

# Groton Daily Independent

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## UpComing Events

### Tuesday, Feb. 15

Boys Basketball at Sisseton  
C game at 5 p.m. in the Practice Gym; Dakota Valley girls are playing at Sisseton, so the Groton JV boys will start after the varsity girls game which is scheduled to start at 5:15 p.m.

**Cancelled:** Junior High Boys Basketball hosts Tiospa Zina. 7th Grade at 5:30 p.m. followed by 8th grade game.

City Council meeting, 7 p.m.

### Wednesday, Feb. 16

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla.

### Thursday, Feb. 17

Parent-Teacher Conference, 4-8 p.m.

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla.

### Friday, Feb. 18

NO SCHOOL

Parent-Teacher Conferences, 8 a.m. to Noon  
Basketball Double-Header at Deuel (Clear Lake).

JV games start at 4 p.m.

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla.

### Saturday, Feb. 19

Region Wrestling at Britton

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla.

### Sunday, Feb 20

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla.

### Monday, Feb. 21

NO SCHOOL - President's Day

Band Trip to Orlando, Fla. - RETURNING

Boys Basketball hosts Tiospa Zina - C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity

Junior High Basketball vs. Warner. 7th grade game at 4 p.m. followed by 8th grade game

### Tuesday, Feb. 22

Girls Basketball regions begin

Thursday, April 7: Groton CDE

**Groton Daily Independent**  
**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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## Monthly COVID-19 reports eliminated from future agendas

Ann Gibbs, Lindsey DeHoet, Emily Eichler and Julie Milbrandt gave a program review of the junior kindergarten, kindergarten and first grade. Alexa Schuring also assists with the core programs in the kindergarten and junior kindergarten level.

DeHoet said they had to revamp the math program last year - rearranged the chapters so it made more sense in teaching the curriculum.

Superintendent Joe Schwan said the state sets the standards, it then goes to the local schools to choose the curriculum and then the teachers reorganize the curriculum for teaching at a local level. "That's the way it suppose to be," he said. He said what the group was talking about is what the legislatures need to hear in how it works locally.

It is required that every six months the district has to review the COVID-19 plan. Superintendent Schwan said he questions whether the COVID-19 update needs to be done each month. During the peak COVID-19 period Schwan had to make a dash to Pierre to pick up additional test kits. "I'm glad we did as we got the tests out quickly." The board agreed to get rid of the COVID-19 report and if something comes up, he can report on it during his superintendent's report.

Schwan reported on athletic cooperative request from Doland School. He said they are leaning towards a co-op with Hitchcock-Tulare.

The district only had one ding from the food service inspections and that was an incomplete thermometer calibration report in the MS/HS.

Schwan said the district is looking at a 20 percent grant for a full size bus and a possible ESSER grant for full funding for a 14-passenger minibus.

A new re-imbusement program available through the USDA is a USDA Supply Chain Assistance grant. The district would qualify for \$14,000 and Schwan said it could be used to purchase milk and for local beef purchases. It would be available for next year as items already invoiced cannot be used for this grant. Schwan said there have been supply chain issues as the district had run out of milk at one point.

One item going through the state legislature is making hazing a crime. If a student recklessly engages in hazing, they would be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor. An intentional act of hazing would be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. A person who maliciously engages in hazing and by that conduct causes serious bodily injury to the student would be guilty of a class 6 felony.

Board Member Marty Weismantel said at a cracker barrel, he asked if there would be a special one-time appropriation to the eight schools in the state that do not get state aide, which includes Groton. The response was that there is probably no chance of that.

Academic All-State team awards through the South Dakota High School Activities Association recognized these Groton Area groups: All-State Chorus, Boys Cross Country, Boys Golf, Boys Soccer, Football, Football Cheerleaders, Girls Soccer and Volleyball.

There will be new CTE and Science Courses available to Groton Area students. Becky Hubsch will be teaching Introduction to Sports Medicine, Specialized Accounting and Medical Terminology and Adam Franken will be teaching Fundamental Plant Science and Fundamental Animal Science.

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Some of the roof at the elementary school has been leaking and bids will be let for the replacement of the roof. Architectural Roofing and Sheet Metal will do an inspection of both facilities for \$935.

The district signed an intent to participate for softball to not register for fast-pitch softball in the Spring 2023 with the South Dakota High School Activities Association. It can be changed if there is a sudden demand to participate.

The board approved the bid from Don Donley for \$150 for the surplus van.

## 2022-2023 Groton Area School District

Drafted 2/11/2022

August 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

August	
22 - Faculty Inservice	
23 - Faculty Inservice	
24 - 1st Day of School	
<b>Student Contact: 6; Inservice: 2</b>	

January 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

January	
4 - School Resumes	
13 - <del>NCSEC Faculty Inservice - NO SCHOOL</del>	
<b>Student Contact: 19; Inservice: 0</b>	

September 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

September	
2 - NO SCHOOL	
5 - Labor Day - NO SCHOOL	
?? - Homecoming - TBD	
29 - Parent/Teacher Conferences (1:30-8:00)	
30 - Faculty Inservice - NO SCHOOL	
<b>Student Contact: 19; Inservice: 2</b>	

February 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

February	
16 - Parent/Teacher Conferences (1:30-8:00)	
17 - Faculty Inservice - NO SCHOOL	
20 - President's Day - NO SCHOOL	
<b>Student Contact: 18; Inservice: 2</b>	

October 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

October	
7 - Lake Region Marching Festival	
10 - Native American Day - NO SCHOOL	
21 - End of 1st Quarter (39)	
<b>Student Contact: 20; Inservice: 0</b>	

March 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

March	
10 - End of 3rd Quarter (45)	
16-17 - Spring Break - NO SCHOOL	
<b>Student Contact: 21; Inservice: 0</b>	

November 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

November	
11 - Veterans Day Program	
23-25 - Thanksgiving - NO SCHOOL	
<b>Student Contact: 19; Inservice: 0</b>	

April 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

April	
2 - Pops Concert (2:00 & 5:00)	
7 - Good Friday - NO SCHOOL	
10 - Easter Monday - NO SCHOOL	
22 - PROM	
27 - Middle School Spring Concert (7:00)	
<b>Student Contact: 18; Inservice: 0</b>	

December 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

December	
8 - MS/HS Christmas Concert (7:00)	
22 - Elementary Christmas Concert (1:00)	
22 - Early Dismissal (2:00)	
22 - End of 1st Semester (41/80)	
22-31 Christmas Break - NO SCHOOL	
<b>Student Contact: 16; Inservice: 0</b>	

May 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

May	
2 - Elementary Spring Concert (7:00)	
4 - High School Concert/Awards Night (7:00)	
14 - Graduation (2:00)	
17 - End of 2nd Semester (44/89)	
<b>Student Contact: 12; Inservice: 1</b>	

- Faculty Inservice
- No School
- Important Dates
- End of Quarter/Semester
- Early Dismissal

All make-up days will be added to the end of the school calendar.

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Principal's Report

MS/HS Building

Mrs. Sombke

February 14, 2022

## 1) Enrollment

February 20-21	February 21-22
6- 45	6- 53
7- 49	7- 40
8- 51	8- 47
MS= 145	MS= 140
9- 45	9- 50
10- 48	10- 42
11- 46	11- 42
12- 51	12- 46
HS= 190	HS= 180
Total= 335	Total= 320

## 2) South Dakota High School Activities Association Academic Team Awards

- SDHSAA Academic Award began in 1996 and is designed to recognize varsity athletic teams and fine arts groups for their academic excellence. This award recognizes student success in two different ways; inside the classroom and outside the classroom on the stage and the athletic field
- All- State Chorus
- Boys Cross Country
- Boys Golf
- Boys Soccer
- Football
- Football Cheerleaders
- Girls Soccer
- Volleyball

## 3) Spring 2022 Registration

- March 1-3: Grades 6-11 register during guidance class
- March 14 & 15 – Practice ACT in Guidance Classroom (See Mrs. Schwan to sign up)
- March 21<sup>st</sup> 6pm – Informational Dual Credit Presentation for 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> grade students and parents (Optional)
- March 30<sup>th</sup> – 2 Year Dual Credit Registration
- April 1<sup>st</sup> – 4 year Dual Credit registration
- April 2<sup>nd</sup> – ACT at Groton

## 4) New CTE and Science Courses

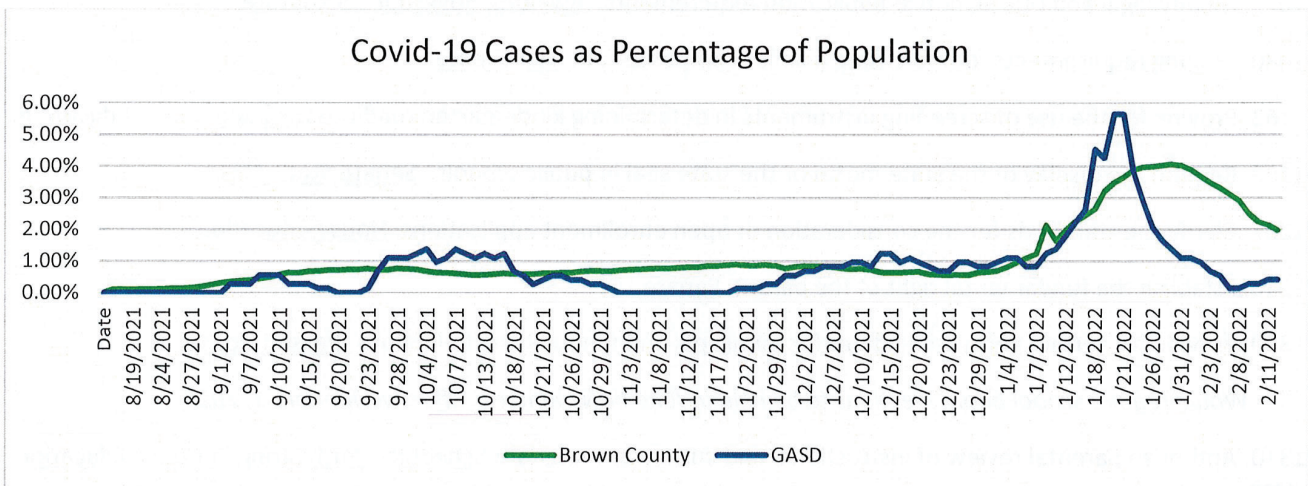
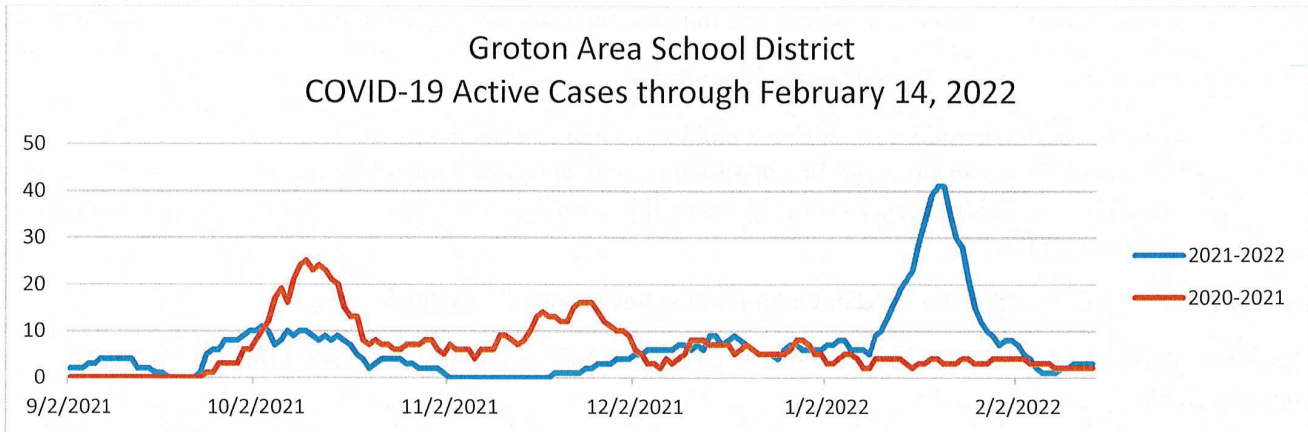
- Fundamental Plan Science (18051) p. 11
- Fundamental Animal Science (18101) p. 11
- Introduction to Sports Medicine (893) p. 16
- Specialized Accounting (755) p. 13
- Medical Terminology (894) p. 16

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Superintendent's Report to the Groton Area School District 06-6 Board of Education  
February 14, 2022

## COVID-19 Case Count.



**COVID-19 Testing.** We continue to receive weekly supplies of at-home COVID testing materials for students and staff without issue.

**North Central Special Education Cooperative Director Search.** The NCSEC Director has submitted her resignation in favor of a similar job at South Central Cooperative in Avon (her hometown). The position has been posted with a closing date of March 4, 2022. Review of applications is scheduled for the Governing Board meeting on Monday, March 7.

**South Dakota Department of Health – Food Service Inspections.** The DOH inspector was on-site Thursday, February 10 for routine food service inspection at each facility. The elementary received an inspection rating score of 100/100. The MS/HS facility received an inspection rating score of 99/100 (-1 point for incomplete thermometer calibration report).

**Round 14 Clean Diesel Application.** We've received approval of a clean diesel grant to fund 20% of the replacement cost of a new bus (requires disposal of the other bus).

**Food Service – Supply Chain Assistance Funding.** We'll be receiving a USDA Supply Chain Assistance grant in early April (anticipated) of \$14,277.19. This is a new federal funding source with its own set of spending criteria. Generally, the funding is intended to reduce the impact of supply-chain disruptions and associated cost increases. Funding may be used for only non-processed or minimally-processed foods purchased after the grant funds are received.

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**Legislative Session.** Monday, February 14 is the 22<sup>nd</sup> Legislative Day of the calendar. There are 4 weeks left of session excluding veto day.

SB46. Protect fairness in women's sports. Signed by Governor.

SB59. Revise property tax levies for school districts and to revise the state aid to general and special education formulas.

SB72. Establish the crime of hazing. Passed Senate (amended).

*"A person who recklessly engages in hazing is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor."*

*"A person who commits an intentional act of hazing is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor."*

*"A person who maliciously engages in hazing and by that conduct causes serious bodily injury to the student, is guilty of a Class 6 felony."*

SB95. Revise provisions regarding the Teacher Compensation Review Board. Passed Senate.

SB198. Revise provisions related to juvenile offenders. Scheduled for hearing in Senate State Affairs Committee on Wednesday, 2/16/22.

HB1075. Modify legal and official notice publication requirements. Awaiting Governor's Signature.

HB1080. Prolong requirements for increasing teacher compensation. Full Senate.

HB1163. Provide for the use of screening instruments in determining kindergarten readiness. Passed House Education.

HB1198. Require the display of the state motto or the state seal in public schools. Senate State Affairs.

HB1207. Clarify the standards for the consideration of open enrollment applications. House Education.

HB1246. Establish the fundamental right of the parent. Senate.

HB1300. Provide for certain permissible dates for municipal and school district elections. Passed House.

*Would require school board elections to be held in June or November. Effective January 1, 2025.*

HB1310. Authorize parental review of instructional and curricular materials. Scheduled for hearing in House Education 2/14/22.

HB1327. To reduce certain gross receipts tax rates and a use tax rate, and to repeal a conditional reduction of certain gross receipts tax rates. Joint Appropriations.

HB1337. To protect elementary and secondary students from political indoctrination. Passed House Education.

There are many "Bill Tracker" sites available online. Two that I use are provided by School Administrators of South Dakota (sasd.org) and Associated School Boards of South Dakota (<https://asbsd.org/index.php/services/billtracker-2/>).

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Elementary Principal Report

2/14/2022

Brett Schwan

## Enrollment:

JK-16

KG-43

1<sup>st</sup>-25

2<sup>nd</sup>-46

3<sup>rd</sup>-46

4<sup>th</sup>-41

5<sup>th</sup>-41 (+1)

**FFA:** The FFA chapter will be doing Farm Safety Demonstrations with the Elementary students next Tuesday for FFA Week. The students are planning to drive tractors to school that day. One class will be inside for the safety demonstrations and the other class outside to see the tractor safety. They will also be providing breakfast for the teachers next Friday. They are planning to cook egg bake.

**Elementary PAC:** PAC will be providing supper for the teachers on Thursday during conferences. Chili and soup will be the main dish served.

**Book Fair:** Our spring Book fair will be up and running Thursday during conferences. We will not be open on Friday morning. Families can also go online if they are interested in purchasing books. A link has been posted on both Facebook and the news feed on our website.

**OST:** OST will be open Thursday during conferences from 3:30-6:00 OST will be closed this Friday for conferences and in-service.

**Conferences:** Elementary conferences will be held this Thursday after school and Friday morning. If parents did not receive information regarding parents we asked that you call the office as soon as possible.

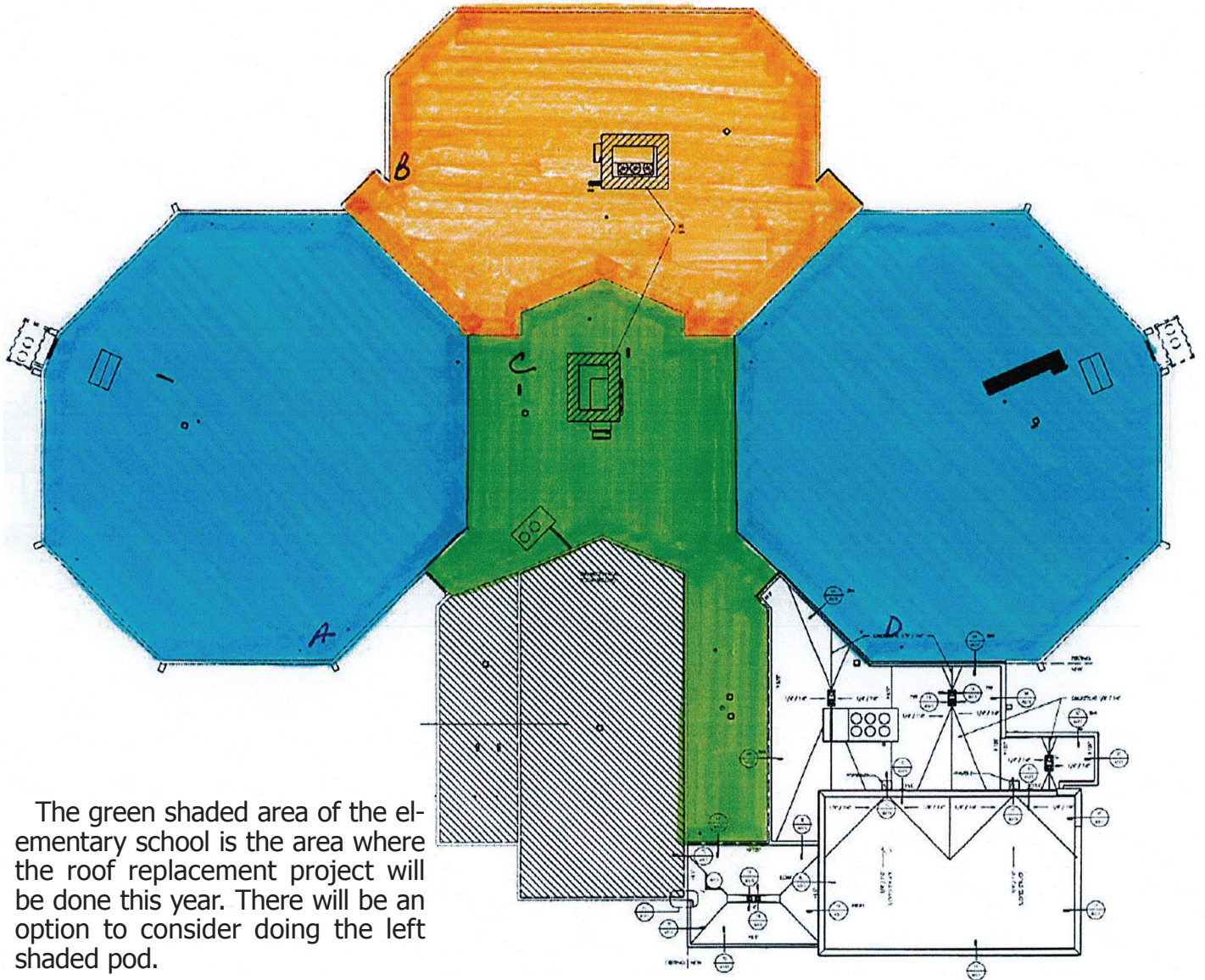
**MAPs Training:** After conferences on Friday we will be doing our DATA training online. This will hopefully help everyone better understand the scores and results of our students, and how we can use it to help assist with lesson planning.

**Evaluations:** My teacher evaluations have been coming along nicely. I have nearly all of my informal observations completed and only have 5 more formal evaluations to complete.

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Groton Area Elementary Diagram  
Roofing Sections  
February 2022



The green shaded area of the elementary school is the area where the roof replacement project will be done this year. There will be an option to consider doing the left shaded pod.



## Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

February 15, 2022 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

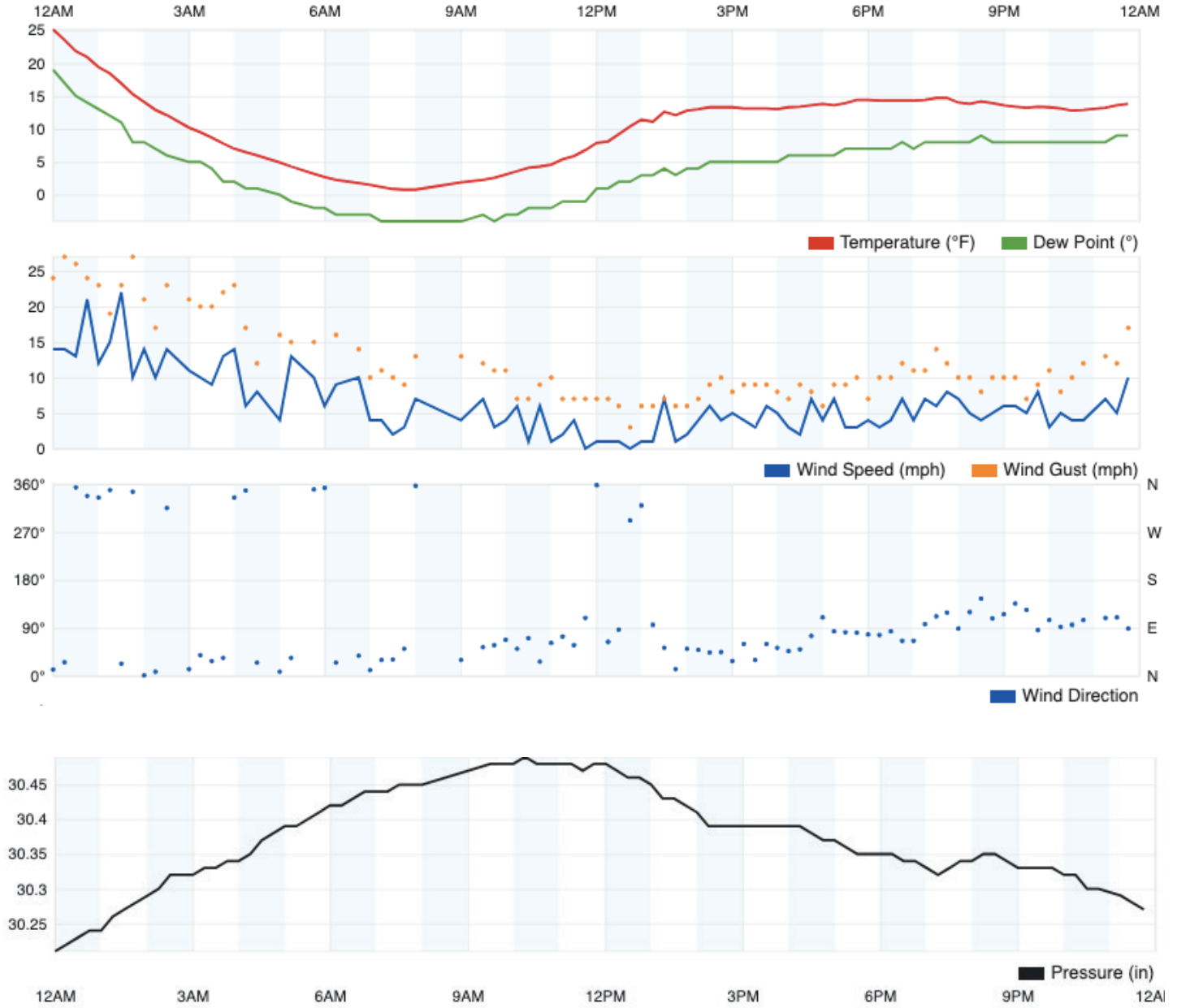
(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1  
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
2. Budget Pay Request- Bill Schuck
3. 608 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St Curb & Gutter
4. Request to Expand Residency Requirement for GPD – Chief Stacy Mayou
5. Gravel Quotes
6. Minutes
7. Bills
8. January Finance Report
9. Community Center Surplus
10. Discussion and possible award of Pool Resurfacing Contract
11. First reading of the Summer Salary Ordinance #759
12. Baseball Complex Facilities Use Agreement- High School Spring Baseball
13. Food Bank at Community Center, Non-Profit entity to Sponsor
14. Allied Health Insurance refund for lower-than-expected claim costs
15. Reminder- closing for Summer employment applications 5:00pm 3/11/22
16. Reminder- SDML District 6 Annual Meeting 3/23/22, RSVP 3/9/22
17. Reminder- Election Petitions must be submitted by 5:00pm 2/25/22
18. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
19. Adjournment

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs




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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 37 °F	Low: 13 °F	High: 21 °F	Low: -2 °F	High: 16 °F



WARM		COOLER	
Today	Wednesday	Thursday	
			
26 to 49°	15 to 30°	5 to 35°	
<b>BREEZY</b>	<b>COOLER</b>	<b>COLD MORNING</b>	
Warmest over s central SD		Morning Wind Chills -10 to -25° East of the Missouri River, lowest over northeastern SD & west central MN	



NWS Aberdeen, SD

Expect warm and breezy conditions today, under a cloudy sky. Highs will range from the upper 20s over far northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota, to near 50 degrees over south central South Dakota. Cooler air will filter in Wednesday and Thursday, with widespread below zero wind chills returning for Thursday morning.

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## Today in Weather History

February 15th, 1969: Heavy snow and winds of 15 to 25 mph caused blowing and drifting snow, which closed many roads. The heaviest snow fell in the southeast part of the state, where a foot of snow was reported.

February 15th, 1990: Heavy snow developed across southwest South Dakota early on the 15th and moved slowly across the state before ending early on the 16th. A narrow band of 10 to 12 inches accumulated in Central South Dakota from Pierre to near Huron. Lesser amounts of 3 to 6 inches fell north and south of the heavy snow band. Some heavier snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Aberdeen and Sioux Falls, 10 inches Pierre, and 12 inches at Huron.

1564: Galileo Galilei, who invented the telescope, the compass, and the thermometer, was born on February 15th, 1564.

2000: Amarillo, Texas, set unusual temperature records today. The high of 82 degrees smashed the old daily high of 76 degrees set in 1921. Likewise, the morning low of 41 degrees broke the old high-low record of 40 degrees, established in 1921.

2013: A meteor entered the Earth's atmosphere and exploded over the Russian town of Chelyabinsk.

1895 - A big Gulf snowstorm produced six inches at Brownsville TX and Mobile AL, 15 inches at Galveston TX, and 24 inches of snow at Rayne LA in 24 hours. Snow fell at the very mouth of the Mississippi River. Houston TX received 22 inches of snow, and nine inches blanketed New Orleans LA. (David Ludlum)

1936 - The temperature at Parshall ND plunged to 60 degrees below zero to establish a state record. On the 6th of July that same year the temperature at Steele ND hit 121 degrees, also a state record. (David Ludlum)

1982 - An intense cyclone off the Atlantic coast capsized a drilling rig killing 84 persons, and sank a Soviet freighter resulting in 33 more deaths. The cyclone produced 80 mph winds which whipped the water into waves fifty feet high. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm crossing the central U.S. produced severe thunderstorms which spawned tornadoes in Louisiana and Mississippi. Tornadoes injured four persons at Pierre Pass LA, three persons at Tangipahoa LA, two persons at Lexie MS and two persons at Nicholson MS. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph killed one person south of Sulphur LA. Jackson MS was drenched with 1.5 inches of rain in ten minutes. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Low pressure brought heavy snow to parts of Michigan, with eleven inches reported at Rogers City. A cold front crossing the Northern Rockies produced wind gusts to 74 mph at Livingston MT, and created blizzard conditions in Idaho. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thirty-seven cities in the southeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 80 degrees at Atlanta GA was a February record. Highs of 79 degrees at Chattanooga TN, 84 degrees at Columbia SC and 85 degrees at New Orleans LA equalled February records. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Snow, sleet and freezing rain along an arctic cold front prevailed from the north central U.S. to the Northern Atlantic Coast Region. High winds created near blizzard conditions in southern Wyoming, closing Interstate 80, while up to eleven inches of snow fell across central Minnesota.

1990 - Heavy snow also blanketed the Northern Atlantic Coast States, with ten inches reported at Buffalo NY and Mount Washington NH. Freezing rain over southern New England knocked out electricity to more than 10,000 homes in the western suburbs of Boston MA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004 - Up to 11 inches of snow fell in areas south of Nashville, TN, causing power outages and producing hazardous driving conditions. The Weather Doctor

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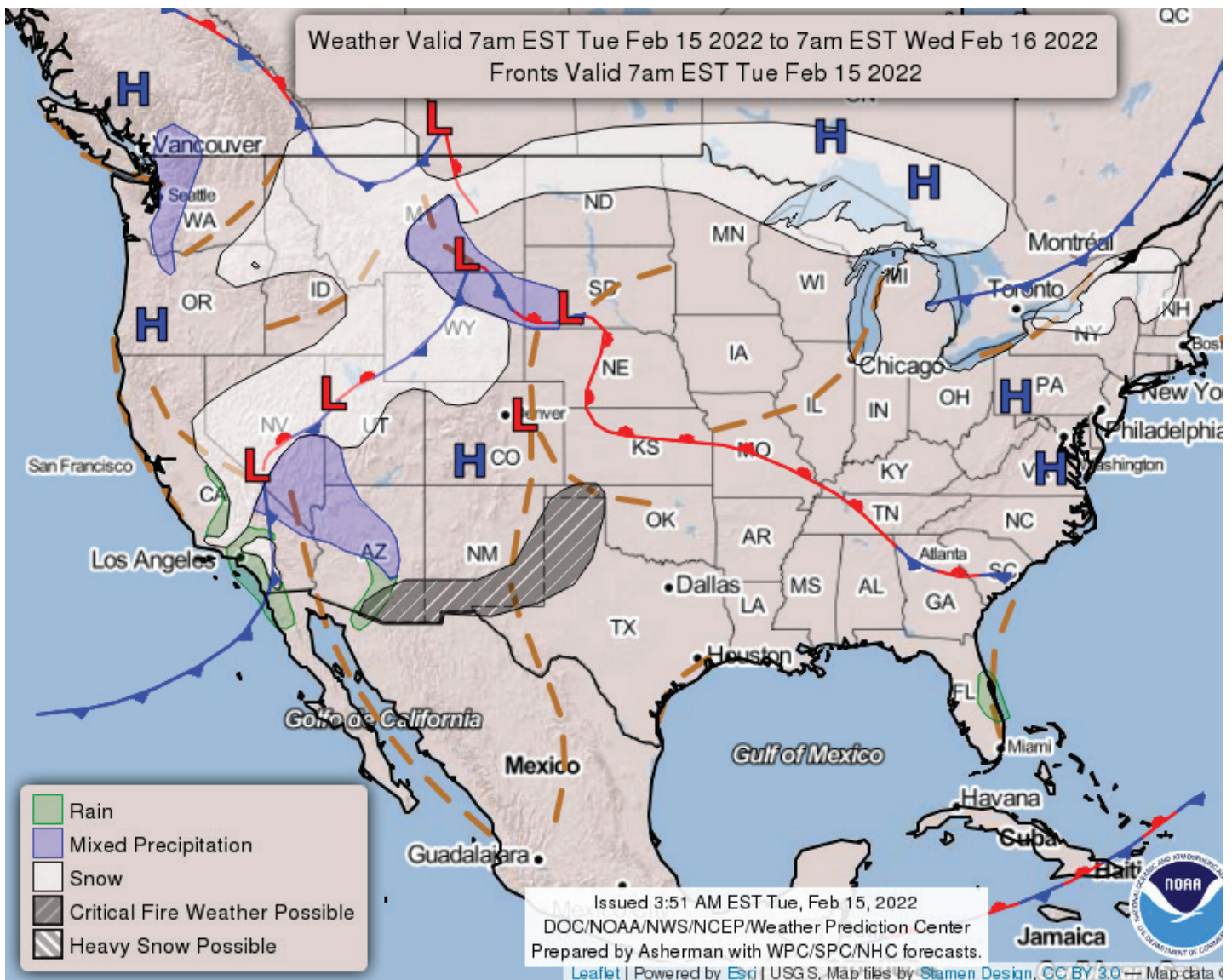
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 25 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Low Temp: 1 °F at 7:42 AM**  
**Wind: 27 mph at 12:11 AM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

## Today's Info

Record High: 65 in 1921  
Record Low: -35 in 1939  
Average High: 28°F  
Average Low: 6°F  
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.31  
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 0.86  
Precip Year to Date: 0.59  
Sunset Tonight: 6:01:03 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:30:20 AM



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## UNIVERSAL TRUTH

Jim, the Chairman of the Deacons, had been ill for quite some time. His pastor had been very faithful in visiting him several times each week. Every time he visited him, he would read a passage of Scripture from his Bible and pray with him.

On this particular day he forgot his Bible and asked, "May I borrow your Bible, Jim?"

"Certainly. Son," he shouted, "bring my favorite book. The Pastor wants to read something to me."

Immediately his son appeared and handed the Pastor his "favorite book" - the TV Guide.

A Psalmist spoke of his favorite book with these words: "I can answer anyone who taunts me, for I trust in Your Word...never take Your word of truth from my mouth for I have put my hope in Your laws...I will obey Your laws for ever and ever."

Notice the significance of what the Psalmist read: When he sought the "ultimate" truth he turned to the Word of God. No matter who challenged his beliefs, he would answer them with God's truth. In God's Word we find the best way to live and the most comfortable way to die. It answers all our questions, contains a solution for every one of our problems, and has a cure for all of our ills.

It also provides the reason for being optimistic. "I will walk, in freedom!" No bondage. No worries. No fears. No doubts. Nothing in this world can take away the gracious gifts God gives us if we accept His Word.

Prayer: How thankful we are, Father, for Your Word that contains a solution for every problem in our lives. We trust in Your Word for the right answer. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Then I can answer anyone who taunts me, for I trust in your word. Psalm 119:42

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## 2022 Community Events

- 01/30/2022 84th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)  
01/30/2022 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am – 1pm, Groton Community Center, 109 N 3rd St, Groton,  
04/07/2022 Groton CDE  
04/09/2022 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)  
04/09/2022 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/23/2022 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/24/2022 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/07/2022 Lions Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
St John's Lutheran Church VBS 9-11am  
05/30/2022 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
Transit Fundraiser at the Community Center 4-7pm (Thursday Mid-June)  
06/17/2022 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm Start  
06/18/2022 Groton Triathlon  
Ladies Invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration 10am Start  
07/04/2022 Firecracker Couples Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start (4th of July)  
07/10/2022 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar 11am-1pm at the Groton Legion  
Baseball Tourney  
07/21/2022 Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start  
How can we... "Love Groton"? United Methodist Church 9:30am  
Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20  
Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm  
08/05/2022 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm  
08/12/2022 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament  
United Methodist Church VBS 5-8pm  
Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot  
09/10/2022 Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm  
09/11/2022 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm  
Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/14/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am (2nd Friday in October)  
10/01/2022 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm  
10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)  
10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/12/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course  
Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm

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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: \$53 million

Powerball

16-25-27-49-55, Powerball: 17, Power Play: 3

(sixteen, twenty-five, twenty-seven, forty-nine, fifty-five; Powerball: seventeen; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$183 million

### Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Avon 48, Gayville-Volin 40

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 52, Pine Ridge 45

DeSmet 58, Canistota 26

Dell Rapids St. Mary 70, Lake Preston 38

Gregory 78, Colome 25

Hankinson, N.D. 50, Wilmot 35

Harding County 40, Bison 37

Iroquois/Doland 56, Estelline/Hendricks 46

Lower Brule 60, Little Wound 57

McCook Central/Montrose 49, Tri-Valley 42

Potter County 44, Leola/Frederick 37

Timber Lake 49, North Central Co-Op 33

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Elkton-Lake Benton 55, Baltic 39

Gayville-Volin 51, Avon 17

Hankinson, N.D. 67, Wilmot 61

Jones County 49, New Underwood 42

Kadoka Area 61, Wall 56

Lower Brule 72, Little Wound 53

Miller 55, McLaughlin 36

Mobridge-Pollock 69, Sisseton 60

Potter County 70, Leola/Frederick 36

Timber Lake 58, North Central Co-Op 27

Tiospa Zina Tribal 63, Aberdeen Roncalli 38

Vermillion 70, Madison 52

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

### **Ice Hole Festival in Sioux Falls, South Dakota creates excitement, draws flocks of Scuba Divers for the past 5 years!**

SIoux FALLS, S.D., Feb. 15, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- The Ice Hole Festival started as a bucket list check

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off. A new scuba diver walked into International Scuba in Carrollton, Texas. He asked if anyone had info about scuba diving under the ice. Richard Thomas, owner of the chain of Texas dive stores International Scuba, called his friends in South Dakota who have lots of ice.

The Friday Night Ice Hole Cutting and bon fire has become legendary. It includes pizza, drinks that warm your hearts and toes, and a bonfire on the ice.

Meeting up with Colonel Echols of Land Shark Scuba in Sioux Falls, they organized the first weekend of ice diving. Locals showed up to support the effort and to get a good laugh at the crazy Texans willing to risk freezing on a -20F afternoon. It turned out the joke was everyone had so much fun and bonded while completing an extreme sport that a pact was made to repeat the next year and the locals would also take the plunge.

Since then, the event has grown every year. It now draws certified scuba divers from Canada, Mexico, Florida, Arkansas, Texas, Illinois, and California. According to Thomas, "The unique nature of the environment seems to really attract the southern scuba divers that want to test their skill in a harsh environment."

Richard Thomas explains, "The mission of the Ice Hole Dive Fest is to create a gathering of scuba divers that want to expand their skill set. Also, to foster working relationships with Scuba Dive centers from all reaches of North America." To get started a shop sponsors an Ice Diving Instructor. They are now considered a stakeholder. They can benefit each year because the infrastructure is already in place. In future years, the Scuba Dive shops just need to reserve their space.

The added benefit is these Scuba Dive shops get a chance to collaborate on other events during the year. For example, Ocean Impact out of Arkansas hosts a spearfishing tournament. Each year, the other shops are eager to support that event - hosted by Justin Sours. It allows shops that typically have a small gathering of local scuba divers to show off the best they have to offer and create a larger following. This grows the diving industry and has created what Richard likes to call a Scuba Mafia. A collection of Scuba Dive Shop owners that are willing to share the limelight and have their divers be the winners.

Thanks to world renowned, award winning underwater photographer Tom St George from Tulum, Mexico, everything gets documented by his camera lens.

This year there will be Course Directors from PADI and SDI ready to create new Ice Instructors. The outstanding support from PADI has helped grow the event in large part due to Leroy Wickham. He has been a constant supporter of the event. The end goal is to have all scuba dive training agencies that want to take part be represented.

Are you ready to step up and earn a place amongst the Ice Hole divers? All you need is a spirit for adventure and some questionable judgement. The entrance fee for the event is \$425.00. That includes transportation from airport to host hotel (The Hilton Garden Inn South Sioux Falls, SD), transportation to the nearby Wall Lake where the event is held, and entrance to the Friday night ice hole cutting.

Thursday and Friday there will be professional level training for any scuba instructors or assistants wanting to become Ice Dive Instructors. All scuba certifications cost \$100. Saturday starts the ice diving certifications and fun dives for the previously trained Ice Divers. Sunday divers will complete their certification dives. For non-divers wanting to join in we can provide training in tendering the divers and shore support.

You can sign up online at <https://internationalscuba.com/trips/ice-hole-festival>. You can also call the shop at 972-416-8400. Divers that have gear rental needs please call the shop or email [rich@internationalscuba.com](mailto:rich@internationalscuba.com). We have tanks at the event for those flying in. We can also supply a small number of undergarments.

International Scuba in Dallas provides scuba diving certifications for all experience levels, small classes, flexible schedules, and year-round diving. <https://internationalscuba.com/>

View original content to download multimedia: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/ice-hole-festival-in-sioux-falls-south-dakota-creates-excitement-draws-flocks-of-scuba-divers-for-the-past-5-years-301482111.html>

SOURCE International Scuba

**South Dakota Senate passes Noem's vaccine mandate bill**

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By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Senate Republicans gave hearty support on Monday to Gov. Kristi Noem's proposal to allow employees to gain exemptions from their employer's COVID-19 vaccine mandates, passing it with the two-thirds majority required if it is to be enacted immediately.

The bill drew just four "nay" votes in the 35-member Senate, sending it to the House. The proposal would allow employees to receive an exemption to their employer's vaccine requirement by citing either a medical exemption certified by a medical professional, any religious grounds for refusal or a test showing antibodies against COVID-19 in the last six months.

Noem is pushing for the bill to get two-thirds support from both chambers so that it can be enacted immediately.

The Republican governor has carved out a reputation nationwide among conservatives for taking a hands-off approach to the virus. But even Noem has seemingly changed her position on the issue of vaccine mandate exemptions in the last year.

In August, she said in a Twitter video that employers should at least allow religious exemptions from mandates, but added that "I don't have the authority as governor to tell them what to do."

"It is not conservative to grow government and to tell businesses what to do and how to treat their employees," Noem said at the time.

However, she has become a powerful proponent of the mandate exemption proposal in this year's legislative session and argued that her current proposal squares with her hands-off governing philosophy. Her office has cast it as a middle ground between health experts urging vaccines and those opposed to mandates altogether.

As senators debated Noem's proposal, several raised questions about how a religious exemption can be defined. The bill requires employees to sign on to a 30-word statement that they object to getting COVID-19 shots on religious grounds, but stipulates that those can't be "social, political, or economic philosophies or mere preference."

President Joe Biden's administration pushed last year to boost the nation's COVID-19 vaccination rate and slow the spread of the coronavirus through mandates for employment. But the U.S. Supreme Court has stopped that effort.

However, Biden's requirement for millions of health care workers, issued through Medicare and Medicaid providers, has remained. Noem's proposal also carves out an exemption for those health care providers, as well as National Guard troops.

Republican Sen. Erin Tobin, a certified nurse practitioner, argued for the exemptions and called vaccine requirements "politically charged."

"With the latest variant, it's going to spread and really the immunization is your choice," she said.

Democrats, who hold just three seats in the Senate, offered opposition by arguing it undercuts efforts from both public health experts and businesses to get employees' vaccinated.

"Freedom from the virus, I think, is important," Democratic Sen. Reynold Nesiba said.

The proposal comes as South Dakota's rate of 59% of people fully vaccinated lags behind the nationwide rate of 64%. The state Department of Health reported 259 people hospitalized with COVID-19 Monday, marking a decline from last month when the number topped 400 — the highest rate in over a year.

Meanwhile, the House on Monday passed a bill to demand that medical practitioners may prescribe ivermectin, an unproven treatment for COVID-19. The drug, which is usually used for parasites, has been promoted by conservative commentators as a treatment despite a lack of conclusive evidence that it helps people with the virus.

Federal health officials saw a surge in prescriptions for the drug last year, accompanied by worrying increases in reported overdoses.

## US announces tribal lockup reforms after 16 deaths reviewed

Associated Press undefined

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FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs on Monday announced a series of reforms for the tribal correctional facilities it oversees after reviewing the deaths of 16 inmates.

The agency did not make public the report of its review, making it difficult to gauge what led to the actions that it says will protect the rights, dignity and safety of tribal members taken into custody.

"The report is undergoing a review right now because it contains some protected personal information, but it's our goal to share what we can as soon as possible," Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland told reporters.

The review and reforms come after an NPR story last year on deaths in tribal jails. The Bureau of Indian Affairs directly operates about one-fourth of the 100 correctional facilities under its umbrella. Tribes operate the others under contract with the BIA.

At least 16 inmates died in those facilities from 2016 to 2020. A three-month BIA review of the deaths was launched last fall. It was done by The Cruzan Group, LLC, consulting firm, which includes the former director of the BIA'S Office of Justice Services Darren Cruzan, at a cost of nearly \$83,000, according to online public records.

Newland said he's aware of the scrutiny surrounding the contract for Cruzan's group to investigate the workings of an agency he once led. As a political appointee, Newland said he wasn't involved in the process.

"But I do work to make sure our process is ethical and fair," Newland said. "I intend to make sure this contract was awarded in an ethical and fair manner and that it adheres to law and regulation."

Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, who sits on the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, said Monday he's reviewing the reforms to ensure the federal government upholds its responsibility to Indian Country under treaties and other acts.

"Sen. Tester is deeply concerned that a former official was hired to investigate conduct that occurred under his own watch and believes the BIA needs to act with complete transparency about the investigation and its findings," a spokeswoman for Tester, Sarah Feldman, said in a statement.

The review focused on the fairness and effectiveness of investigations of in-custody deaths, Newland said.

The more than two dozen reforms — some of which have been put in place already — include policy changes to enable investigators to respond more quickly to in-custody deaths and report about those investigations monthly to the Office of Justice Services. Other reforms focus on training, and working with other federal agencies to define the roles of investigators and on healthcare.

NPR reported on the Cruzan contract earlier this month and published its investigative story last June on deaths in tribal jails, though it put the number of deaths at 19 from 2016 and 2020.

The media outlet said poor staff training and neglect led to several inmates' deaths. NPR also found violations of federal policy that meant correctional staff didn't check on inmates in a timely manner, and about one-fifth of correctional officers hadn't completed required basic training.

Government watchdog groups, congressional testimony and other advocates have raised similar concerns for years.

While the Bureau of Indian Affairs didn't release the review report that led to the reforms, NPR obtained a copy.

The 127-page report found evidence of employee misconduct, falsified reports and shoddy investigations by the BIA and the FBI — two federal agencies that respond to crime on tribal land, NPR reported.

The review also found that some employees in tribal jails weren't properly trained and lacked supervision.

## Ban on donations for election costs advances in South Dakota

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A proposal to bar South Dakota election officials from accepting donations for election operating costs gained support from Republican lawmakers in the state Senate on Monday.

Every Republican on the Senate State Affairs committee voted in favor of the proposal, while the lone Democrat on the committee opposed it.

The proposal comes after Meta founder Marck Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, in 2020 donated

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\$350 million nationwide to helping local election offices collect and count ballots amid the pandemic. Those donations, which were made through the Chicago-based Center for Technology and Civic Life, have been targeted by conservatives, especially after President Donald Trump's baseless efforts to overturn the 2020 election.

An Associated Press review of every potential case of voter fraud in the six battleground states disputed by Trump has found that the actual number of fraud cases would have made no difference in the 2020 presidential election.

Republican Sen. Casey Crabtree, who sponsored a spate of bills aimed at changing election processes, acknowledged there was no evidence of anything improper happening with the funds from the Center for Technology and Civic Life, which gave over \$350,000 in grants to South Dakota election offices. But Crabtree said such funding "undermines the integrity of the process and erodes voter confidence."

The organization has said its grant program helped make the 2020 election the most secure in history while turnout soared even amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Federal officials from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency have also said that the election was the most secure in American history.

However, Crabtree argued that a private organization should not be funding a government function that is fundamental to democracy. His bill also attracted support from a number of South Dakota residents who contended, without any substantial evidence, that the state's election systems were not secure.

Joanna Smith, who said she held conservative views, did not trust election results in her home of Pennington County. It did not matter that Republicans — from Trump for president at the top to Travis Lassetter for county commission further down — dominated that county's ballots, Smith said learning about the donations "undermined my confidence in my county's election."

However, Democratic Sen. Troy Heinert, who is a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, said the limitation "could effect voter access and education efforts in Indian country," where voter turnout has lagged behind much of the state. The bill would not restrain organizations from holding voter registration efforts apart from official elections offices.

The bill will next head to a vote by the full Senate.

The same committee rejected two other proposals from Crabtree on Monday. Those would have put regulations on organizations that gather applications to vote absentee and required county auditors to report how many people have been removed from voter rolls.

Several Republicans on the committee opposed those two bills after pointing out that the bipartisan state Board of Elections, which creates rules for elections, did not endorse the proposed law changes.

## Body of 17-year-old homicide victim found on reservation

MANDERSON, S.D. (AP) — The body of a 17-year-old homicide victim has been found on the Pine Ridge Reservation, according to tribal officials.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe Department of Public Safety said the remains of Shayna Youngman were found Friday north of Manderson.

A person of interest has been detained in the death investigation, according to authorities.

Youngman was last seen Feb. 3 at a residence in Fraggles Rock.

Officials don't believe there's an ongoing threat to the community, KELO-TV reported.

The tribe offered a \$25,000 reward for information that would help find her.

## Ukraine-Russia crisis: What to know on hopes of averting war

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted Germany's chancellor on Tuesday after the Kremlin signaled that it was still possible for diplomacy to head off what Western officials have said could be an imminent invasion of Ukraine.

In another possible sign that the Kremlin would like to lower the temperature, Russia announced that

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some units participating in military exercises would begin returning to their bases.

But much remains unclear about Russia's intentions and how the crisis over Ukraine will play out.

Here's a look at what is happening where and why:

## WHAT IS THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT SAYING?

Russia's Defense Ministry announced that some units participating in exercises would begin returning to their bases. But it wasn't immediately clear where exactly these troops were deployed or how many were leaving.

The news came a day after Western officials said some forces and military hardware were moving toward the border, muddying the picture. Russia denies it has any plans to invade Ukraine, despite placing troops on Ukraine's borders to the north, south and east and launching massive military drills nearby.

Russia has massed more than 130,000 troops near Ukraine. While the U.S. agreed that there was still a possibility of a diplomatic path out, Washington, London and other allies have kept up their warnings that those forces could move on Ukraine at any moment.

At a meeting with Putin on Monday, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov indicated that Russia was ready to keep talking about the security grievances that have led to the crisis.

Asked Tuesday about troops returning to permanent bases after exercises, Lavrov stressed that Russia holds military drills "on its own territory and according to its own plans, they start, go on and end as planned."

Ukraine's leaders expressed skepticism.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT?

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz met Putin in Moscow, a day after he visited Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv in a show of solidarity.

On Monday, Scholz demanded "clear steps to de-escalate the current tensions" from Russia. And he underlined Western unity in preparing to impose tough sanctions if Russia does encroach further into Ukraine, though once again he didn't specify what exactly whose would be.

Scholz said that "we are in a position any day to take the necessary decisions."

"No one should doubt the determination and preparedness of the EU, NATO, Germany and the United States, for example, when it comes to what has to be done if there is military aggression against Ukraine," he added. "We will then act, and there will be very far-reaching measures that would have significant influence on Russia's possibilities of economic development."

Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau of Poland, currently the chair of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, met Lavrov in Moscow. Rau said the OSCE has offered multilateral talks aimed at easing tensions.

Ukraine's foreign minister hosted his Italian counterpart.

## WHAT DO RUSSIAN LAWMAKERS WANT?

Russian lawmakers called on Putin to recognize rebel-held areas in eastern Ukraine, the two self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, as independent states. The State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, voted Tuesday to submit an appeal to Putin to that effect, put forward earlier by Russia's Communist party.

Kyiv isn't fulfilling the Minsk agreements, mediated by Germany and France in an effort to bring peace to eastern Ukraine, and "our citizens and compatriots that live in Donbas need help and support," State Duma speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said on the Telegram messaging app.

Volodin said the document will be submitted to Putin "immediately."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said earlier Tuesday that the issue of recognizing the self-proclaimed republics is "very, very relevant to the public." But it was unclear what consequences if any the vote would have.

## WHAT ARE NATO ALLIES SAYING?

British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said a Russian invasion of Ukraine "could be imminent," but there's still time for Putin "to step away from the brink."

Truss said before Russia made its announcement about pulling back some military units that "we believe

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that Vladimir Putin has not yet made a decision about whether to invade Ukraine. We think it's highly likely."

"There are huge numbers of troops lined up on the border. We know that they're in a position to attack imminently, but he can still change his mind and that is why diplomacy is so vital," she told Sky News.

Truss said an invasion might involve "an attack on Kyiv" as well as "an attack from the east."

"What we do expect over the next few days is there could be an attempt of a false flag operation to create a pretext to claim the Ukrainians are attacking them, so that the Russians have a justification for invading Ukraine," she added.

In Oslo, Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt said that "a Russian attack on Ukraine may be imminent."

Huitfeldt was speaking as Russia made its announcement that some units would be sent back to their bases.

Defense Minister Odd-Roger Enoksen said Norway is strengthening its contribution in Lithuania with 50-60 soldiers to strengthen the allied presence in the Baltic states. The contingent will be sent there for a three-month period, with a possibility of extension.

## WHAT'S THE FEELING IN MOSCOW?

While the U.S. has warned that Russia could invade Ukraine any day, the drumbeat of war is all but unheard in Moscow, where pundits and ordinary people alike don't expect Putin to attack Russia's ex-Soviet neighbor.

The Kremlin has cast the U.S. warnings of an imminent attack as "hysteria" and "absurdity," and many Russians believe that Washington is deliberately stoking panic and fomenting tensions to trigger a conflict for domestic reasons.

Putin's angry rhetoric about NATO's plans to expand to Russia's "doorstep" and its refusal to hear Moscow's concerns has struck a chord with the public, tapping into a sense of betrayal by the West after the end of the Cold War and widespread suspicion about Western designs.

## Activist jailed by Egypt sees wider struggle for rights

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Ramy Shaath, who was released from an Egyptian jail last month, is an outspoken opponent of Arab dictatorships and Israeli rule over the Palestinians, and is part of a generation of activists who see them as two sides of the same coin.

He was never told why exactly Egyptian authorities confined him to a packed and filthy cell for over two and a half years. But he believes his brand of rights-based activism is clearly seen as a threat by both Israel and its growing roster of autocratic Arab allies.

It's also a major departure from the approach of the Palestinian leadership, which includes his father, Nabil Shaath, an 83-year-old veteran peace negotiator.

Shaath, 50, who is Egyptian and Palestinian by birth, took part in the 2011 pro-democracy uprising in Egypt, something he mentions in the same breath as his role in founding the Egyptian branch of the Palestinian-led boycott movement against Israel.

"It is all civil, nonviolent action against injustice, against inhumane treatment and against occupation as well as dictatorship," he told The Associated Press in a video interview from France. "For me that's the same cause and I will continue doing that."

He's part of a new generation of activists, forged by the harsh repression of the 2011 uprisings and the failure of the Mideast peace process, and more focused on human rights than on the ideological and territorial disputes of their parents' generation.

In Egypt, it means campaigning for basic freedoms and the release of tens of thousands of political prisoners. For Palestinians, it's embracing a rights-based approach in opposition to both Israel and the increasingly autocratic Palestinian Authority.

The most visible activists hail from the educated elite, but they give voice to a pervasive sense of injustice that is felt and communicated in different ways by ordinary people across the Arab world. It animated

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protests against both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, a self-rule government in autonomous West Bank enclaves, over the past year.

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, which enjoys near-unanimous support among Palestinian civil society groups, holds that any solution has to be based on granting Palestinians equal rights — in one state or two — rather than bargaining over territory.

The Palestinian leadership, which is still dominated by the elder Shaath's generation, seeks a state alongside Israel in east Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, territories Israel captured in the 1967 war.

Around 60% of Palestinians are younger than 30, with little memory of the peace process launched by the 1993 Oslo accords. The negotiations repeatedly stumbled before grounding to a halt over a decade ago.

Ramy Shaath participated in the early rounds of talks but gave up on the process and returned to Egypt in 1998, convinced that Israel and the U.S. were not serious and that the Palestinian leadership had no backup plan.

He said he and his father "definitely argued," but not on principle. "I have all the respect and admiration for my father and his work all through his life. But for me, I am not seeing that this is going anywhere," Shaath said.

Nabil Shaath, who recently contracted COVID-19, could not be reached for comment.

The younger Shaath supported BDS from the time of its establishment in 2005, believing that a "South African model" of international boycotts would bring more effective pressure on Israel. He founded the Egyptian chapter in 2014.

Israel says the BDS movement has little to do with human rights. Instead, it sees it as an assault on its very existence, in part because it calls for the return of millions of Palestinian refugees. Israel says that would mean the end of the world's only Jewish state, once again condemning Jews to being an embattled minority in a hostile region.

Israel passed a law in 2017 barring entry to foreigners who advocate boycotts. It also has rallied anti-BDS opposition in the U.S. Congress and state legislatures, some of which has been challenged by courts.

Yossi Beilin, 73, a former senior Israeli official and peace negotiator, said he understands the deep frustrations on both sides. But he insists that creating a Palestinian state alongside Israel — perhaps as part of a confederation — is the only realistic way to resolve the conflict.

"Israel is not an apartheid state. It is an occupier for too long, and that is bad enough," he said. He called utopian visions of a single state of Israelis and Palestinians unrealistic.

Polls show dwindling support for a two-state solution among Israelis and Palestinians, but support for one state is even lower, and the idea is roundly rejected by leaders on both sides.

The Trump administration also soured on the Oslo paradigm, instead adopting an approach that radically favored Israel.

Ramy Shaath, like nearly all Palestinians, was deeply opposed to Trump's Mideast plan. He was arrested in the summer of 2019, just weeks after the U.S. held a conference in the Gulf country of Bahrain aimed at rallying Arab support. Egypt, which developed strong security ties with Israel and actively courted Trump's support, might have seen his activism as a threat.

"My very vocal opposition to Donald Trump's 'deal of the century' in Palestine, I think, was the detrimental factor in the Egyptian authorities' decision to arrest me," he said.

Egypt accused him of being a member of an outlawed group, without saying which one, and he was never formally charged. Egyptian officials have declined to comment on his case.

Tahani Mustafa, an analyst with the Crisis Group, an international think tank, says the BDS movement's calls for freedom and equality transcend the Palestinian context and threaten Arab rulers.

"These are very threatening concepts for these sorts of regimes, where subjects like human rights are severely repressed," she said.

The Biden administration has meanwhile swung back toward a more traditional approach, urging both sides to avoid steps that would hinder an eventual two-state solution.

Shaath spent two-and-a-half years in a bug-infested cell with exposed wiring in which 18 to 32 prisoners shared a space the size of a living room. Their one, shared bathroom consisted of a hole in the ground



with a cold-water shower above it, he said.

Shaath says the suffering he and other prisoners endured only reinforced his commitment to political activism.

He said one of his worst experiences came near the end, when he was placed alone in a windowless room, with lights and cameras on 24 hours. He could hear a woman with three small children a few cells over, calling out for help.

"For me that was horrific, and I wanted to signal her somehow, that I know you're there," he said.

## Russia says some forces pulling back amid Ukraine crisis

By DASHA LITVINOVA and YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia said Tuesday that some units participating in military exercises would begin returning to their bases, adding to glimmers of hope that the Kremlin may not be planning to invade Ukraine imminently. But it gave no details on where the troops were pulling back from, or how many.

That muddied efforts to determine the significance of the announcement, which buoyed world financial markets and the long-suffering ruble after weeks of escalation in Europe's worst East-West standoff in decades. It came a day after Russia's foreign minister indicated the country was ready to keep talking about the security grievances that led to the Ukraine crisis — a gesture that changed the tenor after weeks of tensions.

Yet hours before the Russian Defense Ministry statement about the troops, a U.S. defense official said Russian units were moving closer to the Ukrainian border — not away from it. And Western officials continued to warn Tuesday that the Russian military could attack at any time, with some floating Wednesday as a possible invasion day.

The fears of an invasion grew from the fact that Russia has massed more than 130,000 troops near Ukraine. Russia denies it has any such plans, despite placing troops on Ukraine's borders to the north, south and east and launching massive military drills nearby. U.S. and other NATO allies, meanwhile, have moved troops and military supplies toward Ukraine's western flank, and promised more financial aid to the ex-Soviet nation.

In announcing the pullback, the Russian Defense Ministry did not indicate where the troops had been deployed or how many were leaving.

Asked about the announcement, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stressed that Russia holds military drills "on its own territory and according to its own plans, they start, go on and end as planned." The minister said such drills always adhered to a schedule — regardless of "who thinks what and who gets hysterical about it, who is deploying real informational terrorism."

Ukraine's leaders expressed skepticism about the pullback.

"Russia constantly makes various statements," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said. "That's why we have the rule: We won't believe when we hear, we'll believe when we see. When we see troops pulling out, we'll believe in de-escalation."

European leaders have been scrambling to try to head off a new war on their continent, after several tense weeks that have left Europeans feeling caught between Russia and the U.S., and further pushed up household energy prices because of Europe's dependence on Russian gas.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz met Tuesday with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, a day after sitting down with Ukraine's leader in Kyiv. In his opening remarks in the Kremlin, Scholz addressed the Ukraine tensions but also noted Germany's economic ties with Russia — which complicate Western efforts to agree on how to punish Russia in case of an invasion.

Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau of Poland, one of Russia's most strident European critics, met in Moscow on Tuesday with Lavrov, and they discussed ways to use the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for more talks aimed at easing tensions around Ukraine.

The day before, Lavrov suggested more efforts at diplomacy in a made-for-TV meeting with Putin that

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seemed designed to send a message to the world about the Russian leader's position. The foreign minister argued that Moscow should hold more talks, despite the West's refusal to consider Russia's main demands.

Moscow wants guarantees that NATO will not allow Ukraine and other former Soviet countries to join as members. It also wants the alliance to halt weapons deployments to Ukraine and roll back its forces from Eastern Europe.

Lavrov said possibilities for talks "are far from being exhausted."

The U.S. reacted coolly.

"The path for diplomacy remains available if Russia chooses to engage constructively," White House principal deputy press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said. "However, we are clear-eyed about the prospects of that, given the steps Russia is taking on the ground in plain sight."

Ukraine's foreign minister, meanwhile, claimed credit for keeping the diplomatic path open—at least for now.

"We managed with our partners to restrain the Russian Federation from any further escalation. Today is already the middle of February and you can see that diplomacy continues to work," Kuleba said.

As if to show defiance, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared Wednesday would be a "day of national unity," calling on the country to display the blue-and-yellow flag and sing the national anthem.

Even amid the hopeful signs, the U.S. and European countries kept up their warnings.

British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss reiterated Tuesday that the danger of an invasion still exists, telling Sky News that it "could be imminent." Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt issued a similar warning.

U.S. officials have said the Russian military continued apparent attack preparations along Ukraine's borders. A U.S. defense official said small numbers of Russian ground units have been moving out of larger assembly areas for several days, taking up positions closer to the Ukrainian border at what would be departure points if Putin launched an invasion.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss information not publicly released.

Maxar Technologies, a commercial satellite imagery company that has been monitoring the Russian buildup, reported increased Russian military activity in Belarus, Crimea and western Russia, including the arrival of helicopters, ground-attack aircraft and fighter-bomber jets at forward locations. The photos taken over a 48-hour period also show ground forces leaving their garrisons and combat units moving into convoy formation.

Meanwhile, Russian lawmakers called on Putin on Tuesday to recognize rebel-held areas in eastern Ukraine as independent states. The State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, voted to submit an appeal to Putin to that effect.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the issue of recognizing the self-proclaimed republics is "very, very relevant to the public." But it was unclear how he would respond or how this could influence Russia's actions in Ukraine.

While the U.S. warns that Russia could invade Ukraine any day, and Kyiv is alerting residents to locate their nearest bomb shelters, the drumbeat of war is all but unheard in Russia itself.

The Kremlin has cast the U.S. warnings of an imminent attack as "hysteria" and "absurdity," and many Russians believe that Washington is deliberately stoking panic and fomenting tensions to trigger a conflict for domestic reasons.

Few expect a war.

In Russia's Belgorod region about 30 kilometers (18 miles) from Ukraine's border, residents carry on with life as usual, even as more military personnel have been passing through village streets.

"Planes, helicopters just started flying, I guess, to patrol the border," said Vladimir Konovalenko.

Villager Lyudmila Nechvolod says she's not worried.

"We are friends with Ukraine. And we are not sure that Ukraine wants war with us. ... We are really on the border, we really have relatives here and there, everyone has somebody there (on the Ukrainian side)," she said. "No one wants war."

## Six months of Taliban: Afghans safer, poorer, less hopeful

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Afghanistan has undergone a dramatic transformation in half a year of Taliban rule.

The country feels safer, less violent than it has in decades, but the once aid-fueled economy is barreling toward collapse. Tens of thousands of Afghans have fled or have been evacuated, including large numbers of educated elites. They either fear for their economic future or lack of freedom under a group that ascribes to a strict interpretation of Islam. During its previous rule in the late 1990s, the Taliban barred girls from school and women from work.

Tuesday marks six months since the Afghan capital of Kabul was ceded to the Taliban with the sudden and secret departure of the country's U.S.-backed president. The takeover of Kabul had been preceded by a months-long Taliban military campaign to take control of provincial areas, many of which fell with hardly a fight.

Today, the sight of armed Taliban fighters roaming the street still jars and frightens residents. But women have returned to the streets, and many young men have put on Western clothes again after initially shedding them for the traditional shalwar kameez, the long shirt and baggy pants favored by the Taliban.

Unlike in the 1990s, the Taliban are allowing some women to work. Women are back in their jobs in the health and education ministries, as well as at Kabul International Airport, often next to men. But women are still waiting to return to work in other ministries. Thousands of jobs have been lost in the economic downward spiral, and women have been hit hardest.

The Taliban have cracked down on women's protests and harassed journalists, including briefly detaining two foreign journalists working with the U.N. refugee agency last week.

On Monday, the detention of some young men selling heart-shaped flowers in recognition of Valentine's Day was a stark reminder that the new all-male religion-driven administration has no tolerance for Western ideas of romance.

Girls in grades one to six have been going to school, but those in the higher grades are still locked out in most parts of the country. The Taliban promised all girls will be in school after the Afghan new year at the end of March. Universities are gradually reopening and private universities and schools never closed.

Poverty is deepening. Even those who have money have a hard time accessing it. At banks, lines are long as residents wait for hours, sometimes even days, to withdraw a limit of \$200 a week.

More than \$9 billion in Afghanistan's foreign assets were frozen after the Taliban takeover. Last week, President Joe Biden signed an executive order that promised \$3.5 billion — out of \$7 billion of Afghanistan's assets frozen in the United States — would be given to families of America's 9/11 victims. The other \$3.5 billion would be freed for Afghan aid.

Afghans across the political spectrum have decried the order, accusing the U.S. of taking money that belongs to Afghans.

On Tuesday, about 3,000 Afghans in the capital protested Biden's order carrying placards calling "Biden the world thief of 2022."

"9/11 had nothing to do with Afghans," one placard read. "Shame Shame Mr. Biden, you kill us, you bomb us and now you steal our money."

Tuesday's was the largest demonstration yet against the order and was organized by an umbrella group of private money dealers.

The Taliban have campaigned for international recognition of their all-male, all-Taliban government, but they are being pressed to create an inclusive administration and guarantee the rights of women and religious minorities.

Graeme Smith, a senior consultant for the International Crisis Group's Asia Program, warned against using sanctions, saying that would backfire.

"Keeping economic pressure on the Taliban will not get rid of their regime, but a collapsing economy could lead to more people fleeing the country, sparking another migration crisis" he said. He also noted

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that this round of Taliban rule “probably ranks as the most peaceful six-month period that Afghanistan has enjoyed in four decades.”

The Taliban have re-opened the country’s passport office, which is clogged with thousands of people a day. The Taliban have promised Afghans they can travel, but only with proper documents.

Alam Gul Haqqani, who manages passport offices countrywide, told The Associated Press on Tuesday the administration is negotiating for new equipment and has reinstated 70 percent of former employees. The government had to recruit new technical staff because most of the previous professional staff had left the country, he said.

Those trying to leave seem largely driven by fear of a failing economy or the desire for greater freedom in a more liberal society.

Haqqani said the passport department countrywide is lucrative, bringing in about 25 million Afghanis daily, or \$271,500 a day. He said corruption had previously eaten much of the profits. He has paid salaries for three months and has arrested or dismissed dozens of people on allegations of corruption.

International aid workers who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media said the Taliban have reduced corruption in the past six months. That has meant increased revenue in some sectors, even though business is down. For example, they say, customs revenue has been increasing even though the new Taliban government is doing less business.

Several officials linked to the former U.S.-backed government have returned. One of the returnees, former ambassador Omar Zakhilwal, said he encountered no rancor from the Taliban.

He said he hoped that the Taliban will “find the courage” to open their ranks, guarantee minorities a say in the government and go further to guarantee rights of all Afghans.

## **Eileen Gu: Navigating two cultures, judged by both of them**

By JANIE HAR and SARAH DiLORENZO Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — She is an exceptional athlete who has already won medals in the Beijing Olympics. But the fascination — some might say obsession — with Eileen Gu’s origin story has threatened to overshadow anything she does on the slopes.

As the freestyle skier chases gold in the mountains northwest of Beijing, some competing narratives about her have taken hold, from California to China.

Some have the San Francisco native skiing for the Chinese team to secure more lucrative endorsements. In others, she has betrayed the United States, where she was born and grew up, to ski for China, her mother’s native country.

And a third: She was way too young to have made the decision to “abandon” the United States for China, where a single misstep could lead a repressive government to restrict her movement or her speech.

The frenzy to “explain” Gu’s choice reflects biases and misunderstandings in the United States about Asian American identity. The stories about Eileen Gu are as much about the people telling them as they are about the athlete herself.

For her part, the 18-year-old athlete has said repeatedly that she was raised by two strong women — her mother and maternal grandmother — and she wanted to inspire girls in China, where there are few female role models in sports.

She has genuinely strong connections to China, just like many others in the Chinese diaspora who are taking advantage of opportunities and resources both in the Western countries where they grew up and in an increasingly wealthy mainland China.

“What she represents is a new trend,” says Yinan He, an associate professor of international relations at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, “simply because China has become so wealthy and powerful and attractive and generating opportunities not available to immigrants here.”

Gu is particularly well placed to take advantage of these opportunities.

As engineers retired from Chinese government ministries, her grandparents were part of the professional elite. Her mother, Yan Gu, 58, left China in the 1980s to pursue graduate studies in the U.S. and

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now works as a private investor with a focus on China, according to LinkedIn. Her father has never been publicly identified.

Gu had an upper middle-class upbringing and private school education in the United States, and she says she's equally comfortable in both countries.

In 2019, according to the IOC, she became a Chinese national, but her full citizenship picture remains unclear. Gu has sidestepped questions about whether she gave up her U.S. passport, and China does not recognize dual citizenship.

Gu has consistently refused to choose one country or the other. As she has written on Instagram, dichotomy is her favorite word. And she told the Olympic Channel in 2020: "When I'm in China, I'm Chinese. When I'm in the U.S., I'm American."

Many immigrants and their children feel this duality. Few are allowed to live it.

Nonwhite immigrants and their descendants, in particular, face the double bind of being required to completely assimilate in order to be considered American, but also butting up against racist notions that prevent them from being accepted as truly American.

"Part of the Eileen Gu perplexity is that the West is seen as superior and the East is seen as inferior. So why would she want to represent China?" says Russell Jeung, an Asian American Studies professor at San Francisco State University, who has tracked the rise of hate incidents against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. during the pandemic.

"It's sort of ironic because in half our cases, people use anti-Chinese rhetoric and are telling us to go back home. They're telling us, 'You don't belong here. We don't accept you.' And then this is sort of the opposite: 'Why aren't you representing your home?'" he says. "And so we lose either way."

It turns out that, in a world where elite athletes increasingly cross borders to compete, Gu is not that unusual.

No one thinks twice about a Senegalese winger in the English Premier League or a Japanese pitcher in Major League Baseball. At the Olympics, nation-shopping is fairly common: China's men's hockey team in Beijing is primarily made up of North Americans, many of whom had no connection to the country until they were recruited to ensure the home team didn't get blown out.

Asian American representation at the Olympics has also come a long way.

In 1998, cable news network MSNBC used the headline "American beats out Kwan" to describe Tara Lipinski's win over Michelle Kwan. Both figure skaters were born in the United States.

Today, Gu is also just one of many Asian Americans whose family immigration tales are on display at the Beijing Olympics.

Nathan Chen, who won a gold for the U.S. in figure skating, was born in Utah to immigrants from China. Snowboarder Chloe Kim, who won her second gold for the U.S. in the women's halfpipe, was born in California to Korean immigrants. U.S. figure skater Alysa Liu is the daughter of a man who left China in his 20s as a political refugee because he had protested the Communist government.

So what makes Gu the subject of such intense fascination? She is perhaps a perfect storm of elements.

Unlike many athletes who change countries to compete, Gu could have easily skied for the U.S. team — and that perhaps heightens the feeling of betrayal. Her modeling work with global brands from Louis Vuitton to Victoria's Secret makes her more visible than other athletes.

"She gets a lot of attention because of that, because there is always that focus on femininity and appearance for female athletes," says Robert Hayashi, a professor at Amherst College who specializes in Asian American history and sports studies.

That fascination is evident from the gross tonnage of social media commentary she attracts in both countries.

A recent Instagram post showing her on the medal stand following her gold medal-winning performance in the Big Air competition garnered 402,000 likes and 51,000 comments. And China's Twitter-like Sina Weibo said its servers were briefly overloaded with adoration for the champion following her win.

But there can be a dark side. Critics in China have chided Gu for failing to use her platform to advo-

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cate for internet freedom in a country that tightly restricts access for its citizens. On Tuesday, she largely dodged a reporter's question about whether she compromised by choosing China, saying she uses her voice as much as she can.

And of course pundits in the U.S. have attacked her for competing for China, often in terms that further the persistent, racist othering of Asian Americans.

"Right now Eileen is a hot commodity in China, and just treated as 'Chinese' by the media and many of her fans," says Rui Ma, founder of the San Francisco-based investment consulting firm Tech Buzz, who immigrated from China to the U.S. as a child in 1989.

"We'll see if her stance ... will be fully accepted there over the long run," she says. "It certainly doesn't seem to be accepted by many Americans at the moment."

Gu also represents how dramatically migration from China to America has changed.

"The profile of the Chinese population here is qualitatively different from many other immigrant groups," says Jeanne Batalova, senior policy analyst at the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, D.C. "They're highly educated, they work in in-demand jobs and many come with substantial amounts of finances that they invest here."

While many continue to move to the U.S. for low-wage jobs, they're increasingly being outpaced by migrants with flexibility and the money to spend summers in China and maintain regular contact with family at home.

They are more likely to be bicultural, openly embracing their heritage unlike earlier generations who were told — and believed — that integration was their ticket to acceptance.

"There are benefits to being Chinese and engaging with China, the country and the culture," Ma says.

Scott Kennedy, senior adviser and expert on China at the Center for Strategic & International Studies in Washington, DC, says Gu's story shows that the complexities of the globalized world don't always line up neatly with geopolitical lenses.

"Her story speaks to the benefits, the value, the opportunities that come from an interconnected world," he says. "Her gold medal may be placed in China's column. But her success is a global success."

## Russia's Olympic doping case helps China skirt dicey topics

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Little more than a week ago, the questions from non-Chinese reporters at daily Olympics briefings were about sensitive things involving China — tennis player Peng Shuai, the government's treatment of Uyghur Muslims in the northwest, the efficiency of the anti-COVID "closed-loop system."

These days, they're all about a drug scandal — the one with Russia at the center — and not much else.

The doping saga unfolding around Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva has been a Games-changer at the Beijing Olympics, pushing aside dicey topics that Chinese officials like to avoid answering.

"The big winner in the Valieva scandal is the Chinese government," Olympic historian David Wallechinsky said in an email. He has been a consistent critic of China's government and stayed away from these Games, his first Olympic absence since 1988.

"What a relief for them to not have to fend off comments about human rights," Wallechinsky quipped.

The focus is now on 15-year-old Valieva, which will continue through her long program on Thursday when she is expected to win gold — her second of the Games — but be banned from any medal ceremony after failing a pre-Games doping test.

The IOC has said it "would not be appropriate to hold the medal ceremony" with her case sure to wind up again in the Court of Arbitration for Sport, which ruled on Monday that she could compete. She seems sure to dominate the briefings until the Games end on Sunday, leaving room for little else.

Peng, once the world's No. 1-ranked tennis doubles player, made sexual assault allegations against a former high-ranking member of China's ruling Communist Party. The charges three months ago were scrubbed immediately from China's censored internet, placing the subject out of bounds for Chinese reporters.

Yang Shu'an, the high-profile organizing committee vice president, nearly stumbled in a briefing when —

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speaking in English — he was asked about Peng and almost mentioned her by name. Of course, saying it would acknowledge that Chinese officials are aware of her case.

China's internment of at least 1 million Uyghurs has been termed genocide by the United States and others, which China calls the "lie of the century." This topic is also off limits for Chinese reporters and, by its own choice, the International Olympic Committee.

"The position of the IOC must be, given the political neutrality, that we are not commenting on political issues," IOC President Thomas Bach said at the briefing Feb. 3, the day before the Games opened. Bach also seldom mentions the Uyghurs by name.

Still, uncomfortable queries about Peng and the Uyghurs kept coming as the Games opened. COVID-19 questions were popular, too, as was criticism about China's "case-hardened" bubble that separates reporters and athletes from 20 million Beijing residents.

There was a question about Jack Ma, China's e-commerce billionaire who has largely disappeared from public view. Ma is the founder of the Alibaba Group, which is a major IOC sponsor.

There were persistent questions about athletes' safety if their comments upset officials of China's authoritarian government. But those began to fade as few spoke up.

Then came Feb. 9: Day 5 of the Olympics.

"A situation arose today at short notice which requires legal consultation," IOC spokesman Adams said. "You'll appreciate because there are legal implications involved that I can't talk very much about it at this stage."

Non-Chinese reporters quizzed Adams about the details for days. Questions from Chinese state-controlled media continued to center on soliciting laudatory comments about the venues, offering praise of the efficient organization — and laments about the scarce supply of Bing Dwen Dwen panda mascots.

Much news is local, so Chinese reporters are not alone in this. But not one offered a question about Valieva as non-Chinese continued to press Adams about the unfolding mystery.

"I can't give you any more details," Adams said. He repeated this for several days in varied forms. "I'm afraid, as you know, legal issues can sometimes drag on."

After days of dominating the briefings, news came Monday that Valieva had been cleared to compete despite failing a pre-Games drug test. She skates this week and is the favorite to win the gold on Thursday, where she may lead a 1-2-3 sweep by Russian women.

And everybody's watching. They'll be doing so not just for her skating prowess, but for the next chapter in the saga of a girl buffeted by powerful forces and a nation known for doing what it takes to get the outcome it wants.

A nation that, for the moment, isn't China.

"This is likely a welcome distraction from other potential subversions or critiques of the Games and of China at large," Maria Repnikova, a China expert at Georgia State University, said in a email to Associated Press.

"Since the Olympics tend to present apt opportunities for the international community to investigate and widely report on the host country, having a scandal that takes the attention away from China in this case plays in favor of Chinese authorities."

## Unvaccinated Djokovic could skip French Open, Wimbledon

LONDON (AP) — If forced to choose, Novak Djokovic said he would skip the French Open and Wimbledon, foregoing the chance to overtake Rafael Nadal's record haul of 21 Grand Slams titles, rather than get vaccinated against COVID-19.

And the No. 1-ranked tennis player is also still smarting about being deported last month from Australia in a drama about his vaccination status that polarized opinion worldwide.

Speaking in an interview broadcast Tuesday by the BBC, the 20-time Grand Slam champion said he is still not vaccinated, and prepared to sacrifice titles to stay that way.

If need be, not defending his titles at Roland Garros and Wimbledon and missing other tournaments is

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"the price that I am willing to pay," said the 34-year-old Serb, comments likely to further boost his hero-status among some opponents of vaccination.

Djokovic said he is not opposed to vaccinations and sought to distance himself from anti-vaccination campaigners, saying: "I have never said that I am part of that movement."

But he said "everyone has the right to choose, to act, or say what ever they feel is appropriate for them" and that he believes in "the freedom to choose what you put into your body. And, for me, that is essential."

"I am trying to be in tune with my body as much as I possibly can," he said, adding that he has always been careful about everything he ingests. "Based on all the information that I got, I decided not to take the vaccine, as of today.

"I understand the consequences of my decision," Djokovic said. "I understand that not being vaccinated today, you know, I am unable to travel to most of the tournaments at the moment."

Asked if he would be prepared to miss the French Open in May, he repeated: "That is the price that I am willing to pay."

Also asked if would be ready to skip Wimbledon, he added: "Yes."

"Because the principles of decision-making on my body are more important than any title or anything else," he said.

Djokovic has won the French Open twice, including in 2021, and has six Wimbledon titles, including the last three.

Nadal won this year's Australian Open, giving him one more major title than Djokovic and Roger Federer. Djokovic was deported before he could play.

Djokovic went back over the deportation drama in detail with the BBC and made clear his displeasure at how it turned out.

"What people probably don't know is that I was not deported from Australia on the basis that I was not vaccinated, or I broke any rules or that I made an error in my visa declaration," he said. "The reason why I was deported from Australia was because the minister for immigration used his discretionary right to cancel my visa based on his perception that I might create some anti-vax sentiment in the country or in the city, which I completely disagree with."

The saga began when Djokovic was granted an exemption to strict vaccination rules by two medical panels and Tennis Australia in order to play. That exemption, based on evidence that he recently recovered from COVID-19, apparently allowed him to receive a visa to enter Australia. But upon arrival, border officials said the exemption was not valid and moved to deport him.

An ensuing back-and-forth raised questions of whether Djokovic was unfairly given special treatment or unfairly singled out because of his celebrity status.

Speaking to the BBC, he said: "I never used my privileged status to get into Australia by force or do anything in this entire process."

A court initially ruled on procedural grounds that Djokovic could stay, but Australian Immigration Minister Alex Hawke, who has wide powers, later decided to deport him. The government said his presence could stir up anti-vaccine sentiments.

"I understand that there has been lots of, say, frustrations from Australian people towards me and towards the entire situation and the way it was dealt with," Djokovic told the BBC. "I would like to say that I always followed the rules."

His threats to skip the next two majors may prove to be moot.

New rules in force in England since last week allow unvaccinated people to enter with tests before and after their arrival.

Vaccination rules in France could also change in the months before Roland Garros, possibly allowing Djokovic to play. The country has started to ease some of its health and travel restrictions as it recovers from a record surge in infections fueled by the highly contagious omicron variant.

The French government last week gave an end-of-March, beginning-of-April timeframe for the possible lifting of its vaccine requirement that, at the moment, puts unvaccinated players at risk of missing the



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French Open.

From Tuesday, anyone who is not vaccinated against the coronavirus will need to show proof they tested positive for COVID-19 within the previous four months — down from the previous six-month window — in order to enter sports venues in France. The French law, which operates under the assumption that you have some protection from the virus if you've recently had it, aims to bar unvaccinated individuals from stadiums, restaurants, bars and other public places.

Djokovic has previously said that he tested positive in mid-December. If the four-month requirement stays in force, it is likely to rule him out of the French Open unless he gets vaccinated or tests positive again within four months of the start of the clay-court Grand Slam on May 22.

## Olympics Live: Riiber leads after start of Nordic combined

BEIJING (AP) — The Latest on the Beijing Winter Olympics:

Norway's Jarl Magnus Riiber jumped 142 meters (466 feet) and had 139.8 points in the first phase of Nordic combined, giving him a 44-second lead in the 10-kilometer cross-country race later Tuesday.

It was an impressive performance from the three-time world champion, who returned to the competition after being in isolation for more than 10 days because he tested positive for COVID-19.

Estonia's Kristjan Ilves, who also had tested positive for COVID, will start the cross-country race second alongside Japan's Ryota Yamaoto.

The athlete who jumps the farthest and impresses judges the most starts the cross-country portion of Nordic combined with a lead. The rest of the field follows, in order of the finish in ski jumping. The first to cross the finish line wins gold.

Three-time Olympic gold medalist Eric Frenzel of Germany is out of isolation and the team is hopeful he will be fit to compete Thursday in the Nordic combined team event.

Star figure skater Kamila Valieva joined Russian teammates Anna Shcherbakova and Alexandra Trusova at Capital Indoor Stadium for a final run-through hours before the start of the women's individual competition at the Beijing Games.

Valieva was cleared to compete Monday by the Court of Arbitration for Sport following a hearing into a positive drug test that surfaced the previous week. One of her lawyers has since said the heart medication that triggered the positive test came from a contaminated cup that the 15-year-old Valieva used after her grandfather.

Valieva looked calm and confident in the glittering purple dress of her short program, set to "In Memoriam" by the composer Kirill Richter, though she did fall hard on a triple axel during the session. She was watched closely by her embattled coach, Eteri Tutberidze, who also coaches the other two Russian women.

For the second straight Olympics, Norway is the gold medalist in men's team pursuit speedskating.

Norway won the gold-medal final with a time of 3 minutes, 38.08 seconds — nearly 2 1/2 seconds ahead of the Russian Olympic Committee.

The Norwegian trio of Hallgeir Engebretsen, Peder Kongshaug and Sverre Lunde Pedersen defeated the Netherlands in the semifinals, then led all the way in the final against the Russian Olympic Committee.

The Russian team settled for the silver, while the United States claimed the bronze by beating the Dutch in the B final.

The United States has won its second speedskating medal of the Beijing Olympics, taking the bronze in men's team pursuit.

With 36-year-old Joey Mantia leading three American skaters through all eight laps, the U.S. denied Sven Kramer of the Netherlands his 10th career medal.

The U.S. finished in 3 minutes, 38.80 seconds, nearly 3 seconds ahead of the Dutch.

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Also winning bronze with Mantia are Ethan Cepuran, Casey Dawson and Emery Lehman. Cepuran skated in the semifinals, then was replaced by Mantia for the bronze-medal race.

Canada has won speedskating gold in women's team pursuit after a skater for defending Olympic champion Japan fell on the final turn.

Japan appeared to be heading for a second straight gold medal in the event, holding a lead of about 0.3 seconds with a half lap to go. But the final athlete in the three-skater train, Nana Takagi, lost her balance and skidded into the padding coming through the final turn.

That allowed the Canadian trio of Ivania Blondin, Valerie Maltais and Isabelle Weidemann to pull out the victory in dramatic fashion.

Takagi got up and crossed the line far behind her two teammates, finally registering a time for Japan. She was in tears as she was consoled by her sister, Miho Takagi, and the other member of the Japanese team, Ayana Sato.

Canada won with an Olympic-record time of 2 minute, 53.44 seconds. The Japanese settled for silver, more than 11 seconds behind.

The Netherlands beat the Russian Olympic Committee in the bronze-medal final.

A Dutch team that included individual gold medalists Irene Schouten and Ireen Wust, joined by Marijke Groenewoud, led all the way to finish in 2:56.86. They were more than 2 seconds ahead of the Russians.

Norway has won biathlon gold in the men's four-man relay.

Clean shooting by Norway's Vetle Sjaastad Christiansen and an uncharacteristic miss by France's Quentin Fillon Maillet allowed Norway to leave the range first and win with a time of 1 hour, 19 minutes, 50.2 seconds.

France held on for the silver, 27.4 seconds back and Russia stayed in front of Germany for the bronze, 45.3 seconds behind. The Russian athletes had led from the start of the race, but a series of missed shots on the very last shooting stage cost them the gold medal.

Strula Holm Laegreid led for Norway, followed by Tarjei Boe, Johannes Thingnes Boe and finally Christiansen. It was Johannes Boe and Tarjei Boe have both won four medals at the Beijing Olympics and Fillon Maillet's has won five.

The relay race had been scheduled for 5 p.m., but was moved to 2:30 p.m. due to exceptionally cold temperatures at the stadium, which were expected to drop to minus 4 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 20 Celsius) by 6 p.m., meaning the racers would face dangerous conditions.

Nordic combined star Jarl Magnus Riiber of Norway is back.

The three-time world champion jumped 136 meters (446 feet) on the large hill in the trial round, sending a clear message that he's fit to compete after being in isolation for more than 10 days after testing positive for COVID.

Only Austria's Johannes Lamparter jumped farther, by half a meter, before the competition round Tuesday afternoon.

Riiber and the rest of the 48-man field will jump and take part in a 10K cross-country race later in the day at the Beijing Games.

Estonia's Kristjan Ilves, who also had tested positive for COVID-19, is competing after missing last week's medal event.

Three-time Olympic gold medalist Eric Frenzel of Germany has not been cleared for competition, but the team is holding out hope he can make a comeback for the team event. Germany's Terence Weber was ruled out after testing positive for COVID-19 and replaced by Manuel Faisst, who traveled to China and may compete.

The Russians have set an Olympic record in men's speedskating team pursuit to advance to the gold medal final against defending champion Norway.

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The ROC squad of Daniil Aldoshkin, Sergei Trofimov and Ruslan Zakharov won a thrilling semifinal race against the world record holders from the United States. They crossed the line in 3 minutes, 36.62 seconds, beating the Olympic record of 3:37.08 set four years ago by the Norwegians.

The U.S. trio of Ethan Cepuran, Casey Dawson and Emery Lehman briefly grabbed the lead in the middle of the eight-lap race, but the Russians held a slight advantage almost the entire way. The Americans finished in 3:37.05, also bettering the previous Olympic record but only good enough to earn a spot against the Netherlands in a race later Tuesday for the bronze medal.

On the women's side, defending Olympic champion Japan will meet Canada for the gold medal. The Netherlands will face ROC for the bronze.

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Defending Olympic champion Japan has advanced to the final of women's speedskating team pursuit.

The trio of Ayana Sato and sisters Miho and Nana Takagi easily won their semifinal race against the Russian team. They advance to the gold medal race later Tuesday against Canada.

The Canadians knocked off a team from the Netherlands that included gold medalists Irene Schouten and Ireen Wust. The Dutch will face the Russian team for the bronze medal.

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Su Yiming gave host China its second gold medal at Big Air Shougang, matching Eileen Gu with a stunning show in front of fans at the repurposed steel mill and winning the country's first top prize in Olympic snowboarding.

The 17-year-old child actor-turned-rider followed up his unexpected silver in slopestyle — he would've taken gold if not for a judging blunder — by joining Gu in cementing his celebrity status with a big air gold.

Gu won the freestyle skiing best-trick contest last week on her final jump, and the celebration briefly broke Chinese social media website Weibo.

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Kamila Valieva's lawyers say the Russian skater failed a doping test before the Olympics because of contamination from medication her grandfather was taking.

IOC member Denis Oswald says part of the 15-year-old's defense is "contamination which happened with a product her grandfather was taking."

The argument was made at a Court of Arbitration for Sport hearing late Sunday night. The CAS judges ruled Monday that Valieva can compete in the women's individual event despite testing positive for a banned heart medication.

Although she can skate, the investigation will continue for months, and she may be stripped of medals later. She helped the Russian team win gold last week and is the favorite in the women's event starting Tuesday.

Valieva and her entourage will be investigated by the Russian anti-doping agency after the Olympics. Even if the Russian investigation clears her, the ruling will likely be appealed.

Oswald, a veteran sports lawyer who investigated Sochi Olympics doping scandal cases for the IOC, says lawyers for Valieva "presented elements that brought some doubts about her guilt."

The CAS panel cited several reasons for allowing her to skate, including her status as a minor, the potential harm to her career and the delay in informing Russia about the positive test, from a sample taken on Dec. 25.

Even if she wins another medal, the International Olympic Committee announced no medals will be handed out in events that Valieva places in until after the full investigation.

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The only skier to beat Sofia Goggia in a downhill over the last two seasons beat Sofia Goggia again to win the Olympic gold medal in the event at the Beijing Games.

Corinne Suter, a 27-year-old Swiss skier who injured both of her legs early in the season, edged Goggia by 0.16 seconds.

Goggia hurt her left knee about a month ago but still managed to take the lead by nearly half a second.

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She let out a lengthy roar after crossing the line and then kissed a television camera.

Goggia has dominated the downhill in recent seasons and would have been the favorite if not for getting injured during a super-G in Cortina d'Ampezzo less than a month ago. The 29-year-old Italian partially tore a ligament in her left knee and sustained a minor fracture in that leg, along with tendon damage.

Goggia had won the last eight World Cup downhills she finished, a streak that began in December 2020. But Suter won the last downhill race before the Olympics.

Mikaela Shiffrin, who did not finish her opening runs in either of her initial two events, finished in 18th place, 2.49 behind Suter.

The defending Olympic champion U.S. men's curling team beat Switzerland 7-4 and moved within reach of a playoff berth.

John Shuster's team is in fourth place after its fourth win, with matches against the two bottom teams in the standings — Italy and Denmark — remaining. Six wins would definitely earn the 2018 gold medalists a spot in the semifinals, and five might even be good enough.

The Swiss led 4-2 after six ends before the Americans (4-3) rolled off three scoring ends in a row. They picked up two points in the seventh with the last-rock advantage known as the hammer, then stole a point in the eighth and ninth when Switzerland held the edge.

Defending silver medalist Sweden (7-0) remained unbeaten with an 8-3 win over Denmark in the morning session. Britain (5-1) is in second, and Canada (5-2) beat China 10-8 to hold onto third place.

The Americans entered the day tied for fourth with Switzerland and Russia, which lost to Norway 12-5.

Defending champion Sofia Goggia won't win a second straight Olympic gold medal in the women's downhill.

The Italian took the lead in the race shortly after Mikaela Shiffrin completed her run but Corinne Suter then finished ahead of Goggia. Shiffrin was in 17th place with about half the racers still to come.

Nadia Delago of Italy was in third.

The 29-year-old Goggia was injured during a super-G in Cortina d'Ampezzo last month. She partially tore a ligament in her left knee and sustained a minor fracture in that leg.

Suter would become the first woman since Lindsey Vonn to hold the Olympic and world championship titles in downhill at the same time.

The four-man biathlon relay race scheduled for 5 p.m. Tuesday has been moved to 2:30 p.m. due to exceptionally cold temperatures at the Zhangjiakou National Biathlon Stadium.

During the relay biathletes ski three laps and shoot twice, meaning they will spend about 20 to 30 minutes out in the cold on the track — in addition to the time they spend waiting for their turn. They also risk frostbite on their hands, since their trigger fingers are exposed while shooting.

At 11 a.m., the temperature at the stadium was 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 17 degrees Celsius) and was expected to drop to minus 4 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 20 degrees Celsius) by 6 p.m. That means the racers would face dangerous conditions.

Those were air temperatures and did not take into consideration the wind, which was blowing at almost 5 mph (8 kph.) The wind chill makes the actual temperature feel closer to minus 22 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 30 degrees Celsius.)

Eileen Gu took home another medal from the Beijing Games with a second-place finish in the women's ski slopestyle competition. That means she could still become the first action-sports athlete to capture three medals at the same Winter Games.

Gu's bid for another gold medal was thwarted by Mathilde Gremaud. The freestyle skier from Switzerland won the event on a bitterly cold and hazy day when temperatures hovered around minus 5 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 20 Celsius). Kelly Sildaru of Estonia took home bronze.

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Gu, the 18-year-old American-born freestyler who is competing for her mother's home country of China, won the big air contest last week. She's also competing in the halfpipe competition.

Sitting in eighth place after two runs, Gu used a strong final run to work her way onto the podium. She couldn't catch Gremaud, who scored an 86.56 on her second run.

Anna Gasser of Austria has won her second straight Olympic gold medal in women's snowboarding big air.

The 30-year-old Gasser held off a field with an average age of 21, including 20-year-old Zoi Sadowski Synnott of New Zealand, who last week won her country's first ever Winter Olympics gold medal in slopestyle. Sadowski Synnott took silver Tuesday.

Kokomo Murase of Japan earned bronze with a pair of 1080s at Big Air Shougang. It was the first Olympic medal for the 17-year-old.

The start of the women's downhill ski race at the Beijing Games has been delayed for at least 30 minutes because of wind.

An hour before the scheduled start of the race, the wind was whipping at about 15 mph (about 25 kph), with gusts topping 25 mph (40 kph) at the top of the hill.

The temperature was minus 5 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 20 Celsius).

Defending champion Sofia Goggia starts 13th, immediately after Mikaela Shiffrin of the United States.

The men's downhill, which was supposed to open the Alpine competition on Feb 6., had to be postponed until the following day because of wind.

Eileen Gu fell on her second run and dropped into eighth place in the final of the women's ski slopestyle competition at the Beijing Games.

Mathilde Gremaud of Switzerland jumped into the lead after two of three runs. Kelly Sildaru of Estonia sits in second place and American Maggie Voisin in third.

Gu over-rotated on the third rail and tumbled to the snow. She fixed her helmet before skiing down.

Gu, the 18-year-old American-born freestyler who is competing for her mother's home country of China, is trying to win her second gold of these Winter Olympics. She won the gold medal in big air last week. She's also competing in the halfpipe contest later this week.

Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva says she's happy but worn out after a grueling doping hearing ended with her being allowed to skate at the Beijing Games.

The 15-year-old tells Russian state broadcaster Channel One that the past few days have been very difficult for her.

"I'm happy but I'm tired emotionally," she said in comments broadcast Monday night.

Valieva is the favorite for the gold medal in the women's competition alongside her Russian teammates Alexandra Trusova and Anna Shcherbakova. The competition starts with the short program Tuesday night Beijing time and continues with the free skate Thursday.

There won't be a medal ceremony if Valieva finishes in the top three because the International Olympic Committee is concerned she could still be banned over a failed drug test from Dec. 25. That test was not revealed until after she won team gold with the Russian Olympic Committee last week.

## Ethiopia lifts state of emergency early, citing calming war

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopian lawmakers have voted to end the country's three-month state of emergency early as mediation efforts continue to end the deadly war in the north.

Tuesday's vote by lawmakers came after Ethiopia's Council of Ministers, chaired by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, decided on Jan. 26 to end the state of emergency originally imposed for six months, citing recent developments in the conflict.

The state of emergency was imposed in early November as Tigray forces fighting Ethiopian and allied

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forces moved closer to the capital, Addis Ababa. They withdrew back into the Tigray region in late December amid mediation efforts and under pressure from a drone-supported military offensive carried out by the government.

Thousands of mainly ethnic Tigrayans were detained under the state of emergency, according to witnesses, lawyers and human rights groups. Many were released after December's shift in the war.

There was no immediate word Tuesday on when the rest of the people detained under the state of emergency would be released. They include a freelance video journalist accredited to The Associated Press, Amir Aman Kiyaro.

The state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting reported: "The state of emergency investigation board is instructed to finish any outstanding works within a month and report back to the relevant body. Judicial bodies are also instructed to finish emergency law-related cases within the regular judicial process."

Ahead of Tuesday's vote, an advisory committee within the Ethiopian parliament said the lifting of the state of emergency will help revive the country's economic and diplomatic situation. Parliament speaker Tadesse Chafo said the committee believes the country's security threats can now be dealt with by regular law enforcement mechanisms.

Fana Broadcasting reported that some members of the advisory committee, however, raised concerns regarding threats posed by the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Army that have been fighting the federal army and its allies.

The parliament speaker said security threats in the Amhara, Afar, Benishangul Gumuz and Gambella regions and the Wellega area in the Oromia region will be dealt with by a new "corrective measure" that is being put in place.

Ethiopia's war erupted in November 2020 and is believed to have caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people and the displacement of millions. Though the war has subsided in several places, notably within the Tigray and Amhara regions, concerns remain in the northeastern Afar region.

Aid remains badly limited to millions in the Tigray region under what the United Nations has described as a "de facto humanitarian blockade." On Monday, the World Health Organization said it has been granted access to send medical supplies to Tigray for the first time in six months, but fuel shortages are hampering distribution.

## Winter Olympians champion climate, peace amid muted activism

By KELVIN CHAN Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — After a morning training session at the Winter Olympics' Big Air Shougang venue, British snowboarder Katie Ormerod stopped by the press zone to do a quick interview. The topic wasn't how much air time she got or the tricks she was trying to pull off.

"I have been asked so many questions about climate change around the Olympics," said Ormerod, one of many winter sports athletes turned climate activists. "Especially because obviously there's so much artificial snow that's being used for these Games."

Athletes everywhere are throwing their support behind political and social causes, part of a wave of sports activism that has flourished in the years since former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick began taking a knee during games to protest police brutality against Black people.

The Olympics are no exception, even here in Beijing, where pro-Democracy demonstrations were violently put down by the government in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and nearly all forms of civil disobedience are frowned upon.

In perhaps the most timely example of activism at these Games, Ukrainian skeleton racer Vladyslav Heraskevych flashed a sign with his country's flag and the message "No War in Ukraine," a reference to Russia's military build-up that has raised fears of military conflict.

"I fight for peace," Heraskevych said, adding that he had planned before the Olympics to "show my position to the world."

"We're seeing this all over sport where athletes are becoming more involved," said Noah Hoffman, a

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former U.S. Olympic skier and board member of Global Athlete, an advocacy group. "And yeah, I think it's only going to continue to grow."

Protests have long been restricted by the International Olympic Committee, but last year the rules were eased to allow limited activism at the Games inside the field of play.

At last year's Summer Games in Tokyo, soccer players took a knee as a gesture against racism.

Elsewhere, Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka and Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton have publicly backed the Black Lives Matter movement. Osaka has also spoken out on her mental health issues, as has U.S. Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps. Boston Celtics center Enes Kanter Freedom has drawn attention to the plight of Tibetans and Uyghurs in China.

Olympic podium protests are still off limits. That means the chance of a repeat of the raised black-gloved fist by U.S. sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Mexico Olympics is unlikely. At the time, it got them expelled from the Olympic village and suspended by the IOC.

In Beijing, athlete activism has been muted because of fears about what China's Communist leaders could do to squelch criticism of country's human rights record.

An official with the Beijing Organizing Committee warned ahead of the Games that: "Any behavior or speech that is against the Olympic spirit, especially against the Chinese laws and regulations, are also subject to certain punishment."

Rights groups responded by advising athletes to keep quiet while in China, citing as a cautionary tale the disappearance of tennis player Peng Shuai after she accused a former high-ranking member of the Communist Party of sexual assault. Peng has since re-emerged, saying her accusation was misinterpreted, and was seen attending Olympic events last week in Beijing.

German luger Natalie Geisenberger has said she grappled with whether to attend because of concerns that included human rights.

Hoffman, who was on the 2014 and 2018 U.S. Olympic cross country ski teams, has been in touch with a current member who's holding back outspoken views on political issues until they get home, "because it's just not worth the risk."

"When athletes are told to get burner phones and rental computers, they know this is not normal," Hoffman said. "They've been told they're not going to have any privacy that everything they say is going to be monitored. So of course, they're not speaking out and it's terrifying."

Many Olympians are reluctant to back more divisive issues because, as amateurs, they lack financial stability and are vulnerable to the dictates of sports administrators, including the IOC, Hoffman said.

Climate activism may be the exception, and is a more natural fit for snowboarders and skiers who worry about what warmer winters are doing to their sport.

This year's setting, in China's parched capital where organizers spent months making artificial snow, has reinforced concerns about the future viability of the Winter Games.

Ormerod has spoken out about climate change's effects on snowboarding, as has Finnish snowboarder Enni Rukajarvi.

"I hope that other athletes would use their voice as well," said Rukajarvi, who won silver at the 2014 Sochi Olympics. She's a longtime climate activist who has campaigned for ski resorts in Finland to use renewable electricity. "I feel like when I'm an athlete I need to do something good."

Dozens of athletes competing in Beijing, from the U.S., Canada, Europe and Japan, have worked on climate issues in coordination with Protect Our Winters, an athlete-driven environmental group.

The aim is to use their platform to rally support for political change by electing supportive lawmakers and officials, said founder Jeremy Jones, a renowned snowboarder.

Taylor Gold, who came fifth in the halfpipe competition, told the AP in December that "trying to do things at the individual level is great," such as carpooling and cycling instead of driving, or eating less meat. "But at the end of the day, we really need systemic change to have the impact that we need to preserve these places" threatened by global warming.

Some athletes work at the grassroots level.

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Paul Schommer, a member of the U.S. biathlon team with a degree in chemistry, has given talks about the science of climate change to schoolchildren in his hometown of Appleton, Wisconsin.

"Climate change is not something that's always talked about back in my hometown," Schommer said. "And so to be able to go back home and kind of talk a little bit more with with students there was something that I've done in the past and has been pretty cool."

## Russians scoff at Western fears of Ukraine invasion

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — While the U.S. warns that Russia could invade Ukraine any day, the drumbeat of war is all but unheard in Moscow, where pundits and ordinary people alike don't expect President Vladimir Putin to launch an attack on its ex-Soviet neighbor.

The Kremlin has cast the U.S. warnings of an imminent attack as "hysteria" and "absurdity," and many Russians believe that Washington is deliberately stoking panic and fomenting tensions to trigger a conflict for domestic reasons.

Putin's angry rhetoric about NATO's plans to expand to Russia's "doorstep" and its refusal to hear Moscow's concerns has struck a chord with the public, tapping into a sense of betrayal by the West after the end of the Cold War and widespread suspicion about Western designs.

Speaking to reporters after President Joe Biden's call with Putin on Saturday, Kremlin foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov bemoaned what he described as U.S. "hysteria" about an allegedly imminent invasion, saying that the situation has "reached the point of absurdity."

The U.S. says that Russia has concentrated over 130,000 troops east, north and south of Ukraine and has the necessary firepower to launch an attack at any moment.

Russian officials have angrily denied any plans to attack Ukraine and dismissed Western concerns about the buildup near the country, arguing that Moscow is free to deploy its troops wherever it likes on its national territory.

"We don't understand why they are spreading clearly false information about Russian intentions," Ushakov said about the U.S. warnings of an imminent attack.

In 2014, Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula following the ouster of the country's Moscow-friendly president and threw its weight behind a separatist insurgency in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, Donbas, where more than 14,000 people have been killed in fighting.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has taken a more combative tone, denouncing Washington's warnings of an imminent Russian attack on Ukraine as "war propaganda" by the U.S. and some of its allies.

Zakharova alleged that the U.S. "needs a war at any price," charging that "provocations, disinformation and threats represent its favorite methods of solving its own problems."

She denounced U.S. intelligence claims about an alleged "false flag" operation mounted by Russia to create a pretext for invading Ukraine, comparing them to then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell's 2003 speech before the U.N. Security Council, in which he made the case for war against Iraq, citing faulty intelligence information claiming Saddam Hussein had secretly stashed weapons of mass destruction.

"The U.S. politicians lied, are lying and will keep lying," Zakharova said.

Such rhetoric has been amplified by state television, where hosts have alleged nefarious U.S. designs, accusing Washington and its allies of planning phony operations of their own to encourage hawkish forces in Ukraine to launch an offensive to reclaim areas controlled by Russia-backed separatists in the country's east.

Opinion surveys indicate that the majority of Russians share such views.

More than half of respondents in recent polls conducted by the Levada Center, the top independent opinion firm, consider the U.S. responsible for the current standoff over Ukraine, about 15% blame it on Ukraine and only 3%-4% believe it's Russia's fault, while others were undecided, its director Denis Volkov said in comments broadcast earlier this month. Levada's nationwide polls of about 1,600 people have a margin of error not exceeding 3.4 percentage points.



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"Most people see the conflict as a Russia-U.S. conflict," Volkov said, adding that respondents in focus group interviews said that the U.S. could push Ukraine into attacking the rebels in the east to draw Russia into the fighting.

Asked if she fears a war, Moscow resident Anaida Gevorgyan dismissed it as Western "propaganda." "Russia will never do it," she said. "We are brotherly people, and we have lived together for so many years."

Russian political analysts are broadly dismissive of U.S. war warnings, pointing out that Russia's invasion of Ukraine would carry a massive price without offering Putin any clear wins.

"For Moscow, risks of an invasion of Ukraine outweigh any possible gains," Moscow-based security analyst Sergei Poletayev said in a commentary.

Unlike Crimea, which Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014 without firing a shot, and the conflict in Donbas, where Moscow has denied playing a military role despite Ukrainian and Western claims to the contrary, a full-fledged invasion is certain to become a political and economic disaster for Russia.

While the Kremlin appears bent on pulling Ukraine back into Moscow's orbit, a massive offensive will inevitably involve huge casualties, undermining Russia's global standing, leading to its international isolation and shattering Putin's posture as a leader who cares about ordinary Ukrainians and sees the two people as one.

"It's impossible to imagine a war with Ukraine," Moscow resident Vitaly Ladygin said. "We all have relatives there, we have always lived together. I love Ukraine and dream about going there once it all ends."

An attack on Ukraine would be certain to trigger draconian Western sanctions that would further cripple Russia's stagnant economy, dent people's incomes and erode Putin's support. And while the Russian military could be expected to rout the much weaker Ukrainian army, it will inevitably face massive resistance later, resulting in a protracted conflict that would drain Moscow's scarce resources.

Sergei Karaganov, a Russian foreign policy analyst with close ties to Kremlin thinking, said in recently published comments that while "it's necessary to stop NATO's further expansion and militarization of Ukraine ... we definitely don't have plans to conquer Ukraine."

Many Russian observers predict that instead of launching an invasion, Putin could try to keep pressure on the West with more troop deployments and drills to keep Ukraine out of NATO.

"Having failed to score a full diplomatic result or dare to use force, Russia could turn its army presence near Ukraine into a constant or regularly renewed source of threat that will incur a damage to Ukraine that Western assistance wouldn't be able to compensate," Alexander Baunov of the Carnegie Moscow Center said in an analysis. "It will also keep the West under strain, and in the end Ukraine and the West could show a greater flexibility."

## US asks Honduras to arrest, extradite ex-President Hernández

By MARLON GONZÁLEZ and CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN Associated Press

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — After years of speculation in Honduras, the United States formally requested the arrest and extradition of former President Juan Orlando Hernández less than three weeks after he left office.

Honduran security forces surrounded Hernández's neighborhood Monday night and the Supreme Court of Justice scheduled an urgent meeting Tuesday morning to select a judge to handle the extradition request. A standoff ensued.

In a video released by Hernández's legal team from apparently inside his home, attorney Félix Ávila said that everything would have to wait until the Supreme Court designated a judge Tuesday to consider the case. "Meanwhile, it is understood that no arrest order exists."

However, at a police barrier to the neighborhood, Rasel Tomé, vice president of the newly elected National Congress, said that Hernández had to turn himself in or he would be captured at 6 a.m. Tuesday.

It was a long-awaited fall for a leader reviled in his home country, who enjoyed support from the Trump administration, but had been kept at arm's length by a Biden White House targeting Central America's endemic corruption as a root cause of migration.

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The specific charges Hernández's faces are not known, but federal prosecutors in New York had previously named him a co-conspirator in a drug trafficking case, alleging that his political rise was fueled with drug profits. Hernández has long denied any wrongdoing.

Nicole Navas, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Department of Justice, declined to comment.

Hernández left office Jan. 27 with the swearing in of President Xiomara Castro. The same day he was sworn in as Honduras' representative to the Central American Parliament.

His lawyer, Hermes Ramírez, told local media his client had immunity as a member of the regional parliament and said government forces were not following proper procedures. He said Hernández was inside the home.

Various contingents of the National Police, including special forces, as well as military police were present around Hernández's neighborhood Monday night. Barriers at all of the entrances kept out media and even residents.

Members of the security forces entered the area with weapons, wearing balaclavas and with handcuffs dangling from their ballistic vests. Some neighbors said the house had been dark and they believe unoccupied.

Hernández often pointed to the fact that Honduras began allowing the extradition of Hondurans on drug trafficking charges while he was president of the congress as part of his defense.

But U.S. prosecutors have alleged that he was taking bribes from drug traffickers on the promise of protecting them once he was Honduras' president.

U.S. prosecutors in New York repeatedly implicated him in his brother's 2019 drug trafficking trial, alleging that his political rise was fueled by drug profits.

That brother, Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernández, himself a former Honduran congressman, was sentenced to life in prison on drug and weapons charges in March 2021. At his sentencing Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Laroche characterized the crimes as "state-sponsored drug trafficking."

Juan Orlando Hernández took office Jan. 27, 2014. Hernández used a friendly Supreme Court to overcome Honduras' constitutional ban on reelection and won a second term in 2017 in elections marred by irregularities.

Around midnight Monday, 56-year-old Jorge Arturo Vega, a supporter of Castro's Liberty and Refoundation party, stood outside a police barricade at Hernández's neighborhood celebrating.

"This is a party we've been waiting a long time for," Vega said, thinking back over the dozen years since Hernández came up in the congress. "We couldn't stand this his drug trafficker, criminal, killer in the presidential house any longer."

## 'Tired' Valieva to skate at Olympics after doping ruling

By DAVE SKRETTA and JAMES ELLINGWORTH AP Sports Writers

BEIJING (AP) — Worn out after a grueling doping hearing, Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva said she was happy nonetheless after being allowed to skate Tuesday in the women's short program at the Beijing Olympics.

The 15-year-old Valieva is the overwhelming favorite for the gold medal alongside Russian teammates Alexandra Trusova and Anna Shcherbakova, who are aiming for the first sweep by any nation of the women's Olympic podium.

Valieva was cleared to skate even though she failed a drug test taken Dec. 25, the result only emerging last week, after her two brilliant performances in the team competition helped win gold for the Russian team. The Court of Arbitration for Sport gave her a favorable decision Monday in part because she is a minor, known as a "protected person," and is subject to different rules from an adult athlete.

Lawyers for Valieva also "brought some doubts about her guilt," veteran IOC member Denis Oswald said Tuesday, with their possible explanation of accidental rather than deliberate doping with the heart medication trimetazidine.

"Her argument was this contamination which happened with a product her grandfather was taking,"

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Oswald, a Swiss lawyer who prosecuted previous Russian doping cases, told reporters.

Valieva, who practiced in both of her allotted sessions Monday, told Russian state broadcaster Channel One in comments shown that night: "These days have been very difficult for me. I'm happy but I'm tired emotionally."

There won't be a medal ceremony if Valieva finishes in the top three because the International Olympic Committee is concerned that she could still be banned after a full investigation of her doping case. The three-member court ruled only on whether she could skate at the Olympics and did not consider the full merits of the case.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport already had said Valieva testified during its lengthy hearing, which ended at about 3 a.m. Monday. Valieva said she watched the entire hearing by video link from the Olympic Village.

"I sat there for seven hours, we had one 20-minute break, and I sat there and watched. It was very difficult, but it is apparently one of the moments, of the phases, that I have to go through," Valieva said, adding that the entire process had taught her that adult life "can be unfair to some extent."

Valieva is scheduled to perform in the final group, 26th among the 30 women taking part in the individual competition on Tuesday in Beijing. Trusova and Shcherbakova, who like Valieva are coached by the controversial Eteri Tutberidze, skate shortly after her, before Kaori Sakamoto of Japan finishes the short program.

The free skate to decide the medals is Thursday at Capital Indoor Stadium.

Valieva and her teammates are trying to extend an era of Russian dominance in women's figure skating at the Olympics. It began at the 2014 Sochi Games, when the country's state-sponsored doping scheme first came to light, and Adelina Sotnikova won the gold medal for the host nation. Alina Zagitova and Evgenia Medvedeva followed with a one-two finish for what was known as the Olympic Athletes from Russia at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games.

Zagitova and Medvedeva also were coached by Tutberidze, the former ice dancer-turned-kingmaker who has been criticized for pushing young skaters to extreme limits in the pursuit of Olympic medals.

The World Anti-Doping Agency announced this week it will investigate Tutberidze along with the rest of the entourage that has surrounded Valieva in the lead-up to the Olympics. Tutberidze also could be subject to prosecution in the U.S. under a recently enacted law that criminalizes doping schemes in events involving American athletes and sponsors.

It has been Tutberidze, and the rest of the Russian team, that has received the vast majority of worldwide scorn.

"The ladies event is a complete joke," said 2018 Olympic figure skater Adam Rippon, who now helps coach one of the American women, Mariah Bell. "It's not a real competition and it most likely won't even have a medal ceremony. So many Olympic experiences stolen from clean athletes who got here without the help of performance-enhancing drugs."

The IOC has said it will "organize dignified medal ceremonies" once Valieva's case is decided, but that could be months down the road. The organizing committee also did not explain where or how it might be held.

"So everyone's medals are going to be shipped to them? Yay for Olympic moments," said retired pairs skater Chris Knierim, whose wife, Alexa Knierim, and partner Brandon Frazier helped the U.S. win team silver last week.

That medal ceremony also will not be held in Beijing because the Russian team could eventually be disqualified.

"Four years of hard work just to wait for UPS to deliver your Olympic medal. Hope they have tracking numbers at least," Knierim said jokingly. "It's going to take extra long because we all know how fast customs is."

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## Testimony to begin in Ahmaud Arbery death hate crimes trial

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Ga. (AP) — Prosecutors were to begin calling witnesses Tuesday in the federal hate crimes

trial of three white men convicted of murdering Ahmaud Arbery.

On the trial's first day in the port city of Brunswick on Monday, prosecutors told the jury they have evidence that each of the defendants had a history of making racist comments. To win convictions on the hate crime charges, they must prove to the jury that Arbery was chased and fatally shot because he was Black.

In their opening statements, defense attorneys called their clients' use of racist slurs offensive and indefensible. But they insisted that their deadly pursuit of Arbery was motivated by an earnest, though erroneous, suspicion that the 25-year-old Black man had committed crimes — not by racial hostility.

Father and son Greg and Travis McMichael armed themselves and used a pickup truck to chase Arbery after spotting him running in their coastal Georgia neighborhood on Feb. 23, 2020. A neighbor, William "Roddie" Bryan, joined the chase in his own truck and recorded cellphone video of Travis McMichael blasting Arbery with a shotgun.

No arrests were made until the video leaked online two months later.

Both McMichaels and Bryan were convicted of murder last fall in a Georgia state court and sentenced to life in prison.

All three are now standing trial in a separate case in U.S. District Court, where they are charged with violating Arbery's civil rights and with targeting him because he was Black. They have pleaded not guilty.

A jury of eight white members, three Black people and one Hispanic person was sworn in Monday to hear the case.

## US asks Honduras to arrest, extradite ex-President Hernández

By MARLON GONZÁLEZ and CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN Associated Press

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — The United States has asked Honduras to arrest former President Juan Orlando Hernández for his eventual extradition to the U.S., officials confirmed Monday.

National Police and soldiers surrounded the neighborhood around Hernández's home Monday night.

Honduras' foreign affairs ministry initially said via Twitter that it had notified the country's Supreme Court of Justice that the U.S. Embassy had formally requested the arrest of a Honduran politician for the purposes of extradition.

The ministry did not identify the politician. But Honduras' current vice president, Salvador Nasralla, confirmed to The Associated Press that the request names Hernández.

Later, the president of the Supreme Court of Justice called an urgent session of the full court for Tuesday morning to choose a judge to consider the extradition request from the United States.

Nicole Navas, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Department of Justice, declined to comment. The U.S. State Department referred requests for comment to the Justice Department.

CNN en Español first reported that the politician was Hernández, showing the communication from the ministry to the court naming Hernández.

Hernández's attorney, Hermes Ramírez, accused authorities of being unfair to the former president. He said Hernández was inside the Tegucigalpa residence.

"At this time the secretary of security is violating the rule of law by wanting to execute an arrest order violating the procedure that is established by law," the lawyer told local media. "We leave clear the abuse that my client ex-President Juan Orlando Hernández is the subject of."

Various contingents of the National Police, including special forces, as well as military police were present around Hernández's neighborhood Monday night. Barriers were set up at all of the entrances to keep the press and even residents out.

Members of the security forces entered the area with weapons, wearing balaclavas and with handcuffs dangling from their ballistic vests. Some neighbors said the house had been dark and they believe unoccupied.

Supporters of new President Xiomara Castro arrived as well, waving flags from her party and celebrating.

Over the weekend, Hernández had posted photographs of himself playing with his dogs in an apparent attempt to knock down rumors that he had fled the country.

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Hernández left office Jan. 27 with the swearing in of Castro. The same day he was sworn in as Honduras' representative to the Central American Parliament.

Ramírez said Monday night that Hernández had immunity because of his position in the regional parliament and insisted that he had a right to a presumption of innocence.

With a weak and co-opted Honduran justice system, Hondurans' hope for justice had rested for years with U.S. federal prosecutors in New York, where a string of revelations against Hernández was closely followed back home.

Speculation had swirled for months over whether Hernández would be charged once he was no longer president, because U.S. prosecutors in New York repeatedly implicated him in his brother's 2019 drug trafficking trial, alleging that his political rise was fueled by drug profits.

Hernández strongly denied any such activities.

The brother, Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernández, himself a former Honduran congressman, was sentenced to life in prison on drug and weapons charges in March 2021. At his sentencing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Laroche characterized the crimes as "state-sponsored drug trafficking."

In an audio recording sent to his staff that day, the then president said his brother's conviction "is hard for the family, hard for me personally."

"I find it outrageous; I find it unbelievable that false testimony by confessed killers could have been heard and given weight in this way," he continued, citing Honduras' progress in reducing violence as evidence of his stance against organized crime.

U.S. prosecutors said Tony Hernández brokered large bribes from drug traffickers to his brother in exchange for protecting their shipments through Honduras. In some cases, members of the National Police and military escorted drug shipments, prosecutors said.

They said Juan Orlando Hernández received bribes while still a member of Honduras' congress and directed bribes to other lawmakers so they would support him as the body's president.

Hernández has long said that the accusations against him come from drug traffickers, who in some cases he extradited and who are now seeking revenge. He has denied any involvement with drug traffickers.

Hernández became president of the congress in early 2010. By 2013, he was campaigning to be Honduras' president and allegedly solicited \$1.6 million from a drug trafficker to support his campaign and those of other politicians in the National Party, according to U.S. authorities.

Tony Hernández also received \$1 million from Mexican kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán to support his brother's presidential campaign, prosecutors said. They said Tony Hernández had promised the Sinaloa cartel leader that if his brother won the presidency, they could protect Guzmán's drug shipments through Honduras.

Juan Orlando Hernández took office Jan. 27, 2014. U.S. authorities allege he continued receiving drug profits while in office in exchange for allowing drugs to move through Honduras.

Hernández was also named as a "co-conspirator" in the case of convicted drug trafficker Geovanny Fuentes Ramírez. Witnesses in the two-week trial shortly before Tony Hernández's sentencing told of Hernández accepting bribes from Fuentes Ramírez and other drug traffickers from his time as a presidential candidate up through at least 2019.

Hernández used a friendly Supreme Court to overcome Honduras' constitutional ban on re-election and won a second term in 2017 in elections marred by irregularities.

He was a deeply unpopular president at a time that saw tens of thousands of Hondurans flee the country due to a lack of economic opportunity, street gang violence and natural disasters.

Hernández worked to curry favor with the Trump administration, which was focused largely on slowing immigration. The Trump administration was quick to recognize Hernández's re-election victory in the disputed election. When accusations against Hernández emerged from trials in New York, Hernández would often use photo ops with U.S. officials to show that he had nothing to hide.

The Biden administration, however, worked to keep Hernández at arm's length, frequently repeating that corruption was one of the root causes of migration in the region.

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Hernández has focused his defense largely on his record of extraditing drug traffickers to the United States and Honduran security forces' cooperation with U.S. authorities intercepting drug shipments.

Honduras changed its constitution in 2012 — while Hernández was president of the congress — to allow the extradition of Hondurans facing drug trafficking charges. And drug traffickers were extradited under Hernández. However, the U.S. government has complained that Honduras in recent years had not extradited others, including some alleged co-conspirators of Tony Hernández.

Last week, the U.S. State Department said it had quietly placed Hernández on a list of Central American officials suspected of corruption or undermining democracy last year.

## **GOP positions to grab left-leaning Nashville in US House map**

By JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Black college students once marched downtown from the north Nashville neighborhood where Aaron Marble preaches, sitting at whites-only lunch counters to fight for civil rights. Soon, his historically Black community will fold into a mostly rural, white 14-county territory, and he'll likely have a Republican congressman.

Reality set in for Marble when longtime U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper, a white moderate Democrat, said he wouldn't run again because even he couldn't win any of the three new Nashville seats drawn by Republicans during the once-a-decade redistricting process.

The new maps will amount to a stark shift for Nashville, which encompasses Davidson County. As one of three Tennessee counties that backed President Joe Biden in 2020, it's home to the type of coalition of younger progressives, white moderates and African Americans that Democrats have increasingly relied on.

Now, voters there face the potential of representation mostly at odds with their political views, including broad-based support for greater health care access and immigrant rights. There's particular concern that the new lawmakers will be hostile to protecting voting rights, an issue especially resonant in the city where John Lewis, Diane Nash and other civil rights leaders got their start.

"Black Nashvillians have been feeling the weight of living in a red state for quite some time. But I think this redistricting will have deep and lasting adverse impacts on some of Tennessee's most vulnerable populations," said Marble, Jefferson Street Missionary Baptist Church's senior pastor.

The once sleepy Southern city has fueled much of Tennessee's population growth through thriving health care and tech industries. Construction cranes hover over new steel-and-glass structures that sprout up into a Nashville skyline that looks dramatically different from the one Bob Dylan turned into an album title in 1969. The cost of living has skyrocketed.

Navigating that will be a challenge for lawmakers who will also represent rural and suburban communities, where the prevailing politics range from moderate to conservative Republican.

"I think that Nashvillians are going to get more whiplash, culture shock, regret than the residents of almost any city in America, because to go from 100 years of Democratic representation to three varieties of Trump representation is going to be quite a shock," Cooper said in an interview.

What Tennessee Republicans did in Nashville is a standard gerrymandering technique known as cracking, which dilutes a party's power by spreading its voters among multiple districts. The prototype for this approach last decade was Austin, which Texas Republicans split into six congressional districts.

This cycle, Republicans' attempts to crack Democratic cities like Charlotte and Cincinnati have run afoul of anti-gerrymandering laws in North Carolina and Ohio, leading the states' supreme courts to reject their maps. Tennessee, however, lacks similar provisions.

The pattern works in Democrats' favor sometimes, too. Portland, Oregon, is divided four ways in the new, Democratic-drawn map to create as many liberal-leaning districts as possible.

This time around, Republicans control the line-drawing process in states representing 187 House seats compared with 75 for Democrats. Others use independent commissions, have split government control or have only one congressional seat.

Tennessee Democrats plan to challenge the maps but face significant hurdles. The U.S. Supreme Court

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has ruled that federal courts won't referee partisan gerrymandering.

Additionally, Nashville likely doesn't have enough minority voters to make up a district's majority, a key argument under federal voting rights protections. A recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Alabama further dampens Nashville's prospects in court, with justices deciding that elections were too imminent to consider changes to the state's congressional map.

So far for Nashville, the two GOP congressmen and the open-seat Republican candidates haven't struck more moderate tones.

Republican Rep. Mark Green, from the Clarksville area about 50 miles from Nashville, will draw Marble's majority-Black north Nashville neighborhood, plus downtown and elsewhere. In an interview, Green said Democratic policies "are not serving anyone in the state of Tennessee" and "conservative principles are just better."

He sought to counter criticisms that Republican representation within meandering new districts could short Nashville's needs. It's unclear which Democrats might seek the Nashville seats.

"What I've got to do is get in and listen to people and understand the challenges, and then I'll put my brain to it," Green said. "I mean, I'm a smart guy. If I look at the problem and see the problem, I'll help find a solution to it."

Republican Rep. John Rose will inherit part of Nashville as well. He's from Cookeville, some 80 miles east.

The crowded-and-growing field for the recast version of Cooper's seat includes Morgan Ortagus, a Nashville resident and former State Department spokesperson under President Donald Trump, who has endorsed her. Her first video attacks the media, "Sleepy Joe" Biden and "radical socialists."

"There may be some people that have differing opinions. That's OK," Ortagus told The Associated Press. "I want to meet them. I want to knock on their door. I want to talk to them. ... I really think you can have common ground with people."

Green's and Rose's records, and the rhetoric of those seeking Cooper's seat, make any relationship with Nashville complicated.

Both support Trump's tough tone on immigration, including building out the U.S.-Mexico border wall. They'll represent a growing Nashville immigrant community — it has the nation's largest Kurdish population — and will be asked to help people navigate immigration services.

Lisa Sherman Luna, of the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition Votes group, said immigrant advocates are accustomed to building political influence in tough territory.

"I think that the price is going to be much higher for cheap nativist tactics for some of these folks," she said. "They could rise to the occasion, truly representing a district that is going to be increasingly diverse."

Green and Rose voted against Biden's infrastructure law. Green contended that vote doesn't mean he's opposed to spending on infrastructure, which Nashville officials say is sorely needed.

"We're fiscally challenged with our debt right now. It's part of the problem," Green said. "We just have to be smart about it. But yeah, if there's an infrastructure need, we go find the money and we build it."

Cooper, leaning more fiscally conservative than his party, has spent years navigating Nashville's political complexities. A 2022 challenge from the left was awaiting him if the district wasn't severed. He also shifted some policy positions leftward over the years, following his city. He was vocal about the need to shore up voting rights protections.

Cooper predicted that Republicans aren't prepared for what awaits them representing Nashville.

"They'll pay lip service. They'll engage in tokenism. They'll try to put oil on the waters," Cooper said. "But they won't be able to hide their voting records, current, past or future. And those will not go down well."

## Pressure mounts on Congress to curb lawmaker stock trading

By BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Amid a steady drip of damaging headlines, pressure is building for Congress to pass legislation that would curtail lawmakers' ability to speculate on the stock market.

Trading in Congress has long been criticized by government watchdogs, who say the access to nonpublic

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information creates a temptation for lawmakers to prioritize their own finances over the public good.

But public anger has mounted since the first tremors of the pandemic, when some lawmakers were caught buying and selling millions of dollars worth of stock after being warned about the coming disruption from the virus. The pandemic's arrival tanked markets and caught many Americans by surprise.

Now, with the November election fast approaching and members of both parties embracing reform, congressional leaders are getting on the bandwagon, expressing their willingness to toughen the rules. After a spate of controversies over suspiciously timed trades and undisclosed transactions, few lawmakers are defending the status quo, raising hopes that a significant ethics package is within reach.

"This isn't going to solve all of America's problems. But it's a substantive reform that three-fourths of the country supports," said Sen. Jon Ossoff, who is sponsoring a bill that would require lawmakers and their spouses to sell off stocks or place their assets in a blind trust. The Georgia Democrat beat Republican Sen. David Perdue last year in a race that turned largely on Perdue's pandemic-era stock trading.

There's reason for skepticism. Past efforts to tighten ethics rules have fallen short of lawmakers' lofty declarations. And in the end, the task of writing ethics rules governing Congress is left to the lawmakers themselves, creating a conflict that often results in easily evaded restrictions.

But progress is apparent. A raft of bills have been introduced, some by lawmakers at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. Senators are working on a compromise. And House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, whose husband is a prolific trader, is on board with the legislative push, though she has advocated a more targeted approach.

Pelosi supports strengthening an existing law, the Stock Act, which requires lawmakers to disclose their stock sales and purchases. She has also called for extending stock trading disclosure requirements to members of the judiciary, while stiffening penalties for members of Congress who flout the rules.

"It's complicated," Pelosi said last week. "What we're trying to build is consensus."

Her stance has evolved since December, when Pelosi reacted to a question about lawmaker trades by saying there is a "free market" that members of Congress "should be able to participate in."

Past ethics reforms demonstrate the challenge ahead.

The Stock Act was signed into law in 2012. At the time, lawmakers and government watchdogs predicted that public disclosure would shame lawmakers out of actively buying and selling stock. That hasn't happened. A decade later, trading continues apace and no one has been prosecuted under the law.

The same could be said for reforms enacted in the wake of the Jack Abramoff lobbying scandal. A 2007 law that was intended to force more disclosure of lobbying activity instead created a new class of "shadow lobbyists" who work to influence public policy but don't have to register as a lobbyist or disclose their activities.

"Both those bills certainly did not solve the actual problems themselves," said Craig Holman, a registered lobbyist for the good government group Public Citizen. He said the earlier laws were important, but added that "there is room for improvement."

Several lawmakers have come under fire for their stock portfolios.

Last year, The Associated Press reported that Democratic Rep. Tom Malinowski of New Jersey repeatedly failed to disclose trades worth as much as \$1 million in medical and tech companies that had a stake in the virus response. He now supports efforts to curtail lawmakers' trading.

Former Sens. Perdue and Kelly Loeffler, both Georgia Republicans, lost their runoff bids for the Senate in January after their own stock trades became a campaign issue. Both were investigated by the Justice Department and ultimately cleared.

Perdue had dumped between \$1 million and \$5 million worth of stock in a company where he was formerly a board member. After markets crashed, he bought it back and earned a windfall after its price skyrocketed.

Loeffler and her husband, the CEO and chairman of the parent company of the New York Stock Exchange, dumped millions of dollars in stock following a briefing on the virus.

Republican Sen. Richard Burr of North Carolina drew perhaps the most scrutiny for his trades. He stepped



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aside as chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee after the FBI obtained a search warrant to seize a cellphone.

Burr and his wife sold \$1.6 million in early 2020, just before the market began to dive. The Justice Department investigated Burr's actions, but did not file charges and closed the case. The Securities and Exchange Commission continues to probe the matter.

Drafting the legislation presents a challenge. Difficult questions remain, such as whether lawmakers who sell their assets would be required to pay capital gains tax, whether the proposed ban would apply to spouses and children and whether stocks purchased before serving in Congress would be exempt. But supporters of the effort say the rules need to be as tight as possible.

"I think that the worse possible thing that Democratic leadership could do would be to put forth a bit of a hand-wave effort," said Rep. Abigail Spanberger, D-Va. "That would be so outrageously insulting to the American people."

Spanberger is sponsoring a bill with Texas Republican Chip Roy that would require lawmakers to place assets like stock in a blind trust.

The issue has broad support from the public. Republicans and Democrats alike point to recent polling, which they say indicated as much as three-quarters of the electorate supports action.

"Too many Americans have lost faith in Congress as an institution," said Sen. Steve Daines, R-Mont., who is sponsoring a bill with Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., to ban lawmaker trades. "Sen. Warren and I disagree on many important issues, but we agree and have found common ground that we have to restore faith in Congress."

Holman, the good government lobbyist, said it's time for Congress to go further than the Stock Act.

"It really did reduce stock trading activity by members of Congress by two-thirds," Holman said. "The problem is there's still one-third of members of Congress who are still out there trading stocks."

## Two popular bills, two problems: It's never easy in Senate

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — No, the word "Senate" is not Latin for "It's never easy." But sometimes it seems that way.

The House easily approved two bills last Tuesday with broad bipartisan support. There's no doubt Senate approval is inevitable, sooner rather than later.

But each is encountering problems — for now, let's call them speed bumps — in a chamber designed to do exactly that, to the chagrin of supporters of whatever legislation gets ensnared in the chamber's procedural netherworld.

One measure would relieve much of the financially strapped Postal Service's huge debt. The other would avoid a government shutdown this weekend.

Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., has threatened to delay the measure preventing a shutdown amid an outcry by conservative lawmakers and media opposing a federal program they say would buy crack pipes for drug abusers.

That allegation is bogus, Democrats say. A Blackburn spokesman said Monday she would drop her objections if she received a promise in writing that taxpayers' money wouldn't be spent on the pipes.

Separately, Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., blocked an initial vote Monday on the Postal Service bill, saying it needed to be reworked. He said it would "add more stress on our already enormous national debt with poor financial planning" and merely shift debt to Medicare, which has its own solvency problems.

"There is no looming deadline that will necessitate rushed action by the Senate," Scott said. The delay likely meant the Senate won't approve the bill until after next week's scheduled recess.

Scott said his roadblock won't hurt the Postal Service. The measure's supporters said it would damage the service and reaffirm voters' healthy dismay for Congress.

"What we heard is why people really are frustrated, angered at the United States Senate," said Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. He accused Scott of using "a technical detail" to delay a bipartisan mea-

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sure and lamented that "the arcane rules of the Senate allow one person to stand up" and delay widely supported legislation.

Senate bills have long faced delays, with reason. According to an apocryphal story on the Senate web-page, George Washington may have told Thomas Jefferson that the Founding Fathers designed the Senate to "cool" House bills, like saucers can be used to cool hot tea.

All 100 senators must all agree to let the chamber begin debating legislation and vote on it. That usually happens quickly and routinely for broadly supported bills.

Except when it doesn't. That can occur when senators of either party want to use the resulting delay to focus attention on an issue, or on themselves.

The Postal Service bill already encountered an embarrassing hitch as it traveled the several hundred feet across the Capitol from the House to the Senate. House staff mistakenly sent an earlier version of the legislation that omitted a last-minute amendment.

Schumer last week unwittingly scheduled a Monday evening vote limiting the time for debating the incomplete postal bill. Scott blocked the unanimous consent Schumer needed to change that to a vote on the full legislation.

"Let's help the American people and let's show that the United States Senate knows how to get a job done," said Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., an author of the postal measure.

Earlier Monday, Peters told reporters he'd had reached out to Scott but hadn't learned why he was threatening the holdup. "I hope folks are not intent on hurting the Postal Service," he said.

The bill would end a requirement that the Postal Service finance retirees' health benefits for 75 years in advance, which has driven it tens of billions of dollars into debt. It would also require it to continue deliveries six days weekly and issue data, by zip code, on how quickly mail is delivered.

The separate, short-term spending bill would keep government operating through March 11. It's aimed at giving bargainers time to complete legislation financing agencies through the rest of the fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.

Blackburn has been objecting to a \$30 million federal program that issues grants to help drug addicts avoid further health risks. She said last week that the money should not be used to "fund vending machines for crack pipes." Sens. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Tom Cotton, R-Ark., made similar complaints.

The government issued guidelines last week that said costs could be covered for equipment including "Safe smoking kits/supplies." But the Biden administration said the program would not cover safe pipes for smoking crack or methamphetamine. Covered items include drugs to prevent overdoses and containers for disposing syringes.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said last week that pipes "were never a part of the kit" and blamed the uproar on "inaccurate reporting."

Supporters say harm reduction programs help troubled people avoid even worse problems. Critics say they encourage illicit drug use.

The latest short-term bill expires at midnight Friday. An election-year shutdown would serve neither party's political interests, and an agreement to approve the measure is expected.

## S. Korean COVID deaths rise, hope rests on high booster rate

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea reported its highest number of COVID-19 deaths in a month Tuesday as U.S. health authorities advised Americans to avoid traveling to the country grappling with a fast-developing omicron surge.

The 61 deaths reported by the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency on Tuesday was the highest daily tally since the 74 reported on Jan. 19, when the country was emerging from an outbreak driven by the delta variant.

While omicron so far seems less likely to cause serious illness or death, the greater scale of the outbreak is fueling concerns that hospitalizations and fatalities could spike in coming weeks.

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The 57,177 new cases reported by the KDCA was another one-day record and more than a 12-fold increase from the levels seen in mid-January, when omicron became the dominant strain.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its travel notice for South Korea to level 4, the highest risk, advising Americans to avoid travel to the country or to make sure they are fully vaccinated if traveling is necessary.

Park Hyang, a senior South Korean Health Ministry official, said the country's hospital resources remain stable, with less than 27% of intensive care units designated for COVID-19 currently being occupied.

Officials have expressed cautious hope the country's high vaccination rate – with nearly 58% of a population of more than 51 million having received booster shots – would prevent hospital systems from buckling. They plan to start offering fourth vaccination shots to people at nursing homes and other long-term care settings later this month.

"While unvaccinated people account for only 6% of the population 12 years or older, these people have accounted for 62% of serious cases and 66.5% of the deaths over the past eight weeks," Park said during a briefing.

South Korea has reshaped its COVID-19 response due to the unprecedented surge. It has significantly eased quarantine restrictions so essential services won't be disrupted by having huge numbers of people in quarantine. More than 245,000 infected people were being treated at home as of Tuesday, weeks after at-home treatment was made the standard for mild or moderate cases.

Testing practices are also now centered around rapid antigen tests, with the more accurate laboratory tests reserved mostly for high-risk groups. But there are concerns that infected people may falsely test negative and continue to stay out in public, which could worsen the spread of the virus.

"Compared to PCR (lab) tests, rapid antigen testing has limitations in accuracy. Our new testing policy is based on the thinking that such limitations must be tolerated as a tradeoff for detecting serious cases earlier amid a major viral spread like this one," Health Ministry official Son Youngrae said.

## Sliver of hope: Kremlin sees a diplomatic path on Ukraine

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV and YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — The Kremlin signaled Monday it is ready to keep talking with the West about security grievances that led to the current Ukraine crisis, offering hope that Russia might not invade its beleaguered neighbor within days as the U.S. and European allies increasingly fear.

Questions remain about Russian President Vladimir Putin's intentions, however. And countries are evacuating diplomats and on alert for possible imminent war amid the worst East-West tensions since the Cold War.

On a last-ditch diplomatic trip, Germany's chancellor said there are "no sensible reasons" for the buildup of more than 130,000 Russian troops on Ukraine's borders to the north, south and east, and he urged more dialogue.

Britain's prime minister said Europe is "on the edge of a precipice" — but added, "there is still time for President Putin to step back." France's foreign minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, told French television that "all elements" were in place for a strong Russian offensive, but "nothing shows today" that Putin has decided to launch one.

Despite warnings from Washington, London and elsewhere that Russian troops could move on Ukraine as soon as Wednesday, Monday's meeting between Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov suggested otherwise.

At the session with Putin, Lavrov argued that Moscow should hold more talks with the U.S. and its allies despite their refusal to consider Russia's main security demands.

Moscow, which denies it has any plans to invade Ukraine, wants Western guarantees that NATO won't allow Ukraine and other former Soviet countries to join as members. It also wants the alliance to halt weapons deployments to Ukraine and roll back its forces from Eastern Europe — demands flatly rejected by the West.

The talks "can't go on indefinitely, but I would suggest to continue and expand them at this stage,"

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Lavrov said, noting that Washington has offered to conduct dialogue on limits for missile deployments in Europe, restrictions on military drills and other confidence-building measures. Lavrov said possibilities for talks "are far from being exhausted."

His comments, at an appearance orchestrated for TV cameras, seemed designed to send a message to the world about Putin's own position: namely, that hopes for a diplomatic solution aren't yet dead.

Putin noted the West could try to draw Russia into "endless talks" and questioned whether there is still a chance to reach agreement. Lavrov replied that his ministry wouldn't allow the U.S. and its allies to stonewall Russia's main requests.

The U.S. reacted coolly to Lavrov's comments.

"The path for diplomacy remains available if Russia chooses to engage constructively," White House principal deputy press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said. "However, we are clear-eyed about the prospects of that, given the steps Russia is taking on the ground in plain sight."

U.S. officials said the Russian military continued apparent attack preparations along Ukraine's borders. A U.S. defense official said small numbers of Russian ground units have been moving out of larger assembly areas for several days, taking up positions closer to the Ukrainian border at what would be departure points if Putin launched an invasion.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss information not publicly released. CBS News was first to report on the movement of the units.

Satellite images taken over the last 48 hours show increased Russian military activity in Belarus, Crimea and western Russia, including the arrival of helicopters, ground-attack aircraft and fighter-bomber jets at forward locations. The photos also show ground forces leaving their garrisons and combat units moving into convoy formation, according to Maxar Technologies, a commercial satellite imagery company that has been monitoring the Russian buildup.

Ukrainian security and defense council chief Oleksiy Danilov downplayed the threat of invasion but warned of the risk of "internal destabilization" by unspecified forces.

"Today we do not see that a large-scale offensive by the Russian Federation can take place either on (Feb.) 16th or the 17th," he told reporters after meeting lawmakers. "We are aware of the risks that exist in the territory of our country. But the situation is absolutely under control."

As if to show defiance, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday would be a "day of national unity," calling on the country to display the blue-and-yellow flags and sing the national anthem in the face of "hybrid threats."

"Our country today is as strong as ever. It is not the first threat the strong Ukrainian people have faced," Zelenskyy said Monday evening in a video address to the nation. "We're calm. We're strong. We're together. A great nation in a great country."

The country is preparing nonetheless. Kyiv residents received letters from the mayor urging them "to defend your city," and signs appeared in apartment buildings indicating the nearest bomb shelter. The mayor says the capital has about 4,500 such sites, including underground parking garages, subway stations and basements.

Dr. Tamara Ugrich said she stocked up on grains and canned food, and prepared an emergency suitcase.

"I don't believe in war, but on TV the tension is growing every day and it's getting harder and harder to keep calm. The more we are told not to panic, the more nervous people become," she said.

Others heeded the advice of Ukraine's leaders not to panic. Street music flooded central Maidan Square on Sunday night and crowds danced. "I feel calm. You should always be ready for everything, and then you will have nothing to be afraid of," said Alona Buznitskaya, a model.

During what could be a crucial week for Europe's security, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Ukraine on Monday before heading to Moscow for talks with Putin on a high-stakes diplomatic foray.

After meeting Zelenskyy, Scholz urged Russia to show signs of de-escalation, and reiterated unspecified threats to Russia's financial standing if it invades.

"There are no sensible reasons for such a military deployment," Scholz said.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres held talks with Lavrov and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro

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Kuleba and said in a statement that "abandoning diplomacy for confrontation is not a step over a line, it is a dive over a cliff."

U.S. President Joe Biden on Monday spoke by phone with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. According to a Downing Street statement, the two "agreed there remained a crucial window for diplomacy and for Russia to step back from its threats towards Ukraine."

The U.S. said it will close its embassy in Kyiv and move all remaining staff there to Lviv, a city near the Polish border. Lithuania moved diplomats' families and some nonessential diplomatic workers out of the country as well.

"It's a big mistake that some embassies moved to western Ukraine," Zelenskyy said. "It's their decision, but 'western Ukraine' doesn't exist. It's united Ukraine. If something happens, God forbids, it (escalation) will be everywhere."

So far, NATO's warnings have had little effect: Russia has only bolstered troops and weapons in the region and launched massive drills in its ally Belarus, which also neighbors Ukraine. The West fears that the drills, which run through Sunday, could be used by Moscow as a cover for an invasion from the north.

One possible off-ramp emerged this week: Ukraine's ambassador to the U.K., Vadym Prystaiko, pointed at a possibility of Ukraine shelving its NATO bid — an objective that is written into its constitution — if it would avert war with Russia.

"We might — especially being threatened like that, blackmailed by that, and pushed to it," Prystaiko told BBC Radio 5.

On Monday, Prystaiko appeared to back away from the idea, but the fact that it was raised at all suggests it is being discussed behind closed doors.

Pressed over Ukraine's NATO ambitions Monday, the Ukrainian president remained vague, referring to them as a "dream."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia would welcome such a move.

## 2 cops plan to testify about Floyd killing; prosecutors rest

By AMY FORLITI and STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Federal prosecutors rested their case Monday against three former Minneapolis police officers charged with violating George Floyd's civil rights, setting the stage for two of the officers to soon take the stand as part of their defense.

The prosecution rested its case after nearly three weeks of testimony from doctors, police officers and bystanders, including the teenager who recorded widely seen video that showed Officer Derek Chauvin pressing his knee onto Floyd's neck for 9 1/2 minutes while the 46-year-old Black man was handcuffed, facedown and pleading for air.

J. Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane and Tou Thao are broadly charged with violating Floyd's constitutional rights while acting under government authority. Kueng knelt on Floyd's back and Lane held down his legs while Thao kept bystanders back.

All three are accused of depriving Floyd of medical care. Kueng and Thao are also accused of failing to intervene to stop the May 25, 2020, killing, which triggered protests worldwide and a reexamination of racism and policing. The charges allege that the officers' actions resulted in Floyd's death.

Before court ended for the day Monday, Thao and Kueng told the judge that they plan to testify. Lane's attorney, Earl Gray, told the jury earlier that Lane would also be taking the stand, but on Monday, Gray said he and Lane would like to talk it over more before making a decision.

The defense is expected to start presenting witnesses on Tuesday.

Darnella Frazier, who was 16 when Floyd was killed, was the last witness to testify for the prosecution. Frazier, who was given a special citation by the Pulitzer Prizes for her video of the killing, said she knew Floyd needed medical care when he became unresponsive.

"Over time, he kind of just became weaker and eventually just stopped making sounds overall," she said.

Moments after she took the stand, Frazier, who is now 18, began crying, saying: "I can't do it. I'm sorry." The judge, who has been trying to keep emotional testimony out of the trial, took a short break before

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resuming. When Frazier came back, she talked about witnessing Floyd on the ground with Chauvin's knee on his neck.

"It looked like he was very uncomfortable and he kept saying, 'I can't breathe,'" she said, adding that Thao looked like he was protecting and patrolling the area. When prosecutor LeeAnn Bell asked what it appeared to her that Thao might need to protect. She said Floyd "was the only one who needed protection at that moment."

She added: "I didn't see George Floyd resist at all. The only thing I saw him do was really try to find comfort in his situation ... try to breathe and get more oxygen."

Earlier Monday, a use-of-force expert testified that the officers should have intervened. The testimony from Tim Longo, the police chief at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, was peppered with emphatic objections, numerous warnings from the judge that the information was repetitive, and combative cross-examination.

Gray, Lane's attorney, challenged Longo on whether he was asserting that "my client, a four-day veteran" should have thrown Chauvin off Floyd. Both Kueng and Lane were just a few days into their jobs as full-fledged officers.

"I think someone should have done something, yes," Longo replied.

Gray continued, thundering, "What else should they have done besides that?"

"No one asked Chauvin to get his knee off his neck," Longo said after a little more discussion.

Longo testified earlier that an officer has a duty to take "affirmative steps" to stop another officer from using excessive force.

"The term 'intervene' is a verb, it's an action word. And it requires an act. And what you do is, you stop the behavior," he said.

Chauvin, who is white, was convicted of murder and manslaughter in state court last year and later pleaded guilty to a federal civil rights charge.

Lane, who is white; Kueng, who is Black; and Thao, who is Hmong American, also face a separate state trial in June on charges alleging that they aided and abetted murder and manslaughter.

## At Olympics, the line between photo and painting can blur

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

BEIJING (AP) — A photograph is not a painting. A painting is not a photograph. Yet in the right situation, in the right hands, the two can approach each other and, in the best circumstances, seem to merge.

Add to that the unremitting scenes of dynamic motion that the Olympics provide — dramatic backdrops, unexpected moves, impossibly fit bodies performing at the height of their capacities — and you have a recipe for the arresting collision of news and aesthetics, of photography and art.

In short: Through the eyes and lenses of Associated Press photographers who are training their eyes on the arenas of competition at the Beijing Games, sometimes true magic can happen.

"Some of these photos, you can't get around it, they look like paintings," says Denis Paquin, who would know. He has overseen AP's Olympic photo report for more than a decade and has viewed thousands of images over the past two weeks.

Photography is sometimes called "painting with light." With these images, that's truer than usual.

So slow yourself down. Spend some time looking at these six images from the Beijing Winter Games and hearing from the photojournalists who made them. And think about what art is, what news is — and what photography can be when undertaken at the most thoughtful of levels.

THE SILHOUETTED SNOWBOARDER, by Gregory Bull

What it shows: China's Su Yiming competing during the men's slopestyle finals last Monday.

Why it grabs you: Creates a dreamlike relationship between the sharply focused snowboarder and the blurry mesh barrier, all backed by a blistering, blown-out sun. Has something of the elemental feel of a 19th-century tintype — the world seen through a glass, darkly.

What Bull was thinking: "That frame took a while to make. I had been relying on very standard composi-

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tions for most of that day. Using the lovely fixtures of the slopestyle course, I would leave a spot for the athlete to perform, among the backdrop of the ice Great Wall or house. So for this picture I wanted to deconstruct, tear down my planned composition. I used the sun to kind of burn a hole in the middle of the picture, and let the snowboarder tear into the lines in the composition. With our cameras, the autofocus is amazing but it will track to lines, so I had to switch to manual, and prefocus at the distance where the snowboarder would fly into the frame. As luck would have it, the snowboarder also won a medal that day, which was also nice."

THE SKATER IN THE RINGS, By Ashley Landis

What it shows: Viktor Hald Horup of Denmark warming up during a light show before the start of the men's speedskating 5,000-meter race on Feb. 6.

Why it grabs you: The colors, so saturated and dappled with shadow and light. The dark grooves along the ice. Horup's presence, smack in the middle of the red ring, caught mid-stride with his left leg in the air and his hand up, fingers visible. The diagonals, straight horizontal lines and circles that pull the image together. And the Beijing 2022 right in the middle of it all. The sense that this photo could stand in for the entire Winter Games.

What Landis was thinking: "It's a really beautiful venue, but the light is very even all the way across. So it makes it very difficult to get artistic images, like silhouettes. However, before every session, there's about a 30-second light show. And the first few days there weren't any skaters on the ice warming up during the light show and I was like, 'Wouldn't it be great if we had someone warming up and they could go across the logo across the rings?' So I went out to the highest point that we can go to see the light show, hoping that someone would be on the ice warming up. Someone was, and they happened to go right through the rings at the perfect time."

THE LUGE BLUR, by Pavel Golovkin

What it shows: Natalie Maag of Switzerland sliding during the luge women's singles last Monday.

Why it grabs you: Scale, first of all — the tiny, sharply focused, brightly colored athlete moving through a vast apparatus. The contrast of colors and the complementary curves that work with the blur to create a pleasing sense of motion.

What Golovkin was thinking: "You have to create more than simple pictures of athletes steering down the track, and one idea is to use a long shutter speed. It's also good if your object of focus separates from the background not only by moving effect but by contrast as well. Natalie Maag's brightly colored suit helps with this."

THE HOCKEY HUDDLE, by Petr David Josek

What it shows: Canada's players huddling before a women's quarterfinal hockey game between Canada and Sweden on Friday.

Why it grabs you: The vantage point, of course. But also the painterly almost-symmetry anchored by the hockey net and ramped up by the red numbers and names on the black jerseys. Plus the contrast between the matte uniforms and the shiny black helmets — and the single white one.

What Josek was thinking: "Almost all teams huddle before each match and we take a photo of it using a remote overhead camera. Sometimes it works, sometimes it does not. I cropped this image tighter to get a bit different frame than in previous matches. Also, this time the Canadian ladies had their black uniforms, which I think really works in contrast with the white rings and the white goalie's helmet."

THE UPSIDE-DOWN SUN SEEKER, by Francisco Seco

What it shows: Canada's Mark McMorris competing during the men's slopestyle qualifying on Feb. 6.

Why it grabs you: Something feels off — in the best of ways — because of the athlete being upside down. The eye is drawn back and forth from the sun to the silhouette, and the entire frame feels frozen in time — even more than most photographs. It feels like a moment that could last forever.

What Seco was thinking: "I love silhouettes. Basically I was after this photo since we started covering snowboard. On that particular day, I shot the first round of qualifying from another position to secure one pic of each rider. Then I saw location of the sun and I thought it could be a good chance to try silhouettes."

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I moved to the right side of the track, just after the last jump. I roamed a bit before I found the good spot to shoot. Then I shot few riders during the second round. I was lucky with Mark McMorris. (I would really like to mention that our photo editor, Kiichiro Sato, did nice work editing it. So I would like to share with him any credit for the photo.)"

THE MOTION MACHINE, by Matthias Schrader

What it shows: Matthew Soukup of Canada speeding down the hill during a men's large hill training session on Thursday.

Why it grabs you: The diagonals. The splash of red in the corner that complements the middle of Soukup's outfit. the jagged fragments around him, some sharp and some blurry. The utter sense of trajectory that the whole image conveys.

What Schrader was thinking: "I took this picture at the start on the ski jump tower. Besides the action pictures in the air and the landing, we also need some long time exposures and features to break up the photo galleries. That's the moment, captured on a 16-35mm with 1/10 at f 5.6. Everything blurs a bit, and nice effects can be created."

## Accounting firm: Trump financial statements aren't reliable

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The accounting firm that prepared former President Donald Trump's annual financial statements says the documents, used to secure lucrative loans and burnish Trump's image as a wealthy businessman, "should no longer be relied upon" after New York's attorney general said they regularly misstated the value of assets.

In a letter to the Trump Organization's lawyer Feb. 9, Mazars USA LLP advised the company to inform anyone who had gotten the documents not to use them when assessing the financial health of the company and the ex-president. The firm also said it was cutting ties with Trump, its highest-profile client.

Mazars' letter, made public in a court filing Monday, came just weeks after New York Attorney General Letitia James said her civil investigation uncovered evidence that Trump and his company used "fraudulent or misleading" valuations of its golf clubs, skyscrapers and other properties to get loans and tax benefits.

"While we have not concluded that the various financial statements, as a whole, contain material discrepancies, based upon the totality of the circumstances, we believe our advice to you to no longer rely upon those financial statements is appropriate," Mazars General Counsel William J. Kelly wrote to his Trump Organization counterpart, Alan Garten.

Kelly told Garten that Mazars could no longer work with Trump because of a conflict of interest and urged him to find another tax preparer. Kelly said several Trump-related tax returns still needed to be finished, including those of the former president and first lady.

The Trump Organization said in a statement it was "disappointed that Mazars has chosen to part ways," but took Kelly's letter as a positive because the accounting firm hadn't found material discrepancies in Trump's financial statements.

The letter "confirms that after conducting a subsequent review of all prior statements of financial condition, Mazars' work was performed in accordance with all applicable accounting standards and principles and that such statements of financial condition do not contain any material discrepancies," the Trump Organization said. "This confirmation effectively renders the investigations by the DA and AG moot."

Kelly said Mazars performed its work on Trump's financial statements "in accordance with professional standards" but that it could no longer stand by the documents in light of James' findings and its own investigation. Kelly said Mazars' conclusions applied to Trump's 2011-2020 financial statements. Another firm handled Trump's 2021 financial statement.

James' office included a copy of Kelly's letter in a court filing as she seeks to enforce a subpoena to have Trump and his two eldest children, Donald Jr. and Ivanka, testify under oath. A state court judge, Arthur Engoron, is scheduled to hear arguments Thursday in the subpoena dispute.

James, a Democrat, said Monday that given the evidence, "there should be no doubt that this is a lawful



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investigation and that we have legitimate reason" to question Trump, a Republican, and his children, both of whom have been Trump Organization executives.

Trump's lawyers have argued that any testimony they give could be used against them in a parallel criminal investigation being overseen by the Manhattan district attorney's office — a probe that led to tax fraud charges last year against the Trump Organization and Allen Weisselberg, its longtime chief financial officer.

Trump has given his Statement of Financial Condition — a yearly snapshot of his holdings — to banks to secure hundreds of millions of dollars worth of loans on properties such as a Wall Street office building and a Florida golf course, and to financial magazines to justify his place among the world's billionaires.

In a court filing last month, James' office detailed several instances in which Trump misstated the value of assets on financial statements given to banks.

Deutsche Bank accepted Trump's financial statements without objection in a deal for \$300 million in loans for three of his properties and, in internal memoranda, emphasized Trump's reported financial strength as a factor in lending to him, James' office said.

Another bank said it received financial statements in 2014 stating Trump had a net worth of \$5.8 billion and liquidity of \$302 million. A bank official involved in that deal told James' office that if he were aware of misstatements on Trump's statement of financial condition, he would have killed the deal.

James' office said its investigation started after Trump's former personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, told Congress in 2019 that Trump had a history of misrepresenting the value of assets to gain favorable loan terms and tax benefits.

Cohen gave copies of three of Trump's financial statements to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform. Cohen said Trump gave the statements to Deutsche Bank to inquire about a loan to buy the NFL's Buffalo Bills and to Forbes magazine to substantiate his claim to a spot on its list of the world's wealthiest people.

Cohen served time in federal prison after pleading guilty in 2018 to tax crimes, lying to Congress and campaign finance violations, some of which involved his role in orchestrating payments to two women to keep them from talking about alleged affairs with Trump.

Trump's lawyers have portrayed Cohen as having a vendetta against Trump and said in a recent court filing that it "stretches all credibility to believe that" James' office put "any legitimate stock" in his testimony.

James' office responded Monday that not only did it rely on Cohen's testimony, but that his testimony is "vindicated by the evidence obtained to date and Mazars's notification that those statements should not be relied upon."

## Canada's Trudeau invokes emergency powers to quell protests

By ROB GILLIES and TED SHAFFREY Associated Press

OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked emergency powers Monday to quell the paralyzing protests by truckers and others angry over Canada's COVID-19 restrictions, outlining plans not only to tow away their rigs but to strike at their bank accounts and their livelihoods.

"These blockades are illegal, and if you are still participating, the time to go home is now," he declared.

In invoking Canada's Emergencies Act, which gives the federal government broad powers to restore order, Trudeau ruled out using the military.

His government instead threatened to tow away vehicles to keep essential services running; freeze truckers' personal and corporate bank accounts; and suspend the insurance on their rigs.

"Consider yourselves warned," Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said. "Send your rigs home."

Freeland, who is also the finance minister, said the government will also broaden its anti-money-laundering regulations to target crowd-funding sites that are being used to support the illegal blockades.

Trudeau did not indicate when the new crackdowns would begin. But he gave assurances the emergency measures "will be time-limited, geographically targeted, as well as reasonable and proportionate to the threats they are meant to address."

For more than two weeks, hundreds and sometimes thousands of protesters in trucks and other ve-

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hicles have clogged the streets of Ottawa, the capital, and besieged Parliament Hill, railing against vaccine mandates for truckers and other COVID-19 precautions and condemning Trudeau's Liberal government.

Members of the self-styled Freedom Convoy have also blockaded various U.S.-Canadian border crossings, though the busiest and most important — the Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit — was reopened on Sunday after police arrested dozens of demonstrators and broke the nearly week-long siege that had disrupted auto production in both countries.

"This is the biggest, greatest, most severe test Trudeau has faced," said Wesley Wark, a University of Ottawa professor and national security expert.

Invoking the Emergencies Act would allow the government to declare the Ottawa protest illegal and clear it out by such means as towing vehicles, Wark said. It would also enable the government to make greater use of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the federal police agency.

One of the protest organizers in Ottawa vowed not to back down in the face of pressure from the government.

"There are no threats that will frighten us. We will hold the line," Tamara Lich said.

Cadalin Valcea, a truck driver from Montreal protesting for more than two weeks, said he will move only if forced: "We want only one thing: to finish with this lockdown and these restrictions."

Trudeau met virtually with leaders of the country's provinces before announcing the crackdown.

Doug Ford, the Conservative premier of Ontario, which is Canada's most populous province and includes Ottawa and Windsor, expressed support for emergency action, saying: "We need law and order. Our country is at risk now."

But the leaders of other provinces warned the prime minister against taking such a step, some of them cautioning it could inflame an already dangerous situation.

"At this point, it would not help the social climate. There is a lot of pressure, and I think we have to be careful," said Quebec Premier François Legault. "It wouldn't help for the polarization."

The protests have drawn support from right-wing extremists and armed citizens in Canada, and have been cheered on in the U.S. by Fox News personalities and conservatives such as Donald Trump.

Some conservatives pushed Trudeau to simply drop the pandemic mandates.

"He's got protests right around the country, and now he's dropping in the polls, desperately trying to save his political career. The solution is staring him in the face," said opposition Conservative lawmaker Pierre Poilievre, who is running for the party's leadership.

Millions in donations have poured in supporting the protests, including a big chunk from the U.S.

Hackers who apparently infiltrated one of fundraising websites, GiveSendGo.com, dumped a file online that showed a tally of nearly 93,000 donations totaling \$8.4 million through Thursday, an Associated Press analysis of the data found.

Roughly 40% of the money raised came from the U.S. while slightly over half was from Canada.

In other developments, the Mounties said they arrested 11 people at the blockaded border crossing at Coutts, Alberta, opposite Montana, after learning of a cache of guns and ammunition.

Police said a small group within the protest was said to have a "willingness to use force against the police if any attempts were made to disrupt the blockade." Authorities seized long guns, handguns, body armor and a large quantity of ammunition.

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney also said protesters in a tractor and a heavy-duty truck tried to ram a police vehicle at Coutts on Sunday night and fled. He said some protesters want to "take this in a very dangerous and dark direction."

Over the past weeks, authorities have hesitated to move against the protesters. Local officials cited a lack of police manpower and fears of violence, while provincial and federal authorities disagreed over who had responsibility for quelling the unrest.

An earlier version of the Emergencies Act, called the War Measures Act, was used just once during peacetime, by Trudeau's late father, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, to deal with a militant Quebec independence movement in 1970.

The demonstrations have inspired similar convoys in France, New Zealand and the Netherlands. U.S.

authorities have said that truck convoys may be in the works in the United States.

Invoking emergency powers would be a signal to Canadians and allies like the United States and around the world "who are wondering what the hell has Canada been up to," Wark said.

Also Monday, Ontario's premier announced that on March 1, the province will lift its requirement that people show proof of vaccination to get into restaurants, restaurants, gyms and sporting events. The surge of cases caused by the omicron variant has crested in Canada.

"We are moving in this direction because it is safe to do so. Today's announcement is not because of what's happening in Ottawa or Windsor but despite it," Ford said.

The Ambassador Bridge, which carries 25% of all trade between the two countries, reopened to traffic late Sunday night. The interruption forced General Motors, Ford, Toyota and other automakers to close plants or curtail production on both sides of the border. Some of them have yet to get back to full production.

The siege in Ottawa, about 470 miles (750 kilometers) away, has infuriated residents fed up with government inaction. They have complained of being harassed and intimidated by the protesters who have parked their rigs bumper to bumper on the streets.

"It's stressful. I feel angry at what's happening. This isn't Canada. This does not represent us," Colleen Sinclair, a counter-protester who lives in Ottawa.

Many of Canada's COVID-19 restrictions, such as mask rules and vaccine passports for getting into restaurants and theaters, are already falling away as the omicron surge levels off.

Pandemic restrictions have been far stricter in Canada than in the U.S., but Canadians have largely supported them. The vast majority of Canadians are vaccinated.

## Unvaccinated medical workers turn to religious exemptions

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

When nurse Julia Buffo was told by her Montana hospital that she had to be vaccinated against COVID-19, she responded by filling out paperwork declaring that the shots run afoul of her religious beliefs.

She cited various Old and New Testament verses including a passage from Revelation that vaccine opponents often quote to liken the shots to the "Mark of the Beast." She told her managers that God is the "ultimate guardian of health" and that accepting the vaccine would make her "complicit with evil."

Religious exemptions like the one Buffo obtained are increasingly becoming a workaround for unvaccinated hospital and nursing home workers who want to keep their jobs in the face of federal mandates that are going into effect nationwide this week.

In some institutions, religious exemptions are being invoked by staff and approved by managers in large numbers. It's a tricky issue for hospital administrators, who are struggling to maintain adequate staff levels and are often reticent to question the legitimacy of the requests.

"We're not going to have a Spanish inquisition with Torquemada deciding if your religious exemption is granted or not by the Grand Inquisitor," said Dr. Randy Tobler, CEO of Scotland County Hospital in Missouri, where about 25% of the 145 employees remain unvaccinated and 30 of them have been granted exemptions.

Tobler, who is vaccinated, said some employees threatened to quit if they were required to get the shot.

"For people that want to judge what we're doing in rural America, I'd love them to come and walk in our shoes for a little while, just come and sit in the desk and try to staff the place," Tobler said.

At Cody Regional Health in Wyoming, about 200 of the 620 staffers have asked for religious exemptions and most have been granted. Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte pledged his support last week to "defending Montanans against discrimination based on their vaccination status" in an open letter to medical workers and urged the unvaccinated to consider seeking exemptions. And West Virginia lawmakers have advanced a proposal with health care workers in mind that would let those who quit because their exemption was denied collect unemployment.

As of Monday health care workers in 24 states — all but three of which went for then-President Donald Trump in the 2020 election — will be required to have received their first vaccine dose or an exemption.

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The mandate already took effect late last month in jurisdictions that didn't challenge the requirement in court, although enforcement actions won't begin immediately.

It affects a wide swath of the industry, covering doctors, nurses, technicians, aides, hospital volunteers, nursing homes, home-health agencies and other providers that participate in the federal Medicare or Medicaid programs.

Beyond the federal mandate, some hospitals and cities have imposed their own requirements. One of the most sweeping is in New York City, where public workers faced termination if they weren't vaccinated by Friday. The military branches have their own vaccine mandates, but commanders have been loath to grant religious exemptions.

While reasons given for seeking exemptions vary, the vaccines' remote link to fetuses aborted decades ago is often cited — lab-grown cell lines descended from those fetuses were used in testing and manufacturing processes. The vaccines do not contain fetal cells, however, and workers generally are seeking the exemptions without the backing of major denominations and prominent religious leaders.

But as the health care mandate takes effect, hospital leaders acknowledge that they see the exemptions as a way to retain staff at a time when resources are already stretched thin.

"Our position has been we would we want we want everyone vaccinated," said Brock Slabach, chief operations officer for the National Rural Health Association. "But we also think that access to care is incredibly important."

Similar stories abound across the country.

At the 25-bed Community Hospital in McCook, Nebraska, in the southwestern part of the state, about 20% of the 320 employees have not been vaccinated. About 35 applied for exemptions, and others are still deciding what to do. The hospital has rejected some requests that relied on specious religious reasoning.

"If it's a complete, like, essay on the science behind why this shouldn't be allowed, or a complete essay on why a certain political party or political figure is an idiot, which we've seen, we don't go with that because that's not religious at all," hospital president and CEO Troy Buntz said. "We do push back on those, but I don't know if other people are even reading the exemptions as much as they probably should be."

In Mississippi, some hospitals have nearly all their employees vaccinated while others are closer to the 50% to 70% range, according to Richard Roberson, the state hospital association's general counsel. Since the mandate was announced, he has received dozens of calls inquiring about how the exemptions work.

"I don't know how many there will be, but we're in the heart of the Bible belt. And so that is something that is very near and dear to everyone's heart," Roberson said.

And at the 14-bed Holton Community Hospital in rural northeastern Kansas, 28 out of 193 employees have gotten religious exemptions and one got a medical exemption. The mandate helped nudge the staff vaccination rate from around 75% to nearly 87%, but some younger nurses remain hesitant because of disproven concerns that the vaccine could hurt their fertility, CEO Carrie Saia said.

Saia questioned vaccine resistance among medical workers since they see every day that those in their care with the most severe COVID-19 consequences are overwhelmingly unvaccinated. But "unfortunately, with the COVID 19 pandemic, everything has gotten so political or polarized," she said.

Buffo, the Montana nurse, said she was in a "state of terror" when the mandate was announced, fearing that it might threaten her career. She asked herself how much she was willing to sacrifice for her values, she added, and turning to the Bible strengthened her resolve to resist what she called the "insidious evil behind the vaccine campaign."

But Marcella Dahl, a primary care clinic nurse in Sidney, Montana, said she feels like some people are abusing the exemptions and it's alarming that some religious leaders are encouraging the practice.

"Half of the people saying this don't even go to church," Dahl said. "I think it puts everybody at risk."

Faith-based opposition to immunizations in the country historically has been limited to just a relatively few small denominations such as the End Time Ministries and the Church of the First Born. But during the pandemic, some more mainstream preachers have spoken out against the vaccines from the pulpit.

"That's new, and that's a problem," said Dr. Chris Beyrer, an epidemiologist at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "If you are not going to be vaccinated and you're going to be caring for the

frail, the elderly, you should get out of health care.”

## Woman killed by man who followed her into NYC apartment

By KAREN MATTHEWS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A woman was stabbed to death inside her lower Manhattan apartment by a man who followed her from the street into her building, authorities said.

Christina Yuna Lee, 35, was found fatally wounded in her bathtub at about 4:30 a.m. Sunday, police said. The suspected killer was taken into custody after he at first tried to flee down a fire escape and then barricaded himself inside the apartment, a police spokesperson said.

Police announced Monday that Assamad Nash, 25, was arrested on charges of murder and burglary. It wasn't clear if he had an attorney who could comment on the charges.

Officials including New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and New York City Mayor Eric Adams denounced Lee's killing as the latest in a string of unprovoked attacks on people of Asian descent.

"I join New Yorkers standing together in support of our AAPI friends & neighbors," Hochul said on Twitter.

Police have not classified Lee's death as a hate crime, but Adams said the police are investigating and added, "we stand with our Asian community today."

Several dozen neighborhood residents and their supporters chanted "Enough is enough!" at a rally on Monday near the victim's building. "Our elected officials need to act," said Susan Lee, who is not related to Christina Lee. "I'm begging them to act so that not another life is lost."

Christina Lee worked as a senior creative producer at Splice, an online platform for digital music. She was a graduate of Rutgers University and had previously worked for companies including Marriott and the shoe retailer Toms, according to her LinkedIn page.

"Over the weekend, our beloved Christina Lee was senselessly murdered in her home," Splice officials said in a statement posted on Twitter. "Our hearts are broken. Always dedicated to making beautiful and inclusive artwork, Christina is irreplaceable. As we start to process this tragedy, we ask that you remember Christina Lee as the magical person she was, always filled with joy. We wish peace upon her family in their grief."

Surveillance video obtained by the New York Post shows a man following Lee into her building on Chrystie Street in Chinatown.

The building's landlord told the Post that cameras posted on every floor showed the man followed Lee all the way up the stairs to her sixth floor apartment. A neighbor heard screaming and called 911, police said.

The killing happened weeks after another woman of Asian descent, Michelle Alyssa Go, was killed by a man who pushed her in front of an oncoming subway train at the Times Square station.

## DNA analysis of elephant ivory reveals trafficking networks

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — As few as three major criminal groups are responsible for smuggling the vast majority of elephant ivory tusks out of Africa, according to a new study.

Researchers used analysis of DNA from seized elephant tusks and evidence such as phone records, license plates, financial records and shipping documents to map trafficking operations across the continent and better understand who was behind the crimes. The study was published Monday in the journal *Nature Human Behavior*.

"When you have the genetic analysis and other data, you can finally begin to understand the illicit supply chain — that's absolutely key to countering these networks," said Louise Shelley, who researches illegal trade at George Mason University and was not involved in the research.

Conservation biologist Samuel Wasser, a study co-author, hopes the findings will help law enforcement officials target the leaders of these networks instead of low-level poachers who are easily replaced by criminal organizations.

"If you can stop the trade where the ivory is being consolidated and exported out of the country, those

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are really the key players," said Wasser, who co-directs the Center for Environmental Forensic Science at the University of Washington.

Africa's elephant population is fast dwindling. From around 5 million elephants a century ago to 1.3 million in 1979, the total number of elephants in Africa is now estimated to be around 415,000.

A 1989 ban on international commercial ivory trade hasn't stopped the decline. Each year, an estimated 1.1 million pounds (500 metric tons) of poached elephant tusks are shipped from Africa, mostly to Asia.

For the past two decades, Wasser has fixated on a few key questions: "Where is most of the ivory being poached, who is moving it, and how many people are they?"

He works with wildlife authorities in Kenya, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and elsewhere, who contact him after they intercept ivory shipments. He flies to the countries to take small samples of tusks to analyze the DNA. He has now amassed samples from the tusks of more than 4,300 elephants trafficked out of Africa between 1995 and today.

"That's an amazing, remarkable data set," said Princeton University biologist Robert Pringle, who was not involved in the study. With such data, "it becomes possible to spot connections and make strong inferences," he said.

In 2004, Wasser demonstrated that DNA from elephant tusks and dung could be used to pinpoint their home location to within a few hundred miles. In 2018, he recognized that finding identical DNA in tusks from two different ivory seizures meant they were harvested from the same animal – and likely trafficked by the same poaching network.

The new research expands that approach to identify DNA belonging to elephant parents and offspring, as well as siblings — and led to the discovery that only a very few criminal groups are behind most of the ivory trafficking in Africa.

Because female elephants remain in the same family group their whole life, and most males don't travel too far from their family herd, the researchers hypothesize that tusks from close family members are likely to have been poached at the same time, or by the same operators.

Such genetic links can provide a blueprint for wildlife authorities seeking other evidence – cell phone records, license plates, shipping documents and financial statements – to link different ivory shipments.

Previously when an ivory shipment was intercepted, the one seizure wouldn't allow authorities to identify the organization behind the crime, said Special Agent John Brown III of the Office of Homeland Security Investigations, who has worked on environmental crimes for 25 years.

But the scientists' work identifying DNA links can "alert us to the connections between individual seizures," said Brown, who is also a co-author. "This collaborative effort has definitely been the backbone of multiple multinational investigations that are still ongoing," he said.

They identified several poaching hotspots, including regions of Tanzania, Kenya, Botswana, Gabon and Republic of Congo. Tusks are often moved to warehouses in another location to be combined with other contraband in shipping containers, then moved to ports. Current trafficking hubs exist in Kampala, Uganda; Mombasa, Kenya; and Lome, Togo.

Two suspects were recently arrested as a result of one such investigation, said Wasser.

Traffickers that smuggle ivory also often move other contraband, the researchers found. A quarter of large seizures of pangolin scales – a heavily-poached anteater-like animal – are co-mingled with ivory, for instance.

"Confronting these networks is a great example of how genetics can be used for conservation purposes," said Brian Arnold, a Princeton University evolutionary biologist who was not involved in the research.

## **A-Rod, once scorned by Trump, in group buying his D.C. hotel**

By BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

Former New York Yankees slugger Alex Rodriguez, once vilified by Donald Trump as a "druggie" and "joke" unworthy of wearing the pinstripes, is now a key part of an investment group seeking to buy the rights to the ex-president's marquee Washington, D.C., hotel, people familiar with the deal told The As-

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sociated Press.

A-Rod's involvement in the \$375 million deal, which could close within weeks, would make the athlete-turned-entrepreneur an unlikely financial savior for Trump, allowing him to recoup millions he invested and perhaps even emerge with a profit from his money-losing hotel.

"This is just more proof that the only thing that matters to Trump is money," said Trump biographer Michael D'Antonio. "If A-Rod can bail out Trump and get him out of a sticky situation and help him turn a profit, he's going to take that deal. He'd take it from Hillary Clinton."

While published reports late last year identified the buyer as Miami-based CGI Merchant Group, the rights to lease the 263-room property near the White House are actually being purchased by a fund led by CGI that includes Rodriguez as a general partner, two people familiar with the deal told the AP. The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the deal, declined to detail Rodriguez's stake other than to say he is a key investor.

One of the sources identified the fund as the \$650 million Hospitality Opportunity Fund that CGI, Rodriguez and New York real estate financier Adi Chugh set up in late 2020 to buy hotels with plunging valuations due to coronavirus shutdowns and rebrand them as a collection of "socially conscious" and "eco-friendly" properties.

But the Trump International Hotel in Washington may not be such a bargain. If the deal is finalized at the currently offered price of \$375 million, much higher than experts expected, it could allow Trump to emerge with a profit after losing tens of millions of dollars on the hotel even as it became a magnet for lobbyists, diplomats and GOP supporters.

Taking in \$375 million would more than make up for the \$200 million Trump's company put into renovating the historic, federally-owned Old Post Office building into a luxury hotel after signing a lease with the General Services Administration in 2012, as well as the \$70 million that a congressional oversight committee says the hotel lost during Trump's four years in office.

Real estate experts say a more realistic price in the current Washington market would be \$1 million per room, or about \$260 million. But hotel brokers, consultants and other experts AP contacted say determining a fair value for this particular property is exceedingly difficult, in part because it's a lease being sold. Also, the only name over the door since it opened more than five years ago has been Trump's and there is no telling how many guests might come in once those divisive five letters are removed.

Rodriguez, reached through his spokesman Monday, did not immediately respond to a request for comment, nor did the Trump Organization. CGI and Surya Capital, the hospitality fund's third partner run by Indian-born investor Chugh, declined to comment. The GSA, which must approve any transfer of the lease, also did not respond to a request for comment.

Word of Rodriguez's involvement in the Trump hotel deal brings together two infamously polarizing figures and has cast a renewed spotlight on their often-tempestuous relationship.

Trump, a longtime Yankees fan, said in a 2012 radio interview that he was never a fan of Rodriguez's -- either as a player or person -- citing an unspecified "bad experience" he had with A-Rod when he lived in Trump's Park Avenue building.

Trump has also tweeted about A-Rod dozens of times, mostly in a span from 2011 to 2013 prior to Major League Baseball suspending Rodriguez for the entire 2014 season for use and possession of prohibited performance-enhancing substances, including testosterone and human growth hormone, and attempting to obstruct MLB's investigation.

"The @Yankees should immediately stop paying A-Rod — he signed his contract without telling them he was a druggie," @realDonaldTrump said on Opening Day 2013.

"Druggie A-Rod has disgraced the blessed @Yankees organization, lied to the fans & embarrassed NYC. He does not deserve to wear the pinstripes," Trump said in another tweet.

But in recent years, there seemed to be a cooling off. Trump praised A-Rod when the two appeared together at a charity reception at his Bronx golf course in 2015. And Trump reportedly called the 14-time All-Star in the early days of the pandemic in 2020 for advice on how to handle the coronavirus.

That didn't stop Rodriguez and his then-fiancee Jennifer Lopez from appearing in an online campaign

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ad for Joe Biden just weeks before the 2020 presidential election, urging Hispanic voters to turn out for the Democrat.

A-Rod's prior political activity included donations to Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Republican Mitt Romney in 2012, a gift Trump felt compelled to tweet about at the time: "I started to get very worried about Mitt's chances when I heard that A-Rod donated to his campaign. Everything A-Rod touches turns bad."

Since the 46-year-old Rodriguez's playing days ended in 2016, he has focused heavily on investing, including being part of a \$1.5 billion deal last year to buy the NBA's Minnesota Timberwolves. Rodriguez also owns numerous office, retail and residential properties, and stakes in dozens of businesses, including online groceries, private plane sharing, a beer brand, and gym and yoga chains.

Rodriguez was an enthusiastic supporter of the \$650 million Hospitality Opportunity Fund when it launched in December 2020 with plans to buy more than 20 hotels, praising lead investor CGI for its socially conscious approach to investing that focuses on helping "communities it calls home."

CGI's chief executive, Jamaican-born Raoul Thomas, has donated heavily to Democratic politicians and is turning to an increasingly popular marketing strategy that promises to combat social injustices and a warming planet. The website for CGI, owner of mostly office and retail buildings in the Miami area, trumpets what it calls "conscious certified" properties that help local groups working on social, health and environmental issues and are committed to cutting their carbon footprint.

So far, the fund has purchased and renovated two hotels under the Gabriel name in the Miami area and a third on the campus of Morris Brown College in Atlanta, a deal that included \$30 million from CGI for the historically Black school to develop a hotel and hospitality training program.

If the Trump hotel purchase follows that pattern, a property that once was packed with GOP politicians rallying behind a president who ridiculed "woke" liberal culture and once called global warming a "Chinese hoax" would find itself pledging 1% of room revenue to local charities, buying from local businesses and using eco-friendly products.

Said Trump biographer D'Antonio: "The idea of someone taking over this citadel to right-wing heedless excess and turning it into a haven for the socially and environmentally conscious is delicious."

## **Biden has long-term inflation plan, but voter patience short**

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden came into office with a plan to fix inflation — just not the particular inflationary problem that the country now faces.

His belief is that a cluster of companies control too many industries, which reduces competition for both customers and workers. That leads to higher prices and lower wages in what the White House says is an average cost of \$5,000 annually for U.S. families. Biden is now trying to remedy the situation with 72 distinct initiatives — everything from new rules for cell phone repairs to regulations on meatpacking to more merger reviews.

"The dynamics of the modern American economy — the increased consolidation and lack of competition — has distorted market incentives in important ways," said Brian Deese, director of the White House National Economic Council. "The president gave us the direction that he wanted us to come back and say what could we do to address this issue of consolidation across industries in a way that would be durable."

But even administration officials acknowledge that the initiatives outlined by the president's seven-month-old competition council aren't designed to quickly stop the 7.5% inflation that's frustrating Americans and damaging Biden's popularity. Furthermore, business groups dispute the fundamental premise that competition has faded within the U.S. economy and they are prepared to challenge the administration's new initiatives in court.

"It will strangle economic growth," said Neil Bradley, executive vice president and chief policy officer of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "Ironically, what this will do is actually lead to more inflation."

Part of Biden's dilemma is that reorienting a bureaucracy to promote competition takes time, and voters want to see inflation — running at a 40-year peak— start dropping now. Voters feel the bite of inflation



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with every trip they make to the grocery store or the gas station, yet the president is traveling the country to discuss solutions such as competition and new infrastructure that predate the current predicament and would have a much more gradual impact.

America's current inflation woes stem from the pandemic. Supply chains for computer chips, clothes, furniture and other goods are under stress. At the same time, consumer demand has surged after a historical amount of government aid flowed into the economy. Despite efforts to get the kinks out of the supply chain, price increases have stayed high in recent months instead of fading as many initial forecasts suggested. That has the Federal Reserve ready to increase interest rates to lower inflation.

In a January survey by the University of Chicago, two-thirds of leading economists said that the concentrated power of companies does not explain the current rash of inflation.

New York University economist Thomas Philippon has welcomed the administration's approach — while allowing it would do little to bring down prices. As the author of the 2019 book, "The Great Reversal: How America Gave Up on Free Markets," Philippon is the source of the administration's statement that market concentration places a \$5,000 drag on an average family.

What Philippon observed was that other nations had embraced a level of antitrust enforcement and competition that no longer exists in America, resulting in lower costs for cell phone service, internet and airline tickets in Europe relative to the U.S.

"As a way to fight current inflation, it is unlikely to have a big impact in the short term, but it can still be useful," Philippon said. "I think of it more as a positive side effect of something that should be done in any case."

The Biden administration contends that even if the lack of competition didn't directly trigger the recent spike in prices, it has contributed to inflation. The White House Council of Economic Advisers blogged in July about how more sectors of the economy are effectively controlled by a smaller number of companies.

It cited studies that show how mergers led to higher prices for hospital services, health insurance, airline tickets and beer. It also documented a decline in government reviews of mergers and noted that the 2020 federal lawsuits against Google and, separately, Facebook were the first major monopolization cases in 22 years.

After the second meeting of the government-wide competition council in late January, the White House charted its progress. The Food and Drug Administration has proposed selling hearing aids over-the-counter, "lowering their cost from thousands of dollars to hundreds of dollars," according to a White House statement. The Federal Trade Commission will increase enforcement against restrictions that companies place on people repairing their own electronic devices. The Transportation Department figures it can cut prices of airline tickets in the New York City area by opening up 16 slots to a low-cost carrier at the airport in Newark, New Jersey.

For proof that more competition can lead to lower prices, administration officials cite the example of eyeglasses. Before 1979, people could only buy eyeglasses from doctors who wrote their prescriptions. The FTC then passed a rule that forced doctors to give out prescriptions, causing the average price of glasses to fall 30.4% to \$178 (in 1979 dollars).

The issue does not break cleanly along partisan lines. Republican Sens. Todd Young of Indiana and Kevin Cramer of North Dakota have sponsored a bill to limit companies from using non-compete agreements, which can keep workers from going to another employer for more money.

But many in the business sector dispute Biden's core premise that the U.S. economy has become less competitive. They argue that mergers allow companies to operate more efficiently and the resulting gains in productivity benefit consumers.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce says market concentration had waned by 2017 and it intends to challenge some of the administration's regulatory actions in court.

Airlines for America, a trade association, says that consumers are better off under industry consolidation. In inflation-adjusted terms, it said, the average price of a roundtrip ticket has fallen nearly \$100 since 2010 to \$306 in 2020.

The Business Roundtable, a group representing CEOs, said that at a time of high inflation "more burden-

some government regulations are not what the economy or Americans need.”

Despite the pandemic and inflation, companies have still found ways to achieve historic profits. Corporate profits after tax equaled 11.8% of the total U.S. economy in the second quarter of last year, the highest share on record going back to 1947. The Biden administration is arguing that government policy can ensure that more of that money goes to workers and customers.

The fact that the Biden administration is focused on corporate profits and structure could ultimately limit how much companies can charge and that could deter some inflation, said Barry Lynn, executive director of the Open Markets Institute.

“It sends a message,” Lynn said. “Just having cops walking the beat, having cops out there, saying, ‘Hey, we’re watching. We’re looking. We’re going to be checking your profit levels. We’re going to be targeting those who seem to be really exploiting their monopoly power.’ That’s going to have an effect.”

## Tripwire for real war? Cyber’s fuzzy rules of engagement

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

BOSTON (AP) — President Joe Biden couldn’t have been more blunt about the risks of cyberattacks spinning out of control. “If we end up in a war, a real shooting war with a major power, it’s going to be as a consequence of a cyber breach of great consequence,” he told his intelligence brain trust in July.

Now tensions are soaring over Ukraine with Western officials warning about the danger of Russia launching damaging cyberattacks against Ukraine’s NATO allies. While no one is suggesting that could lead to a full-blown war between nuclear-armed rivals, the risk of escalation is serious.

The danger is in the uncertainty about what crosses a digital red line. Cyberattacks, including those that cripple critical infrastructure with ransomware, have been on the rise for years and often go unpunished. It’s unclear how grave a malicious cyber operation by a state actor would have to be to cross the threshold to an act of war.

“The rules are fuzzy,” said Max Smeets, director of the European Cyber Conflict Research Initiative. “It’s not clear what is allowed, what isn’t allowed.”

The United States and other NATO members have threatened crippling sanctions against Russia if it sends troops into Ukraine. Less clear is whether such sanctions, whose secondary effects could also hurt Europe, would be imposed if Russia were to seriously damage Ukrainian critical infrastructure — power, telecommunications, finance, railways — with cyberattacks in lieu of invading.

And if the West were to respond harshly to Russian aggression, Moscow could retaliate against NATO nations in cyberspace with an intensity and on a scale previously unseen. A major cyberattack on U.S. targets would almost certainly unleash a muscular response. But what of lesser cyberattacks? Or if Russian President Vladimir Putin restricted them to a NATO member in Europe?

Under Article 5 of the organization’s treaty, an attack on any of its 30 members is considered an attack on all. But unclear is what it would take to unleash full-scale cyber retaliation. Or how bad an attack would have to be to trigger retaliation from NATO’s most potent cyber military forces, led by the U.S. and Britain.

Cyberspace is exceptionally unruly. No arms control treaties exist to put guard rails on state-backed hacking, which is often shielded by plausible deniability as it’s often difficult to quickly attribute cyberattacks and intelligence-gathering intrusions. The technology is cheap and criminals can act as proxies, further muddying attribution. Freelancers and hacktivists compound the problem.

In 2015, the major powers and others agreed on a set of 11 voluntary norms of international cyber behavior at the United Nations. But they are routinely ignored. Russia helped craft them only to knock Ukraine’s power grid offline that winter and set in motion its hack-and-leak operation to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Hacking is now a core component of great power conflict. In 2016, NATO formally designated cyberspace a “domain” of conflict, alongside land, sea and air.

Nowhere has the militarization of cyberspace been more clear than in Putin’s bid to return Ukraine to Moscow’s orbit.

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To Serhii Demediuk, the No. 2 official on Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, a noisy cyberattack last month was "part of a full-scale Russian operation directed at destabilizing the situation in Ukraine, aimed at exploding our Euro-Atlantic integration and seizing power."

The attack damaged servers at the State Emergency Service and at the Motor Transport Insurance Bureau with a malicious "wiper" cloaked as ransomware. The damage proved minimal, but a message posted simultaneously on dozens of defaced government websites said: "Be afraid and expect the worst."

Such attacks are apt to continue as Putin tries to "degrade" and "delegitimize" trust in Ukrainian institutions, the cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike said in a blog on Russian military cyber wreckage in the former Soviet republic: Winter attacks on the power grid in 2015 and 2016 were followed by NotPetya, which exacted more than \$10 billion in damage globally.

Michele Markoff, the U.S. State Department's deputy coordinator for cyber issues, thinks "muscular diplomacy" is the only way to end such "immoral, unethical and destabilizing behavior."

But how? Unlike nuclear arms, cyberweapons can't easily be quantified, verified and limited in treaties. Nor are violators apt to be held accountable in the United Nations, not with Russia and China wielding veto power on its Security Council.

"We've wallowed kind of in a quagmire for years now on making transgressors accountable," said Duncan Hollis, a Temple Law professor and former State Department legal adviser.

Members endorsed in May an update to the 2015 U.N. norms that further delineates what should be out of bounds: including hospitals, energy, water and sanitation, education and financial services. That has hardly deterred Russian-speaking ransomware crooks, who are at the very least tolerated by the Kremlin. Nor have U.S. indictments of Russian and Chinese state hackers and the blacklisting of tech companies accused of aiding them helped much.

Under a new policy NATO adopted last year after U.S. lobbying, an accumulation of lower-level cyberattacks — far below, say, blacking out the U.S. East Coast — could be enough to trigger Article 5. But NATO is vague on what a tipping point might be.

NATO's doctrinal shift followed a pair of seismic cyberespionage shocks — the highly targeted 2020 SolarWinds supply chain hack by Russia that badly rattled Washington and the reckless March 2021 Microsoft Exchange hack attributed to Chinese state security that set off a criminal hacking free-for-all.

A cluster of wholesale data pilfering in the mid-2010s attributed to China — from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, United Airlines, Marriott hotels and the health insurer Anthem — inflicted a deep national security wound. And U.S. officials have worried for more than a decade about rivals — Russia especially — quietly "pre-positioning" enough malware in U.S. critical infrastructure including the energy sector to cause considerable chaos in an armed conflict.

In response, U.S. Cyber Command developed a strategy in 2018 it calls "persistent engagement" to counter rivals who "operate continuously below the threshold of armed conflict to weaken institutions and gain strategic advantages."

The aim: deny foes the chance to breach U.S. systems by operating "across the interconnected battlespace, globally, as close as possible to adversaries," Cybercom commander Gen. Paul Nakasone wrote.

That has sometimes meant penetrating not just adversaries' networks but also those of allies — without asking permission, said Smeets, the European cyber conflict analyst.

Disinformation campaigns have also muddied the definition of a "cyber threat." No longer do they merely encompass malware like NotPetya or the the Stuxnet virus that wrecked Iranian nuclear centrifuges, an operation widely attributed to the U.S. and Israel and discovered in 2010.

During the 2018 U.S. midterm elections, Cybercom temporarily knocked offline a key Russian disinformation mill.

Most major powers have the equivalent of a U.S. Cyber Command for both offense and defense.

Also active are terrorists, criminals working as state proxies, begrudged freelancers and hacktivists like the Cyber Partisans of Belarus.

Hollis compares the current messy cyber moment to the early 19th century when U.S. and European navies

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were so small they often relied on privateers — we know them now as pirates— for high-seas dirty work.

The U.S. and other NATO partners are, meantime, helping Ukraine stand up a separate cyber military unit, said Demediuk, the Ukrainian security official. Since Russia seized Crimea in 2014, NATO has closely and systematically coordinating cyber actions with Ukraine, including joint missions, he said.

In November, Ukraine exposed an eight-year espionage operation by agents of Russia's FSB in Crimea involving more than 5,000 attempted hacks. The main goal: to gain control over critical infrastructure, including power plants, heating and water supply systems, Ukraine's state news agency said.

This month, Microsoft said the operation, dubbed Armageddon, persists with attempts to penetrate Ukraine's military, judiciary and law enforcement. Microsoft detected no damage, but that doesn't mean Russian cyber operators haven't gained undetected footholds.

That's where hackers hide until they are ready to pounce.

## Olympics Live: US wins to set up gold-medal game with Canada

BEIJING (AP) — The Latest on the Beijing Winter Olympics:

Hilary Knight had a goal and assist, Alex Cavallini stopped 25 shots and the defending Olympic champion United States defeated Finland 4-1 in a women's hockey semifinal at the Beijing Games on Monday to set up the sixth gold-medal showdown between the Americans and Canada.

The cross-border rivals will play on Thursday after Canada erupted for five first-period goals over an Olympic record span of 3:24 in a 10-3 win over Switzerland earlier in the day. The two world powers have played for the championship in every Olympic tournament except the 2006 Turin Games, when Canada defeated Sweden after the Swedes eliminated the Americans in the semifinal round.

This time, the United States is attempting to defend its title following a 3-2 shootout win at the 2018 the Pyeongchang Games, which ended Canada's Olympic run of four championships.

Cayla Barnes had a goal and assist, and Hayley Scamurra and Abby Roque, with an empty-netter, also scored for the U.S.

Austria has won Olympic gold in the ski jumping team event at the Beijing Games.

Manuel Fettner jumped 128 meters (420 feet) Monday night on his final jump to seal the first-place finish.

The team of Fettner, Stefan Kraft, Daniel Huber and Jan Hoerl combined to score 942.7 points, beating Slovenia by 8.3 points with a combination of jaw-dropping distances and style that impressed the judges.

The Slovenians earned silver and Germany won bronze.

Slovenia went into the final round with a nine-point lead over Austria. Norway, Germany, Japan and Poland followed after the first round in the last ski jumping event of the 2022 Olympics, but they couldn't keep up with the top two nations.

Germany's result was particularly impressive because the team didn't have one of the best — two-time gold medalist Andreas Wellinger, in their lineup because he tested positive for COVID-19.

Men have been ski jumping at the Winter Olympics since the first edition in 1924, and have had an opportunity to compete as teams since 1988.

Xu Mengtao of China landed a jump with three somersaults to win Olympic gold in women's aerials on a frigid evening.

Xu becomes the first woman from China to win the Olympic ski aerials event. She instantly knew her run was a gold-medal worthy jump, too, pointing up at the sky soon after landing Monday night.

She later leaned back and screamed into the cold air as the temperature hovered around minus-10 (minus-23 Celsius). Xu scored a 108.61 to edge defending champion Hanna Huskova of Belarus. American Megan Nick was a surprise bronze medalist, holding off teammate Ashley Caldwell.

The 28-year-old Caldwell was the last to go after posting the highest score over the first two jumps of the final, which trimmed the field to six. She hit her back on the snow while landing her final jump.

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Caldwell won a gold medal last week in the Olympic debut of mixed team aerials.

The International Olympic Committee says there will be no medal ceremony in Beijing if 15-year-old Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva places in the top three in the women's individual event.

There will also be no medal ceremony for the team event, where Russia won gold a week ago with help from Valieva. The U.S. won silver and Japan won bronze.

Valieva was cleared Monday by Court of Arbitration for Sport judges to compete starting Tuesday, despite failing a drug test ahead of the Olympics.

But a separate investigation of that possible doping offense must be done in Russia and could take several months to resolve.

In the meantime, if Valieva wins an individual medal when the competition concludes Thursday, there won't be even a flower ceremony on the ice.

The IOC says its executive board decided "in the interest of fairness to all athletes" not to award medals this week.

It will "organize dignified medal ceremonies once the case of Ms. Valieva has been concluded."

Nordic combined star Jarl Magnus Riiber of Norway has tested negative for COVID-19, leaving open the chance of him competing at the Beijing Games. The three-time world champion was in isolation for more than 10 days.

Nordic combined has two medal events left on Tuesday and Thursday. Four of the top seven athletes in the sport, which combines ski jumping and a cross-country ski race, missed the first event last Wednesday. Germany's Vinzenz Geiger won.

Estonia's Kristjan Ilves was released from isolation after 11 days on Saturday and has been training to compete.

Germany, meanwhile, has ruled out Terence Weber and says Manuel Faisst traveled to China to potentially replace him in its Nordic combined lineup. The team is still holding out hope that three-time Olympic gold medalist Eric Frenzel will be cleared to compete in Beijing.

American freestyle skier Marin Hamill won't compete in the slopestyle final after hurting her right leg in a crash during qualifying. She's headed back to the United State for further evaluation, the team announced.

Hamill, a 20-year-old from Utah, earned a spot in the final with her score of 69.43 on her first run through a course filled with rails and jumps.

She was finishing her final run when she crashed on the last jump. Hamill slid to the bottom of the hill and was treated by medical personnel. She was taken off the course in a sled and placed into an ambulance.

Hamill was second in a World Cup skiing slopestyle competition in France last month.

A Norwegian biathlete who collapsed after crossing the finish line in the women's 10-kilometer pursuit race will be heading home instead of competing again at the Beijing Olympics.

Ingrid Landmakr Tandrevold, who said she has had heart issues in the past, was in position to win a medal at the end of Sunday's race. But she stalled as she approached the line and then fell to the ground after crossing it. She ended up finishing 14th.

Dropping to the ground at the end of a biathlon race is common for skiers who push themselves on the ski tracks and shooting range, but several other competitors noticed that Tandrevold appeared to be in trouble and alerted medical staff.

On Monday, Tandrevold said she is feeling better but is done with competing for now. She says she needs to be careful because of her past heart issues.

The World Anti-Doping Agency suggests officials in Russia are at least partly to blame for the six-week wait to produce a doping test result for figure skater Kamila Valieva.

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Court of Arbitration for Sport judges have cleared Valieva to continue skating at the Beijing Olympics. One reason cited was "serious issues" with the time between when Valieva took the test and when the sample was flagged.

Valieva's urine sample was taken Dec. 25 in St. Petersburg by Russia's anti-doping agency and sent to a laboratory in Stockholm, Sweden. That laboratory flagged the result just a week ago, hours after Valieva helped the Russians win team gold in Beijing.

WADA says it expects bodies like Russian agency RUSADA to tell labs when faster testing is needed ahead of major championships like the Olympics, which it says didn't happen in this case.

Though Valieva can skate in Beijing, a separate longer-term investigation of the doping case by RUSADA could yet result in a ban and disqualification from the Olympics.

WADA can appeal against the eventual Russian ruling if it thinks a stricter punishment is needed.

Mikaela Shiffrin has confirmed that she will race a downhill at the Winter Olympics for the first time Tuesday.

She says she's changing how she thinks about what is at stake as she prepares for her fourth event in Beijing.

She finished a second training session at the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center with the 15th-fastest time among the women who didn't miss a gate.

The two-time gold medalist in Alpine skiing did not finish her opening runs in either of her initial two events, the two-leg giant slalom and slalom, before coming in ninth in the super-G, another race she hadn't previously entered at an Olympics.

As someone who specialized in the technical disciplines of slalom and giant slalom, the speed events of downhill and super-G are still new and works-in-progress for Shiffrin.

Reigning Olympic gold medalist Sebastien Toutant of Canada crashed hard during qualifying at men's snowboarding big air and won't defend his title.

Toutant needed to land a big trick on his third run to crack the top 12, but he slammed into the icy landing attempting a triple cork 1620 -- three off-axis flips with 4 1/2 rotations.

The 29-year-old fell on his back, and his head whipped back hard enough to knock his goggles off entirely. He remained down for several minutes before being helped up and walking away.

Max Parrot, the Canadian who took gold in slopestyle last week, leads after qualifying, followed by Japan's Takeru Otsuka and American Red Gerard, who won gold at slopestyle in 2018.

Defending champion Sofia Goggia says she "can be in there" competing for a medal in Tuesday's Olympic downhill despite not competing since badly injuring her left knee and leg in a crash three weeks ago.

The Italian placed fourth in the final training session.

Joana Haehlen of Switzerland led the session and was 0.61 seconds ahead of Goggia.

Mikaela Shiffrin placed 17th and said she will race the downhill after indicating following the opening training session that she wasn't sure. The two-time Olympic champion is still seeking her first medal in Beijing.

Former overall World Cup champion Federica Brignone did not qualify for a downhill starting spot on Italy's team.

Tamara Tippler appeared to grab the final starting spot for Austria.

Tricia Mangan of the United States and Jasmine Flury of Switzerland crashed, but both appeared to avoid serious injury.

Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva is on the ice practicing less than an hour after learning she'll be allowed to compete in the women's individual event at the Beijing Olympics.

She's skating along with teammate Alexandra Trusova and four other competitors. Her coach, Eteri Tutberidze, is at the side of the rink.

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Valieva appeared intently focused on her warm up. She's the favorite for the gold medal in the individual event, which starts Tuesday.

When it was her turn to run through her practice program, she didn't appear to stumble or falter. Her skating elicited a smattering of applause from Russian press watching from an area designated for media.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled that the 15-year-old should not be provisionally suspended. She tested positive for a banned heart drug before the Olympics, on Dec. 25.

The ruling doesn't decide the fate of the gold medal she won as part of the team competition.

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The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee says it's disappointed Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva will be allowed to compete for a second gold medal despite failing a pre-Olympics drug test.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled that the 15-year-old Valieva, the favorite for the women's individual gold, should not be provisionally suspended ahead of a full hearing into her positive test for a banned heart drug on Dec. 25.

USOPC CEO Sarah Hirshland says the committee is disappointed by the message the ruling sends. She says athletes are being denied the right to know they're competing on a level playing field. She says it's part of a systemic and pervasive disregard for clean sport by Russia.

The ruling means Valieva can compete starting Tuesday in the women's individual competition, where she's a favorite for gold.

It doesn't decide the fate of the gold medal she won as part of the team competition. The U.S. won silver and would be in line for gold if the Russian medal is revoked.

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Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva will be allowed to compete for a second gold medal at the Winter Olympics despite failing a pre-Games drug test.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled Monday that the 15-year-old Valieva, the favorite for the women's individual gold, does not need to be provisionally suspended ahead of a full hearing into her positive test for the heart drug trimetazidine. The positive test was Dec. 25.

The Russian team can still aim for the first women's figure skating podium sweep in Olympic history. The event starts with the short program Tuesday and concludes Thursday with the free skate. Valieva is the favorite to win gold.

The ruling only addresses whether Valieva can keep skating before her case is resolved. It doesn't decide the fate of the one gold medal that she has already won.

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Olympic champion Jamie Anderson says life in Beijing's pandemic bubble has been difficult for her mental health, leaving her "a little bit tapped out" and "excited to go home."

The American snowboarder failed to qualify for the finals in women's big air Monday. She said the Beijing Games have been a draining slog for her and her teammates.

"We've been here for so long and I feel like our whole crew is just over it," Anderson said. "Just barely hanging on by a fricking strand of hair. Just like, tired of the food, homesick, tired of the pressure."

The 31-year-old Anderson came to China a two-time defending champion in slopestyle and won silver in big air at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games. She finished ninth trying to defend her slopestyle titles last week, then said on Instagram that she "straight up couldn't handle the pressure" and that her "mental health and clarity just hasn't been on par."

Anderson says she's not ready to retire, but she's not sure what's next for her as far as competitive snowboarding. She plans to take some time and free ride, then reset and see how she feels.

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The International Olympic Committee says it wanted the entire investigation of Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva's doping case to be completed during the Olympics.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport is expected to announce Monday afternoon Beijing time whether Valieva can compete in the women's figure skating event that starts Tuesday, where she would be a heavy favorite.

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But they won't decide now whether Valieva is guilty of doping, nor whether the Russian skaters can keep the gold team medal they won with Valieva's help. Those questions will be answered by a separate investigation led by the Russian anti-doping agency.

Valieva is the strong favorite for gold if CAS lets her compete in the individual competition despite a positive doping test from before the Olympics. It was only revealed last week after she competed in the team competition.

IOC spokesman Mark Adams says it wanted all legal issues "settled once and for all before this competition starts."

Adams says the parties – which include the IOC, World Anti-Doping Agency and the Russian team – could not agree on a process.

Adams says "it's a deeply concerning situation for us and of course for all athletes" affected.

Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron of France broke their own ice dance world record to win the Olympic gold medal that narrowly eluded them four years ago in Pyeongchang.

The last figure skaters on the ice for the free dance, Papadakis and Cizeron scored 136.15 points to "Elegie" by the early 20th century French composer Gabriel Faure.

That gave them 226.98 points, beating their previous mark of 226.61 set at the 2019 NHK Trophy in Japan. It was enough to hold off Victoria Sinitsina and Nikita Katsalapov.

The Russian world champions took silver with 220.51 points while the American duo of Madison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue claimed bronze in their final Olympics. The two have already announced they plan to retire.

Another pair of Americans, Madison Chock and Evan Bates, finished fourth.

Eileen Gu has made it through to slopestyle finals in freestyle skiing. She overcame a number of bobbles in her first qualifying run to nail down a solid second trip down the mountain and secure her spot in the top 12.

The 18-year-old American-born freestyler is competing for her mother's home country of China at the Beijing Games. She won the gold medal in big air last week, and will also compete in the halfpipe contest later this week.

While Gu awaited her score after the second run, she stood at the bottom and ate a dumpling. Then, she rushed off to the halfpipe, where practice had begun about an hour earlier.

The slopestyle final is set for Tuesday.

Kaillie Humphries has captured a third Olympic gold medal, and her first for the U.S.

The former Canadian bobsledder was an easy winner of the inaugural women's monobob event. It's the first sliding medal for the U.S. in seven events so far -- the others being four in luge and two in skeleton -- at the Beijing Games.

Elana Meyers Taylor of the U.S. was second. It was the fourth medal of Meyers Taylor's career, the most won by anyone in USA Bobsled history.

Humphries has four medals now as well, the first three of those for Canada. She began sliding for the U.S. in 2019 and got her citizenship in December. That allowed her to represent the U.S. in Beijing.

Christine de Bruin of Canada won bronze.

Canadian forward Melodie Daoust has returned to the lineup for the women's hockey semifinal game against Switzerland at the Beijing Olympics.

Daoust missed four games after being sidelined with an upper-body injury sustained in the second period of a 12-1 preliminary round-opening win over the Swiss. She is taking part in the semifinal pre-game skate and listed back at her familiar spot on Canada's second line alongside center Sarah Fillier and winger Natalie Spooner.



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Canada entered the playoffs as the Olympic tournament's top seed and is seeking to make its seventh consecutive gold-medal game appearance on Thursday.

For Switzerland, forward Lisa Ruedi returns after missing a 4-2 quarterfinal win over the Russian team while spending two days in COVID-19 isolation. The Swiss team honored her during the game by hanging her No. 12 jersey behind their bench.

The defending Olympic champion United States faces Finland in the other semifinal later Monday.

Slopestyle silver medalist Julia Marino of the United States has dropped out of the Olympic snowboard big air contest after a fall in practice.

The 24-year-old Marino was set to jump 23rd in the 30-snowboarder field during qualifying Monday, just ahead of 2018 gold medalist Anna Gasser of Austria. It was a surprise when she didn't appear.

Team USA snowboarding said in a statement that Marino fell during practice a few days ago and is "prioritizing her health."

Marino's scratch appears to have been a late decision. The Connecticut resident shared video of herself practicing at Big Air Shougang on Instagram about 12 hours before qualifying began, encouraging followers to tune in.

The embattled coach of Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva, whose future at the Olympics will be announced later Monday by the Court of Arbitration for Sport, showed up to watch her daughter compete in the ice dance competition in Beijing.

Eteri Tutberidze stood against the wall in an inconspicuous corner of Capital Indoor Stadium to watch Diana Davis compete with partner Gleb Smolkin in the free dance. Davis and Smolkin finished well out of medal contention.

Tutberidze has come under fire after Valieva's drug test from December was flagged last week for traces of a banned heart medication. The case was referred to CAS, which met for about 5 1/2 hours at a Beijing hotel late Sunday, to decide whether to allow the 15-year-old gold medal favorite to compete in the women's competition beginning Tuesday night.

Their decision is expected Monday afternoon in Beijing, just when Valieva is next scheduled to practice.

## Russian skater can compete, but medal ceremony won't be held

By JAMES ELLINGWORTH and GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writers

BEIJING (AP) — Russian teenager Kamila Valieva has been cleared to compete in the women's figure skating competition at the Winter Olympics despite failing a pre-Games drug test, setting her up for an attempt at a second gold medal.

Whatever happens on the ice, Valieva will not get a medal ceremony moment in Beijing. Nor will any skater who finishes in the top three with her.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport cleared Valieva to skate less than 12 hours after a hastily arranged hearing that lasted into early Monday morning. A panel of judges ruled that the 15-year-old Valieva, the favorite for the women's individual gold, does not need to be provisionally suspended ahead of a full investigation.

The court gave her a favorable decision in part because she is a minor, known in Olympic jargon as a "protected person," and is subject to different rules from an adult athlete.

"The panel considered that preventing the athlete to compete at the Olympic Games would cause her irreparable harm in the circumstances," CAS Director General Matthieu Reeb said.

Now, Valieva and her fellow Russian skaters can aim for the first podium sweep of women's figure skating in Olympic history. The event starts with the short program Tuesday and concludes Thursday with the free skate.

The International Olympic Committee said Monday afternoon that if Valieva finishes in the top three, there will be no medal ceremony during the Games. There will also be no ceremony for the team event

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won by Valieva and the Russian team a week ago.

"It would not be appropriate to hold the medal ceremony," the IOC said.

Valieva landed the first quadruple jumps by a woman at the Olympics as the Russian team won gold in a dominant performance.

The decision not to award medals also affects Nathan Chen and the rest of the second-place American team, who will leave Beijing unsure if they won silver or gold. It would be Chen's second gold of the Games. If Valieva and Russia are disqualified, Japan moves up to silver and Canada wins bronze.

"We are devastated that they will leave Beijing without their medals in hand, but we appreciate the intention of the IOC to ensure the right medals are awarded to the right individuals," the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee said in a statement.

The IOC decision also means the fourth-place finisher in the women's event will have a good chance to move into the bronze position.

Shortly after the CAS ruling, Valieva skated at practice, watched by her coach, Eteri Tutberidze. She completed her program without a fall, drawing a smattering of applause from the Russian media watching.

Reaction around the world ranged from support of the young skater to complaints that Russian doping had once again damaged a sporting event.

In addition to her status as a minor, the CAS ruling cited fundamental issues of fairness, the fact she tested clean in Beijing and that there were "serious issues of untimely notification" of her positive test.

Valieva tested positive for the heart drug trimetazidine on Dec. 25 at the Russian nationals, but the result from a Swedish lab didn't come to light until a week ago, after she helped the Russian Olympic Committee win the team gold.

Reasons for the six-week wait for a result from Sweden are unclear. In a statement, WADA suggested RUSADA slipped up by not signaling to the Stockholm lab that Valieva's sample was a priority to be analyzed so close to the Olympics.

Her case has caused havoc at the Olympics since last Tuesday when the team event medal ceremony was pulled from the schedule because of the positive test.

The Russian anti-doping agency (RUSADA) immediately suspended her, then lifted the ban a day later. The IOC and others appealed, and an expedited hearing was held Sunday night. Valieva testified via video.

Athletes under 16 like Valieva have more rights under anti-doping rules and typically aren't held responsible for taking banned substances. The focus of any future investigation will be on her coaches, doctors, nutritionists, etc.

This ruling only addresses whether Valieva can keep skating before her case is resolved. It doesn't decide the fate of the one gold medal she has already won.

Those issues will be dealt with in a separate, longer-term investigation led by RUSADA, which took the sample in St. Petersburg.

The World Anti-Doping Agency will have the right to appeal any ruling by RUSADA, and also said it wants to independently investigate Valieva's entourage.

The Valieva case means Russian doping has been a major theme for a six straight Olympic Games.

"This appears to be another chapter in the systematic and pervasive disregard for clean sport by Russia," US Olympic and Paralympic Committee CEO Sarah Hirshland said in a statement.

Hirshland said the USOPC was "disappointed by the message this decision sends" and suggested athletes were denied the confidence of knowing they competed on a level playing field.

At the rink Tuesday, the ice dance competition was decided as the CAS prepared its verdict.

Gold medalists Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron of France and American bronze medalists Madison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue offered, "No comment."

Nikita Katsalapov, who along with Victoria Sinitsina won the silver medal for the Russians, said simply: "Go Kamila!"

Hubbell and Donohue could have their silver medals upgraded to gold in the team competition.

"There's no done deal yet, but I know all the people in the team want to receive the medals here as a team" Hubbell said. "If we miss that opportunity, it's huge disappointment."

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The IOC now says it will "organize dignified medal ceremonies once the case of Ms Valieva has been concluded," whenever that may be.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Feb. 15, the 46th day of 2022. There are 319 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 15, 1879, President Rutherford B. Hayes signed a bill allowing female attorneys to argue cases before the Supreme Court.

On this date:

In 1764, the site of present-day St. Louis was established by Pierre Laclède and Auguste Chouteau.

In 1898, the U.S. battleship Maine mysteriously blew up in Havana Harbor, killing more than 260 crew members and bringing the United States closer to war with Spain.

In 1933, President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt escaped an assassination attempt in Miami that mortally wounded Chicago Mayor Anton J. Cermak; gunman Giuseppe Zangara was executed more than four weeks later.

In 1944, Allied bombers destroyed the monastery atop Monte Cassino (MAWN'tay kah-SEE'noh) in Italy.

In 1961, 73 people, including an 18-member U.S. figure skating team en route to the World Championships in Czechoslovakia, were killed in the crash of a Sabena Airlines Boeing 707 in Belgium.

In 1965, singer Nat King Cole, 45, died in Santa Monica, California.

In 1967, the rock band Chicago was founded by Walter Parazaider, Terry Kath, Danny Seraphine, Lee Loughnane (LAHK'nayn), James Pankow and Robert Lamm; the group originally called itself The Big Thing.

In 1989, the Soviet Union announced that the last of its troops had left Afghanistan, after more than nine years of military intervention.

In 1992, a Milwaukee jury found that Jeffrey Dahmer was sane when he killed and mutilated 15 men and boys. (The decision meant that Dahmer, who had already pleaded guilty to the murders, would receive a mandatory life sentence for each count; Dahmer was beaten to death in prison in 1994.)

In 2003, millions of protesters around the world demonstrated against the prospect of a U.S. attack on Iraq.

In 2005, defrocked priest Paul Shanley was sentenced in Boston to 12 to 15 years in prison on child rape charges.

In 2020, the U.S. government said Americans who were on board a cruise ship under quarantine in Japan because of the coronavirus would be flown back home on a chartered flight, but that they would face another two-week quarantine; about 380 Americans were aboard the Diamond Princess.

Ten years ago: Congressional negotiators sealed an agreement on legislation to renew a payroll tax cut for 160 million workers and jobless benefits for millions more. In defiant swipes at its foes, Iran said it was dramatically closer to mastering the production of nuclear fuel even as the U.S. weighed tougher pressure on the Tehran government.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump's nominee for labor secretary, Andrew Puzder, abruptly withdrew his nomination after Senate Republicans balked at supporting him, in part over taxes he had belatedly paid on a former housekeeper not authorized to work in the United States. In an ultimatum to America's allies, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told fellow NATO members to increase military spending by year's end or risk seeing the U.S. curtail its defense support.

One year ago: A sprawling blast of winter weather brought unusual snow and cold into Texas, knocking out power for more than 4 million people and sending temperatures into the single digits as far south as San Antonio; the icy blast across the Deep South would later be blamed for more than 100 deaths in Texas and dozens more across other Southern states. Salsa music idol Johnny Pacheco died at 85 in New York, where he'd been hospitalized with pneumonia. Michael McDowell stunned NASCAR by scoring

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his first career victory in the Daytona 500, charging through a crash scene when Brad Keselowski and Joey Logano wrecked racing for the win; the race ended early on a Monday morning after a rain delay of nearly six hours.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Claire Bloom is 91. Author Susan Brownmiller is 87. Songwriter Brian Holland is 81. Rock musician Mick Avory (The Kinks) is 78. Jazz musician Henry Threadgill is 78. Actor-model Marisa Berenson is 75. Actor Jane Seymour is 71. Singer Melissa Manchester is 71. Actor Lynn Whitfield is 69. "Simpsons" creator Matt Groening (GREE'-ning) is 68. Model Janice Dickinson is 67. Actor Christopher McDonald is 67. Reggae singer Ali Campbell is 63. Actor Joseph R. Gannascoli is 63. Musician Mikey Craig (Culture Club) is 62. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Darrell Green is 62. Actor-comedian Steven Michael Quezada is 59. Actor Michael Easton is 55. Latin singer Gloria Trevi is 54. Rock musician Stevie Benton (Drowning Pool) is 51. Actor Alex Borstein is 51. Actor Renee O'Connor is 51. Actor Sarah Wynter is 49. Olympic gold medal swimmer Amy Van Dyken-Rouen is 49. Actor-director Miranda July is 48. Rock singer Brandon Boyd (Incubus) is 46. Rock musician Ronnie Vannucci (The Killers) is 46. Rock singer/guitarist Adam Granduciel (The War on Drugs) is 43. Singer-songwriter-musician Conor Oberst (Bright Eyes) is 42. Actor Ashley Lyn Cafagna is 39. Blues-rock musician Gary Clark Jr. is 38. Actor Natalie Morales is 37. Actor Amber Riley is 36. Rapper Megan Thee Stallion is 27. Actor Zach Gordon is 24.