

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 1 of 65

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [1-FB Playoff on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [2- City Council Meeting Agenda](#)
- [3- Groton beat Langford in Volleyball](#)
- [3 - Board of Regents Launches Our Dakota Dream Coalition, Extends Free College Application Campaign](#)
- [4- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [5- Weather Pages](#)
- [8- Daily Devotional](#)
- [9- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [10- News from the Associated Press](#)



Upcoming Events

Tuesday, Oct. 19

Volleyball hosts Northwestern. 7th/C match at 5 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m., Varsity to follow 7 p.m. Council Meeting at City Hall

Wednesday, Oct. 20

Senior Scholarship Info Night at GHS Library Conference Room, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 21

First Round Football Playoffs: Wagner at Groton, 7 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 22

End of First Quarter
Volleyball at Aberdeen Roncalli. (7th at 5 p.m., 8th at 6 p.m., JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.

Saturday, Oct. 23

State Cross Country at Yankton Trail Park in Sioux Falls.

Oral Interp at NSU Invitational

ACT Testing at GHS, 8 a.m. to Noon

Starting 10/24/21, you must dial the area code for all calls. This change supports 988 as the new 3-digit code to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.



First Round
Football Playoffs
on
GDILIVE.COM



Ice skating opportunity on Sunday, Oct 24 in Watertown -- one of our guest skaters at the carnival for the past few years, Kathryn Pfaff, would like to invite our ice skaters to their Come Skate with Us event on Sunday, Oct 24 in Watertown. It will be held at the Maas Ice Arena in Watertown from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. with some mini classes available.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

October 19, 2021 – 7:00pm

120 N Main Street

(NOTICE ADDRESS)

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

1. Nick Neel – Residential Complaint
2. Special Event Alcoholic License – Adult Painting Class – October 21 & November 18 – 120 N Main Street
3. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
4. Minutes
5. Bills
6. September Finance Report
7. Bucket Truck Rental Agreement - \$3,000/28 day + \$500 Delivery
8. First Reading Ordinance #754 Certifying 2022 City of Groton Property Tax Levy to Brown County
9. Change Order # 3 – Maguire Iron
10. Certificate of Substantial Completion – Maguire Iron
11. Certificate of Substantial Completion – AB Contracting
12. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
13. Public works on call pay effective date
14. Adjournment

Groton Area beats Langford Area in three sets

Groton Area's volleyball team traveled to Langford Monday night and came home with a 3-0 win over the Lions. Game scores were 25-19, 25-20 and 25-20.

Sydney Leicht had eight kills and three ace serves, Anna Fjeldheim had four kills and an ace serve, Madeline Flihs had five kills and an ace serve, Maddie Bjerke had four kills, Elizabeth Flihs had two kills and two ace serves, Allyssa Locke had an ace serve and a kill and Alyssa Thaler had an ace serve.

Langford was led by Ashley Cadwell with six kills, a block and an ace serve while Olyvia Dwight had four kills, a block and two ace serves, Gracie Cadwell had four kills and an ace serve, Rebecca Hanson had four kills, Katherine Jensen had two kills and two blocks and Megan Gustafson had two kills and a block.

Groton Area won the junior varsity match, 25-14 and 25-21. Emma Schinkel had eight kills and a block, Lydia Meier had two kills and three ace serves, Marlee Tollifson had three kills, Faith Trapahgen two kills, Carly Guthmiller two ace serves, Hollie Frost a kill and Laila Roberts an ace serve.

Board of Regents Launches Our Dakota Dream Coalition, Extends Free College Application Campaign

All SD Colleges, Universities Extend Free Application Period to Six Weeks for South Dakota Residents

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Board of Regents announced the launch of the Dakota Dream coalition today as part of an ongoing effort to encourage South Dakotans to pursue post-secondary education.

The coalition is funded by a national grant through the U.S. Department of Education and coordinated through the Board of Regents. The coalition includes representatives from the regents' central office, Black Hills State University, Dakota State University, Northern State University, South Dakota Mines, South Dakota State University, University of South Dakota, South Dakota Department of Education, South Dakota Board of Technical Education, and Mapping Your Future.

Our Dakota Dream is designed to support the dreams of South Dakotans who require education after high school. Post-secondary certifications can take many forms, and many dreams can only be achieved by attending college.

"Pursuing higher education can help make many dreams come true, while supporting the vitality of communities across South Dakota," said Brian L. Maher, the regents' executive director and CEO. "As workforce demand for jobs requiring at least a bachelor's degree increase, 'Our Dakota Dream' will help demonstrate that college for South Dakotans is accessible and affordable – and that college can make dreams a reality."

The regents also announced an extension of its Free College Application Campaign from one week to six weeks. Application fees at all South Dakota colleges and universities will be waived from Oct. 18 to Nov. 30. Our Dakota Dream coalition will also coordinate a series of initiatives to help potential students navigate the college application process.

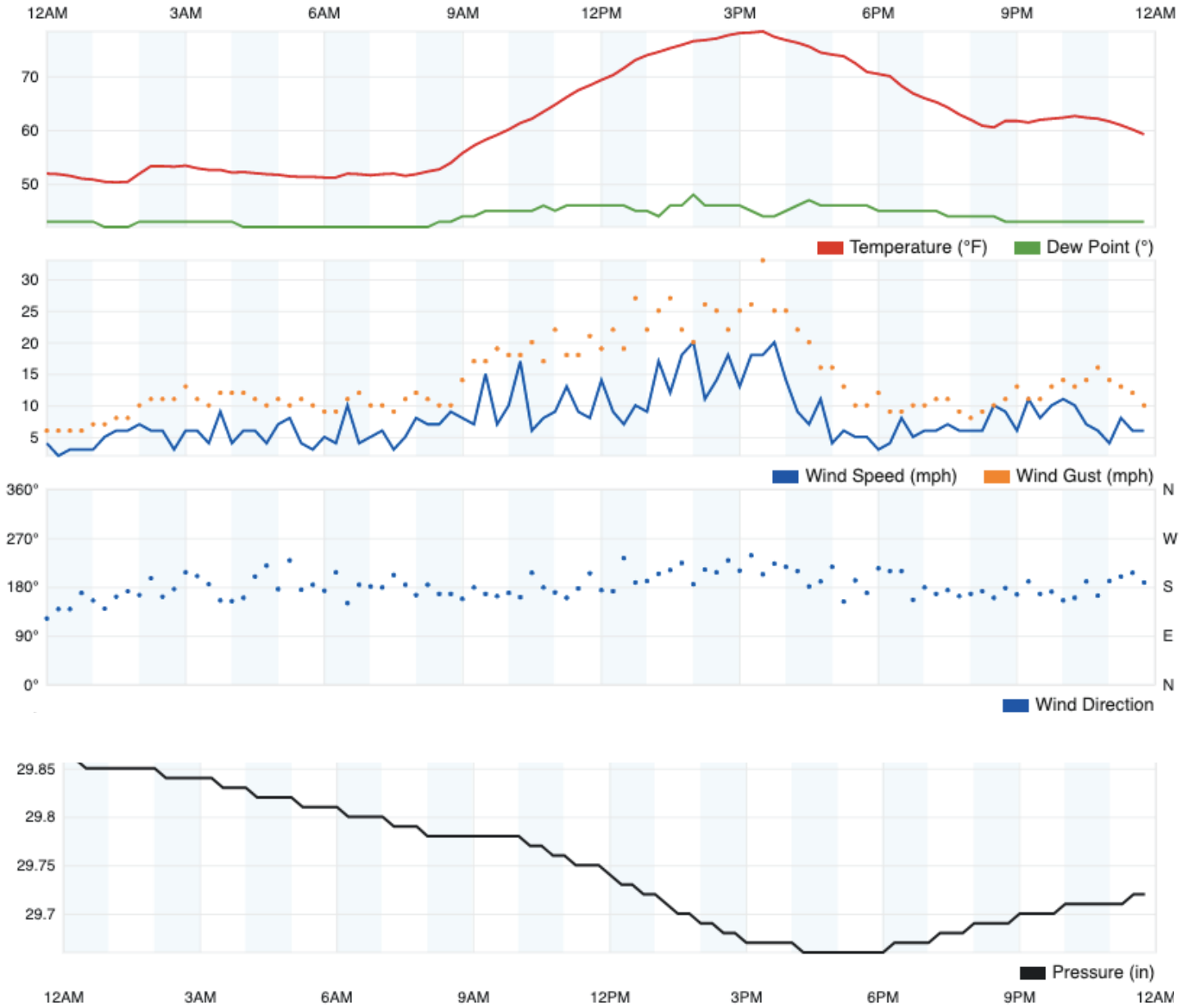
"Applying for college can be an intimidating and scary process," said Janice Minder, the regents' system vice president for academic policy and planning. "By offering a free application period we hope to increase the number of first-generation students and students from low-income families who might otherwise not pursue their dreams of attending college. Our Dakota Dream is that all South Dakotans have an opportunity to achieve their dreams."

Learn more about college application month and how you can apply for free: <https://www.selectdakota.org/parents counselors/collegeapplicationweek/>

Groton Daily Independent



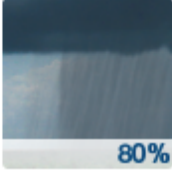


Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 4 of 65

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



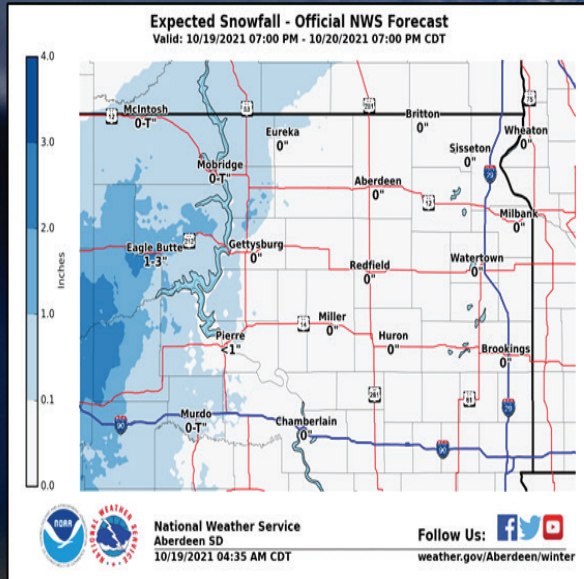
Broton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 5 of 65

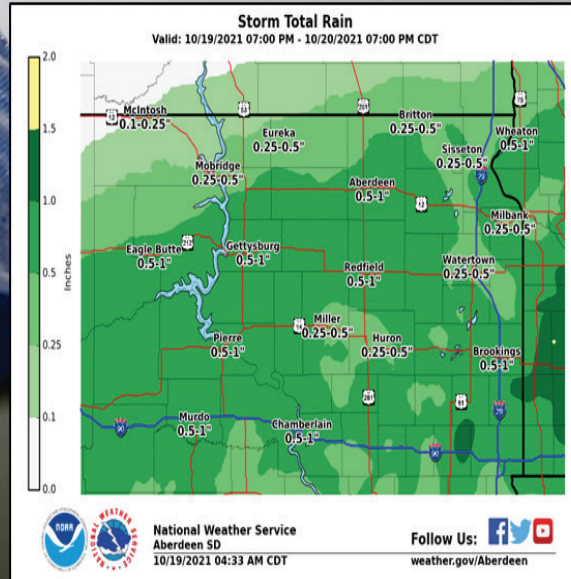
Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
Mostly Sunny then Mostly Cloudy and Breezy	Breezy. Mostly Cloudy then Showers Likely	Showers and Breezy	Decreasing Clouds	Mostly Sunny
High: 57 °F	Low: 36 °F	High: 40 °F	Low: 27 °F	High: 46 °F

Rain and Snow Tonight - Wednesday

Snowfall Totals
Tuesday Night - Wednesday Evening



Precipitation Totals
Tuesday Night - Wednesday Evening



What

Mostly a rain event. However, light snow accumulation of a trace to an inch possible while windy north winds are occurring.

When

Tuesday night through early Wednesday evening. Snow is best during the Wednesday morning commute.

Where

Portions of central and north central South Dakota, especially west river; could see light accumulating snowfall on grassy areas.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
10/19/2021 5:19 AM
Graphic Created

A storm system will cross the region later tonight through Wednesday evening. This system will bring showers to most areas, changing over to light snow Wednesday morning for locations along and west of Highway 83. A dusting to an inch of snowfall will be possible, mainly on grassy areas. Highs today will range from the mid-40s, in northwest South Dakota, to the lower 70s, in southeast South Dakota. Highs on Wednesday will only reach the upper 30s to the mid-40s.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 6 of 65

Today in Weather History

October 19, 1982: An early fall snowstorm dropped 3 to 12 inches of wet snow over the southeastern corner of South Dakota. The wet snow combined with the gusty winds of 20 to 40 mph dropped wind chills to around zero. Numerous trees snapped downing power lines. Power outages were extensive from Vermillion to Mitchell. Thunder rumbled, and lightning flashed amidst the height of the snowstorm. Almost a foot of snow fell in northern Union and southern Lincoln counties. High wind gusts knocked out television and radio transmitters in Sioux Falls. The weight of the snow collapsed a panel on the covered stadium at the University of South Dakota at Vermillion.

1844 - The famous "Lower Great Lakes Storm" occurred. Southwesterly winds were at hurricane force for five hours, driving lake waters into downtown Buffalo NY. The storm drowned 200 persons. (David Ludlum)

1961 - Rain changed to a record early season, heavy wet snow over the southern mountains of West Virginia. Leaves were still on trees, resulting in the worst forest disaster since the fires of 1952 and 1953. One to two feet of snow fell near Summersville and Richwood. (19th-20th) (The Weather Channel)

1984 - Thunderstorms deluged the town of Odem, TX (located 15 miles northwest of Corpus Christi) with 25 inches of rain in just three and a half hours. Most businesses in Odem were flooded, as were 1000 homes in nearby Sinton. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front brought rainshowers to parts of the central U.S., and ushered cool Canadian air into the Great Plains Region. Daytime highs were only in the 30s in North Dakota and eastern Montana. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced high winds in eastern Colorado, with gusts to 63 mph reported at La Junta. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Record breaking snows fell across northern and central Indiana. Totals ranged up to 10.5 inches at Kokomo, and 9.3 inches was reported at Indianapolis. The 8.8 inch total at South Bend was a record for the month as a whole. Up to seven inches of snow fell in extreme southern Lower Michigan, and up to six inches fell in southwestern Ohio. The heavy wet snow downed many trees and power lines. Half the city of Cincinnati OH was without electricity during the morning hours. Temperatures dipped below freezing across much of the Great Plains Region. Twenty cities, including fourteen in Texas, reported record low temperatures for the date. North Platte NE reported a record low of 11 degrees. In Florida, four cities reported record high temperatures for the date. The record high of 92 degrees at Miami also marked a record fourteen days of 90 degree weather in October, and 116 such days for the year.

1996: The opening game of World Series between the Braves and Yankees in New York was postponed by heavy rains and high wind from a major storm system affecting the East Coast, marking the third time in history that the World Series opener had been postponed. Overall, nine of the 22 games that have been canceled in Series history were scheduled in New York or Brooklyn.

2007: A total of 87 tornadoes were reported in the United States from Oct. 17-19, a new record outbreak for the month, according to NOAA's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma. The outbreak also contributed to the monthly total of 105 tornado reports – the second highest for October, behind the 117 tornadoes in October 2001. Records date back to 1950.

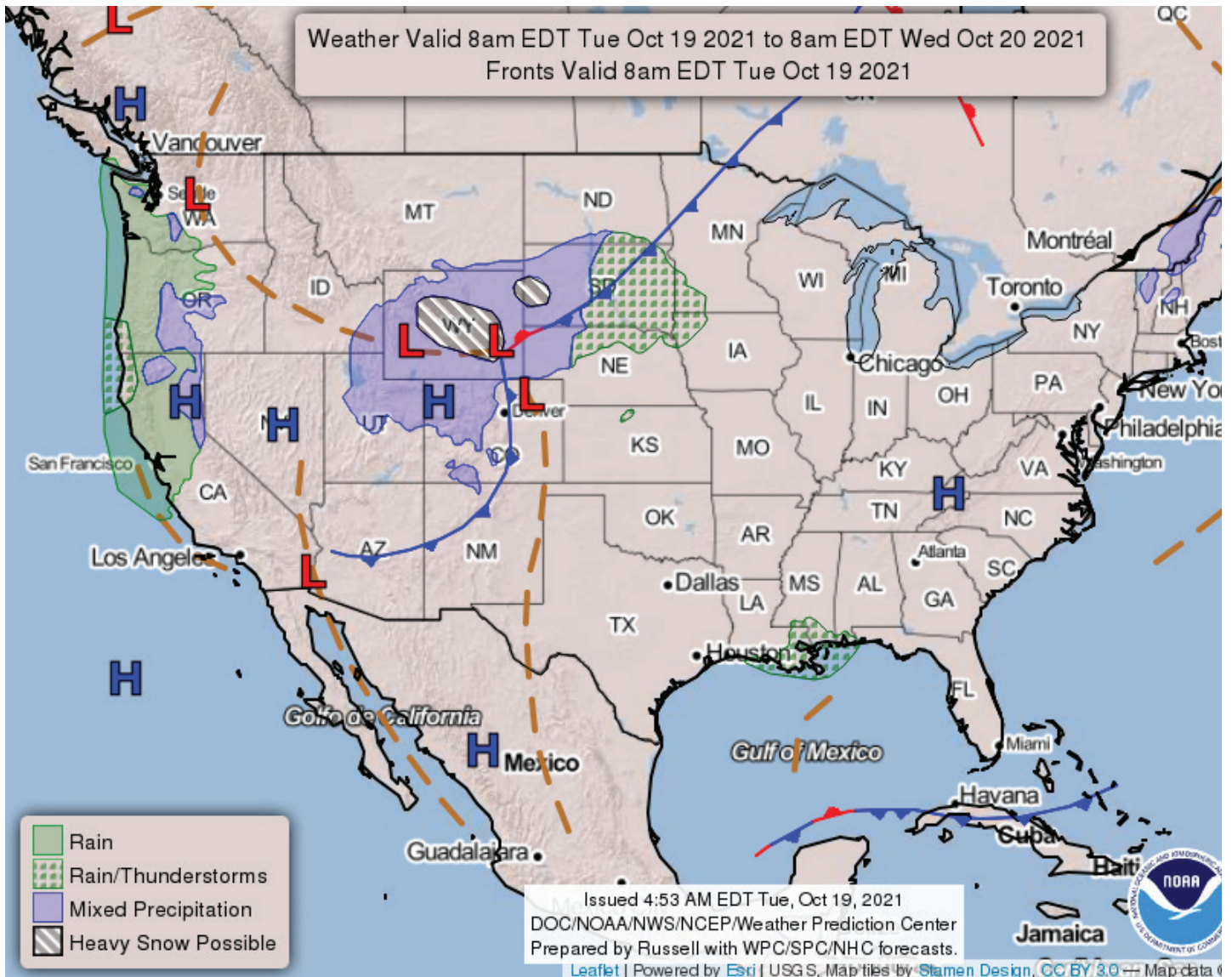
Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 7 of 65

Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 78.3 °F at 3:30 PM
Low Temp: 50.3 °F at 1:30 AM
Wind: 33 mph at 3:30 PM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 90° in 1910
Record Low: 12° in 1930
Average High: 58°F
Average Low: 32°F
Average Precip in Oct.: 1.37
Precip to date in Oct.: 1.94
Average Precip to date: 19.70
Precip Year to Date: 17.36
Sunset Tonight: 6:43:04 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:53:10 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 8 of 65



RENEWED LIKE EAGLES

Eagles have a unique place in nature - certainly a place that differs from all other birds. They represent strength, power and freedom from the things of this world that would distract them. No wonder they have a special place in God's Word. Isaiah promised, "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar on wings like eagles." No doubt David had this in mind when he wrote, "so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." What makes eagles special? Eagles have great vision and sharp focus. Their eyes were designed by God for long distance and clarity. Their vision enables them to see what other birds do not see. We as Christians need God's vision so we can see what we need to do for Him.

Eagles are fearless. As God's representatives, we need to be fearless as we represent Him and present His message to others. We must never bow to others in fear.

Eagles are tenacious. Other birds fly from a storm. But eagles fly into the storm - taking advantage of life's difficulties - and rise to greater heights, never giving up.

Eagles are "high-flyers." They easily fly to an altitude of 10,000 feet. Pigeons stay on the ground and "grumble" all day long. The eagle quietly soars above the noises of life and finds peace with God.

Eagles possess vitality. They are full of life yet find time to reenergize themselves and extend their lives.

Eagles nurture their young ones. No other bird is more attentive or gentle to its young than the eagle.

Prayer: Grant us, Lord, the qualities of an eagle. May we live lives that distinguish us from others as we serve You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Psalm 103:5

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 9 of 65

2021 Community Events

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 10 of 65

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$94 million

Powerball

30-32-48-53-63, Powerball: 12, Power Play: 2

(thirty, thirty-two, forty-eight, fifty-three, sixty-three; Powerball: twelve; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$65 million

Monday's Scores

The Associated Press undefined

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Bridgewater-Emery def. Sioux Falls Lutheran, 25-20, 25-7, 25-15

Ethan def. Avon, 25-10, 25-19, 25-22

Groton Area def. Langford, 25-20, 25-19, 25-20

Hamlin def. Castlewood, 20-25, 25-15, 25-21, 23-25, 15-9

Highmore-Harrold def. Crow Creek, 25-10, 25-8, 25-17

Hill City def. Red Cloud, 25-13, 25-11, 25-14

Ipswich def. Leola/Frederick, 25-15, 25-17, 25-12

Irene-Wakonda def. Canistota, 25-15, 25-18, 25-17

Kimball/White Lake def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-16, 25-22, 25-6

Lennox def. Tri-Valley, 25-19, 18-25, 25-14, 25-19

Platte-Geddes def. Tripp-Delmont/Armour, 25-23, 25-22, 25-21

Scotland def. Hanson, 25-23, 25-21, 25-20

Tiospa Zina Tribal def. Marty Indian, 25-13, 25-14, 25-22

Tri-State def. Wilmot, 25-21, 25-23, 20-25, 25-23

Webster def. Ortonville, Minn., 21-25, 22-25, 25-14, 25-18, 15-9

Wolsey-Wessington def. Miller, 25-13, 23-25, 25-22, 25-18

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

Information from: ScoreStream Inc., <http://ScoreStream.com>

2 dead; child sustains life-threatening injuries in crash

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A man and a woman died and a 5-year-old child suffered life-threatening injuries in a two-vehicle crash about 5 miles south of Rapid City.

The South Dakota Department of Public Safety said the 31-year-old male driver of a compact SUV and his 30-year-old female front-seat passenger were pronounced dead at the scene.

The 5-year-old in the back seat was flown to a Rapid City hospital.

The Rapid City Journal reports the adults were wearing seat belts, but it's unclear if the child was.

The preliminary investigation shows the compact SUV drove into an intersection after stopping at a stop sign and collided with a full-size SUV. That vehicle's 16-year-old driver suffered minor injuries and her 14-year-old female passenger was not injured.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating.

South Dakota lawmakers summon key figures for Noem inquiry

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers have summoned two people who were present at a meeting Gov. Kristi Noem held last year that included her daughter, Kassidy Peters, and state employees who were overseeing Peters' application for a real estate appraiser license.

The Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee, which is controlled by Republicans, sent letters asking Secretary of Labor and Regulation Marcia Hultman and the former director of the state's Appraiser Certification Program, Sherry Bren, to show up at a meeting next week. Although it isn't clear what will be asked of the women, the requests for them to appear at the meeting show that lawmakers want more answers from the Republican governor.

Bren and Hultman were central to the episode that has raised concerns from ethics experts. They attended the meeting in the governor's office in July 2020, just days after Bren's agency moved to deny Peters a certification to become a residential appraiser. Peters received her license four months after the meeting. And days after she received it, Hultman allegedly pressured Bren to retire. Bren eventually left her job this year after the state paid her \$200,000 to withdraw an age discrimination complaint.

Noem has dismissed concerns about the episode by saying she never requested special treatment for her daughter and casting her actions as an effort to "cut the red tape" to address a shortage of appraisers certified by the state. She also has said the initial report on the meeting from The Associated Press was a political attack.

Republican lawmakers on the committee said they would start with questions about why there was a shortage of appraisers under Bren's leadership.

"Secretary Hultman is prepared to talk about how South Dakota has made positive changes to the Appraiser Certification Program," said Dawn Dovre, a spokeswoman for the Department of Labor and Regulation.

However, Republicans acknowledged that the committee could also hone in on whether Noem inappropriately interfered in the agency while her daughter was applying for a license.

"Anything is fair game, especially when there is public testimony," said state Rep. Randy Gross, the committee's vice-chair. "There is no script for the meeting."

Democratic state Rep. Linda Duba said she wanted to focus on why the governor involved her daughter in the meeting. She planned to press for the committee to spend more time delving into the issue.

"I don't know what is going to come of this, but we can't just give it one hour on the agenda and then walk away," she said.

Both Bren and Noem's administration have limited their comments about why she was pressured to retire, in part because the settlement agreement bars them from disparaging each other.

Noem, 49, has generated speculation that she might run for president in 2024 because she formed a federal political action committee, has been assisting campaigns across the country and has attended many of the same events as other potential GOP hopefuls.

The audit committee has scheduled the matter of the July 2020 meeting as its first item of business on Thursday next week. It also requested the presence of the president of the state's appraiser association, who has been critical of Noem's handling of the agency and called for a thorough investigation. In addition, lawmakers want to hear from the Office of Risk Management, which negotiated the settlement with Bren.

South Dakota lawmakers split over records lawsuit payment

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Top South Dakota lawmakers are feuding over whether taxpayers should pay for the state House speaker's legal defense as he faces a lawsuit for refusing to release the names of House legislators who supported a special session this year.

Sen. Lee Schoenbeck — who as pro tempore oversees the Senate's conduct — asserted in an email to

legislators last week that House Speaker Spencer Gosch, a fellow Republican, should personally foot the legal bill to avoid expense to taxpayers. Gosch has replied that South Dakota statute calls for the attorney general to come to his legal defense if the state Supreme Court considers the lawsuit.

The House is set next month to meet in a special legislative session to decide whether to move forward with impeaching Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg for his conduct following a crash that killed a pedestrian last year. In the run-up, Gosch declined to release the names of lawmakers who petitioned for the session. The Sioux Falls Argus Leader and the South Dakota Newspaper Association have sued Gosch, alleging that he violated open records laws. Gosch has argued the list of lawmakers is exempt from public disclosure.

Schoenbeck, who had released the names of senators who petitioned for the session, emailed fellow legislators last week to press for a meeting of the Legislature's executive committee if Gosch intended to involve the Legislature in the legal battle.

"There is no legal basis for the Speaker's actions and I will not support any expenditure of taxpayer funds on this behavior," he wrote in the email obtained by The Associated Press.

Gosch replied by asserting that he was acting in his official capacity as speaker when he made the decision not to release the names and he expected the attorney general to represent him if the state Supreme Court considers the lawsuit. He added that a meeting of the Legislature's Executive Board "would not be appropriate at this time" because the court has not yet indicated whether it will hear the lawsuit.

Gosch said Monday that Schoenbeck "basically is just wrong on everything" in the matter.

Rep. Steve Haugaard, the previous speaker, was represented by the attorney general's office when he was sued in 2019 for barring a lobbyist from the chamber's floor. However, Haugaard had to personally pay for the lobbyist's legal fees after the two entered a settlement agreement.

Meanwhile, the media organizations are asking the Supreme Court to order the Legislature to halt plans for the special session, which is slated for Nov. 9, until the litigation is resolved.

EXPLAINER: How lawmakers are investigating the Jan. 6 riot

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee tasked with investigating the deadly Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol has been ramping up its efforts in recent weeks, issuing subpoenas to nearly 20 individuals, including four of former President Donald Trump's advisers and associates.

Lawmakers on the committee have made clear that they want to move quickly to obtain testimony and documents related to the attack. One witness summoned to testify, former Trump White House adviser Steve Bannon, is facing a criminal contempt referral after defying the panel's subpoena.

Here's a deeper look at the committee, its mission and how it operates:

WHY IS CONGRESS INVESTIGATING?

Unlike some previous investigations in the Trump era — including the Russia probes and the impeachment inquiry into Trump's interactions with Ukraine — the central facts of the Jan. 6 insurrection are known. A group of Trump supporters, fueled by his false claims of a stolen election, brutally assaulted police and smashed their way into the Capitol to interrupt the certification of President Joe Biden's victory.

But there are still unanswered questions about the attack on the Capitol, and lawmakers say they are committed to presenting a full accounting to make sure it never happens again.

The committee is looking into every aspect of the riot, including what Trump himself was doing while it unfolded and any connections between the White House and the rioters who broke into the building.

The panel is also investigating how the protests leading up to and during the insurrection were financed, including the rally at the Ellipse on Jan. 6 preceding the riot.

"The biggest black box though is what was the president's role? What was the role of people in the White House? What did the president know about who was coming to this rally?" House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, who sits on the panel, said in an interview on C-SPAN. "And what did he do when he found out?"

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 13 of 65

The Democrat from California added, "There are a lot of important unanswered questions."

Trump's claims of widespread election fraud were soundly rejected by a succession of judges, by state election officials and by Trump's own attorney general, William Barr. No case has ever established irregularities of a scale that would have changed the outcome.

A BROAD INQUIRY

Another goal for the committee is looking into why U.S. Capitol Police — as well as federal, state and local law enforcement agencies — were so ill-prepared for the rally-turned-insurrection and whether their response, after it began, was inadequate. The factors that contributed to the attack, including the role of technology companies and online platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, is also under review.

Last week, committee members expanded the scope of their investigation when they subpoenaed Jeffrey Clark, a former Justice Department lawyer who positioned himself as an ally of Donald Trump. The demands for documents and testimony from Clark, who aided Trump's efforts to challenge the results of the 2020 election, reflect the committee's interest in the chaos that ensued in the Justice Department as Trump and his allies leaned on government lawyers to advance his false election claims.

The committee's probe plans on building upon findings of other investigations being conducted, including the large-scale prosecution by the U.S. Department of Justice of the more than 600 rioters from nearly every state. But, ultimately, the final report the committee will produce will be separate from the DOJ effort.

WHAT POWERS DOES THE PANEL HAVE?

For now, the panel is conducting closed-door interviews rather than open hearings, trying to build a comprehensive picture of everything that happened that day and who was behind it.

But that's not always easy to do — especially with aides and confidants of the former president, who learned during his presidency that there were few consequences for rebuffing Congress.

The committee chair has the power to issue subpoenas, and they can also pursue contempt charges against subpoenaed witnesses who refuse to comply. On Tuesday, the committee will start that process with a vote to recommend criminal contempt charges against Bannon, who defied a subpoena last week.

The full House would then vote to send that recommendation to the Justice Department, which would then decide whether to prosecute. Biden has said he would like the Justice Department to prosecute, but Attorney General Merrick Garland has not indicated what he would do.

WHAT'S AHEAD?

The Jan. 6 panel so far has issued 19 subpoenas as thousands of pages of documents are flowing to the committee and its staff.

Besides Bannon, lawmakers have said they are "engaging" with two other Trump officials — former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows and former Defense Department official Kashyap Patel. It remains unclear whether Dan Scavino, Trump's longtime social media director and one of his most loyal aides, will cooperate.

Of the subpoenas issued, 13 were to officials who helped plan rallies in support of Trump ahead of the attack, including the massive event on the day of the siege at which the president told his supporters to "fight like hell."

Those individuals have been ordered to appear at separate depositions the committee has scheduled from late October through the beginning of November.

In addition, the committee is receiving support from the Biden administration as it seeks information and documents. Biden rejected Trump's claim of executive privilege surrounding documents requested from Trump's time in the White House. The setup of their potential release to Congress is expected in mid-November.

It is unclear at this point when the committee will wrap up its investigation and release a final report.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick and Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show the committee is scheduled to vote Tuesday, not Wednesday.

Colin Powell had mixed legacy among some African Americans

By COREY WILLIAMS and AARON MORRISON Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — As an American leader, Colin Powell's credentials were impeccable: He was chairman of the Joint Chiefs and secretary of state. But his legacy as the first Black person in those roles is murkier, with some African Americans saying that his voice on their behalf could have been louder.

Powell, who died Monday of COVID-19 complications, spent 35 years in the Army and rose to political prominence under Republican presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. His stature fueled persistent speculation that he would one day run for president as a member of the GOP.

Through it all, Powell never seemed entirely comfortable talking about race, said Kevin Powell, a New York-based writer and rights activist who is not related to Colin Powell.

"I think that's why a lot of Black folks never saw him as a leader. There was never a sense that Colin Powell was one of us," said Kevin Powell, who met him in the 1990s, when he was often discussed as a potential presidential candidate.

Colin Powell later became disenchanted with the GOP and endorsed Democrats for president, starting with Barack Obama. Powell also called then-President Donald Trump a national disgrace and said he no longer considered himself a Republican following the Jan. 6 storming of the Capitol.

"By the time the Bush years were over, in 2009, he was largely invisible in a lot of things that happened — Trayvon Martin, Ferguson, George Floyd," said Kevin Powell, who also is Black. "It was clear that the party he was part of was moving right. I don't recall him ever saying this party has become nothing more than race mongers."

But Powell's dignity and composure should not be interpreted as any indication that he failed to understand the struggle of his people, according to Sam Riddle, an Army veteran and Detroit-based political activist.

"He personified a quiet inner strength that we knew he held on the battlefield for America and for Black Americans," said Riddle, who also hosts a Detroit talk radio show. "The bullhorns we can use can be simply quiet competency, integrity and perseverance."

Powell expressed concern over the U.S. rate of incarceration, which has consistently been the highest in the world. He favored policies designed to keep young adults, especially Black Americans, out of the criminal justice system.

Years before the 2020 murder of George Floyd renewed calls from the Black Lives Matter movement to "defund the police," Powell said he was not in favor of reducing law enforcement budgets to address police brutality. He suspected that many Black Americans agreed.

A June 2020 poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research around the height of that summer's police protests showed that 43% of Black Americans strongly supported or somewhat supported reducing police funding, while 30% opposed the idea.

"You can't say, 'We should disinvest the criminal justice, police and courts,'" Powell said in 2017. "They're there not just to protect white folks. They're there to protect Black folks as well."

He continued: "If you tell a Black community leader that the police are not going to be around, they may say, 'Whoa! Wait a minute!' What they want is fair and balanced justice treatment for all Americans."

A child of Jamaican immigrants who grew up in the Bronx borough of New York City, Powell said he was raised in a community where his neighbors were as invested in his safety and success as his own mother and father.

"I had adults who cared about me," Powell said in a 2017 interview with Mic. "My two parents, all my Jamaican relatives in the South Bronx, they watched out for us kids. And if you ever did anything wrong, I mean, you were going to get it."

Powell graduated in 1958 from City College of New York, which later created the Colin Powell Center to develop student leadership and campus community engagement. The program was eventually renamed the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership.

In the wake of Floyd's slaying and the Black Lives Matter protests, the school launched a racial justice fellows program as a joint initiative between the Colin Powell School and CCNY's Black studies program.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 15 of 65

Powell once said he wanted the next generation to have opportunities like he did, according to Andrew Rich, dean of the Colin Powell School.

Being a Black American "defined his experience," Rich said. "He was a trailblazer in every sense. I think he was very aware of the barriers he broke. One of the things he was so proud of was that he knocked open doors and did not close them behind him."

Former President Barack Obama said Monday that Powell helped "a generation of young people set their sights higher" and "never denied the role that race played in his own life and in our society more broadly."

"But he also refused to accept that race would limit his dreams, and through his steady and principled leadership, helped pave the way for so many who would follow," Obama said.

Many Black people look to high-achieving African Americans to act on their behalf, said Frederick Gooding, associate professor of humanities at Texas Christian University.

"Maybe they just disproportionately expect a Colin Powell to do more or be more than he needs to be. It might be one of those deals where he may not have spoken for every Black person, but at the same time it's OK that he does not," Gooding said.

Powell's career and his long record of public service show his excellence, Gooding added.

"When it comes to African Americans, often times, when you've been touched by the struggle so to speak, when you have a position of power and privilege, do you leverage it?" Gooding said. "He may not have been that front-line cheerleader, but that doesn't mean he wasn't affected by the struggle."

Morrison reported from New York City. He and Williams are members of the AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow Morrison on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/aaronlmorrison>. Follow Williams on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/coreyapreporter>.

'A dangerous time': Portland, Oregon, sees record homicides

By SARA CLINE Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — It was nearly last call on a Friday when Jacob Eli Knight Vasquez went to get a drink across the street from the tavern where he worked in northwest Portland — an area with a thriving dining scene, where citygoers enjoy laid-back eateries, international cuisines and cozy cafés.

The 34-year-old had been at the pizza bar only a short time when shots rang out. Vasquez was struck by a stray bullet and died at the scene.

His killing in late September was one of the 67 homicides this year in Portland — a city on pace to shatter its previous record of 66 slayings in 1987.

Fear and frustration with gang violence have settled over the metropolis, as stories like Vasquez's make some wary to go out at night. Unlike previous years, more bystanders are being caught in the crossfire — from people mourning at vigils and sitting in cars to children playing in a park.

"People should be leery because this is a dangerous time," said Lionel Irving Jr., a lifelong Portland resident and a gang outreach worker.

Portland's police department is struggling to keep up amid an acute staffing shortage and budget cuts. Now, Oregon's largest city is implementing novel solutions aimed at improving safety, including adding traffic barrels to prevent drive-by shootings and suspending minor traffic stops so officers can focus on immediate threats.

But critics say the liberal Pacific Northwest city, home more than 650,000 people, is flailing.

"Let's please untie the hands of our law enforcement officers," Vasquez's brother-in-law, Don Osborn, said outside the business where Vasquez was slain. "I believe if the proper tools were in place for our law enforcement officers, this wouldn't even have happened."

So far this year, Portland has had about 1,000 shootings, 314 people have been injured by bullets, and firearms have accounted for three-quarters of homicides. Police attribute much of the gunfire to gangs, fights and retaliation killings, but they are also affecting bystanders.

Nine-year-old Hadar Kedem recently told city leaders about a dangerously close call when she was

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 16 of 65

caught in gunfire earlier this year.

Hadar had been playing with her father, brother and dog at a northeast Portland park when a group of people in ski masks began shooting. Hadar and her family dove for cover behind a metal equipment bin. One bullet landed within feet of the fourth-grader.

"I know that not only do I want change, but everyone wants change," Hadar said during a City Council meeting last month. "I want to feel safe."

Nationally, homicides increased by nearly 30% from 2019 to 2020, based on FBI data. However, in Portland, deadly violence is increasing at a faster rate than nearly all major cities, with an 83% increase in homicides in 2020.

Portland has seen more homicides in 2021 than some larger cities, including San Francisco, and twice as many slayings as its larger neighbor, Seattle. Other hard-hit Western cities include the Albuquerque, New Mexico, metro area, which has about 679,000 residents and has seen a record 97 homicides this year.

Portland police have struggled to quell the violence with a force 128 officers below its authorized strength. Since August 2020, about 200 officers have left the department. Many, in their exit interviews, cited low morale, lack of support from city officials and burnout from months of racial justice protests, which often ended in plumes of tear gas before largely dying down since summer.

"We are running on fumes. There's no way we can investigate thoroughly, and correctly, all these shootings," said Daryl Turner, executive director of Portland's police union.

Turner says the city will need to hire 840 officers over the next five years to implement proper community policing and keep Portland safe.

Besides staffing, Turner said the increase in violence is directly related to budget cuts.

Amid booming calls to defund the police, city leaders slashed \$27 million from the police budget last year — \$11 million due to the pandemic-caused budget crisis — a decision that Turner says has cost lives.

Officials also disbanded a specialized unit focused on curbing gun violence, which had long faced criticism for disproportionately targeting people of color.

Insufficient manpower and funds have forced officials to implement nontraditional ideas in an attempt to hinder gun violence.

More traffic barrels were installed this month in a southeast Portland neighborhood plagued by shootings, some linked to high-speed drivers. City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty said they hope to slow activity at gun violence hot spots and make it harder to "both commit a crime and get away with it."

"This is an all-hands-on deck situation where government needs to dig deep, think creatively," Hardesty said. "From police to community-based organizations to infrastructure design — we all have a role to play in this emergency."

In addition, Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler announced in June that officers are no longer being directed to stop drivers for low-level traffic violations.

Wheeler and Police Chief Chuck Lovell said this was in response to data showing a disproportionate impact on Black drivers, but also because the city doesn't have enough officers.

But experts, police and residents say these measures aren't nearly enough to counter the most violent year in the city's modern history.

"This past year has shattered anything that I've ever witnessed," said Irving, the outreach worker and a former gang member. He said he does not see gun violence slowing without more officers on the streets and a specialized gun violence unit, along with investments in community-based organizations.

Four cultural institutions in Portland's Old Town Chinatown neighborhood recently sent a letter to officials, demanding immediate action to keep visitors, staff and volunteers safe.

The increasing violence and pleas for cities to do more have compelled some areas to switch from defunding police departments to restoring funding to them.

In major cities across the country, portions of police budgets are being restored. From Los Angeles to New York, some law enforcement departments that underwent massive budget cuts, amid nationwide protests over the murder of George Floyd last year, have had local leaders restore funds or implement

new programs or units.

In Portland, there's money available for public safety in the form of a \$60 million general fund excess balance.

The City Council can use half the money, which came from business taxes last year and was far more than anticipated, however it wants. Whether a significant portion will go to the police bureau has yet to be determined.

"We have to realize that everybody has a role, from community members to the police department," Irving said. "No one entity is going to solve gun violence."

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

Rights activists urge boycott of Beijing Winter Olympics

By NICHOLAS PAPHITIS Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Human rights activists urged international governments, sponsors and athletes on Tuesday to boycott what they called China's "genocide games" as Greek officials handed over the Olympic flame to 2022 Beijing Winter Games organizers.

Activist groups, which also disrupted the flame lighting ceremony in southern Greece on Monday, accused the International Olympic Committee of granting legitimacy to rights abuses in China by allowing the Winter Games to go ahead in Beijing.

"We have yet again borne witness to the hypocrisy (of the IOC)," Mandie McKeown, the executive director for the International Tibet Network, said at a news conference in Athens. "They're handing over the Olympic torch to a host government that is so far removed from holding any of (the Olympic) ideals that it seems we're living in a kind of warped reality."

There has been international criticism of China's treatment of Uyghur Muslims in the northwest region of Xinjiang, its crackdown on protesters in Hong Kong and its policies toward Tibet and Taiwan.

But the IOC, which previously held the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, has shied away from the issue, saying it's out of its remit.

In his speech in the ancient stadium of Olympia on Monday, IOC President Thomas Bach stressed that the Games must be "respected as politically neutral ground."

Activists on Tuesday argued that human rights in the country have deteriorated since 2008, claiming that the Summer Games "emboldened" China.

Beijing launched a brutal crackdown about four years ago that swept up to a million or more Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim minorities into detention camps and prisons. Chinese authorities say their goal is not to eliminate the Uyghurs — a historically Muslim group of 13 million people — but to integrate them.

"If this press conference was to take place in China, I, as an Uyghur, would end up in a camp and maybe be subjected to sexual abuse and torture, as millions of my fellow Uyghurs are," said Zumretay Arkin, program and advocacy manager for the World Uyghur Congress. "The Olympic Games are being handed over to a country actively committing a genocide."

President Joe Biden's administration has affirmed the U.S. position that China's repression of Uyghurs and other minorities was "genocide." At June's Group of Seven summit, Biden successfully pressed fellow leaders to include specific language criticizing China's use of forced labor and other human rights abuses in their joint statement.

Arkin urged G-7 governments to follow up on that by boycotting the Beijing Games.

"We believe that we have a better chance today ahead of the Games that governments commit to a boycott ... than we had previously in 2008," she said.

Pema Doma, the campaign director for Students for a Free Tibet, said the IOC was making "a very big mistake."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 18 of 65

"How can anyone think that there is not a red line anywhere in the world for genocide?" said Doma, who was briefly detained by police in Ancient Olympia before Monday's protest.

The handover ceremony was held without spectators at the renovated marble stadium in Athens where the first modern Olympics were held in 1896.

Three activists were detained Monday after sneaking into the strongly-guarded archaeological site of Ancient Olympia during the flame lighting, waving a Tibetan flag and a banner that read "No genocide games." Another four were detained outside the site, while two more protesters were detained in Athens on Sunday after a protest on the Acropolis.

The latter seven have been released, but the first three remain in police custody in southern Greece.

The Beijing Winter Olympics will run from Feb. 4-20. Only spectators from mainland China will be allowed to attend.

More AP Olympics: <https://apnews.com/hub/olympic-games> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

North Korea tests possible submarine missile amid tensions

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, HYUNG-JIN KIM and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea on Tuesday fired at least one ballistic missile, which South Korea's military said was likely designed to be launched from a submarine, in what is possibly the most significant demonstration of the North's military might since U.S. President Joe Biden took office.

The launch of the missile into the sea came hours after the U.S. reaffirmed an offer to resume talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons program. It underscored how North Korea has continued to expand its military capabilities during the pause in diplomacy.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement it detected that North Korea fired one short-range missile it believed was a submarine-launched ballistic missile from waters near the eastern port of Sinpo, and that the South Korean and U.S. militaries were closely analyzing the launch.

The South Korean military said the launch was made at sea, but it didn't say whether it was fired from a vessel underwater or another launch platform above the sea's surface.

Japan's military said its initial analysis suggested that North Korea fired two ballistic missiles. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said officials were examining whether they were submarine-launched.

Kishida interrupted a campaign trip ahead of Japanese legislative elections later this month and returned to Tokyo because of the launch. He ordered his government to start revising the country's national security strategy to adapt to growing North Korean threats, including the possible development of the ability to pre-emptively strike North Korean military targets.

"We cannot overlook North Korea's recent development in missile technology and its impact on the security of Japan and in the region," he said.

Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said one of the North Korean missiles reached a maximum altitude of 50 kilometers (30 miles) and flew on "an irregular trajectory" while traveling as far as 600 kilometers (360 miles). He said the missile didn't breach Japan's exclusive economic zone set outside its territorial waters.

South Korean officials held a national security council meeting and expressed "deep regret" over the launch occurring despite efforts to revive diplomacy. A strong South Korean response could anger North Korea, which has accused Seoul of hypocrisy for criticizing the North's weapons tests while expanding its own conventional military capabilities.

The apparent site of the missile firing — a shipyard in Sinpo — is a major defense industry hub where North Korea focuses its submarine production. In recent years, North Korea has also used Sinpo to develop ballistic weapons systems designed to be fired from submarines.

North Korea last tested a submarine-launched ballistic missile, or SLBM, in October 2019.

Analysts had expected North Korea to resume tests of such weapons after it rolled out at least two new

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 19 of 65

submarine-launched missiles during military parades in 2020 and 2021. There have also been signs that North Korea is trying to build a larger submarine that would be capable of carrying and firing multiple missiles.

Japanese Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihiko Isozaki said Tokyo lodged a "strong protest" to North Korea through the "usual channels," meaning their embassies in Beijing. Japan and North Korea have no diplomatic ties.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said tensions on the Korean Peninsula were at a "critical stage" and called for a renewed commitment to a diplomatic resolution of the issue.

Ending a monthlong lull in September, North Korea has been ramping up its weapons tests while making conditional peace offers to Seoul, reviving a pattern of pressuring South Korea to try to get what it wants from the United States.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is "developing submarine-launched ballistic missiles because he wants a more survivable nuclear deterrent able to blackmail his neighbors and the United States," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul.

Easley said North Korea "cannot politically afford appearing to fall behind in a regional arms race" with its southern neighbor.

"North Korea's SLBM is probably far from being operationally deployed with a nuclear warhead," he added.

North Korea has been pushing hard for years to acquire an ability to fire nuclear-armed missiles from submarines, the next key piece in Kim Jong Un's arsenal that includes a broad range of mobile missiles and ICBMs with the potential range to reach the American homeland.

Still, experts say it would take years, large amounts of resources and major technological improvements for the heavily sanctioned nation to build at least several submarines that could travel quietly in seas and reliably execute strikes.

Within days, Biden's special envoy for North Korea, Sung Kim, is scheduled to meet with U.S. allies in Seoul over the prospects of reviving talks with North Korea.

Nuclear negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea have stalled for more than two years because of disagreements over an easing of crippling U.S.-led sanctions against North Korea in exchange for denuclearization steps by the North.

While North Korea is apparently trying to use South Korea's desire for inter-Korean engagement to extract concessions from Washington, analysts say Seoul has little wiggle room because the Biden administration is intent on keeping sanctions in place until North Korea takes concrete steps toward denuclearization.

"The U.S. continues to reach out to Pyongyang to restart dialogue. Our intent remains the same. We harbor no hostile intent toward (North Korea) and we are open to meeting without preconditions," Sung Kim told reporters on Monday.

Last week, Kim Jong Un reviewed powerful missiles designed to launch nuclear strikes on the U.S. mainland during a military exhibition and vowed to build an "invincible" military to cope with what he called persistent U.S. hostility. Earlier, Kim dismissed U.S. offers to resume talks without preconditions as a "cunning" attempt to conceal its hostile policy toward the North.

The country has tested various weapons over the past month, including a new cruise missile that could potentially carry nuclear warheads, and a developmental hypersonic missile.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said North Korea's latest launch did not pose an immediate threat to U.S. personnel, territory, or that of its allies.

Yamaguchi reported from Tokyo. AP writer Matthew Lee in Washington and AP video producer Liu Zheng in Beijing contributed to this report.

Alex Murdaugh asks to leave jail after 5 days behind bars

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Lawyers for prominent South Carolina attorney Alex Murdaugh plan to ask a

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 20 of 65

judge on Tuesday to grant bond for their client, who has spent five nights in jail following his second arrest in about a month.

Murdaugh, whose wife and son were shot to death months ago in a killing that is still unresolved, stole \$3.4 million of insurance money that was meant for the sons of his housekeeper, who died after falling in his home, according to sworn statements by the State Law Enforcement Division.

Murdaugh is already out on a recognizance bond for a September arrest on insurance fraud charges after state agents said he tried to arrange his own shooting death on a roadside so that his surviving son could collect a \$10 million life insurance policy. The would-be fatal bullet only grazed him.

Murdaugh's latest bond hearing on two new charges of obtaining property by false pretenses is scheduled for 10 a.m. Tuesday. He was arrested at a drug rehab center near Orlando, Florida, on Thursday and brought back to South Carolina.

The housekeeper's insurance isn't the only six-figure case being investigated by state police. Murdaugh's former law firm — founded by his great-grandfather a century ago — has accused him of stealing possibly millions of dollars.

Murdaugh's attorney, Dick Harpootlian, said last week that Murdaugh plans to do what he can to right his financial wrongs, and has accepted that he will probably spend time in prison. Each charge of obtaining property by false pretenses carries a sentence of up to 10 years. The three felony charges from the botched attempt to arrange his own death could bring up to 20 years in prison if he's convicted.

Murdaugh continues to insist he had nothing to do with the June deaths of his wife, Maggie, 52, and their son Paul, 22. Murdaugh said he returned to their rural Colleton County home to find them shot to death. Tight-lipped state police have neither named any suspects nor ruled anyone out.

Murdaugh's housekeeper, Gloria Satterfield, died from a stroke and heart attack in February, more than three weeks after being hurt in a fall at the Murdaugh home. No autopsy was performed, and a coroner said her death was improperly described as "natural" on her death certificate.

Murdaugh told Satterfield's sons he would help them get insurance settlements for her death, recommending they hire attorney Cory Fleming without telling them Fleming was a family friend, according to a lawsuit filed by the sons.

Murdaugh negotiated more than \$4 million in payments, then had the checks — minus fees and attorney payments — sent to his bank account, authorities said.

A lawyer for the sons said they haven't seen any money from the settlements.

Fleming has promised to return any money he received to the sons and pay them an unspecified amount from a malpractice insurance policy.

The state Supreme Court has temporarily suspended the law licenses of both Fleming and Murdaugh.

In addition to all of the other cases, state police are looking into whether Murdaugh has connections to a 2015 hit-and-run death and whether he or other family members tried to obstruct the investigation into a boat crash involving Paul Murdaugh that killed a 19-year-old woman in 2019.

The Murdaugh family has dominated the legal community in Hampton County for nearly the past century. Murdaugh's father, grandfather and great-grandfather were elected prosecutors and the family founded and built a prestigious law firm known for suing railroads.

This story has been corrected; the housekeeper's name was Gloria, not Florida.

Follow Jeffrey Collins on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/JSCollinsAP>.

Texas lawmakers pass new congressional maps bolstering GOP

By ACACIA CORONADO and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Republicans approved redrawn U.S. House maps that favor incumbents and decrease political representation for growing minority communities, even as Latinos drive much of the growth in the nation's largest red state.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 21 of 65

The maps were approved late Monday night following outcry from Democrats over what they claimed was a rushed redistricting process crammed into a 30-day session, and one which gave little time for public input. They also denounced the reduction of minority opportunity districts -- Texas will now have seven House districts where Latino residents hold a majority, down from eight -- despite the state's changing demographics.

"What we are doing in passing this congressional map is a disservice to the people of Texas," Democratic state Rep. Rafael Anchia said to the chamber just before the final vote.

GOP Gov. Greg Abbott is expected to sign off on the changes.

Civil rights groups, including the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, sued before Republican lawmakers were even done Monday. The lawsuit alleges that Republican mapmakers diluted the political strength of minority voters by not drawing any new districts where Latino residents hold a majority, despite Latinos making up half of Texas' 4 million new residents over the last decade.

Abbott's office did not respond to a message seeking comment.

Republicans have said they followed the law in defending the maps, which protect their slipping grip on Texas by pulling more GOP-leaning voters into suburban districts where Democrats have made inroads in recent years.

Texas has been routinely dragged into court for decades over voting maps, and in 2017, a federal court found that a Republican-drawn map was drawn to intentionally discriminate against minority voters. But two years later, that same court said there was insufficient reason to take the extraordinary step of putting Texas back under federal supervision before changing voting laws or maps.

The maps that overhaul how Texas' nearly 30 million residents are sorted into political districts — and who is elected to represent them — bookends a highly charged year in the state over voting rights. Democratic lawmakers twice walked out on an elections bill that tightened the state's already strict voting rules, which they called a brazen attempt to disenfranchise minorities and other Democratic-leaning voters.

The plan does not create any additional districts where Black or Hispanic voters make up more than 50% of the voting population, even as people of color accounted for more than 9 of 10 new residents in Texas over the past decade.

Republican state Sen. Joan Huffman, who authored the maps and leads the Senate Redistricting Committee, told fellow lawmakers that they were "drawn blind to race." She said her legal team ensured the plan followed the Voting Rights Act.

The Texas GOP control both chambers of the Legislature, giving them nearly complete control of the mapmaking process. The state has had to defend their maps in court after every redistricting process since the Voting Rights Act took effect in 1965, but this will be the first since a U.S. Supreme Court ruling said Texas and other states with a history of racial discrimination no longer need to have the Justice Department scrutinize the maps before they are approved.

However, drawing maps to engineer a political advantage is not unconstitutional. The proposal would also make an estimated two dozen of the state's 38 congressional districts safe Republican districts, with an opportunity to pick up at least one additional newly redrawn Democratic stronghold on the border with Mexico, according to an analysis by The Associated Press of data from last year's election collected by the Texas Legislative Council. Currently, Republicans hold 23 of the state's 36 seats.

Following negotiations between Texas House members and state senators, the Houston-area districts of U.S. Rep Sheila Jackson Lee, a Democrat who is serving her 14th term, and U.S. Rep Al Green, a neighboring Democrat, were restored, unpairing the two and drawing Jackson Lee's home back into her district.

Texas lawmakers also approved redrawn maps for their own districts, with Republicans following a similar plan that does not increase minority opportunity districts and would keep their party in power in the state House and Senate.

Associated Press writer Paul J. Weber contributed to this report. Coronado is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national

service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Climate report: Africa's rare glaciers soon to disappear

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Africa's rare glaciers will disappear in the next two decades because of climate change, a new report warned Tuesday amid sweeping forecasts of pain for the continent that contributes least to global warming but will suffer from it most.

The report from the World Meteorological Organization and other agencies, released ahead of the U.N. climate conference in Scotland that starts Oct. 31, is a grim reminder that Africa's 1.3 billion people remain "extremely vulnerable" as the continent warms more, and at a faster rate, than the global average. And yet Africa's 54 countries are responsible for less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The new report seizes on the shrinking glaciers of Mount Kilimanjaro, Mount Kenya and the Rwenzori Mountains in Uganda as symbols of the rapid and widespread changes to come. "Their current retreat rates are higher than the global average. If this continues, it will lead to total deglaciation by the 2040s," it says.

Massive displacement, hunger and increasing climate shocks such droughts and flooding are in the future, and yet the lack of climate data in parts of Africa "is having a major impact" on disaster warnings for millions of people, WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said at Tuesday's launch.

Estimates of the economic effects of climate change vary across the African continent, but "in sub-Saharan Africa, climate change could further lower gross domestic product by up to 3% by 2050," Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko with the African Union Commission writes in the report. "Not only are physical conditions getting worse, but also the number of people being affected is increasing."

By 2030, up to 118 million extremely poor people, or those living on less than \$1.90 a day, "will be exposed to drought, floods and extreme heat in Africa if adequate response measures are not put in place," Sacko adds.

Already, the U.N. has warned that the Indian Ocean island nation of Madagascar is one where "famine-like conditions have been driven by climate change." And it says parts of South Sudan are seeing the worst flooding in almost 60 years.

Despite the threats ahead to the African continent, the voices of Africans have been less represented than richer regions at global climate meetings and among the authors of the crucial Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change scientific assessments. African participation in IPCC reports has been "extremely low," according to Future Climate for Africa, a multi-country research program.

The costs ahead are huge. "Overall, Africa will need investments of over \$3 trillion in mitigation and adaptation by 2030 to implement its (national climate plans), requiring significant, accessible and predictable inflows of conditional finance," the WMO's Taalas said.

"The cost of adapting to climate change in Africa will rise to \$50 billion per year by 2050, even assuming the international efforts to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius."

Colin Powell: A trailblazing legacy, blotted by Iraq war

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A child of working-class Jamaican immigrants in the Bronx, Colin Powell rose from neighborhood store clerk to warehouse floor-mopper to the highest echelons of the U.S. government. It was a trailblazing American dream journey that won him international acclaim and trust.

It was that credibility he put on the line in 2003 when, appearing before the United Nations as secretary of state, he made the case for war against Iraq. When it turned out that the intelligence he cited was faulty and the Iraq War became a bloody, chaotic nightmare, Powell's stellar reputation was damaged.

Still, it wasn't destroyed. After leaving government, he became an elder statesman on the global stage and the founder of an organization aimed at helping young disadvantaged Americans. Republicans wanted

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 23 of 65

him to run for president. After becoming disillusioned with his party, he ended up endorsing the last three Democratic presidential candidates, who welcomed his support.

For many Iraqis and others, Powell will forever be associated with that 2003 speech and the bloodshed that followed. But with Powell's death Monday at age 84 of COVID-19 complications, Republicans and Democrats remembered him as a historic figure, a groundbreaking soldier-turned-statesman, the first Black secretary of state and first Black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Powell rejected comparisons between himself and previous icons like George Marshall, the World War II general who became America's top diplomat. But he embraced a local-kid-does-good narrative that reflected his humble roots.

He was fond of recalling his youth in the Bronx, working first as a clerk in a neighborhood store and then as a sweeper in the massive Pepsi-Cola plant directly across the East River from the United Nations headquarters, a job he frequently referred to in meetings at the United Nations. A geology student at City College of New York, Powell made clear that he found his calling in the Reserve Officer Training Corps or ROTC, which would initiate his 35-year career in the Army.

Powell served two tours in Vietnam and rose through the ranks with various stints in Cold War-era Europe before President Ronald Reagan tapped him as his national security adviser. President George H.W. Bush then appointed him chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, where he oversaw the ouster of Saddam Hussein's Iraq from Kuwait in 1991.

It was then that the "Powell Doctrine" emerged; it was a strategy for the use of American military power that relied on the deployment of overwhelming force and a clear and defined exit strategy from conflict.

Powell held the Joint Chiefs of Staff position into the Clinton administration, where he recalled arguments with Cabinet members over military intervention in the Balkans, which Powell believed was unwise.

"I thought I would have an aneurysm," Powell wrote in a memoir about a White House incident in which then-U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright asked what good the armed forces are if they were never used. Powell ended up succeeding Albright as secretary of state in 2001.

And while his military career had taken him from the minefields of Vietnam to West Germany's strategic Fulda Gap, it was his role as secretary of state in wartime that almost did him in.

Powell was the first of President George W. Bush's Cabinet members to publicly blame Osama bin Laden for the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the first of Bush's top national security aides to visit Pakistan, just a month later, to make clear to the Pakistanis that they must join the U.S.-led coalition or be labelled an enemy.

Amid significant security concerns in the aftermath of 9/11, Powell flew to Islamabad, his plane blacked-out as it went into a corkscrew landing to avoid potential rocket strikes, to tell then-Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf that his support in the operation to avenge the attacks was non-negotiable. It worked, at least in the short-term.

Powell was personally skeptical of the 2003 Iraq invasion and cautioned against the war privately. But he dutifully presented the administration's case for invasion not only in diplomatic meetings with his counterparts but also in the now-infamous speech before the U.N. Security Council in February 2003.

Confronted with widespread doubts about the accuracy of the American and British assessment of Saddam's capabilities and intentions, many compared the stakes of Powell's speech to be similar to those of former United Nations Ambassador Adlai Stevenson's electrifying 1962 presentation to the council about the Soviet Union's placement of missiles in Cuba.

In Powell's speech — which he would later call a "blot" on his record — he brandished a vial that he said could have contained anthrax that intelligence agencies insisted Saddam was producing in mass quantities.

"Less than a teaspoon of dry anthrax, a little bit — about this amount," he told the council, waving the vial. "This is just about the amount of a teaspoon. Less than a teaspoonful of dry anthrax in an envelope shut down the United States Senate in the fall of 2001."

Some, including several critics of the Bush administration, believed Powell had hit the mark, but unlike Stevenson 41 years earlier, whatever convincing he accomplished was quickly erased.

No anthrax or, in fact, any weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq after the end of the war,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 24 of 65

which led to a protracted U.S. military occupation of the country that many believe resulted in a broader destabilization of the Middle East, including the rise of the Islamic State, that persists to this day.

While he will always be associated with the Iraq War, Powell was not an unaccomplished diplomat. He oversaw the resolution of the Bush administration's first foreign policy crisis, China's force down of a Navy spy plane and the detention of its crew, and self-deprecatingly referred to successes in resolving a spat with Moscow over a Russian ban on U.S. chicken imports and an armed dispute between Morocco and Spain over a small Mediterranean island.

Powell was also critical in engineering an end to a standoff between Israel then Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat who had been blockaded in his Ramallah headquarters by Israeli troops during the second "intifada" or Palestinian uprising. And he was the first senior U.S. official to visit Afghanistan after the Taliban were ousted, flying into Kabul on a military plane in Jan. 2002, to meet with then-President Hamid Karzai.

Nonetheless, Powell's biggest legacy at the State Department may be bureaucratic rather than diplomatic. A natural tinkerer who loved to collect and repair old Volkswagens and was a fan of the then-new Chrysler PT Cruiser, Powell pushed to bring the department's antiquated computer and communications systems into the age of email and interoperability.

He fought budget battles to increase diplomatic spending and hiring and also led a successful drive to prevent the newly established Department of Homeland Security from entirely taking over the process of issuing visas, something that had been recommended in the wake of 9/11.

Unlike his predecessors and several successors as secretary of state, Powell was not enamored of foreign travel and spent less time overseas than almost any of America's top diplomats since the dawn of the jet age, an aversion perhaps exacerbated by his unsuccessful behind-the-scenes attempts in Washington to blunt his Bush administration colleagues' push for war with Iraq.

Personable and often approachable, Powell sought to assure his new employees that he would not be a burden on them in some of his first remarks to the diplomatic corps.

"I will be around to see you in due course," he told his first town hall meeting. "I am an easy visitor. We are going to try to make it very easy for me to visit. Just to save a lot of cable traffic, I have no food preferences, no drink preferences. A cheeseburger will be fine. I like Holiday Inns, I have no illusions."

Energy crunch hits global recovery as winter approaches

By DAVID McHUGH, COLLEEN BARRY, JOE McDONALD and TATIANA POLLASTRI Associated Press

Power shortages are turning out streetlights and shutting down factories in China. The poor in Brazil are choosing between paying for food or electricity. German corn and wheat farmers can't find fertilizer, made using natural gas. And fears are rising that Europe will have to ration electricity if it's a cold winter.

The world is gripped by an energy crunch — a fierce squeeze on some of the key markets for natural gas, oil and other fuels that keep the global economy running and the lights and heat on in homes. Heading into winter, that has meant higher utility bills, more expensive products and growing concern about how energy-consuming Europe and China will recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The biggest squeeze is on natural gas in Europe, which imports 90% of its supply — largely from Russia — and where prices have risen to five times what they were at the start of the year, to 95 euros from about 19 euros per megawatt hour.

It's hitting the Italian food chain hard, with methane prices expected to increase sixfold and push up the cost of drying grains. That could eventually raise the price of bread and pasta at supermarkets, but meat and dairy aisles are more vulnerable as beef and dairy farmers are forced to pay more for grain to feed their animals and pass the cost along to customers.

"From October we are starting to suffer a lot," said Valentino Miotto of the AIRES association that represents the grain sector.

Analysts blame a confluence of events for the gas crunch: Demand rose sharply as the economy rebounded from the pandemic, while a cold winter depleted reserves. Europe's chief supplier, Russia's Gazprom, held back extra summer supplies beyond its long-term contracts to fill reserves at home for

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 25 of 65

winter. China's electricity demand has come roaring back, vacuuming up limited supplies of liquid natural gas, which moves by ship, not pipeline. There also are limited facilities to export natural gas from the United States.

Costlier natural gas has even pushed up oil prices because some power generators in Asia can switch from using gas to oil-based products. U.S. crude is over \$83 per barrel, the highest in seven years, while international benchmark Brent is around \$85, with oil cartel OPEC and allied countries cautious about restoring production cuts made during the pandemic.

The crunch is likely short term but it's difficult to say how long higher fossil fuel prices will last, said Claudia Kemfert, an energy economics expert at the German Institute for Economic Research in Berlin.

But "the long-term answer that has to be taken out of this is to invest in renewables and energy saving," she said.

The European Union's executive commission urged member nations last week to speed up approvals for renewable energy projects like wind and solar, saying the "clean energy transition is the best insurance against price shocks in the future and needs to be accelerated."

In the meantime, some gas-dependent European industries are throttling back production. German chemical companies BASF and SKW Piesteritz have cut output of ammonia, a key ingredient in fertilizer.

That left Hermann Greif, a farmer in the village of Pinzberg in Germany's southern Bavaria region, unexpectedly emptyhanded when he tried to order fertilizer for next year.

"There's no product, no price, not even a contract," he said. "It's a situation we've never seen before." One thing is certain: "If I don't give the crops the food they need, they react with lower yields. It's as simple as that."

High energy prices already were hitting the region's farmers, who need diesel to operate machinery and heat to keep animals warm, said Greif, who grows corn to feed a bioenergy power facility that feeds emission-free energy into the power grid.

Likewise in Italy, the cost of energy to process wheat and corn is expected to go up more than 600% for the three months ending Dec. 31, according to the grain association. That includes turning wheat into flour, and corn into feed for cows and pigs.

Giampietro Scusato, an energy consultant who negotiates contracts for the AIRES association and others, expects the volatility and high prices to persist for the coming year.

High energy prices also seep into bread and pasta production through transport costs and electricity use, which could eventually affect store prices. Dairy and meat sections are especially exposed because prices are low now and farmers may be forced to pass along the higher cost of animal feed to shoppers.

People worldwide also are facing soaring utility bills this winter, including in the U.S., where officials have warned home heating prices could jump as much as 54%. Governments in Spain, France, Italy and Greece have announced measures to help low-income households, while the European Union has urged similar aid.

Much depends on the weather. Europe's gas reserves, usually replenished in summer, are at unusually low levels.

"A cold winter in both Europe and Asia would risk European storage levels dropping to zero," says Massimo Di Odoardo at research firm Wood Mackenzie.

That would leave Europe dependent on additional natural gas from a just-completed Russian pipeline or on Russian willingness to send more through pipelines across Ukraine. But the new Nord Stream 2 pipeline has not passed regulatory approval in Europe and may not be contributing gas until next year.

Russian suppliers' decision to sell less gas on spot markets reflects "an intention to put pressure on the early certification of Nord Stream 2," said Kemfert, the energy economics expert.

In China, outages have followed high prices for coal and gas as electric companies power down amid limits in passing costs to customers or government orders to stay under emission thresholds.

Factories in Jiangsu province, northwest of Shanghai, and Zhejiang in the southeast shut down in mid-September, and dozens warned deliveries might be delayed ahead of the Christmas shopping season.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 26 of 65

Chenchen Jewelry Factory in Dongyang, a city in Zhejiang, faced power cuts over 10 days, general manager Joanna Lan said. The factory makes hairbands, stationery and promotional gifts and exports 80% to 90% of its goods to the U.S., Europe and other markets.

Deliveries were delayed "by at least a week," Lan said. "We had to buy generators."

The biggest city in the northeast, Shenyang, shut down streetlights and elevators and cut power to restaurants and shops a few hours a day.

China's gas imports have jumped, but surging demand in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan also helped push up global prices, said Jenny Yang, research manager for the gas, power and energy futures team for China at IHS Markit.

In Brazil, higher gas and oil prices have been compounded by the worst drought in 91 years, which has left hydropower plants unable to supply electricity and more expensive bills.

Rosa Benta, a 67-year-old from a Sao Paulo working-class neighborhood, fears she will no longer be able to provide for her unemployed children and grandkids.

"Several times, (energy company) Enel called me saying I had debt. I told them: 'I'm not going to stop feeding my son to pay you,'" Benta said outside her concrete house on a steep, narrow street. "If they want to cut the electricity, they can come."

Benta lives on 1,400 reais (about \$250) a month and says she often has to choose between buying gas for cooking or rice and beans.

"I don't know what we are going to do with our lives," she said.

McHugh reported from Frankfurt, Germany, Barry from Milan, McDonald from Beijing and Pollastri from Sao Paulo.

EXPLAINER: Why some fear a 'Polexit' from European Union

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland will be a focus of European attention this week, with Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki addressing the European Parliament and leaders at a European Union summit expected to grapple with a legal conundrum created by a recent ruling by Poland's constitutional court.

Some opponents of Poland's nationalist government fear that the court's ruling has put the country on a path to a possible "Polexit," or a departure from the 27-nation EU like Britain did with Brexit. The government denounces those spreading the idea, which it calls "fake news." Here is a look at the differing views on the matter — and why Poland's departure from the bloc is unlikely.

THE BACKSTORY

Poland's government, which is led by the conservative Law and Justice party, has been in conflict with EU officials in Brussels since it took power in 2015. The dispute is largely over changes to the Polish judicial system which give the ruling party more power over the courts. Polish authorities say they seek to reform a corrupt and inefficient justice system. The European Commission believes the changes erode the country's democratic system of checks and balances.

ANTI-EU RHETORIC EMERGES FROM POLAND

As the standoff over the judiciary has grown more tense, with the Commission threatening to withhold billions of euros in pandemic recovery funds to Poland over it, ruling party leaders have sometimes compared the EU to the Soviet Union, Poland's occupying power during the Cold War.

Ryszard Terlecki, the party's deputy leader, said last month that if things don't go the way Poland likes, "we will have to search for drastic solutions." Referring to Brexit, he also said: "The British showed that the dictatorship of the Brussels bureaucracy did not suit them and turned around and left."

Marek Suski, another leading party member, said Poland "will fight the Brussels occupier" just as it fought the Nazi and Soviet occupiers in the past. "Brussels sends us overlords who are supposed to bring Poland to order, to put us on our knees, so that we might be a German state, and not a proud state of free Poles," he declared.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 27 of 65

A KEY RULING OVER LAWS

This month Poland's constitutional court challenged the notion that EU law supersedes the laws of its 27 member nations with a ruling saying that some EU laws are incompatible with the nation's own constitution.

That decision — made by a court dominated by ruling party loyalists — gives the Polish government the justification it had sought to ignore directives from the European Union's Court of Justice which it doesn't like — particularly on matters of judicial independence.

The ruling marks another major test for the EU after years of managing its messy divorce from the U.K.

WHAT DOES THE POLISH GOVERNMENT SAY?

Polish leaders say it's absurd to think they want to leave the EU and they accuse the opposition of playing with the idea of "Polexit" for political gain.

Morawiecki, the prime minister, said last week that the opposition "is trying to insinuate that we want to weaken Poland and the European Union by leaving the EU. This is obviously not only fake news, it is even worse. It is simply a lie that is made to weaken the EU."

Morawiecki spoke soon after Poland's leading opposition leader, Donald Tusk, a former EU leader, organized mass nationwide protests voicing support for Poland remaining in the EU.

COULD EXPULSION HAPPEN FOR POLAND?

The EU has no legal mechanism to expel a member. That means for Polexit to happen, it would have to be triggered by Warsaw. At the moment, the idea seems farfetched, because EU membership in Poland is extremely popular, with surveys showing more than 80% of Poles favor being in the bloc.

When Poland entered the EU in 2004, Poles won new freedoms to travel and work across the EU and a dramatic economic transformation was set in motion that has benefited millions.

Yet some Poles still fear that could change. They worry that if new EU funds are withheld from Poland over rule of law disputes, Poles might eventually come to feel that it's no longer in their benefit to belong to the bloc.

Some simply fear a political accident along the lines of what happened with Britain's departure from the EU. The former British prime minister who called for a referendum on EU membership, David Cameron, had sought to have the country remain in the bloc. He called for the vote to settle the matter, believing Britons would vote to stay. A majority in 2016 did not, and Cameron quickly resigned.

Jumping onto trucks to get to Britain: A migrant's day

By ARNO PEDRAM Associated Press

CALAIS, France (AP) — Mohammad and Jaber spend every day looking for the right truck, and this afternoon it feels like it could happen.

This truck seems right. They scream to their friend to jump. He runs, latches on to the moving rig between the cab and the cargo compartment, and squeezes in. The truck doesn't stop, meaning the driver hasn't noticed.

The truck and its stowaway then disappear down a French highway toward the English Channel tunnel, the man's friends hoping he makes it to his destination: Britain.

Mohammad and Jaber are young Sudanese refugees who escaped war in their country, endured kidnappings or beatings in Libya, and crossed the deadly Mediterranean to Italy. They are now in the northern French town of Calais, and like hundreds of other people mostly from East Africa and the Middle East, they are trying to get to Britain by hiding in trucks in what has proved to be a dangerous and potentially lethal method.

Politicians on both sides of the English Channel are arguing about how to make them stop, after thousands of people crossed into Britain by various means in recent months in a flow that has been met with heightened anti-immigrant rhetoric.

While those with some money can pay to go to Britain on flimsy, overcrowded boats in often dangerous waters, the ones who can't have to jump on one of the tens of thousands of commercial trucks that pass each week between France and Britain.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 28 of 65

Many of the migrants in Calais want to reach the UK in search of economic opportunity or because of family and community ties. French authorities say another big draw is lax British rules toward migrants without residency papers.

Only young and fit migrants unencumbered by other family members dare attempt the truck-jumping. It's a team effort.

On a cold autumn day in Calais last week, five young men crouched by a roundabout at a muddy construction site, watching as trucks emerged from a warehouse. A sixth young man hid close to the road.

When a promising-looking truck came out, the other men screamed at him to jump on.

There's a code to tell jumpers which one of the exiting trucks they should grab onto.

"We tell them number one, no, number two, no, number three, yes!" Mohammad explained, giving only his first name for fear of arrest or expulsion for trying to cross borders illegally.

The truck drivers check to see that no one enters their rigs, or stop to tell would-be stowaways they they're not going to Britain and that there's no point in climbing aboard. Police in patrol cars come by often, too, their sirens blaring, to deter the men.

Once aboard a rig, the jumpers pay close attention to the truck's route. Only one sequence of left and right turns will lead them to the promised land across the Channel. If the combination is the wrong one, they get off and start over again.

Mohammad twice managed to get on a truck unnoticed but had to jump off when he realized it was not going to the UK.

Some ride in the space between the cab and the cargo. Some climb into the cargo compartment if they can pry the doors open.

And even if the vehicle is going in the right direction, more challenges and danger await the stowaways. Police use technology at the Channel tunnel to scan trucks for body heat and moving shadows. If the stowaways are discovered, they are forced out of the vehicles by police. More than 18,000 were discovered in trucks last year, and 11,000 so far in 2021.

Refugee advocacy groups and human rights observers report receiving calls for help from migrants in refrigerated trucks who say they are suffocating or about to die from hypothermia. Some say they have been roughed up by police when caught.

Some suffer broken bones or worse from trying to jump onto moving trucks. In late September, 20-year-old Yasser Abdallah was crushed to death by a truck.

Abdallah, too, had fled Sudan. He dreamed of being a taxi driver in Britain. The Calais migrant community grieved for him, and a week later, more than 300 came out to march in his memory.

In a written appeal to truck drivers, the marchers asked: "When you notice a refugee in the truck, you shake the truck and brake again and again until we let go. Why can't we continue our travel?"

The truck jumpers have kept on trying.

At night, they sleep in the forest around Calais, in a tent if they're lucky, but usually under tree. Police raid the encampments every morning, arresting them, tear-gassing them and confiscating their belongings, according to human rights observers.

"Some people stay one day, some one week, some one month, me, four months and 15 days," Mohammad said. He and others estimate two to three a day succeed in hopping a truck to Britain.

Ahmad, a 28-year-old, Sudanese truck jumper who left his country in 2018 because of the war, showed a reporter a TikTok video dated one day after Yasser died, from the account of someone who made it across.

On the video, a man runs by a white and blue truck and pulls himself up.

The video is overlaid with Arabic text, the Union Jack and two letters from the English alphabet: "UK."

The economy on the brink, Taliban rely on former technocrats

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — When the Taliban swept into power, they found Afghanistan's economy fast

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 29 of 65

approaching the brink and were faced with harrowing predictions of growing poverty and hunger. So they ordered the financial managers of the collapsed former government back to work, with an urgent directive: Do your jobs, because we can't.

In the 20 years since the Taliban last ruled, Afghanistan evolved from an economy dealing mostly in illicit enterprise to a sophisticated, multi-billion-dollar system fueled by donor aid and international trade. The Taliban, a movement borne out of the rural clergy, struggled to grasp the extent of the transformation.

Four employees from financial institutions told The Associated Press how the Taliban commanded bureaucrats from the previous government's Finance Ministry, central bank and other state-owned banks to return to work. Their accounts were confirmed by three Taliban officials.

"They told us, 'We are not experts, you know what is better for the country, how we can survive under these challenges,'" recalled one state bank official, who like others spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on record.

They told him, "Do what you must," but warned, "God is watching you, and you will be accountable for what you do on Judgment Day."

Quietly, these technocrats are advising the Taliban leadership in the running of the crippled financial sector. They tell them what to do and how to do it. But, as seasoned experts, they see no way out of Afghanistan's economic quagmire: With billions in international funds frozen, the best they can muster in domestic revenues is \$500 million to \$700 million, not enough to pay public salaries or provide basic goods and services.

The Taliban are buttressing relations with local businessmen to keep them operating, while the leadership makes its case for international recognition in meetings with foreign officials.

The Taliban's seizure of power in mid-August resulted in an abrupt halt to most donor funds. These disbursements accounted for 45% of GDP and financed 75% of state expenditures, including public sector salaries. In 2019, total government expenditures were nearly \$11 billion.

With drought ongoing as well, the United Nations predicts 95% of the population will go hungry and as much as 97% of the country risks sinking below the poverty line.

The United States froze billions in dollar reserves in line with international sanctions against the Taliban, eroding the liquidity of both the central bank and commercial banks and constraining their ability to make international transactions.

This has undermined international trade, a mainstay of the Afghan economy. Intermediary banks abroad are reluctant to engage in transactions given sanctions risks. Informal trade, however, continues. The International Monetary Fund predicts the economy will contract sharply.

In the Finance Ministry and central bank, near daily meetings revolve around procuring basic staples like flour to ward off hunger, centralizing customs collections and finding revenue sources amid critical shortages in household goods. In Afghanistan, all fuel oil, 80% of electricity and up to 40% of wheat is imported.

The technocrats' frustrations are many.

Never mind dollars, there isn't enough of the local currency, the afghani, in circulation, they said. They blame this on the previous government for not printing enough prior to Kabul's fall in August.

Hallways once bustling with employees are quiet. Some ministry workers only show up once or twice a week; no one has been paid a salary. A department responsible for donor relations once had 250 members and dealt with up to 40 countries; now it has 50 employees at best, and one interlocutor: the United Nations.

There are no women.

Many are growing exasperated with the Taliban leadership.

"They don't understand the magnitude," said one ministry official. "We had an economy of \$9 billion in circulation, now we have less than \$1 billion."

But he was quick to excuse them. "Why would I expect them to understand international monetary policy? They are guerrilla fighters at heart."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 30 of 65

The returning government workers said the Taliban appear genuine in wanting to root out corruption and offer transparency.

They aren't told everything. A closely guarded secret of the Taliban is how much cash remains in state coffers. Ministry and bank officials estimate this could be just \$160 million to \$350 million.

"They are very sincere about the country, they want to boost morale and create friendly relations with neighboring countries," said another banking official. "But they don't have expertise in banking or financial issues. That is why they requested we return, and that we do our work honestly."

Mawlawi Abdul Jabbar, a Taliban government adviser, said the returning experts are "with the government. And they are working on the financial issues to solve these problems."

The Taliban are strengthening relations with businessmen who trade in basic goods with neighboring countries.

An active proponent of forging business relations is Taliban adviser Abdul-Hameed Hamasi. He was recently greeted with a warm embrace at the wedding of the son of prominent businessman Baz Mohammed Ghairat.

Ghairat's factories process everything from cooking oil to wheat. Hamasi said the Taliban were providing him with security, including permission to drive in bulletproof vehicles, so his dealings could continue.

But central bank limits on withdrawals are Ghairat's chief concern. Without access to deposits, he cannot pay traders, he said.

The economic woes preceded the Taliban's rise. Corruption and mismanagement were rampant in the former government.

In the first months of 2021, economic growth slowed and inflation accelerated. Drought undermined agricultural production as fuel and food costs spiked.

The Taliban's capture of border posts and transit hubs ahead of Kabul's fall exacerbated matters.

Government officials, schoolteachers and civil servants hadn't received salaries for two to three months before the government collapsed. Many sold household goods or accumulated debts with neighbors and relatives to make ends meet.

Sayed Miraza, an Agriculture Ministry employee, arrived at the bank at 4 a.m. one Saturday morning. People had already lined up to access their weekly withdrawal limit of 20,000 afghanis, or \$200.

Miraza's account is empty. He came to pick up a Western Union transfer from a nephew in the U.S. "We ran out of food, so we had to ask for help," he said. By 9 a.m. he was still waiting.

In a Kabul flea market, Hematullah Midanwal sells the items of people who have run out of funds.

"They come sometimes with their entire living rooms, everything down to spoons," he said.

Many hope to leave Afghanistan. Given the chance, the technocrats running the country's finances would also leave, every single one interviewed by the AP said.

One central bank official said he was waiting on his asylum papers to go to a Western country. "If it comes, I will definitely leave. I would never work with the Taliban again."

New Zealand hits virus high, pushes vaccination as way out

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand counted its most new coronavirus cases of the pandemic Tuesday as an outbreak in its largest city grew and officials urged vaccinations as a way out of Auckland's two-month lockdown.

Health officials found 94 new local infections, eclipsing the 89 that were reported twice during the early days of the pandemic 18 months ago. Most of the new cases were in Auckland, but seven were found in the nearby Waikato district.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said lockdown rule-breakers were contributing to the spread of infections and noted that many of the new cases had been detected among younger people.

"I know the highs and lows of cases is incredibly hard on people, particularly those in Tamaki Makaurau," Ardern said, using the Indigenous Maori name for Auckland. "I just wanted to reinforce again that we're

not powerless. We do have the ability to keep cases as low as we can.”

New Zealand had successfully eliminated earlier outbreaks by imposing tough border controls and strict lockdowns, as well as aggressive contact-tracing and isolating those who were infectious. But the approach failed against the more transmissible delta variant. The government has since eased some of Auckland’s lockdown rules, allowing more people to return to work.

Ardern has also embarked on an all-out effort to get people vaccinated. That’s included a televised “Vaxathon” festival on Saturday which saw a record 130,000 people getting shots, more than 2% of the New Zealand’s population of 5 million.

Ardern has promised to outline a path out of lockdown for Auckland based on vaccination numbers.

The government has previously talked about the importance of getting 90% of people aged 12 and over fully vaccinated, including a high proportion of Maori, who have been particularly hard hit by the outbreak.

But that goal remains some distance away, with 85% of eligible people having had at least one dose and 67% fully vaccinated. The numbers are lower among Maori.

Professor Michael Baker, an epidemiologist at the University of Otago, said he was concerned that contact tracers in Auckland would soon become overwhelmed. He said lawmakers needed to consider temporarily reimposing stricter lockdown rules as a circuit breaker.

“There are burning embers all over the city,” Baker said. “They have lifted the wet blanket of the strong lockdown, and people are getting lockdown fatigue.”

Baker said he thought it was possible for the government to continue eliminating the outbreak outside of Auckland, provided it kept in place strict border controls around the city.

He said the most important goal in any reopening would be to ensure the health system was not overrun.

Health officials on Tuesday also said they had authorized people with weakened immune systems to get a third shot of the Pfizer vaccine and were recommending they do so.

Jury selection moving slow in Ahmaud Arbery slaying trial

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Ga. (AP) — Attorneys planned to resume questioning potential jurors Tuesday in the trial of three white men charged with chasing and killing Ahmaud Arbery following a slow start and some admonishment from the judge to speed things along.

The fatal shooting of Arbery on a residential street outside the port city of Brunswick on Feb. 23, 2020, sparked a national outcry after a cellphone video of the killing leaked online two months later. Father and son Greg and Travis McMichael and a neighbor, William “Roddie” Bryan, are charged with murder and other crimes in the 25-year-old Black man’s death.

Prosecutors and defense attorneys spent hours Monday questioning the first panel of 20 potential jurors brought to the courthouse. That’s out of 600 summoned to jury duty Monday, with 400 more on deck to show up next week if needed.

The plodding pace and huge number of potential jurors underscore how Arbery’s slaying dominated the news, social media feeds and workplace chatter in coastal Glynn County. One jury panelist told attorneys he was sick of hearing about the case. Another wondered if she should fear for her safety should she be part of the final jury and the verdict angers some people.

Eight potential jurors were dismissed and the status of four others who had undergone individual questioning remained unresolved when court adjourned Monday evening.

Superior Court Judge Timothy Walmsley urged the lawyers to “streamline” their approach. More than once he stopped defense attorneys as they asked jury panelists bluntly whether they already believed the defendants were guilty — or pressed those who expressed negative impressions of the men on trial how they would remain impartial.

“You do not ask a potential juror what their opinion on guilt or innocence is,” Walmsley warned one attorney, calling the question “inappropriate.”

Jason Sheffield, an attorney for Travis McMichael, insisted lawyers need to ask such questions to weed

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 32 of 65

out jury pool members who have already made up their minds.

"Life is on the line and we feel like these are reasonable questions," Sheffield said.

Court officials have said jury selection could take more than two weeks. And prosecutor Linda Dunikoski told jury panelists the trial itself could push into the week before Thanksgiving.

The court has not identified the race of any of the prospective jurors.

Prosecutors say Arbery was merely jogging when the McMichaels grabbed guns and chased him in a pickup truck. Bryan joined the pursuit in his own truck and recorded the now-infamous cellphone video of Travis McMichael shooting Arbery three times at close range with a shotgun.

Defense attorneys insist the three men committed no crimes. Greg McMichael told police they believed Arbery was a burglar after security cameras previously recorded him entering a nearby home under construction. He said Travis McMichael fired in self-defense after Arbery punched him and tried to grab his weapon.

Titans stop Allen on 4th down, hang on to beat Bills 34-31

By TERESA M. WALKER AP Pro Football Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Derrick Henry showed once again how important he is to the Tennessee Titans. This time, he had help from the Tennessee defense.

Henry scored his third touchdown with 3:05 left, and the Titans stopped Josh Allen on a fourth-down quarterback sneak in the final seconds to beat Buffalo 34-31 on Monday night, snapping the Bills' four-game winning streak.

The AFC East-leading Bills drove to the Titans 3 on their final possession and could have sent the game to overtime with a field goal, but instead went for the win — and didn't execute.

First, Allen was marked shy of the first-down marker on a scramble. On fourth down, the rugged quarterback moved from the shotgun to take the snap under center. Tennessee's defensive line surged forward to meet Allen, whose legs went out from under him before Titans tackle Jeffery Simmons smothered the quarterback.

The Titans (4-2) took over with 12 seconds left to start a much-needed celebration for the battered defending AFC South champs.

"We got some dogs over there," Henry said of Tennessee's defense. "They fight to the end. They showed it right there."

Henry came in as the NFL's rushing leader even with most teams in the league having played six games, and he finished with 143 yards, topping 100 for the fifth consecutive game. It's the longest streak in the NFL since DeMarco Murray had eight straight in 2014 for Dallas.

The 2020 AP Offensive Player of the Year also had a 76-yard TD run and a 3-yarder. His long TD — the first of seven lead changes in the game — came with the Titans trailing 6-0 early in the second thanks to the defense holding the Bills to a pair of early field goals.

"We continue to jump on Derrick's back, and he's willing and able to carry us," Titans coach Mike Vrabel said. "And it's just something that you know you have in your back pocket, front pocket. We pull it out and we use it. It just gave us a big shot of life there."

Quarterback Ryan Tannehill added another TD run against a Buffalo defense that came in ranked third against the run.

Harold Landry had two of the Titans' three sacks, and Kevin Byard intercepted a pass.

The Bills (4-2) wanted to go for the win instead of playing for OT, and the fourth down caught Buffalo slightly off guard. Bills coach Sean McDermott said officials initially signaled Allen got the first down on his third-down scramble. McDermott said he talked after the game with referee Clete Blakeman, who told him an official radioed down from the box that Allen had come up short.

"We didn't get it done," McDermott said.

Allen, who had converted an NFL-best 24 quarterback sneaks for first downs since 2018, said he didn't have great footing.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 33 of 65

"I was just trying to find a window to get in there, and quarterback sneaks aren't the funnest play by any means," Allen said.

The Bills extended their NFL record of leading at halftime to 15 straight games. But their defense, which came in allowing a league-best 12.8 points a game, gave up a season high in points.

Allen finished with 353 yards and three TDs. His third was a 1-yarder to Tommy Sweeney in the final minute of the third quarter, and Allen caught a pass from tight end Dawson Knox for the 2-point conversion and a 31-24 lead. Buffalo didn't score again.

With his 29-yard TD pass to a wide-open Cole Beasley just before halftime, Allen passed Aaron Rogers with 108 combined TDs in his 49th start. Rogers had 107 TDs for what had been the most by a quarterback in his first 50 starts since the NFL merger.

HENRY GOES LONG

Henry now has 11 TDs of 50 yards or longer, tying former Titans running back Chris Johnson for fourth-most in NFL history. Only Adrian Peterson (16), Barry Sanders (15) and Jim Brown (12) have more. This TD came on the one-year anniversary of a 94-yard scoring run by Henry.

HOME RUN THROW FORWARD

The Titans dipped back into history for a play that beat the Bills in an AFC wild-card game in January 2000 known as the Music City Miracle. The play was called "Home Run Throw Back" with Frank Wycheck throwing a lateral to Kevin Dyson for the winning touchdown.

This time, Chester Rogers caught a punt late in the first quarter and threw across the field to Chris Jackson. The issue? His pass was a forward pass and not a lateral, costing the Titans a penalty.

INJURIES

This was a costly game for Tennessee. Three-time Pro Bowl left tackle Taylor Lewan was carted from the field and evaluated for a concussion late in the second quarter. Rookie cornerback Caleb Farley, the Titans' top draft pick, had to be helped off the field with an injured left knee he couldn't put weight on.

Receiver Julio Jones, who made an amazing 43-yard catch of a ball that bounced off Micah Hyde's helmet, also hurt a hamstring after missing the last two games. Defensive back Chris Jackson didn't return with an injured foot.

Cameron Batson hurt a knee on a kickoff return just before halftime. Tennessee came into this game with 16 on injured reserve.

For the Bills, Knox hurt his hand and missed the fourth quarter.

UP NEXT

Buffalo has a bye before hosting Miami on Halloween.

Tennessee hosts Kansas City on Sunday.

Follow Teresa M. Walker at <https://twitter.com/TeresaMWalker>

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

District attorneys refuse to prosecute some GOP-led laws

By JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — When Republican lawmakers in Tennessee blocked a policy to ease up on low-level marijuana cases, Nashville's top prosecutor decided on a workaround: He just didn't charge anyone with the crime.

Meanwhile, in Georgia, the Gwinnett County solicitor vowed not to punish anyone for the crime of distributing food or water to voters in line. Tampa's chief prosecutor says a law that allows law enforcement to detain protesters until their court date is "an assault on our democracy." And a district attorney in Douglas County, Kansas, promised not to enforce a new state law that makes it harder for nonpartisan groups and neighbors and candidates to collect and return absentee ballots for voters.

Progressive prosecutors around the country are increasingly declaring they just won't enforce some GOP-backed state laws, a strategy at work in response to some of the most controversial new changes in

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 34 of 65

recent years — near-total abortion bans, voting restrictions, limits on certain protest activity, laws aimed at LGBTQ people, and restrictions on mask requirements.

The elected law enforcement leaders say they're just doing what is right as support has grown for changing a system they believe has relied too heavily on locking people up, particularly for low-level, nonviolent offenses.

But politics is also at play here. These lawyers live in deep blue districts where their decisions are popular with voters, and they have to be reelected.

"The real limit on this is political," said William & Mary Law School professor Jeffrey Bellin. "These prosecutors have to stand for election almost everywhere in the country. Ultimately, the limit on this is popularity."

Prosecutors wield wide discretion over whom to charge with crimes, and they can hold off based on factors that include the strength of an individual case, the severity of the offense and, sometimes, the prosecutor's views on a law's constitutionality.

Last October, more than 70 prosecutors from blue districts around the country publicized that they won't bring charges under increasingly stringent laws that states have passed against abortion because they "should not and will not criminalize healthcare decisions," even if the landmark abortion rights case *Roe v. Wade* is eroded or overturned.

And in June, more than 70 elected prosecutors and law enforcement leaders signed a similar letter pledging not to charge doctors or parents who could face criminal penalties under state laws barring certain medical treatments for transgender youth.

"We know that our country has seen a past where some have sought to criminalize interracial marriage or individuals of different race who choose to sit at a lunch counter together, or ride a bus together, or use certain bathrooms and certain drinking fountains," said Miriam Krinsky, executive director of Fair and Just Prosecution, which published the statements. "Change often starts at the ground and moves its way on up."

In Nashville, Glenn Funk has made a habit of resisting GOP-passed laws, saying people in his city "really want a common sense approach to the criminal justice system that keeps us safe and does not incarcerate folks without good reason." His stand comes as his 2022 Nashville reelection bid is approaching, in which he expects a challenge for another eight-year term.

Funk rebuffed Republican Gov. Bill Lee this summer, saying he would not prosecute teachers and school officials enforcing mask mandates in defiance of an executive order that let parents opt their students out of mask mandates.

Funk said he "will not prosecute school officials or teachers for keeping children safe."

He also refused to enforce a 2020 law requiring medical professionals to inform women undergoing medication-induced abortions that the procedure could be reversed, which medical experts say is not backed by science. He deemed the law "unconstitutional" and said "criminal law must not be used by the State to exercise control over a woman's body."

Tennessee passed a first-of-its-kind law this year that required a notice outside public bathrooms at businesses that effectively says transgender people could be inside. Funk made it known that he wouldn't be enforcing that, either, saying his office "will not promote hate."

Judges paused the policies about bathroom signs and abortion reversals statewide and blocked the school mask opt-outs in three big counties.

Funk said prosecutors need to use the "levers of power" to provide "a check and balance on overreaching" by other branches of government.

"It's also incumbent, I think, upon public officials who disagree to stand up and say so," Funk told The Associated Press. "Because if people who are elected officials just stay quiet in the face of unconstitutional laws being passed, in the face of a social debate that might actually be dehumanizing large sections of our population, then if nobody speaks up, then the impression is that there is a not another side to this argument, and that there really is no argument."

A Vermont state's attorney isn't prosecuting possession of addiction therapy drugs, including buprenor-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 35 of 65

phine. Seattle's county prosecutor stopped filing charges for small personal drug possession, and a prosecutor in Washtenaw County, Michigan, and multiple prosecutors in New York City have stopped charging prostitution crimes as long as it's consensual. In Philadelphia, before federal courts blocked the opening of overdose prevention sites, the district attorney said he would not charge people who open and run them.

In Florida, 13th Judicial Circuit State Attorney Andrew Warren, covering the Tampa area, called one new state law "an assault on our democracy." It stiffens penalties for crimes committed during a riot or violent protest and was passed after protests in the wake of George Floyd's death. It's on hold by a federal judge.

But prosecutorial discretion can cut both ways — especially on COVID-19 mandates. In Pennsylvania, York County District Attorney Dave Sunday, a Republican, told police not to issue criminal citations related to Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf's statewide schools masking order, saying his office would not prosecute violations.

Elsewhere in Tennessee, conservative district attorney Craig Northcott in Coffee County, about 65 miles southeast Nashville, has said gay people shouldn't receive domestic violence protections, arguing that such laws are designed to protect the "sanctity of marriage."

Republican lawmakers have aired plenty of grievances about Funk, though so far their efforts to rein him in have been unsuccessful. Rep. John Ragan, who sponsored the business bathroom signage law, asked the state attorney general for an opinion on whether Funk's refusal to enforce the business bathroom law was grounds to remove him from office. Republican Attorney General Herbert Slatery's office declined to weigh in, citing ongoing lawsuits on the law.

And the governor has maligned him on social media: "A district attorney purposefully disregarding current, duly enacted laws by the legislature is a grave matter that threatens our justice system and has serious consequences," he tweeted.

Claudia Lauer in Philadelphia contributed to this report.

Jan. 6 panel plans contempt vote as Trump sues over probe

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, JILL COLVIN and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A House committee tasked with investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection is moving swiftly Tuesday to hold at least one of Donald Trump's allies in contempt as the former president is pushing back on the probe in a new lawsuit.

Trump is aggressively trying to block the committee's work by directing former White House aide Steve Bannon not to answer questions in the probe while also suing the panel to try to prevent Congress from obtaining former White House documents. But lawmakers on the House committee say they will not back down as they gather facts and testimony about the attack involving Trump's supporters that left dozens of police officers injured, sent lawmakers running for their lives and interrupted the certification of President Joe Biden's victory.

"The former president's clear objective is to stop the Select Committee from getting to the facts about January 6th and his lawsuit is nothing more than an attempt to delay and obstruct our probe," said Chairman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., and Republican Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, the panel's vice chairwoman, in a joint statement late Monday.

They added: "It's hard to imagine a more compelling public interest than trying to get answers about an attack on our democracy and an attempt to overturn the results of an election."

Trump's lawsuit, filed after Biden decided to waive his right to block the document release over executive privilege concerns, claims that the panel's August request was overly broad and a "vexatious, illegal fishing expedition," according to papers filed in federal court in the District of Columbia.

The lawsuit was expected, as Trump has repeatedly made clear that he will challenge the investigation of the violent attack by a mob of his supporters. But Trump's challenge went beyond the initial 125 pages of records that Biden recently cleared for release to the committee. The suit, which names the committee as well as the National Archives, seeks to invalidate the entirety of the congressional request, calling it

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 36 of 65

overly broad, unduly burdensome and a challenge to separation of powers. It requests a court injunction to bar the archivist from producing the documents.

The Biden administration, in clearing the documents for release, said the violent siege of the Capitol more than nine months ago was such an extraordinary circumstance that it merited waiving the privilege that usually protects White House communications.

The legal challenge came a day before the panel is scheduled to vote to recommend that Bannon be held in criminal contempt of Congress for his defiance of the committee's demands for documents and testimony. In a resolution released Monday, and scheduled to be voted out of the panel on Tuesday, the committee asserts that the former Trump aide and podcast host has no legal standing to rebuff the committee — even as Trump's lawyer has argued that Bannon should not disclose information because it is protected by the privilege of the former president's office.

Bannon was a private citizen when he spoke to Trump ahead of the attack, the committee said, and Trump has not asserted any such executive privilege claims to the panel itself.

"Mr. Bannon appears to have played a multi-faceted role in the events of January 6th, and the American people are entitled to hear his first-hand testimony regarding his actions," the committee wrote in the resolution.

The resolution lists many ways in which Bannon was involved in the leadup to the insurrection, including reports that he encouraged Trump to focus on Jan. 6, the day Congress certified the presidential vote, and his comments on Jan. 5 that "all hell is going to break loose" the next day.

Once the committee votes on the Bannon contempt measure, it will go to the full House for a vote and then on to the Justice Department, which would decide whether to prosecute.

In a letter obtained by The Associated Press, the White House also worked to undercut Bannon's argument. Deputy Counsel Jonathan Su wrote that the president's decision on the documents applied to Bannon, too, and "at this point we are not aware of any basis for your client's refusal to appear for a deposition."

"President Biden's determination that an assertion of privilege is not justified with respect to these subjects applies to your client's deposition testimony and to any documents your client may possess concerning either subject," Su wrote to Bannon's lawyer.

Bannon's attorney said he had not yet seen the letter and could not comment on it. While Bannon has said he needs a court order before complying with his subpoena, former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and former White House and Pentagon aide Kashyap Patel have been negotiating with the committee. It is unclear whether a fourth former White House aide, Dan Scavino, will comply.

The committee has also subpoenaed more than a dozen people who helped plan Trump rallies ahead of the siege, and some of them have already said they would turn over documents and give testimony.

The committee has demanded a broad range of executive branch papers related to intelligence gathered before the attack, security preparations during and before the siege, the pro-Trump rallies held that day and Trump's false claims that he won the election, among other matters.

Associated Press Writers Zeke Miller, Nomaan Merchant and Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

Washington State coach Rolovich fired for refusing vaccine

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Washington State fired football coach Nick Rolovich and four of his assistants on Monday for refusing a state mandate that all employees get vaccinated against COVID-19, making him the first major college coach to lose his job over vaccination status.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, a Democrat, had set a deadline of Monday for thousands of state employees, including the Cougars' coach, to be vaccinated. Rolovich applied for a religious exemption, which was denied Monday, Washington State athletic director Pat Chun said.

Defensive coordinator Jake Dickert will be elevated to acting coach and his first game in charge will be Saturday at home against BYU.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 37 of 65

"This is a tough day for Washington State football," Chun said at a news conference. "Nobody wants to be here."

Also fired for refusing vaccination were assistant coaches Ricky Logo, John Richardson, Craig Stutzmann and Mark Weber. Chun said there may be no precedent for a team losing its head coach and so many assistants in the middle of a season.

"Our student-athletes are the biggest losers in this," he said.

Rolovich was not immediately available for comment.

The 42-year-old Rolovich was the highest-paid state employee with an annual salary of more than \$3 million in a contract that runs through 2025. He had said he wouldn't get vaccinated but wouldn't specify his reasons. He was the only unvaccinated head coach in the Pac-12 and had worn a mask during games.

Rolovich was fired for cause, which means the university does not have to honor the rest of his contract, although lawsuits over the decision are likely. The Washington State athletic department is currently facing a shortfall of more than \$30 million.

Around the country, many college football coaches have publicly advocated for vaccination, including Clemson's Dabo Swinney and Alabama's Nick Saban. Mississippi coach Lane Kiffin said not getting vaccinated would be irresponsible and bragged about his team being 100% vaccinated.

Many coaches have talked about their teams' high vaccination rates, though schools are not under any obligation to share those numbers.

Unlike last season, when COVID-19 cases swept through major college football, postponing and canceling games weekly, no games have needed to be rescheduled because of a COVID-19 outbreak.

Rolovich was hired from Hawaii two years ago, after Mike Leach left for Mississippi State, and led Washington State to a 1-3 record in the Pac-12 in a 2020 season cut short because of the pandemic. Washington State has won its past three games and is 4-3 this season, including a 34-31 win over Stanford last Saturday. He finishes with a 5-6 record at the Pullman campus in southeastern Washington.

Rolovich revealed in July that he would not get vaccinated and couldn't attend Pac-12 media day in person because of it.

He said in mid-August that he intended to follow the new mandate requiring vaccinations for every state employee but repeatedly declined to say how.

After refusing for weeks to reveal his plans, Rolovich on Oct. 9 confirmed he was seeking a religious exemption to the mandate. He has not specified his religious beliefs.

Chun said he met with Rolovich over a period of several months, but could not change the coach's mind.

"He was resolute in his stance," Chun said.

Rolovich needed to prove a sincerely held religious belief that prevented him from getting vaccinated in his exemption application. The application was put before a committee that reviewed the requests without knowing names of the applicants.

To continue coaching, Rolovich needed to receive the religious exemption and also to have Chun determine that Rolovich could do his job while keeping the public safe. In addition to his work as a coach, Rolovich oversaw a youth football program and participated in promotional and fundraising events.

Dickert is in his second season as Washington State's defensive coordinator and came to Pullman after three seasons at Wyoming. He has not previously been a head coach.

Chun said the school is looking to hire assistants immediately to fill the vacancies on the staff.

Washington State President Kirk Schulz said nearly 90% of WSU employees and 97% of students had been vaccinated. Fewer than 50 of some 10,000 employees have sought exemptions, Schulz said.

The vaccine issue has percolated all season, dividing Washington State fans and providing a continual distraction.

"There was a lot of frustration with such a prominent employee choosing to be unvaccinated," Schulz said.

Players stood up for their coach as the season progressed. Quarterback Jayden de Laura told a sideline reporter after Saturday's win: "Stop hating on Rolo. We love him."

Wide receiver Travell Harris commended Rolovich after the game for being a "players' coach."

"He's a coach we all love to play for," Harris said.

AP College Football Writer Ralph D. Russo contributed to this report.

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Colin Powell dies, trailblazing general stained by Iraq

By ROBERT BURNS, ERIC TUCKER and EILEEN PUTMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Colin Powell, the trailblazing soldier and diplomat whose sterling reputation of service to Republican and Democratic presidents was stained by his faulty claims to justify the 2003 U.S. war in Iraq, died Monday of COVID-19 complications. He was 84.

A veteran of the Vietnam War, Powell spent 35 years in the Army and rose to the rank of four-star general before becoming the first Black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. His oversight of the U.S. invasion of Kuwait to oust the Iraqi army in 1991 made him a household name, prompting speculation for nearly a decade that he might run for president, a course he ultimately decided against.

He instead joined President George W. Bush's administration in 2001 as secretary of state, the first Black person to represent the U.S. government on the world stage. Powell's tenure, however, was marred by his 2003 address to the United Nations Security Council in which he cited faulty information to claim that Saddam Hussein had secretly stashed weapons of mass destruction. Such weapons never materialized, and though the Iraqi leader was removed, the war devolved into years of military and humanitarian losses.

Powell was fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, his family said. But he faced several ailments, telling Washington Post journalist Bob Woodward over the summer that he had Parkinson's disease. Powell's longtime aide, Peggy Cifrino, said Monday that he was also treated over the past few years for multiple myeloma, a blood cancer that impairs the body's ability to fight infection. Studies have shown that those cancer patients don't get as much protection from the COVID-19 vaccines as healthier people.

In a Washington where partisan divisions run deep, Democrats and Republicans recalled Powell fondly. Flags were ordered lowered at government buildings, including the White House, Pentagon and State Department.

President Joe Biden said Powell "embodied the highest ideals of both warrior and diplomat."

Noting Powell's rise from a childhood in a fraying New York City neighborhood, Biden said: "He believed in the promise of America because he lived it. And he devoted much of his life to making that promise a reality for so many others."

Powell's time as secretary of state was largely defined by the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. He was the first American official to publicly blame Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network. He made a lightning trip to Pakistan to demand that then-Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf cooperate with the United States in going after the Afghanistan-based group, which also had a presence in Pakistan, where bin Laden was later killed.

But as the push for war in Iraq deepened, Powell sometimes found himself at odds with other key figures in the Bush administration, including Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld also died this year.

Powell's State Department was dubious of the military and intelligence communities' conviction that Saddam possessed or was developing weapons of mass destruction. But he presented the administration's case that Saddam posed a major regional and global threat in a strong speech to the U.N. Security Council in February 2003. The following month, Bush gave the go-ahead for the invasion.

The U.N. speech, complete with Powell's display of a vial of what he said could have been a biological weapon, was seen as a low point in his career, although he had removed some elements from the remarks that he deemed to have been based on poor intelligence assessments.

The U.S. overthrow of Saddam ended the rule of a brutal dictator. But the power vacuum and lawless-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 39 of 65

ness that followed unleashed years of sectarian fighting and chaos that killed countless Iraqi civilians, sparked a lengthy insurgency, and unintentionally tilted the balance of power in the Middle East toward a U.S. rival, Iran. No Iraqi weapons of mass destruction were ever found.

Still, Powell maintained in a 2012 interview with The Associated Press that on balance, the U.S. succeeded in Iraq.

"I think we had a lot of successes," he said. "Iraq's terrible dictator is gone."

Saddam was captured by U.S. forces while hiding out in northern Iraq in December 2003 and was later executed by the Iraqi government. But the war dragged on. President Barack Obama pulled U.S. troops out of Iraq in 2011, but he sent advisers back in 2014 after the Islamic State group swept into the country from Syria and captured large swaths of territory.

Bush said Monday that he and former first lady Laura Bush were "deeply saddened" by Powell's death.

"He was a great public servant" and "widely respected at home and abroad," Bush said. "And most important, Colin was a family man and a friend. Laura and I send Alma and their children our sincere condolences as they remember the life of a great man."

Condoleezza Rice, Powell's successor at State and the department's first Black female secretary, praised him as "a trusted colleague and a dear friend through some very challenging times."

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, a retired Army general and the first Black Pentagon chief, said the news of Powell's death left "a hole in my heart."

"The world lost one of the greatest leaders that we have ever witnessed," Austin said while traveling in Europe.

Vice President Kamala Harris, the highest ranking Black woman in U.S. history, also noted Powell's racial firsts.

"Every step of the way, when he filled those roles, he was by everything that he did and the way he did it, inspiring so many people," she said. "Young servicemembers and others not only within the military, but in our nation and around the globe, took notice of what his accomplishments meant as a reflection of who we are as a nation."

No child of privilege, Powell often framed his biography as an American success story.

"Mine is the story of a black kid of no early promise from an immigrant family of limited means who was raised in the South Bronx," he wrote in his 1995 autobiography "My American Journey."

It's an experience he was fond of recalling later in his life. When he appeared at the United Nations, even during his Iraq speech, he often reminisced about his childhood in New York City, where he grew up the child of Jamaican immigrants and got one of his first jobs at the Pepsi-Cola bottling plant directly across the East River from the U.N. headquarters.

Powell's path toward the military began at City College, where he discovered the ROTC. When he put on his first uniform, he wrote, "I liked what I saw."

He joined the Army and in 1962 he was one of more than 16,000 military advisers sent to South Vietnam by President John F. Kennedy. A series of promotions led to the Pentagon and assignment as a military assistant to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, who became his unofficial sponsor. He later became commander of the Army's 5th Corps in Germany and later was national security assistant to President Ronald Reagan.

During his term as Joint Chiefs chairman, his approach to war became known as the Powell Doctrine, which held that the United States should only commit forces in a conflict if it has clear and achievable objectives with public support, sufficient firepower and a strategy for ending the war.

Though he gained national prominence under Republican presidents, Powell ultimately moved away from the party.

He endorsed Democrats in the past four presidential elections, starting with Obama. He emerged as a vocal Donald Trump critic in recent years, describing Trump as "a national disgrace" who should have been removed from office through impeachment.

Associated Press writer Steve Peoples and AP Medical Writer Lauran Neergaard contributed to this report.

DC suspends most of its Metro trains over safety issue

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Washington's regional Metro system abruptly pulled more than half its fleet of trains from service early Monday morning over a lingering problem with the wheels and axles that caused a dramatic derailling last week. The ruling promises to complicate daily travel and commutes for thousands of riders for an unspecified length of time while the National Transportation Safety Board investigates the issue.

The Metro authority's safety commission ordered the withdrawal of the entire 7000-series line of trains overnight. The Kawasaki-made 7000-series are the newest set of trains in service and the 748 cars comprise about 60% of the fleet.

NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy told reporters Monday that a design flaw had been identified which caused the trains' wheels to spread too wide on the axles, allowing the carriage to slip off the tracks.

"We're at the preliminary stage of our investigation — just trying to collect data and information," Homendy said. "This could have resulted in a catastrophic event."

It wasn't immediately clear if other regional commuter systems used the same model rail car. But Homendy said the NTSB "may at some point" issue a recommendation for inspections of all similar train cars around the country.

"If you are a transit agency operating in the United States and you're listening, make sure you are checking your cars as well," she said.

Homendy said the rail system had been aware of the problem since 2017, but hadn't informed the NTSB about it. There were 39 such failures this year alone.

Paul J. Wiedefeld, general manager of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, which oversees the regional D.C. transport system, apologized to riders for the disruption and said the cars would remain out of action through at least Sunday and possibly longer.

"I want to assure our customers that their safety is driving every decision being made," Wiedefeld said in a statement, adding that his agency would "continue working hand-in-hand with the NTSB."

WMATA said it had been working with Kawasaki to resolve the problem since 2017 but provided no details.

The company did not respond to an email or phone request for comment.

The wheel issue is being blamed for an incident last week in which a train car slipped off the tracks on the Metro's Blue Line near Arlington National Cemetery. Homendy said the car had apparently derailed once and then re-connected with the rails by itself, before derailling a second time. Some passengers were trapped in a tunnel in a dark train car and had to be evacuated on foot.

The safety ruling had already snarled commutes across the nation's capital and the intertwined communities of northern Virginia and southern Maryland. Passengers on social media reported widespread delays with commuters waiting up to 45 minutes between trains and crowding chaotically into whatever space was available.

The problem comes as WMATA is working to attract more riders, after ridership numbers plummeted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall rider numbers remain at about 30% of pre-pandemic levels but are expected to increase steadily as offices reopen and tourists return to Washington.

Kawasaki also supplies trains to the Metropolitan Transit Authority in New York City, among other systems. An MTA spokesman said the Kawasaki trains used in New York are a different model than those used in Washington. The spokesman, Eugene Resnick, said his agency would "continue to work with Kawasaki to maximize safety and closely monitor the results of the NTSB and D.C. Metro investigations."

Chicago uses a set of train cars also labeled the 7000 series, but a statement from the Chicago Transit Authority said the cars are made by a different manufacturer and there are no plans to take them out of service.

Atlanta's commuter rail system plans to "check a percentage of railcars to look for similar anomalies out

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 41 of 65

of an abundance of caution," said spokeswoman Stephany Fisher.

But the Atlanta system doesn't use Kawasaki trains, and Fisher said no suspensions or schedule disruptions are expected.

The incident promises to shine a potentially harsh light on WMATA, the regional transit authority which suffered a string of embarrassing and dangerous derailments and track fires, several years ago but claimed to have addressed its issues.

The rail cars have been in service in the Washington area since 2015.

Homendy said minor incidents with the wheels on the Kawasaki 7000 cars had been escalating since 2017. She said WMATA was aware of 18 such failures in 2021, and the current round of emergency inspections revealed an additional 21 failures. Homendy said the inspections were ongoing and "that number could go up" in the coming days.

Associated Press writers Jeff Amy in Atlanta, Ken Kusmer in Chicago and David Porter in New York contributed to this report.

Biden's dilemma: Satisfying Manchin risks losing other Dems

By MATTHEW DALY and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's Washington's enduring question: What does Joe Manchin want?

But increasingly the answer is crystal clear. The conservative West Virginia Democrat wants to dismantle President Joe Biden's proposed climate change strategies and social services expansion in ways that are simply unacceptable for most in his party.

So the question becomes less about what Manchin wants and more about whether Biden can bring him, the party's other centrist senators and its progressives to middle ground and salvage his once-sweeping \$3.5 trillion proposal from collapse.

As the White House pushes its Democratic allies on Capitol Hill to wrap up slogging negotiations before end-of-the-month deadlines, pressure is mounting on the party to hold its slim majority in Congress together to deliver on Biden's priorities. The president will meet with House lawmakers from both groups again Tuesday at the White House. Biden spoke by phone with Manchin Monday, and Manchin met separately with two progressive leaders: Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Rep. Pramila Jayapal of Washington state.

"We are at a point where we feel an urgency to move things forward," Biden press secretary Jen Psaki acknowledged Monday.

For months, Manchin has publicly and repeatedly balked at the size and scale of Biden's plan to expand the social safety net, tackle climate change and confront income inequality.

Already, he and fellow centrists, including Democratic Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, have forced Biden to concede that the final price tag will likely be much smaller, likely around \$2 trillion — largely paid for with higher taxes on corporations and the wealthy, those earning more than \$400,000 per year.

But as negotiators sift through the details of what's in and out of the proposal, it's Manchin's priorities that are driving much of the debate, infuriating colleagues and complicating a deal.

To start, Manchin is on board with raising the corporate tax rate to 25%, though not quite as much as the 26.5% Democrats have proposed, to finance Biden's expansive vision, agreeing that corporations should pay their "fair share" at a time when many have reported paying zero taxes.

But after that, the coal-state senator parts ways with progressives and most others in his party.

By insisting on a "fuel neutral" approach to energy policies, he threatens to wreck a cornerstone of the climate change plan, the Clean Energy Payment Program, which would offer grants to power companies that increase clean energy generation by 4% each year and fine those that do not.

On another major issue, by interjecting work requirements or income thresholds for government aid recipients he wants to limit new child care and health care programs to the neediest Americans.

With a striking ability to saunter into the spotlight with wide-ranging demands, Manchin is testing the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 42 of 65

patience of his colleagues who see a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape government programs slipping away to his personal preferences. With Republicans fully opposed to Biden's plans, the president needs all Democrats in the 50-50 split Senate for passage.

"I would hope that we're going to see some real action within the next week or so," said Sanders, the Vermont Independent, after meeting privately with Manchin.

"We discussed the way forward," Sanders said.

As chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Manchin says he has been forthcoming both publicly and privately about his concern that some Democratic proposals may be detrimental to his coal and gas-producing state.

In conversations with the White House over the weekend, Manchin reiterated his opposition to the clean energy plan — this as Biden prepares to head to the U.N. Climate Summit at the end of the month and climate envoy John Kerry warns against failure as the administration seeks to regain leadership on the climate issue.

Under Biden's proposal in the emerging bill, the U.S. would provide financial rewards to electric utilities that meet clean energy benchmarks and impose financial penalties on utilities that don't, in line with the president's goal of achieving 80% "clean electricity" by 2030.

While the Democratic plan focuses on renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power, Manchin insists the tax breaks received by fossil fuels should be preserved, along with breaks for wind and solar. He also says natural gas "has to be" part of the mix.

Natural gas produces fewer carbon emissions than coal or oil but has overtaken coal as the largest source of carbon pollution in the U.S. power sector, thanks in part to the U.S. fracking boom.

"I am all for clean energy, but I am also for producing the amount of energy that we need to make sure that we have reliability," Manchin said.

Progressives have pushed back hard.

"No climate, no deal," said Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., at a recent Capitol news conference.

"And let me be clear: natural gas is not clean energy and it is not climate action," he added.

Lawmakers are now considering a "menu" of other emission reduction options to replace Biden's clean energy plan. Manchin has pushed for "carbon capture" technology that would allow coal and natural gas to be burned while trapping harmful emissions, but he laments it's "so darn expensive that it makes it almost improbable to do."

A middle ground could emerge in a proposal from Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., the chairman of the Finance Committee, who has said the bulk of greenhouse gas emission cuts would come from an energy tax overhaul he is spearheading.

Among tax changes his committee is considering are tax credits for energy producers that reduce emissions, and pollution fees to be paid by industries for every ton of planet-warming carbon dioxide they emit.

A carbon tax is seen by economists as the most effective way to cut fossil fuel emissions, and the American Petroleum Institute, the chief lobbying arm of the oil and gas industry, has endorsed the idea of a price on carbon emissions.

While Manchin's climate-related objections are central to the debate, he is also pushing Democrats in other ways, by limiting the expanded social services to only people of modest or lower income levels.

Already, some of Biden's proposals including a child tax credit, come with income thresholds, in keeping with the president's interest in targeting the help to middle class Americans. Other help, including the proposed expansion of Medicare to include dental, vision and hearing aid benefits, would be available to all seniors, regardless of income level.

The White House acknowledges there could be some income limits imposed.

"We're talking about targeting and focusing the president's proposals in some areas on people who need help the most," Psaki said.

Rapper formerly known as Kanye West is now just Ye

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Kanye is now Ye.

A Los Angeles judge on Monday approved the request of the rapper, producer and fashion designer to legally change his name from Kanye Omari West to just Ye, with no middle or last name.

"There being no objections, the petition for change of name is granted," Judge Michelle Williams Court said in court documents.

The petition filed Aug. 24 cited "personal reasons."

He has called himself Ye on his social media pages for years. He tweeted in 2018 that he wanted the change saying, "the being formally known as Kanye West. I am YE."

The moniker was also the title of his 2018 album. He has said in interviews that, along with being a shortening of his first name he likes, that it's a word used throughout the Bible.

The 44-year-old is in the middle of a divorce with Kim Kardashian West, who did not ask that her last name be changed back to just Kardashian when she filed to split from him in February. The couple's four children also have his former last name.

Jury selection begins in trial over Ahmaud Arbery's death

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Ga. (AP) — As jury selection got slowly underway Monday in the trial of three white men charged with fatally shooting Ahmaud Arbery as he was running in their Georgia neighborhood, potential jurors said they came in with negative feelings about the case and worried about the personal consequences of serving on the jury.

The slaying of the 25-year-old Black man sparked a national outcry fueled by graphic video of the shooting leaked online more than two months after Arbery was killed. Father and son Greg and Travis McMichael and their neighbor William "Roddie" Bryan are charged with murder and other crimes in Arbery's death on Feb. 23, 2020, just outside the port city of Brunswick.

With hundreds called, jury selection could last two weeks or more. Arbery's father said he was praying for an impartial panel and a fair trial, saying Black crime victims too often have been denied justice.

"This is 2021, and it's time for a change," Marcus Arbery Sr. told The Associated Press. "We need to be treated equally and get fair justice as human beings, because we've been treated wrong so long."

The first panel of 20 jurors was sworn in and questioned Monday afternoon.

When Judge Timothy Walmsley asked the group if their minds were neutral regarding both sides of the case, only one raised a hand. Asked if they were already leaning toward either side, about half raised their hands to indicate yes.

"Please raise your card if you would like to serve on this jury," prosecutor Linda Dunikoski instructed as she wrapped up her questions for the group.

At first, nobody did. Finally, one young man raised his hand.

Jason Sheffield, one of Travis McMichael's attorneys, asked the group whether they had any negative feelings about the three defendants. More than half raised their hands.

After being questioned as a group, the potential jurors were questioned individually. Their answers reflected the intense attention the case has attracted, their existing ideas about the case and their apprehensions about being involved in such a high-profile case.

An Air Force veteran and gun owner who was the first to be questioned said he had a negative impression of Greg McMichael but not the other defendants.

"I got the impression he was stalking," the man said, saying he based that on news coverage and from seeing the video of the shooting "fewer than five times."

"From what I observed, he appeared to be the lead dog," the panel member said of Greg McMichael, a retired investigator for the local district attorney's office. Still, he said he had not made up his mind about innocence or guilt.

Another panelist said he had seen so much about the slaying in the news and on social media that "I'm sick of it."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 44 of 65

He said he shared the video of Arbery's shooting on social media and discussed the case with his brothers — one of whom was also among the 1,000 people mailed a jury summons in the case.

A retired accountant said she had negative feelings about the defendants but tried to avoid an opinion on guilt or innocence. She also expressed misgivings about sitting on the jury.

"How would I feel if I was asked to render a verdict that was unpopular?" she said. "Any verdict, guilty or innocent, is going to be unpopular with some people."

"Maybe I'd even feel unsafe," she added.

The court hasn't identified the race of any of the prospective jurors.

Arbery's killing stoked outrage during a period of national protests over racial injustice. More than two months passed before the McMichaels and Bryan were charged and jailed — only after the video leaked online and state investigators took over the case.

Prosecutors say Arbery was merely jogging when the McMichaels grabbed guns and chased him in a pickup truck. Bryan joined the pursuit in his own truck and recorded the now-infamous cellphone video of Travis McMichael shooting Arbery three times at close range with a shotgun.

As she was questioned by defense attorneys, one potential juror — a young woman who's a teacher — had harsh words for Bryan.

"His videotaping the scene was disgusting and vicious," she said. "However, at the same time I'm thankful that he did, because we are able to see what happened."

Defense attorneys insist the three men committed no crimes. Greg McMichael told police they believed Arbery was a burglar after security cameras previously recorded him entering a nearby home under construction. He said Travis McMichael fired in self-defense after Arbery punched him and tried to grab his weapon.

Investigators have testified that they found no evidence of crimes by Arbery, who was unarmed, in the Satilla Shores subdivision.

As a precaution against the coronavirus, 600 jury pool members were ordered to report to a gymnasium to provide room for social distancing. They were summoned to the courthouse in groups of 20, Glynn County Superior Court Clerk Ronald Adams said.

Ultimately, 12 jurors will be seated plus four alternates to fill in for any jurors who get sick or are dismissed before the trial ends.

The judge dismissed eight total potential jurors before adjourning Monday evening. Four others were individually interviewed but no final decision was made on their status. Jury selection was to resume Tuesday morning.

Once a jury is seated, the trial itself could take more than two weeks, Adams said.

Top German tabloid editor ousted over misconduct claims

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The powerful chief editor of Germany's best-selling newspaper has been removed from his post following revelations of misconduct, publishing company Axel Springer SE said Monday.

Julian Reichelt was axed from the helm of the Bild tabloid "with immediate effect," the company said in a statement.

The 41-year-old was suspended earlier this year as part of company-ordered probe into his management style, but later reinstated.

Axel Springer said it had recently gained new information about Reichelt "as a result of press investigations" that it had followed up on, revealing that he had "failed to maintain a clear boundary between private and professional matters" even after being required to do so following the internal investigation in March.

Reichelt had also lied to the board about this, the company said.

Reichelt could not be reached for comment.

Axel Springer said it would appoint Johannes Boie, 37, as the new chair of Bild's three-member editorial

board.

The announcement came after it emerged over the weekend that journalists at a rival German media group had been investigating allegations against Reichelt but were prevented from publishing their findings.

In a letter dated Friday, four senior reporters at the Ippen media group accused their company and its publisher, Dirk Ippen, of a "breach of trust" for deciding to halt the report, which had been months in the making and was due to be published Sunday.

The Ippen media group said it had nixed the story to "avoid the impression we might want to economically harm a competitor." It denied there had been any pressure from Axel Springer executives over the matter.

While Ippen held back on its story, The New York Times published a report Sunday about Reichelt's alleged affair with an Axel Springer trainee. The affair had been part of the probe ordered earlier this year by Axel Springer into allegations that Reichelt had acted in a bullying manner and abused his position of power toward female staff.

Reichelt, one of the mightiest figures in German media, was briefly suspended during that investigation but later reinstated after the company said the probe — conducted by an independent law firm — found his actions didn't warrant dismissal.

In its statement, Axel Springer said the first investigation never included allegations of sexual harassment or assault against Reichelt, but rather centered around "consensual intimate relationships with female Bild employees and indications of abuse of power in that connection."

At the time, the company said, a decision was made to give Reichelt a second chance.

"In the context of recent media investigations, new evidence of current misconduct by Julian Reichelt has come to the company's attention in the last few days," it said.

"As the executive board has learned, Julian Reichelt still fails to maintain a clear boundary between private and professional matters and has also been untruthful to the executive board in this regard," the company added. "The executive board therefore considers the termination of his office to be unavoidable."

It also announced legal steps against "third parties" for releasing confidential business information and private communication with the aim of trying to harm the company and having Reichelt removed.

Axel Springer's chief executive, Mathias Doepfner, said Reichelt had done "an outstanding job" at Bild and that the company would have liked to continue developing the media brand "with him on board."

"That is now no longer possible," said Doepfner, adding that new chief editor Boie "possesses a proven ability to combine excellent journalism with a leadership style in keeping with today's needs."

Axel Springer has successfully expanded its business in the United States in recent years. It owns online media company Insider and the business-oriented Morning Brew, and in August it announced a deal to buy the U.S.-based political news company Politico and the tech news site Protocol.

Maduro ally appears in court to face corruption charges

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A businessman who prosecutors say was a major conduit for corruption by Nicolás Maduro's inner circle appeared for the first time in Miami federal court Monday after a weekend extradition that has further strained relations between the U.S. and Venezuela's socialist government.

Alex Saab's legs shook nervously while seated as he waited, handcuffed and in an orange jumpsuit, for the start of the hearing, which took place via Zoom with more than 350 journalists, gawking opponents of Maduro and members of Saab's family in attendance.

Saab's extradition to the U.S. from Cape Verde, where he was arrested 16 months ago, has already ricocheted far and wide.

Only hours after Saab was placed on a Department of Justice aircraft on Saturday, Maduro's government suspended negotiations with Venezuela's U.S.-backed opposition. It also threw back into jail six American oil executives it accuses of corruption. They had been under house arrest in another politically charged case marked by allegations of wrongful detention.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 46 of 65

The Maduro government has labelled Saab a diplomatic envoy and has spared no effort to free the Colombian-born businessman, who was arrested on a U.S. warrant in the African archipelago while making a fuel stop en route to Iran.

On Monday, it was joined by ally Russia, whose ambassador in Caracas tweeted his "most energetic and categorical protest against the kidnapping" of Saab.

Saab, 49, raised his bushy eyebrows but was largely silent as magistrate Judge John O'Sullivan, through an interpreter, informed him that he was being charged with eight counts of money laundering. The judge set another hearing in two weeks where Saab will have the opportunity to enter a plea.

Saab, was indicted in 2019 on money-laundering charges for allegedly bribing Venezuelan officials and falsifying import documents to pocket more than \$350 million from a low-income housing project. On the same day as his indictment, he was sanctioned by the Trump administration for allegedly utilizing a network of shell companies spanning the globe — Turkey, Hong Kong, Mexico and the United Arab Emirates — to hide windfall profits from overvalued food contracts.

But Saab's connections extend much deeper.

Among those the U.S. claims he paid to win government contracts are Maduro's stepsons. Commonly known in Venezuela as "Los Chamos," slang for "the kids," the three adult children of first lady Cilia Flores from a previous relationship have themselves been under investigation by prosecutors in Miami for several years, two people familiar with the U.S. investigation told The Associated Press.

"Saab is an illustrative case of the immense level of corruption in Venezuela and the consequences for the region," said Diego Area, a Latin America expert at the Atlantic Council in Washington.

Michael Penfold, a Venezuelan political analyst, said that Saab's extradition is likely to freeze all attempts to bridge deep distrust between the Maduro government and its opponents. The two sides have been meeting since August in a bid to jointly address the country's ongoing humanitarian crisis, which has led more than 5 million people to flee the country in recent years, and pave the way for a democratic opening starting with next month's regional elections.

The Biden administration, which has tried to downplay the political impact of Saab's extradition, is key to the success of those talks. After years of cracking down on its opponents, Venezuela's cash-starved government is considering granting more freedoms in exchange for the U.S. reversing crippling sanctions put in place on one of the world's largest oil producers by the Trump administration, which was hellbent on ousting Maduro.

"Saab's extradition restarts the bad blood between Venezuela and the U.S.," said Penfold, a global fellow at the Wilson Center in Washington. "We're going back to the old dynamic of mutual recrimination that the negotiations had started to ease, but with the difference that now these indictments are part of that dynamic."

The U.S. State Department blasted Maduro for backing out of the negotiations, saying that law enforcement in the U.S. is independent of politics and that the charges against Saab long predate the talks.

"They are putting the case of one individual above the welfare, above the well-being, above the livelihoods of the millions of Venezuelans who have made clear their aspirations for democracy, for greater freedom, for prosperity, and, at a most basic level, an alleviation of the humanitarian suffering that the regime has inflicted on the Venezuelan people," spokesman Ned Price said.

Norway, which is sponsoring the fledgling talks, urged restraint after Maduro's government said it would not travel to Mexico City for the next round of talks, which were scheduled to take place this week.

"We will keep working for the parties to, as soon as possible, continue their important effort at the negotiating table for an inclusive political solution for the benefit of the Venezuelan people," Norway's foreign ministry said in a statement

In Caracas' historic Plaza Bolivar, Saab's wife, a former Italian model, led a small rally Sunday of a few dozen government supporters protesting what they see as Saab's "kidnapping."

"I don't plan to lie to favor the U.S.," said a nervous-sounding Camilla Fabri, reading a letter she said was penned by her husband. "I've not committed any crime, in the U.S. or in any country."

Hours later, Maduro himself entered the fray, saying the U.S. — not his government — delivered a "mortal blow" to the dialogue effort and next month's gubernatorial elections, which pits a bitterly divided

opposition against a slate of pro-Maduro candidates supported by the central government.

He also asserted, with no evidence, that interrogators in Cape Verde used electric shocks to torture Saab and extract a false confession that in the end never came.

"They wanted to force him into becoming a monster, a false accuser against Venezuela, against me and against the Bolivarian revolution — something he never allowed," Maduro said on state TV.

The out-of-court maneuvers have been especially troubling to the families of nine Americans jailed in Caracas. Over the weekend, they published an open letter appealing to the White House to remain engaged on Venezuela.

"Mr. President, we are frustrated by the lack of action by your administration," the families said in the letter, which was written just prior to Saab's extradition. "The people in charge of protecting and returning wrongfully detained Americans have not even taken the basic first step of directly engaging with the Venezuelans that are holding our loved ones."

Those jailed include six oil executives who had been working for the Houston subsidiary of Venezuela's state-owned oil giant PDVSA who were convicted and sentenced last year to long prison sentences for embezzling funds from a never-executed plan to refinance Citgo's bonds. The families of the so-called Citgo 6 and the U.S. government have vehemently rejected the accusations and consider the men wrongfully detained.

Within hours of Saab's extradition, security forces returned the oil executives to the infamous Helicoide jail where they've been held on and off since being lured to Caracas in 2017 for a meeting at which they were arrested by masked police who stormed a conference room where they were gathered. Also at the prison is former U.S. Marine Matthew Heath, who is awaiting trial on weapons charges tied to a supposed plan to sabotage refineries, and two former Green Berets Caracas has tied to a failed cross-border raid from Colombia to overthrow Maduro.

Associated Press writers Matthew Lee in Washington, Regina Garcia-Cano in Mexico City and Jorge Rueda in Caracas, Venezuela, contributed to this report.

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LA County wants Vanessa Bryant to undergo psychiatric exam

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles County is seeking to compel psychiatric evaluations for Kobe Bryant's widow and others to determine if they truly suffered emotional distress after first responders took and shared graphic photos from the site of the 2020 helicopter crash that killed the basketball star, his teenage daughter and seven others, court documents say.

Vanessa Bryant, whose federal lawsuit against the county alleges invasion of privacy, has claimed in court papers that she has experienced "severe emotional distress" that has compounded the trauma of losing her husband and 13-year-old daughter, Gianna.

Kobe Bryant and the others were killed Jan. 26, 2020, when the helicopter they were aboard, on their way to a girls basketball tournament, crashed in the hills west of Los Angeles amid foggy weather. Federal safety officials blamed pilot error for the wreck.

Vanessa Bryant's lawsuit contends first responders, including firefighters and sheriff's deputies, shared photographs of Kobe Bryant's body with a bartender and passed around "gratuitous photos of the dead children, parents and coaches." The Los Angeles Times first reported that a sheriff's department internal investigation found deputies shared photos of victims' remains.

None of the first responders were directly involved in the investigation of the crash or had any legitimate purpose in taking or passing around the grisly photos, the suit contends. Gov. Gavin Newsom last year approved legislation prompted by the helicopter crash that makes it a crime for first responders to take unauthorized photos of deceased people at the scene of an accident or crime.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 48 of 65

"Ms. Bryant feels ill at the thought of strangers gawking at images of her deceased husband and child, and she lives in fear that she or her children will one day confront horrific images of their loved ones online," court documents say.

Attorneys for Los Angeles County want the court to order Bryant and other family members of the people who were killed in the crash, including children, to undergo psychiatric evaluations as independent medical examinations. The lawyers propose that the evaluations be audio- and video-recorded and last eight hours for adults and four to six hours for children.

The county contends that while the families "have undoubtedly suffered severe distress and trauma from the crash and resulting loss of their loved ones, their distress was not caused by (the first responders) or any accident site photos that were never publicly disseminated."

LA County attorneys wrote in court papers that such psychiatric examinations are "necessary to evaluate the nature and extent" of the families' alleged injuries.

Vanessa Bryant's attorneys, in filings submitted Friday, said the county is resorting to "scorched-earth discovery tactics" designed to bully her and the family members of other victims into "abandoning their pursuit of accountability."

Attorneys for Los Angeles County, in a statement Monday to The Associated Press, said the county has "great sympathy" for Bryant's losses.

"It's horrific, the worst imaginable," they said in the statement. "But she sued the County for something that didn't happen. There's been no public disclosure of crash site photos, none. So we see this case as a money grab and are doing what's necessary to defend our client."

Attorneys for Bryant declined to immediately comment on Monday afternoon.

Hezbollah leader declares his group has 100,000 fighters

By SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanon's Hezbollah leader declared for the first time on Monday that his powerful militant group has 100,000 trained fighters. His speech appeared to be meant as a deterrent to domestic foes following the nation's worst internal violence in years.

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah disclosed the size of the Shiite group's militant arm in his first speech since seven people were killed in gunbattles on the streets of Beirut on Thursday — the worst street violence the city has seen in years. The confrontation erupted over a long-running probe into last year's massive port blast in the city.

It is difficult to verify the 100,000 fighters figure as Hezbollah is largely secretive. If true, it would be larger than the size of Lebanon's armed forces, estimated at about 85,000.

The speech came at a time of heightened tension in Lebanon over the clashes and the course of the investigation into the Aug. 4, 2020 blast in which over 215 people were killed.

"We have prepared (those fighters) with their diverse weapons to defend our territory, our oil and gas that is being robbed before the eyes of Lebanese, to protect the dignity and sovereignty of our country from any aggression (and) terrorism and not for internal fighting," Nasrallah said.

In his speech, Nasrallah accused the head of a right-wing Christian party, Samir Geagea, of seeking to ignite civil war in the small country.

Addressing Geagea directly, Nasrallah said: "Don't miscalculate. Be wise and behave. Learn a lesson from all your wars and all our wars."

Geagea's office declined to immediately comment late Monday.

At the end of the country's 15-year civil war in 1990, Hezbollah was the only group to retain its weapons. It has fought several rounds of war with Israel and took credit for Israel's troop withdrawal from the country's south in 2000. Hezbollah has also sent its fighters to support Syria's armed forces in that country's decade-long civil war.

Hezbollah and its allies have been highly critical of Judge Tarek Bitar, who is in charge of the port blast investigation, accusing him of being selective and going after some officials and not others while seeking

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 49 of 65

to politicize the probe. They asked that he be removed.

The clashes Thursday came as officials from Hezbollah have suggested the judge's investigation is leaning toward holding them responsible for the port blast.

Bitar has been criticized by other political groups, too, after he summoned senior officials as part of the investigation, including former ministers and a former prime minister, and charged them with intentional negligence that led to the deaths of over 215 people.

The judge has not publicly commented or responded to the criticism.

Thursday's clashes saw gunmen battling each other for several hours with automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades in the streets of Beirut. It was the most violent confrontation in the city in years, echoing the nation's darkest era of the 1975-90 civil war.

Nasrallah accused Geagea of "manufacturing" Thursday's clashes in the Tayuneh area of the city and described him as a criminal and a killer.

"The real program for the Lebanese Forces is civil war," Nasrallah said. "The biggest threat to the social peace in Lebanon is the Lebanese Forces."

Nasrallah accused Geagea and his party of seeking to scare Lebanon's Christians over Hezbollah's intentions. He said that's mostly to serve foreign countries that have also made the Shiite group an enemy, including the United States, Israel and some Gulf states.

Geagea is a close ally of Saudi Arabia, which is critical of Iran-backed Hezbollah.

Geagea led the Lebanese Forces Christian militia during the 1975-90 civil war and spent more than a decade in prison. He was released after an amnesty following Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005. The anti-Syria Geagea now leads the Lebanese Forces political party.

Nasrallah said his group and its ally, the Amal movement, expect results in an investigation into how the violence broke out Thursday. He suggested that if the army opened fire at protesters from the two Shiite groups, it should be held accountable.

It wasn't clear from Nasrallah's speech if his group and Amal are ending their call for the removal of the judge — a move considered by many as interference in judicial affairs.

The newly installed government has come to a standstill after opposition from Hezbollah- and Amal-allied ministers over government inaction against the judge. The crisis is the latest to beset the small nation of 6 million, already struggling with one of the worst financial crises in the world in the last 150 years.

Associated Press writers Zeina Karam and Bassem Mroue contributed to this report.

GameStop mania severely tested market system, regulator says

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market certainly shook when hundreds of thousands of regular people suddenly piled into GameStop early this year, driving its price to heights that shocked professional investors. But it didn't break.

That's one of the takeaways from a report by the Securities and Exchange Commission's staff released Monday about January's "meme-stock" mania. As GameStop's stock shot from \$39 to \$347 in just a week, some of the stock market's plumbing began creaking, but the report indicated the market's basic systems and operations remained sound.

The surge for GameStop and other downtrodden stocks also laid bare how much power is being wielded by a new generation of smaller-pocketed and novice investors, armed with apps on their phones that make trading fun.

"The extreme volatility in meme stocks in January 2021 tested the capacity and resiliency of our securities markets in a way that few could have anticipated," the report said. "At the same time, the trading in meme stocks during this time highlighted an important feature of United States securities markets in the 21st century: broad participation."

Many of the points in the report were already known, such as how the extremely heavy bets made by

some hedge funds against GameStop's stock actually helped accelerate its extreme ascent, though they weren't the main driver.

The report also didn't make any recommendations for changes to how the market is structured, but it pointed to several areas for further consideration. They include topics that SEC Chair Gary Gensler has already cited in recent speeches, such as whether the way some brokerages make their money encourages them to push customers to trade more often than they should.

The report also indicated the SEC could further scrutinize events that may cause a brokerage to restrict trading in a stock. During the height of the frenzy, several brokerages barred customers from buying GameStop after the clearinghouse that settles their trades demanded more cash to cover the increased risk created by its highly volatile price. That left many investors incensed.

The report also raised questions about whether investors are getting the best execution on their trades when so many are getting routed to big trading firms instead of to exchanges like the Nasdaq or the New York Stock Exchange.

And, perhaps in a disappointment to some of the investors who piled into GameStop to punish the financial elite: The SEC's staff said it doesn't believe hedge funds were broadly affected by investments in GameStop and other meme stocks.

During the run-up of GameStop's price, many people were bellowing on Reddit and other social media platforms that this was their chance to stick it to the hedge funds. They took aim at funds that had bet GameStop, a struggling video-game retailer, would see its price continue to fall.

Those hedge funds did that by "shorting" the stock. In such a trade, a short seller borrows a share, sells it and then hopes to buy it back later at a lower price to pocket the difference.

Some of those short sellers were indeed burned. And when they bought GameStop shares to get out of their suddenly soured bets, the buying helped push the stock up even further. But other hedge funds that had earlier bet on gains for GameStop's stock made profits, as did others who jumped into the upsurge.

Hedge funds as a group have been making money this year, including a 1.2% return in January during the throes of the meme mania, according to the HFRI Fund Weighted Composite index.

The SEC's staff nevertheless said that improved reporting of short sales is another area worthy of further study, particularly if it will help regulators better track the market.

Biden team asks Supreme Court to pause Texas abortion law

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is asking the Supreme Court to block the Texas law banning most abortions, while the fight over the measure's constitutionality plays out in the courts.

The administration also took the unusual step of telling the justices they could grant the Texas law full review and decide its fate this term, which already includes a major case about the future of abortion rights in the U.S.

No court has yet reached a decision on the constitutionality of the Texas law, and the Supreme Court rarely grants such requests.

The law has been in effect since September, aside from a district court-ordered pause that lasted just 48 hours, and bans abortions once cardiac activity is detected, usually around six weeks and before some women know they are pregnant.

The Justice Department asked the high court Monday to lift an order imposed by a conservative federal appeals court that has allowed Texas to continue enforcing the nation's strictest curbs on abortion through a novel law that was written to make it hard to challenge in the federal court system. The department had announced its intentions last Friday.

The Texas law defies the Supreme Court's major decisions on abortion rights "by banning abortion long before viability -- indeed, before many women even realize they are pregnant," the Justice Department wrote in its plea to the court.

"The question now is whether Texas' nullification of this Court's precedents should be allowed to con-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 51 of 65

tinue while the courts consider the United States' suit. As the district court recognized, it should not," the Justice Department wrote.

The administration also said the court could short-circuit the usual process and rule on the law's constitutionality this term, even though lower courts have yet to do so. The justices have done this only a handful of times in recent decades, the last occasion being a 2019 dispute over the Trump administration's ultimately failed effort to include a citizenship question on the 2020 Census. In that case, a deadline for finalizing the census was fast approaching.

In this case, the administration said, Texas' attempt to evade federal court review of its law and the possibility that other states could adopt similar measures justify the court's early involvement.

The high court ordered Texas to respond by midday Thursday.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said at Monday's news briefing that President Joe Biden would protect abortion rights, and that the Justice Department would lead efforts to ensure that women have "access to fundamental rights that they have to protect their own health."

It's not clear whether the administration will prevail at a Supreme Court with a conservative majority that has been fortified by three appointees of former President Donald Trump and already has agreed to hear a major challenge to abortion rights in a case from Mississippi.

The Trump appointees, joined by two other conservatives, have once before rejected a plea to keep the law on hold, in a separate lawsuit filed by abortion providers. There was no immediate timetable for Supreme Court action on this latest motion.

While courts have blocked other state laws effectively banning abortion before a fetus can survive outside the womb, roughly around 24 weeks, the Texas law has so far avoided a similar fate because of its unique structure that leaves enforcement up to private citizens, rather than state officials. Anyone who brings a successful lawsuit against an abortion provider for violating the law is entitled to claim at least \$10,000 in damages.

In the 5-4 vote last month to allow the law to remain in effect, the high court acknowledged in an unsigned order that there were "serious questions regarding the constitutionality of the Texas law" but also "complex and novel" procedural questions about whom to sue and whether federal courts had the power to stop the law from being enforced.

In a dissenting opinion, Chief Justice John Roberts wrote that he would have put the "unprecedented" law on hold so that court could consider "whether a state can avoid responsibility for its laws" by handing off enforcement. The court's three liberal justices also dissented.

The question now is whether the administration's presence in the new lawsuit will make a difference. A three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals provided its answer late Thursday, extending its earlier order that allows the law to remain in effect. In a 2-1 vote, the court said it was siding with Texas for the same reasons the Supreme Court and a different 5th Circuit panel cited in the providers' lawsuit — questioning whether anyone could march into federal court to challenge the law.

Texas sought help from the appeals court after U.S. District Judge Robert Pitman ruled that the Justice Department did have the ability to sue and that he had the authority to stop the law from being enforced, writing that "women have been unlawfully prevented from exercising control over their lives in ways that are protected by the Constitution."

The judge conceded, however, that "other courts may find a way to avoid this conclusion."

Witnesses: Ethiopian military airstrikes hit Tigray capital

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopian military airstrikes hit the capital of the country's Tigray region and killed at least three people, witnesses said Monday, returning the war abruptly to the city of Mekele after several months of peace.

The airstrikes came days after a new military offensive was launched against the Tigray forces who have been fighting Ethiopian and allied forces for nearly a year.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 52 of 65

Mekele hasn't seen fighting since late June, when the Tigray forces retook much of the region and Ethiopian troops withdrew. Since then, Ethiopia's federal government has called all able citizens to crush the Tigray fighters who dominated the national government for 27 years before being sidelined by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. What began as a political dispute in Africa's second-most populous country has now killed thousands of people.

The state-owned Ethiopian Press Agency, citing the air force, reported that "communication towers and equipment" were attacked and that "utmost care was made to avoid civilian casualties."

One Mekele resident, Kindeya Gebrehiwot, a spokesman for the Tigray authorities, told The Associated Press that a market was bombed. Another resident, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation, said the first airstrike occurred just outside the city and three children from the same family were killed. The resident said at least seven people were wounded in the second airstrike, which also damaged a hotel.

The Tigray region, along with the current areas of fighting in the neighboring Amhara and Afar regions, are under a communications blackout, making it challenging to verify information.

The Tigray forces have said they are trying to pressure Ethiopia's government to lift a deadly blockade imposed on the Tigray region since the dramatic turn in the war in June. But witnesses in the Amhara region have alleged door-to-door killings and other atrocities against civilians by the Tigray fighters — an echo of the atrocities that Tigrayans reported at the hands of Ethiopian and allied forces earlier in the war.

The new offensive rages despite pressure from the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and other African nations for a cease-fire, talks and humanitarian access. The U.S. a month ago threatened a new round of targeted sanctions if steps toward those goals weren't taken quickly.

Instead, the warring sides have shown no sign of stopping.

"The possibility for peaceful dialogue, which the people of Tigray had waited for, has no hope," the Tigray forces said in a statement on Sunday.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters they were trying to verify details of Monday's airstrikes.

"What is clear is that civilians should never be targeted. Civilian infrastructure should never be targeted. Those are basic humanitarian principles," he said.

The fighting is reducing U.N. aid operations during a time of growing need, Dujarric said, and the absence of essential supplies such as fuel in Tigray has led several humanitarian groups including the U.N. to reduce their presence in the region in the past week. He did not say how many U.N. staffers are in Mekele; there are several hundred in Tigray and about 1,300 humanitarian workers overall.

An Ethiopian Foreign Ministry statement on Monday said it was "absurd to expect unrestricted flow of humanitarian aid to the Tigray region while the (Tigray forces are) actively attacking neighboring areas."

The last time the Ethiopian military carried out an airstrike near Mekele was in June, when a market in Togoga outside the city was hit and at least 64 civilians were killed. Soldiers for hours blocked medical teams from responding to victims.

Associated Press writer Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed.

UK Parliament honors lawmaker slain at constituents' meeting

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prime Minister Boris Johnson led a somber British Parliament on Monday in honoring the Conservative lawmaker stabbed to death as he met constituents at a church hall, an attack that has raised questions about how the country protects its politicians and grapples with extremism at home.

The tributes from shaken and grieving colleagues came as detectives tried to determine whether David Amess was targeted simply because he was a legislator, or for more individual reasons. A 25-year-old British man with Somali heritage, Ali Harbi Ali, was arrested at the scene and is being held under the Terrorism Act on suspicion of murder. Police say the suspect may have had a "motivation linked to Islamist extremism."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 53 of 65

The prime minister told lawmakers that "this House has lost a steadfast servant."

"Sir David was taken from us in a contemptible act of violence, striking at the core of what it is to be a member of this House and violating the sanctity both of the church in which he was killed and the constituency surgery that is so essential to our representative democracy," Johnson said, referring to the open meetings British lawmakers hold with those they represent.

The death of the popular legislator — who had served in Parliament for almost 40 years and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2015 — has shocked Britain, especially its politicians. It came five years after Labour Party lawmaker Jo Cox was shot and stabbed to death by a far-right extremist. Cox was the first British lawmaker to be killed since a peace accord ended large-scale Northern Ireland violence almost 30 years earlier.

The House of Commons returned Monday from a three-week break for a session that opened with a prayer from the Speaker's chaplain, Tricia Hillas, and a minute of silence. Then lawmakers from all parties stood recall Amess fondly as a hard-working legislator who never sought high office but, as Johnson put it, "simply wanted to serve the people of Essex," his home county.

Amess, 69, was a social conservative who opposed abortion, campaigned for animal rights and strongly supported Britain's exit from the European Union.

Labour Party leader Keir Starmer, who often differed with Amess politically, said the late lawmaker held his beliefs "passionately but gently," and his life was a reminder that "civility matters."

After the tributes, lawmakers crossed the street from Parliament to the medieval St. Margaret's Church, for a memorial service that included prayers for those who "feel vulnerable in public service."

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said that, despite the horror of Amess' death, "the light lit by public service must never be put out."

"In the face of mindless injustice, we determine to shine it all the more brightly," said Welby, the leader of the Church of England.

The government has ordered a review of lawmakers' security following the attack on Friday in Leigh-on-Sea, a town in Amess' Southend West constituency 40 miles (60 kilometers) east of London. British politicians are protected by armed police when they are in Parliament but generally are not given such protection in their home districts.

That is despite the fact that many politicians say the amount of abuse they receive, both online and in person, has soared. Police in Wales said Monday they had arrested a 76-year-old man on suspicion of sending a death threat to Labour lawmaker Chris Bryant, the latest in a string of threats to politicians.

Bryant said the tenor of politics was "more sour now than I've known it in 20 years."

While many politicians fear for their safety, most also resist putting more barriers between themselves and the public in a country where lawmakers regularly hold "surgeries" to hear their constituents' complaints and suggestions.

The killing has also renewed debate about the threat from people radicalized by Islamic extremist or far-right ideology.

Multiple media outlets have reported that the suspect was referred several years ago to a government-sponsored program to steer people away from extremism, but was not considered a current subject of interest by the security services.

Ali comes from a family prominent in politics in Somalia. His father, Harbi Ali Kullane, a former adviser to Somalia's prime minister, told the Sunday Times he was "traumatized" by the attack and his son's arrest.

Ali is being questioned at a police station and has not yet been charged or appeared in court. Police have until Friday to charge or release him — though that time can be extended. They are working to determine what, if any, connection he had to Amess.

Amess had campaigned for children with disabilities, women with endometriosis and — tirelessly — for the town of Southend to be made a city. To cheers in Parliament on Monday, Johnson announced that the queen had agreed to grant Southend city status.

Amess was also a member of several committees, including the All-Party Parliamentary group for Tamils, which promotes the rights of the minority ethnic group in Sri Lanka, and was chairman of the All-Party

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 54 of 65

Parliamentary British-Qatar Group, which aims to build ties between the two countries. Amess visited the Gulf state just days before he was killed.

U.K. investigators so far have not found any evidence that the link to Qatar is significant.

On Monday, lawmakers and parliamentary staff left bouquets of flowers and handwritten notes in a courtyard at Parliament. Outside the Methodist church in Leigh-on-Sea, his widow, Julia, wiped away tears as she viewed the many flowers, notes and cards left by residents.

Amess' family said in a statement that they were struggling to comprehend what had happened.

"We ask people to set aside their differences and show kindness and love to all," said Julia Amess and the couple's five children. "This is the only way forward. Set aside hatred and work towards togetherness."

Center-left wins in Rome, elsewhere in blow to Italy's right

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italy's center-left forces won big in Rome, Turin and several other mayoral runoffs on Monday, dealing embarrassing defeats to the anti-migrant and far-right parties that are hoping to capture Italy's premiership in the next national election.

Roberto Gualtieri from Italy's Democratic Party trounced a challenger who had been selected by the Brothers of Italy, a party with neo-fascist roots, to win Rome's City Hall, taking some 60% of the vote, with nearly all the ballots counted.

Democratic Party leader Enrico Letta predicted that the center-left wins over right-wing alliances will dampen any push by conservative forces, which include the anti-migrant League party, to hold an early national election. That enhances Premier Mario Draghi's prospects of continuing in office until Parliament's term expires in 2023.

Letta also interpreted the Democratic Party-anchored winning alliances as resounding affirmation of Draghi's tough anti-pandemic policies. Those include a recently implemented Green Pass decree that workers must be vaccinated, recently recovered from COVID-19 or test negative for the virus to enter their workplaces. The rule has sparked protests, including violence, mainly by right-wing opponents.

"We (in the center-left) were on the side of broadening the Green Pass, on the side of the wide majority of Italians who want to work and want the country to be relaunched" by emerging from the pandemic, Letta told reporters.

The sole notable defeat for the center-left came in Trieste, where the center-right mayor, Roberto Di-piazza, won another term with 51.5% of the vote. Many angry port workers in that northeast city have opposed the Green Pass rule. On Monday, riot police repeatedly used water cannons to try to break up the protest, but demonstrators were still squaring off with officers into the evening.

In national opinion polls in recent months, both Matteo Salvini of the League and Giorgia Meloni of Brothers of Italy had been neck-in-neck in popularity. Meloni, whose far-right party is Parliament's main opposition party, bitterly opposed the Green Pass workplace requirement. Salvini, whose League is a Draghi coalition member, had sought vainly to convince Draghi to soften the rule by making COVID-19 tests free to workers who oppose vaccination.

"It had seemed inevitable" that for the right "the only question was who would be the next premier, Salvini or Meloni," said Letta, but he added that the center-left mayoral wins proved "rosier than any expectations."

In problem-plagued Rome, Gualtieri defeated Enrico Michetti, a novice politician handpicked by Meloni, who cited the low 40% turnout to diminish the Democratic candidate's victory.

"When the mayor of Rome is elected by 24% of those eligible to vote ... there is a crisis of democracy," Meloni said.

Gualtieri faces a Herculean task of cleaning up a city where trash and recycling collection is often inadequate, public buses have caught fire and broken elevators have put key subway stations out of service.

But "this city can be re-born," he insisted.

Meloni conceded "the center-right comes out defeated in these mayoral elections."

But she contended that it was the populist 5-Stars who had suffered the real "debacle," which recal-

brated Italy's national politics to a question of center-right vs. center-left. Barely a decade in existence, the 5-Stars' stunning success in 2018 saw them become Parliament's largest party and the kingmaker in deciding who became premier.

Rome's current 5-Star mayor, Virginia Raggi, was eliminated in first-round voting and the 5-Star mayor in Turin had declined to seek another term.

Salvini's northern-based right-wing party suffered some stinging setbacks in the mayoral races, including a resounding first-round defeat for his candidate for Milan, Italy's financial capital, which reelected its center-left mayor.

'He lied': Iraqis still blame Powell for role in Iraq war

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — For many Iraqis, the name Colin Powell conjures up one image: the man who as U.S. secretary of state went before the U.N. Security Council in 2003 to make the case for war against their country.

Word of his death Monday at age 84 dredged up feelings of anger in Iraq toward the former general and diplomat, one of several Bush administration officials whom they hold responsible for a disastrous U.S.-led invasion that led to decades of death, chaos and violence in Iraq.

His U.N. testimony was a key part of events that they say had a heavy cost for Iraqis and others in the Middle East.

"He lied, lied and lied," said Maryam, a 51-year-old Iraqi writer and mother of two in northern Iraq who spoke on condition her last name not be used because one of her children is studying in the United States.

"He lied, and we are the ones who got stuck with never-ending wars," she added.

As chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Powell oversaw the Persian Gulf war to oust the Iraqi army in 1991 after Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

But Iraqis remember Powell more for his U.N. presentation justifying the invasion of their country more than a decade later by casting Saddam as a major global threat who possessed weapons of mass destruction, even displaying a vial of what he said could have been a biological weapon. Powell had called Iraq's claims that it had no such weapons "a web of lies." No WMD were ever found, however, and the speech was later derided as a low point in his career.

"I am saddened by the death of Colin Powell without being tried for his crimes in Iraq. ... But I am sure that the court of God will be waiting for him," tweeted Muntadher al-Zaidi, an Iraqi journalist who vented his outrage at the U.S. by throwing his shoes at then-President George W. Bush during a 2008 news conference in Baghdad.

In 2011, Powell told Al Jazeera he regretted providing misleading intelligence that led the U.S. invasion, calling it a "blot on my record." He said a lot of sources cited by the intelligence community were wrong.

But in a 2012 interview with The Associated Press, Powell maintained that on balance, the U.S. "had a lot of successes" because "Iraq's terrible dictator is gone."

Saddam was captured by U.S. forces while hiding in northern Iraq in December 2003 and later executed by the Iraqi government.

But the insurgency that emerged from the U.S. occupation grew into deadly sectarian violence that killed countless Iraqi civilians, and the war dragged on far longer than had been predicted by the Bush administration and eventually helped give rise to the Islamic State group. President Barack Obama pulled U.S. troops out of Iraq in 2011 but sent advisers back in three years later after the Islamic State group swept in from Syria and captured large swaths of both countries.

Powell's U.N. testimony "resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqis. This blood is on his hands," said Muayad al-Jashami, a 37-year old Iraqi who works with nongovernmental organizations.

While he did not suffer direct losses, al-Jashami said he continues to struggle with stress and panic attacks as a result of growing up with war, displacement, and years of terrorist bombings in the country.

Aqeel al-Rubai, 42, who owns a clothes and cosmetics shop in Baghdad, said he doesn't care if Powell

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 56 of 65

regretted the faulty information he gave on WMD.

Al-Rubai, who lost his cousin in the war, also blames the U.S. for the death of his father, who had a close call during the sectarian blood-letting that followed the U.S. invasion, and later had a fatal heart attack.

"What does that remorse do for us? A whole country was destroyed, and we continue to pay the price," he said. "But I say may God have mercy on him."

Elsewhere, Powell was remembered as "a towering figure in American military and political leadership over many years, someone of immense capability and integrity," by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who backed the U.S. campaign and invasion.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas tweeted that Powell was a "straight-talking foreign policy official" and a "trans-Atlantic bridge-builder."

The Israeli Embassy in Washington praised Powell for his "commitment to Israel and his deep personal connection to the Jewish community."

Mary Robinson, the former president of Ireland, said Powell was "a wonderful, moral man who was misled terribly in the context of the Iraq war before the Security Council." Robinson heads The Elders, a group of retired world leaders.

But Maryam, the writer from northern Iraq, refuses to accept the idea that Powell may have been misled on Iraq.

"I don't believe that," she added. "And anyway, when lives are at stake, you do not have that luxury."

Karam reported from Beirut.

Facebook plans to hire 10,000 in Europe to build 'metaverse'

By KELVIN CHAN and MATT O'BRIEN Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Facebook said it plans to hire 10,000 workers in the European Union over the next five years to work on a new computing platform that promises to connect people virtually but could raise concerns about privacy and the social platform gaining more control over people's online lives.

The company said in a blog post Sunday that those high-skilled workers will help build "the metaverse," a futuristic notion for connecting online that uses augmented and virtual reality.

Facebook executives have been touting the metaverse as the next big thing after the mobile internet, though their track record is spotty on predicting future trends. Expectations that CEO Mark Zuckerberg made four years ago of taking virtual vacations with faraway loved ones via a headset or using a smartphone camera to improve an apartment virtually have not materialized so far.

The company also is contending with antitrust crackdowns, the testimony of whistleblowing former employees and concerns about how it handles vaccine-related and political misinformation.

"As we begin the journey of bringing the metaverse to life, the need for highly specialized engineers is one of Facebook's most pressing priorities," according to the blog post from Nick Clegg, vice president of global affairs, and Javier Oliván, vice president of central products.

Facebook's recruiters are targeting Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, the Netherlands and Ireland for the hiring drive. The company as of June reported having more than 63,000 employees worldwide, up 21% from the same time last year.

The metaverse essentially is a massive virtual world that can be accessed in real time by millions of people using avatars, who can use it to hold virtual meetings or buy virtual land and clothing or other digital assets, often paying with cryptocurrencies.

The social network isn't the only one working on the metaverse, and Facebook acknowledged that no single company will own and operate it. Other players include Fortnite maker Epic Games, which has raised \$1 billion from investors to help with its long-term plans for building the metaverse.

"There's not going to be specific metaverses to specific companies. There's only going to be one metaverse," said Tuong Nguyen, an analyst who tracks immersive technologies for research firm Gartner.

But there are concerns Facebook and a handful of other Silicon Valley giants would end up monopolizing the metaverse and use it to collect and profit from personal data, mirroring the situation now with

the internet.

Facebook last month announced a \$50 million investment to fund global research and partnerships with civil rights groups, nonprofits, governments and universities to develop products responsibly for the metaverse. But the company added that it would probably take 10 to 15 years to "fully realize" many of those products.

The term metaverse was coined by writer Neal Stephenson for his 1992 science fiction novel "Snow Crash" but has recently found new life in the tech business world as startups and tech giants try to stake their claim on an emerging trend.

Some of that involves a "little bit of metaverse-washing," or applying the term to existing initiatives in augmented reality and other technologies to take advantage of the hype around it, Nguyen said.

"It will help raise their profile, at least for the moment, as one of the leaders in metaverse initiatives," he said of Facebook's latest push. "But like any big technology trend, there will be competing ideas and competing standards."

In a separate blog post Sunday, Facebook defended its approach to combating hate speech, in response to a Wall Street Journal article that examined the company's inability to detect and remove hateful and excessively violent posts.

A British parliamentary committee that's working on online safety legislation was set to hear from two Facebook whistleblowers. The bill proposes big fines or other penalties for internet companies that don't remove and limit the spread of harmful material such as child sexual abuse or terrorist content.

Sophie Zhang, a data scientist who raised the alarm after finding evidence of online political manipulation in countries such as Honduras and Azerbaijan before she was fired, appeared before the committee Monday. She said social media companies should be required to apply policies consistently, adding that it's not what happened at Facebook.

Fake accounts that weren't directly tied to a political figure were easier to take down than those that weren't, she said.

This resulted in a "perverse effect in that it creates an incentive for major political figures to essentially commit a crime openly," Zhang said. She compared it to police taking a year to arrest a burglar who was a member of Parliament and didn't wear a mask.

"That's an analogy of what is going on at Facebook," Zhang said.

Next week, the committee will hear from Frances Haugen, who went public with internal Facebook research that she copied before leaving her job earlier this year. Haugen testified before a U.S. Senate panel this month about her accusations Facebook's platforms harm children and incite political violence, and her British appearance will be the start of a tour to meet European lawmakers and regulators.

O'Brien reported from Providence, Rhode Island.

British Museum to display the world's oldest map of stars

Associated Press undefined

LONDON (AP) — The British Museum will display what it says is the world's oldest surviving map of the stars in a major upcoming exhibition on the Stonehenge stone circle.

The 3,600-year-old "Nebra Sky Disc," first discovered in Germany in 1999, is one of the oldest surviving representations of the cosmos in the world and has never before been displayed in the U.K., the London museum said Monday.

The 30 centimeter (12 inch) bronze disc features a blue-green patina and is decorated with inlaid gold symbols thought to represent the sun, the moon and constellations.

The "World of Stonehenge" exhibition planned for next year will be the first time the disc has been loaned out from Germany for 15 years. The U.K. is only the fourth country the disc has travelled to after it was discovered buried in the ground in eastern Germany.

It will feature alongside an extremely rare 3,000-year-old sun pendant described by the British Museum

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 58 of 65

as the most significant piece of Bronze Age gold ever found in Britain.

"The Nebra Sky Disc and the sun pendant are two of the most remarkable surviving objects from Bronze Age Europe," said Neil Wilkin, the exhibition's curator.

"While both were found hundreds of miles from Stonehenge, we'll be using them to shine a light on the vast interconnected world that existed around the ancient monument, spanning Britain, Ireland and mainland Europe," he added. "It's going to be eye-opening."

The exhibition aims to share a wider history of the mythology and cosmology surrounding the 4,500-year-old Stonehenge in southern England. Hundreds of artefacts from across Britain and Europe telling the story of Stonehenge will also be displayed.

The exhibition runs from Feb.17 to July 17, 2022.

Why COVID boosters weren't tweaked to better match variants

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

More COVID-19 booster shots may be on the way -- but when it's your turn, you'll get an extra dose of the original vaccine, not one updated to better match the extra-contagious delta variant.

And that has some experts wondering if the booster campaign is a bit of a missed opportunity to target delta and its likely descendants.

"Don't we want to match the new strains that are most likely to circulate as closely as possible?" Dr. Cody Meissner of Tufts Medical Center, an adviser to the Food and Drug Administration, challenged Pfizer scientists recently.

"I don't quite understand why this is not delta because that's what we're facing right now," fellow adviser Dr. Patrick Moore of the University of Pittsburgh said last week as government experts debated whether it's time for Moderna boosters. He wondered if such a switch would be particularly useful to block mild infection.

The simple answer: The FDA last month OK'd extra doses of Pfizer's original recipe after studies showed it still works well enough against delta -- and those doses could be rolled out right away. Now the FDA is weighing evidence for boosters of the original Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines.

"It's less churn and burn on the manufacturing" to only switch formulas when it's really necessary, said FDA vaccine chief Dr. Peter Marks.

But Pfizer and Moderna are hedging their bets. They're already testing experimental doses customized to delta and another variant, learning how to rapidly tweak the formula in case a change eventually is needed -- for today's mutants or a brand new one. The tougher question for regulators is how they'd decide if and when to ever order such a switch.

What we know so far:

CURRENT VACCINES ARE WORKING EVEN AGAINST DELTA

Vaccines used in the U.S. remain strongly effective against hospitalization and death from COVID-19, even after the delta variant took over, but authorities hope to shore up waning protection against less severe infection and for high-risk populations. Studies show an extra dose of the original formulas revs up virus-fighting antibodies that fend off infection, including antibodies that target delta.

MIGHT A DELTA-SPECIFIC BOOSTER WORK EVEN BETTER?

Vaccines target the spike protein that coats the coronavirus. Mutations in that protein made delta more contagious but to the immune system, it doesn't look all that different, said virus expert Richard Webby of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

That means there's no guarantee a delta-specific booster would protect any better, said University of Pennsylvania immunologist John Wherry. Waiting for studies to settle that question -- and if necessary, brewing updated doses -- would have delayed rolling out boosters to people deemed to need them now.

Still, because delta is now the dominant version of the virus worldwide it almost certainly will be a common ancestor for whatever evolves next in a mostly unvaccinated world, said Trevor Bedford, a biologist and genetics expert at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 59 of 65

A delta-updated vaccine would "help to provide a buffer against those additional mutations," he said. Bedford is paid by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, which also supports The Associated Press Health and Science Department.

TWEAKING THE RECIPE

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are made with a piece of genetic code called messenger RNA that tells the body to make harmless copies of the spike protein so it's trained to recognize the virus. Updating the formula merely requires swapping out the original genetic code with mRNA for a mutated spike protein.

Both companies first experimented with tweaked doses against a mutant that emerged in South Africa, the beta variant, that has been the most vaccine-resistant to date, more so than the delta variant. Lab tests showed the updated shots produced potent antibodies. But the beta variant didn't spread widely.

Now the companies have studies underway of fully vaccinated people who agreed to test a booster dose tweaked to match delta. Moderna's studies also include some shots that combine protection against more than one version of the coronavirus -- much like today's flu vaccines work against multiple influenza strains.

The mRNA vaccines are considered the easiest kind to tweak but some other vaccine makers also are exploring how to change their recipes if necessary.

WHY STUDY UPDATED SHOTS IF THEY'RE NOT YET NEEDED?

Moderna's Dr. Jacqueline Miller told an FDA advisory panel last week the company is studying variant-specific boosters now to learn if they offer advantages, and to be ready if they're needed.

And Penn's Wherry said it is critical to carefully analyze how the body reacts to updated shots because the immune system tends to "imprint" a stronger memory of the first virus strain it encounters. That raises questions about whether a subtly different booster would prompt a temporary jump in antibodies the body's made before -- or the bigger goal, a broader and more durable response that might even be better positioned for the next mutations to come along.

NO RULES YET FOR MAKING A SWITCH

"What is the tripping point?" asked Webby, who is part of a World Health Organization network that tracks influenza evolution. "A lot of what is going to need to go into that decision making is just going to be learned by experience, unfortunately."

Bedford said now is the time to decide what drop in vaccine effectiveness would trigger a formula change, just as is done with flu vaccines every year.

That's important not just if a dramatically worse variant suddenly develops. Like many scientists, Bedford expects the coronavirus to eventually evolve from a global crisis into a regular threat every winter -- which might mean more regular boosters, maybe even yearly in combination with the flu shot.

Timing between shots matters, too, Wherry noted.

"Your boostability may actually improve with longer intervals between stimulation," he said. While scientists have learned a lot about the coronavirus, "the story's not finished yet and we don't know what the last chapters say."

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Norway: Bow-and-arrow attack victims likely stabbed to death

HELSINKI (AP) — Norwegian police say the Danish man suspected of killing five people and injuring three others in an attack last week also used "stabbing weapons" along with a bow and arrow to kill his victims.

Police inspector Per Thomas Omholt said it was likely the 37-year-old suspect, identified as Espen Andersen Braathen, first used arrows to wound his victims and then killed them by stabbing them with an unspecified weapon or weapons in Wednesday's attack in Kongsberg, a town of 26,000 southwest of the capital, Oslo.

"When it comes to weapons, we have previously stated that a bow and arrow has been used," Omholt told a news conference Monday. "Other weapons that have been used are stabbing weapons. We don't

want to go out with what kind of stabbing weapons were used as all witnesses at the scene haven't been questioned yet."

Andersen Braathen has confessed to the killings and has initially been charged with five murders. Omholt said, however, the list of charges would be extended as the investigation proceeds.

Omholt reiterated Norwegian police's assessment that the suspect's apparent mental illness was the likely cause for the attack, while Andersen Braathen's statement of being a convert to Islam had become a less important investigation line.

Norwegian police have identified the four female victims as Andrea Meyer, 52; Hanne Englund, 56; Liv Berit Borge, 75; and Gun Marith Madsen, 78. The male victim was Gunnar Erling Sauve, 75. Meyer is a native of Germany who had moved to Norway several years ago.

"So far, all indications are that these victims were randomly picked," Omholt said, adding that police had questioned some 60 witnesses.

The victims all lived on the same street in Kongsberg and several were part of its thriving artists' community, Norwegian media reported.

The regional police department received reports Wednesday evening about a man shooting arrows at the Coop Extra supermarket in central Kongsberg. According to a police timeline, the first information on the attack was logged at 6:13 p.m. and Andersen Braathen was caught at 6:47 p.m.

An unarmed police patrol spotted the suspect in the supermarket and Andersen Braathen shot at them with several arrows before fleeing. One of the wounded was an off-duty police officer inside the supermarket. The patrol called for reinforcements and armed police apprehended the suspect, but not before the victims were killed, police have said.

Norway's domestic intelligence agency has called for an independent investigation into the police's delay in capturing Andersen Braathen amid criticism that the police response was too slow.

The Coop Extra supermarket reopened on Monday, saying in a press release that the "tragic incident" had affected its employees, and its main focus was now to take care of them. No employees were wounded in the attack.

Vaccines, masks? Japan puzzling over sudden virus success

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Almost overnight, Japan has become a stunning, and somewhat mysterious, coronavirus success story.

Daily new COVID-19 cases have plummeted from a mid-August peak of nearly 6,000 in Tokyo, with caseloads in the densely populated capital now routinely below 100, an 11-month low.

The bars are packed, the trains are crowded, and the mood is celebratory, despite a general bafflement over what, exactly, is behind the sharp drop.

Japan, unlike other places in Europe and Asia, has never had anything close to a lockdown, just a series of relatively toothless states of emergency.

Some possible factors in Japan's success include a belated but remarkably rapid vaccination campaign, an emptying out of many nightlife areas as fears spread during the recent surge in cases, a widespread practice, well before the pandemic, of wearing masks and bad weather in late August that kept people home.

But with vaccine efficacy gradually waning and winter approaching, experts worry that without knowing what exactly why cases have dropped so drastically, Japan could face another wave like this summer, when hospitals overflowed with serious cases and deaths soared — though the numbers were lower than pre-vaccination levels.

Many credit the vaccination campaign, especially among younger people, for bringing infections down. Nearly 70 percent of the population is fully vaccinated.

"Rapid and intensive vaccinations in Japan among those younger than 64 might have created a temporary condition similar to herd-immunity," said Dr. Kazuhiro Tateda, a Toho University professor of virology.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 61 of 65

Tateda noted that vaccination rates surged in July to September, just as the more infectious delta variant was spreading fast.

He cautioned, however, that breakthrough infections in the U.S., Britain and other places where inoculations began months earlier than in Japan show that vaccines alone are not perfect and efficacy gradually wears off.

Japan's vaccinations started in mid-February, with health workers and the elderly first in line. Shortages of imported vaccines kept progress slow until late May, when the supply stabilized and daily inoculation targets were raised to above 1 million doses to maximize protection before the July 23-Aug. 8 Olympics.

The number of daily shots rose to about 1.5 million in July, pushing vaccination rates from 15% in early July to 65% by early October, exceeding the 57% of the United States.

Daily new cases surged just weeks ahead of the Olympics, forcing Japan to hold the Games with daily caseloads of more than 5,000 in Tokyo and around 20,000 nationwide in early August. Tokyo reported 40 cases Sunday, below 100 for the ninth straight day and lowest this year. Nationwide, Japan reported 429 cases Sunday for an accumulated total of about 1.71 million and 18,000 deaths since the pandemic began early last year.

So why the drop?

"It's a tough question, and we have to consider the effect of the vaccinations progress, which is extremely big," said Disease Control and Prevention Center Director Norio Ohmagari. "At the same time, people who gather in high-risk environments, such as crowded and less-ventilated places, may have been already infected and acquired natural immunity by now."

Though some speculated that the drop in cases might be due to less testing, Tokyo metropolitan government data showed the positivity rate fell from 25% in late August to 1% in mid-October, while the number of tests fell by one-third. Masataka Inokuchi, the Tokyo Medical Association deputy chief, said falling positivity rates show infections have slowed.

Japan's state of emergency measures were not lockdowns but requests that focused mainly on bars and eateries, which were asked to close early and not serve alcohol. Many people continued to commute on crowded trains, and attended sports and cultural events at stadiums with some social distancing controls.

The emergency requests have ended and the government is gradually expanding social and economic activity while allowing athletic events and package tours on a trial basis using vaccination certificates and increased testing.

To speed up inoculations, former Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who left office recently, expanded the number of health workers legally eligible to give shots, opened large-scale vaccination centers and promoted workplace vaccinations beginning in late June.

Kyoto University professor Hiroshi Nishiura told a recent government advisory board meeting that he estimates vaccinations helped some 650,000 people avoid infection and saved more than 7,200 lives between March and September.

Many experts initially blamed younger people, seen drinking on the streets and in parks when the bars were closed, for spreading the virus, but said data showed many in their 40s and 50s also frequented nightlife districts. Most serious cases and deaths were among unvaccinated people in their 50s or younger.

Takaji Wakita, director of the National Institute of Infectious Diseases, told reporters recently he is worried people have already resumed partying in nightlife districts, noting that the slowing of infections may have already hit bottom.

"Looking ahead, it is important to further push down the caseloads in case of a future resurgence of infections," Wakita said Thursday.

On Friday, new Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said a preparedness plan to be compiled by early November would include tougher limits on activities and require hospitals to provide more beds and staff for COVID-19 treatment in case infections soar in a "worst-case scenario."

He did not elaborate on details.

Many people are cautious about letting down their guard, regardless of the numbers.

Mask-wearing "has become so normal," said university student Mizuki Kawano. "I'm still worried about the virus," she said.

"I don't want to get close to those who don't wear masks," said her friend, Alice Kawaguchi.

Public health experts want a comprehensive investigation into why infections have dropped off.

An analysis of GPS data showed that people's movements in major downtown entertainment districts fell during the most recent, third state of emergency, which ended Sept. 30.

"I believe the decrease of people visiting entertainment districts, along with the vaccination progress, has contributed to the decline of infections," said Atsushi Nishida, the director of the Research Center for Social Science & Medicine Sciences at the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Medical Science.

But people headed back to entertainment districts as soon as the recent emergency ended, he said, and that may "affect the infection situation in coming weeks."

AP journalist Chisato Tanaka contributed to this report.

Follow Mari Yamaguchi on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/mariyamaguchi>

Sites where Germans killed Jews are dedicated in Poland

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WOJSLAWICE, Poland (AP) — The Polish witnesses of the German crime in Wojslawice lived for decades with the memories of their Jewish neighbors executed in 1942. They remembered a meadow that flowed with blood, a child who cried out for water from underneath a pile of bodies, arms and legs that still moved days after the execution.

In the years that followed, those who had seen the crime shared their knowledge with their children, warning them to stay away from the spot behind the Orthodox church where some 60 Jews, among them 20 children, were murdered on that October day.

"When I was a young boy I was running around these meadows but the elders were saying: 'please do not run there because there are buried people, buried Jews,'" said Marian Lackowski, a retired police officer whose late mother witnessed the execution in the small town in eastern Poland.

Born after the war, Lackowski has devoted years to ensuring that the victims receive a dignified burial, a mission he finally fulfilled Thursday as he gathered with Jewish and Christian clergy, the mayor, school-children and other members of the town.

Beginning at the town hall, the group walked solemnly down a hill to the execution site, their silence broken only by roosters and barking dogs. After they arrived at the spot, church bells rang out from the town's Catholic church and a trumpet called at noon. Jewish and Christian prayers were recited and mourners lit candles and placed stones in the Jewish tradition at a new memorial erected over the bones. "May their souls have a share in eternal life," it reads.

The mass grave site in Wojslawice is tragically not unique. During the German occupation of Poland during World War II, the Germans imprisoned Jews in ghettos and murdered them in death camps including Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor. But they also shot them in fields and forests near their homes, leaving behind mass graves across Poland, many of which have only come to light in recent years.

Germany invaded Poland in 1939, the act that started the war and began some five years of brutal occupation. Ethnic Poles were considered racially inferior by the Germans and sent to labor and concentration camps and sometimes executed on the streets. Jews were targeted for total destruction, a goal that the Third Reich came close to achieving.

Amid the occupation, ethnic Poles were sometimes bystanders of the Holocaust, sometimes the saviors of Jews and sometimes the executioners' helpers. It's a traumatic history that was often suppressed during the decades of communist rule but has been the subject of soul searching since.

Poland's nationalist government seeks to highlight Polish heroism and play down Polish crimes — to the point it has been accused by Israel of historical whitewashing.

Nonetheless, across Poland many regular people are engaged at the local level in preserving Jewish

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 63 of 65

cemeteries or doing other work to preserve remembrance of the nation's lost Jews.

Agnieszka Nieradko, co-founder of a Warsaw-based foundation devoted to finding the unmarked graves and securing them, said the large scale of unmarked graves started to become clear about a decade ago. The person she credits with their discovery is Zbigniew Nizinski, a Protestant man whose religious convictions led him to pay tribute to the Polish Jews who helped make Poland a multicultural land for the centuries before the Holocaust.

Nizinski, often traveling by bike, would go to small communities and ask local people where the Jewish cemetery was. The response was often: Did he mean the old prewar cemetery, or the unmarked wartime grave? Nizinski would then report his discoveries to the Rabbinical Commission for Jewish Cemeteries in Poland and created a foundation to help dedicate the sites.

Eventually the task was too much for Nizinski, and Nieradko and Aleksander Schwarz co-founded a foundation in 2014 under the auspices of the rabbinical commission to find and preserve as many Holocaust graves as possible, a race against time as eyewitness grow older and die.

The foundation is called Zapomniane, which means "Forgotten," but Nieradko has since come to realize that forgotten doesn't really capture the full truth of the unmarked graves.

"They operate somewhere on the margins of local history but they have never been forgotten. When we go to those places, we don't discover anything new for these people," she said. "Everyone knows about Jews buried in the forest or Jews buried somewhere on the meadow. It is oral history that is transmitted from generation to generation."

Nieradko and Rabbi Michael Schudrich, the American-born chief rabbi of the country, frequently travel to communities for ceremonies dedicating new memorials at the sites. Nieradko says over 50 mass grave sites have been commemorated, 70 have been secured with wooden markers and she believes there are more still to be found.

Schudrich said ceremonies like the one Thursday in Wojslawice give the Holocaust victims their much-deserved graves, and offer a sense of closure to local people who witnessed the murders.

Some Jewish survivors and descendants also finally have a grave to visit. Schudrich recalled how one survivor in Israel returned to Poland for the dedication of a memorial where her mother and siblings were killed after she got separated from them at the start of the war.

"She just stood and hugged the matzevah (grave stone) because she never got to see her mother again," he recalled.

The foundation uses ground penetrating radar, a surveying method called light detection and ranging, or LIDAR, and wartime aerial photos made by German army spy planes to precisely define the borders of the graves. But nothing is more important than human memory.

"If you don't have a person to lead you to the grave, all those fancy tools are useless," she said.

Nieradko said the sites of graves are found largely thanks to the testimony of the eyewitnesses. Their memories are often preserved by children and grandchildren.

Exhumations are never carried out because Judaism teaches that human remains are sacred and must not be touched.

After the graveside ceremony, the mourners moved to Wojslawice's renovated synagogue, where the mayor paid tribute to the multiethnic nature of the prewar town, where Poles, Ukrainians and Jews lived side by side.

A man from nearby Chelm whose mother is Jewish stood up during the events to praise the tolerance of the local leaders, lamenting that is not the case everywhere.

Lackowski, who had worked many years to commemorate the burial site, expressed his satisfaction that the victims finally have a proper memorial.

He said that in his work he collected testimony from eight witnesses "who tell horrible stories that the meadow flowed with blood, that a child cried out for a drink from this pile (of bodies), that even after being buried for a few days, there were arms and legs sticking out of this pile that were still moving. It was something terrible."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 64 of 65

The few remaining eyewitnesses were mostly too feeble to attend the ceremony. Only 94-year-old Boleslaw Sitarz joined the town's commemorations in the synagogue. He was 15 when he saw the Jews being lined up and taken to the spot behind the Orthodox church. "Screaming, shouting, lamenting did not help," he said. After they were gunned down, he said, dogs came at night and scattered the bodies.

He expressed satisfaction that a ceremony was finally held to honor them. "These were our neighbors," he said.

Nieradko says she and her foundation limit their work to where they are wanted. She has also learned of massacres where local people were involved in the murders, and there is less of a willingness to cooperate and have the spot commemorated.

"We choose sites where there is hope for putting a monument," she said. "The difficult places we just leave for better times."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Oct. 19, the 292nd day of 2021. There are 73 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 19, 2001, U.S. special forces began operations on the ground in Afghanistan, opening a significant new phase of the assault against the Taliban and al-Qaida.

On this date:

In 1781, British troops under Gen. Lord Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, Virginia, as the American Revolution neared its end.

In 1789, John Jay was sworn in as the first Chief Justice of the United States.

In 1944, the U.S. Navy began accepting Black women into WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service).

In 1950, during the Korean Conflict, United Nations forces entered the North Korean capital of Pyongyang.

In 1953, the Ray Bradbury novel "Fahrenheit 451," set in a dystopian future where books are banned and burned by the government, was first published by Ballantine Books.

In 1960, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested during a sit-down protest at a lunch counter in Atlanta. (Sent to prison for a parole violation over a traffic offense, King was released after three days following an appeal by Robert F. Kennedy.)

In 1977, the supersonic Concorde made its first landing in New York City.

In 1987, the stock market crashed as the Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged 508 points, or 22.6 percent in value (its biggest daily percentage loss), to close at 1,738.74 in what came to be known as "Black Monday."

In 2002, in York, Pa., former mayor Charlie Robertson was acquitted and two other men were convicted in the shotgun slaying of Lillie Belle Allen, a young Black woman, during race riots that tore the city apart in 1969.

In 2003, Pope John Paul II beatified Mother Teresa during a ceremony in St. Peter's Square.

In 2010, the Pentagon directed the military to accept openly gay recruits for the first time in the nation's history.

In 2015, Canadians voted for a sharp change in their government as the Liberals led by Justin Trudeau, the son of a former prime minister, won a landslide victory to end Conservative Stephen Harper's near decade in office.

Ten years ago: Authorities in the Zanesville, Ohio, area wound down their hunt for wild animals unleashed by a private farm owner who'd taken his own life; sheriff's deputies shot and killed a total of 48 animals. In Greece, hundreds of youths smashed and looted stores in central Athens and clashed with riot police during a massive anti-government rally against painful new austerity measures.

Five years ago: In the third and final 2016 presidential debate, Republican Donald Trump stunned the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 104 ~ 65 of 65

forum in Las Vegas by refusing to say he would accept the results of the election if he were to lose; Democrat Hillary Clinton declared Trump's resistance "horrifying."

One year ago: Floridians began early voting in much of the state with no serious problems reported as the Trump campaign tried to cut into an early advantage Democrats had posted in mail-in votes in the key swing state. President Donald Trump told campaign staffers that people were tired of hearing from Dr. Anthony Fauci "and all these idiots" about the coronavirus; he called Fauci "a disaster." Health officials in northwestern Kansas said 10 residents of a nursing home had died of the coronavirus and that all 62 residents of the nursing home and an unspecified number of employees had tested positive. British guitarist and bandleader Spencer Davis, whose eponymous rock group had 1960s hits including "Gimme Some Lovin'" and "I'm a Man," died at the age of 81.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Tony Lo Bianco is 85. Artist Peter Max is 84. Author and critic Renata Adler is 84. Actor Michael Gambon is 81. Actor John Lithgow (LIHTH'-goh) is 76. Feminist activist Patricia Ireland is 76. Singer Jeannie C. Riley is 76. Rock singer-musician Patrick Simmons (The Doobie Brothers) is 73. Actor Annie Golden is 70. Talk show host Charlie Chase is 69. Rock singer-musician Karl Wallinger (World Party) is 64. Former Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele is 63. Singer Jennifer Holiday is 61. Retired boxer Evander Holyfield is 59. Host Ty Pennington (TV: "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition") is 57. Rock singer-musician Todd Park Mohr (Big Head Todd and the Monsters) is 56. Actor Jon Favreau is 55. Amy Carter is 54. "South Park" co-creator Trey Parker is 52. Comedian Chris Kattan is 51. Rock singer Pras Michel (The Fugees) is 49. Actor Omar Gooding is 45. Country singer Cyndi Thomson is 45. Writer-director Jason Reitman is 44. Actor Benjamin Salisbury is 41. Actor Gillian Jacobs is 39. Actor Rebecca Ferguson is 38. Rock singer Zac Barnett (American Authors) is 35. Singer-actor Ciara Renee (TV: "Legends of Tomorrow") is 31. Actor Hunter King is 28.