's frustrated by the divisions among Democrats. Those who depict the proposal as defunding the police are using "fear-based rhetoric" and a "right-wing dog whistle" as a distraction, she said. Police "most certainly" will be part of the proposed new agency along with professionals trained to handle situations for which armed officers are not suited, she said.

"The fact of the matter is Democrats, progressives, liberals all across the board want people to be safe and that is what this charter change does," Bates said.

Omar, who represents Minneapolis, contends there's "nothing radical" in the amendment. What's radical, she said in an opinion piece published in the Star Tribune, was how opponents fought to keep it off the ballot and, in her view, misrepresent what it will do.

The ballot question has attracted plenty of money, with glossy mailers showing up around the city and ads filling social media feeds since shortly before early voting began in early September.

The Yes 4 Minneapolis campaign has raised over \$1 million in cash and nearly \$500,000 of in-kind donations from across the country, according to campaign finance reports filed in August. Its money included \$500,000 in seed money from the Open Society Policy Center, which has ties to billionaire George Soros.

The group has stressed the need for change and sought to reassure voters that the new structure will make everyone safer. It has also disputed suggestions from opponents that passage would mean the departure of Medaria Arradondo, the city's popular Black chief, even though Arradondo said passage would put any law enforcement leader in a "wholly unbearable position."

The much newer All of Mpls, which opposes the amendment, raised more than \$100,000 in its first few weeks, mostly locally. It has been playing up the uncertainty over how the proposed new department would work, since the amendment leaves it up to the City Council and the mayor to figure out the details within a short timeframe after the election.

University of Minnesota political scientist Larry Jacobs credited the "defund" issue with helping Republicans hold their own in Minnesota's legislative races in 2020 despite Joe Biden winning statewide. He said it's clear to Democrats that "defunding the police" was effective for Republicans then — and could be again.

U.S. Rep. Nicole Malliotakis, of New York, flipped a Staten Island seat in 2020 by running against defunding police. Moderate Democrat Eric Adams, a former New York Police Department captain, won New York's mayoral primary in July on a platform of rejecting activists' calls to defund police.

U.S. Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney, of New York, who chairs the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, has pushed back against the "defund" rhetoric, highlighting that the American Rescue Plan stimulus bill signed in March contains \$350 billion to help support police departments.

"If this thing does pass, which a lot of people think and assume that it will, there's going to be massive national blowback, not just in Minnesota," said Republican strategist Billy Grant, whose clients include Craig's likely opponent, former Marine Tyler Kistner.

"People are going to say they showed they can do this. That's going to have a domino effect."

George Floyd memorial statue in New York City defaced again

NEW YORK (AP) — A statue honoring George Floyd in New York City's Union Square Park was vandal-

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ized on Sunday, police said.

According to police, a video showed an unidentified man on a skateboard throwing paint on the statue at approximately 10 a.m. then fleeing. Nearby statues of late Congressman John Lewis and Breonna Taylor, a Louisville, Kentucky, woman shot and killed by police last year, apparently weren't touched.

Police have not released the video.

Sunday's act wasn't the first example of vandalism to the statue memorializing Floyd, whose killing at the hands of police in Minneapolis last year galvanized a racial justice movement across the country.

The statue was unveiled on the Juneteenth holiday in a spot on Flatbush Avenue, in Brooklyn, and it was vandalized five days later with black paint and marked with an alleged logo of a white supremacist group.

Members of the group that installed the statue cleaned it, and local residents and one of Floyd's brothers gathered in July as it was prepared to move to Union Square, in the heart of Manhattan.

Reaching pre-pandemic levels, 'Venom' debuts with \$90.1M

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Pandemic moviegoing is finally starting to look like pre-pandemic moviegoing. Sony Pictures' Marvel sequel "Venom: Let There Be Carnage" blew away expectations to debut with \$90.1 million in ticket sales, making it easily the best opening of the pandemic, according to studio estimates Sunday.

"Venom: Let There Be Carnage" had been forecast to open with closer to half that total. But the film, which is playing exclusively in theaters, exceeded even the debut of the 2018 original. "Venom," the "Spider-Man" offshoot that introduced Tom Hardy's parasitic alien symbiote, launched with \$80.3 million. Only 2019's "Joker" (\$96.2 million) has ever opened bigger in October.

The result — along with robust international sales for the James Bond film "No Time to Die" — constituted the best news for movie theaters in more than 18 months.

"With apologies to Mr. Twain: The death of movies has been greatly exaggerated," Tom Rothman, chairman and chief executive of Sony Pictures' Motion Picture Group, said in a statement.

Both "Let There Be Carnage" and MGM's "No Time to Die" had originally been set to open last year. Believing the best box-office return would happen with an exclusive release in theaters, both studios (neither of which has a major streaming platform) held out for better moviegoing conditions. Over the weekend, their wait was rewarded.

"No Time to Die," which opens in North America on Friday, launched with \$119.1 million in 54 overseas markets. The pace, according to MGM and Universal Pictures (which has many international rights), was roughly in line with the opening for "Skyfall." Following its London premiere last week, "No Time to Die" — the 25th Bond film and Daniel Craig's last outing as the super spy — grossed \$25.6 million in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Its \$11.4 million on Saturday there was the best box office day for any Bond film on its home turf.

Before "Let There Be Carnage," the top pandemic openings had been the Walt Disney's "Black Widow" (\$80 million), "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" (\$75 million) and Universal Pictures' "Fast and Furious" sequel "F9" (\$70 million). "Black Widow" launched simultaneously in homes, prompting a lawsuit from star Scarlett Johansson which was settled last week. "Shang-Chi," "F9" and "Let There Be Carnage" debuted only in theaters.

"Films can only become cultural when people see them together on the biggest, best screens and have that experience as a group," said Josh Greenstein, president of Sony Motion Pictures Group. "You can't replicate that by yourself at home."

After numerous delays, Sony in the end actually moved up the release of the "Venom" sequel, directed by Andy Serkis and co-starring Woody Harrelson as the Venom foe Carnage, by two weeks. Overseas, it also added \$13.8 million in Russia.

"We saw the health of 'Shang-Chi' and it gave us confidence that when the product is there, the box office will return," said Adrian Smith, Sony's distribution chief. "It's very validating to see the demand for theatricality."

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Not everything is bouncing back in theaters and quickly as Marvel movies and the biggest brand names. Family moviegoing is still sluggish, as are ticket sales at art house theaters. Older audiences and families with unvaccinated children have been more cautious.

"The Addams Family 2," an animated sequel from MGM and United Artists Releasing, opened with \$18 million despite terrible reviews (27% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) from critics. The film, a sequel to the 2019 cartoon reboot, was launched simultaneously on video-on-demand.

"The Many Saints of Newark," the long-in-coming prequel to "The Sopranos," flopped. The film, co-written by "Sopranos" creator David Chase and set decades before the seminal HBO series, opened with \$5 million. The film, like all Warner Bros. releases in 2021, was also streaming on HBO Max for subscribers — a practice some filmmakers, including Chase, have decried. The studio has pledged to return to exclusive theatrical windows in 2022.

Julia Ducournau's "Titane," the Palme d'Or winner at the Cannes Film Festival this summer, also struggled to make a dent in theaters. The film, a wild odyssey about a serial-killing woman with a unique bond to automobiles, grossed about \$516,000 in 562 theaters for Neon.

But spectacle movies, particularly those that appeal especially to younger males, have been driving an even larger share of moviegoing this year. Marvel's "Shang-Chi," the studio's first film led by an Asian superhero, has dominated the last month in theaters. It had previously been the No. 1 film for four consecutive weeks. "Shang-Chi" this weekend became the first film to pass \$200 million domestically, with a cumulative haul of \$206.1 million in the U.S. and Canada, and \$386.9 million globally.

Large format screens are also helping to drive the recovery. With \$30 million in global sales, IMAX had its best October weekend ever. Megan Colligan, president of IMAX Entertainment, called it proof of "what today's box office is capable of."

"The perception may be that these films are overperforming," Colligan said, "but the reality is that many people are underestimating just how excited global consumers are to get back to the movies."

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Venom: Let There Be Carnage," \$90.1 million
2. "The Addams Family 2," \$18 million
3. "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings," \$6 million
4. "The Many Saints of Newark," \$5 million
5. "Dear Evan Hansen," \$2.5 million
6. "Free Guy," \$2.28 million
7. "Candyman," \$1.2 million
8. "Jungle Cruise," \$680,000
9. "The Jesus Music," \$560,000
10. "Titane," \$516,000

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

Russia hits record number of daily COVID-19 deaths

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia on Sunday reported a record daily death toll from COVID-19, the fifth time in a week that deaths have hit a new high.

The national coronavirus task force said 890 deaths were recorded over the past day, exceeding the 887 reported on Friday. The task force also said the number of new infections in the past day was the second-highest of the year at 25,769.

Overall, Russia, a nation of 146 million people, has Europe's highest death toll from the pandemic, nearly 210,000 people.

Yet despite the country's persistent rise in daily deaths and new cases, Russian officials say there are no plans to impose a lockdown. Mask-wearing regulations are in place but are loosely enforced.

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Moscow briefly tried during the summer to require proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test for indoor customers at restaurants and bars, but abandoned the program after business owners complained of reduced revenues.

Even though Russia boasted of creating the world's first coronavirus vaccine, Sputnik V, only 32.5% of its people have gotten at least one vaccine shot and only 28% are fully vaccinated. Critics have principally blamed a botched vaccine rollout and mixed messages the authorities have been sending about the outbreak.

In addition, coronavirus antibody tests are popular in Russia and some observers suggest this contributes to the low vaccination numbers.

Western health experts say the antibody tests are unreliable either for diagnosing COVID-19 or assessing immunity to it. The antibodies that these tests look for can only serve as evidence of a past infection. Scientists say it's still unclear what level of antibodies indicates that a person has protection from the virus and for how long.

President Vladimir Putin has observed periods of self-isolation since mid-September after dozens of people in the Kremlin were found to be infected. Putin met with Turkey's leader last week after coming out of his latest isolation period.

Follow all AP stories on the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>.

Plane crashes into building near Milan; all 8 aboard die

ROME (AP) — A small, single-engine plane carrying six passengers and two crew crashed Sunday into a vacant two-story office building in a Milan suburb, and authorities said all eight people aboard died.

Investigators opened a probe into what caused the private plane to crash shortly after takeoff from Milan's Linate Airport en route to Olbia Airport on the Italian island of Sardinia. A thick column of dark smoke rose from the crash site and was visible for kilometers. Several parked cars nearby went up in flames.

Firefighters tweeted that no one else but those on board were hurt in the early afternoon crash near a subway station in San Donato Milanese, a small town near Milan.

Milan Prosecutor Tiziana Siciliano told reporters at the scene that the plane was proceeding on its flight until "a certain point, then an anomaly appeared on the radar screen and it plunged," striking the building's roof.

Control tower officials reported the anomaly, she said, but further details on that weren't immediately given.

The prosecutor said the plane didn't send out any alarm. It was too early to cite any possible cause for the crash, Siciliano said, adding that the flight recorder has been retrieved.

By early evening, only two of the eight dead had been identified, since they carried documents on them, Siciliano said. Those aboard were "all foreigners," she said, including the pilot, who was Romanian. The aircraft was registered in Romania, the prosecutor said.

Later, the Romanian Foreign Ministry said two Romanians with dual citizenship were among the dead.

Italian news reports said the pilot, 30, also had German citizenship. A second victim was a Romanian woman in her 60s who also held French citizenship, the reports said.

The reports said the aircraft had flown from Bucharest, Romania, to Milan on Sept. 30 with no apparent problem.

The Italian news agency ANSA quoted the national air safety agency ANSV as saying "the plane hit the building and started burning." It said the aircraft was a PC-12, a single-engine, executive-type plane.

Fire officials said earlier that the aircraft had crashed into the building's facade. But following further inspection, the prosecutor said it was apparent that the plane had struck the roof.

Firefighters extinguished the flames at the badly charred and gutted building, which reportedly was under renovation.

Iowa up to No. 3; Clemson out of Top 25 first time since '14

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By ERIC OLSON AP College Football Writer

Iowa is gearing up for its biggest home game since the 1980s, Cincinnati has its highest ranking in 12 years and Clemson is on the outside looking in at The Associated Press college football poll for the first time since 2014.

Alabama and Georgia are the only constants during this topsy-turvy college football season. They held down the top two spots for a fifth straight week in the AP Top 25, which is presented by Regions Bank.

Alabama received 53 of a possible 62 first-place votes Sunday, with Georgia picking up the rest.

After those two teams, the movement up and down and in and out of the Top 25 was about what would be expected after a week in which nine ranked teams lost, including four in the top 10.

Through the first five weeks of the season, 34 ranked teams have lost, the most in poll history.

Iowa leapfrogged Penn State to take the No. 3 spot after its 51-14 road win over previously unbeaten Maryland. The Hawkeyes have their highest ranking since 2015. Penn State beat Indiana 24-0 at home and remained No. 4.

No. 5 Cincinnati, coming off a 24-13 road win over Notre Dame, has its best ranking since Brian Kelly's 2009 Bearcats were No. 4 in the first week of November.

Oklahoma, Ohio State, Oregon, Michigan and BYU round out the top 10.

Clemson's 19-13 home win over previously unbeaten Boston College didn't impress voters enough to keep the Tigers in the Top 25. Thus ends their streak of 107 consecutive weeks in the rankings. The last time the Tigers were unranked was the week of Oct. 5, 2014.

They are one spot out of the Top 25, 15 points behind San Diego State.

POLL POINTS

Midway through the season, it's strange that a rankings-based debate over the top two teams in the Big Ten doesn't include Ohio State.

The Buckeyes very well may be the best, and the voters certainly show their respect by ranking them ahead of Oregon despite a Week 2 home loss to the Ducks and a meh home win over Tulsa in the following game.

This week's Penn State-Iowa clash is the Big Ten's game of the year — so far.

It will be the highest-ranked matchup in Iowa City since 1985, when the No. 1 Hawkeyes beat No. 2 Michigan 12-10 on a field goal as time ran out for what then-Iowa coach Hayden Fry called the biggest win in program history.

IN

— No. 16 Kentucky (5-0) is rewarded for its win over then-No. 10 Florida with its first ranking of the season.

— No. 21 Texas (4-1) beat TCU for its third straight victory and is back in for the first time in a month.

— No. 22 Arizona State (4-1) returns after wins over Colorado and UCLA.

— No. 24 SMU is 5-0 for a third straight season.

— No. 25 San Diego State (4-0) returns for the first time since November 2019.

OUT

— Clemson managed only one touchdown and four field goals against BC. The Tigers get a week off before facing a top-15 defense at Syracuse.

— Texas A&M got bounced for losing two in a row and Alabama comes calling this week.

— Fresno State is out following two weeks after committing six turnovers and blowing a two-touchdown lead in the fourth quarter against Hawaii.

— UCLA was ranked for three straight weeks but got bumped after losing two straight home games.

— Baylor couldn't get its running game going against Oklahoma State and is out after a one-week appearance.

CONFERENCE CALL

Losses by Arkansas and Florida made room for the Big Ten to claim four of the top 10 spots, and Michigan State is sitting at No. 11.

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Last week, the Southeastern Conference had four teams in the top 10 and five of the top 12. Alabama and Georgia are the SEC's only two in the top 10 this week.

The Atlantic Coast Conference's first absence from the top 20 in 10 years lasted only a week thanks to Wake Forest moving up to No. 19.

SEC — 7 (Nos. 1, 2, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20).

Big Ten — 5 (Nos. 3, 4, 7, 9, 11).

ACC — 2 (Nos. 19, 23).

Big 12 — 3 (Nos. 6, 12, 21).

Pac-12 — 2 (Nos. 8, 22).

American — 2 (Nos. 5, 24).

Sun Belt — 1 (No. 15).

Mountain West — 1 (No. 25).

Independents — 2 (Nos. 10, 14).

RANKED vs. RANKED

No. 4 Penn State at No. 3 Iowa. This isn't the same Nittany Lions team that lost by 20 points to Iowa last year.

No. 6 Oklahoma vs. No. 21 Texas. Red River Rivalry will be hard-pressed to duplicate last year's four-overtime thriller won by the Sooners.

No. 13 Arkansas at No. 17 Mississippi. These are a couple of teams looking for a re-set after lopsided losses to the nation's best two.

No. 2 Georgia at No. 18 Auburn. Bulldogs have won 12 of 15 in the series.

More AP college football: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-football> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25. Sign up for the AP's college football newsletter: <https://apnews.com/cfbtop25>

Bomb at Kabul mosque kills 5 civilians, Taliban say

SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — At least five civilians were killed in a bomb blast outside a Kabul mosque Sunday, a Taliban official said. It was the deadliest attack in the Afghan capital since U.S. forces left at the end of August.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but suspicion fell on Islamic State extremists who have stepped up attacks on the Taliban in recent weeks, particularly in an IS stronghold in eastern Afghanistan.

An apparent roadside bomb went off at the gate of the sprawling Eid Gah Mosque in Kabul at a time when a memorial service was being held for the mother of chief Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. Five people were killed, said Qari Saeed Khosti, the spokesman of the Interior Ministry.

The explosion underscored the growing challenges the Taliban face just weeks after they took control of Afghanistan in a blitz campaign, culminating in their takeover of Kabul on Aug. 15.

During their 20-year insurgency, the Taliban themselves had frequently carried out bombing and shooting attacks, but are now faced with trying to contain rival militants using the same methods. The growing security challenges come at a time of an economic meltdown, as the Taliban struggle to run the country without the massive foreign aid given to U.S.-backed government they toppled.

Three suspects were arrested in Sunday's explosion in Kabul, said Bilal Karimi, a Taliban spokesman. He said Taliban fighters were not harmed.

Mohammad Israil, a Kabul resident, said he heard "a loud sound" and saw people running away.

An Italian-funded emergency hospital in Kabul tweeted it had received four people wounded in the blast.

The area around the mosque was cordoned off by the Taliban, who maintained a heavy security presence. Later in the afternoon the site was cleaned. The only signs of the blast was slight damage to the ornamental arch by the entrance gate.

IS militants have stepped up attacks against the Taliban since their mid-August takeover, signaling a

widening conflict between them.

IS maintains a strong presence in the eastern province of Nangarhar, where it has claimed responsibility for several killings in the provincial capital of Jalalabad.

In late August, an IS suicide bomber targeted American evacuation efforts at Kabul's international airport. The blast killed 169 Afghans and 13 U.S. service members and was one of the deadliest attacks in the country in years.

Attacks in Kabul have so far been rare, but in recent weeks IS has shown signs it is expanding its footprint beyond the east and closer toward the capital.

On Friday, Taliban fighters raided an IS hideout just north of Kabul in Parwan province. The raid came after an IS roadside bomb wounded four Taliban fighters in the area.

Project aims to ID voting rights marchers of 'Bloody Sunday'

SELMA, Ala. (AP) — The world knows the names of John Lewis and a few more of the voting rights demonstrators who walked across Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1965 only to be attacked by Alabama state troopers on a day that came to be called "Bloody Sunday." A new project aims to identify more of the hundreds of people who were involved in the protest.

Auburn University professors Richard Burt and Keith Hebert, working with a group of honors college students, have established a Facebook page where people can look through photographs of March 7, 1965, and identify themselves or others in the black-and-white images.

Online since August, the page is titled "Help us identify the Selma Bloody Sunday Foot Soldiers." It features multiple images of marchers who are labeled with red numerals, and users can add the names of people they recognize in the comments section.

Some people already have been identified, and the creators hope more will be as word spreads about the page, particularly in Selma, where the effort is being promoted. A class at Selma High School is helping as students enlist relatives to help identify marchers.

The project "highlights the need for additional historical research and documentation for one of the most famous moments in American history," Hebert said in a statement released by the university announcing the work.

"By taking a fresh look at Bloody Sunday, our research has revealed rich details about how the march unfolded that prior historians have overlooked. We intend to help those in Selma who want to do more to preserve and interpret the historic landscapes connected to this seminal event," he said.

Lewis, Hosea Williams, Amelia Boynton, Marie Foster and other established activists were at the front of a line of hundreds of marchers when the column crossed the bridge over the Alabama River bound for Montgomery. They were savagely beaten by troopers and members of the Dallas County sheriff's posse; images of the violence helped build support for voting rights across the segregated South.

Lewis, a native of Alabama who died last year, went on to serve multiple terms in Congress representing the Atlanta area. But many of the marchers have never been publicly identified, an omission the project could help resolve.

As marchers are identified, they get messages through the social media platform offering the chance to share their stories in the future. Hebert said students are learning how to communicate with diverse groups as they collect information about one of the best-known events of the civil rights movement.

"Those learning opportunities will bode well for their future career endeavors as they help America build a diverse, inclusive and equitable society," he said.

3rd victim dies after angry co-worker's rampage

DAVENPORT, Fla. (AP) — Authorities said Sunday a third victim has died following a violent attack where an angry electrician wielding a knife and baseball bat killed three co-workers and injured another at the Florida home they shared.

Polk County Sheriff's officials said electrician Shaun Runyon got into the argument with his supervisor

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Friday, punching the man and fleeing the job site. He returned to the Davenport home he where he was temporarily living with his co-workers Saturday and beat one man to death while he slept, killed another man on the front porch and chased another victim into the street, beating him badly with a bat, Sheriff Grady Judd said.

A fourth victim suffered critical injuries and later died at the hospital. Another man, his wife and their 7-year-old daughter escaped unharmed. Authorities did not release the identifies of the victims.

Runyon and seven co-workers and their families were living at the home rented by a Pennsylvania company, J & B Electric, Inc.

It's unclear what prompted the fight between 39-year-old Runyon and his supervisor Friday, but Sheriff Judd said he confessed.

He was charged with three counts of first degree murder and one count of aggravated battery. It was not immediately clear if he had retained a lawyer to comment on the charges.

Runyon fled the home, turning up hours later at the home of a random Lake Wales couple, wearing bloody clothes and telling them he'd been raped, according to the sheriff.

Judd said the man discarded his bloody clothes at the home as they urged him to go to the hospital where he was later taken into custody.

Puerto Ricans fume as outages threaten health, work, school

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Not a single hurricane has hit Puerto Rico this year, but hundreds of thousands of people in the U.S. territory feel like they're living in the aftermath of a major storm: Students do homework by the light of dying cellphones, people who depend on insulin or respiratory therapies struggle to find power sources and the elderly are fleeing sweltering homes amid record high temperatures.

Power outages across the island have surged in recent weeks, with some lasting several days. Officials have blamed everything from seaweed to mechanical failures as the government calls the situation a "crass failure" that urgently needs to be fixed.

The daily outages are snarling traffic, frying costly appliances, forcing doctors to cancel appointments, causing restaurants, shopping malls and schools to temporarily close and even prompting one university to suspend classes and another to declare a moratorium on exams.

"This is hell," said Iris Santiago, a 48-year-old with chronic health conditions who often joins her elderly neighbors outside when their apartment building goes dark and the humid heat soars into the 90s Fahrenheit.

"Like any Puerto Rican, I live in a constant state of anxiety because the power goes out every day," she said. "Not everyone has family they can run to and go into a home with a generator."

Santiago recently endured three days without power and had to throw out the eggs, chicken and milk that spoiled in her refrigerator. She said power surges also caused hundreds of dollars of damage to her air conditioner and refrigerator.

Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority, which is responsible for the generation of electricity, and Luma, a private company that handles transmission and distribution of power, have blamed mechanical failures at various plants involving components such as boilers and condensers. In one recent incident, seaweed clogged filters and a narrow pipe.

Luma also has implemented selective blackouts in recent weeks that have affected a majority of its 1.5 million clients, saying demand is exceeding supply.

Luma took over transmission and distribution in June. Puerto Rico's governor said the company had pledged to reduce power interruptions by 30% and the length of outages by 40%.

The island's Electric Power Authority has long struggled with mismanagement, corruption and, more recently, bankruptcy.

In September 2016, a fire at a power plant sparked an island-wide blackout. A year later, Hurricane Maria hit as a Category 4 storm, shredding the aging power grid and leaving some customers up to a year

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without power.

Emergency repairs were done, but reconstruction work to strengthen the grid has yet to start.

"We're on the verge of a collapse," said Juan Alicea, a former executive director of the authority.

He said three main factors are to blame: Officials halted maintenance of generation units under the erroneous belief they would soon be replaced. Scores of experienced employees have retired. And investment to replace aging infrastructure has dwindled.

Puerto Rico's power generation units are on average 45 years old, twice those of the U.S. mainland.

Luma has said it expects to spend \$3.85 billion to revamp the transmission and distribution system and company CEO Wayne Stensby said Luma has made significant progress in stabilizing it. He noted that crews have restarted four substations, some of which had been out of operation since Hurricane Maria.

Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro Pierluisi blamed the outages on management failures at the Electric Power Authority and called the repeated failures "untenable."

Pierluisi himself has faced calls to resign — hundreds gathered to protest near the governor's mansion on Friday — and many are demanding that the government cancel Luma's contract.

The president of the power authority's governing board resigned last week and a new executive director, Josué Colón, was appointed, promising to visit all generation units to pinpoint the problem.

"I recognize the critical condition that they're in," he said. "We're not going to stop until the problem is corrected."

Some people have taken to banging pots at night in frustration in addition to organizing protests.

Among those planning to join is Carmen Cabrer, a 53-year-old asthmatic and diabetic. She has been unable to use her nebulizer and recently had to throw out insulin for lack of refrigeration. The heat forces her to open her windows and breathe in pollution that aggravates her asthma. She cooks and washes clothes at irregular hours, fearing the power will go out again.

"This has turned into abuse," she said of the outages. "I'm constantly tense."

The outages are especially aggravating because power bills have been rising and the pandemic has forced many people to work or study from home.

Barbra Maysonet, a 30-year-old call center operator who works from home, said she sometimes loses an entire shift and doesn't get paid for lack of power. She's hesitant to work at the office because she doesn't want to expose her mother and grandmother to COVID-19.

"It really puts a dent in my paycheck," she said. "I have to rethink things. ... I'm going to have to risk my health just to be able to pay the rest of the bills."

Like other Puerto Ricans, Maysonet has modified her diet, turning to canned goods, snacks and crackers that won't spoil in a power outage.

"Just when I'm about to cook something, the power goes out. Then it's, 'I guess I'm having another bowl of cereal,'" she said.

Those who can afford it buy generators or invest in solar panels, but budgets are tight for many on an island mired in a deep economic crisis and a government that is effectively bankrupt.

Even attempts to rely on alternate sources of energy often are frustrated.

Manuel Casellas, an attorney who recently served as president of his 84-unit condominium complex, said the owners agreed to buy a generator more than a year ago at a cost of \$100,000. However, they first need a power company official to connect the generator to the grid. He has made four appointments, and said officials canceled them all at the last minute without explanation.

"This has created great annoyance," he said. "This is a building with many elderly people."

Casellas himself has at times been unable to work at home or the office because of power outages at both. If he can't meet with clients, he doesn't get paid. Like others, he is considering leaving Puerto Rico.

"Every time the power goes out here it pushes your post-traumatic stress button," he said, referring to the harrowing experiences many went through after Hurricane Maria, with an estimated 2,975 people dying in the aftermath. "You can't live without electricity."

AP: States and cities slow to spend federal pandemic money

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

As Congress considered a massive COVID-19 relief package earlier this year, hundreds of mayors from across the U.S. pleaded for "immediate action" on billions of dollars targeted to shore up their finances and revive their communities.

Now that they've received it, local officials are taking their time before actually spending the windfall.

As of this summer, a majority of large cities and states hadn't spent a penny from the American Rescue Plan championed by Democrats and President Joe Biden, according to an Associated Press review of the first financial reports due under the law. States had spent just 2.5% of their initial allotment while large cities spent 8.5%, according to the AP analysis.

Many state and local governments reported they were still working on plans for their share of the \$350 billion, which can be spent on a wide array of programs.

Though Biden signed the law in March, the Treasury Department didn't release the money and spending guidelines until May. By then, some state legislatures already had wrapped up their budget work for the next year, leaving governors with no authority to spend the new money. Some states waited several more months to ask the federal government for their share.

Cities sometimes delayed decisions while soliciting suggestions from the public. And some government officials — still trying to figure out how to spend previous rounds of federal pandemic aid — simply didn't see an urgent need for the additional cash.

"It's a lot of money that's been put out there. I think it's a good sign that it hasn't been frivolously spent," Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer said. He was president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors when more than 400 mayors signed a letter urging Congress to quickly pass Biden's plan.

The law gives states until the end of 2024 to make spending commitments and the end of 2026 to spend the money. Any money not obligated or spent by those dates must be returned to the federal government.

The Biden administration said it isn't concerned about the early pace of the initiative. The aid to governments is intended both "to address any crisis needs" and to provide "longer-term fire power to ensure a durable and equitable recovery," said Gene Sperling, White House American Rescue Plan coordinator.

"The fact that you can spread your spending out is a feature, not a bug, of the program. It is by design," Sperling told the AP.

The Treasury Department set an aggressive reporting schedule to try to prod local planning. It required states, counties and cities with estimated populations of at least 250,000 to file reports by Aug. 31 detailing their spending as of the previous month as well as future plans.

More than half the states and nearly two-thirds of the roughly 90 largest cities reported no initial spending. The governments reported future plans for about 40% of their total funds. The AP did not gather reports from counties because of the large number of them.

To promote transparency, the Treasury Department also required governments to post the reports on a "prominent public-facing website," such as their home page or a general coronavirus response site. But the AP found that many governments ignored that directive, instead tucking the documents behind numerous navigational steps. Idaho and Nebraska had not posted their reports online when contacted by the AP. Neither had some cities.

Officials in Jersey City, New Jersey, required the AP to file a formal open-records request to get its report, though that shouldn't have been necessary. City employees in Laredo, Texas, and Sacramento, California, also initially directed the AP to file open-records requests. Laredo later told the AP it had spent nothing. Sacramento relented and eventually provided a short report stating it had spent nothing but might put its entire \$112 million allocation toward replacing lost revenue and providing government services.

Among states, the largest share of initial spending went toward shoring up unemployment insurance trust funds that were depleted during the pandemic. Arizona reported pouring nearly \$759 million into its unemployment account, New Mexico nearly \$657 million and Kentucky almost \$506 million.

For large cities, the most common use of the money was to replenish their diminished revenue and fund government services. San Francisco reported using its entire initial allotment of \$312 million for that purpose.

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Those reporting no initial spending included Pittsburgh, whose mayor joined with several other Pennsylvania mayors in February on a column urging Congress to pass "crucial" aid for state and local governments. "Congress must act, and they must act soon. Our communities cannot wait another day," the Pennsylvania mayors wrote.

Pittsburgh ultimately ended up waiting to spend the money until the Treasury guidelines were released, community members had a chance to comment and the City Council could sign off on the spending plans. In the future, the city plans to use part of its federal windfall to buy 78 electric vehicles, build technology labs at recreation centers and launch a pilot project paying 100 low-income Black women \$500 a month for two years to test the merits of a guaranteed income program.

The federal money also will help pay the salaries of more than 600 city employees

"Even though the money hadn't technically been expended" by the Treasury Department's reporting timeline, "the receipt of the money was enough for us to hold off on major layoffs," said Dan Gilman, chief of staff to Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto.

Some officials are intentionally taking their time.

Missouri Gov. Mike Parson, a Republican, opted not to call a special session to appropriate money from the latest federal pandemic relief act. So far, he's publicly outlined just one proposal — \$400 million for broadband.

Parson's budget director said the administration will present more ideas to lawmakers when they convene for their regular session in January. Until then, the state should have enough money left from a previous federal relief law to cover the costs of fighting the virus, budget director Dan Haug said.

"We want to try to find things that are going to benefit Missouri not just next year or the year after, but 10 or 20 years down the road," Haug said. "That takes some thought and some planning."

Republican state Rep. Doug Richey, who leads a House panel on federal stimulus spending, said he's not convinced Missouri needs to spend all of its American Rescue Plan funds.

"To the extent that we spend these dollars, we are participating in an ever-increasing federal debt or bad monetary policy," Richey said.

Missouri was one several states that waited to request its initial allotment. Five other Republican-led states — Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee and Texas — waited so long that they weren't required to file reports by the Treasury's Aug. 31 deadline.

Tennessee wanted to make sure small cities were prepared for a 30-day clock that starts ticking for them to seek funding once the dollars arrive at the state, said Lola Potter, a spokesperson for the state Department of Finance and Administration. A South Dakota official cited similar reasoning for the delay. Financial Systems Director Colin Keeler said it's difficult for small towns to take the steps needed to apply.

"The state was in no rush at all," he said. "The cities wanted to get theirs, but we needed to be prepared."

Algeria blasts French leader, bans flights, recalls diplomat

ALGIERS, Algeria (AP) — Algeria has refused permission for France to fly military planes in its airspace and announced the recall of its ambassador from Paris in the wake of what it said were "inadmissible" comments attributed to French President Emmanuel Macron.

This weekend's sharp escalation in tensions also follows a French decision to slash the number of visas issued to people in North Africa — including Algeria — because governments there are refusing to take back migrants expelled from France.

A French request that two military planes be allowed to fly Sunday over Algerian territory was rejected, French military spokesman Col. Pascal Ianni said. One plane was meant to depart from France, the other from Chad, he said.

Ianni said it isn't clear whether Algeria is closing its airspace completely to the French military or whether Sunday's flights will be the only ones affected.

"We haven't had official notification, so we will see," he said. "The planners are thinking about how we will adapt."

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Algeria had approved previous French flights in recent months, he said.

The flight ban followed the immediate recall of Algeria's ambassador from France for "consultations" — announced Saturday evening by the Algerian presidency.

The statement said the diplomat's recall was motivated by recent comments about Algeria that were attributed to Macron. The comments amounted to "inadmissible interference" in Algeria's affairs and were "an intolerable affront" to Algerians who died fighting French colonialism, the Algerian presidency said.

"The crimes of colonial France in Algeria are innumerable and fit the strictest definitions of genocide," its statement alleged.

French media reported that Macron spoke recently about Algeria's post-colonial system of government and its attitudes to France. The newspaper Le Monde said Macron made the comments Thursday in a meeting at the presidential palace with French and Algerian grandchildren of former combatants in Algeria's 1954-62 war of independence from France and people affected by the conflict's aftermath.

In its report from the meeting, Le Monde said that Macron accused Algerian authorities of stoking hatred for France. The French leader also spoke about his government's tightening of visas for North Africans, saying the visa reduction would target "people in the area of governance, who had a habit of asking for visas easily," the newspaper reported.

French officials announced the number of visas given to Algerians and Moroccans would be cut by half, and to Tunisians by 30%. The government said the decision responded to refusals from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia to provide consular documents for their citizens who were being deported from France after arriving illegally. The three countries were part of France's colonial empire, and many Europe-bound migrants and other visitors coming from those North African nations have family or other ties in France.

The Algerian presidency said in its statement that Macron's remarks were "an intolerable affront to the memory of the 5,630,000 valiant martyrs who sacrificed their lives in their heroic resistance of the French colonial invasion." There was no explanation of how Algerian authorities came up with such a large number.

It added that "nothing and nobody can absolve the colonial powers of their crimes."

US raises concern as China flies warplanes south of Taiwan

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — The Chinese military flew 16 warplanes over waters south of Taiwan on Sunday as the United States expressed concern about what it called China's "provocative military action" near the self-governing island that China claims.

China sent 38 warplanes into the area on Friday and 39 aircraft on Saturday, the most in a single day since Taiwan began releasing reports on the flights in September 2020. The flights came in daytime and nighttime sorties, and it wasn't clear if China was planning more flights on Sunday night.

A statement from U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price warned that China's military activity near Taiwan risks miscalculation and undermines regional peace and stability.

"We urge Beijing to cease its military, diplomatic, and economic pressure and coercion against Taiwan," the statement said.

It added that the United States, Taiwan's biggest supplier of arms, would continue to help the government maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.

China and Taiwan split in 1949 during a civil war in which the Communists took control of mainland China and the rival Nationalists set up a government on Taiwan, an island of 24 million people about 160 kilometers (100 miles) off the east coast.

China has been sending military planes into the area south of Taiwan on a frequent basis for more than a year. Taiwan's Defense Ministry said 12 fighter jets and four other military aircraft entered Taiwan's air defense identification zone on Sunday.

Associated Press journalist Matthew Lee in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

Italians vote for mayors of Rome, Milan, other key cities

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By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Millions of people in Italy started voting Sunday for new mayors, including in Rome and Milan, in an election widely seen as a test of political alliances before nationwide balloting just over a year away.

The two days of voting end on Monday and the first results are expected afterwards. But many voters will have to wait two weeks to learn who their mayor will be.

Runoffs will be held Oct. 17-18 in municipalities with more than 15,000 people between the top two vote-getters if no single candidate garners more than 50% of the ballots.

Nearly all the mayoral races in the biggest cities, including Rome, Turin, Naples and Bologna, are expected to see runoffs. Milan Mayor Giuseppe Sala has told supporters he thinks they might be able to win enough votes to give him another five-year term without a runoff.

Around 12 million people, or roughly 20% of Italy's population, are eligible to vote in the mayoral races.

Rome Mayor Virginia Raggi, a prominent populist 5-Star Movement figure, has been fighting an uphill battle to keep her office. Opinion polls indicated that the likely two top vote-getters in the 22-candidate field will be a center-left Democratic and a right-wing candidate who is backed by anti-migrant League leader Matteo Salvini and far-right leader Giorgia Meloni and her Brothers of Italy party with neo-fascist roots.

When Raggi took the helm of the city in 2016, she inherited a mess, and many of the the Italian capital's problems persist. Piles of uncollected trash still blighted the city, several subway stations were shut down for months for maintenance and aging buses often broke down on their routes, sometimes going on fire, during her tenure.

Besides casting her ballot, Raggi on Sunday morning inspected the site of a fire that damaged a bridge spanning the Tiber and a settlement of riverbank shacks occupied by homeless persons, another illustration of Rome's chronic problems.

Salvini and Meloni, while officially right-wing allies, have been warily sizing each other up, since both have ambitions to be Italian premier. A parliamentary election is due in early 2023, but both leaders have been pressing to vote sooner.

The 5-Star Movement, currently Parliament's largest party, has suffered internal bickering. Its newly elected leader, former Premier Giuseppe Conte, who has been trying to heal the divisions, heavily backed Raggi and rebuffed overtures by the Democrat Party to throw its backing behind the Democrat running to be Rome's mayor.

The Democrats will likely need an alliance with the Movement to counter the rising popularity of right-wing forces when national elections are held. After national elections, alliances will be crucial in forming a government, since in Italy's fractured political spectrum, no one party can count on any significant likelihood of governing alone.

Thus, how the mayoral campaign alliances fare in this month's municipal races will be dissected as a possible indication of Italians' sentiment when they next vote for national leadership.

"The competition (and the barometer) of the leaders" of the political party chiefs' jockeying for advantage, Corriere della Sera's headline about the voting said.

Salvini's League is a coalition member of Premier Mario Draghi's unity government, formed earlier this year to lead the country through the COVID-19 pandemic. Meloni was the only major leader to refuse to join the unusual coalition, which includes technocrats as well as ministers from leftist, centrists, right-wing and populist parties.

Since the 5-Stars triumph in the last election for Parliament, in 2018, the Movement's popularity plummeted in gubernatorial balloting and in public opinion polls.

Voters in southern Calabria in the "toe" of the Italian peninsula are also electing a governor, replacing one who died of cancer while in office last year.

North Korea threatens top UN body after emergency meeting

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

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SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea has warned the U.N. Security Council against criticizing the isolated country's missile program, in a statement Sunday that included unspecified threats against the international body.

During an emergency closed-door meeting of the top U.N. body Friday, France circulated a proposed statement that expresses concern over North Korea's missile launches and calls on it to fully implement council resolutions that ban its ballistic missile firings.

On Sunday, Jo Chol Su, a senior North Korean Foreign Ministry official, warned the U.N. council it "had better think what consequences it will bring in the future in case it tries to encroach upon the sovereignty" of North Korea.

Jo also accused the U.N. body of a "double-dealing standard" because it doesn't equally take issue with similar weapons tests by the United States and its allies, according to the statement circulated by state media.

After a six-month hiatus, North Korea resumed missile tests in September, launching newly developed missiles including nuclear-capable weapons that place South Korea and Japan, both key U.S. allies, within their striking distances. The country still offered conditional talks with South Korea, in what some experts call an attempt to pressure Seoul to persuade Washington to relax crippling economic sanctions on it.

Under multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions, North Korea is banned from engaging in any ballistic missile activities as the country aims to mount nuclear weapons on its ballistic missiles. North Korea has argued its nuclear program is meant to cope with U.S. military threats, though Washington has said it has no hostile intent toward Pyongyang.

Despite its recent launches, North Korea maintains a 2018 self-imposed moratorium on a long-range missile directly threatening the American homeland, a sign that it still wants to keep alive chances for future diplomacy with the U.S.

U.S. officials have urged North Korea to return to talks without preconditions, but the North has argued it won't do so unless the Americans drop their "hostile policy," in an apparent reference to the sanctions and regular military drills between Washington and Seoul.

Pope calls for more humane prison life after Ecuador deaths

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis on Sunday called for "more humane" prison life in the wake of bloodshed in a prison in Ecuador in which 118 people died and dozens more were injured.

Francis told the public in St. Peter's Square that he was "very pained" by what happened last week in Guayaquil prison. He lamented what he called a "terrible explosion of violence among inmates belonging to rival gangs."

"May God help to heal the wounds of crime that enslave the poorest," Francis said. He also prayed that God help "all those who work every day to render life in prisons more humane."

The pontiff, who is from South America, prayed for the dead and the wounded and their families.

Last week, Ecuador's president declared a state of emergency in the prison system following a battle among gang members that killed at least 118 people and injured 79 in what authorities said was the worst prison bloodbath ever in the country. Officials said at least five of the dead were found to have been beheaded.

Virus surge hits New England despite high vaccination rates

By WILSON RING Associated Press

Despite having the highest vaccination rates in the country, there are constant reminders for most New England states of just how vicious the delta variant of COVID-19 is.

Hospitals across the region are seeing full intensive care units and staff shortages are starting to affect care. Public officials are pleading with the unvaccinated to get the shots. Health care workers are coping with pent-up demand for other kinds of care that had been delayed by the pandemic.

"I think it's clearly frustrating for all of us," said Michael Pieciak, the commissioner of the Vermont Depart-

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ment of Financial Regulation who monitors COVID-19 statistics for the state. "We want kids to be safe in school, we want parents not to have to worry about their child's education and health."

Even though parts of New England are seeing record case counts, hospitalizations and deaths that rival pre-vaccine peaks, largely among the unvaccinated, the region hasn't seen the impact the delta variant wave has wrought on other parts of the country.

According to statistics from The Associated Press, the five states with the highest percentage of a fully vaccinated population are all in New England, with Vermont leading, followed by Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. New Hampshire is 10th.

According to the AP data, full vaccination rates across the six New England states range from a high of 69.4% in Vermont to 61.5% in New Hampshire.

Despite the relatively high vaccination rates — the U.S. as a whole is averaging 55.5% — there are still hundreds of thousands of people across the region who, for one reason or another, remain unvaccinated and vulnerable to infection.

Now, a Rhode Island official said he didn't think the 70% vaccination goal, once touted as the level that would help end the pandemic in the state, is enough.

"What we've learned with delta and looking beyond delta, is because that's where our focus is as well, to really reach those levels of vaccination, to give you that true population level protection, you need to be in excess of 90%," said Tom McCarthy, the executive director of the Rhode Island Department of Health COVID Response Unit.

Officials throughout New England continue to push the unvaccinated to get the shots as well as bolster vaccine mandates.

"We have it in our power to end this needless suffering and heartbreak; a way to protect our health and that of the people we love; a way to give our heroic doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals a much-needed break; a way to protect our children — please get vaccinated today," Maine's Democratic Gov. Janet Mills said recently.

Yet the head of UMass Memorial Health, the largest health system in central Massachusetts, said recently that regional hospitals were seeing nearly 20 times more COVID-19 patients than in June and there isn't an ICU bed to spare.

In Connecticut, the Legislature just extended the governor's emergency powers to make it easier to cope with the latest wave of the pandemic.

Case counts in Vermont, which has continually boasted about high vaccination and low hospitalization and death rates, are the highest during the pandemic. Hospitalizations are approaching the pandemic peak from last winter and September was Vermont's second-deadliest month during the pandemic.

On Sept. 22, Maine had nearly 90 people in intensive care units, a pandemic peak for the state. Maine also recently passed 1,000 deaths since the start of the pandemic.

Dr. Gretchen Volpe, an infectious disease specialist at the 48-bed York Hospital in Maine, said the delta surge has made it harder to find care for patients who need more assistance.

"The physicians who are transferring people have commented to me that they keep having to go farther and call more places to achieve that goal, Volpe said.

On Friday, the United States crossed the threshold of 700,000 deaths from COVID-19. The deaths during the delta surge have been unrelenting in hotspots in the South. New England has been at the other end of the spectrum, but the region is still coping with the same surge that has ravaged other parts of the country.

Vermont's Republican governor, Phil Scott drew near-universal praise for his early handling of the pandemic, when his calm demeanor and reliance on the science kept his state among the safest.

But recently, he's faced criticism by some, including Democratic leaders of the state Legislature and more than 90 employees of the Vermont Health Department who in August signed a letter urging him to do more to combat the delta wave.

Scott lifted Vermont's state of emergency in June, when the state became the first to see 80% of its eligible population get at least the first shot.

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He is now recommending that schools require masks and he's urging people to wear masks in crowded indoor locations. But he won't reinstitute required mitigation measures that were in place during the state of emergency.

"We can't be in a perpetual state of emergency," Scott said this week.

Dr. Tim Lahey, an infectious disease specialist at the University of Vermont Medical Center in Burlington, said he felt it was important to look at the situation more optimistically.

Unlike some others in the region his Vermont hospital is busy, not overwhelmed. People still need to be cautious, but they are not locked down and outside life has a semblance of normality.

"We all hate the word 'delta' now, but has vaccination made it so we can withstand the brunt of delta with losing fewer of our neighbors while still having the quality of life that we enjoy in Vermont?" he said. "Yeah."

AP reporter Jennifer McDermott in Providence, Rhode Island, contributed to this report as did Patrick Whittle and David Sharp in Portland, Maine, and Philip Marcelo in Boston.

Florida school shooting suspect faces trial for jail brawl

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — The suspect in the 2018 killing of 17 people at a Florida high school is finally going on trial — but not for the slayings.

Jury selection begins Monday on charges Nikolas Cruz attacked a Broward County jail guard nine months after the Feb. 14, 2018, shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland.

Cruz, a former Stoneman Douglas student, brawled with Sgt. Raymond Beltran after being jailed on charges of killing 14 students and three staff members and wounding 17 others. No date has been set for the murder trial, which has been delayed by the pandemic and arguments over witnesses and evidence. It may start in the next few months.

"The accused murderer who took our children's lives is clearly violent and took that out on a guard. He needs to face the justice system for that," said Tony Montalto, president of Stand With Parkland, a group comprised of victims' families. His 14-year-old daughter, Gina, died in the shooting.

Cruz, 23, faces a possible 15-year sentence if convicted of attempted criminal battery on a law enforcement officer and three lesser charges. Cruz will get either death or life in prison without parole if he is later found guilty of first-degree murder, but this trial still has relevance. If Cruz is convicted of attacking Beltran, prosecutors can argue that is an aggravating factor when they seek his execution during the penalty phase of his murder trial if convicted.

"If that is entered as an aggravating factor, it will be hard for that not to be in the back of the jury's mind," said Mark Dobson, a professor at Nova Southeastern University's law school and a former Florida prosecutor.

Prosecutors declined significant comment, only saying in a statement that "the jail video and evidence in the case speak for themselves."

Cruz's public defenders declined comment, saying they don't want to further traumatize the shooting victims' families by discussing their client.

Cruz's attorneys are expected to argue that Beltran mistreated Cruz previously and provoked the Nov. 13, 2018, brawl, which occurred inside a Broward County jail recreation area and was captured on a soundless security video.

According to court records, Cruz's lead attorney, Melisa McNeill, had complained six weeks before the fight to the Broward Sheriff's Office about Beltran's treatment of Cruz. No details of the alleged mistreatment have been released, but his attorneys said at a recent court hearing that Beltran is the only guard they have ever complained about.

Cruz's attorneys say the sheriff's office erased video of the three hours Cruz and Beltran spent together before the fight — even though they asked within a day that it be preserved and were told it would be.

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The preserved video begins a couple minutes before the brawl. It shows Cruz walking alone in circles with his head down around tables with attached benches. He is dressed in an orange jail jumpsuit, a white long-sleeve undershirt and sandals. Beltran is sitting at a table in the corner.

Suddenly, Cruz stops about 10 feet (3 meters) from Beltran and the two appear to exchange words — Beltran told investigators he asked Cruz not to drag his feet and damage his sandals.

Cruz flips both middle fingers at Beltran and then charges the guard, who stands up to defend himself. Cruz, who weighs about 130 pounds (60 kilograms), throws the larger Beltran to the ground, before the guard is able to flip him and briefly pin him. Cruz grabs Beltran's stun gun and they fight over it as it goes off, apparently jolting neither, before the guard wrests it away.

Cruz escapes Beltran's grasp and the two take boxing stances. Cruz punches Beltran in the shoulder before the guard hits Cruz in the head, staggering him.

Beltran then rearms his stun gun and points it at Cruz, who had sat on a bench. Cruz lies face down on the ground and is handcuffed. The fight lasted almost exactly a minute. Neither was seriously hurt.

Because of Cruz's infamy in South Florida, jury selection is scheduled to last three days — in a typical jail battery trial with a defendant the public doesn't know, it would likely take a few hours. The court plans to screen 400 people to seat six jurors plus alternates. The typical pool for jail battery trials and similar felonies is 22, according to The Florida Bar.

Cruz's attorneys will want to eliminate any candidates who can't separate their knowledge of the Stoneman Douglas massacre from the only considerations jurors are supposed to make during this trial: Did Cruz attack Beltran and, if so, was he provoked? Testimony about the killings will not be permitted as that is irrelevant to the assault charge and would be prejudicial.

Once the jury is selected, the rest of the trial is only expected to last one to three days.

The murder trial is expected to last months. Circuit Judge Elizabeth Scherer has been holding frequent hearings in recent weeks to consider issues that must be resolved before it begins.

"The wheels of justice grind slowly and that is especially true with our group of families," Montalto said.

Cruz's attorneys have said he would plead guilty to 17 murders in exchange for a life sentence. Prosecutors have declined the offer, saying this is a case that deserves a death sentence.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Oct. 4, the 277th day of 2021. There are 88 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Oct. 4, 2002, "American Taliban" John Walker Lindh received a 20-year sentence after a sobbing plea for forgiveness before a federal judge in Alexandria, Virginia. (He was released from prison in May, 2019.) In a federal court in Boston, a laughing Richard Reid pleaded guilty to trying to blow up a trans-Atlantic flight with explosives in his shoes (the British citizen was later sentenced to life in prison).

On this date:

In 1814, French painter Jean-Francois Millet was born in Normandy.

In 1861, during the Civil War, the United States Navy authorized construction of the first ironclad ship, the USS Monitor.

In 1940, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini conferred at Brenner Pass in the Alps.

In 1957, the Space Age began as the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite, into orbit.

In 1970, rock singer Janis Joplin, 27, was found dead in her Hollywood hotel room.

In 1976, Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz resigned in the wake of a controversy over an obscene joke he'd made that was derogatory to Black people.

In 1990, for the first time in nearly six decades, German lawmakers met in the Reichstag for the first meeting of reunified Germany's parliament.

In 1991, 26 nations, including the United States, signed the Madrid Protocol, which imposed a 50-year

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ban on oil exploration and mining in Antarctica.

In 2001, a Russian airliner flying from Israel to Siberia was accidentally downed by a Ukrainian anti-aircraft missile over the Black Sea, killing all 78 people aboard. Barry Bonds of the San Francisco Giants hit his 70th home run to tie Mark McGwire's 1998 record in a 10-2 victory over the Houston Astros.

In 2004, the SpaceShipOne rocket plane broke through Earth's atmosphere to the edge of space for the second time in five days, capturing the \$10 million Ansari X prize aimed at opening the final frontier to tourists. Pioneering astronaut Gordon Cooper died in Ventura, California, at age 77.

In 2010, the Supreme Court began a new era with three women serving together for the first time as Elena Kagan took her place at the end of the bench.

In 2019, Diahann Carroll died in Los Angeles at the age of 84 after a bout with breast cancer; she'd been the first Black woman to star as a non-servant in her own television series "Julia," which ran from 1968 to 1973.

Ten years ago: Three U.S.-born scientists, Saul Perlmutter, Brian Schmidt and Adam Riess, won the Nobel Prize in physics for discovering that the universe is expanding at an accelerating pace. The NBA canceled the entire 114-game preseason schedule because a new collective bargaining agreement had not been reached with the National Basketball Players Association.

Five years ago: Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine repeatedly challenged Mike Pence during their vice presidential debate, attempting to tie the Indiana governor to some of Donald Trump's most controversial statements about women, immigrants and foreign policy, while Trump's running mate maintained a folksy, soft-spoken demeanor as he defended Trump. Hurricane Matthew slammed into Haiti's southwest peninsula, the first Category 4 storm to hit the country in more than a half century; the Haitian government would put the death toll from Matthew at 546.

One year ago: Infected and contagious, President Donald Trump briefly ventured out in an SUV from the hospital where he was being treated for COVID-19 to salute cheering supporters. Trump's medical team reported that his blood oxygen level had dropped suddenly twice in recent days and that they gave him a steroid typically only recommended for the very sick; doctors said he had also been given oxygen before being hospitalized.

Today's Birthdays: Country singer Leroy Van Dyke is 92. Actor Felicia Farr is 89. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Sam Huff is 87. Author Roy Blount Jr. is 80. Author Anne Rice is 80. Actor Lori Saunders (TV: "Petticoat Junction") is 80. Baseball Hall of Famer Tony La Russa is 77. Actor Clifton Davis is 76. The former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen, is 75. Former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel is 75. Actor Susan Sarandon is 75. Blues musician Duke Robillard is 73. Playwright Lee Blessing is 72. Actor Armand Assante is 72. Actor Alan Rosenberg is 71. Actor Christoph Waltz is 65. Actor Bill Fagerbakke is 64. Music producer Russell Simmons is 64. Actor Kyra Schon (Film: "Night of the Living Dead") is 64. Actor-singer Wendy Makkena is 63. Musician Chris Lowe (The Pet Shop Boys) is 62. Country musician Gregg "Hobie" Hubbard (Sawyer Brown) is 61. Actor David W. Harper is 60. Singer Jon Secada is 60. TV personality John Melendez is 56. Actor-comedian Jerry Minor is 54. Actor Liev Schreiber is 54. Actor Abraham Benrubi is 52. Country singer-musician Heidi Newfield is 51. Singer-guitarist M. Ward (She & Him) is 48. Actor Alicia Silverstone is 45. Actor Dana Davis is 43. Rock musician Robbie Bennett (The War on Drugs) is 43. Actor Phillip Glasser is 43. Rock singer-musician Marc Roberge (O.A.R.) is 43. Actor Brandon Barash is 42. Actor Rachael Leigh Cook is 42. Actor Tim Peper is 41. Actor Jimmy Workman is 41. Actor Michael Charles Roman is 34. Actor Melissa Benoist is 33. NBA All-Star Derrick Rose is 33. Actor Dakota Johnson is 32. Figure skater Kimmie Meisner is 32. Actor Leigh-Anne Pinnoch (Little Mix) is 30. Actor Ryan Scott Lee is 25.