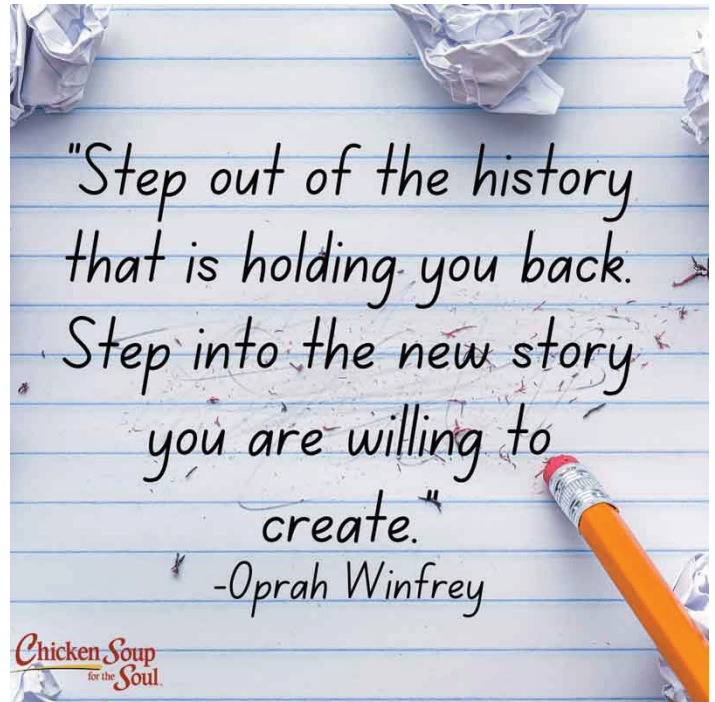


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Upcoming Events

Tuesday, Nov. 9

Junior High GBB at Webster Area. 7th Grade at 4 p.m. followed by 8th grade game
SoDak16: Hamlin vs. Mobridge-Pollock at Groton at 6 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 11

2 p.m.: Veteran's Day Program in the Arena
Junior High GBB: Langford at Groton. 7th grade game at 4 p.m. followed by 8th grade game

Friday & Saturday, Nov. 12-13

Debate & Oral Interp at SF Washington

Junior High Activity buses may have to be eliminated

Junior high activity buses could be on the chopping block, but not by choice. Superintendent Joe Schwan said the district barely has enough bus drivers for the routes and when a junior high activity bus is run, it takes a driver off the route. Coaches could take the vans and the parents would car pool for the players. "We'll do what we can," Schwan said, "but there may come a time when we'll have to stop the activity buses for junior high events."

Schwan reported on the 2021 District and School Report Card. He said it looked well and was not disappointed in the results. There were no areas that brought up a red flag, especially with the COVID-19 year.

Karen Johnson resigned as kitchen staff effective October 12 due to health issues.

Alexandria Homsombath was hired as study hall/office assistant at \$12 and hour.

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

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 Chamber of Commerce

November 3, 2021

12pm City Hall

- Individuals present: Kellie Locke, Becky Hubsch, Katelyn Nehlich, Carol Kutter, April Abeln, Ashley Smith, and Lori Westby
- Hubsch spoke about the GHS Internship Program. The school is looking for local businesses willing to mentor 20 high school seniors from January-May 2022. If anyone is interested, please email her at becky.hubsch@k12.sd.us. Kutter will set up a time to come and speak to a GHS business classes.
- Minutes from the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Westby and seconded by Smith. All members present voted aye.
- Treasurer's report was given by Nehlich. Dacotah Bank checking account balance is \$8,508.49 and \$1299.40 is in the bucks account. Report was approved by Smith and seconded by Locke. All members present voted aye.
- Closing date for the water tower memorabilia order is November 15th.
- Fall advertising opportunities were discussed. Motion by Abeln and seconded by Smith to create a Facebook holiday shopping ad to be ran November 5th - December 20th for a maximum price of \$150. Motion also included printing and hanging flyers of the same advertisement. All members present voted aye. Smith will converse with Next Level Nutrition on joining her 12 Days of Christmas Giveaway.
- Oliver picked up the window clings for 2022 Chamber members and will mail when dues are received.
- Pumpkin Fest report was given. Over \$2,000 was taken in for donations the day of the event to go towards a new bathroom facility at the City Park.
- Santa Day is December 11th. Westby is planning the event at PMS.
- Snow Queen date got changed to November 21st.
- Chamber board member shirts have been ordered but there have been some delays.
- Abeln will line up a welcome visit with Sarah Dennert of Sarah Joan Photography.
- Abeln completed the 990-N (e-Postcard) along with the NVC/JVT Application for Donated Services, which was approved for the internet to run the highway 12 electronic sign.
- Motion by Abeln and seconded by Smith to gift Kristi Eckrich a water tower tumbler along with \$50 Chamber bucks for her donated photography for the water tower memorabilia. All members present voted aye.
- Motion by Abeln and seconded by Locke to have a Subway catered lunch at our December 1st meeting. All members present voted aye. Abeln will take care of ordering and Kutter will pick up.
- Locke reported on upcoming Wage Memorial Library events and extended an invitation to businesses to bring and decorate a tree at the library for Olive Grove's Tour of Homes event. The Grand Opening for Wage Memorial Library is scheduled for December 11th from 9:30-11:30am.
- Next meeting:
 - December 1st at City Hall 12-1pm (Subway Catered Lunch)
- Upcoming events
 - Nov. 11, 12, 13- Lori's Pharmacy Open House
 - Nov. 12, 13- Beauty Brew Boutique Open House
 - Nov. 12, 13 & 14- Front Porch 605 Christmas at the Barn
 - Nov. 13- Turkey Party- Legion
 - Nov. 21- Snow Queen (NOTICE DATE CHANGE)
 - Nov. 25- Community Thanksgiving Dinner
 - Dec. 4- OGGC Tour of Homes
 - Dec. 11- Santa Day & Wage Memorial Library Grand Opening

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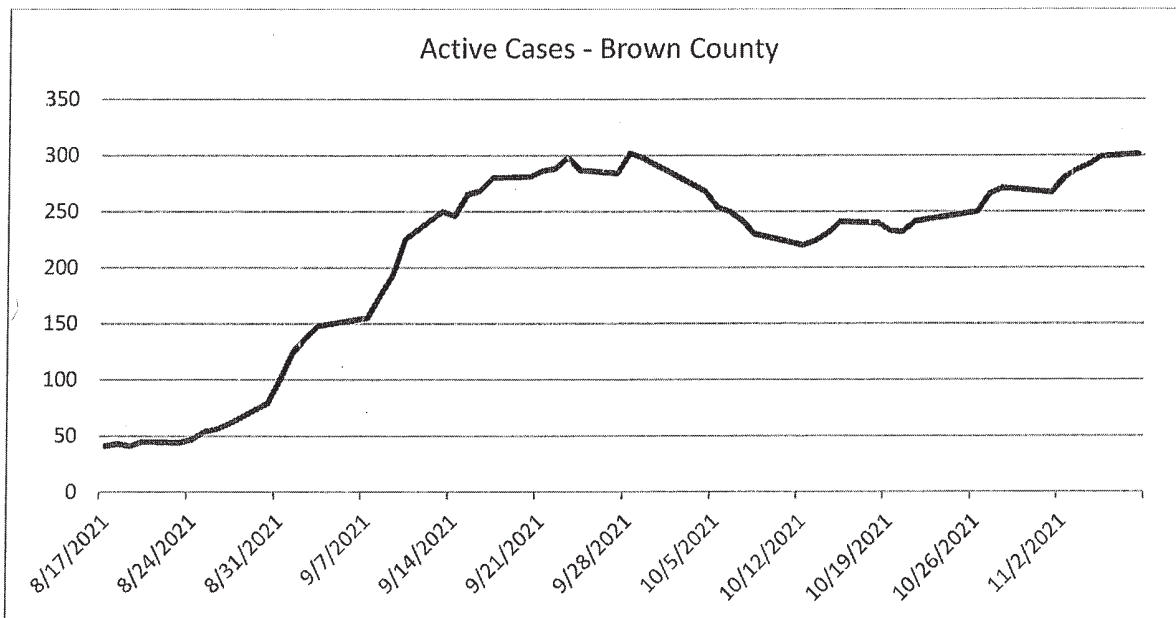
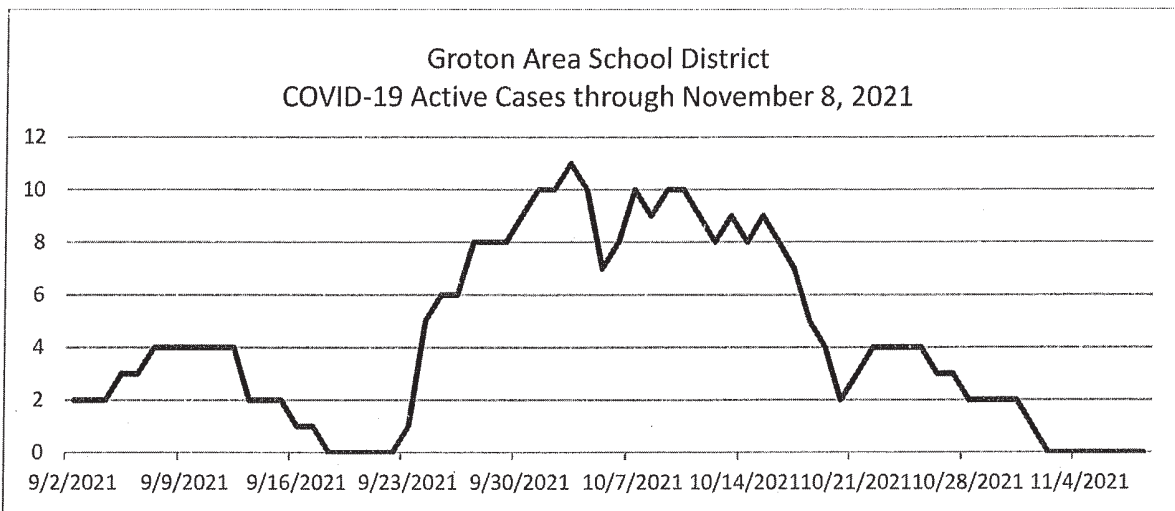
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Superintendent's Report to the Groton Area School District 06-6 Board of Education

November 8, 2021

COVID-19 Case Count.

To date, we've had 28 students or staff members test positive for COVID-19. From those, we've sent 66 notifications to families regarding their child meeting the definition of close contact in the school setting. One of those 66 students (1.55%) subsequently tested positive for COVID-19.



COVID-19 Testing. We've been consistently receiving 135 boxes of Quidel QuickVue tests each week for distribution to students and staff. Last week's allocation arrived today and we anticipate the arrival of the next set by the end of the week.

ESSER Applications. Our District "Learn On" Plan and our ARP ESSER plan have been re-submitted with modifications as requested by the DOE program reviewer. We're awaiting response on our changes from DOE. The initial ESSER-II application has been approved. The ARP ESSER-III application has not.

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School Bus Extrication Drill. This event was postponed as firemen/EMTs were busy with harvest.

Activity Trip Drivers. There may be times during the upcoming winter sports seasons where we need to seek help from parent drivers for extra-curricular activities. In particular, it may make sense to do this with junior high activities (e.g. boys/girls basketball) where most parents are already in attendance. Doing so would allow for our regular route drivers to stay on their routes and lessen the need for substitute drivers.

Pre-Student Teacher Opportunity. Last week I had the opportunity to talk with a cohort of future secondary teachers at NSU. Our topic was teacher ethics and social media.

Social Studies Standards Revision. As has been publicly reported in October, Governor Noem directed the SD Department of Education to re-start a review of the SD Social Studies Standards. DOE is beginning to appoint members of the Social Studies Standards Revision Commission (nominations open until November 14). If the commission stays on schedule, it is anticipated they'll release a draft proposal for public comment in August 2022 followed by required public hearings through next school year and final adoption in March of 2023. We would use the 2023-24 school year as a "transition year" and evaluate curriculum against the standards and teach to the new standards beginning in the fall of 2024.

SASD Leadership. I've been participating in the SASD Leadership Academy since the start of the year in lieu of some of the other PD opportunities. Our first meeting was on September 29th and centered on "Leading Self." Our next session will be on "Leading Others" and is scheduled for Tuesday, 11/16. The class is taught by Tom Oster and Rick Melmer and uses two books – "The Power of Postive Leadership" by Jon Gordon and "Tuesday Morning Coaching" by David Cottrell. The class consists of 23 school administrators from across South Dakota.

Region VB. Last week Tuesday, we hosted Region 1B volleyball in the Arena and tomorrow night, we'll host SoDak-16 volleyball in the Arena.

Goal Setting Workshop. As a reminder we'll be meeting on Monday, December 6 at 4:00 PM for board development workshop and goal setting work. Mr. Holbeck's presentation/discussion will last approximately 2.5 hours.

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Elementary Principal Report

Brett Schwan

November 8, 2021

Enrollment:

PS-10

JK-16

KG-43

1st-35

2nd-47

3rd-48

4th-42

5th-41

Total: 282

5th Grade Music Concert: Aberdeen Community Concert Association (Barb Paepke) invited our 5th grade students to attend Black Market Trust on Friday, Nov 12 at 1:00 in the Johnson Fines Arts Center. This is a special performance for area schools to attend.

The Black Market Trust is an American pop/vocal jazz band that combines the sounds of the great American crooners and vocal groups with the romantic Eastern European gypsy fire of jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt. Consisting of five world class musicians who have traveled the globe recording and performing on the world's biggest stages and with music's most renowned artists, The Black Market Trust capitalize on their experience and pedigree to bring a new and exciting sound to audiences and listeners.

4th Grade Science: Emily Wheeler is the head teacher for this project through NSU. Two education majors go to local 4th grade classrooms to present a hands-on science experiment. Starting in October, they come with a different project every 4-6 weeks. Each project starts with a video/PowerPoint stating information about what they will be learning about.

The first project they did with our students was color fading. Students were put in groups and given the supplies needed to find out which colors make up each color in a marker. It was interesting to watch the students' surprises as they found out that most colors have other colors that make them up. The November project was dissecting owl pellets. Students worked with a partner to find out what their animal ate. They removed different bones, fur, etc. and placed it on an identification sheet to find out what animal the owl had eaten.

This is the 3rd year we are participating, and students always look forward to the projects

OST Fundraiser: Groton Area Elementary Students are currently selling coffee for OST. This year we will be purchasing STEM projects with all of the money we raise. If you're interested in some

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Driven Coffee please contact Brett Schwan at the elementary school or an elementary student. Thank you!!

Veterans Day Breakfast and Program: Our annual Veterans Day Breakfast is back this year. Kitchen staff will be serving biscuits and gravy, rolls, and potatoes for breakfast from 7:30-8:30. Please invite a veteran to attend!!! Students will also be attending the Veterans Day program at 2:00. Parents are asked to fill out the sheets that were sent home so teachers know what student's dismissal plans are. OST will be open after the program.

Math Curriculum Review: Our 6 year subscription to Envision2.0 is up at the end of the school year. Even though we are not on our regular math rotation, elementary teachers will have to determine if they want to renew our current subtraction with Savvy (Envision2020) or purchase from a different company.

Science Curriculum: We are in the same situation with our Science Fusion subscription. After talk with Mr. Joe Schwan, we will continue with this curriculum for the next two years and then do a full curriculum review. This will also align closely to the state's content review.

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Principal's Report

MS/HS Building

Mrs. Sombke

November 8, 2021

1) Enrollment MS/HS Building

November 2020

November 2021

6- 45

9- 45

6- 52

9- 50

7- 49

10- 48

7- 39

10- 41

8- 51

11- 46

8- 47

11- 42

MS= 145

12- 51

MS= 138

12- 46

HS=190

HS= 179

Total= 335

Total=317

2) MAPS Assessment

- Grades 6-11 Assessments in Math, English, and Science were completed in September and early October to establish baseline
- Grades 6-11 will complete mid-year assessments again at the end of 2nd semester
- Year end assessments will be completed between middle to end of April
- Overall assessment data and results will help identify learning loss and inform instruction

3) CTE (Career and Technical Education) Training

- Groton Area Team of Mrs. Hubsch, Mr. Franken, Ms. VanGerpen, and Mrs. Sombke attended on November 20th in Aberdeen
- CTE Packet/Information
- Groton Area is part of a consortium
- Each group worked within School Team to problem solve and brainstorm through program improvement challenges and opportunities

4) Dual Credit Registration

- Registration for Dual Credit Spring 2022 Courses was held today during student's dual credit or study hall hours for 4-year Board of Regents Schools
- Registration for Dual Credit Spring 2022 Courses for 2-year Technical College programs will be held tomorrow during student's dual credit or study hall hours
- Tomorrow Lee Quale from Lake Area Technical College will be here to enroll students from 9:30-12 noon

5) Veterans Day 11/11/21

- 7:30am Veteran's Breakfast at Elementary School
- Veteran's Day Program @ 2:00pm in Groton Area Arena

6) Native American Heritage Month- November

- Wo'okiye Project and Essential Understandings (OSEU)
- Classroom Materials from SDDOE to expand and grow understanding and knowledge for all people

7) Informational Post with "Dates to Know"

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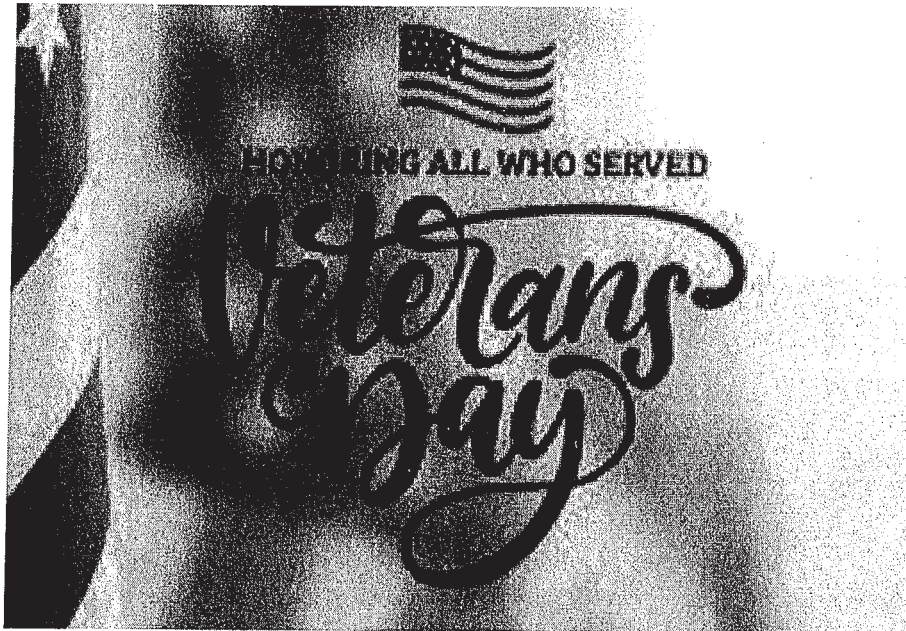
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Student Name: _____ Student Grade: _____ Graduation Year: _____

BASIC DIPLOMA	ADVANCED CAREER ENDORSEMENT	ADVANCED ENDORSEMENT	ADVANCED HONORS ENDORSEMENT
<i>This meets the minimum units required by the State of SD and the Groton Area Board of Education. All students are encouraged to do more than the minimum to be well prepared for college and future careers.</i>	<i>Students earning this distinction have chosen classes and experiences to make them well prepared to continue their education in a specific area.</i>	<i>This endorsement meets the course requirements to be accepted into SD Universities and Technical Institutes. GAHS encourages students to look at this pathway as the standard graduation plan.</i>	<i>Students earning this distinction have elected to take a rigorous sequence of courses throughout high school. This plan includes extra units of Math, Science, and CTE/Language.</i>
1 cr – English 9	1 cr- English 9	1 cr – English 9	1 cr- English 9
1 cr – English 10 (.5 speech or .5 Debate)	1 cr- English 10 (.5 speech or .5 Debate)	1 cr—English 10 (.5 speech or .5 Debate)	1 cr- English 10 (.5 speech or .5 Debate)
1 cr- English 11	1 cr- English 11	1 cr- English 11	1 cr- English 11
1 cr – English 12	1 cr- English 12	1 cr- English 12	1 cr- English 12
1cr – Math:	1 cr- Math:	1 cr- Algebra II	1 cr – Algebra II
1 cr – Geometry (or Inf. Geometry)	1 cr- Geometry (or Informal Geometry)	1 cr- Geometry (or Informal Geometry)	1 cr- Geometry 1 cr- Advanced Math
1 cr – Algebra I	1 cr- Algebra I	1 cr- Algebra I	1 cr– Algebra I
1 cr – Physical Science	1 cr- Physical Science	1 cr – Physical Science	1 cr- Physical Science
1 cr – Biology I	1 cr- Biology I	1 cr- Biology I	1 cr- Biology I
1 cr - Science:	1 cr - Science:	1 cr- Lab Science:	1 cr- Chemistry I
.5 cr- World Hist	.5 cr- World Hist	.5 cr- World Hist	1 cr-Bio II/Chem II/ Physics
.5 cr- Geography	.5 cr- Geography	.5 cr- Geography	.5 cr- World Hist
.5 cr – US Government	.5 cr- US Government	.5 cr- US Government	.5 cr- Geography
1 cr – US History	1 cr- US History	1 cr- US History	.5 cr- US Government
.5 Soc. Stu:	.5 Soc. Stu:	.5 Soc. Stu:	1 cr – US History
.5 cr- PE	.5 cr- PE	.5 cr- PE	.5 cr- Soc. Stu:
.5 cr- Health	.5 cr- Health	.5 cr- Health	.5 cr- PE
.5 cr- Personal Finance	.5 cr- Personal Finance	.5 cr- Personal Finance	.5 cr- Health
1 cr – Fine Arts:	1 cr- Fine Arts:	1 cr- Fine Arts:	.5 cr- Personal Finance
1 cr – CTE:	2 cr- CTE or Foreign Lang:	1 cr- CTE or Foreign Lang:	1 cr- Fine Arts:
			2 cr- CTE or Foreign Lang:
5.5 cr- Electives:	4.5 cr- Electives:	5.5 cr-Electives:	2.5 cr- Electives:
			Regents Scholar Cert:
			ACT Score: Must be 24
Total Credits:	Total Credits:	Total Credits:	Total Credits:
Credits Needed: 22	Credits Needed: 22	Credits Needed: 22	Credits Needed: 22
Classes Needed:	Classes Needed:	Classes Needed:	Classes Needed:

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Hello students and families!

Happy November! I hope you are all enjoying the beautiful fall weather we've been having and taking advantage of the above freezing temperatures, as we know in South Dakota that winter temps will surely follow!

This week we will be celebrating Veteran's Day with a Veteran's Breakfast held at the Elementary School beginning at 7:30am, and a traditional program beginning at 2:00pm in the Groton Area Arena. Please scroll down to view the class and **bell schedule for the MS/HS Building** for the school day on **November 11th**, as classes will run on a shortened schedule.

Some other highlights to note this week are the dual credit enrollment days:

- Monday November 8th for Board of Regents 4-year schools. All juniors and seniors may see Mrs. Schwan on Monday November 8th **DURING** their current dual credit hour to register for next semester, any student not currently enrolled in a dual credit course may see Mrs. Schwan during their study hall.
- Tuesday November 9th for South Dakota Technical College 2-year programs. All juniors and seniors may see Mrs. Schwan and Lee Quale from Lake Area Technical College during their current dual credit hour, or study hall hour if student does not have a dual credit course this semester. Lee Quale is the Dual Credit Enrollment Representative from Lake Area Technical College and can help students register for enrollment in any of the South Dakota Technical Colleges.

For your convenience, additional "Dates to Know" are listed below. Have a great week, and a happy fall everyone!

Mrs. Sombke

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South Dakota

DEPARTMENT OF TRIBAL RELATIONS
OFFICE OF INDIAN EDUCATION

711 East Wells Ave., Pierre, SD 57501 • 605.773.3415



Greetings from the South Dakota Office of Indian Education and the Wóokiye Project!

The Wóokiye Project, under direction of the South Dakota Office of Indian Education, is a Bush Foundation grant project whose goal is to create and implement a network of support that will help, aid, and assist teachers as they become proficient in using the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings (OSEU). The Lakota term Wóokiye means to help, aid, assist.

In 2008, the Oceti Sakowin core concepts were developed by a team of educators and experts in culture, history, oral traditions, and language that focused on the essential to understanding and teachings of the Oceti Sakowin history and culture. Upon completion of the identification of the Oceti Sakowin Core Concepts, a smaller work group was created to develop essential understandings and standards. Over the course of the years 2012-15, the Oceti Sakowin workgroup will develop curriculum based on the South Dakota Essential Understandings and Standards. The work was designed to provide compatibility to the South Dakota social studies standards

On March 19, 2018, the State Board of Education Standards adopted the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings (OSEU) and included them in the State's standards.

In an effort to help, aid and assist the teachers of South Dakota's schools become proficient in using the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings (OSEU), you will find enclosed OSEU textbooks containing the essential understandings for use in guiding teaching of the standards. Also enclosed are posters of Tribal Elders reflecting on each essential understanding. These materials are provided to you by and through the Wóokiye Project and the Bush Foundation. If you require additional textbooks or posters, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,

Frederick J. Osborn
Director - Office of Indian Education

"Essential Understandings will address cultural diversity; provide many new insights and concerns of local Tribal communities, and address challenges faced by educators and families of students. Education will be much better as a result of the commitment of schools, administrators and educators for meaningful engagement to raise consciousness to appreciate and respect cultural differences that will empower Native American students."

- Lakota Elder, Lydia Whirlwind Soldier 2012

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1-866-798-0193



*\$100 ADT Visa Reward Card: Requires 36-month monitoring contract starting at \$28.99/mo. (24-month monitoring contract in California, total fees from \$695.76), and enrollment in ADT EasyPay. Requires minimum purchase price of \$449. One (1) Visa Reward Card valued at \$100 is redeemable seven (7) days after system is installed, wherein an email is sent to the customer's email address associated with their account with a promo code. The customer must validate the promo code on the website provided in the email and a physical card will be sent in the mail. Installation must occur within 60 days of offer expiration date to receive card. Applicable to new and resale sale types only. Card is issued by MetaBank®, N.A., Member FDIC, pursuant to a license from Visa U.S.A. Inc. No cash access or recurring payments. Can be used everywhere Visa debit cards are accepted. Card valid for up to 6 months; unused funds will forfeit after the valid thru date. Card terms and conditions apply. Interactive Services: ADT Command Interactive Solutions Services ("ADT Command") helps you manage your home environment and family lifestyle. Requires purchase of an ADT alarm system with 36-month monitoring contract ranging from \$45.99-\$59.99/mo. with GSP (24-month monitoring contract in California, total fees ranging \$1,103.76-\$1,439.76), enrollment in ADT EasyPay, and a compatible device with Internet and email access. These interactive services do not cover the operation or maintenance of any household equipment/systems that are connected to the ADT Command equipment. All ADT Command services are not available with all interactive service levels. All ADT Command services may not be available in all geographic areas. You may be required to pay additional charges to purchase equipment required to utilize the interactive service features you desire.

General: Additional charges may apply in areas that require guard response service for municipal alarm verification. System remains property of ADT. Local permit fees may be required. Prices and offers subject to change and may vary by market. Additional taxes and fees may apply. Satisfactory credit required. A security deposit may be required. Simulated screen images and photos are for illustrative purposes only.

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Studies Find Hunters Not Using Hearing Protection at High Risk of Hearing Loss

Pinkston News Service

WASHINGTON, DC — (Pinkston News Service) — Depending on where you live in the U.S., hunting season for large-game and fowl is open, or is about to be. For many gun owners, this means the risk of hearing loss goes up as large bore rifles and shotguns come off the racks and out of safes to see action once again. As men, women and children head out to the fields, forests and blinds, experts have offered a number of options to protect their hearing, their health and their hunt.

It's estimated that 15 million Americans hunt each year. Indeed hunting is a way of life for many families, but it's not without hazards, especially when it comes to hearing loss. Noises greater than 140 decibels (roughly the amount a jet engine at take-off) can permanently damage hearing, but many long arms exceed that threshold by as much as 30 decibels. Study after study confirms that hunters and target shooters without adequate ear protection (after adjusting for age and other factors) were more likely to have a marked high-frequency hearing loss than those who had ear protection.

Some of this is self induced. Some studies have shown that 70% to 80% of hunters "never wear earplugs or earmuffs." Mayo Clinic Health System Ear, Nose and Throat specialist Dr. Thomas Lowry told the Mayo Clinic News Network, "I'm an avid sportsman, and I'm amazed by how many people don't wear hearing protection when they shoot guns."

To prevent danger, there are strategies one can adopt to mitigate the possibility of hearing loss. Among the recommendations from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association: using or wearing hearing protection devices when shooting, double-protecting your ears (by putting earmuffs over plugs when shooting big-bore firearms) and making hearing protective devices a requisite part of your shooting gear.

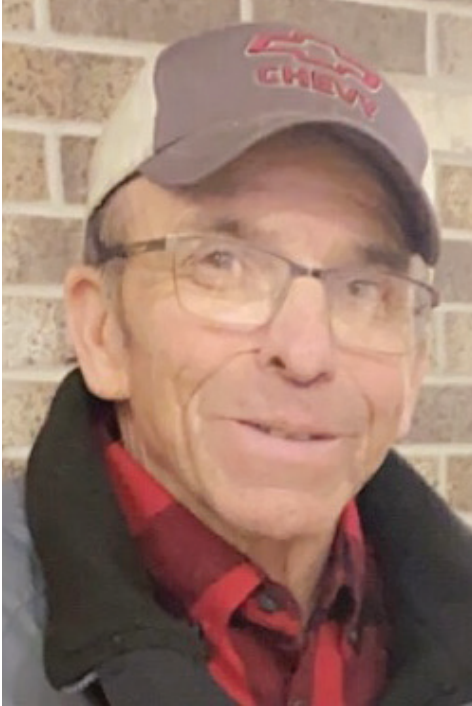
Another option is to adopt the use of silencers or suppressors. These gun barrel attachments shave off 20-35 decibels from each report, reducing very loud and damaging noises to a safer level. Silencer Shop (www.silencershop.com), the largest silencer distributor in the U.S., assists buyers in acquiring these highly regulated but effective tools for protecting the aural health, selling suppressors for virtually every firearm setup — even for fowling weapons like shotguns, frequently among the loudest of long arms.

Silencer Shop Founder Dave Matheny says he bought his first suppressor to protect his son who is deaf in one ear. "My son and I enjoy hunting together and to be able to continue to do one of our favorite activities safely, I bought him a silencer to protect his hearing in his good ear. That eventually led me to use my software development expertise to start Silencer Shop to help protect others and make the process of buying a silencer simple."

Suppressors also provide benefits apart from your hearing. If you hunt with family or a friend, they can protect the hearing of both you and your companions, as well as improve your chances of bagging that trophy, say hunting experts. By reducing the volume of the shot, suppressors help anonymize your position, leaving prey confused as to where the threat is coming from. Suppressors can also improve your aim by reducing jarring noise and recoil that can obstruct follow-up shots.

This fall, hunters in most states who want to preserve their hearing have a number of safety precautions at their disposal.

The Life of James Olson



Memorial services for James F. Olson, 70, of Andover will be 2:00 p.m., Saturday, November 13th at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Rev. Janine Rew-Werling will officiate. Inurnment will take place in Homer Cemetery, Pierpont under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel.

Visitation will begin at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday.

James passed away November 3, 2021 at Sanford Health in Sioux Falls.

James Fred Olson was born on October 2, 1951 in Webster to Milton and Violet (Spilloway) Olson. He attended school in Pierpont and graduated from Langford High School in 1970. Jim began his lifelong career, farming on the family farm. On December 8, 1979 he was united in marriage with Arlene Biel in Watertown and they were blessed with three daughters.

Jim loved life on the farm, including his animals and several dogs. He was a kind and sentimental man, as well as determined. Jim was a hard-worker and cared deeply for his family, who he always referred to as "his girls". He enjoyed collecting toy John Deere tractors and had a countless number of caps. He was a regular at coffee and had never met a stranger. Jim was a member of the Pierpont Community Church until its closing.

Celebrating his life is his wife, Arlene of Andover, daughters, Jennifer "Jenny" Olson of Castlewood, Jamie Olson (Chris McDowell) of Sioux Falls, Janel (Brad) Penning of Pierpont, grandchildren: Jaedyn Penning, Talen Olson, Kyrell Baker, Beckham Olson-Wellnitz, Jameson Penning, Jagger Penning, Bentley "BJ" Olson-McDowell, his sister, Pam Donovan of Andover, several brother-in-laws and his neighbors.

Preceding him in death were his parents and his infant brother, Douglas Olson.

Honorary Urn Bearers will be all of Jim's Grandchildren and coffee buddies.

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Potpourri

That time change thing

It may be just legend, but an unnamed Native American is credited with saying, "Only the government would believe that you could cut a foot off the top of a blanket, sew it to the bottom, and have a longer blanket." As cranky as people are getting about everything, I'm surprised they haven't begun protesting the time change.

I don't mind it—actually like it, as it fits the weird routine I've slud into. What I do mind is the clock change. Of course, if you're a rural electric customer, you have to reset your digital clocks every few weeks, anyway. Analog has its place. Remember VCRs? I bought the newish technology in the mid-80's for the ungodly sum of \$800 and ran it until the format died without ever setting the clock. I still haven't decided whether I should be proud or ashamed of that.

Aaron Rodgers

I've never been a fan of Aaron Rodgers. Maybe it's because of the arrogant, blame-everyone-else-first quarterback mentality (as opposed to the aw-shucks, humility and good humor of columnists). But even after his exhausting "will I play or won't I" routine last summer, I began to appreciate the joy with which he performed when the season got underway. Now, this. We all get the "my body, my choice" mantra, especially when it suits one's particular needs at the moment, but don't lie about being vaccinated. Carson Wentz and Kirk Cousins came clean, and fine, that's up to them, their employer, and the workplace to deal with. Rodgers was trying to have it both ways. We remain in a pandemic, we have the finest medical minds ever assembled in America, and Aaron Rodgers is taking advice from Joe Rogen. You may as well take advice from me, which is: "Consult your doctor."

JFK Jr. doesn't show

If things aren't weird enough, hundreds of QAnon adherents gathered at Dealey Plaza in Dallas last week waiting for their savior, JFK Jr., who died in a 1999 plane crash, to be resurrected and reinstate Donald Trump to the White House. Presumably, JFK Jr. was a Democrat, so I'm not sure how that works. I guess you come back cleansed of your sins. Spoiler alert: He didn't show. However, there is some conjecture that Rolling Stone Keith Richards is actually JFK Jr. in disguise. I'm not kidding. Hopefully, they are.

And on the home front

This week, the Ashley Tribune and Wishek Star are carrying a letter to the editor from North Dakota Secretary of State Al Jaeger refuting the assertions from Rep. Jeff Magrum, R-Hazleton, that there was something fishy in the North Dakota election, presumably because Donald Trump only got 65% of the vote in the state, down 3% from 2016. A letter from the Secretary of State slapping down a fellow Republican is rare, if unprecedented.

Magrum, who attended conspiracy theorist and pillow guy Mike Lindell's cybersecurity seminar, claimed, "cyber security experts have found discrepancies in the ND election... to the tune of approximately 15,000 votes being switched from President Trump to 'Obiden'."

Jaeger said, "That didn't happen. None were switched. All votes in the 2020 November election were accurately counted as cast by the voter... the election was administered according to state law. It included public voting system testing before and after the election."

Personally, I like Magrum, but I think casting doubt on the integrity of elections without ironclad proof is playing with fire that could torch democracy. And the "Obiden" thing is just disrespectful. Why offend a third of your constituents? We're not used to seeing that stuff from our elected representatives. Decorum is a good thing.

Shop local

There've been doom and gloom reports of a spoiled Christmas ahead because of shortages and supply chain issues brought on by the pandemic. Gosh, you mean I might not get that 70" flat screen? Well, the pandemic and the resulting issues have caused many people to reevaluate their lives. There are worker shortages because after doing the math, some folks realized they were just working to pay for daycare. Our just-in-time product delivery system is still backed up, but really, how tough do we have it?

We have supply chain issues because so much of what we buy comes from overseas. It's a global economy from oil to t-shirts. Here's my challenge: buy American and shop local as much as you can. Make them your first stop—not just in a crisis—but always. If we're not learning from all this and appreciating who we have serving us locally, shame on us.

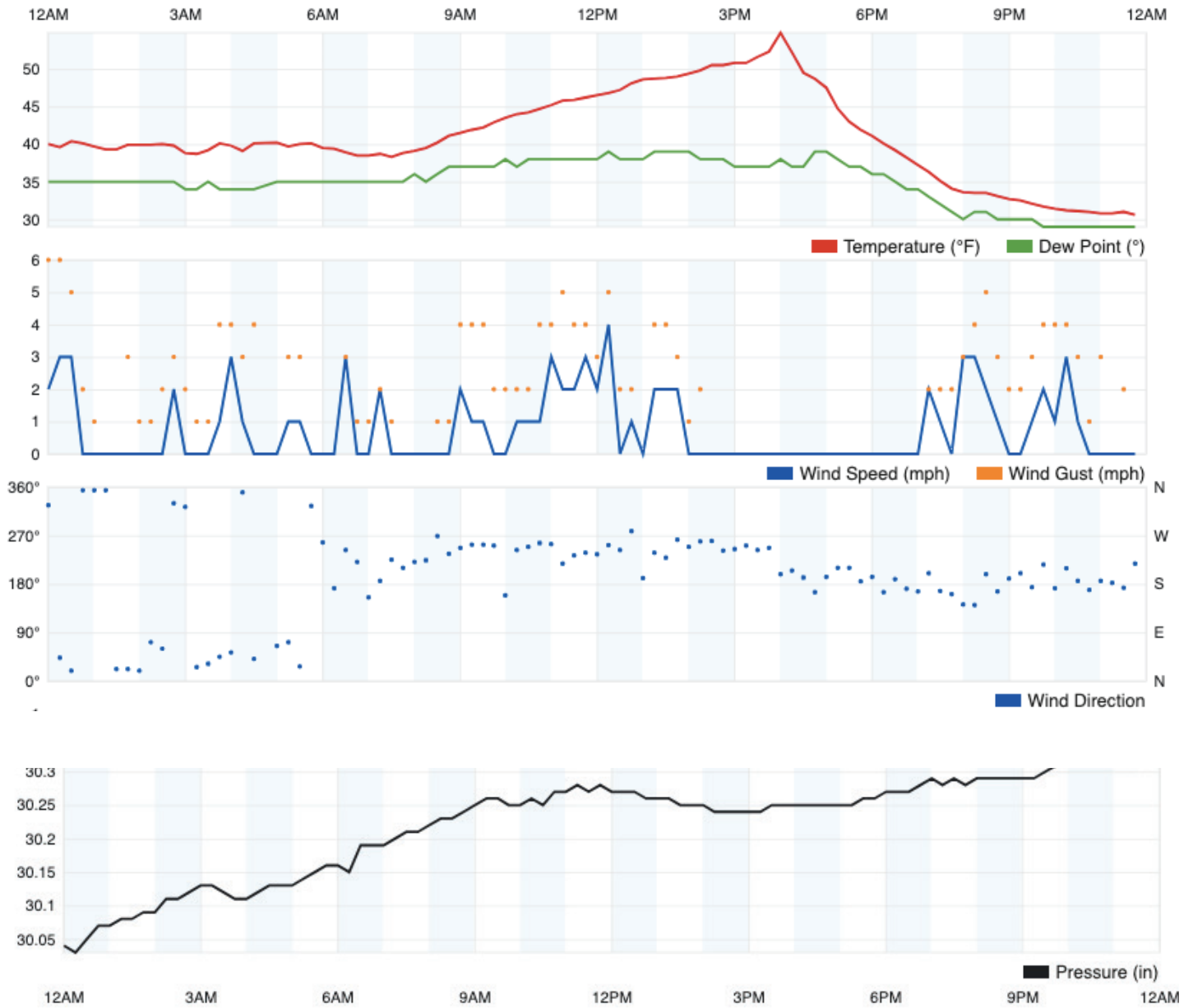


**That's
Life**
by Tony Bender

Groton Daily Independent


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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

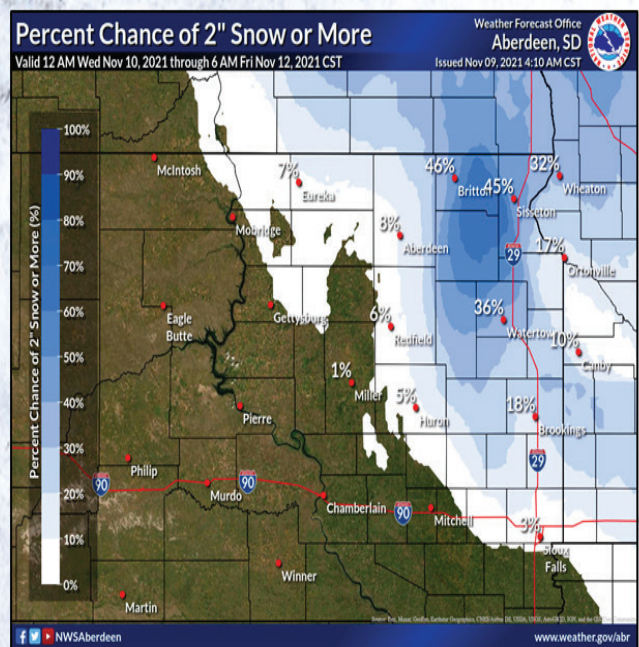
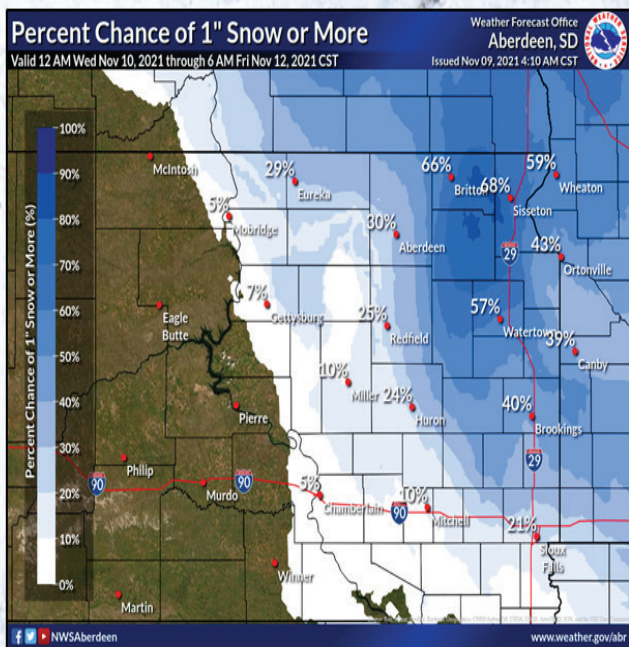


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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Veterans Day
				
Decreasing Clouds	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Rain	Rain Likely	Slight Chance Rain then Partly Cloudy	Chance Rain/Snow and Breezy
High: 54 °F	Low: 37 °F	High: 48 °F	Low: 31 °F	High: 39 °F

Wintry Weather Probabilities Later This Week



What

Starting off as mostly a rain event. However, colder temps will filter in on strong northwest winds changing precip over to snow

When

Rainfall early Wednesday thru Wednesday evening. Snowfall early Thursday thru Friday morning

Where

Portions of northeast South Dakota, especially from the James Valley and points east including west-central Minnesota

Impacts

Roads could get a little tricky to navigate later in the day Thursday into Thursday night. Strong winds combined with falling snow will reduce visibilities.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
11/9/2021 6:04 AM
Graphic Created

A storm system will continue to take shape during the next 24 to 36 hours and move into our region later this week. This system is expected to deliver the first bout of wintry conditions of the season to portions of the area. This storm will also generate a lot of wind by Thursday into Friday. Best chances for accumulating snowfall look to occur across parts of northeast South Dakota into west-central Minnesota. Probabilities for seeing 1 inch or more and 2 inches or more are highlighted in the graphic above. The strong winds combined with the falling snow could create some visibility issues.

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Today in Weather History

November 9th, 1977: An intense early winter storm moved northeast from Colorado to Iowa on November 9th and then to Lake Superior by November 10th. In most areas, the precipitation began late on the 8th as rain with temperatures in the 50s, changing to snow early on Wednesday the 9th, with the storm continuing through Thursday. In west-central Minnesota, some freezing rain also occurred before it changed to all snow. As the storm intensified, the winds in the eastern half of South Dakota increased with some gusts as high as 60-70 miles per hour, with widespread visibilities reduced to zero in blowing snow. In west-central Minnesota, north to northwest winds of 60 to 80 mph reduced visibility to zero and piled snow into eight-foot drifts. The temperature dropped rapidly into the 20s. Many roads throughout the eastern part of South Dakota and west-central Minnesota were blocked, and the heavy wet snow immobilized snow plows. Many cars and trucks were snowbound on the roads and highways. Approximately 100 cars and trucks were stalled on Interstate 90, east of Murdo. Near Fergus Falls in western Minnesota, two trucks loaded with turkeys became stuck, and half the birds were frozen. Many schools were closed on the 9th and 10th. Snowfall amounts in the eastern half of the state were more significant than four inches. A band of heavy snow, ten inches or more, extended from Bridgewater to Howard to Clear Lake into parts of west-central Minnesota. The high winds also destroyed a 1400-foot TV tower at Garden City. In addition, there was some loss of the corn crop. Sunflowers comprised the greatest loss because they had not been entirely harvested. Reports of livestock losses were minimal. Some storm total snowfall amounts include; 15 inches in Watertown; 14 inches in Sisseton; 12 inches in Clear Lake and Wheaton; 10.5 inches in Castlewood; and 9 inches near Raymond and Bryant.

1864: On Election Night, a violent tornado strikes a ferry on the Mississippi River near Chester, Illinois, blowing away all but the hull. The boiler and engines are found up the bluff. Half of Chester was destroyed, and twenty died during the storm.

1913 - The freshwater fury , a rapidly deepening cyclone, caused unpredicted gales on the Great Lakes. Eight large ore carriers on Lake Erie sank drowning 270 sailors. Cleveland OH reported 17.4 inches of snow in 24 hours, and a total of 22.2 inches, both all-time records for that location. During the storm, winds at Cleveland averaged 50 mph, with gusts to 79 mph. The storm produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Buffalo NY, and buried Pickens WV under three feet of snow. (9th-11th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1926: An estimated F3 to F4 tornado tore through La Plata, Maryland, killing 14 individuals at a small school. This storm caused 17 deaths and injured 65 others.

1982 - Seven tornadoes touched down in southern California, three of which began as waterspouts. The waterspouts moved ashore at Point Mugu, Malibu, and Long Beach. The Long Beach tornado traveled inland ten miles causing much damage. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Showers and gusty winds associated with a cold front helped extinguish forest fires in the Appalachian Region and clear out smoke in the eastern U.S. Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains from eastern Texas to the Tennessee Valley. Longview TX received 3.12 inches of rain, including two inches in two hours, Tupelo MS was soaked with 2.80 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a strong cold front produced severe weather from eastern Oklahoma to central Indiana. Hail more than two inches in diameter was reported around Tulsa OK. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - High winds prevailed along the eastern slopes of the Rockies from the afternoon of the 8th into the early morning hours of the 9th. Winds of 50 to 80 mph prevailed across the northwest chinook area of Wyoming, with gusts to 100 mph. Winds in Colorado gusted to 97 mph at Fritz Peak (located near Rollinsville) the evening of the 8th, and early in the morning on the 9th, gusted to 78 mph west of Fort Collins. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1996 - The Veteran's Day storm of November 9-14, 1996 may be the most severe early season lake effect snow (LES) storm the Great Lakes has witnessed in the past fifty years. At the height of the storm, over 160,000 customers were without power in Greater Cleveland alone, as the storm produced isolated snowfall tallies approaching 70 . As usual with these LES events, the Veteran's Day storm battered snow-belt communities downwind of each of the Great Lakes while nearby towns went unscathed. (University of Illinois WW2010)

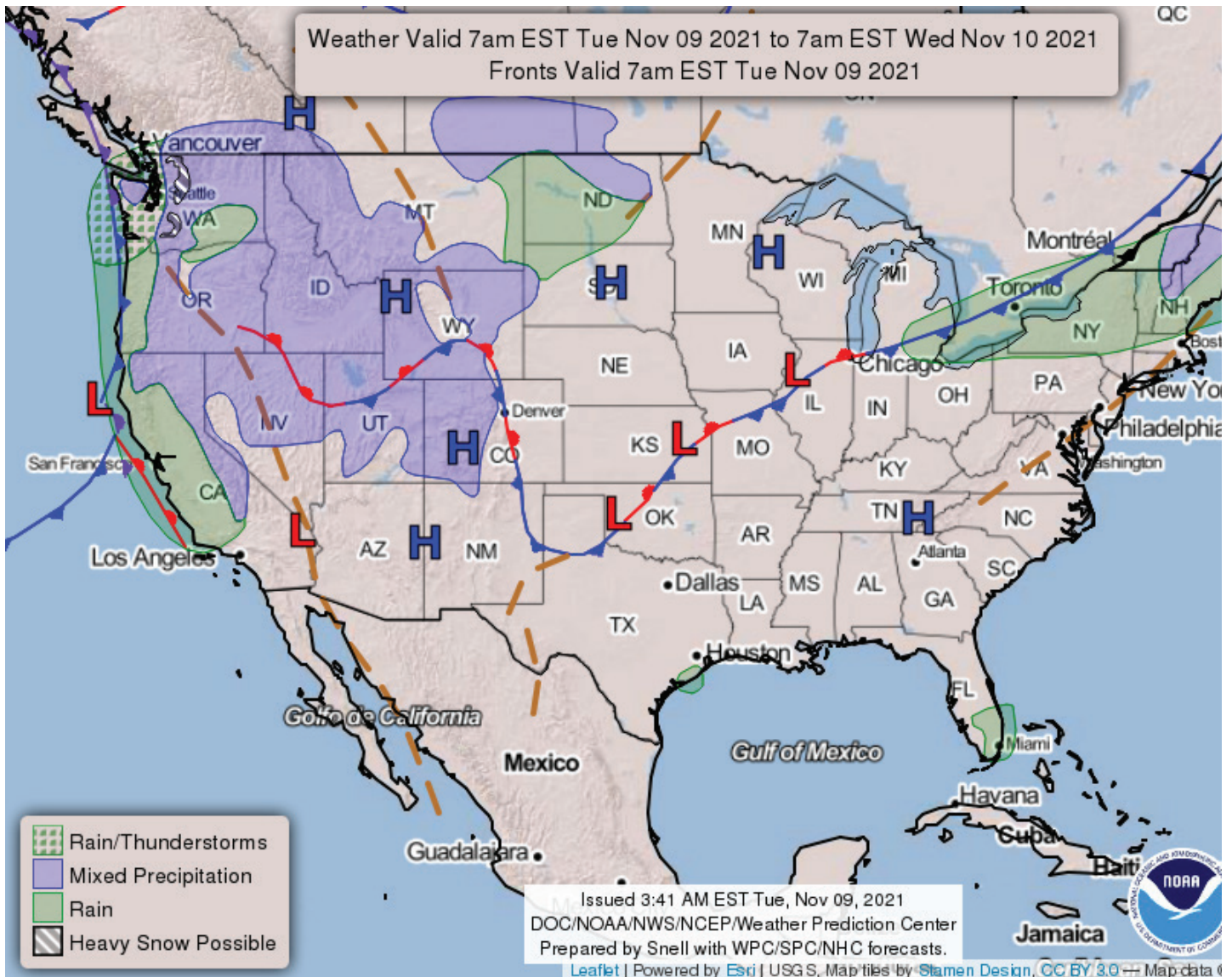
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 54.8 °F at 4:00 PM
Low Temp: 30.6 °F at 11:45 PM
Wind: 6 mph at 12:15 AM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 70° in 1903
Record Low: 0° in 2018
Average High: 46°F
Average Low: 22°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.29
Precip to date in Nov.: 4.30
Average Precip to date: 20.76
Precip Year to Date: 19.72
Sunset Tonight: 5:10:25 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:23:29 AM



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His Strength

"Remember, don't BLT," said the surgeon. Of course, that got my attention immediately.

Then he explained, "Do not bend, lift or twist. If you do, you will damage or destroy the work that I did on your spine. You must ask for help from others if you want to heal properly. If you are seated, get help to stand. Do not lift anything that weighs more than five pounds. And, turn your entire body rather than twist if you want to see something that is to your left or right."

As I was wheeled from the hospital to begin the trip home, I could not imagine how different my life was going to be. Being dependent on others has always been difficult for me. But thinking of his orders and my false pride forced me to admit how often I had failed at one thing or another because I refused to ask someone for help. Even God. Certainly, "pride does come before a fall."

"Look to the Lord and His strength," said the Psalmist. How easy it sounds but how difficult it is for many of us to do. God wants us to depend on Him and seek the help and counsel of others. If we don't, the likelihood of failure looms large. Our strength is limited, but He is not.

But there is something more to be learned here. When I come to the end of my strength and am unable to do what He has called me to do and ask others to help me, they share in my ministry. So, two things happen: I realize the blessings that can come from depending on others because they are able show His love by helping me. Also, I can share my calling with them. It's all good!

Prayer: Lord, Your ways and Your Word and Your wisdom are gifts we do not deserve. While we know this is true, we realize we have a desperate need for both. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Look for the Lord and His strength. Look for His face all the time. Psalm 105:4

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2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament
06/19/2021 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament
Cancelled Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am Olive Grove Golf Course
08/29/2021 Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day at GHS Parking Lot (4-5 p.m.)
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/29/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/11/2021 Veteran's Day Program at the GHS Arena
11/21/2021 Groton Area Snow Queen Contest
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

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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: \$45 million

Powerball

21-46-47-57-62, Powerball: 8, Power Play: 3

(twenty-one, forty-six, forty-seven, fifty-seven, sixty-two; Powerball: eight; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$151 million

One of 3 men shot in Sioux Falls has died, police said

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — One of three men shot in the parking lot of a Sioux Falls business over the weekend has died of his injuries, police said at a briefing Monday.

A 37-year-old man died at a hospital where he was taken following the shooting outside a restaurant early Sunday morning, police spokesman Sam Clemens said.

Clemens says one person fired an undetermined amount of shots after there was a disagreement between two groups of about 40 people outside Giliberto's. The man who died has not been identified.

Clemens said dozens of people witnessed the shooting and others were recording the incident as well as what led up to the dispute. However, no arrests have been made.

The two other victims are a 26-year-old man who had a wound to his leg and a 29-year-old man who had a wound to his arm, Clemens said.

All three men were from Sioux Falls, according to police.

Various vehicles in the parking lot were damaged in the gunfire, Clemens said. Police are not yet releasing the number of shots fired or amount of shell casings found.

Police pursued a vehicle through central Sioux Falls after the driver of the vehicle attempted to hit a police officer while fleeing the scene, Clemens said.

A 20-year-old man is accused of aggravated assault on law enforcement, aggravated eluding, fleeing police and resisting arrest, according to police.

Cold case slaying defendant incompetent for trial in MN

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A judge has determined a defendant from South Dakota accused in a 1974 slaying in Minnesota isn't competent to stand trial.

New DNA testing led to the arrest of Algene Vossen in the death of Mable Herman of Willmar, Minnesota, who prosecutors said had been stabbed 38 times.

Vossen was questioned shortly after the body of the 74-year-old victim was discovered by her sister in Willmar on Jan. 27, 1974. But it was only after advances in DNA testing and another look at the case that Vossen was arrested decades later in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where he had been living.

Vossen, 80, is charged with second-degree murder. His attorney asked a judge to find Vossen incompetent to stand trial due to his physical and mental status. Three mental health experts examined Vossen and determined that he was suffering from significant memory impairment.

A judge in Kandiyohi County, Minnesota on Friday agreed with the defense request.

Defense attorney Kent Marshall says he doesn't consider the ruling a win for his client.

"I can't say there's a victory here, you know we have a family that is still 47 years later still grieving the loss of someone, no closure and we have a guy who is 80-years old that is suffering from mental incapacity either suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's or some combination of that," Marshall told KELO-TV.

Now that Vossen has been found to be incompetent to stand trial for murder, the county must decide if he can be civilly committed to a mental health facility.

Redistricting stalls in South Dakota Legislature

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Legislative redistricting was left stalled in South Dakota Monday after the House and Senate were deadlocked on competing proposals for a new political map.

The Legislature convened in a special session for the once-in-a-decade process, but 10 hours of negotiating left Republicans in the House and Senate divided. One top lawmaker in the Senate raised the prospect of the state Supreme Court drawing the new legislative map if the House did not budge. State law calls for the high court to determine the map if the Legislature can't pass one by Dec. 1.

"This is going to the Supreme Court unless they decide to follow some map that follows the law," Republican Sen. Lee Schoenbeck, the Senate pro tempore, told reporters after adjourning the Senate for the day.

Lawmakers planned to retry Tuesday. While senators argued the House's proposal failed to meet federal requirements to protect the voting rights of Native Americans, House lawmakers charged the Senate with orchestrating a shake-up by pitting lawmakers against each other in the new political map.

"The reality of it is, you have to have two willing participants," said House Republican leader Rep. Kent Peterson. "We've tried to do our best to be at the table."

US Holocaust Museum says China boosting Uyghur repression

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum says it has compiled evidence of increasing government repression against Uyghur Muslims in China's western Xinjiang region.

In a new report released Tuesday, the museum's Center for the Prevention of Genocide says there is now "a reasonable basis" to believe that previously alleged crimes against humanity versus the Uyghurs are growing amid a concerted campaign to hide their severity.

"The Chinese government has done its best to keep information about crimes against the Uyghurs from seeing the light of day," said Tom Bernstein, the chairman of the museum's Committee on Conscience. "The Chinese government must halt its attacks on the Uyghur people and allow independent international monitors to investigate and ensure that the crimes have stopped."

China has repeatedly rejected charges of human rights abuses and atrocities in the region.

The report, which cites witness testimony, publicly available information from dissidents and accounts provided by human rights groups, expands on the museum's March 2020 findings that the Chinese Communist Party had persecuted, unlawfully imprisoned and otherwise severely deprived Uyghurs of their physical liberty.

The new findings include allegations of forced sterilization, sexual violence, enslavement, torture and forcible transfer. The U.S. government has already determined that China's actions against Xinjiang's Uyghur Muslim and other minority populations amount to genocide.

"The Chinese government's assault on the Uyghur community — marked by the incarceration of between one and three million people as well as abuses such as forced sterilization, torture, sexual violence, and forced labor — is alarming in scale and severity," said Naomi Kikoler, director of the museum's Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide. "The damage inflicted upon Uyghur individuals, families, and their community has left deep physical and emotional scars. The trauma from these atrocities will harm generations of Uyghurs."

Kikoler said the 59-page report, "To Make Us Slowly Disappear: The Chinese Government's Assault on the Uyghurs," should serve as a wake-up call for the international community to boost pressure on Beijing to halt the repression in Xinjiang.

China has said that allegations of rights abuses are lies. Just last month, China's U.N. Ambassador Zhang Jun attacked a statement signed by 43 countries condemning the reported torture and repression of Uy-

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ghurs and other religious and ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, where foreign governments and researchers say an estimated 1 million people or more have been confined in camps.

Zhang denounced "the groundless accusations" and unfounded "lies" and accused the United States and other signatories of poisoning the atmosphere of cooperation and "using human rights as a pretext for political maneuvering to provoke confrontation."

Echoing the Chinese government's long-standing position, he strongly defended Beijing's efforts to develop Xinjiang, saying the lives of its people are getting better by the day and "your plot to obstruct China's development is doomed to failure."

The Associated Press reported in October that China's control of Xinjiang had entered a new era in the four years since Beijing launched the brutal crackdown that swept up to a million or more Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim minorities into detention camps and prisons.

Chinese authorities have scaled back many of the most draconian and visible aspects of the region's high-tech police state, including razor wire that once ringed public buildings, the AP reported after two visits to Xinjiang.

Climate talks struggle with gap between rich, poor nations

By SETH BORENSTEIN AND ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL AP Science Writers

GLASGOW, Scotland (AP) — Large rifts remain as United Nations climate talks tick down to a Friday deadline. A lot of the divide comes down to money, which nations have it and which do not. So it's time for the diplomatic cavalry to ride in.

The two-week climate conference in Glasgow first saw heads of government talking about how curbing global warming is a fight for survival. The leaders focused on big pictures, not the intricate wording crucial to negotiations. Then, for about a week, the technocratic negotiations focused on those key details, getting some things done but not resolving the really sticky situations.

Now, it's time for the "high level" negotiations, when government ministers or other senior diplomats swoop in to make the political decisions that are supposed to break the technical logjams. The United Nations has three goals out of Glasgow, which so far are all out of reach: cutting carbon dioxide emissions in half by 2030; rich nations giving poor countries \$100 billion a year for combating climate change; and ensuring that half of that money goes to adapting to climate change's increasing harms.

To forge compromise, they have a big gap to bridge. Or more accurately, multiple gaps: there's a trust gap and a wealth gap. A north-south gap. It's about money, history and the future.

On one side of the gap are nations that developed and became rich from the Industrial Revolution fueled by coal, oil and gas that started in the U.K. On the other side are the nations that haven't developed yet and haven't gotten rich and are now being told those fuels are too dangerous for the planet.

The key financial issue is the \$100 billion a year pledge first made in 2009. The developed nations still haven't reached the \$100 billion a year mark. This year the rich nations increased their aid to \$80 billion a year, still short of what's promised.

As the head of the conference briefed countries Monday on the progress - and the lack of it, in some ways - in the talks, developing country after developing country responded by noting how unfulfilled rich nations' financial pledges were.

"Everybody here is livid," said Saleemul Huq, a climate science and policy expert who is director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development in Bangladesh

It's not as if that \$100 billion alone would make a big difference because trillions of dollars worldwide in payments, not pledges, would be needed to combat climate change, not \$100 billion, Huq said. Providing the money is important to bridge the gap in trust between rich nations and poor nations, he argued.

"They reneged on their promise. They failed to deliver it," Huq said. "And they seem not to care about it. And, so why should we trust anything they say anymore?"

While the crowd at the conference Monday cheered on former U.S. President Barack Obama when he urged nations to do more and rich nations to help poor, young Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate

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tweeted: "I was 13 when you promised \$100B #ClimateFinance. The US has broken that promise, it will cost lives in Africa. Earth's richest country does not contribute enough to life-saving funds. You want to meet #COP26 youth. We want action. Obama & @POTUS #ShowUsTheMoney."

Nakate told The Associated Press she wasn't criticizing Obama, who targeted young climate activists with his message, but "speaking the truth....The money was promised, but hasn't been delivered."

Huq said that rich, polluting nations also had failed the rest of the world by not delivering on emission targets that would limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. As things stand, it's the poor who pay for the destruction caused by climate change, he said. Studies have shown that poorer nations, like Bangladesh, are hit harder by climate change than rich nations, which also have more resources to adapt to extreme weather.

There have long been trust issues in the annual U.N. climate talks, said Niklas Hohne, a climate scientist at the New Climate Institute in Germany who has attended the conference for more than 20 years and tracks pledges and actions to translate how much they mean for curbing projected warming.

Hohne said poor countries have good reasons to be wary, but nations are gathering "at this conference to build that trust. And the trust can only be built by showing real action."

While China is now the No. 1 carbon polluter and India is No. 3, carbon dioxide stays in the air for centuries. Based on historical emissions - the stuff still in the atmosphere trapping heat = the United States and European nations are most responsible for climate change, Hohne said.

Hohne said it is normal for high-level ministers to ride to the rescue in the second week of climate talks. "There are certain issues which go to the ministers and those are the tricky bits and only the ministers can solve them. And once they solve them, they go to the technical level again for the implementation," Hohne said. "I think we have the normal amount of tricky bits right now."

U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez brought her climate-celebrity star power to the U.N. climate talks on Tuesday as part of a congressional delegation led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Ocasio-Cortez told reporters her chief hope is to see the United States establish itself as a world leader in cutting climate-damaging fossil fuel pollution.

Asked if she had a message to young activists who have instrumental in pressing governments to cut climate-damaging fossil fuel pollution, Ocasio-Cortez told reporters inside the conference site: "Well, I would say, 'Stay in the streets. Keep pushing.'"

Ellen Knickmeyer contributed to this report from Glasgow.

Read stories on climate issues by The Associated Press at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate>.

Follow Seth Borenstein and Aniruddha Ghosal on Twitter at @borenbears and @aniruddgh1

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

SpaceX returns 4 astronauts to Earth, ending 200-day flight

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Four astronauts returned to Earth on Monday, riding home with SpaceX to end a 200-day space station mission that began last spring.

Their capsule streaked through the late night sky like a dazzling meteor before parachuting into the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Pensacola, Florida. Recovery boats quickly moved in with spotlights.

"On behalf of SpaceX, welcome home to Planet Earth," SpaceX Mission Control radioed from Southern California. Within an hour, all four astronauts were out of the capsule, exchanging fist bumps with the team on the recovery ship.

Their homecoming — coming just eight hours after leaving the International Space Station — paved the

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way for SpaceX's launch of their four replacements as early as Wednesday night.

The newcomers were scheduled to launch first, but NASA switched the order because of bad weather and an astronaut's undisclosed medical condition. The welcoming duties will now fall to the lone American and two Russians left behind at the space station.

Before Monday afternoon's undocking, German astronaut Matthias Maurer, who's waiting to launch at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, tweeted it was a shame the two crews wouldn't overlap at the space station but "we trust you'll leave everything nice and tidy." His will be SpaceX's fourth crew flight for NASA in just 1 1/2 years.

NASA astronauts Shane Kimbrough and Megan McArthur, Japan's Akihiko Hoshide and France's Thomas Pesquet should have been back Monday morning, but high wind in the recovery zone delayed their return.

"One more night with this magical view. Who could complain? I'll miss our spaceship!" Pesquet tweeted Sunday alongside a brief video showing the space station illuminated against the blackness of space and the twinkling city lights on the nighttime side of Earth.

From the space station, NASA astronaut Mark Vande Hei -- midway through a one-year flight -- bid farewell to each of his departing friends, telling McArthur "I'll miss hearing your laughter in adjacent modules."

Before leaving the neighborhood, the four took a spin around the space station, taking pictures. This was a first for SpaceX; NASA's shuttles used to do it all the time before their retirement a decade ago. The last Russian capsule fly-around was three years ago.

It wasn't the most comfortable ride back. The toilet in their capsule was broken, and so the astronauts needed to rely on diapers for the eight-hour trip home. They shrugged it off late last week as just one more challenge in their mission.

The first issue arose shortly after their April liftoff; Mission Control warned a piece of space junk was threatening to collide with their capsule. It turned out to be a false alarm. Then in July, thrusters on a newly arrived Russian lab inadvertently fired and sent the station into a spin. The four astronauts took shelter in their docked SpaceX capsule, ready to make a hasty departure if necessary.

Among the upbeat milestones: four spacewalks to enhance the station's solar power, a movie-making visit by a Russian film crew and the first-ever space harvest of chile peppers.

The next crew will also spend six months up there, welcoming back-to-back groups of tourists. A Japanese tycoon and his personal assistant will get a lift from the Russian Space Agency in December, followed by three businessmen arriving via SpaceX in February. SpaceX's first privately chartered flight, in September, bypassed the space station.

NASA's Kathy Lueders, head of space operations, said engineers would evaluate the lagging inflation of one of the four main parachutes, something seen in testing when the lines bunch together. Overall, though, "the return looked spotless."

"I can't tell you how excited I am to see all four of the crew members back on Earth," she added, "and I'm looking forward to launching another set of four this week."

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Virus deaths in Russia hit daily record after work limits

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Coronavirus deaths in Russia hit a new record Tuesday and new confirmed cases remained high two days after a nine-day non-working period ended in most of the country's regions.

The state coronavirus task force reported 1,211 COVID-19 deaths, the highest daily death toll in the pandemic, and 39,160 new cases. The task force has reported around 40,000 cases and over 1,100 deaths every day since late October.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered many Russians last month to stay off work between Oct. 30 and Nov. 7. He authorized regional governments to extend the number of non-working days if necessary,

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but only five Russian regions have done so.

Other regions have restricted access to restaurants, theaters and other public places to people who either have been fully vaccinated, have recovered from COVID-19 within the last six months or tested negative in the previous 72 hours.

The daily tallies of new cases and COVID-19 deaths remained high throughout the non-working period. Officials in the Kremlin argued Monday that it was too early to tell whether the measure had the desired effect.

Russia's fall surge in infections and deaths comes amid low vaccination rates, lax public attitudes toward taking precautions and the government's reluctance to toughen restrictions.

Less than 40% of Russia's nearly 146 million people have been fully vaccinated, even though Russia approved a domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine months before most countries.

In all, Russia's coronavirus task force has reported more than 8.8 million confirmed cases and over 249,000 deaths in the pandemic.

However, reports by Russia's statistical service Rosstat that tally coronavirus-linked deaths retroactively reveal much higher mortality numbers: 462,000 people with COVID-19 died between April 2020 and September this year.

Russian officials have said the task force only includes deaths for which COVID-19 was the main cause and uses data from medical facilities. Rosstat uses wider criteria for counting virus-related deaths and takes its numbers from civil registry offices where registering a death is finalized.

The AP Interview: Facebook whistleblower fears the metaverse

By RAF CASERT and KELVIN CHAN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen said the world should fear the impact of the metaverse that the social media giant has rebranded to focus on, saying the futuristic virtual reality world would force people to give up more of their personal information, be addicting and give the embattled company another monopoly in the online world.

In an interview with The Associated Press on Tuesday as she makes a series of appearances before European lawmakers drawing up rules for social media companies, Haugen said her former employer has rushed to prioritize the metaverse because "if you don't like the conversation, you try to change the conversation."

"Facebook should have a transparency plan for the metaverse before they start building all this stuff, because they've demonstrated with regard to Facebook that they can hide behind a wall, they keep making unforced errors, they keep making things that prioritize their own profits over our safety," she said.

The metaverse is sort of the internet brought to life, or at least rendered in 3D. CEO Mark Zuckerberg has described it as a "virtual environment" you can go inside of — instead of just looking at on a screen — and refocused Facebook's business model on it, including renaming the company Meta. People can meet, work and play, using virtual reality headsets, augmented reality glasses, smartphone apps or other devices.

Haugen is a former product manager at Facebook turned whistleblower whose revelations about the company's practices have drawn global attention. Documents she has turned over to authorities and her testimony to lawmakers on both sides of the Atlantic have revealed deep-seated problems at the company and energized legislative and regulatory efforts around the world to crack down on big tech companies.

She says the social media giant prioritizes engagement and user growth over online safety. Haugen, who also provided a vast trove of redacted internal documents to a group of news organizations, alleges that Facebook's systems amplify online hate and extremism, fail to protect young people from harmful content and the company lacks any incentive to fix the problems.

Haugen's documents have exposed an internal crisis at the company that provides free services to 3 billion people.

Zuckerberg has dismissed Haugen's claims as a "coordinated effort" to paint a false picture of the company. A spokesman for Facebook said the company was working on a response to her comments about

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the metaverse.

Officials in Washington and European capitals are taking her claims seriously. European Union lawmakers questioned her intensely Monday, before applauding her at the end of the 2 1/2 hour hearing.

The EU is drafting new digital rules for the 27-nation bloc that call for reining in big "digital gatekeepers," requiring them to be more transparent about their algorithms that determine what people see on their feeds and making them more accountable for content on their platforms.

Facebook has said it largely supports regulations, with legislative efforts in the EU and United Kingdom much further along than those in the U.S.

Haugen is calling for politicians to ensure extra scrutiny as Facebook focuses on the metaverse — a world that others including Microsoft and video gaming companies also are moving to build. She said such immersive environments are "extremely addictive, and they encourage people to unplug from the reality we actually live in." In "Snow Crash," the 1992 sci-fi novel that coined the phrase, "it was a thing that people used to numb themselves when their lives were horrible," she added.

Haugen voiced concern about how the metaverse will require adding sensors in homes and workplaces. "In case of workplaces, we don't get to choose to be in those spaces. Like, if your employer decides they're now a metaverse company, you have to give out way more personal data to a company that's demonstrated that it lies whenever it's in its best interests," she said.

Haugen has made stops in London and Berlin to speak to officials and lawmakers and spoke at a tech conference in Lisbon. She also will address French lawmakers in Paris on Wednesday.

Chan reported from London.

Keep fighting, Obama urges young climate activists

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

GLASGOW, Scotland (AP) — At 19, Glasgow college student Ross Hamilton doesn't think highly of world leaders — "they chat a lot of" nonsense — or expect them to accomplish anything on a problem he cares deeply about, climate change.

But there is one former world leader Hamilton trusts, at least enough to join several hundred Glasgow college students crowding outside their college in the dark Monday in hopes of a glimpse of him: Barack Obama. "I've always liked him. I feel as if he's pretty honest."

The former U.S. president, one of the leaders responsible for the 2015 Paris climate accord, came to the U.N. global climate talks in Glasgow, wielding his cross-generational appeal to urge frustrated climate activists to stay in the fight. Even five years out of office, and now 60, Obama still claims a rapport with liberal and moderate young people in a way that President Joe Biden, 78, might not be able to pull off.

Inside the glass-fronted building where Hamilton and other students of Glasgow's Strathclyde University were waiting for him to emerge, Obama was sitting around a table with a dozen climate advocates from around the world, hearing them out and encouraging them.

Obama was in shirtsleeves and tieless, his hair whiter than during his presidency.

"The success of the movement shouldn't be diminished even if some of the outcomes" have fallen short, Obama told the gathering of climate-focused people in their 20s and 30s. They included a lawmaker, a filmmaker, legal advocate, private and public businesspeople, foundation leaders and heads of activist groups.

"The question is, where are the countries that really met our expectations? And it turns out those are the places where there was pressure, where there was political mobilization, where there were activists," Obama told them.

It's all "going to depend on you guys to apply it," he added.

Obama as president introduced programs to move the U.S. more toward renewable fuel and away from coal, although President Donald Trump rolled back most of them.

Not all younger people are Obama fans.

Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate tweeted Monday that she was 13 when the United States,

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under Obama's leadership, was among rich nations promising \$100 billion a year to poor countries to help them fight and cope with warming, but said those nations broke the promise.

Nakate told The Associated Press on Monday that she wasn't attacking the former president, "but that is me speaking the truth."

"This money was promised, but it hasn't been delivered," Nakate said.

Especially in Europe, young activists are credited with pressuring governments to confront climate change. Most famously, teenager Greta Thunberg in 2018 launched a climate movement that has since drawn hundreds of thousands to weekly protests to demand governments end their dependence on coal, natural gas and oil.

After the Paris deal, Glasgow was billed as the talks where roughly 200 governments would put the accord into action.

Last Friday, Thunberg, now 18, branded the talks a "failure" after their first of two weeks. Speaking to tens of thousands of young climate demonstrators protesting Friday in the summit's host city, Thunberg said national delegations at Glasgow were carving out loopholes for every pledge and "greenwashing" their own countries' emissions.

Young people were finding it hard to believe a climate movement that had mobilized so many could fail, Luisa Neubauer, a leader of Thunberg's movement in Germany, told Obama.

Neubauer told Obama she feared disillusionment was undermining peoples' faith in democracy, "as people, especially activists, lose confidence in their governmental pledges, in what often turns out empty promises, in the lack of honesty about past failures."

Stay the course, Obama told climate activists.

"Don't think that you can ignore politics," Obama said earlier, in a speech at the talks site that saw the former president draw short standing ovations.

"You don't have to be happy about it, but you can't ignore it. You can't be too pure for it," Obama said, devoting much of his speech to the young activists he said he came to Glasgow to be with it.

"It's part of the process that is going to deliver all of us," he said.

Associated Press writer Aniruddha Ghosal contributed to this report.

Migrants camp overnight at Polish border after tense day

By VANESSA GERA and MONIKA SCISLOWSKA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Polish riot police and coils of razor wire faced off Tuesday against migrants, including families with young children, who were camped just across the border in Belarus, amid a tense standoff on the European Union's eastern border.

Polish authorities reported that the situation on the border was calm overnight and earlier Tuesday, but authorities said they were bracing for any possibility. Poland's Defense Ministry said Tuesday that a large group of Belarusian forces was moving toward the migrant camp.

There was no way to independently verify what was happening, however. Journalists have limited ability to operate in Belarus and a state of emergency in Poland kept reporters and others out of the border area.

A day earlier tensions flared as a large group of migrants sought to illegally push their way into Poland, according to video footage posted on social media by Polish authorities.

Polish forces repelled them, and then the migrants settled into a camp overnight, with tents and campfires along the border.

Monday's siege escalated a crisis along the border that has been simmering for months in which the authoritarian regime of Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko has encouraged migrants to illegally enter the EU.

The EU reacted Tuesday by tightening visa rules for Belarus officials over what it is calling a "hybrid attack" against the 27-country bloc.

EU headquarters said that it was "partially suspending" an agreement it has with Belarus that eases

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visa rules.

The move hits Belarusian members of the government, lawmakers, diplomats, and top court representatives. It increases travel red tape and requires them to provide extra documents and pay more for visas.

In videos posted on Twitter, tents and campfires can be seen, in near-freezing temperatures, as the Polish police play an announcement warning the migrants that crossing the Polish border is only allowed at official border crossings, where visas are required.

But as of early Tuesday, the nearest crossing point, in Kuznica, in the northeast of the country, was closed.

The situation marks an escalation in months of migration pressure against Lithuania and Poland, and to a lesser extent Latvia, the three EU states on the bloc's eastern border with Belarus. The EU says Belarus is building the pressure, intending to destabilize the bloc in retaliation for Western sanctions.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, accompanied by Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak, went to the border on Tuesday morning to meet with border guards and other security officials. Morawiecki praised them, also on behalf of the EU, for their "effective defense of our border."

"We do not know what else Lukashenko's regime will come up with — this is the reality," Morawiecki said.

Meanwhile, the Lithuanian government on Tuesday asked parliament to declare a state of emergency along the border with Belarus for a month from midnight.

The state of emergency would be in place along the border stretch and five kilometers (three miles) inland, as well as in migrant accommodation facilities in Vilnius and elsewhere in the country.

The measure would include restricting the right of irregular migrants accommodated in Lithuania to communicate in writing or by phone except to contact the country's authorities.

The migrants are mostly people from the Mideast and Africa who have seized on the opening of a new migration route to enter Europe, often seeking to reach family members who have already immigrated to Germany or other countries in western Europe.

Poland has received strong signals of support and solidarity from the EU and EU member states and the United States as it faces its border crisis.

Germany's outgoing interior minister, Horst Seehofer, said on Tuesday that all EU countries "must stand together, because Lukashenko is using people's fates with the support of Russian President Vladimir Putin to destabilize the West." He called for the European Commission to support Poland in securing the border.

"The Poles are fulfilling a very important service for the whole of Europe," he said.

So far Poland's ruling nationalists have refused help from Frontex, the EU's border agency.

Many of the migrants fly to Minsk, the capital of Belarus, on tourist visas, and from there travel by taxi to the border with Poland. The EU is seeking to pressure airlines not to facilitate the illegal migration.

Although direct flights from Iraq to Minsk were suspended in August, migrants have been flying into Belarus via commercial and chartered flights from Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and even Russia, according to recent internal EU migration reports seen by The Associated Press.

On social media, smugglers have advertised transportation from Belarus to Germany by car. Drivers smuggling people across the Polish-German border were mainly from non-EU countries, according to the reports, although there were also EU nationals involved. Many of the migrants have ended up in Germany. But some continued their journey all the way to Finland by ferry via Sweden, one report said.

Geir Moulson in Berlin, Lorne Cook in Brussels, Liudas Dapkus in Vilnius, Lithuania, and Renata Brito in Barcelona, Spain, contributed.

Jan. 6 panel subpoenas 6 more Trump associates in probe

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Further expanding its probe, the U.S. House committee investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection has issued subpoenas to six additional associates of former President Donald Trump who were closely involved in his efforts to overturn his defeat in the 2020 election.

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The committee's chairman, Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, said in a statement Monday that the panel is demanding testimony and documents from former Trump campaign officials and others who participated in a "war room" ahead of the siege and strategized about how to halt the certification of Joe Biden's victory.

Thompson said the committee had issued new subpoenas to Bill Stepien, manager of Trump's 2020 reelection campaign; Jason Miller, a senior adviser to the campaign; Angela McCallum, national executive assistant to the campaign; John Eastman, a lawyer who advised the former president; Michael Flynn, a former national security adviser to Trump who talked with Trump ahead of the insurrection; and Bernard Kerik, who the committee says paid for hotel rooms that served as command centers ahead of Jan. 6.

"In the days before the January 6th attack, the former president's closest allies and advisers drove a campaign of misinformation about the election and planned ways to stop the count of Electoral College votes," Thompson said. "The Select Committee needs to know every detail about their efforts to overturn the election, including who they were talking to in the White House and in Congress, what connections they had with rallies that escalated into a riot, and who paid for it all."

The subpoenas come after the panel has already demanded documents and testimony from several other Trump advisers — some who have cooperated and some who have not. The House voted last month to hold longtime Trump ally Steve Bannon in contempt after he refused to comply with his subpoena. Trump himself is fighting the probe in court.

The rioters who violently pushed back police to break into the Capitol and interrupt the electoral count repeated Trump's false claims of widespread fraud, and the committee says the six newly subpoenaed witnesses helped amplify the misinformation in the days ahead of the attack. Trump's false claims came as election officials and courts across the country verified Biden's win, and as his own attorney general said there was no evidence of significant fraud.

Thompson says in the letters to the Trump associates that the panel has uncovered "credible evidence" of their participation in the former president's efforts to overturn the election and cites ways that they individually tried to further his cause.

In Stepien's subpoena, Thompson cites the testimony of an unnamed witness in saying he oversaw the "conversion" of Trump's presidential campaign to a "Stop the Steal" effort. In letters to Miller and McCallum, Thompson cites specific efforts to spread the false claims, including a phone call from McCallum to an unidentified Michigan state legislator asking if the Trump campaign could "count on" them and urging the person to push for the appointment of new state electors.

Thompson detailed several efforts by Eastman, a lawyer and professor, to persuade Vice President Mike Pence to try to overturn the election as he presided over the congressional certification — a power Pence did not legally have. Thompson also cites Eastman's outreach to states, including a briefing to state legislators, and his participation in the so-called "war room" at the Willard Hotel where he, Bannon, Kerik and others strategized ahead of the siege about how to overturn Trump's defeat.

Kerik, a former New York City police commissioner who was pardoned by Trump after serving time in prison for tax fraud and other charges, responded to his subpoena with a lengthy statement on Monday evening. He said that he "was not hired to overturn the will of the people, only to look into the integrity of the process" and that his focus after the election was on "looking for evidence," not public relations.

"As to the events of January 6th, I was not involved," he said.

The others contacted by The Associated Press did not respond to requests for comment.

In the letter to Flynn — the former national security adviser who twice pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI and was also pardoned by Trump — Thompson cited a December Oval Office meeting with the then-president. Citing media reports, Thompson said Flynn and other participants "discussed seizing voting machines, declaring a national emergency, invoking certain national security emergency powers and continuing to spread the message that the Nov. 2020 election had been tainted by widespread fraud."

The panel is working with other close Trump advisers to gain testimony, including former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and administration aides Kashyap Patel and Dan Scavino. Members of the committee said they have been "engaging" with those witnesses but may move to hold them in contempt, as well, if they don't comply soon.

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Trump's own opposition has prompted some of his advisors, including Bannon, to say they can't speak publicly about their roles. The former president's lawsuit argues that he can assert executive privilege, or a presidential claim to keep some information private, in an effort to block the government from releasing a tranche of internal White House documents to the panel. The committee has argued that privilege doesn't apply.

President Biden has so far waived executive privilege on nearly all the documents that the committee has asked for, citing the panel's need to investigate the violent attack.

In his subpoena to Eastman, Thompson sought to preemptively attack any attorney-client privilege that he may attempt to cite to avoid testifying. The letter noted that Eastman has already "made extensive public comments" regarding his legal advice and direct discussions with Trump.

Former Justice Department official Jeffrey Clark, who aligned himself with Trump's efforts to overturn the election as other department leaders pushed back, appeared for a deposition on Friday but declined to cooperate, presenting the committee with a letter saying he would not answer questions based on Trump's assertions of privilege, including in the ongoing court case.

Thompson said afterward that he had rejected the claims of privilege and said Clark "has a very short time" to reconsider and cooperate.

The committee has already interviewed more than 150 people across government, social media and law enforcement, including some former Trump aides who have been cooperative. The panel has subpoenaed more than 20 witnesses total, and most of them, including several associates who helped plan the massive "Stop the Steal" rally the morning of the 6th, have signaled they will cooperate.

Associated Press writer Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

"Not on my watch!" War remembrance tourism fights for life

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

POPERINGE, Belgium (AP) — Simon Louagie dreaded losing Talbot House, a World War I soldiers' club that has become an institution in remembrance tourism on the Western Front where soldiers from all corners of the globe fought amid untold carnage just over a century ago.

For months last year, a COVID-19 lockdown closed the club which had always been an open house. Once it was for Commonwealth soldiers who fleetingly shed the fear of battle in Flanders fields that was within earshot. For generations since, people found history, solace, wisdom and an understanding at Talbot House about why the motto of this region in western Belgium is "Never into war again."

Since the end of World War I in 1918, millions of visitors — from as far away as the United States New Zealand, and South Africa — have flocked to memorials in northern France and Belgium to pay tribute to the fallen.

Now, closing in on two years of the coronavirus pandemic and travel restrictions, the tourist industry welcoming them is crippled. Lockdowns and travel restrictions, of which many remain in place, are keeping foreign visitors away.

Another Armistice Day beckons on Nov. 11 and the outlook remains bleak.

Talbot House manager Louagie remembers that when funds were running low and doors were closed, only one thought ran through his head: "Not on my watch." From as many as 500 guests a day, he sometimes found himself alone.

The house, he said, "needs noise. It needs piano music. It needs visitors, schoolchildren, people playing chess. Cups of tea, rattling in the kitchen to make it come alive. I need to hear the kettle whistle," he said.

"We cannot disappoint all those generations before us by letting it close down," he said. The thought has echoed around the region where hundreds of thousands lost their lives during the four years of fighting which finally led to the victory of allied forces over Germany.

Nick Benoot, who runs the small Hooge Crater Museum not far from Poperinge could not believe it when at the end of 2019, schools started to cancel trips because of reports of a virus in Wuhan, China.

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Like Louagie, he had plunged money into the business and needed any income he could get. "Seriously, do you mean that? This is in China. This is far, far away from us," he remembers saying. But the reality of the pandemic, which has since claimed at least 5 million dead across the globe, soon sank in and he had to close on March 13, 2020 - a somber day he remembers well.

From 65,000 paying visitors in 2017 to just 3,000 last year, the numbers demonstrated how remembrance tourism slumped throughout the region.

"It was like we went bankrupt. We had to close everything down," he said.

But each man dealt with it in his own way and is still around to tell his story.

Crowdfunding was the answer for Louagie. Last year, a 98-year-old World War II veteran raised money by walking from a war graves cemetery to Talbot House, cheered on by locals who pulled money out of their wallet when they were not applauding. When a local died, the family asked that instead of flowers, mourners donate money to Talbot House.

"It became very emotional when I saw how many people cared so deeply," Louagie said.

As virus measures eased recently thanks to Belgium's vaccination drive, some visitors enjoyed their breakfast at Talbot house. And just like old times, praise was heaped on English volunteer Libby Madden for her Victoria sponge cake. "You know, we very much want to keep the spirit of this wonderful place alive," she said.

Flanders' fields were once so war-scarred that churches and castles simply vanished as rubble under the mud. Much around Ypres has been restored to its former splendor and imbued locals with an unshakable sense of optimism.

Benoot was looking at an empty parking lot last year and had missed the din of spoken English from heaps of British tourists that resounded in the museum and cafe. Yet this week, "we have had the first British (bus) in two years."

Even as his income dwindled in the middle of the pandemic, Benoot understood that the message of "the war to end all wars" still needed to be passed on to younger generations.

At 37, he thought himself too old to convey the message to kids, so he left it to his sons Louis and Arthur, 10 and 8, who are now YouTube whizzes to teach kids about gas masks, helmets and medical kits. The Hooge Boys are a hit now.

"We don't do what all the rest does. So I think we have a way to survive," Benoot said.

Even the Last Post ceremony in nearby Ypres — a daily, mournful bugle call harking back to 1928 that had only briefly stopped during World War II — was at risk of being silenced. The tradition has the bugle playing under the Menin Gate where some 55,000 names of soldiers whose remains were never found are engraved.

Yet it pulled through. Volunteers refused to stop and pulled strings all the way up to the top political posts to ensure its continuation, even if it had to be scaled down.

"During COVID, there was only one bugler and the names of 55,000 soldiers," said Benoit Mottrie, the head of the Last Post Association.

On Thursday, there should be the full complement of six buglers again, backed up by a piper, a choir, a band and several hundred invitees and poppy promenade walkers. Even the Belgian prime minister will show up.

In fast-changing Dubai, once-isolated village to be razed

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — From the front porch of their cinderblock home, Garry and Amanda James gaze over Dubai's soaring skyscrapers and massive malls.

It's a skyline that in their young days had seemed impossibly far off. Outside Amanda's childhood home in the same spot three decades ago were just miles of empty desert.

Throughout Dubai's meteoric rise from tiny pearling town to booming financial hub, Jebel Ali Village, a collection of cottages built in the late 1970s for European port workers, largely stayed the same.

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It's a relic of another time. Expat residents still amble along quiet, windswept roads and play Christmas bingo at the clubhouse.

But now, the bulldozers are coming.

Nakheel, the state-owned developer of Dubai's signature palm-shaped islands, unveiled plans to demolish the neighborhood to make way for a gated community of luxury two-story villas. Residents found 12-month eviction notices stuck to their doors.

"We're just gutted," said Amanda James, 53, whose British father first moved the family to the village in 1984. "I arrived here during the Iran-Iraq War. I stayed through both Gulf wars. ... We've had three generations. There's a history of people growing up, meeting each other, having their families right here."

In response to a request for comment, Nakheel said it informed residents of its plans and complied with legal requirements.

"We recognize Jebel Ali Village's importance to Dubai's history and its residents and, for this reason, have taken the decision to redevelop the community to preserve and enhance its longevity for many more generations to come," the company said, arguing that the planned pools, parks, sports courts and bike trails would bring residents together in new ways.

As oil boomed in the 1970s, American and European employees of international oil conglomerates, lured by generous cost-of-living allowances, descended on the dusty towns of the Persian Gulf. Expats settled with their families in well-guarded communities across the region, transforming outposts like Saudi Arabian Oil Co. compounds into meticulously landscaped replicas of California suburbia.

Dubai didn't have much oil, but used what it had to build Jebel Ali, the region's first major shipping hub and dry dock. Dutch and British port workers moved into houses made from concrete breeze blocks. As the neighborhood grew, a school sprouted up. So did horse stables, a pool and clubhouse where residents gathered to swap stories over brunches and beers.

"That sense of community is quite unique to this place," said Donna Dickinson, a 40-year-old from Norfolk, England, who spent her teenage years in the village and moved back with her family last year "to replicate for my children the childhood that I had."

Residents recalled the city's rapid changes that climaxed in 2002, when Dubai's ruler allowed foreigners to buy property in areas of the emirate. That unleashed a real estate frenzy fueled by speculators.

Extravagant housing developments, sprawling golf courses, luxury resorts, elaborate water parks and gigantic shopping malls crammed into the land around the James' home. Over time, the coral stone homes of the emirate's rulers along the Dubai Creek were gutted and leveled.

"A lot of the history was demolished and replaced," said Todd Reisz, the author of "Showpiece City: How Architecture Made Dubai," rattling off razed treasures. "Change is inevitable for a city always trying to meet market demands. But there are still places of culture and places where we understand our history."

Nakheel announced plans to revamp Jebel Ali village and evicted residents ahead of demolition. But the real estate bubble burst in 2008. The company, struggling with billions of dollars in debt, abandoned its vision for the site.

As Dubai's property prices plunged and oil-rich Abu Dhabi rescued the emirate from default, village homes sat empty. Years later as the economy perked up, Nakheel allowed residents old and new to trickle back, ready to spend to restore the scruffy community to its former glory.

"When you're an expat, having a sort of history to a place is quite a difficult thing," Dickinson said as her 7-year-old son bounced on a trampoline. Behind him loomed Dubai's mammoth aluminum smelter near the port.

In a transient city where foreigners on short-term visas with no route to citizenship far outnumber locals, the village "was always home, really, in my heart," she said.

Yet hints emerged that one of the last bastions of 1970s Dubai may soon be no more.

In 2017, Nakheel transformed the rustic clubhouse into a sleek pub with suede chairs and added a dine-in movie theater bearing the name of Food Network star Guy Fieri — in stark contrast to the dilapidated village homes. Even as kids on bikes returned to the winding roads, some houses remained abandoned,

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drawing raucous teenagers searching for secret party venues to residents' chagrin.

The village crackled with rumors about Nakheel's plans to tear it all down. But it wasn't until last week that residents' worst fears were confirmed. Flyers declaring "the past has a new future" blanketed their cars and gates, advertising modern villas of glass and steel.

The remaining Jebel Ali residents won't be offered property in future villas, which many can't afford, and all will have to try to find homes elsewhere. Some said they'd consider leaving Dubai altogether.

Monique Buitendag, a 37-year-old South African who spent a fortune on renovations just months ago, is seething.

"They knew this was coming, and they still sold us the dream," she said. "It's just going to look like the rest of the swanky villas. ... You're losing that little bit of old Dubai."

Cory Rhodes, a 43-year-old from Oregon whose cozy cottage also functions as his business and daughters' home school, is heartbroken.

"The emotional feeling you get from living here you're just not going to get it anywhere else," he said grimly.

Amanda James has felt the whiplash before. Reflecting on the stubborn allure of the old village, she wonders if Dubai may lose more than it gains.

"My hope is that young people today don't think Dubai is Disneyland — because it's not," she said, staring out across the city's tapering towers illuminated in the haze. "It had so much depth."

Follow Isabel DeBre on Twitter at www.twitter.com/isabeldebre.

Russia comes in from cold on climate, launches forest plan

By TANYA TITOVA and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian island north of Japan has become a testing ground for Moscow's efforts to reconcile its prized fossil fuel industry with the need to do something about climate change.

More than two-thirds of Sakhalin Island is forested. With the Kremlin's blessing, authorities there have set an ambitious goal of making the island — Russia's largest — carbon neutral by 2025.

Tree growth will absorb as much planet-warming carbon dioxide as the island's half-million residents and its businesses produce, an idea the Russian government 4,000 miles to the west in Moscow hopes to apply to the whole country, which has more forested area than any other nation.

"The economic structure of Sakhalin and the large share of forestland in the territory and carbon balance distribution reflect the general situation in Russia," said Dinara Gershinkova, an adviser to Sakhalin's governor on climate and sustainable development. "So the results of the experiment in Sakhalin will be representative and applicable to the whole Russian Federation."

The plan reflects a marked change of mood in Russia on climate change.

President Vladimir Putin joked about global warming in 2003, saying that Russians would be able to "spend less on fur coats, and the grain harvest would increase" if it continued.

Last year, he acknowledged that climate change "requires real actions and way more attention," and he has sought to position the world's biggest fossil fuel exporter as a leader in the fight against global warming.

The country's vast forests are key to this idea.

"By aiming to build a carbon-neutral economy by no later than 2060, Russia is relying, among other things, on the unique resource of forest ecosystems available to us, and their significant capacity to absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen," Putin said in a video address Nov. 2 to the U.N. climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland. "After all, our country accounts for around 20% of the world's forestland."

Scientists say that natural forms of removing carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, from the atmosphere will indeed play a key role in tackling global warming.

Many of the countries at the climate summit rely on some form of absorbing emissions to achieve their targets of being "net zero" by 2050 — that is, emitting only as much greenhouse gas as can be captured again by natural or artificial means.

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But experts say the math behind such calculations is notoriously fuzzy and prone to manipulation by governments, who have a vested interest in making their emissions figures look good.

"Russia makes an enormous contribution in the absorption of global emissions -- both its own and others' -- by means of absorptive capacity of our ecosystems, firstly of forests, which is estimated at 2.5 billion (metric) tons of CO2 equivalent a year," said Viktoria Abramchenko, deputy prime minister for environmental issues, speaking at a recent conference in St. Petersburg.

The figure came as a surprise to scientists contacted by The Associated Press. It constitutes a fivefold increase on the 535 million metric tons of CO2 absorption that Russia reported to the U.N. climate office for 2019.

Natalia Lukina, the director of the Center of Ecology and Productivity of Forests, a government-funded research institute, said the estimates are actually assumptions because "there is no real accurate data."

"Unfortunately, our official information about forestland is 25 years old, then this data was updated somehow, but there were no direct measurements," she said.

One problem is that nobody knows how many trees are in Russia's forests.

Last year, its forestry body finished an inventory that took 13 years and cost at least \$142 million, but it hasn't been made public or shared with the scientific community.

Russia's network of emissions monitoring stations is likewise limited, Lukina said.

Vadim Mamkin, a scientist who maintains one of the country's 11 greenhouse gas measuring masts in the Tver region, said the carbon balance of such old forests is "usually about zero," though figures vary about 10% from year to year.

Wildfires that burn millions of hectares of forest are another, increasingly pressing problem. Forests that have stored carbon for decades suddenly become big emitters when they burn, undoing an absorption effect, said Sergey Bartalev, head of the boreal ecosystems monitoring lab at the Space Research Institute.

Such fires are becoming increasingly frequent in Russia, partly due to climate change.

This year saw a record 13.1 million hectares burned, leading to emissions of 970 million metric tons of CO2 equivalent, according to an estimate by the European Union's Copernicus Programme -- almost twice as much as the last reported absorption.

Fire protection is now a priority in Moscow's new strategy of low-carbon development.

Ahead of the climate summit, Putin declared that Russia plans to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 -- a goal similar to those set by China and Saudi Arabia -- but a decade behind the midcentury deadline that the U.S. and EU are aiming for.

Scientists say that stopping additional emissions of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere by 2050 is the only way to achieve the Paris accord's goal to keep the Earth's warming below catastrophic levels of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century.

Russia sent a large delegation to the Glasgow summit, although Putin himself did not attend.

Environmental campaigns and other nations that are wary of giving Moscow a free pass while they ramp up their own efforts to cut emissions will be watching closely what Russian diplomats propose.

Vasily Yablokov, the head of Energy and Climate Sector at Russian Greenpeace, said Russia's forest calculations will play a key role in its climate plan, and he fears that estimates would be made to "fit into the answer."

One reason why Russia has a vested interest in minimizing its reported emissions in front of the United Nations is the prospect of a carbon tariff being mulled by the EU on imports from countries that are deemed to be not doing enough on climate.

"The role of forest is overestimated, unfortunately," said Alexey Kokorin, the head of climate and energy program at WWF-Russia. "It would be good to trust that Russia will be able to increase the absorption as it is in the draft strategy, and all of us will do the best to achieve it, but it looks like it's too much."

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Jordans reported from Glasgow, Scotland.
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Follow AP's coverage of the climate summit at <http://apnews.com/hub/climate>

UN says over 3 million in Myanmar need "life-saving" aid

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. humanitarian chief urged Myanmar's military leaders on Monday to provide unimpeded access to the more than 3 million people in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance since government forces seized power on Feb. 1 "because of growing conflict and insecurity, COVID-19 and a failing economy."

Martin Griffiths warned that without an end to violence and a peaceful resolution of Myanmar's crisis, "this number will only rise."

He also urged donors to respond to the U.N. appeal, saying less than half of the \$385 million required has been raised since the military ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Monday was the first anniversary of the 2020 elections in Myanmar, which "were deemed free and fair by domestic and international observers," U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. They were won by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party with approximately 80% of the elected seats in the upper and lower houses of Parliament. The military rejects the results, claiming the vote was fraudulent.

"The United Nations reiterates its call on the military to respect the will of the people and put the country back on track to democratic transition," Dujarric said, stressing that the U.N. remains "gravely concerned about the intensifying violence in Myanmar" and again urges unimpeded humanitarian access.

Griffiths' statement was issued as members of the U.N. Security Council held a closed-door meeting on Myanmar requested by the United Kingdom. Diplomats said Russia and China objected to a proposed press statement that would express concern at recent violence including air strikes and reaffirm the council's support for the country's democratic transition, but discussions were continuing.

UK deputy ambassador James Kariuki told reporters before heading into the meeting that Britain is particularly concerned about the buildup of military action in northwest Chin state, "and we are concerned that this rather mirrors the activity we saw four years ago ahead of the atrocities that were committed in Rakhine against the Rohingya" Muslim minority.

"So, we're very keen to make sure the council is focused, and the military know that we're watching," he said.

Since Suu Kyi's ouster, Myanmar has been wracked by unrest, with peaceful demonstrations against the ruling generals morphing first into a low-level insurgency in many urban areas after security forces used deadly force and then into more serious combat in rural areas, especially in border regions where ethnic minority militias have been engaging in heavy clashes with government troops.

On Sept. 7, the National Unity Government, the main underground group coordinating resistance to the military which was established by elected legislators who had been barred from taking their seats when the military seized power, called for a nationwide uprising. Its "People's Defense Forces" operate in many areas and have received training and weapons from some armed ethnic groups.

Christine Schraner Burgener told The Associated Press shortly before her 3 1/2 year term as the U.N. special envoy for Myanmar ended on Oct. 31 that "civil war" has spread throughout the country.

She said the U.N. has heard that many soldiers are on the ground conducting "clearing operations" in Chin state, and reminded the world that the military's "clearing operation" in Rakhine state in 2017 saw villages burned down, widespread rapes and more than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims flee to neighboring Bangladesh.

Griffiths also called the situation in the northwest "extremely concerning, with an escalation in hostilities between the Myanmar Armed Forces and the Chinland Defense Force in Chin state, and with the People's Defense Forces in Magway and Sagaing regions."

"More than 37,000 people, including women and children, have been newly displaced, and more than 160 homes have been burned, including churches and the offices of a humanitarian organization," Griffiths said. "Attacks directed against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including humanitarian workers and facilities,

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are clearly prohibited under international humanitarian law and must stop immediately.”

Since Feb. 1, he said, hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes due to violence across the country, and 223,000 people remain internally displaced.

“This includes 165,000 in the southeast of the country and is on top of a significant population of people who were already displaced in Rakhine, Chin, Shan and Kachin states prior to the takeover,” Griffiths said. He noted that 144,000 Rohingya people are still confined to camps or living in camp-like settings in Rakhine, many since their displacement in 2012, and more than 105,000 people have been displaced in Kachin and Shan, many for years.

The U.N. undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs said he is also “increasingly concerned about reports of rising levels of food insecurity in and around urban areas, including in Yangon and Mandalay.”

Boswell’s late field goal lifts Steelers past Bears 29-27

By WILL GRAVES AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Mike Tomlin sat down, smiled and let out a sarcastic laugh.

“Had ‘em all the way, right?” the longtime Pittsburgh Steelers coach said after his team slipped past Chicago 29-27 on Monday night.

Not exactly.

Not after a 10-point fourth-quarter lead turned into a one-point deficit following a fumble by punt returner Ray-Ray McCloud and a flash of brilliance by Bears rookie quarterback Justin Fields, who put Chicago in front with a 16-yard strike to Darnell Mooney with 1:46 to go.

Steelers rookie tight end Pat Freiermuth hardly seemed rattled. Sure, the Bears had the lead. But the Steelers had Ben Roethlisberger.

“I wasn’t nervous at all,” said Freiermuth, who caught a pair of touchdown passes. “Ben’s been doing this for a long time. We’re all confident in each other. I was thinking in my mind when they scored, ‘It’s too much time (left).’”

And there was.

Roethlisberger guided the Steelers 52 yards in seven plays — abetted by Chicago’s 12th penalty of the night — to set up Chris Boswell’s 40-yard field goal with 26 seconds left, and Pittsburgh won its fourth straight after a 1-3 start.

“We’re finding ways to win the game,” Roethlisberger said. “Played well enough. Not great. But offensively speaking, we’re just doing enough right now.”

Roethlisberger completed 21 of 30 passes for 205 yards and the two scores to Freiermuth while pulling off the 50th game-winning drive and 38th fourth-quarter comeback of his 18-year career. Rookie running back Najee Harris found the end zone for the fifth straight game and Boswell made three field goals — including two from over 50 yards — into the open end at perpetually windy Heinz Field.

“Boz is a serial killer,” Steelers defensive end Cam Heyward said. “He’s too calm.”

Boswell might have been the only one relaxed after the Steelers frittered away a seemingly comfortable lead when McCloud gave the ball up on a punt return midway through the fourth quarter that DeAndre Houston-Carson returned 25 yards for a touchdown to pull the Bears within three.

Things got weird from there. Chicago appeared to get a stop on Pittsburgh’s ensuing possession only to have linebacker Cassius Marsh — who spent training camp with the Steelers — get flagged for taunting after sacking Roethlisberger on third down.

Marsh’s celebration looked relatively innocuous, though the league has cracked down on any semblance of taunting this season.

“I saw the player, after he made a big play, run toward the bench area of the Pittsburgh Steelers and posture in such a way that I felt he was taunting them,” referee Tony Corrente said.

Marsh’s teammates came to his defense, with linebacker Roquan Smith calling the penalty “BS.” Marsh shrugged his shoulders.

“It’s just sad to see stuff like that happen in a close game like that,” he said. “It’s just rough. I don’t want

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to say too much because you all know how it is.”

The call extended Pittsburgh’s drive and allowed the Steelers to take a 26-20 lead with 2:52 remaining. It took Fields all of 66 seconds to put the Bears in front. He took Chicago 75 yards in seven plays, and his strike to Mooney appeared to have the Bears in position to pull off a stunner before Roethlisberger and Boswell came through.

Chicago did get the ball to midfield in the final seconds, but Cairo Santos’ 65-yard attempt into the closed end of the stadium was well short. Bears coach Matt Nagy praised Fields’ resilience on a night he passed for 291 yards with a touchdown and an interception and ran for 45 more, but it wasn’t enough.

“We lost,” Nagy said. “This is a team game. That’s what our guys care about. And we’ve got to figure it out.”

PASSING COWHER

The victory was the 150th of Tomlin’s career, moving him into second place on the franchise’s win list behind Chuck Noll. Tomlin passed predecessor Bill Cowher, who joined Noll in the Hall of Fame over the summer.

“I’m just appreciative of the standards that have been set by those that have come before me,” said Tomlin, who is in his 15th season. “That standard is inspirational for us. ... I work to do my job and uphold that standard.”

FLAG DAY

Chicago’s dozen penalties ran the gamut, from a pass-interference call that set up a Pittsburgh field goal to an illegal block in the second quarter that negated a 1-yard touchdown pass from Fields to Jimmy Graham. The Steelers, by comparison, were flagged six times for 30 yards.

“With 12 penalties, that’s too many,” Nagy said. “What it does is it pushes you back or gives them free yards. You want to stay away from penalties and I think we need to be better there.”

THE MAN GOT PAID

Steelers linebacker T.J. Watt sacked Fields three times to push his season total to 11 1/2. Watt signed a contract in September that made him one of the highest-paid defenders in the league.

“He’s well-compensated,” Tomlin said with a laugh.

INJURIES

Bears: WR Allen Robinson went down with a hamstring injury. ... DT Akiem Hicks is dealing with a sprained ankle.

Steelers: WR Chase Claypool was being evaluated for an undisclosed injury.

UP NEXT

Bears: Are off next week, then welcome Baltimore to Soldier Field on Nov. 21.

Steelers: Host Detroit next Sunday. Pittsburgh has won its last five meetings with the Lions.

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

APEC leaders meeting to chart path forward from pandemic

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — U.S. President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping will have a rare virtual encounter this week as they gather online with other Pacific Rim leaders to chart a path to recovery out of the crisis brought on by the pandemic.

New Zealand is hosting this year’s Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, which culminates in a leader’s meeting on Saturday. Continued outbreaks of the coronavirus and related travel restrictions have confined the meeting to the virtual realm for a second straight year.

As usual, the 21 APEC members will be seeking areas where members can cooperate on easing barriers to trade and economic growth instead of trying to settle longstanding feuds.

The focus will be on “charting a path to recovery out of this once-in-a-century crisis,” New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, host of the leader’s meeting, said in a statement.

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In all, APEC members account for nearly 3 billion people and about 60% of the world's GDP. They span the Pacific rim, from Chile to Russia to Thailand to Australia.

Officials say they've made significant progress during some 340 preliminary meetings. APEC members have agreed to reduce or eliminate many tariffs and border holdups on vaccines, masks and other medical products important to fighting the coronavirus, said Vangelis Vitalis, chair of the Senior Officials' Meeting.

But big power frictions are the inevitable backdrop for the closed door summit meetings of APEC, which as an economic forum includes both Hong Kong and Taiwan in addition to communist-ruled mainland China.

Both Taiwan and China have put in applications to join a Pacific Rim trade group, the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership, with Beijing saying it will block Taiwan's bid on the basis that the democratically governed island refuses to accept that it's part of China.

Stephen Hoadley, an associate professor of politics and international relations at the University of Auckland, said Biden will be looking to reverse the course set by predecessor Donald Trump, who spurned regional trade deals with his America First foreign policy approach.

Since Biden has taken office, Washington has shifted back to a more internationalist approach to trade liberalization, supporting global and regional efforts such as the rules-making World Trade Organization.

However, Biden has kept most trade, technology and investment restrictions that Trump imposed on Chinese exports and companies in place while also moving to counter Beijing's sway in the region.

One such effort is a recent new defense agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom and the U.S. that raised eyebrows because it did not include New Zealand or other U.S. allies. The development of nuclear submarines is a major part of the new defense arrangement, and New Zealand has a longstanding nuclear-free policy.

Hoadley said the China-U.S. rivalry can be seen even in the way they describe the region, with China calling it the Asia-Pacific and the U.S. having switched years ago to calling it the Indo-Pacific, to include the democratic counterweight of India — which is not an APEC member.

Apart from the geopolitical tensions simmering at all times, the pandemic has added to uncertainty in a region that has long been viewed as an increasingly important engine of global growth.

Many economies are still struggling to emerge from the downturns that hit the region hard in 2020, stalling travel and many other activities. Prolonged outbreaks of COVID-19 infections, slow progress in vaccinations and other disruptions both to manufacturing and shipping have added to uncertainty and dragged millions of the region's most vulnerable people back into poverty.

"Unfortunately, too, there's been rising protectionism around the globe, and that has also made for an incredibly challenging environment for us to be operating in," Vitalis said during a media briefing.

He said there are areas of common ground, including improving environmental sustainability, and enhancing the untapped potential of Indigenous groups.

New Zealand's Trade Minister Damien O'Connor said Tuesday that APEC should send a powerful message to the world ahead of a World Trade Organization meeting.

"We are facing the biggest economic shock in 75 years. We know that trade will be a strong driver in our recovery. We absolutely cannot afford to turn our attention away from an institution that has underpinned APEC's work since its inception," O'Connor said.

Ahead of the main leader's meeting APEC will host a youth summit and its usual CEO summit featuring addresses by leaders and a keynote speech by human rights lawyer Amal Clooney. Ardern and German Chancellor Angela Merkel will hold a dialogue on how the pandemic has changed the world.

The pandemic APEC meetings lack the pomp and glamor of past in-person gatherings. No fancy shirts or gala balls. New Zealand made the decision last year to switch to a virtual summit. Malaysia also opted to host the 2020 APEC leader's meeting online due to the pandemic.

Biden asking Democrats do so much with so little in Congress

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rarely have the leaders of Congress been asked to do so much, with so little, as

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in navigating President Joe Biden's big domestic vision into law.

Reaching for FDR-style accomplishments with slimmer-than-ever Democratic majorities has been politically messy at best, arduous at worst, and about to become even more daunting for the president and his party.

Fresh off passage of Biden's \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill, Democrats are reviving his even bigger \$1.75 trillion package for expanding health, child, elder care and climate change programs. Anxious to show voters a deliverable after dismal election results last week, the party's congressional leaders will try to muscle the massive bill past staunch Republican opposition in an ambitious, if fraught, undertaking beyond almost any other in modern American history.

"There's just no good precedent for what Democrats are seeking to do, and I really wouldn't be surprised to see them fail," said Frances Lee, the associate chair of the Politics Department at Princeton University. "I can't think of any parallel. I mean, I can think of some big bills, but nothing this big."

It's not just that the package is giant -- even at half its original \$3.5 trillion size -- Biden's 2,135-page proposal is made up of so many far-reaching policies and programs that even lawmakers who support the framework have had trouble explaining it all.

And Democrats are trying to pass Biden's big bill on their own, relying on their fragile hold on Congress to push it past the opposition in ways Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson and other modern presidents didn't have to contend with.

The Congress hasn't been this narrowly split in 20 years, with a Democratic margin of just a few seats in the House and the rare 50-50 split Senate. That's given rise to new political power centers. Progressives, centrists and even the power-center of a single senator — West Virginia's Joe Manchin or Arizona's Kyrsten Sinema — all have oversized influence to dictate terms of a deal and the schedule of votes.

While Friday night's infrastructure bill enjoyed Republican support in both the House and earlier in the Senate, a rare bipartisan accord, that won't be the case going forward on the "Build Back Better Act" that is an echo of Biden's presidential campaign promises.

"The question is: Can I get all of those votes? This is a process," Biden told reporters at the White House on Saturday as he celebrated the passage of one bill and acknowledged the challenge in the days and weeks ahead.

"You didn't believe we could do any of it. And I don't blame you," he said to the press as well as the viewing American voters. "Because you look at the facts, you wonder, 'How is this going to get done?'"

Roosevelt launched his New Deal programs at the start of his first term amid the Great Depression, his landslide election swelling the Democratic hold on Congress to more than 300 members early in his presidency. Johnson's Great Society bills benefitted from similarly big Democratic majorities in Congress. He had nearly 300 House Democrats in 1965.

And, unlike today, both earlier administrations were able to find crossover support from minority-party Republicans for some aspects of their agendas.

"We don't have landslides anymore," said Sarah Binder, a political science professor and expert on Congress at George Washington University. "So the demand for government to step in to do something was quite a bit larger than what's here today."

While even Republican Ronald Reagan had help from Democrats for a balanced budget bill in 1981, today's locked-in partisanship splits the country along geographic, cultural and political lines, leaving more recent administrations to take a go-it alone approach.

Barack Obama heaved the Affordable Care Act into law on party-line votes with much bigger margins — at one point the Democrats had 60 members in the Senate — that initially allowed his party to overcome Republican filibusters. Final passage of the bill, though, which came to be known as Obamacare, relied on a similar filibuster-dodging budget reconciliation process to the one Biden is using.

Donald Trump failed to repeal Obamacare when Republicans had control of Congress in his first year as president, but the party powered through GOP tax changes with the same majority-only budget process on a party-line vote at the end of 2017.

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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is determined to push ahead with just a few votes to spare on Biden's big bill once lawmakers return next Monday.

"We must, as John Lewis said, 'keep our eyes on the prize,'" Pelosi wrote, invoking the late congressman and civil rights leader, in a letter late Sunday to colleagues.

Already, centrist Democrats in the House have signaled their reluctance, while progressives have indicated a willingness to give at least a little ground.

The Senate terrain is even more perilous. Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is the first party leader in some two decades to navigate a 50-50 split in what's now a wholly different era producing self-styled mavericks and zero crossover votes.

Manchin will almost certainly still exert his power try to strip out what he doesn't like, from climate change provisions to a new paid family leave program. And in the evenly split chamber, any senator can make demands before they vote. Others surely will.

Republican Minority Leader Mitch McConnell on Monday revived his attack on Biden's bill as a "reckless tax-and-spending" spree. He has argued that Biden was not elected with a mandate for his proposals.

"I don't think the American people are interested in seeing this go any further," McConnell said at a stop in Kentucky.

Lee, the Princeton political science professor, said if Democrats are able to push Biden's bill to passage it will be a sizable accomplishment. And if they don't there will be "a lot of hand wringing and anger" from the party's base of supporters.

All told, "People should be aware that what they're attempting to do is really a high wire act."

Congress mandates new car technology to stop drunken driving

By HOPE YEN and TOM KRISHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress has created a new requirement for automakers: Find a high-tech way to keep drunken people from driving cars.

It's one of the mandates along with a burst of new spending aimed at improving auto safety amid escalating road fatalities in the \$1 trillion infrastructure package that President Joe Biden is expected to sign soon.

Under the legislation, monitoring systems to stop intoxicated drivers would roll out in all new vehicles as early as 2026, after the Transportation Department assesses the best form of technology to install in millions of vehicles and automakers are given time to comply.

In all, about \$17 billion is allotted to road safety programs, the biggest increase in such funding in decades, according to the Eno Center for Transportation. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said Monday that could mean more protected bike paths and greener spaces built into busy roadways.

"It's monumental," said Alex Otte, national president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Otte called the package the "single most important legislation" in the group's history that marks "the beginning of the end of drunk driving."

"It will virtually eliminate the No. 1 killer on America's roads," she said.

Last month, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported an estimated 20,160 people died in traffic collisions in the first half of 2021, the highest first-half total since 2006. The agency has pointed to speeding, impaired driving and not wearing seatbelts during the coronavirus pandemic as factors behind the spike.

Each year, around 10,000 people are killed due to alcohol-related crashes in the U.S., making up nearly 30% of all traffic fatalities, according to NHTSA.

Currently, some convicted drunken drivers must use breathalyzer devices attached to an ignition interlock, blowing into a tube and disabling the vehicle if their blood alcohol level is too high. The legislation doesn't specify the technology, only that it must "passively monitor the performance of a driver of a motor vehicle to accurately identify whether that driver may be impaired."

Sam Abuelsamid, principal mobility analyst for Guidehouse Insights, said the most likely system to pre-

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vent drunken driving is infrared cameras that monitor driver behavior. That technology is already being installed by automakers such as General Motors, BMW and Nissan to track driver attentiveness while using partially automated driver-assist systems.

The cameras make sure a driver is watching the road, and they look for signs of drowsiness, loss of consciousness or impairment.

If signs are spotted, the cars will warn the driver, and if the behavior persists, the car would turn on its hazard lights, slow down and pull to the side of the road.

Abuelsamid said breathalyzers aren't a practical solution because many people would object to being forced to blow into a tube every time they get into the car. "I don't think it's going to go over very well with a lot of people," he said.

The voluminous bill also requires automakers to install rear-seat reminders to alert parents if a child is left inadvertently in the back seat, a mandate that could begin by 2025 after NHTSA completes its rulemaking on the issue. Since 1990, about 1,000 children have died from vehicular heatstroke after the highest total in a single year was 54 in 2018, according to Kidsandcars.org.

Congress, meanwhile, directed the agency to update decades-old safety standards to avert deaths from collapsing front seatbacks and issue a rule requiring automatic emergency braking and lane departure warnings in all passenger vehicles, though no date was set for compliance.

Most automakers had already agreed to make automatic emergency braking standard equipment in most of their models by September of next year, as part of a voluntary plan announced in the final weeks of the Obama administration.

Buttigieg, promoting the legislation's benefits at a White House briefing, said he had traveled the country in recent months and seen too many roadside memorials for people who had died in preventable traffic deaths.

He pointed to a new \$5 billion "Safe Streets & Roads for All" program under his department that will in part promote healthier streets for cyclists and pedestrians. The federal program, which he acknowledged may take several months to set up, would support cities' campaigns to end traffic fatalities with a "Vision Zero" effort that could build traffic roundabouts to slow cars, carve out new bike paths and widen sidewalks and even reduce some roads to shift commuters toward public transit or other modes of transportation.

The legislation requires at least 15% of a state's highway safety improvement program funds to address pedestrians, bicyclists and other nonmotorized road users if those groups make up 15% or more of the state's crash fatalities.

"The best way to allow people to move in ways that are better for congestion and better for climate is to give them alternatives," Buttigieg said. Describing much of it as a longer-term effort, he said, "this is how we do right by the next generation."

Still, safety advocates worry that the bipartisan bill missed opportunities to address more forcefully an emerging U.S. crisis of road fatalities and urged the Transportation Department to deliver on immediate solutions.

They have called on a sometimes slow-moving NHTSA to address a backlog of traffic safety regulations ordered by Congress nearly a decade ago, such as mandatory rear seat belt reminders. The department recently said it will release a "safe system approach" to road safety in January that identifies safety action for drivers, roads, vehicles, speeds and post-crash medical care.

"Prompt action must be taken on comprehensive, commonsense and confirmed solutions to steer our nation toward zero crash fatalities," said Cathy Chase, president of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety. "Proven solutions are at hand; it's time to take action."

Krisher reported from Detroit.

Astroworld deaths spur calls for independent review

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

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HOUSTON (AP) — The Houston police and fire departments were deeply involved in safety measures for the music festival where a surging crowd killed eight people, playing key roles in crowd control measures, on-site security staffing and the emergency response. The police chief even says he met with the headlining performer before the show.

Now the city's police department is leading the criminal investigation into how the deadly chaos erupted during Friday night's performance by rapper Travis Scott.

While a prominent local official is calling for a separate, independent review of the tragedy, experts in crowd safety say an investigation by neutral outsiders could help the city avoid potential conflicts of interest and promote transparency.

Houston Police Department spokeswoman Jodi Silva declined to comment on questions about whether its close involvement in the event created a conflict or if it considered handing the probe off to an outside agency. Such decisions are often made in investigations like police shootings.

"All of the information we have available to put out at this time has been placed out on Twitter," Silva said.

The police department's probe would be separate from any independent investigation ordered by County Judge Lina Hidalgo, Harris County's top elected official, according to Rafael Lemaitre, a spokesman for the county judge's office. Hidalgo hasn't decided who would conduct such an independent review or how it would be done, Lemaitre said Monday.

"She wants to know if this could have been prevented in any way," Lemaitre said. "It's also entirely possible that it was not preventable for whatever reason, and that's something we would like to know, as well."

Key questions remained unanswered after the Astroworld festival at the Harris County-owned NRG Park. Some of the lingering questions involve what the Houston police and fire departments did before, during and after a crowd surged toward the stage, killing eight people and injuring many more, with over 300 people treated on site and at least 13 others hospitalized. Other questions center on the actions of event organizers.

Officials with the Houston police and fire departments have said that part of their investigation will include reviewing whether the concert promoter and others behind the festival adhered to the plans that were submitted for the event.

Astroworld's organizers laid out security and emergency medical response protocols for the festival in plans filed with Harris County. The 56-page operations plan, obtained by The Associated Press, says that a decision to evacuate the event would be made by the festival director after consultation with other individuals, including the security director. Such plans were filed with Harris County and Houston and have to be reviewed by Houston police officials.

Christopher Slobogin, director of the criminal justice program at Vanderbilt University, said an independent criminal investigation into what happened in Houston could be beneficial to avoid any potential conflicts of interest. But acknowledged that this case is different from typical situations where authorities are confronted with decisions over whether to step away from a case because of a conflict of interest.

"The actual crime was probably not committed directly by the fire department or the police department," he said. "But at least for appearance purposes, if an independent body did the investigation I think that would be the better practice."

Officials have said a private company was primarily responsible for providing security at the festival, but Houston police were also assigned to the event. The plan says medical care at the festival was provided by ParaDocs, a private company based in New York.

Houston Fire Chief Samuel Peña had said during a news conference on Saturday that the injuries and size of the crowd "quickly overwhelmed" the private companies providing security and medical services. Peña said even though the medical operations plan did not require that the fire department have units pre-positioned around the festival, his agency decided to have those units in place "in case this incident escalated."

Houston Police Chief Troy Finner said in a statement on Monday that he had a "brief and respectful" meeting with Scott and the rapper's head of security on Friday before his performance. The chief said he

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asked them to work with the police department.

"I expressed my concerns regarding public safety and that in my 31 years in law enforcement experience I have never seen a time with more challenges facing citizens of all ages, to include a global pandemic and social tension throughout the nation," Finner said.

G. Keith Still, a visiting professor of crowd science at the United Kingdom's University of Suffolk, said his independent investigations of similar tragedies typically begin with an evaluation of an event's safety permitting process. He evaluates how a permit was issued and whether the event organizer adhered to permit conditions.

"Police can sometimes get too caught up in trying to take eyewitness accounts," he said. "With 50,000 potential eyewitnesses, by the time they get done through with all of that, they're left with a huge, confused mass."

Houston police and fire officials said their investigation will include reviewing video taken by concert promoter Live Nation, as well as dozens of clips from people at the show. Officials also planned to review the event's security plan and determine whether its organizers properly followed permit requirements.

Steven Adelman, vice president of the industry group Event Safety Alliance, said in an email that he sees no issue with public safety authorities authorizing an independent investigation of the Houston tragedy.

"I would hope and assume the investigation will be conducted by an outside person who is not subject to influence by the agencies that were involved with Astroworld. This is not an uncommon scenario in complex situations like this one," wrote Adelman, whose organization was formed after the collapse of a stage killed seven people at the Indiana State Fair in 2011.

Adelman said private forensic analysis experts independently investigated the Indiana stage collapse, examining the stage roof engineering and crowd management.

"A good example of what I hope we see here," Adelman said of the investigation in Houston.

Finner has defended how long it took for the concert to be called off after the first signs of trouble. The police chief said his department immediately notified concert organizers after noticing that attendees were "going down." The event was called off 40 minutes later after discussions that included the fire department and NRG Park officials.

"You cannot just close when you've got 50,000 — over 50,000 — individuals, OK?" Finner said. "We have to worry about rioting — riots — when you have a group that's that young."

Peña said city officials limited the attendance to 50,000 even though the venue could have held 200,000 based on fire codes.

"It was the crowd control at the point of the stage that was the issue, especially as the crowd began to surge toward the stage," Peña said.

Live Nation said in a statement that it is cooperating with local authorities "so that both the fans who attended and their families can get the answers they want and deserve, and we will address all legal matters at the appropriate time."

Hidalgo tweeted on Saturday that she was "calling for an objective and independent investigation into what happened." She also said her office was grateful for the work done by the police and fire departments.

"It may well be that this tragedy is the result of unpredictable events, of circumstances coming together that couldn't possibly have been avoided," Hidalgo said. "But until we determine that, I will ask the tough questions."

Hidalgo's office isn't a law-enforcement agency and doesn't have authority over criminal investigations.

Kunzelman reported from College Park, Maryland. Associated Press reporters Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville and Jake Bleiberg in Dallas contributed to this report.

With victims ID'd, many questions remain in Houston tragedy

By JUAN A. LOZANO and JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — When rapper Travis Scott's sold-out concert in Houston became a deadly scene of panic and danger in the surging crowd, Edgar Acosta began worrying about his son, who wasn't answer-

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ing his phone.

He called hospitals and police, who told him his son was not on the list of victims from the Astroworld festival. They were wrong: Axel Acosta Avila, 21, was among the eight people who died Friday night at the outdoor festival that was attended by some 50,000 people and is now the focus of a criminal investigation.

On Monday, authorities released the names of the dead as they continued looking into what went wrong when a crush of fans pressed forward after Scott took the stage. Houston's police chief said Monday he had met with Scott before the rapper's performance on Friday about safety concerns but did not elaborate about what, specifically, concerned him.

"They told me, Mr. Acosta, your son is not on the list so you don't have to worry about anything. He's not on the list of dead people or injured people" said Edgar Acosta, whose family is among those suing organizers of the festival.

"I told them, 'Well, he didn't spend the night at his hotel, so I'm worried about him.'"

Houston police and fire department investigators have said they would review video taken by concert promoter Live Nation, as well as dozens of clips from people at the show that were widely shared on social media. Investigators also planned to speak with Live Nation representatives, Scott and concertgoers.

Live Nation said in a statement Monday that it has provided authorities with all footage from surveillance cameras at the festival, and that it had paused removing equipment at the request of investigators who were walking the grounds. The promoter said full refunds would be offered to all attendees.

Scott's scheduled appearance at the Day N Vegas Festival in Las Vegas this weekend was canceled, according to a Scott representative who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the matter.

Scott, who founded the Astroworld festival, said he would cover funeral costs for the victims. The dead were between the ages of 14 and 27 and were from Texas, Illinois and Washington, according to Harris County authorities. They included high schoolers, an aspiring Border Patrol agent and a computer science student.

Over 300 people were treated at a field hospital on site and at least 13 others were hospitalized. Houston Police Chief Troy Finner said his meeting with Scott before the show included the rapper's head of a security. But Finner did not go into detail about their conversation in a statement released by the police department.

"I asked Travis Scott and his team to work with HPD for all events over the weekend and to be mindful of his team's social media messaging on any scheduled events," Finner said. "The meeting was brief and respectful, and a chance for me to share my public safety concerns as Chief of Police."

Investigators were also interviewing witnesses and planned to examine the design of safety barriers and the use of crowd control at the event.

"It's not the crowd's fault at all, because there was no way you could even move, it was just like a mass loss of control," said 19-year-old festivalgoer Ben Castro. He returned to the venue Monday to leave flowers at a makeshift memorial that included notes, T-shirts and candles. He said he didn't know anyone had died until the next day.

Medical examiners have still not released the causes of death, which could take several weeks, said Michele Arnold, a spokeswoman for the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences.

Contemporary Services Corp., headquartered in Los Angeles, was responsible for security staff at the festival, according to county records in Texas. The company describes itself online as being "recognized worldwide as the pioneer, expert and only employee owned company in the crowd management field." Company representatives have not responded to emails and phone messages seeking comment.

Astroworld's organizers had laid out security and emergency medical response protocols in festival plans filed with Harris County. A 56-page operations plan, obtained by AP, states "the potential for multiple alcohol/drug related incidents, possible evacuation needs, and the ever-present threat of a mass casualty situation are identified as key concerns."

The plan instructs staff to "notify Event Control of a suspected deceased victim utilizing the code 'Smurf'." It goes on to say, "never use the term 'dead' or 'deceased' over the radio." It's not clear whether the

protocol was followed.

None of the people listed in charge of managing Astroworld's security and operations have responded to requests for comment.

There is a long history of similar catastrophes at concerts, as well as sporting and religious events. In 1979, 11 people were killed as thousands of fans tried to get into Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum to see a concert by The Who. Other crowd catastrophes include the deaths of 97 people at a soccer match in Hillsborough Stadium in 1989 in Sheffield, England, and numerous disasters connected with the annual hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

Associated Press writers Paul J. Weber in Austin, Texas; Jake Bleiberg in Dallas; Randall Chase in Dover, Delaware and Kristin M. Hall in Nashville contributed to this report.

Man Rittenhouse shot says he didn't mean to point own gun

By MICHAEL TARM, SCOTT BAUER and AMY FORLITI Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — The protester and volunteer medic who survived after Kyle Rittenhouse shot him on the streets of Kenosha testified that he pointed his own gun at Rittenhouse but didn't mean to and had no intention of firing it.

Gaige Grosskreutz, the third and final man gunned down by Rittenhouse during a night of turbulent racial-justice protests in the summer of 2020, took the stand Monday at Rittenhouse's murder trial and recounted how he drew his own pistol after the bloodshed started.

"I thought the defendant was an active shooter," said Grosskreutz, 27. Asked what was going through his mind as he got closer to the 17-year-old Rittenhouse, he said, "That I was going to die."

Rittenhouse shot Grosskreutz in the arm, tearing away much of his bicep — or "vaporized" it, as the witness put it.

Rittenhouse, now 18, is on trial on charges of killing the two other men and wounding Grosskreutz. The one-time police youth cadet from Antioch, Illinois, had gone to Kenosha with an AR-style semi-automatic rifle and a medical kit in what he said was an effort to safeguard property from the violent demonstrations that broke out over the shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man, by a white Kenosha police officer.

Testimony was expected to continue Tuesday with the state nearing the end of its case.

Prosecutors have portrayed Rittenhouse as the instigator of the bloodshed. His lawyers have argued that he acted in self-defense. He could get life in prison if convicted of the most serious charges against him.

Under questioning from the prosecution, Grosskreutz said he had his hands raised as he closed in on Rittenhouse and didn't intend to shoot him. Prosecutor Thomas Binger asked Grosskreutz why he didn't shoot first.

"That's not the kind of person that I am. That's not why I was out there," he said. "It's not who I am. And definitely not somebody I would want to become."

But during cross-examination, Rittenhouse defense attorney Corey Chirafisi asked: "It wasn't until you pointed your gun at him, advanced on him ... that he fired, right?"

"Correct," Grosskreutz replied. The defense also presented a photo showing Grosskreutz pointing the gun at Rittenhouse, who was on the ground with his rifle pointed up at Grosskreutz.

Grosskreutz, under follow-up questioning from the prosecutor, said he did not intend to point his weapon at Rittenhouse.

Wisconsin's self-defense law allows someone to use deadly force only if "necessary to prevent imminent death or great bodily harm." The jury must decide whether Rittenhouse believed he was in such peril and whether that belief was reasonable under the circumstances.

Grosskreutz said he had gone to the protest in Kenosha to serve as a medic, wearing a hat that said "paramedic" and carrying medical supplies, in addition to a loaded pistol. He said his permit to carry a concealed weapon had expired and he did not have a valid one that night.

"I believe in the Second Amendment. I'm for people's right to carry and bear arms," he said, explaining

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why he was armed. "And that night was no different than any other day. It's keys, phone, wallet, gun." He said he went into action after seeing Rittenhouse kill a man just feet away — the second person Rittenhouse fatally shot that night.

While Grosskreutz said he never verbally threatened Rittenhouse, Chirafisi, the defense attorney, said that people don't have to use words to threaten others. They can do so by their actions, "like running after them down the street with a loaded firearm," Chirafisi said. Grosskreutz denied he was chasing Rittenhouse.

Chirafisi also said Grosskreutz lied when he initially told multiple police officers that he dropped his weapon. In addition, Chirafisi pointed to Grosskreutz's lawsuit against the city of Kenosha, in which he alleges police enabled the violence by allowing an armed militia to have the run of the streets during the demonstration.

"If Mr. Rittenhouse is convicted, your chance of getting 10 million bucks is better, right?" Chirafisi said. Chirafisi also asked Grosskreutz if he told his former roommate that his only regret was "not killing the kid and hesitating to pull the gun before emptying the entire mag into him." Grosskreutz denied saying that.

Grosskreutz, who was trained as a paramedic, testified that he volunteered as a medic at protests in Milwaukee in the days after George Floyd died under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer in May 2020. Grosskreutz said he attended around 75 protests before the night he was shot, offering help to anyone needing medical attention.

While Rittenhouse is white, as were those he shot, the case has stirred racially fraught debate over vigilantism, the right to bear arms, and the unrest that erupted around the U.S. that summer over police violence against Black people.

Last week, witnesses at the trial testified that the first man shot and killed, Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, was "hyperaggressive" and "acting belligerently" that night and threatened to kill Rittenhouse at one point.

One witness said Rosenbaum was gunned down after he chased Rittenhouse and lunged for the young man's rifle.

Rosenbaum's killing set in motion the bloodshed that followed moments later: Rittenhouse killed Anthony Huber, a 26-year-old protester seen on bystander video hitting Rittenhouse with a skateboard. Rittenhouse then wounded Grosskreutz.

Bauer reported from Madison, Wisconsin; Forliti from Minneapolis.

Find AP's full coverage on the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse at: <https://apnews.com/hub/kyle-rittenhouse>

Jan. 6 panel subpoenas 6 more Trump associates in probe

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Further expanding its probe, the U.S. House committee investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection has issued subpoenas to six additional associates of former President Donald Trump who were closely involved in his efforts to overturn his defeat in the 2020 election.

The committee's chairman, Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, said in a statement Monday that the panel is demanding testimony and documents from former Trump campaign officials and others who participated in a "war room" ahead of the siege and strategized about how to halt the certification of Joe Biden's victory.

Thompson said the committee had issued new subpoenas to Bill Stepien, manager of Trump's 2020 reelection campaign; Jason Miller, a senior adviser to the campaign; Angela McCallum, national executive assistant to the campaign; John Eastman, a lawyer who advised the former president; Michael Flynn, a former national security adviser to Trump who talked with Trump ahead of the insurrection; and Bernard Kerik, who the committee says paid for hotel rooms that served as command centers ahead of Jan. 6.

"In the days before the January 6th attack, the former president's closest allies and advisers drove a campaign of misinformation about the election and planned ways to stop the count of Electoral College votes," Thompson said. "The Select Committee needs to know every detail about their efforts to overturn the election, including who they were talking to in the White House and in Congress, what connections they had with rallies that escalated into a riot, and who paid for it all."

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The subpoenas come after the panel has already demanded documents and testimony from several other Trump advisers — some who have cooperated and some who have not. The House voted last month to hold longtime Trump ally Steve Bannon in contempt after he refused to comply with his subpoena. Trump himself is fighting the probe in court.

The rioters who violently pushed back police to break into the Capitol and interrupt the electoral count repeated Trump's false claims of widespread fraud, and the committee says the six newly subpoenaed witnesses helped amplify the misinformation in the days ahead of the attack. Trump's false claims came as election officials and courts across the country verified Biden's win, and as his own attorney general said there was no evidence of significant fraud.

Thompson says in the letters to the Trump associates that the panel has uncovered "credible evidence" of their participation in the former president's efforts to overturn the election and cites ways that they individually tried to further his cause.

In Stepien's subpoena, Thompson cites the testimony of an unnamed witness in saying he oversaw the "conversion" of Trump's presidential campaign to a "Stop the Steal" effort. In letters to Miller and McCallum, Thompson cites specific efforts to spread the false claims, including a phone call from McCallum to an unidentified Michigan state legislator asking if the Trump campaign could "count on" them and urging the person to push for the appointment of new state electors.

Thompson detailed several efforts by Eastman, a lawyer and professor, to persuade Vice President Mike Pence to try to overturn the election as he presided over the congressional certification — a power Pence did not legally have. Thompson also cites Eastman's outreach to states, including a briefing to state legislators, and his participation in the so-called "war room" at the Willard Hotel where he, Bannon, Kerik and others strategized ahead of the siege about how to overturn Trump's defeat.

Kerik, a former New York City police commissioner who was pardoned by Trump after serving time in prison for tax fraud and other charges, responded to his subpoena with a lengthy statement on Monday evening. He said that he "was not hired to overturn the will of the people, only to look into the integrity of the process" and that his focus after the election was on "looking for evidence," not public relations.

"As to the events of January 6th, I was not involved," he said.

The others contacted by The Associated Press did not respond to requests for comment.

In the letter to Flynn — the former national security adviser who twice pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI and was also pardoned by Trump — Thompson cited a December Oval Office meeting with the then-president. Citing media reports, Thompson said Flynn and other participants "discussed seizing voting machines, declaring a national emergency, invoking certain national security emergency powers and continuing to spread the message that the Nov. 2020 election had been tainted by widespread fraud."

The panel is working with other close Trump advisers to gain testimony, including former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and administration aides Kashyap Patel and Dan Scavino. Members of the committee said they have been "engaging" with those witnesses but may move to hold them in contempt, as well, if they don't comply soon.

Trump's own opposition has prompted some of his advisors, including Bannon, to say they can't speak publicly about their roles. The former president's lawsuit argues that he can assert executive privilege, or a presidential claim to keep some information private, in an effort to block the government from releasing a tranche of internal White House documents to the panel. The committee has argued that privilege doesn't apply.

President Biden has so far waived executive privilege on nearly all the documents that the committee has asked for, citing the panel's need to investigate the violent attack.

In his subpoena to Eastman, Thompson sought to preemptively attack any attorney-client privilege that he may attempt to cite to avoid testifying. The letter noted that Eastman has already "made extensive public comments" regarding his legal advice and direct discussions with Trump.

Former Justice Department official Jeffrey Clark, who aligned himself with Trump's efforts to overturn the election as other department leaders pushed back, appeared for a deposition on Friday but declined

to cooperate, presenting the committee with a letter saying he would not answer questions based on Trump's assertions of privilege, including in the ongoing court case.

Thompson said afterward that he had rejected the claims of privilege and said Clark "has a very short time" to reconsider and cooperate.

The committee has already interviewed more than 150 people across government, social media and law enforcement, including some former Trump aides who have been cooperative. The panel has subpoenaed more than 20 witnesses total, and most of them, including several associates who helped plan the massive "Stop the Steal" rally the morning of the 6th, have signaled they will cooperate.

Associated Press writer Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

'A mass loss of control': Answers sought in Houston concert

By JUAN A. LOZANO and JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — When rapper Travis Scott's sold-out concert in Houston became a deadly scene of panic and danger in the surging crowd, Edgar Acosta began worrying about his son, who wasn't answering his phone.

He called hospitals and police, who told him his son was not on the list of victims from the Astroworld festival. They were wrong: Axel Acosta Avila, 21, was among the eight people who died Friday night at the outdoor festival that was attended by some 50,000 people and is now the focus of a criminal investigation.

On Monday, authorities released the names of the dead as they continued looking into what went wrong when a crush of fans pressed forward after Scott took the stage. Houston's police chief said Monday he had met with Scott before the rapper's performance on Friday about safety concerns but did not elaborate about what, specifically, concerned him.

"They told me, Mr. Acosta, your son is not on the list so you don't have to worry about anything. He's not on the list of dead people or injured people" said Edgar Acosta, whose family is among those suing organizers of the festival.

"I told them, 'Well, he didn't spend the night at his hotel, so I'm worried about him.'"

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There is a long history of similar catastrophes at concerts, as well as sporting and religious events. In 1979, 11 people were killed as thousands of fans tried to get into Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum to see a concert by The Who. Other crowd catastrophes include the deaths of 97 people at a soccer match in Hillsborough Stadium in 1989 in Sheffield, England, and numerous disasters connected with the annual hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

This story has been updated to correct the name of Axel Acosta Avila's father to Edgar, not Edward.

Associated Press writers Paul J. Weber in Austin, Texas; Jake Bleiberg in Dallas; Randall Chase in Dover, Delaware and Kristin M. Hall in Nashville contributed to this report.

California parents sue after getting another couple's embryo

CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Two California couples gave birth to each others' babies after a mix-up at a fertility clinic and spent months raising children that weren't theirs before swapping the infants, according to a lawsuit filed Monday in Los Angeles.

Daphna Cardinale said she and her husband, Alexander, had immediate suspicions that the girl she gave birth to in late 2019 wasn't theirs because the child had a darker complexion than they do.

They suppressed their doubts because they fell in love with the baby and trusted the in vitro fertilization process and their doctors, Daphna said. Learning months later that she had been pregnant with another couple's baby, and that another woman had been carrying her child, caused enduring trauma, she said.

"I was overwhelmed by feelings of fear, betrayal, anger and heartbreak," Daphna said during a news conference with her husband announcing the lawsuit. "I was robbed of the ability to carry my own child. I never had the opportunity to grow and bond with her during pregnancy, to feel her kick."

The Cardinales' complaint accuses the Los Angeles-based California Center for Reproductive Health (CCRH) and its owner, Dr. Eliran Mor, of medical malpractice, breach of contract, negligence and fraud. It demands a jury trial and seeks unspecified damages.

Yvonne Telles, the office administrator for the center, declined to comment on Monday. Mor could not be reached for comment.

The two other parents involved in the alleged mix-up wish to remain anonymous and plan a similar

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lawsuit in the coming days, according to attorney Adam Wolf, who represents all four parents.

The lawsuit claims CCRH mistakenly implanted the other couple's embryo into Daphna and transferred the Cardinales' embryo — made from Daphna's egg and Alexander's sperm — into the other woman.

The babies, both girls, were born a week apart in September 2019. Both couples unwittingly raised the wrong child for nearly three months before DNA tests confirmed that the embryos were swapped, according to the filing.

"The Cardinales, including their young daughter, fell in love with this child, and were terrified she would be taken away from them," the complaint says. "All the while, Alexander and Daphna did not know the whereabouts of their own embryo, and thus were terrified that another woman had been pregnant with their child — and their child was out in the world somewhere without them."

The babies were swapped back in January 2020.

Mix-ups like this are exceedingly rare, but not unprecedented. In 2019 a couple from Glendale, California, sued a separate fertility clinic, claiming their embryo was mistakenly implanted in a New York woman, who gave birth to their son as well as a second boy belonging to another couple.

Wolf, whose firm specializes in fertility cases, called for greater oversight for IVF clinics.

"This case highlights an industry in desperate need of federal regulation," he said.

Breaking the news to their older daughter, now 7, that doctors made a mistake and that the new baby wasn't actually her sister "was the hardest thing in my life," Daphna said.

"My heart breaks for her, perhaps the most," she said.

Since the mix-up came to light, both babies have been returned to their biological families. All four parents have since made an effort to stay in each other's lives and "forge a larger family," Daphna said.

"They were just as much in love with our biological daughter as we were with theirs," Alexander said.

US charges 2 suspected major ransomware operators

By ERIC TUCKER and ALAN SUDERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A suspected Ukrainian hacker has been arrested and charged in the United States in connection with a string of costly ransomware attacks, including one that snarled businesses around the globe on the Fourth of July weekend, U.S. officials said Monday.

Yaroslav Vasinskyi was arrested last month after traveling to Poland, according to the Justice Department, which also announced the recovery of \$6.1 million in ill-gotten funds from a Russian national who was separately charged and remains sought by the FBI.

Both men are alleged to be affiliated with the prolific Russia-based REvil ransomware gang, whose attacks have compromised tens of thousands of computers worldwide and yielded at least \$200 million in ransom payments, said Attorney General Merrick Garland. Victims have included the world's largest meat processor, JBS SA, and a technology company called Kaseya, which was hit in a holiday weekend attack last July that the company said affected between 800 and 1,500 businesses that relied on its software.

The coordination of multiple agencies across the Biden administration amounted to perhaps the most high-profile response yet to a blitz of ransomware attacks that officials say continues to threaten national security and the economy. Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco appeared to foreshadow Monday's announcement in an interview with The Associated Press last week, saying that "in the days and weeks to come, you're going to see more arrests" as well as more seizures of illicit ransomware proceeds.

Speaking at a news conference Monday, she said, "We have been using every tool at our disposal and leveraging every authority we have to hunt down and hold accountable cybercriminals wherever they seek to hide."

The indictment accuses Vasinskyi, 22, of deploying REvil ransomware, also known as Sodinokibi, a broad range of victims — including the massive Kaseya attack.

Yevgeniy Polyinin, a Russian national, is charged in a separate indictment. He's accused of conducting roughly 3,000 ransomware attacks on companies and entities across the U.S., including law enforcement agencies and local governments in the state of Texas.

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Both indictments were filed in federal court in the Northern District of Texas, a state where REvil ransomware compromised the computer networks of some two dozen local government agencies in the summer of 2019.

The U.S. is seeking Vasinskyi's extradition from Poland. Though it successfully seized \$6 million in ransomware payments from Polyani, the FBI is continuing to seek his arrest, and the State Department on Monday announced a \$10 million reward for anyone with information leading to the capture of any leaders of the REvil group.

The Treasury Department, meanwhile, announced sanctions against the pair as well as a virtual currency exchange, Chatex, that it said was used to facilitate financial transactions for ransomware gangs.

President Joe Biden commended the government's actions, saying he was making good on his commitment to Russian leader Vladimir Putin that the U.S. would hold cyber criminals accountable.

He said in a statement that the U.S. was "bringing the full strength of the federal government to disrupt malicious cyber activity and actors" and to "bolster resilience at home."

The announcement of the criminal charges came hours after European law enforcement officials revealed the results of a lengthy, 17-nation operation. As part of that operation, Europol said, a total of seven hackers linked to REvil and another ransomware family have been arrested since February, including two last week by Romanian authorities.

The Justice Department has tried multiple ways to address a ransomware scourge that has exploded over the last year with attacks against critical infrastructure and major corporations. Arrests of foreign hackers are significant for the Justice Department, and rare, since many of them operate in the refuge of countries that do not extradite their own citizens to the U.S. for prosecution.

"There's lots of reasons why people travel, and I can't get into the specific reasons why Mr. Vasinskyi traveled, but boy are we glad he did," FBI Director Christopher Wray said Monday.

Even so, ransomware attacks — in which hackers seize and encrypt data and demand often-exorbitant sums to release it to victims — have been hard to curb. Monaco told the AP last week that since Biden's admonitions to Putin last summer to rein in ransomware gangs, "we have not seen a material change in the landscape."

Garland did not answer directly when asked if there was evidence that the Russian government was aware of REvil's activities, but said, "we expect and hope that any government in which one of these ransomware actors is residing will do everything it can to provide that person to us for prosecution."

The \$6.1 million seizure in this case builds on a similar success from months ago.

Federal authorities in June seized \$2.3 million in cryptocurrency from a payment made by Colonial Pipeline following a ransomware attack that caused the company to temporarily halt operations, creating fuel shortages in parts of the country.

Justice Department officials also used Monday's news conference to urge Congress to create a national standard for the reporting of significant cyber incidents, and to require that that information be shared immediately with federal law enforcement.

Suderman reported from Richmond, Virginia. Associated Press writer Jake Bleiberg in Dallas contributed to this report.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>.

Government: Vaccine rule should remain while cases play out

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

The Biden administration framed its vaccine mandate for private employers in life-and-death terms Monday in a legal filing that sought to get the requirement back on track after it was halted by a federal court.

Its filing in response to a stay issued over the weekend by the New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said there is no reason to rush into a ruling on whether the halt should be made permanent

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because the vaccine mandate won't take effect until Jan. 4. Stopping the mandate from taking effect will only prolong the COVID-19 pandemic and would "cost dozens or even hundreds of lives per day," lawyers for the Justice and Labor departments said.

As of Sunday, the seven-day rolling average for daily new deaths in the U.S. was 1,151, but it's not clear what role a future vaccine mandate for private businesses would play in reducing that figure.

The mandate would apply to private businesses with more than 100 workers. Employees who do not receive the shots by Jan. 4 would be required to wear a mask and be tested weekly for the coronavirus. Occupational Safety and Health Administration rules issued last week create exemptions for workers citing religious objections and for those who do not interact in-person with coworkers or customers, as well as those who work only outdoors.

More than two dozen Republican state attorneys general, businesses, religious groups and conservative associations sued on the grounds that the federal government does not have the right to make the regulation, partly because COVID-19 is not a workplace-specific danger.

The Biden administration lawyers argued the risks were greater without the mandate than with it: "Petitioners' asserted injuries, by contrast, are speculative and remote and do not outweigh the interest in protecting employees from a dangerous virus while this case proceeds," they wrote.

At least 27 states filed legal challenges in at least six federal appeals courts after OSHA released its rules last week. All the states have a Republican governor or attorney general.

Over the weekend, judges on the New Orleans-based federal court paused the rule from taking effect, saying it raises "grave statutory and constitutional issues" and told the federal government to explain why the stay should not be made permanent.

The federal government said in its court filings Monday that the cases should be consolidated and that one of the circuit courts where a legal challenge has been filed should be chosen at random on Nov. 16 to hear it.

Administration lawyers said there is no reason to keep the vaccine mandate on hold while the court where the cases ultimately land remains undetermined. Besides, they argued, no employee will have to get a shot to comply until early December.

White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre expressed confidence that the COVID-19 vaccine mandate can withstand the legal challenges.

"This is an authority that we believe the Department of Labor has," Jean-Pierre told reporters during a news briefing. "We are very confident about it."

Jean-Pierre said the mandate was about keeping people safe and that Congress had empowered the Labor Department to act with the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. Vaccine mandates, including those for certain federal employees, contractors and the military, are a key component of the Biden administration's strategy for containing a pandemic that has killed 755,000 people in the U.S.

It has said that widespread vaccinations are the quickest way out of the pandemic. But employers have pushed back, saying they fear the mandate would lead many of their workers to quit.

At a news conference Monday in Concord, New Hampshire, the president of Keller Companies, a manufacturer of building panels and plastics with 350 employees, described the OSHA rule as a "crushing blow to employers."

Kathy Garfield, whose family has run the Manchester-based company for three generations, said it brought in a vaccination van to serve employees and gave workers paid time off to get the shots. Only about half have done so.

"We've had employees come forward and say if we mandate the vaccine, or this comes to be, they will not get the vaccine and they will not get tested. How can I run a business when I have no talent?" Garfield asked at a news conference with Gov. Chris Sununu, a Republican.

She also said it's difficult to find a place to get the virus test. When they are available, they can cost \$200.

"That's the difference between eating and starving," Garfield said. "So what are these employees going to do? They're going to go to another employer with less than 100 employees."

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The administration announced plans for the workplace rule in September and unveiled the plans Nov. 4. Many Republican governors and state attorneys general signaled ahead of time that they would challenge it immediately, as they did with multiple federal lawsuits filed Friday.

The states filed in the most conservative appeals courts in the country, where appointees of former President Donald Trump bolstered Republican-appointed majorities. It was not entirely clear whether the emergency stay issued Saturday by the 5th Circuit applied nationwide or just to the states that filed in that case — Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas and Utah.

The 5th Circuit order read, “the Mandate is hereby stayed pending further action by this court” but did not specifically state whether it applied only to the five states. Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry said it applied nationally, but states that filed in different courts asked Monday for clarification.

“Though the Fifth Circuit’s order may be construed to have nationwide effect, it does not make an explicit statement on this point,” according to a state filing in the St. Louis-based 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. “To avoid any confusion and to secure full protection of their rights, Petitioners respectfully request that this Court enter a similar order here.”

Alabama, Florida and Georgia also asked for a stay Monday in the Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, noting the one granted in the New Orleans-based court is temporary. The group of states, businesses and organizations challenging the rule in the St. Louis-based court called for a quick review of their challenge to the workplace rule.

“Thousands of employers and millions of working families will feel its impact immediately. The Court should act swiftly to forestall these illegal and unconstitutional injuries,” the groups said in court papers.

Associated Press writers Josh Boak and Zeke Miller in Washington, D.C.; Andrew DeMillo in Little Rock, Arkansas; and Kathy McCormack in Concord, New Hampshire, contributed to this report.

US reopens to international travel, allows happy reunions

By ELLIOT SPAGAT and CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Parents held children born while they were stuck abroad. Long-separated couples kissed, and grandparents embraced grandchildren who had doubled in age.

The U.S. fully reopened to many vaccinated international travelers Monday, allowing families and friends to reunite for the first time since the coronavirus emerged and offering a boost to the travel industry decimated by the pandemic. The restrictions closed the U.S. to millions of people for 20 months.

Octavio Alvarez and his 14-year-old daughter zipped through a pedestrian crossing in San Diego in less than 15 minutes on their way to visit his mother-in-law in California.

“It’s a big feeling,” said Alvarez, 43, who lives in Ensenada, Mexico, a two-hour drive from San Diego. Prior to the pandemic, his family would visit California twice a month. The emotional cost of the border restrictions were “very high,” he added.

American citizens and permanent residents were always allowed to enter the U.S., but the travel bans grounded tourists, thwarted business travelers and often keep families far apart. Travelers must have proof of vaccination and a negative COVID-19 test.

“I think a lot of people have been waiting for this day,” said Eileen Bigelow, area port director for Vermont for Customs and Border Protection. “They look at it as a light at the end of the tunnel for some return of normalcy.”

There were lots of prolonged hugs at airports from coast to coast. At Newark International Airport in New Jersey, Nirmal Shelat repeatedly embraced his girlfriend, Jolly Dave, after she arrived from India, ending their nine-month separation. She was on the first flight out of the country to the United States.

“I can’t even explain in my words how happy I am,” Dave said.

Gaye Camara, who lives in France, last saw her husband in New York in January 2020, not knowing it would be 21 months before they could hold each other again.

“I’m going to jump into his arms, kiss him, touch him,” said Camara, 40, as she wheeled her luggage

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through Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport, where the humming crowds resembled those before the pandemic, except for the face masks.

On the U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada, where traveling back and forth was a way of life before the pandemic, the reopening brought relief. Malls, restaurants and shops in U.S. border towns were devastated by the lack of visitors from Mexico.

San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria, flanked by U.S. and Mexican officials at a celebratory news conference at the San Ysidro crossing, said the economic losses were hefty and the cutting of family ties "immeasurable."

Retail sales in San Ysidro fell about 75% from pre-COVID levels, forcing nearly 300 businesses to close.

Edith Aguirre of Tijuana took off work to go shopping in San Diego. Bubbling with laughter, she accepted a gift bag from a duty-free store at the San Diego border crossing. She was a regular at SeaWorld in San Diego and last came to the U.S. to celebrate her 50th birthday at Disneyland in February 2020.

"It was very draining," she said of the interruption to her cross-border life.

Sales dropped in half at David's Western Wear shop in Nogales, Arizona, which manufactures boots popular among Mexicans.

Owner David Moore hopes his specialty products lure back customers, but he said it won't happen overnight. Many Mexicans are still trying to get expired visas renewed amid a backlog. Those who do come may be disappointed to find shelves empty because of supply chain problems.

"I really don't think Mexican shoppers are going to come across in hordes because they have now gotten used to buying a lot of products they need in Mexico," he said.

David Jerome, president and CEO of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce on Mexico's border in Texas, said: "It won't come back as quickly as it was shut off."

Still, "we feel like we're getting our neighbors back and we're glad to get people going back to work," Jerome said.

Along Canada's boundary, cross-border hockey rivalries were upended by the travel restrictions. Churches that had members on both sides of the border were suddenly cut off from each other.

But on Monday, border traffic quickly returned.

At Vermont's busiest international crossing with Canada, U.S. border agents said they began to notice the uptick in border crossing shortly after midnight. By mid-morning, traffic appeared steady.

Travelers at the Peace Bridge in Buffalo, New York, one of the northern border's busiest crossings, found a 2½-hour wait at 2 a.m., officials said, though within a few hours traffic was flowing more freely. The bridge typically handles about 2 million passenger vehicles from Fort Erie, Ontario, yearly, many of them bound for the region's shopping malls, ski slopes and sporting events. Volume dropped by more than 90% during the pandemic.

River Robinson's American partner wasn't able to be in Canada for the birth of their baby boy 17 months ago. She was thrilled to hear about the U.S. reopening and planned to take the child to the U.S. for Thanksgiving.

It's "crazy to think he has a whole other side of the family he hasn't even met yet," said Robinson, who lives in St. Thomas, Ontario.

Airlines are preparing for a surge in activity — especially from Europe — after the pandemic and resulting restrictions caused international travel to plunge.

The 28 European countries that were barred made up 37% of overseas visitors in 2019, according to the U.S. Travel Association. As the reopening takes effect, carriers are increasing flights between the United Kingdom and the U.S. by 21% this month over last month, according to data from travel and analytics firm Cirium.

In a sign of the huge importance of trans-Atlantic travel for airlines, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic celebrated the reopening by synchronizing the departures of their early morning flights to New York on parallel runways at London's Heathrow Airport.

Maria Giribet, 74, who lives on the Mediterranean isle of Majorca was headed to San Francisco where she planned to "suffocate" her twin grandchildren with hugs after missing half their lives. Gabriel and

David are now 3½.

The U.S. will accept travelers who have been fully vaccinated with any of the shots approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization, not just those in use in the U.S. That's a relief for many in Canada, where the AstraZeneca vaccine is widely used.

But millions of people around the world who were vaccinated with Russia's Sputnik V, China's CanSino or other shots not approved by the WHO will not be able to travel to the U.S.

Testing and quarantine requirements remained obstacles for others. A mobile testing truck was parked near the Peace Bridge in New York, promising results in 30 minutes for \$225 and next-day results for \$160.

Marcela Picone, 39, of the Buffalo suburb of Williamsville, has been waiting for the day her fiancé and father of her 2- and 3-year-old children can visit from Stoney Creek, Ontario. But his 15-year-old son would have to miss school to quarantine upon their return if they traveled.

"He's a dad to two American kids," she said. "He should have had the right to come into this country the entire 19 months."

Thompson reported from Buffalo, New York. Associated Press writers John Leicester in Paris, Travis Loller in Nashville, Tennessee, Wilson Ring in Highgate Springs, Vermont, Anita Snow in Phoenix, Rob Gillies in Toronto and Ted Shaffrey in Newark, New Jersey, contributed to this report.

Follow AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>.

Houston concert deaths spur calls for independent review

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — The Houston police and fire departments were deeply involved in safety measures for the music festival where a surging crowd killed eight people, playing key roles in crowd control measures, on-site security staffing and the emergency response. The police chief even says he met with the headlining performer before the show.

Now the city's police department is leading the criminal investigation into how the deadly chaos erupted during Friday night's performance by rapper Travis Scott.

While a prominent local official is calling for a separate, independent review of the tragedy, experts in crowd safety say an investigation by neutral outsiders could help the city avoid potential conflicts of interest and promote transparency.

Houston Police Department spokeswoman Jodi Silva declined to comment on questions about whether its close involvement in the event created a conflict or if it considered handing the probe off to an outside agency. Such decisions are often made in investigations like police shootings.

"All of the information we have available to put out at this time has been placed out on Twitter," Silva said.

The police department's probe would be separate from any independent investigation ordered by County Judge Lina Hidalgo, Harris County's top elected official, according to Rafael Lemaitre, a spokesman for the county judge's office. Hidalgo hasn't decided who would conduct such an independent review or how it would be done, Lemaitre said Monday.

"She wants to know if this could have been prevented in any way," Lemaitre said. "It's also entirely possible that it was not preventable for whatever reason, and that's something we would like to know, as well."

Key questions remained unanswered after the Astroworld festival at the Harris County-owned NRG Park. Some of the lingering questions involve what the Houston police and fire departments did before, during and after a crowd surged toward the stage, killing eight people and injuring many more, with over 300 people treated on site and at least 13 others hospitalized. Other questions center on the actions of event organizers.

Officials with the Houston police and fire departments have said that part of their investigation will include reviewing whether the concert promoter and others behind the festival adhered to the plans that were submitted for the event.

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Astroworld's organizers laid out security and emergency medical response protocols for the festival in plans filed with Harris County. The 56-page operations plan, obtained by The Associated Press, says that a decision to evacuate the event would be made by the festival director after consultation with other individuals, including the security director. Such plans were filed with Harris County and Houston and have to be reviewed by Houston police officials.

Christopher Slobogin, director of the criminal justice program at Vanderbilt University, said an independent criminal investigation into what happened in Houston could be beneficial to avoid any potential conflicts of interest. But acknowledged that this case is different from typical situations where authorities are confronted with decisions over whether to step away from a case because of a conflict of interest.

"The actual crime was probably not committed directly by the fire department or the police department," he said. "But at least for appearance purposes, if an independent body did the investigation I think that would be the better practice."

Officials have said a private company was primarily responsible for providing security at the festival, but Houston police were also assigned to the event. The plan says medical care at the festival was provided by ParaDocs, a private company based in New York.

Houston Fire Chief Samuel Peña had said during a news conference on Saturday that the injuries and size of the crowd "quickly overwhelmed" the private companies providing security and medical services. Peña said even though the medical operations plan did not require that the fire department have units pre-positioned around the festival, his agency decided to have those units in place "in case this incident escalated."

Houston Police Chief Troy Finner said in a statement on Monday that he had a "brief and respectful" meeting with Scott and the rapper's head of security on Friday before his performance. The chief said he asked them to work with the police department.

"I expressed my concerns regarding public safety and that in my 31 years in law enforcement experience I have never seen a time with more challenges facing citizens of all ages, to include a global pandemic and social tension throughout the nation," Finner said.

G. Keith Still, a visiting professor of crowd science at the United Kingdom's University of Suffolk, said his independent investigations of similar tragedies typically begin with an evaluation of an event's safety permitting process. He evaluates how a permit was issued and whether the event organizer adhered to permit conditions.

"Police can sometimes get too caught up in trying to take eyewitness accounts," he said. "With 50,000 potential eyewitnesses, by the time they get done through with all of that, they're left with a huge, confused mass."

Houston police and fire officials said their investigation will include reviewing video taken by concert promoter Live Nation, as well as dozens of clips from people at the show. Officials also planned to review the event's security plan and determine whether its organizers properly followed permit requirements.

Steven Adelman, vice president of the industry group Event Safety Alliance, said in an email that he sees no issue with public safety authorities authorizing an independent investigation of the Houston tragedy.

"I would hope and assume the investigation will be conducted by an outside person who is not subject to influence by the agencies that were involved with Astroworld. This is not an uncommon scenario in complex situations like this one," wrote Adelman, whose organization was formed after the collapse of a stage killed seven people at the Indiana State Fair in 2011.

Adelman said private forensic analysis experts independently investigated the Indiana stage collapse, examining the stage roof engineering and crowd management.

"A good example of what I hope we see here," Adelman said of the investigation in Houston.

Finner has defended how long it took for the concert to be called off after the first signs of trouble. The police chief said his department immediately notified concert organizers after noticing that attendees were "going down." The event was called off 40 minutes later after discussions that included the fire department and NRG Park officials.

"You cannot just close when you've got 50,000 — over 50,000 — individuals, OK?" Finner said. "We have to worry about rioting — riots — when you have a group that's that young."

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Peña said city officials limited the attendance to 50,000 even though the venue could have held 200,000 based on fire codes.

"It was the crowd control at the point of the stage that was the issue, especially as the crowd began to surge toward the stage," Peña said.

Live Nation said in a statement that it is cooperating with local authorities "so that both the fans who attended and their families can get the answers they want and deserve, and we will address all legal matters at the appropriate time."

Hidalgo tweeted on Saturday that she was "calling for an objective and independent investigation into what happened." She also said her office was grateful for the work done by the police and fire departments.

"It may well be that this tragedy is the result of unpredictable events, of circumstances coming together that couldn't possibly have been avoided," Hidalgo said. "But until we determine that, I will ask the tough questions."

Hidalgo's office isn't a law-enforcement agency and doesn't have authority over criminal investigations.

This story has been updated to correct the name of the county judge's spokesman to Rafael Lemaitre, not Maitre.

Kunzelman reported from College Park, Maryland. Associated Press reporters Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville and Jake Bleiberg in Dallas contributed to this report.

Biden asking Democrats do so much with so little in Congress

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rarely have the leaders of Congress been asked to do so much, with so little, as in navigating President Joe Biden's big domestic vision into law.

Reaching for FDR-style accomplishments with slimmer-than-ever Democratic majorities has been politically messy at best, arduous at worst, and about to become even more daunting for the president and his party.

Fresh off passage of Biden's \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill, Democrats are reviving his even bigger \$1.75 trillion package for expanding health, child, elder care and climate change programs. Anxious to show voters a deliverable after dismal election results last week, the party's congressional leaders will try to muscle the massive bill past staunch Republican opposition in an ambitious, if fraught, undertaking beyond almost any other in modern American history.

"There's just no good precedent for what Democrats are seeking to do, and I really wouldn't be surprised to see them fail," said Frances Lee, the associate chair of the Politics Department at Princeton University.

"I can't think of any parallel. I mean, I can think of some big bills, but nothing this big."

It's not just that the package is giant -- even at half its original \$3.5 trillion size -- Biden's 2,135-page proposal is made up of so many far-reaching policies and programs that even lawmakers who support the framework have had trouble explaining it all.

And Democrats are trying to pass Biden's big bill on their own, relying on their fragile hold on Congress to push it past the opposition in ways Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson and other modern presidents didn't have to contend with.

The Congress hasn't been this narrowly split in 20 years, with a Democratic margin of just a few seats in the House and the rare 50-50 split Senate. That's given rise to new political power centers. Progressives, centrists and even the power-center of a single senator — West Virginia's Joe Manchin or Arizona's Kyrsten Sinema — all have oversized influence to dictate terms of a deal and the schedule of votes.

While Friday night's infrastructure bill enjoyed Republican support in both the House and earlier in the Senate, a rare bipartisan accord, that won't be the case going forward on the "Build Back Better Act" that is an echo of Biden's presidential campaign promises.

"The question is: Can I get all of those votes? This is a process," Biden told reporters at the White House on Saturday as he celebrated the passage of one bill and acknowledged the challenge in the days and

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weeks ahead.

"You didn't believe we could do any of it. And I don't blame you," he said to the press as well as the viewing American voters. "Because you look at the facts, you wonder, 'How is this going to get done?'"

Roosevelt launched his New Deal programs at the start of his first term amid the Great Depression, his landslide election swelling the Democratic hold on Congress to more than 300 members early in his presidency. Johnson's Great Society bills benefitted from similarly big Democratic majorities in Congress. He had nearly 300 House Democrats in 1965.

And, unlike today, both earlier administrations were able to find crossover support from minority-party Republicans for some aspects of their agendas.

"We don't have landslides anymore," said Sarah Binder, a political science professor and expert on Congress at George Washington University. "So the demand for government to step in to do something was quite a bit larger than what's here today."

While even Republican Ronald Reagan had help from Democrats for a balanced budget bill in 1981, today's locked-in partisanship splits the country along geographic, cultural and and political lines, leaving more recent administrations to take a go-it alone approach.

Barack Obama heaved the Affordable Care Act into law on party-line votes with much bigger margins — at one point the Democrats had 60 members in the Senate — that initially allowed his party to overcome Republican filibusters. Final passage of the bill, though, which came to be known as Obamacare, relied on a similar filibuster-dodging budget reconciliation process to the one Biden is using.

Donald Trump failed to repeal Obamacare when Republicans had control of Congress in his first year as president, but the party powered through GOP tax changes with the same majority-only budget process on a party-line vote at the end of 2017.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is determined to push ahead with just a few votes to spare on Biden's big bill once lawmakers return next Monday.

"We must, as John Lewis said, 'keep our eyes on the prize,'" Pelosi wrote, invoking the late congressman and civil rights leader, in a letter late Sunday to colleagues.

Already, centrist Democrats in the House have signaled their reluctance, while progressives have indicated a willingness to give at least a little ground.

The Senate terrain is even more perilous. Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is the first party leader in some two decades to navigate a 50-50 split in what's now a wholly different era producing self-styled mavericks and zero crossover votes.

Manchin will almost certainly still exert his power try to strip out what he doesn't like, from climate change provisions to a new paid family leave program. And in the evenly split chamber, any senator can make demands before they vote. Others surely will.

Republican Minority Leader Mitch McConnell on Monday revived his attack on Biden's bill as a "reckless tax-and-spending" spree. He has argued that Biden was not elected with a mandate for his proposals.

"I don't think the American people are interested in seeing this go any further," McConnell said at a stop in Kentucky.

Lee, the Princeton political science professor, said if Democrats are able to push Biden's bill to passage it will be a sizable accomplishment. And if they don't there will be "a lot of hand wringing and anger" from the party's base of supporters.

All told, "People should be aware that what they're attempting to do is really a high wire act."

Feds urge schools to provide COVID-19 shots, info for kids

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is encouraging local school districts to host clinics to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to kids and information to parents on the benefits of the shots as the White House looks to speedily provide vaccines to those ages 5 to 11.

First lady Jill Biden and Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy visited the Franklin Sherman Elementary

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School in McLean, Virginia, on Monday to launch a nationwide campaign to promote child vaccinations. The school was the first to administer the polio vaccine in 1954.

The visit came just days after federal regulators recommended the COVID-19 vaccine for the age group. The White House says the first lady will visit pediatric vaccination clinics across the country over the coming weeks to encourage the shots.

"The vaccine is the best way to protect your children against COVID-19," she told parents in the school's cafeteria, after touring a clinic in the gymnasium that vaccinated 260 students. "It's been thoroughly reviewed and rigorously tested. It's safe. It's free. And it's available for every child in this country, five and up."

At the same time, Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra and Education Secretary Miguel Cardona are sending a letter to school districts across the country calling on them to organize vaccine clinics for their newly eligible students. The officials are reminding school districts that they can tap into billions of dollars in federal coronavirus relief money to support pediatric vaccination efforts.

The Biden administration is providing local school districts with tools to help schools partner with pharmacies to administer shots. And it's asking schools to share information on the benefits of vaccines and details about the vaccination process with parents, to counter disinformation surrounding the shots.

The White House is encouraging schools to host community conversations and share fact sheets on the vaccines and is working with the American Academy of Pediatrics to partner local physicians with schools aiming to share science-based information about the shots.

"Parenthood and worrying go hand-in-hand — it's just what we do," the first lady told parents. "So, I can't promise you that the dangers of the world will become any less frightening. Just wait until your kids start driving! But with this vaccine, we can take away at least one of those worries. A big one."

About 28 million kids ages 5 to 11 are newly eligible for shots now that the Pfizer vaccine is approved for the age group. The White House says the federal government has procured enough of the two-dose vaccine for all of them.

A Pfizer study of 2,268 children found the vaccine was almost 91% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 infections. The Food and Drug Administration studied the shots in 3,100 vaccinated kids in concluding the shots are safe.

While kids are less likely than adults to develop severe COVID-19, with the delta variant they get infected and transmit "just as readily as adults do," Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious diseases expert, told a recent White House briefing.

Since the coronavirus pandemic began, at least 94 children ages 5 to 11 have died from COVID-19, more than 8,300 have been hospitalized and more than 5,000 have developed a serious inflammatory condition linked to the virus.

Shooting victim says he was pointing his gun at Rittenhouse

By MICHAEL TARM, SCOTT BAUER and AMY FORLITI Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — A protester and volunteer medic wounded on the streets of Kenosha by Kyle Rittenhouse testified Monday that he was pointing his own gun at the rifle-toting Rittenhouse — unintentionally, he said — when the young man shot him.

Gaige Grosskreutz, the third and final man gunned down by Rittenhouse during a night of turbulent racial-justice protests in the summer of 2020, took the stand at Rittenhouse's murder trial and recounted how he drew his own pistol after the bloodshed started.

"I thought the defendant was an active shooter," the 27-year-old Grosskreutz said. Asked what was going through his mind as he got closer to the 17-year-old Rittenhouse, he said, "That I was going to die."

Rittenhouse shot Grosskreutz in the arm, tearing away much of his bicep — or "vaporized" it, as the witness put it.

Rittenhouse, now 18, is on trial on charges of killing two men and wounding Grosskreutz. The one-time police youth cadet from Antioch, Illinois, had gone to Kenosha with an AR-style semi-automatic rifle and a medical kit in what he said was an effort to safeguard property from the violent demonstrations that

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broke out over the shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man, by a white Kenosha police officer.

Prosecutors have portrayed Rittenhouse as the instigator of the bloodshed. His lawyers have argued that he acted in self-defense. He could get life in prison if convicted of the most serious charges against him.

Under questioning from the prosecution, Grosskreutz said he had his hands raised as he closed in on Rittenhouse and didn't intend to shoot the young man. Prosecutor Thomas Binger asked Grosskreutz why he didn't shoot first.

"That's not the kind of person that I am. That's not why I was out there," he said. "It's not who I am. And definitely not somebody I would want to become."

But during cross-examination, Rittenhouse defense attorney Corey Chirafisi asked: "It wasn't until you pointed your gun at him, advanced on him ... that he fired, right?"

"Correct," Grosskreutz replied. The defense also presented a photo showing Grosskreutz pointing the gun at Rittenhouse, who was on the ground with his rifle pointed up at Grosskreutz.

Grosskreutz, under follow-up questioning from the prosecutor, said he did not intend to point his weapon at Rittenhouse.

Wisconsin's self-defense law allows someone to use deadly force only if "necessary to prevent imminent death or great bodily harm." The jury must decide whether Rittenhouse believed he was in such peril and whether that belief was reasonable under the circumstances.

Grosskreutz said he had gone to the protest in Kenosha to serve as a medic, wearing a hat that said "paramedic" and carrying medical supplies, in addition to a loaded pistol. He said his permit to carry a concealed weapon had expired and he did not have a valid one that night.

"I believe in the Second Amendment. I'm for people's right to carry and bear arms," he said, explaining why he was armed. "And that night was no different than any other day. It's keys, phone, wallet, gun."

He said he went into action after seeing Rittenhouse kill a man just feet away — the second person Rittenhouse fatally shot that night.

While Grosskreutz said he never verbally threatened Rittenhouse, Chirafisi, the defense attorney, said that people don't have to use words to threaten others. They can do so by their actions, "like running after them down the street with a loaded firearm," Chirafisi said.

On cross-examination, Chirafisi sought to portray Grosskreutz as dishonest in his description of the moments right before he was shot, with Chirafisi asserting that Grosskreutz was chasing Rittenhouse with his gun out. Grosskreutz denied he was chasing Rittenhouse.

Chirafisi also said Grosskreutz lied when he initially told multiple police officers that he dropped his weapon.

In addition, Chirafisi pointed to Grosskreutz's lawsuit against the city of Kenosha, in which he alleges police enabled the violence by allowing an armed militia to have the run of the streets during the demonstration.

"If Mr. Rittenhouse is convicted, your chance of getting 10 million bucks is better, right?" Chirafisi said.

Chirafisi also asked Grosskreutz if he told his former roommate that his only regret was "not killing the kid and hesitating to pull the gun before emptying the entire mag into him." Grosskreutz denied saying that.

At the defense table, Rittenhouse took detailed notes when the witness spoke about the moment he was shot.

Grosskreutz, who was trained as a paramedic, testified that he volunteered as a medic at protests in Milwaukee in the days after George Floyd died under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer in May 2020. Grosskreutz said he attended around 75 protests before the night he was shot, offering help to anyone needing medical attention.

He said he provided medical assistance to about 10 other people that night in Kenosha.

While Rittenhouse is white, as were those he shot, the case has stirred racially fraught debate over vigilantism, the right to bear arms, and the unrest that erupted around the U.S. that summer over police violence against Black people.

Last week, witnesses at the trial testified that the first man shot and killed, Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, was "hyperaggressive" and "acting belligerently" that night and threatened to kill Rittenhouse at one point.

One witness said Rosenbaum was gunned down after he chased Rittenhouse and lunged for the young

man's rifle.

Rosenbaum's killing set in motion the bloodshed that followed moments later: Rittenhouse killed Anthony Huber, a 26-year-old protester seen on bystander video hitting Rittenhouse with a skateboard. Rittenhouse then wounded Grosskreutz.

Grosskreutz has a tattoo on the arm where he was shot. It is the common medical image of a snake wrapped around a staff, and at the top it has a banner that says, "Do no harm" and at the bottom, a banner reading "Do know harm."

When the prosecutor played graphic video of Grosskreutz's badly wounded arm, a few jurors seemed to grimace and look away.

Grosskreutz testified that he has difficulty lifting heavy objects with his right arm and has a loss of feeling extending from his bicep to his thumb.

Bauer reported from Madison, Wisconsin; Forliti from Minneapolis.

Find AP's full coverage on the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse at: <https://apnews.com/hub/kyle-rittenhouse>

Latest exit from Fed's board gives Biden three slots to fill

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Randal Quarles announced Monday that he will resign from the Federal Reserve's Board of Governors at the end of the year after completing a four-year term as its top bank regulator, opening up another vacancy on the Fed's influential board for President Joe Biden to fill.

Quarles has served as the Fed's first vice chair of supervision, which gave him wide-ranging authority over the banking system. In that role, he oversaw a broad loosening of some of the financial regulations that were put in place after the 2008-2009 global financial crisis and recession.

Quarles' deregulatory approach prompted criticism from some on the Fed and from many progressives. It has also sparked resistance from progressives to the potential re-nomination of Jerome Powell as Fed chair, who has voted in favor of Quarles' regulatory changes.

With Powell's term as chair ending in February, an announcement is expected sometime this month on whether Biden will offer him a second four-year term. The president is considered likely to re-nominate Powell, although he could decide instead to elevate Lael Brainard, who is the lone Democrat on the Fed's seven-member board, to the position of chair.

Besides Quarles' soon-to-be vacated position on the board, a second slot is vacant and a third will open up in January, when Vice Chair Richard Clarida's term will expire. Counting the seat held by the Fed chair, that gives Biden a total of four potential slots to fill.

The president may decide to re-nominate Powell while also promoting Brainard to replace Quarles as vice chair for supervision. That move could potentially mollify at least some of Powell's critics. Brainard cast some dissenting votes against Quarles' deregulatory efforts.

With several vacancies to fill, Biden has an opportunity to shift the Fed's board toward a more Democratic-dominated one. That would undercut one key argument against Powell: That even if Biden elevated Brainard to the Fed's top bank supervisory post, Powell could ignore or override efforts she might take to toughen financial rules. If Biden were to successfully appoint three new governors to the Fed's board, Democratic appointees would outnumber Republican ones.

Late last month, in an appearance on CNN, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen defended Powell against any notion that he has weakened bank rules. Yellen asserted that financial regulations were "markedly strengthened" under Ben Bernanke's Fed leadership, during her own subsequent term as chair and under Powell as well.

Members of the Board of Governors have permanent votes at each Fed meeting on interest-rate policy, a powerful tool that affects hiring and the economy. The 12 regional Fed bank presidents also attend policymaking meetings, though only five of them are able to vote on the Fed's decisions. The New York Fed

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president holds a permanent vote, and the regional bank presidents hold four votes that rotate among them each year.

The Fed governors also vote on financial regulations, and they could take steps to regulate some cryptocurrencies, known as stablecoins. Some of the officials, including Brainard and Powell, have discussed incorporating climate change considerations into the Fed's bank oversight, a possibility that has met with opposition from congressional Republicans.

With four slots open, the Biden administration could nominate several candidates as a package. Potential nominees for the three vacancies on the Fed's board include Lisa Cook, an economist at Michigan State University who would be the first black woman to serve as a Fed governor, and Sarah Bloom Raskin, who previously served as a Fed governor and as a financial regulator in Maryland.

Another potential nominee is William Spriggs, chief economist at the AFL-CIO and an economics professor at Howard University.

Karine Jean-Pierre, a White House spokeswoman, declined to say how Quarles' departure might influence Biden's selections for the board.

"All I can say is this is incredibly important to the president, and he's taking this seriously," Jean-Pierre said at Monday's briefing.

At a Senate hearing in September, Sen. Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat who chairs the Senate Banking Committee, which oversees Fed nominations, said, "It's time we had a Black woman on the Board of Governors."

Associated Press Writer Josh Boak contributed to this report.

Migrants aided by Belarus try to storm border into Poland

By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA and VANESSA GERA undefined

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Hundreds if not thousands of migrants sought to storm the border from Belarus into Poland on Monday, cutting razor wire fences and using branches to try and climb over them. The siege escalated a crisis along the European Union's eastern border that has been simmering for months.

Poland's interior ministry said it had rebuffed the illegal invasion and claimed the situation was under control. The Defense Ministry posted a video showing an armed Polish officer using a chemical spray through a fence at men who were trying to cut the razor wire. Some migrants threw objects at police. Video footage from Belarusian media showed people using long wooden poles or branches to try to get past a border fence as police helicopters circled overhead.

Defense Ministry video taken later Monday showed the migrants settling in for the night by the border, having put up scores of tents and cooking meals.

"A coordinated attempt to massively enter the territory of the Republic of Poland by migrants used by Belarus for the hybrid attacks against Poland has just begun," a spokesman for Poland's security forces, Stanislaw Zaryn, said in a statement.

Noting that it's also NATO's eastern border, Zaryn stressed that the "large groups of migrants ... are fully controlled by the Belarusian security services and army." He accused Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko of acting to destabilize Poland and other EU countries to pressure the bloc into dropping its sanctions on Minsk. Those sanctions were put into place after Belarus cracked down brutally on democracy protests.

Piotr Mueller, Poland's government spokesperson, said 3,000 to 4,000 migrants were next to the Polish border on the Belarusian side.

Polish border officials said the border crossing in Kuznica, in the northeast, will be closed early Tuesday.

There was no way to independently verify what was happening. Journalists have limited ability to operate in Belarus and a state of emergency in Poland is keeping reporters and human rights workers out of the border area.

The massing of people at the border appeared to rev up the crisis that has been going on for months

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in which the autocratic regime of Belarus has encouraged migrants from the Mideast and elsewhere to illegally enter the European Union, at first through Lithuania and Latvia and now primarily through Poland.

Anton Bychkovsky, spokesman for Belarus' State Border Guard Committee, told The Associated Press that the migrants at the border are seeking to "exercise their right to apply for refugee status in the EU." Bychkovsky insisted they "are not a security threat."

But the massive group was viewed as a threat by Poland and other European countries, including Germany — the main destination for many. Steffen Seibert, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman, told reporters Monday that "the Belarusian regime is acting as a human trafficker."

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called on the bloc's 27 nations to approve extended sanctions on the Belarusian authorities "responsible for this hybrid attack."

She said two top EU officials — EU Commission vice president Margaritis Schinas and EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell — will travel to the main countries of origin for the migrants to "ensure that they act to prevent their own nationals from falling into the trap set by the Belarusian authorities."

The EU said it hoped that Poland would finally accept help from Frontex, the bloc's border agency, a step that Poland's ruling nationalists have so far refused to do. Frontex would not comment Monday on the border situation.

In Washington, U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price expressed concern "with disturbing images and reports emanating from the Belarus-Poland border" and stressed that the U.S. "strongly condemns the Lukashenko regime's political exploitation and coercion of vulnerable people and the regime's callous and inhumane facilitation of irregular migration flows across its borders."

He said the U.S. was calling on "the regime to immediately halt its campaign of orchestrating and coercing irregular migrant flows across its borders into Europe" and warned that if the regime "refuses to respect its international obligations and commitments ... we will continue to pressure Lukashenko and will not lessen our calls for accountability."

Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said on Twitter that more than 12,000 soldiers have been deployed to the border and a volunteer Territorial Defense force was put on alert. He also posted video footage of what appeared to be a large group of migrants in Belarus, near Kuznica.

Polish ministers held an emergency meeting on the border crisis, with Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki writing on Facebook that Poland's border is "sacred" and "not just a line on the map."

Poland's deputy foreign minister, Pawel Jablonski held talks with Iraqi charge d'affaires Hussein al-Safi on ways of ending the migration crisis and thanked Iraq for having Belarus close its consulates in Baghdad and Irbil that were giving tourist visas to migrants.

Meanwhile, in Poland's EU neighbor Lithuania, officials were preparing for the possibility of a similar incursion, with the Interior Ministry proposing to declare an emergency situation.

"We are getting ready for all possible scenarios," said Rustamas Liubajevs, the head of Lithuania's border guards.

Since the summer, Poland and Lithuania have seen thousands of migrants from the Mideast and Africa trying to cross into the EU. Poland has sought to block the attempts or send those they catch back into Belarus.

Belarusian political analyst Valery Karbalevich told the AP that the Moscow-backed Lukashenko regime seemed to be trying to use the migrants "to scare" the EU.

"The largest attack of migrants on EU borders is taking place three days after Belarus and Russia signed a new agreement on military cooperation. The Kremlin is at least aware of the details of what's happening," Karbalevich said.

Daria Litvinova in Moscow, Yuras Karmanau in Kyiv, Ukraine, Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen, Denmark, Liudas Dapkus in Vilnius, Lithuania, and Lorne Cook and Samuel Petrequin in Brussels contributed.

Follow all AP stories on global migration at <https://apnews.com/hub/migration>.

People fleeing Ethiopia allege attacks, forced conscription

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — A new round of deadly attacks and forced conscription has begun against ethnic Tigrayans in an area of Ethiopia now controlled by Amhara regional authorities in collaboration with soldiers from neighboring Eritrea, people fleeing over the border to Sudan tell The Associated Press as the yearlong war intensifies.

Urgent diplomatic meetings with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Tigray leader Debretsion Gebremichael in an attempt to calm the fighting have found a small “window of opportunity” as the rival sides agreed a political solution through dialogue was required, African Union envoy Olesegun Obasanjo said in briefings Monday. The State Department said U.S. envoy Jeffrey Feltman saw a window to act with Obasanjo and was meeting with him in Ethiopia’s capital Monday night.

Tigray forces have been approaching Addis Ababa to press the prime minister to step aside, leading Ethiopia’s government to declare a state of emergency last week while the U.S. and other countries urged citizens to leave immediately. The war has killed thousands after political tensions with the Tigray forces who once dominated the national government turned deadly.

Those fleeing the western Tigray communities of Adebay and Humera in the past week described warnings from Amhara authorities against supporting the Tigray forces. The accounts confirm warnings by the U.S. and others that Eritrean soldiers remain in the Tigray region, and they indicate that pressure is growing on Tigrayans of mixed heritage who have tried to live quietly amid what the U.S. has alleged as ethnic cleansing in western Tigray.

As reports grew about the Tigray forces’ momentum, Amhara authorities at a public meeting in Adebay on Oct. 29 warned residents against supporting them, two men who fled to Sudan said.

“There are people working for (the Tigray forces). You should give them to us or we will kill you all together,” one who fled, 28-year-old Mawcha Asmelash, recalled authorities saying.

Five days later, he said, Amhara militia attacked. “I saw four people being killed on the run,” he said.

He and other men hid in the bush for two days, gathering information from local women and trying to judge whether it was safe to return. But the women estimated scores of men had been killed and residents had been forbidden to bury their bodies. The women urged them to flee.

Another man who fled Adebay, 36-year-old Berhane Gebremikael, confirmed the public meeting. He said he saw one man killed as he ran from Amhara militia and the Eritrean soldiers, who he said have a camp in the community.

“They called it revenge,” he said. He described a perilous situation for Tigrayan residents of Adebay who had remained during the war, with many changing their identity, paying bribes or using mixed heritage for a measure of protection. Berhane, whose mother is Eritrean, now fears he can’t return.

“Maybe the worst things will happen in the next days,” he said. “The international community should intervene.”

A man who fled to Sudan from the city of Humera, near the Eritrean border, told the AP he had stayed there because of his part-Tigrayan heritage, but last week Amhara authorities “started collecting people. Young men and boys are being forced to join the fighting.”

Again, it started with a public warning, 28-year-old Alemu Abraha said. Then Amhara authorities, along with Eritrean soldiers, started visiting homes at night to take people away. His friends were taken, he said, and he believes the men are being sent to the Amhara region, where most fighting has occurred in recent months.

Amhara regional spokesman Gizachew Muluneh did not respond to AP questions. Amhara regional officials have asserted that western Tigray is historically their land, and during the war witnesses and humanitarian workers have described scores of thousands of Tigrayans forced from communities there.

Meanwhile, reports of mass detentions of Tigrayans continue under the state of emergency. An Ethiopian Orthodox Church official in Addis Ababa, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution, said dozens of priests, monks, deacons and others had been detained in the capital because of their ethnicity. Ethiopian authorities have said they are detaining people suspected of supporting the Tigray forces.

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The government-created Ethiopian Human Rights Commission in a statement noted with concern that "arrests appeared to be based on ethnicity" and included the elderly and mothers with children.

As the war closes in, Ethiopia's government insists that life in the capital remains normal. On Sunday, scores of thousands of people rallied in Addis Ababa in a show of support, some carrying signs criticizing the international community, including foreign media.

On Monday, AU envoy Obasanjo, a former Nigerian president, told the AU Peace and Security Council he saw a window of opportunity after meeting separately with Ethiopia's prime minister and the Tigray leader over the weekend. The rival sides agree "the differences opposing them are political and require political solution through dialogue," he said.

The envoy added, however, that "the window of opportunity we have is very little and that time is paramount for any intervention" in the critical situation facing not only Ethiopia but the Horn of Africa at large. He repeated calls for dialogue without preconditions, an immediate cease-fire and immediate and unrestricted humanitarian access.

State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters that envoy Feltman met with the prime minister Friday and then went to neighboring Kenya to meet its president before returning to Ethiopia on Monday to "urgently press the parties to de-escalate the conflict and negotiate." There was no indication that Feltman, like Obasanjo, went to the Tigray region. Price simply said that "we have engaged with the (Tigray forces) as well."

The prime minister's spokeswoman has called the meeting with Feltman "constructive," with no details.

Matt Lee in Washington contributed.

A new 'Trump.' SNL's Johnson attracts attention for mimicry

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — In James Austin Johnson, "Saturday Night Live" has a new master impressionist on board whose take on Donald Trump over the weekend was a breakout performance for the rookie.

Johnson nailed a stream-of-consciousness Trump during an opening segment Saturday that discussed Republican Glenn Youngkin's election as Virginia governor. Critics at Vulture and TheWrap said Johnson "stole the show," or at least the cold open.

"'Saturday Night Live' finally has a truly great Trump impersonator," wrote Dan Spinelli of Mother Jones. "Close your eyes and you'll think new cast member James Austin Johnson is the real thing."

With Youngkin, portrayed by cast member Alex Moffat, looking uncomfortable on a split screen next to him, Johnson circled through topics like "Dune," "Star Wars," Chris Pratt and Santa Claus as a subject "countdown" mirroring ESPN's "Pardon the Interruption" appeared onscreen.

"Most people don't like him but he's a wonderful guy, OK? Tall, rich, like my sons. Glenn, you're like my son," Johnson's "Trump" said.

"Please don't say that," Moffat replied.

Johnson, a 32-year-old stand-up comic from Nashville, Tennessee, has already impersonated President Joe Biden twice in the season's five episodes, along with Adam Driver, Joe Buck, Jon Gruden, Lindsey Graham and Louis C.K. It's an unusually fast start for a new "SNL" player, particularly now that the on-air cast has swelled to 21 people.

The show did not make Johnson available for an interview on Monday. Even before he joined "Saturday Night Live," he had attracted attention for his mimicry, particularly of Trump. A video of Johnson, as Trump discussing Scooby Doo, has received more than 2.4 million views on Twitter since being posted a year ago.

Of that performance, Vice's Josh Terry wrote last year that "there's something jaw-dropping about how accurately Johnson is able to channel the president's cadence, speech patterns and eccentricities."

While it's unclear how much the news will dictate Johnson appearing as Trump on "Saturday Night Live," he's clearly the successor to Alec Baldwin, who made his last appearance as Trump shortly after the 2020 election.

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In an interview with Vice last year, Johnson said that Baldwin brought "pure evil" to the impersonation of Trump.

"A lot of the mainstream shows miss how much love there is for Trump," he told Vice. "In the quest to depict him as the monster that, of course, I believe he is, they're alienating some of the people who would otherwise laugh at their jokes. It's really hard to laugh at a lot of depictions of Trump. It doesn't make you feel good. I really just want my comedy to be a balm by being really silly."

Yet not everyone was happy to see Trump make a "reappearance" on the comedy show this past weekend.

The Atlantic's Molly Garber wrote that Johnson's impersonation is "deeply skillful," poking fun at Trump's tendency to make himself inescapable. Yet giving Johnson the platform allowed Trump to hijack its attention.

"SNL, for too long, was so interested in Trump as a joke that it ignored him as a threat," Garber wrote. The most recent episode "suggests that the show has looked back over the previous years — and learned precisely nothing."

EXPLAINER: What comes next after Nicaragua's election

By CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega holds a commanding lead in results from Sunday's election against a field of little-known challengers. Ortega's strongest potential competitors weren't on the ballot and are in jail.

Victory would give Ortega his fourth consecutive five-year term as president.

His government has grown increasingly heavy-handed since massive protests began in April 2018. The demonstrations were violently put down by police and government agents. Authorities continue pursuing those involved.

Ortega has said the protests of 2018 were a foreign-backed coup plot. Three dozen opposition leaders, including the potential candidates, arrested since June have essentially been charged with treason and accused of working to overthrow the government. Analysts see little likelihood Ortega will soften in his next term.

WHAT HAS THE INTERNATIONAL REACTION BEEN TO THE ELECTION?

The United States and European Union have panned the election as a farce. Other countries in region, including Costa Rica and Panama have also criticized the electoral process.

The global human rights organization Amnesty International called Ortega's apparent reelection "frightening."

"Once again, the people of Nicaragua find themselves in a situation where voicing criticism of the government puts them at grave risk," said Erika Guevara-Rosas, Americas director at Amnesty International. "In the last few years, we've witnessed first-hand the plot of a horror thriller developing in the country, where deadly police repression, wrongful imprisonment, ill-treatment, harassment and criminalization of human rights defenders and journalists are common practices, all of them endorsed by a judiciary without independence and a National Assembly that exists only to rubberstamp Daniel Ortega's repressive agenda."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Monday criticized the United States for refusing to recognize the validity of Nicaragua's election and urging others to do the same. "We consider it unacceptable and firmly condemn such a policy," Lavrov said,

HOW WILL OTHER NATIONS RESPOND?

Both the European Union and the U.S. government have imposed previous sanctions against Ortega and his inner circle they accuse of anti-democratic actions. So far, those have had little effect.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said Monday that the EU has tried so far to avoid "measures that could potentially add to the hardship of the Nicaraguan people" as a whole. "In that spirit, we will consider all instruments at our disposal to take additional measures, including those that may go beyond individual restrictions."

Some have suggested pressuring lending institutions to restrict funding for Ortega's government. And last week, the U.S. Congress passed a measure requiring the U.S. to increase sanctions on members of that government and to review whether Nicaragua should continue participating in the Central America

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Free Trade Agreement.

But many note that sanctions haven't forced change in countries such as Cuba and Venezuela.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN NICARAGUA?

Oscar René Vargas, a Nicaraguan political analyst, said Nicaraguans can only expect more repression from a victorious Ortega, saying the president "has the mindset of power or death." Vargas added: "He's not going to leave power, because leaving power is his death."

Jennie Lincoln, senior advisor to The Carter Center, an institution that helped validate the fairness of Ortega's election in 2006 but found "significant deficiencies" when he won reelection five years later, also saw little reason for optimism.

"There's no light at the end of the tunnel right now," she said. "The election day is going to come and go, and the situation for the people who are imprisoned isn't going to change, the position of the opposition and the heavy, heavy boot print on them is not likely to change."

Nearly three dozen opposition leaders were jailed in the months before the election and more were picked up around the country the night before voting began. Other targets of government persecution, like the writer Sergio Ramírez, have been forced into exile.

A senior U.S. State Department official, who spoke with reporters on the condition of anonymity, said Ortega's government has been trying to use the prisoners as bargaining chips to ease restrictions or criticism of his government.

"It's hard to contemplate trying to trade the liberation of a group of people for being quiet or somehow tolerating the repression of millions of people," the official said. "But that's effectively what they seem to be trying to set up."

The official added that dropping sanctions in exchange for freeing the prisoners "is just not a viable game plan."

WHAT IS LEFT FOR THE OPPOSITION?

Nicaragua's opposition was already divided before the government started arresting its leaders in June. Ortega has systematically reduced the area in which it can maneuver. Public protests have been essentially banned by the police and those leaders who haven't been arrested have either fled the country or live in fear that they could be next.

Edgar Parrales, a former Nicaraguan diplomat, said that Ortega's ideal would be a single-party political system like Cuba's.

"The real opposition is in part in exile, part prisoner and part in hiding," Parrales said. "That is the real opposition and the one that is fighting and will continue fighting."

He expressed hope they can overcome past divisions: "It appears that they have understood the need to unite is urgent."

AP journalist Alexis Tribouard contributed to this report.

High court struggles with government secrets case

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court struggled Monday with whether to allow a lawsuit by Muslim men claiming religious bias by the FBI to go forward despite the government's objection that doing so could reveal national security secrets.

The case the high court was considering involves a group of three men from Southern California. They filed a class action lawsuit claiming the FBI spied on them and hundreds of others in a surveillance operation that began several years after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. The men, represented by lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union and others, claimed religious discrimination and violations of other rights, saying they were spied on solely because of their faith.

A lower court dismissed almost all their claims after the government said allowing the case to go forward could reveal "state secrets" — whom the government was investigating and why. But an appeals court

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reversed that decision in 2019, saying the lower court first should have privately examined the evidence the government said was state secrets.

The Biden administration, like the Trump administration before it, told the justices that decision is wrong.

A number of the justices suggested they were inclined to agree with the government but also seemed to favor sending the case back to a lower court for additional proceedings. That could give both sides something of a win because it would allow the lawsuit to continue, as the group that sued wants.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh suggested that sending the case back to a lower court would let issues be "fleshed out and come back" to the Supreme Court later.

Justice Elena Kagan seemed to agree, saying the lower court's decision was "in some important way premised on an incorrect understanding of when dismissal is appropriate in a state secrets case."

Justices Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Neil Gorsuch also asked about sending the case back at various points in the arguments, which lasted two hours.

The case involves a confidential informant, Craig Monteilh, the FBI used from 2006 to 2007. Monteilh pretended to be a new convert to Islam as a way to become part of Southern California's Muslim community.

Monteilh told people he was a fitness consultant, but he was really working as part of a surveillance program known as Operation Flex. Monteilh regularly attended the Islamic Center of Irvine in Orange County and has said that he was told to collect as much information on as many people as possible. He gathered names and phone numbers and secretly recorded thousands of hours of conversations and hundreds of hours of video using a camera concealed in a shirt button.

Ultimately Monteilh's handlers told him to ask about jihad and express a willingness to engage in violence. Those questions caused members of the community to report him to the FBI and other authorities and seek a restraining order against him.

The FBI has acknowledged Monteilh was an informant, and the story was covered in the news media including on the National Public Radio show "This American Life."

Three of the men Monteilh allegedly recorded sued, seeking damages and asking the government to destroy or return the information it had gathered.

This is the second case the court has heard involving the state secrets privilege since beginning its new term in October. Last month the court heard a case involving a Guantanamo Bay detainee that also involved the states secrets privilege.

Report: NSO spyware found on 6 Palestinian activists' phones

By FRANK BAJAK and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Security researchers disclosed Monday that spyware from the notorious Israeli hacker-for-hire company NSO Group was detected on the cellphones of six Palestinian human rights activists, half affiliated with groups that Israel's defense minister controversially claimed were involved in terrorism.

The revelation marks the first known instance of Palestinian activists being targeted by the military-grade Pegasus spyware. Its use against journalists, rights activists and political dissidents from Mexico to Saudi Arabia has been documented since 2015.

A successful Pegasus infection surreptitiously gives intruders access to everything a person stores and does on their phone, including real-time communications.

It's not clear who placed the NSO spyware on the activists' phones, said the researcher who first detected it, Mohammed al-Maskati of the nonprofit Frontline Defenders. The hacking began in July 2020, according to researchers.

Shortly after the first two intrusions were identified in mid-October, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz declared six Palestinian civil society groups to be terrorist organizations. Ireland-based Frontline Defenders and at least two of the victims say they consider Israel the main suspect and believe the designation may have been timed to try to overshadow the hacks' discovery, though they have provided no evidence to substantiate those assertions.

Israel has provided little evidence publicly to support the terrorism designation, which the Palestinian

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groups say aims to dry up their funding and muzzle opposition to Israeli military rule. Three of the hacked Palestinians work for the civil society groups. The others do not, and wish to remain anonymous, Frontline Defenders says.

The forensic findings, independently confirmed by security researchers from Amnesty International and the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab in a joint technical report, come as NSO Group faces growing condemnation over the abuse of its spyware and Israel takes heat for lax oversight of its digital surveillance industry.

Last week, the Biden administration blacklisted the NSO Group and a lesser-known Israeli competitor, Candiru, barring them from U.S. technology.

Asked about the allegations its software was used against the Palestinian activists, NSO Group said in a statement that it does not identify its customers for contractual and national security reasons, is not privy to whom they hack and sells only to government agencies for use against "serious crime and terror."

An Israeli defense official said in a brief statement that the designation of the six organizations was based on solid evidence and that any claim it is related to the use of NSO software is unfounded. The statement had no other details, and officials declined requests for further comment. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss security matters.

Israel's Defense Ministry approves the export of spyware produced by NSO Group and other private Israeli companies that recruit from the country's top cyber-capable military units. Critics say the process is opaque.

It's not known precisely when or how the phones were violated, the security researchers said. But four of the six hacked iPhones exclusively used SIM cards issued by Israeli telecom companies with Israeli +972 area code numbers, said the Citizen Lab and Amnesty researchers. That led them to question claims by NSO Group that exported versions of Pegasus cannot be used to hack Israeli phone numbers. NSO Group has also said it doesn't target U.S. numbers.

Among those hacked was Ubai Aboudi, a 37-year-old economist and U.S. citizen. He runs the seven-person Bisan Center for Research and Development in Ramallah, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, one of the six groups Gantz slapped with terrorist designations on Oct. 22.

The other two hacked Palestinians who agreed to be named are researcher Ghassan Halaika of the Al-Haq rights group and attorney Salah Hammouri of Addameer, also a human rights organization. The other three designated groups are Defense for Children International-Palestine, the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees.

Aboudi said he lost "any sense of safety" through the "dehumanizing" hack of a phone that is at his side day and night and holds photos of his three children. He said his wife, the first three nights after learning of the hack, "didn't sleep from the idea of having such deep intrusions into our privacy."

He was especially concerned about eavesdroppers being privy to his communications with foreign diplomats. The researchers' examination of Aboudi's phone determined it was infected by Pegasus in February.

Aboudi accused Israel of "sticking the terrorist logo" on the groups after failing to persuade European governments and others to cut off financial support.

Israel says the groups are linked to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a leftist political faction with an armed wing that has killed Israelis. Israel and Western governments consider the PFLP a terror group. Aboudi served a 12-month sentence last year after being convicted of charges of involvement in the PFLP but denies ever belonging to the group.

Tehilla Shwartz Altshuler, a legal expert at the Israel Democracy Institute, called the findings "really disturbing," especially if it is proven that Israel's security agencies, who are largely exempt from the country's privacy laws, have been using NSO Group's commercial spyware.

"This actually complicates the relationship of the government with NSO," said Altshuler, if the government is indeed both a client and regulator in a relationship conducted under secrecy.

Aboudi, along with representatives from Al-Haq and Addameer, held a press conference in the occupied West Bank on Monday in which they condemned the hacks as an attack on civil society. Addameer director Sahar Francis called for an international investigation.

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"Of course we are not going to close our organizations," Francis said. "We will continue our work, continue providing services."

The executive director of Frontline Defenders, Andrew Anderson, said the NSO Group cannot be trusted to ensure its spyware is not used illegally by its customers and says Israel should face international reproach if it does not bring the company to heel.

"If the Israeli government refuses to take action then this should have consequences in terms of the regulation of trade with Israel," he said via email.

Al-Maskati, the researcher who discovered the hacks, said he was first alerted on Oct. 16 by Halaika, whose phone was determined to have been hacked in July 2020. Al-Haq engages in sensitive communications with the International Criminal Court, among others, involving alleged human rights abuses.

"As human rights defenders living under occupation, we expect it was the (Israeli) occupation," Halaika said when asked who he believed was behind the hack.

The phone of the third named hacking victim, Hammouri, was apparently compromised in April, the researchers said. A dual French national living in Jerusalem, Hammouri previously served a seven-year sentence for security offenses, and Israel considers him a PFLP operative, allegations he denies.

Hammouri declined to speculate who was behind the hack, saying "we have to determine who had the ability and who had the motive."

After Halaika alerted him, Al-Maskati said he scanned 75 phones of Palestinian activists, finding the six infections. He could not determine how the phones were hacked, he said, though the timeline of evidence encountered indicated the use of a so-called "iMessage zero-click" exploit NSO Group used on iPhones. The exploit is highly effective, requiring no user intervention, as phishing attempts typically do.

Facebook has sued NSO Group over the use of a somewhat similar exploit that allegedly intruded via its globally popular encrypted WhatsApp messaging app. A U.S. federal appeals court issued a ruling on Monday rejecting an effort by NSO Group to have the lawsuit thrown out.

A snowballing of new revelations about the hacking of public figures — including Hungarian investigative journalists, the fiancée of slain Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi and an ex-wife of the ruler of Dubai — has occurred since a consortium of international news organizations reported in July on a list of possible NSO Group surveillance targets. The list was obtained from an unnamed source by Amnesty International and the Paris-based journalism nonprofit Forbidden Stories. Among those listed was an Associated Press journalist.

From that list of 50,000 phone numbers, reporters from various news organizations were able to confirm at least 47 additional successful hacks, the Washington Post has reported. NSO Group denied ever maintaining such a list.

Bajak reported from Lima, Peru. Associated Press writer Alan Suderman in Richmond, Virginia, contributed to this report.

Europe bolsters pioneering tech rules with help from Haugen

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — European lawmakers have pioneered efforts to rein in big technology companies and are working to strengthen those rules, putting them ahead of the United States and other parts of world that have been slower to regulate Facebook and other social media giants facing increasing blowback over misinformation and other harmful content that can proliferate on their platforms.

While Europe shares Western democratic values with the U.S., none of the big tech companies — Facebook, Twitter, Google — that dominate online life are based on the continent, which some say allowed European officials to make a more clear-eyed assessment of the risks posed by tech companies largely headquartered in Silicon Valley or elsewhere in the U.S.

But that's only part of the explanation, said Jan Penfrat, senior policy adviser at digital rights group EDRI. The question, Penfrat said, should also be: "Why is the U.S. so much lagging behind? And that may be

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because of the immense pressure from the homegrown companies" arguing to officials in Washington that stricter rules would hobble them as they compete with, for example, Chinese rivals.

Drawing up a new package of digital rules for the 27-nation European Union is getting a boost from Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen, who answered questions Monday in Brussels from a European Parliament committee. It's the latest sign of interest in her revelations that Facebook prioritized profits over safety after the former data scientist testified last month to the U.S. Senate and released internal documents.

If the EU rules are done right, "you can create a game-changer for the world, you can force platforms to price in societal risk to their business operations so the decisions about what products to build and how to build them is not purely based on profit maximization," Haugen told lawmakers. "And you can show the world how transparency, oversight and enforcement should work."

Since Haugen left Facebook, the company has renamed itself Meta as it focuses its business on a virtual reality world called the metaverse.

"I'm shocked they picked this name," she said. In the book that inspired the term, "the metaverse is a dystopian thing, that people's lives are so unpleasant that they need to hide in the system for half of their day."

Haugen has been on a European tour, meeting lawmakers and regulators in the EU and United Kingdom who are seeking her input as they work on stricter rules for online companies amid concerns that social media can do everything from magnify depression in teens to incite political violence. A wider global movement to crack down on digital giants is taking cues from Europe and gaining momentum in the U.S. and Australia.

Europe has been a trailblazer in applying more scrutiny for big tech companies, most famously by slapping Google with multibillion-dollar fines in three antitrust cases. Now, the European Union is working on a sweeping update of its digital rulebook, including requiring companies to be more transparent with users on how algorithms make recommendations for what shows up on their feeds and forcing them to swiftly take down illegal content such as hate speech.

The rules are aimed at preventing bad behavior, rather than punishing past actions, as the EU has largely done so far.

France and Germany also are bringing in legislation requiring social media platforms to take down illegal content quicker, though these rules would be superseded by the EU ones, which are expected to take effect no earlier than 2023.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has only recently started cracking down on big tech companies, with regulators fining Facebook and YouTube over allegations of privacy violations and the government suing over their huge share of the market in the last couple of years. American lawmakers have proposed measures to protect kids online and get at the algorithms used to determine what shows up on feeds, but they all face a long road to passing.

While Haugen's testimony and the documents she has provided have shed light on how Facebook's systems work and spurred efforts in the U.S., European lawmakers may not be that surprised by what she has to say.

"The fact that Facebook is disseminating polarizing content more than other kinds of content is something that people like me have been saying for years," said Alexandra Geese, a European Union lawmaker with the Green party. "But we didn't have any evidence to prove it."

European lawmakers have been interested in digging in to algorithms, as they work on requiring platforms to be more transparent with users on how artificial intelligence makes recommendations on what content people see.

"It's rather about looking under the hood and regulating the kind of mechanisms that a company, a platform established to disseminate content or to direct people down rabbit holes into extremist groups," Geese said. What Haugen is doing is "shifting the focus, and I think this is something that many other people before didn't see."

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In the U.K., which left the European Union last year, the government also is working on raft of digital regulations, including an online safety bill that calls for a regulator to ensure tech companies comply with rules requiring them to remove dangerous or harmful content or face big financial penalties.

For the European Union, there's still a lot of wrangling over the final details of the rules, two packages known as the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act, which the EU Commission hopes to get approved next year.

Free speech campaigners and digital rights activists worry that EU rules requiring platforms to swiftly remove harmful content will lead to overzealous deletion of material that isn't illegal. In a bid to balance free speech requirements, users will be given the chance to complain about what content is removed.

In London, there's been a similar debate over how to define harmful but illegal content.

Both the EU and U.K. rules call for hefty fines worth up to 10% of a company's annual global turnover, which for the biggest tech companies could amount to billions of dollars in revenue.

Hundreds flee to Uganda amid fighting in eastern Congo

By JEAN-YVES KAMALE and RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — Congo's military says that members of the M23 rebellion group have attacked a base in eastern Congo's Rutshuru area and that fighting is ongoing.

"The M23 insurrection movement attacked the FARDC positions in Rutshuru with the intention of destabilizing the province. At present, the fighting is underway and the loyalist forces are determined to put an end to this armed group once and for all," said Gen. Sylvain Ekenge, deputy spokesman for Congo's military, also known as FARDC.

The rebels attacked the remote villages of Runyonyi and Chanzu, on the strategic hills of North Kivu province near the borders with Rwanda and Uganda, he said. The rebels had taken over lands near there in 2012 and were pushed from the area into Uganda and Rwanda in 2013 by Congolese and United Nations forces.

The M23 group, however, denied that they are behind the attacks or fighting with the military or government in a statement Monday.

The fighting has caused large numbers of people to flee to Uganda, according to the Uganda Red Cross.

The group said Monday it deployed a team to assess needs among people fleeing the fighting overnight. Hundreds are camping at the border post of Bunagana, seeking shelter in Uganda, spokeswoman Irene Nakasiita said.

Ugandan authorities didn't immediately comment. The East African country is home to 1.3 million refugees who fled violence in neighboring countries such as South Sudan.

Eastern Congo is prone to insecurity with fighting between rival armed groups, including rebels opposed to the government in the capital, Kinshasa. In recent years an armed group with roots in Uganda has been blamed for a series of attacks on civilians in the region.

In a security alert Sunday, the U.S. Embassy in Congo noted "reports of a potential attack in Goma," the capital of North Kivu province. "There is increased security presence throughout the city," the advisory said, adding that U.S. government personnel in the area were advised to shelter in place.

Muhumuza reported from Kampala, Uganda.

Pistorius up for parole, but he must meet victim's parents

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — Eight years after he shot dead his girlfriend, Olympic runner Oscar Pistorius is up for parole, but first he must meet with her parents.

Pistorius, a world-famous double-amputee athlete who competed at the 2012 Olympics, has been eligible for parole since July after he was convicted of murder for shooting model Reva Steenkamp multiple times

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through a toilet door in his home on Valentine's Day 2013.

Pistorius was convicted of murder in 2015 and ultimately sentenced to 13 years and five months in prison. He became eligible for parole under South African law after serving half his sentence.

A parole hearing for Pistorius was scheduled for last month and then canceled, partly because a meeting between Pistorius and Steenkamp's parents, Barry and June, had not been arranged, lawyers for both parties told The Associated Press on Monday.

Corrections department officials scheduled the parole hearing for October but it was called off when a full report on Pistorius' time in prison wasn't available, said Julian Knight, a lawyer for Pistorius. The date for a new hearing has not yet been set, Knight said.

Also, Barry and June Steenkamp want a face-to-face meeting with Pistorius before he is considered for early release from prison, as is their right under South Africa's victim-offender dialogue policy. The Steenkamps have previously said they want to challenge Pistorius on why he shot their daughter and they would get to do that, with victim-offender meetings aimed at achieving some kind of closure for families of victims of crimes.

"They (Barry and June) feel that Reeva has got a voice. They are Reeva's voice, and they owe it to their beloved daughter," said Tania Koen, the Steenkamps' lawyer.

The Steenkamps will also be allowed to make recommendations to the parole board, although Koen wouldn't say if they will oppose Pistorius' release.

"We have discussed it," Koen said, but declined to give details.

The opinion of victims' families is considered by a parole board when deciding whether to release an offender, but it's not the only criteria.

The 34-year-old Pistorius could be taken from where he is incarcerated at the Atteridgeville Correctional Center in the capital, Pretoria, to the Steenkamps' home city of Gqerberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) for the victim-offender meeting because, according to Koen, Barry Steenkamp is unable to travel due to his health.

Pistorius lawyer Knight said it might "turn out" that way but the corrections department would decide. Knight said he was hopeful that the meeting between Pistorius and the Steenkamps, which must happen before a parole hearing, could take place by the end of the year.

It was a "huge surprise" for the Steenkamps when corrections services officials contacted them last month to say that Pistorius is eligible for parole, Koen said. They believed he would only be eligible in 2023, she said.

"(It) opens a lot of wounds, or rips off the plasters they had put on those wounds," Koen said.

The confusion over when he would be eligible emanated from Pistorius' long and protracted murder trial and two subsequent appeals by prosecutors. Pistorius went on trial in 2014 and his case was only finalized in 2018.

The multiple Paralympic champion was initially found guilty of culpable homicide — an offense comparable to manslaughter — for shooting Steenkamp with his licensed 9 mm pistol. He claimed at his trial it was a tragic accident and he mistook her for a dangerous intruder.

Prosecutors appealed the manslaughter finding and secured a murder conviction. Pistorius was sentenced to six years in jail for murder, but prosecutors again appealed what they called a shockingly light punishment for murder. The Supreme Court of Appeal then more than doubled his sentence in 2017.

Knight later sought clarification over the sentence from the Supreme Court to see if the time Pistorius had already served in prison for culpable homicide should count toward his parole. It did, Knight said, meaning Pistorius could be considered for parole two years earlier than courts had initially indicated.

Knight said he believed Pistorius had met the requirements to be released early.

"From what I have observed of him he has been a model prisoner while he has been in prison," Knight said. "My view is that he does meet the requirements to be placed on parole but the procedures must be followed."

Knight said a parole board could impose a range of conditions on Pistorius if he is released, like only being allowed to leave home to go to work during the week, and only for a limited time on weekends to

buy groceries and attend church.

The Latest: EU: Climate talks must achieve key Paris goal

GLASGOW, Scotland (AP) — The Latest on the COP26 climate talks in Glasgow.

GLASGOW, Scotland — The European Union's climate chief said Monday that U.N. talks in Glasgow must focus on ensuring the headline goal of the Paris Agreement can be met.

One of the issues that negotiators from almost 200 countries have been haggling over at the U.N. climate talks is whether to explicitly mention the Paris accord's target in the final agreement of the 26th Conference of the Parties, or COP26, as the conference is known.

Frans Timmermans, the European Commission's vice president, said that "at the end of the COP, we need to be in a position to say we're still on track to be well below 2 degrees (Celsius; 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit). We still have a shot at the 1.5 degrees (2.7 F goal)."

"All our efforts this week should be directed at that," he said.

Timmermans said a recent U.N. science report on the progress of global warming was "so alarming that I think there's nobody that can still be in denial of the crisis we're already in." He also stressed the importance of reaching an agreement on transparently reporting emissions, something large emitters such as China in particular have resisted.

"We need to be sure that we're comparing apples to apples and not apples to oranges," said Timmermans.

GLASGOW, Scotland ___ Bangladesh's environment minister said the final outcome of the climate talks at Glasgow had to address the gap between the climate targets of countries and the degree to which emissions had to be scaled back for the world to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit).

Minister Shahab Uddin added that there needs to be a deadline for countries to come up with their long-term strategies to achieve their net zero emissions targets. He says longstanding demands -- like increased financing for poor countries and for rich countries to pay for loss and damages due to climate shocks -- needed to be addressed.

He said the science was clear. Failing to limit emissions in this decade would increase the risk "of dangerous and irreversible impacts" on natural systems and people. He said the global community still lacked the "feeling of urgency and true commitment" to implement climate action.

GLASGOW, Scotland ___ World leaders made "inspirational" pledges at the start of climate talks in Glasgow, but inside the negotiating rooms, thorny political issues continue to reign, said Milagros De Camps, Deputy Minister of Environment of the Dominican Republic.

She said inside the talks, some nations' tactics still looked to delay and deny that there was any urgency. This was in contrast with world leaders, who used doomsday rhetoric to underline the importance of the conference.

She said that there was still resistance to acknowledge that small island nations -- whose very existence is at risk from climate change despite contributing a fraction of the world's greenhouse emissions -- are a "special case." She said rich nations needed to live up to the grand pledges and translate that into concrete national targets to combat climate change.

"The needle hasn't moved, and incrementalism won't suffice," she said.

She added that rich nations had to stop subsidizing fossil fuels while fulfilling their old promise of giving poor countries \$100 billion every year by 2020.

"The proof of the pudding will be in the eating," she said.

GLASGOW, Scotland — Former U.S. President Barack Obama says he believes that President Biden's climate package will be "historic" and he welcomed the efforts of all U.S. politicians, Democrats and Republicans, in working toward slowing down global warming.

Obama spoke Monday on the sidelines of the U.N. climate conference in Glasgow.

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"I believe President Biden's Build Back Better bill will be historic. But I know Joe Biden wanted to do even more," Obama said. "Both of us have been constrained by the fact that one of our two major parties have decided to not only sit on the sidelines, but express hostility towards climate science and make climate change a partisan issue."

"That's got to stop. Saving the planet isn't a partisan issue. I welcome any faction within the Republican Party that takes climate change seriously," Obama added.

He said climate change will affect all Americans and everyone on the planet, no matter how they voted. "It doesn't matter if you're a Republican or a Democrat if your Florida house is flooded, or your crops in the Dakotas are failing, or your California house is burning. Nature, physics, climate science – they don't care about party affiliation," Obama said. "We need everybody – even if we disagree on other things. "

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — The Dutch government is joining a group of nations, including the United States and Canada, that has pledged to stop funding overseas fossil fuel projects.

It was not immediately clear how much Dutch funding will be affected. Last week, national broadcaster NOS reported that the government was guarantor in 2020 for loans financing fossil fuel projects overseas of more than 4.5 billion euros.

The decision was announced Monday as the United Nations climate summit in Glasgow entered its second week with key issues still unresolved.

State Secretary for Finance Hans Vrijlbrief called the move "an important acceleration" and a "major step in the right direction to counter climate change." Prime Minister Mark Rutte told reporters in The Hague that his caretaker administration had decided over the weekend to halt the financing.

Outlining the move in a letter to the Dutch parliament, the government said it will "prioritize the transition to a green energy supply with its foreign instruments and will work on new policy in 2022 to end international government support for the fossil energy sector."

The Dutch branch of Greenpeace welcomed what it called an "unavoidable step."

Last month, the Netherlands' biggest pension fund announced it will stop investing in fossil fuel companies.

GLASGOW, Scotland — Ministers from all over the world are arriving in Glasgow to begin the "arduous task" of finding consensus, said Alok Sharma, who is chairing the two-week U.N. climate talks in the Scottish city.

He said the priority is for there to be a "sense of urgency," while ensuring the talks are transparent and inclusive.

"We've no time to lose," he said.

Sharma said countries had made commitments that'll help the planet, but they had to be delivered and accounted for.

Patricia Espinosa, head of the U.N. climate office, said the world was coming into these talks with the "clear picture that we're not there." But at the same time, scientists say that it's still possible to achieve the world's climate goals, like limiting future warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit). They say that will mitigate the effects of global warming, such as increasing droughts, extreme weather, wildfires and rising seas.

"We need to accelerate the process going forward," she said.

GLASGOW, Scotland — After a week of negotiations, numerous of the stickiest issues in climate talks remain unresolved and teams of cabinet ministers from different countries are being sent to move things along.

Briefing the United Nations Conference of Parties, or COP26, on the first week's progress, COP President Alok Sharma had to correct himself, noting that "some" issues had been settled, rather than "many."

Numerous developing nations were pessimistic. They called progress "disappointing," saying announcements were high in quantity but worried that they were low in quantity.

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No deals have been made yet on the three main goals of the U.N. — pledges to cut emissions in half by 2030 to keep the Paris climate deal's 1.5 degree Celsius temperature rise goal alive; the need for \$100 billion annually in financial help from rich countries to poor ones; and the idea that half of that money goes to adapting to global warming's worst effects. Several other issues, including trading carbon and transparency, also weren't solved yet.

And on the issue of more frequent updates of countries' emission-cutting goals — something poorer nations seek — negotiators listed nine different time options for future negotiators to choose from.

Sharma named teams of two ministers — one from a rich country, one from a poor — for each issue to oversee negotiations on each topic.

GLASGOW, Scotland — Rich nations are not being truthful in their commitments to climate change, delegates from developing nations said Monday.

Not fixing the financial pledge problem — the need for \$100 billion annually in financial help from rich countries to poor ones to cope with climate change — shows rich nations' pledges are "an empty commitment," and without fixing that the climate talks in Glasgow cannot be successful, representatives from several countries, including Guinea, said.

"There is a history of broken promises and unfulfilled commitments by developed countries," Diego Pacheco Balanza of Bolivia told the conference.

Follow all AP stories on climate change at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate>.

Air-scrubbing machines gain momentum, but long way to go

CATHY BUSSEWITZ AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — On a field ringed by rolling green hills in Iceland, fans attached to metal structures that look like an industrial-sized Lego project are spinning. Their mission is to scrub the atmosphere by sucking carbon dioxide from the air and storing it safely underground.

Just a few years ago, this technology, known as "direct air capture," was seen by many as an unrealistic fantasy. But the technology has evolved to where people consider it a serious tool in fighting climate change.

The Iceland plant, called Orca, is the largest such facility in the world, capturing about 4,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year. But compared to what the planet needs, the amount is tiny. Experts say 10 billion tons of carbon dioxide must be removed annually by mid-century.

"Effectively, in 30 years' time, we need a worldwide enterprise that is twice as big as the oil and gas industry, and that works in reverse," said Julio Friedmann, senior research scholar at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University.

Leading scientific agencies including the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change say that even if the world manages to stop producing harmful emissions, that still won't be enough to avert a climate catastrophe. They say we need to suck massive amounts of carbon dioxide out of the air and put it back underground — yielding what some call "negative emissions."

"We have already failed on climate to the extent to which direct air capture is one of the many things we must do," Friedmann said. "We have already emitted so many greenhouse gases at such an incredible volume and rate that CO2 removal at enormous scales is required, as well as reduction of emissions."

As dire warnings have accelerated, technology to vacuum carbon dioxide from the air has advanced. Currently, a handful of companies operate such plants on a commercial scale, including Climeworks, which built the Orca plant in Iceland, and Carbon Engineering, which built a different type of direct air capture plant in British Columbia. And now that the technology has been proven, both companies have ambitions for major expansion.

DIRECT AIR CAPTURE AT WORK

At Climeworks' Orca plant near Reykjavik, fans suck air into big, black collection boxes where the carbon dioxide accumulates on a filter. Then it's heated with geothermal energy and is combined with water and pumped deep underground into basalt rock formations. Within a few years, Climeworks says, the carbon

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dioxide turns into stone.

It takes energy to build and run Climeworks' plants. Throughout the life cycle of the Orca plant, including construction, 10 tons of carbon dioxide are emitted for every 100 tons of carbon dioxide removed from the air. Carbon Engineering's plants can run on renewable energy or natural gas, and when natural gas is used, the carbon dioxide generated during combustion is captured.

Carbon dioxide can also be injected into geological reservoirs such as depleted oil and gas fields. Carbon Engineering is taking that approach in partnership with Occidental Petroleum to build what's expected to be the world's largest direct air capture facility in the Southwest's Permian Basin — the most productive U.S. oil field.

Direct air capture plants globally are removing about 9,000 tons of carbon dioxide from the air annually, according to the International Energy Agency.

Climeworks built its first direct air capture plant in 2017 in Hinwil, Switzerland, which captured 900 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually that was sold to companies for use in fizzy beverages and fertilizer. The company built another plant, called Artic Fox, in Iceland that same year; it captured up to 50 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually that was injected underground.

"Today we are on a level that we can say it's on an industrial scale, but it's not on a level where we need to be to make a difference in stopping climate change," said Daniel Egger, chief commercial officer at Climeworks.

BIG PLANS, CHALLENGES

Their plans call for scaling up to remove several million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually by 2030. And Eggers said that would mean increasing capacity by a factor of 10 almost every three years.

It's a lofty, and expensive, goal.

Estimates vary, but it currently costs about \$500 to \$600 per ton to remove carbon dioxide using direct air capture, said Colin McCormick, chief innovation officer at Carbon Direct, which invests in carbon removal projects and advises businesses on buying such services.

As with any new technology, costs can decrease over time. Within the next decade, experts say, the cost of direct air capture could fall to about \$200 per ton or lower.

For years, companies bought carbon offsets by doing things like investing in reforestation projects. But recent studies have shown many offsets don't deliver the promised environmental benefits. So McCormick said companies are looking for more verifiable carbon removal services and are investing in direct air capture, considered the "gold standard."

"This is really exploding. We really didn't see hardly any of this until a couple of years ago," he said, referring to companies investing in the technology. "Two years ago Microsoft, Stripe and Shopify were really the leaders on this who first went out and said, 'We want to procure carbon dioxide removal from the atmosphere.'"

Companies are setting targets of net zero carbon emissions for their operations but can only reduce emissions so far. That's where purchasing carbon removal services such as direct air capture comes in.

Individuals can buy atmosphere-scrubbing services too: Climeworks offers subscriptions starting at \$8 a month to people who want to offset emissions.

In the U.S., direct air capture facilities can get a tax credit of \$50 a ton, but there are efforts in Congress to increase that to up to \$180 a ton, which if passed, could stimulate development.

The Department of Energy announced Friday a goal to reduce the cost of carbon removal and storage to \$100 per metric ton, saying it would collaborate with communities, industry and academia to spur technological innovation.

Oil companies such as Occidental and Exxon have been practicing a different form of carbon capture for decades. For the most part, they are taking carbon dioxide emissions from production facilities and injecting it underground to shake loose more oil and gas from between rocks.

Some question the environmental benefits of using captured CO₂ to produce more fossil fuels that are eventually burned, producing greenhouse gases. But Occidental says part of the goal is to make products such as aviation fuel with a smaller carbon footprint — since while producing the fuel, they're also remov-

ing carbon dioxide from the air and storing it underground.

Capturing carbon dioxide from oil and gas operations or industrial facilities such as steel plants or coal-burning power plants is technically easier and less costly than drawing it from the air, because plant emissions have much more highly concentrated CO₂.

Still, most companies are not capturing carbon dioxide that leaves their facilities.

Worldwide, industrial facilities capturing carbon dioxide from their operations had a combined capacity to capture 40 million tons annually, triple the amount in 2010, according to the International Energy Agency.

But that's less than 1% of the total emissions that could be captured from industrial facilities globally, said Sean McCoy, assistant professor in the department of chemical and petroleum engineering at the University of Calgary.

If governments created policies to penalize carbon dioxide emissions, that would drive more carbon removal projects and push companies to switch to lower-carbon fuels, McCoy said.

"Direct air capture is something you get people to pay for because they want it," he said. "Nobody who operates a power plant wants (carbon capture and storage). You're going to have to hit them with sticks."

Associated Press reporter Jamey Keaten contributed from Geneva.

Follow Cathy Bussewitz on Twitter: @cbussewitz

Mexico's army stands between gangs, enforcing turf divisions

By MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

AGUILILLA, Mexico (AP) — In western Mexico a small squad of soldiers with about a half-dozen trucks and sandbag emplacements stands guard on a rural highway. In one direction, almost within earshot, one drug cartel operates a roadblock extorting farmers. In the other direction, a rival cartel carries out armed patrols in trucks bearing its initials.

The Mexican army has largely stopped fighting drug cartels here, instead ordering soldiers to guard the dividing lines between gang territories so they won't invade each other's turf — and turn a blind eye to the cartels' illegal activities just a few hundred yards away.

At the first roadblock, set up by the Viagras gang that has long dominated the state of Michoacan, a truck stands parked across the highway and stacked sandbags protect cartel gunmen.

Every few hours, the gunmen roll back the truck to allow farmers through, but they interrogate each passing driver about how many crates of limes — the area's most valuable product — or heads of cattle are being transported to market. The answers are written down in a book.

Local farmers say the Viagras are charging about \$150 for each truckload of limes. They weigh and charge separately for each head of cattle. Further north, avocado growers are subject to similar protection payments on every box of fruit they ship.

"Be careful about what you publish," the leader of the Viagras roadblock told journalists passing through. "I can monitor you on Facebook, and I'll find you."

About 3 kilometers (2 miles) down the same road, one formally enters another cartel's territory, marked by squads of armed men and pickups and primitive homemade armored trucks bearing the letters "CJNG," Spanish initials for the Jalisco New Generation Cartel.

Between them stand the soldiers, doing very little at all.

The cartel based in Jalisco state is invading neighboring Michoacan, causing thousands of farmers to flee, with some seeking asylum in the United States. While journalists could see few open threats in Jalisco's newly taken town of Aguililla, Michoacan, local residents report Jalisco gunmen have abducted, and probably killed, youths they suspect of working for rival gangs.

Mexican Defense Secretary Gen. Luis Cresencio Sandoval has publicly said the soldiers are here to stop the Jalisco cartel's incursions into Michoacan.

"We managed to make one of the cartels, the Jalisco, retreat to the border line of Jalisco," Cresencio

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Sandoval said in October. The federal and state governments did not respond to repeated requests for comment on the strategy.

Michoacan's seaport of Lazaro Cardenas is valued by the cartels as an entry point for precursor chemicals from China used to make methamphetamine and fentanyl. Its avocado orchards and iron ore mines are also a prime target for extortion by the Viagras, a gang that got its name from its founders' liberal use of hair gel.

Jalisco's leader, Nemesio "El Mencho" Oseguera, wants to take over all this, as well as regain control of his hometown; he was born in the Michoacan hamlet of Chila.

Security analyst Alejandro Hope says the government's strategy is clearly "some sort of pact of non-aggression."

"There is something like an increasingly explicit attempt to administer the conflict," Hope said. "They (soldiers) are not there to disarm the two sides, but rather to prevent the conflict from spreading. The problem is that we don't know where the army draws the line, what they are willing to accept."

Just how passive has the army become, and how much abuse will it take? In the mountain township of Aguililla, now dominated by Jalisco, almost 200 soldiers have been barricaded into their command post by angry residents for four months.

The army has been flying in food for the troops by helicopter since townspeople used a grader and a bulldozer to block both entrances to the army barracks in late June. It is part of an increasing trend in Mexico: Soldiers have been taken hostage by townspeople because they know troops won't even defend themselves under President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's policy of "hugs, not bullets."

Aguililla residents say they won't let the soldiers out of their barracks until the army does its job of clearing the Viagra roadblocks that make things like medical care, food, fuel, electrical or telephone repairs impossible or expensive to get. Some residents have died because ambulances are either blocked or delayed at the roadblock.

"The most shameful thing is the absence of the government, which has become simply a spectator in a war that has left so many dead, so much destruction," said the local priest in Aguililla, the Rev. Gilberto Vergara, describing the residents' frustration with army's reluctance to fight either of the two cartels.

"It just stands there watching, and at a given moment, when it can't do anything else or when one side appears to be winning, it will act," Vergara said. "But that is not the rule of law."

That was a reference to the army's only real action in recent months: In September, after a Jalisco cartel offensive against the nearby town of Tepalcatepec left five local vigilantes decapitated, the army sent in helicopters, reportedly armed with revolving-barrel machine guns that can fire thousands of rounds per minute, to push Jalisco back.

Since then, the army has taken up positions around Tepalcatepec, but has done the same thing as on the road to Aguililla: nothing.

"Why doesn't the army advance? Why don't they send in the helicopters again?" said a farmer in the hamlet of Taixtan, near Tepalcatepec, as he motioned down a dirt road in the direction of sorghum fields he cannot reach to harvest because Jalisco cartel gunmen posted on a nearby hill can hit the fields with their .50 caliber sniper rifles.

"Since they (soldiers) came, they haven't fired a shot," said the farmer, whose "self-defense" squad regularly exchanges fire with Jalisco. The farmer, like most others interviewed, refused to give his full name because of fears he could be identified and killed by the gangs.

Most of the farmers in Tepalcatepec feel they have been left alone to fight off an invasion.

Locals rely not on soldiers but on their own WWI-style trench warfare, combined with 21st century technology like exploding drones.

On a hilltop near Tepalcatepec, the vigilantes have built a bunker of concrete, steel beams and brick, topped with more concrete to protect against drones. They approach the bunker, known as "Achicumbo," via meter-deep trenches to avoid sniper fire.

One farmer there showed shrapnel from a drone still lodged in the bumper of his truck; the devices

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cause terror, largely because they are unexpected and feel indiscriminate. Throughout the region, drone impacts launched by both sides can be seen in the metal roofs of structures opened like tin cans by the force of explosions. Each side has found "droneros" to operate the devices.

Nobody asks too much about where the Tepalcatepec vigilantes got their bulletproof cars and AR-15 rifles. There are rumors that the Sinaloa cartel has sent help, as part of that cartel's nationwide war with arch-rival Jalisco. The only evidence is one "dronero" from Sinaloa state.

Pedro, who runs his family's ranch in the nearby hamlet of Plaza Vieja, gazed out over the rich valley where his family has raised cattle and crops since his grandfather's time and vowed "I'm not going to leave."

"My umbilical cord is buried here," he said, choking back tears. "We are not invading anyone else's land. We are just defending what is ours, what our grandfathers built."

One elderly woman said she was forced to leave her house and farm in a nearby hamlet in mid-September after Jalisco cartel gunmen showed up and told them they had two days to get out.

"Everything here belongs to el Señor Mencho," the gunmen told her and her husband, whom they abducted and later released. "I walked along, crying and driving my cows in front of me," she said.

Jalisco's takeover of Aguililla has at least brought a modicum of peace; small gasoline shipments can make it through, and fuel is sold from plastic jugs on the streets. The town's only gas station remains closed.

The man who oversees the blockade of the army barracks in Aguililla more or less reflects the Jalisco cartel's view on the conflict.

"Look, there is a conflict between two cartels here," said the man, who identified himself only as José Francisco. "The army should do its jobs, and fight both cartels, if it needs to. But it shouldn't take the side of one of them."

López Obrador has been seeking to avoid conflict since 2019, when he ordered the release of Ovidio Guzman, a son of imprisoned kingpin Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzman, to avoid bloodshed after gunmen in Sinaloa took to the streets and started shooting to win the younger Guzman's release.

But the government's strategy of avoiding conflict has forced inhabitants to choose sides.

"If the government is absent, then the cartels take over. It's not that we choose one, that we want this one or that one. There is a war between them, and they divide up the territory," said Rev. Vergara. "If they are here, we have to live with them. That doesn't make us accomplices, or applaud them or say one is better than another."

Russians go back to work but virus cases, deaths stay high

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russians went back to work on Monday after a mandated, nine-day break with authorities expressing uncertainty whether the measure helped tame a record-breaking surge of coronavirus infections and deaths.

Daily tallies of new cases and COVID-19 deaths remained high throughout the non-working period. Officials in the Kremlin said that it was too early to tell whether the measure had the desired effect.

"Too early to draw a conclusion. It will be clear in about a week," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Russia's coronavirus task force reported 39,400 new infections and 1,190 deaths on Monday — slightly lower than the record 41,335 new cases registered on Saturday and the record 1,195 deaths reported on Thursday. Russia has the worst death toll in Europe by far, and is one of the top five hardest-hit nations in the world.

The task force has been reporting around 40,000 new cases and over 1,100 new deaths each day since late October.

Last month, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered many Russians to stay off work between Oct. 30 and Nov. 7. He authorized regional governments to extend the number of non-working days if necessary, but only five Russian regions have done so.

Others have restricted attendance to public places, such as restaurants, theaters and cinemas, to those

who either have been fully vaccinated, have recovered from COVID-19 within the last six months or tested negative in the previous 72 hours.

Russia's autumn surge in infections and deaths comes amid low vaccination rates, lax public attitudes toward taking precautions and the government's reluctance to toughen restrictions.

Less than 40% of Russia's nearly 146 million people have been fully vaccinated, even though Russia approved a domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine months before most countries.

According to Gogov.ru, a independent website that tracks vaccinations in Russia, the immunization rate went up in mid-October and almost reached peak levels recorded between June and August when dozens of Russian regions mandated vaccinations for certain groups of people. The rate had dropped again as of Thursday.

In all, Russia's coronavirus task force has reported more than 8.8 million confirmed cases and over 248,000 deaths.

However, reports by Russia's statistical service Rosstat that tally coronavirus-linked deaths retroactively reveal much higher mortality numbers: 462,000 people with COVID-19 died between April 2020 and September this year.

Russian officials have said the task force only includes deaths for which COVID-19 was the main cause and uses data from medical facilities. Rosstat uses wider criteria for counting virus-related deaths and takes its numbers from civil registry offices where registering a death is finalized.

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Follow AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>

Emaciated children in Kabul hospital point to rising hunger

By LEE KEATH Associated Press

KABUL (AP) — In Kabul's main children's hospital, 2½-year-old Guldana is sitting up in her bed, but she's too exhausted to even open her eyes. Her tiny body is wrapped in a blanket, only her emaciated face showing.

She's one of a growing number of near-starving children who are brought every day to the Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital in the Afghan capital. Hunger is increasing dramatically in Afghanistan, fueled by an economic crisis that has only gotten worse since the Taliban seized power in the country nearly three months ago.

Guldana's father, Jinnat Gul, said he can hardly afford to feed her and his other five children. He used to work going house to house collecting scrap goods and selling them. But for the past three months, work has dried up and he has hardly made any money.

"Before, I had enough work, I could provide food. We could have meat one or two times a week," he said. Now his family mainly gets by on boiled potatoes. He said sometimes he only has bread soaked in green tea for his children, "just to give them something so they stop crying."

The U.N.'s World Food Program said Monday that the number of people on the edge of famine has risen to 45 million in 43 countries. The number is up from 42 million earlier this year.

Afghanistan is the source of most of that increase. The number of Afghans living in near-famine conditions has risen to 8.7 million, up by 3 million from earlier this year, the WFP said. Overall, almost 24 million people in Afghanistan, or 60% of the population, suffer from acute hunger. An estimated 3.2 million children under age 5 are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition by the end of the year.

"It's a crisis. It's a catastrophe," WFP Executive Director David Beasley said during a weekend visit to Afghanistan. The WFP is rushing in supplies to feed people as the harsh winter sets in, but it says it needs some \$220 million a month in 2022 to fund its effort.

A severe drought this year in Afghanistan is one cause for increasing malnutrition. But also, more and more people simply don't have money to buy food.

The country's economy had been rapidly declining under the previous U.S.-backed government, which struggled to pay salaries to its employees.

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Now the economy is in full-fledged meltdown after the Taliban seized power on Aug. 15. The Taliban government is mired in financial crisis, scrambling for cash. The U.S. and other Western countries have cut off direct financial assistance to the government that covered most of its budget; also, the Taliban government cannot access billions of dollars in Afghan national reserves held abroad. As a result, millions of Afghans have not received salaries for months.

Worsening the situation, hundreds of local health facilities around the country have had to scale back services or shut down completely because of the lack of international funding. That means families with children suffering from malnutrition have to go farther to get care — or get none at all.

The Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital had to expand its space dedicated to malnutrition cases from one room to three, said one doctor there, Salahuddin Salah. At least 25 children brought to the hospital over the past two months have died, he said. Most staff at the hospital, from doctors and nurses to cleaning staff, have not received their salaries in three months.

On Monday, when The Associated Press visited the hospital, there were 18 children in the malnutrition ward. The ward gets around 30 new cases a week, said Zia Mohammed, assistant director for nursing. "Since two and three months, our malnourished patients have increased day by day," he said.

In one bed, a 4-month-old boy named Mohammed was extremely emaciated, and the flesh was shriveled on his tiny limbs. His skin was so thin that the veins showed through on his forehead like a map of tiny blue lines.

Mohammed was born a month prematurely, and his mother died from complications in the birth. "She bled to death because we had no money to take her to the hospital," said Rahila, the second wife of Mohammed's father, who brought the baby to the hospital.

The father was in the military of the ousted government and so hasn't had an income since the Taliban takeover, Rahila said. They tried giving Mohammed milk bought from the market, but he got diarrhea from it, so they have mainly fed him tea-soaked bread, she said.

Jinnat Gul, Guldana's father, said he brought his daughter to Kabul a week ago from his home village, Shahr-e Now, in Baghlan Province, north of Kabul, after a hospital in the provincial capital said it didn't have supplies to treat her.

He said Guldana is not the only child suffering back home. "There's a lot of sick children in the village," he said, "but there's no doctor to say if it's malnutrition or not."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Nov. 9, the 313th day of 2021. There are 52 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 9, 1938, Nazis looted and burned synagogues as well as Jewish-owned stores and houses in Germany and Austria in a pogrom or deliberate persecution that became known as "Kristallnacht."

On this date:

In 1620, the passengers and crew of the Mayflower sighted Cape Cod.

In 1872, fire destroyed nearly 800 buildings in Boston.

In 1918, it was announced that Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II would abdicate; he then fled to the Netherlands.

In 1935, United Mine Workers president John L. Lewis and other labor leaders formed the Committee for Industrial Organization (later renamed the Congress of Industrial Organizations).

In 1953, Welsh author-poet Dylan Thomas died in New York at age 39.

In 1965, the great Northeast blackout began as a series of power failures lasting up to 13 1/2 hours, leaving 30 million people in seven states and part of Canada without electricity.

In 1970, former French President Charles de Gaulle died at age 79.

In 1976, the U.N. General Assembly approved resolutions condemning apartheid in South Africa, includ-

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ing one characterizing the white-ruled government as "illegitimate."

In 1989, communist East Germany threw open its borders, allowing citizens to travel freely to the West; joyous Germans danced atop the Berlin Wall.

In 2000, George W. Bush's lead over Al Gore in all-or-nothing Florida slipped beneath 300 votes in a suspense-filled recount, as Democrats threw the presidential election to the courts, claiming "an injustice unparalleled in our history."

In 2005, three suicide bombers carried out nearly simultaneous attacks on three U.S.-based hotels in Amman, Jordan, killing 60 victims and wounding hundreds.

In 2007, President Gen. Pervez Musharraf (pur-VEHZ' moo-SHAH'-ruhv) of Pakistan placed opposition leader Benazir Bhutto (BEN'-uh-zeer BOO'-toh) under house arrest for a day, and rounded up thousands of her supporters to block a mass rally against his emergency rule.

Ten years ago: After 46 seasons as Penn State's head football coach and a record 409 victories, Joe Paterno was fired along with the university president, Graham Spanier, over their handling of child sex abuse allegations against former assistant coach Jerry Sandusky. Taylor Swift won her second entertainer of the year award at The Country Music Association Awards.

Five years ago: Democrat Hillary Clinton conceded the presidential election to Republican Donald Trump, telling supporters in New York that her defeat was "painful, and it will be for a long time." But Clinton told her faithful to accept Trump and the election results, urging them to give him "an open mind and a chance to lead."

One year ago: President Donald Trump fired Defense Secretary Mark Esper, injecting more uncertainty to a rocky transition period as Joe Biden prepared to assume the presidency; Trump said Christopher Miller, director of the National Counterterrorism Center, would serve as acting secretary. Attorney General William Barr authorized federal prosecutors to pursue "substantial allegations" of voting irregularities before the presidential election was certified, despite no evidence of widespread fraud; the action raised the prospect that Trump would use the Justice Department to try to challenge the outcome. The Trump administration blocked government officials from cooperating with President-elect Joe Biden's team on a transition. Georgia's two Republican senators called for the resignation of the state's top election official, Brad Raffensperger, a fellow Republican, who had said there weren't enough doubtful votes to tip Georgia into the Trump column.

Today's Birthdays: Baseball Hall of Famer Whitey Herzog is 90. Movie director Bille August is 73. Actor Robert David Hall is 73. Actor Lou Ferrigno is 70. Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, is 69. Gospel singer Donnie McClurkin is 62. Rock musician Dee Plakas (L7) is 61. Actor Ion Overman is 52. Rapper Pepa (Salt-N-Pepa) is 57. Rapper Scarface (Geto Boys) is 51. Blues singer Susan Tedeschi (teh-DEHS'-kee) is 51. Actor Jason Antoon is 50. Actor Eric Dane is 49. Singer Nick Lachey (98 Degrees) is 48. Country musician Barry Knox (Parmalee) is 44. R&B singer Sisqo (Dru Hill) is 43. Country singer Corey Smith is 42. Country singer Chris Lane is 37. Actor Emily Tyra is 34. Actor Nikki Blonsky is 33. Actor-model Analeigh (AH'-nuh-lee) Tipton is 33.