

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 1 of 69

## [1- Upcoming Events](#)

[1- Vender Fair Ad](#)

[2- Glimpses From Greenfield 2022-Week 8](#)

[3- Groton Prairie Mixed](#)

[4- SoDak16 on GDILIVE.COM](#)

[5- Lana's Annals- a report from Pierre](#)

[6- Gov. Noem Promises to Defend Veterans from](#)

[Biden's Betrayal](#)

[7- PrairieDoc: Time Heals All Wounds](#)

[8- Democratic Leadership Column from Jamie Smith- Week 8](#)

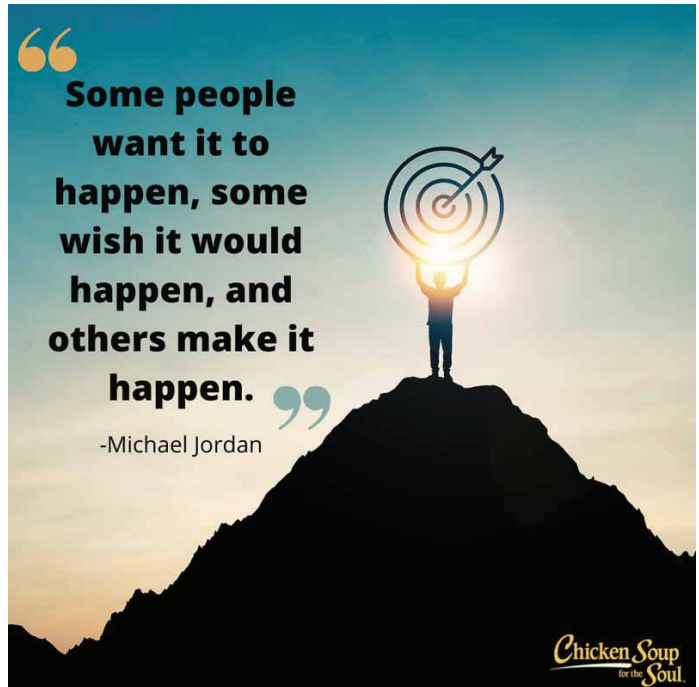
[9- Weather Pages](#)

[13- Daily Devotional](#)

[14- 2022 Community Events](#)

[15- Subscription Form](#)

[16- News from the Associated Press](#)



**Tuesday, March 15**

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

**Thursday, March 17**

Spring Break - No School

**Friday, March 18**

Spring Break - No School

**Saturday, March 19**

Mitchell Show Choir Competition

## UpComing Events

**Tuesday, March 8**

Boys SoDak16 - Groton Area vs. Mt. Vernon/  
Plankinton, 7:30 pm in Redfield

**Thursday, March 10**

End of Third Quarter  
Middle School Talent Show, 7 p.m., GHS Gym

**Saturday, March 12**

Show Choir at Aberdeen Competition

**Sunday, March 13**

Daylight Savings Time - turn clocks forward 1 hour

**Monday, March 14**

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

## Vender Fair

A vendor fair has been organized in Groton for March 26, 2022, at the Groton Community Center, from 10 am. – 3 p.m. A variety of crafters and vendors will be available. Proceeds from an auction table will be donated to Make-a-Wish Foundation.

**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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# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 2 of 69

## Glimpses From Greenfield 2022–Week 8

Last week was full of budgetary discussions and saw a number of spending bills considered on the floor of the House and Senate. With all the federal funds that have been made available to the state, we have focused on utilizing the dollars for long-term investments that will set us up for a better future. We did not want to spend foolishly on short-term projects that did not benefit the broader cross-section of South Dakotans. Many of the federal funds associated with the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) come with certain guidelines attached. That said, I will discuss a number of the bills that have passed the House and/or the Senate.

SB 44 sought to secure \$29.5 million of ARPA monies for the demolition and reconstruction of an academic building at Northern State University. Lincoln Hall had originally been a dormitory building but it was renovated to serve as office space for a number of faculty members. It also had a couple classroom spaces that were less-than-ideal because of load-bearing columns that had to be maneuvered around. This may sound like a minor concern, but having toured the building while classes were actually being conducted, we could see the challenges posed as it related to viewing instructional materials on boards and screens within the classrooms. Also, when considering whether to renovate or demolish Lincoln and the adjacent Briscoe Halls and resurrect an entirely new building, it was important to note that the current facility was basically impossible to retrofit to ensure ADA compliance in the 115-year-old Lincoln facility. The bill had passed the Senate, 33-2, a couple weeks ago, and it met with a favorable 62-8 vote in the House. Going forward, the new building will serve as classroom space for both the business school, as well as expansion of a nursing program offered through outreach from SDSU. As we continue to encounter shortages in the medical field, this will be a very important new offering on the Aberdeen campus. Moreover, with all the improvements in recent years at NSU made possible through local fundraising efforts, this will complement the strides made to modernize the campus and enhance the students' educational experience.

SB 58 called for over \$69.6 million to renovate and construct additional space at the state health lab. A number of legislators took the opportunity to tour the existing structure, which bore out that the current space was woefully inadequate for the myriad of functions carried out there. Also, there were health and safety concerns for the employees who serve there as they deal with hazardous and infectious materials that require a higher level of biohazard safety equipment and air handling devices than are currently available. The bill passed the Senate, 35-0, and the House, 62-5.

SB 196 has passed three hurdles and awaits final consideration on the House floor. This bill was brought forth as a joint effort by Senator Hunhoff and me. Back in 2019, the Appropriations committee toured a facility called Teen Challenge outside Brookings. It was my first exposure to this facility. The name Teen Challenge is a misnomer, as it serves the adult population. People utilizing this residential chemical dependency treatment facility are basically there as an option of last-resort before being incarcerated for their prior addiction-related crimes. As we toured, we were able to hear from individuals who had profound stories of transformation as they set goals and set out on new paths in their lives. Teen Challenge is a faith-based program that has a remarkable success rate in that its graduates have a much lower recidivism rate than people who are put in prison for their transgressions. The facility in Brookings serves an all-male population, but we came to learn that there wasn't a similar facility for women. Given that a majority of females in the SD prison system are serving sentences for drug- and alcohol-related crimes, we are attempting to give them a similar diversion program that will put them on a more successful road-to-recovery. In addition to empirical evidence that the program works long-term and equips people to avoid reoffending, passage of this bill will also save on the costs associated with incarceration. Moreover, it helps to give them job skills that will allow them smooth transitions into more prosperous futures.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 3 of 69

The budget process hasn't been all rainbows and butterflies, in spite of many positive outcomes. Late last week and over the weekend, it appeared we were on a collision course with disaster as there were fundamental disagreements over how to deal with other federal funds that were being woven into the ongoing budget. As I write this, I am fresh off eleven hours of discussions and negotiations with other legislators to try to piece together an agreement that will prevent the House and Senate Appropriations Committees from passing competing general appropriations acts that would ultimately be considered by bitterly divided members of a conference committee. It wasn't easy, and there are still no guarantees that the wheels won't come off, but as of this moment, we have charted a path forward that seems to work for everybody.

On the topic of the budget in general, we continue to move forward with our focus on fully-funding all the priorities set forth in the Governor's recommended budget, including the 6% COLA for education, facilities that care for those who cannot care for themselves and state employees. Because the bill that contemplated reducing the sales tax rate from 4.5% back to 4%, as it was in 2016, prior to the Wayfair decision, we are anticipating having at least an additional \$90 million in still-unobligated general funds. One of the biggest arguments for not providing the tax relief contemplated in SB 1327 was the fear of the unknown, especially as it related to the ballot measure you will be voting on in November that contemplates Medicaid expansion. Although some argue that MexEx will be a windfall benefit to South Dakotans, studies of the actual price tag associated with expansion of the program to sweep in more able-bodied individuals who are currently served by private health insurers bares out that it hits states' general fund obligations MUCH harder than is ever projected. My word of caution to you is to proceed with caution as you consider your vote on that measure. The outcome of that measure could well be the difference between a return to the lower tax rate and the exponential growth of Medicaid expenses.

Please continue to pray the Lord will grant us wisdom and discernment and that His will be done as we work to bring this session to a close.

Brock

## Groton Prairie Mixed

**Team Standings:** Jackelopes 12, Coyotes 12, Chipmunks 7, Foxes 7, Shih Tzus 6, Cheetahs 4

**Men's High Games:** Larry Frohling 214, Brad Waage 207, Mike Siegler 205

**Women's High Games:** Vicki Walter 187, 185, 169, Sue Stanley 174, Nancy Radke 168

**Men's High Series:** Mike Siegler 548, Brad Waage 521, Lance Frohling 494

**Women's High Series:** Vicki Walter 541, Sue Stanley 465, Nancy Radke 443

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 4 of 69



**SoDak16 Boys  
Basketball on  
GDILIVE.COM**



NO TICKET REQUIRED! FREE TO WATCH



## **Good Luck Tigers from the GDILIVE.COM sponsors**

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Groton Ford  
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Locke Electric  
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Matt's Tree Service  
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# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 5 of 69

## Lana's Annals- a report from Pierre

Greetings! It was a very busy week at the capitol as we move into our final days of regular session.

The House Education Committee discussed SB139, which would provide for the creation and funding of charter schools called Oceti Sakowin. The sponsor pointed out that academic achievement on the reservations is very poor and suicide rates are high. The bill asked to set up 2 Native charter schools, which would have a sponsoring public school and would be funded with taxpayer and private funding. The public school would give the charters the state funded per student allocation according to how many students enroll in that school. Once established, the schools would operate under their own boards. If the schools acted "in good faith" in all circumstances, the sponsoring public school would face no liability. Many questions were asked. One that I asked and particularly wanted clarified was what one day at the school would look like structurally. The explanation by 2 testifiers was this: the students would be greeted upon arrival and begin their day with "smudging." The rest of the day would depend on the season of the year as to what cultural activities would take place. One of those testifiers added that "education is a compulsory imposition." At that point I understood that the school would be culture and language teachings in nature, and this bill would do nothing to improve achievement test scores. We also discussed that we should not start allocating money over to private charter schools or it will set a precedent to fund other schools with private school boards. In addition, I did not hear about who would provide food or bus services, etc. It was pointed out by the sponsor that Rapid City operates a charter school independently through organizations and philanthropic donations. A Task Force is offering guidance on this one. At that point, we felt that charter schools without taxpayer funding and sponsoring school's liability could independently be put into place. Therefore, after two hours of testimony and discussion, we defeated the bill and sent it to the 41st day.

The House floor engaged in vigorous debate on SB 53 and 65, the workforce housing and funding bills. I was a definite no on these bills at first. The original bill called for 50 per cent of the funding to go to towns that had a population of 50,000 or above. The other 50 per cent would go to towns below 50,000. In essence then, most of the money for building would be sent to Sioux Falls and Rapid City. Meanwhile the rest of over 300 towns could grapple for the remainder. An amendment, which called for a 30/70 split, seemed far more fair. Therefore, after the amendment passed, I was able to vote in favor. SB53 then passed, but not 65, the actual funding part. We, thus far, have spent 5 hours on these bills with more to come. Those who are opposing it have not yet come forth with an idea as to how we could spend the 150,000,000 in the bill. I can see both sides as to, perhaps, underlying causes for opposition. An earlier proposal to drop the half penny sales tax was passed and sent over to the Senate State Affairs for testimony and discussion. As I sat there as observer only, I felt that there was no respect or courtesy extended to the testifiers or to the bill. After testimony closed, there were no committee questions nor discussion... just one member giving a loud, rude call to kill the bill by sending it to the 41st day. Everyone, except for one lone member, voted aye. We say that every bill deserves a fair hearing. When no questions are even asked, was it?

I was overjoyed that both chamber passed SB44, which allows Northern University to build a new business / nursing building where Lincoln Hall currently sits. Aberdeen folks, through the years, have pitched together and funded many campus buildings and projects on their own. It was 1985 when they asked for money to build the Barnett Center and nothing else until now. I was very happy to speak favorably and help with the passage of this bill!!

This week will be stressful. Tempers are going to flare; arm twisting will ensue. Each of us members have our passions for certain projects and bills. My passion is to create a wholesome, positive environment for our current and future generations.

With that, I will sign off. Have a very good week.

Rep. Lana Greenfield

Lana.greenfield@sdlegislature.gov



## Gov. Noem Promises to Defend Veterans from Biden's Betrayal

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem promised to defend South Dakota veterans against President Biden and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from their plan to close and downsize several VA facilities in South Dakota. Governor Noem issued the following statement:

"The Biden Administration has betrayed the men and women who put their lives on the line to defend our nation and our freedoms. First, Democrats defunded the police. Now, they are defunding our veterans by recommending closures and downsizing of VA facilities across the country.

"These are their plans: they will turn the full-service VA hospitals in Fort Meade and Hot Springs into clinics; the Sioux Falls VA hospital will lose its emergency services; and the clinic in Wagner will completely close. Veterans in these areas will no longer have options and may have to drive hundreds of miles to obtain healthcare services. Tribal veterans, in particular, could lose their healthcare services entirely.

"When I voted to modernize VA healthcare in 2018, we had the goal of expanding healthcare options for our veterans. We wanted them to be able to choose the care that was best for them. The Biden Administration's action will only limit those options and shortchange our veterans. It was not the intent of our vote, so I am promising to push back.

"South Dakota is the best state in America to live and work as a veteran, and we will not stand for this betrayal. We will defend our South Dakota facilities and stand up for the men and women who stood up for us."

## Time Heals All Wounds

The saying goes “time heals all wounds”, but what happens when a wound does not heal? Wounds go through many stages while healing and complications at any step can prolong the process.

The first step is stopping the bleeding. For people who are taking blood thinners like aspirin or warfarin, it may take longer for the bleeding to stop or clot.

The next step after the blood starts to clot is forming a scab. This happens when blood vessels around the wound narrow and platelets in the blood clump together to create the scab. A protein called fibrin helps hold the clot in place. After someone has had a stroke or heart attack caused by a clot, they may be placed on medications to make the platelets more slippery and less likely to clump together. Medications like Plavix and Aggrenox make platelets slide past each other rather than clumping to make a clot which can delay the scabbing process.

At this point, the body cleans the wound. Blood vessels will dilate and increase blood flow to the area. White blood cells called macrophages arrive on the scene to clear out infection and release chemicals called growth factors and cytokines that help tell the body to form new skin cells. If the infection is not cleared by the body, the wound will not heal properly.

The body also creates new blood cells to bring in nutrients and supplies to help heal the wound. Conditions like diabetes, atherosclerosis, known as hardening of the arteries, and high blood pressure, cause poor blood flow and can slow down wound healing. Smoking slows healing in many ways. Nicotine causes blood vessels to narrow and reduces the number of macrophages and fibrin in circulation. Carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke decreases the oxygen transport needed to help repair and rebuild the skin cells.

The final step of wound healing is strengthening or maturation. At this stage the wound looks closed and repaired, but the tissues below are still being strengthened. The wound may feel itchy or tight and the skin may look slightly pink and stretched. After about three months the wound should be about 80 percent healed. It can take up to two years for the scar to remodel and achieve its final appearance.

Yes, it takes time to heal all wounds, but if you have concerns don't bide your time. Talk to your doctor to learn about options that can assist you through the healing process. We want to help your wound heal, all in good time.

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



By Jill Kruse, D.O.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 8 of 69

## Democratic Leadership Column from Jamie Smith— Week 8

PIERRE, SD – Greetings from Pierre! Having just completed the eighth week of the Ninety-Seventh Legislative Session, we are nearing the end, with one week remaining. Many bills have yet to be heard on the floor and the pressure continues to mount as we flesh out the budget.

Recently, we heard bills focusing on recreational marijuana, and unfortunately, we were unable to pass this legislation. Please know that South Dakota Democrats support the will of the people. We are working to implement medical marijuana laws and promote a safe and well-regulated recreational marijuana industry.

The appropriations committee continues to work through the budget, which is flush with unprecedented amounts of money due in large part to federal stimulus dollars. We continue to insist on at least a six percent increase for our schools, community support providers, and state employees. We also are working hard to ensure that one-time projects will be funded that include improvements on our college campuses, state-wide infrastructure, and water projects to name a few.

It is no secret that our state has a housing shortage. It is important that we find a way to move forward with a workforce housing initiative that includes funding. Bills designed to implement this program have been met with resistance, and we are working to find a way to accomplish this goal.

For years I have been concerned about at-risk juveniles falling through the cracks. While juvenile justice reform has decreased the number of youth in the Department of Corrections, we know that there are many troubled youth that are falling through the cracks. Senate Bill 198 ensures that we have a summer study to help find solutions for our schools, families, and communities. We need to provide an environment where our students can learn and troubled students can find the help they need to be successful and productive citizens.

Democrats are here to work for you and want to hear from you! Please contact us to share your questions or concerns about the current session. Our caucus meetings have always been open to the public each day, an hour before floor session. Your voice matters to us, and we believe that together, we can create a South Dakota that works for all of us.

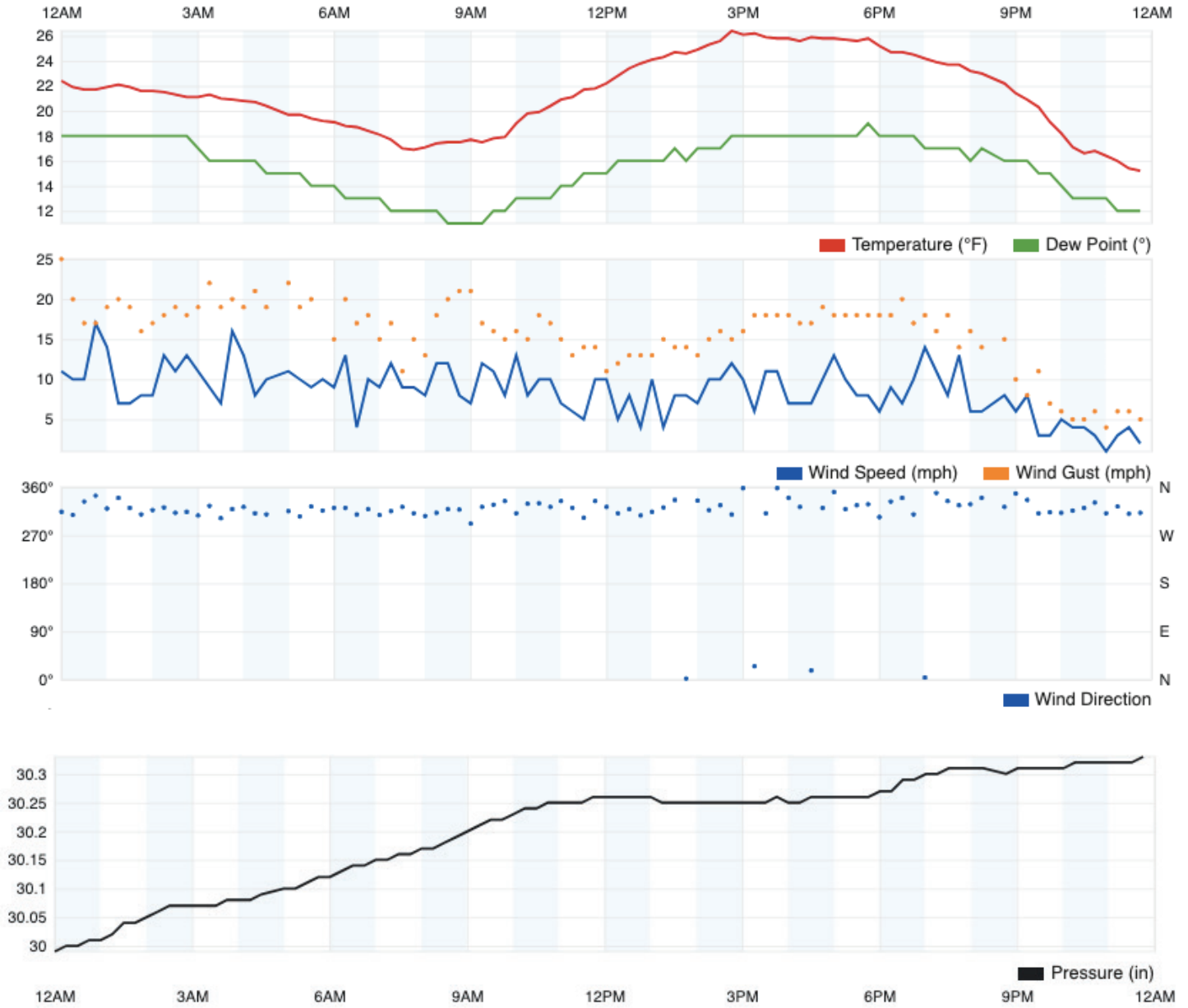
House Minority Leader Jamie Smith



# Groton Daily Independent






Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 9 of 69

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs








# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 10 of 69

Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
Sunny	Mostly Clear then Slight Chance Snow	Partly Sunny and Breezy	Partly Cloudy and Blustery then Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 34 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 32 °F	Low: 7 °F	High: 19 °F

## Cold Through The Week

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
				
	<b>Low Chance Light Snow Windy</b>	<b>Low Chance Light Snow</b>		
HI: 23 - 38	HI: 28 - 35 LO: 15 - 22	HI: 12 - 23 LO: 2 - 12	HI: 15 - 29 LO: -5 - 4	HI: 11 - 25 LO: -3 - 5

Updated: 3/7/2022 3:00 AM Central



'Warmer' range for central SD & 'Colder' temperatures for far northeast South Dakota and western Minnesota

Temperatures through the week will remain below average. There will be chances for moisture, but little if any accumulations and for the most part it will remain dry. Some moderation is possible for next weekend.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 11 of 69

## Today in Weather History

March 7, 1998: A winter storm tracked across South Dakota, resulting in heavy snow of 6 to 8 inches across most of central South Dakota from the evening of the 6th into the afternoon of the 7th. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Fort Pierre and near Stephan, 7 inches at Blunt, Pierre, and Murdo, and 8 inches across far southern Jones and Lyman counties. Many activities were canceled, and travel was significantly disrupted, especially on Interstate-90.

1717 - The Great Snow, a composite of four winter storms to hit the eastern U.S. in nine days, finally came to an end. Snow depths averaged 60 inches following the storm. Up to four feet of snow fell around Boston MA, and snow drifts 25 feet high were reported around Dorchester MA. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1932 - A severe coastal storm set barometric pressure records from Virginia to New England. Block Island RI reported a barometric pressure reading of 28.20 inches. (David Ludlum)

1970: Last near-total eclipse of the sun in Washington, DC, in this century. Sun was 95% eclipsed.

1987 - Forty-five cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Huron SD hit 80 degrees, and Pickstown SD reached 81 degrees. Rochester MN and Rockford IL smashed their previous record for the date by sixteen degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - High winds along a sharp cold front ushered snow and arctic cold into the Central Rocky Mountain Region and the Northern Plains. Snowfall totals in Utah ranged up to sixteen inches at Brighton. Winds gusted to 66 mph at Rapid City SD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Blustery northwest winds ushered arctic cold into eastern U.S. Burlington VT reported a record low of 14 degrees below zero. Snow and ice over the Carolinas replaced the 80 degree weather of the previous day. High winds and heavy surf caused five million dollars damage along the North Carolina coast. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A major ice storm left much of Iowa under a thick coat of ice. It was the worst ice storm in at least twenty-five years for Iowa, perhaps the worst of the century. Up to two inches of ice coated much of western and central Iowa, with three inches reported in Crawford County and Carroll County. As much as five inches of ice was reported on some electrical lines. The ice downed 78 towers in a 17-mile stretch of a high voltage feeder near Boone costing three electric utilities fifteen million dollars. Damage to trees was incredible, and clean-up costs alone ran into the millions. Total damage from the storm was more than fifty million dollars. (Storm Data)

1997: The worst was finally over for states hit hard by the flooding Ohio River. The river crested on the 6th at Louisville, Kentucky, at 15 feet above flood stage, after topping out at nearly 13 feet at Cincinnati, Ohio, and more than 7 feet at Huntington, West Virginia.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 12 of 69

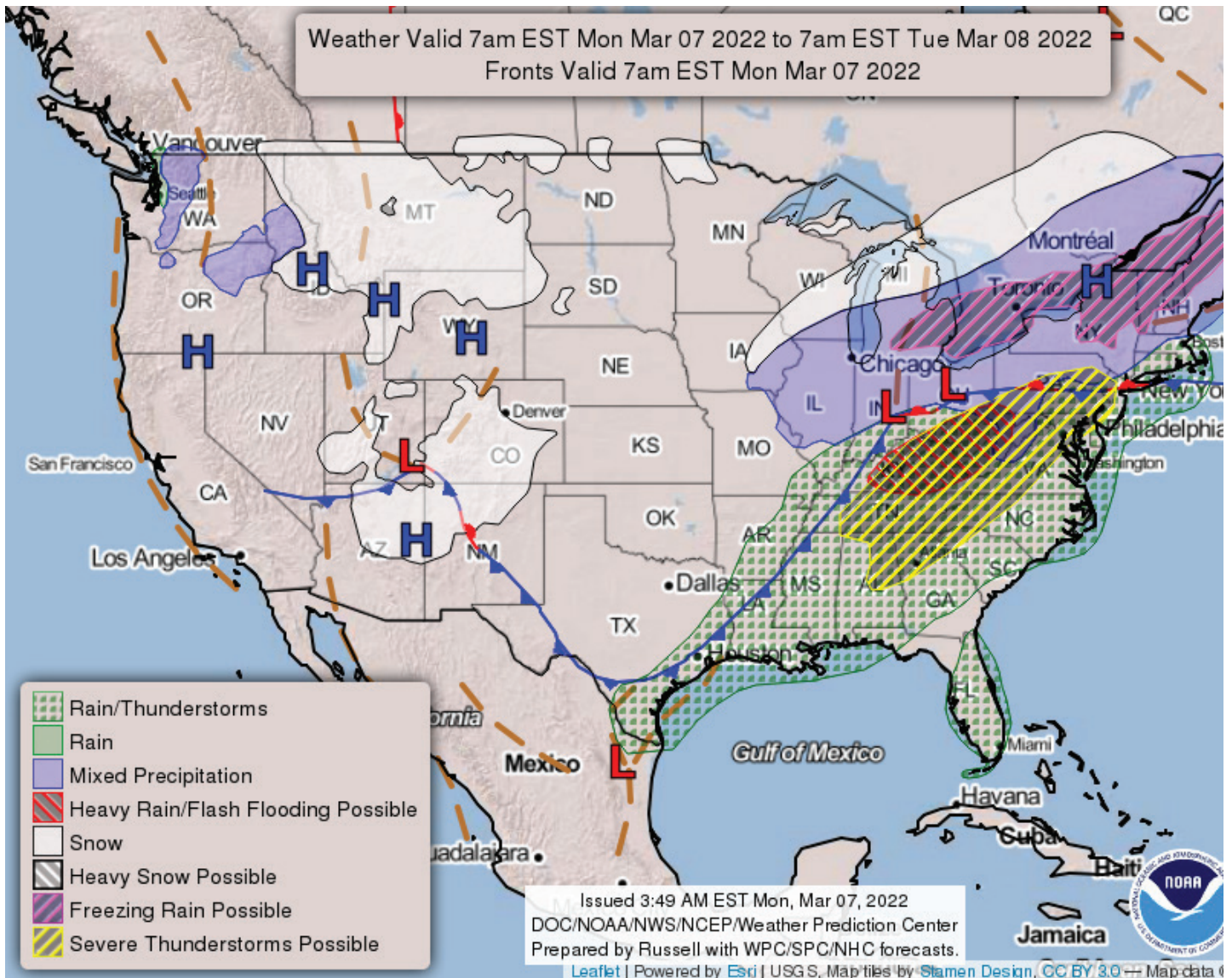
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 26 °F at 2:45 PM**  
**Low Temp: 15 °F at 11:37 PM**  
**Wind: 22 mph at 3:09 AM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

Day length: 11 hours, 31 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 70 in 2016  
Record Low: -24 in 1995  
Average High: 37°F  
Average Low: 15°F  
Average Precip in Mar.: 0.17  
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 1.34  
Precip Year to Date: 0.97  
Sunset Tonight: 6:28:59 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:55:50 AM



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 13 of 69



## MORE THAN JUST WORDS

Quite often we are limited in our understanding of words that come from different cultures and times. The meanings of most words change from one generation to another, and the way they are used can be quite confusing.

For example, we all have some idea of what the word "tall" means. But, if someone were to ask us how many inches it took to be considered a tall person, we might all have a different answer in mind.

Consider the words in Psalm 119:105, "Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path." It would be easy to come to the conclusion that the writer is simply talking about a difficult time in life and that he had faith that God would take care of him. That's a beginning.

The word "lamp" in this passage is a symbol of life, joy, and prosperity as well as guidance. So, the author wants us to know that if we follow the teachings of God's Word, we will live a life that will be filled with a quality of enduring contentment and happiness. Where we are or the circumstances that surround us do not matter. But, of course, it all depends on our being obedient to God's rules. All of God's promises contain the principal of "If/Then." If we do what He asks, then we can expect His rewards.

"Light" is another interesting word. It refers to God's blessings that include joy, happiness, security, and peace. John wrote: "In Him was life and that life was the light of all mankind. That light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." God, then, is our Light!

How great our God is: In Him, we "can have it all!"

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for the assurance of Your joy, happiness, security and peace that we have in You. You are indeed our Light! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path. Psalm 119:105



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 14 of 69

## 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

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 15 of 69

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## News from the Associated Press

### **41 warriors: Native artist painting tipi honoring veterans**

By MIRANDA O'BRYAN KOTA-TV

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The Journey Museum & Learning Center is home to relics, replicas, and art that captures the human condition from a midwestern and Native American perspective.

Now, a new addition, combining the past and present, will celebrate 25 years of Native American history and culture in the Black Hills for the museum.

A Rosebud native, Martin Red Bear has painted for decades and now he's celebrating Native American culture and honoring military service members with a new piece of art that will soon find its home in The Journey Museum & Learning Center.

"What I'm doing is creating riders on horses in which you can see what they may have looked like in the past as warriors, then at the same time, on the shields," said Martin. "You'll notice that I put in military insignias."

Martin was commissioned to adorn the outside of a tipi, choosing to paint 41 horses and warriors. Connecting the past and the present, KOTA-TV reported.

"To decorate this tipi with all of these is going to show this and it'll appear to anyone who comes to see it that they can relate to it in their own way and be honored hopefully by what is being depicted," continued Martin.

A beautiful work of art with a connection to Martin's culture and career.

"I was in the military, in the U.S. Army during the '60s, during the Vietnam war," Martin told the reporter. "I served with the 4th and 5th infantry divisions but I was trained as a combat engineer. Right out of the army, I was looking for a job and there happened to be a position open at a museum that's associated with this one. By working for the museum, and doing all the daily chores that had to be done, I was interviewing other artists and they talked to me about their artwork and how it made them feel and what they got out of it and so as a result of that, it got me thinking, I have a G.I. bill, why not do something with it."

And do something with it he did.

Martin attended Rocky Mountain School of Art, the Institute of American Indian Arts, and finally the University of New Mexico for a master's degree. He then returned home, teaching at Little Wound and Oglala Lakota College.

All while creating art when he could, art Martin says holds an important reminder.

"I think that's important for all of us to know that so we don't forget about our cultures," finished Martin. "We need our culture and regardless of if it's in writing or it's in language or in art or even in education because it's important for us to continue on so we can coexist and live together as we all are now."

The plan is to have the painting finished by April but if you can't wait, you can visit the museum and see Martin in action.

### **Oral Roberts tops W. Illinois 80-68 in Summit League tourney**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Max Abmas had 22 points as Oral Roberts defeated Western Illinois 80-68 in the Summit League tournament's quarterfinals on Sunday night.

Abmas hit 9 of 10 from the free throw line.

Elijah Lufile had 18 points and 14 rebounds for Oral Roberts (19-11). Issac McBride added 11 points. DeShang Weaver had 11 points.

Trenton Massner had 28 points for the Leathernecks (16-15). Tamell Pearson added 14 points. Colton Sandage had 11 points and six rebounds.

Will Carius, the Leathernecks' second leading scorer coming into the contest at 15 points per game, had four points. He shot 0 of 5 from behind the arc.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 17 of 69

## Kamateros leads S. Dakota over Kansas City 74-61 in Summit

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Tasos Kamateros had 15 points and 11 rebounds to lead five South Dakota players in double figures as the Coyotes defeated Kansas City 74-61 in the Summit League Conference tournament's quarterfinals on Sunday night.

Hunter Goodrick and Mason Archambault added 14 points apiece for the Coyotes. Kruz Perrott-Hunt chipped in 13 points, and Boogie Anderson had 12. Goodrick also had eight rebounds and three blocks, while Archambault posted six assists.

Marvin Nesbitt Jr. had 19 points for the Roos (19-12). Evan Gilyard II added 11 points. Arkel Lamar had 11 points and nine rebounds.

## Heat preparing for Oladipo's long-awaited return to lineup

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI (AP) — Victor Oladipo is questionable. After three years of dealing with rehab and challenges, that's a breakthrough.

The Miami Heat are listing Oladipo as questionable for their Monday night game against the Houston Rockets. Officially, that means there's a 50-50 chance of the two-time All-Star playing for the first time in nearly a year, and the expectation is that — barring any last-second setback — his return is about to happen.

Oladipo last appeared in an NBA game on April 8, 2021. He has been sidelined since while going through another recovery process following a second surgery on his right quadriceps tendon, which he originally injured while playing for the Indiana Pacers in January 2019.

"He has great fortitude," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "That's the toughest thing for a professional athlete is to get injured and most of your time is away from the team. Probably, when you talk about mental health, that is the most challenging thing for an athlete.

"You don't necessarily always feel like you're a part of it. You have doubts, you don't know what it's going to look like on the other side when you do get healthy, you're not sure if all the work is really mattering. That's a tough place for an athlete."

Oladipo figures to give even more depth to a Heat team that is 43-22 and holding a three-game lead in the Eastern Conference standings with 17 contests remaining. He's averaged 17.5 points over his career and was averaging 19.8 in stints with three teams — Miami, Houston and Indiana — last season before getting hurt.

And now his return could come against the Rockets, the team that sent him to Miami a year ago in exchange for Kelly Olynyk, Avery Bradley and a swap of draft picks.

"He looks great," Heat forward Jimmy Butler said. "He's been working for, whew, a long time, countless amounts of hours, rehab, in the gym, in the weight room. And I'm excited for him to get back."

Oladipo has missed each of Miami's last 89 games, including last season's playoff appearance. He has played in just 56 games since the initial injury three years ago, missing 201 during that span. He missed a year following the first surgery, then 11 months this time after the second surgery.

The challenge for Spoelstra, which he won't complain about, is going to be finding minutes for everyone.

Point guard Kyle Lowry will be back at some point — nobody has said when — from a team-approved absence to deal with a personal matter. Forward Markieff Morris hasn't played since getting injured in a scuffle with Denver's Nikola Jokic on Nov. 8 but has been working out and clarity is expected soon on when he may return. And now Oladipo is on the verge of joining the rotation as well.

"We've been trying to implement him in stuff. ... He's going to add a huge boost to us," Heat forward Caleb Martin said.

Oladipo has been through some practices with the Heat and has done two rehab stints with Miami's G League affiliate in Sioux Falls, though did not appear in an actual game with the Skyforce. He said when the season began that he wants to "have one of the best comeback stories ever."

His opportunity for that is about to begin.

"Through this entire process I've really respected and admired how Vic is able to keep his positive spirit,"

Spaelstra said. "It really is a unique quality. I love that quality about him."

## **Bird flu detected among mixed species flock in South Dakota**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Federal inspectors have confirmed the presence of bird flu in a commercial mixed species flock in southeastern South Dakota.

Samples from the flock in Charles Mix County, which borders Nebraska, were tested at a national laboratory at South Dakota State University. The property was quarantined and the birds will be killed to prevent spread of the disease, the Agriculture Department said.

Avian influenza is an airborne respiratory virus that spreads easily among chickens through nasal and eye secretions, as well as manure. The virus can spread from flock to flock by wild birds, through contact with infected poultry, by equipment, and on the clothing and shoes of caretakers.

The highly contagious virus was discovered a month ago in a commercial turkey flock in Indiana and was detected earlier this week in a backyard flock of chickens and ducks in western Iowa.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the recent bird flu detections do not present an immediate public health concern. No human cases of these avian influenza viruses have been detected in the United States.

Birds from the South Dakota flock will not enter the food system, the USDA said.

## **Woman sentenced to 2-plus years in prison for biting attack**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota woman accused of attacking a woman by biting her on the arm, back and nose has been sentenced to more than two years in prison.

Teyaune Clairmont, of Mission, was indicted by a federal grand jury in September 2020. She pleaded guilty in November to assault resulting in serious bodily injury.

Federal authorities said Clairmont argued with the woman before the attack at a home in Todd County. The victim required reconstructive surgery to repair injuries to her nose.

Clairmont was sentenced to 28 months in prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release.

## **Man accused of embezzling from Standing Rock tribal group**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a South Dakota man has been indicted by a federal grand jury for embezzlement and theft from a tribal organization on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.

Joshua Iron Cloud Sr., 38, of Wakpala, is accused of stealing an undisclosed amount of money from the Oyate Community Development Corp. Prosecutors say Iron Cloud spent the money on personal items and various expenditures.

The development group is based in Fort Yates, North Dakota. The Standing Rock Reservation straddles both Dakotas.

The charge carries a maximum penalty of five years and prison and a \$250,000 fine, along with the possibility of restitution.

Iron Cloud's court-appointed attorney could not be reached on Sunday.

## **Plan to ax some spruce trees could control Black Hills fires**

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Federal officials say they plan to cut down some white spruce trees in the Black Hills to help limit damage from wildfires and allow other tree species to grow.

The Spruce Vegetation Management Program covers over 20,000 acres for tree removal in the central and northern Black Hills.

Jerry Krueger, deputy supervisor of the Black Hills National Forest, said spruce stands create opportunities for wildfires to jump from one location to the next. He added that removing white spruce will encourage aspen growth.

Ben Wudtke, executive director of the Black Hills Forest Resource Association, represents timber com-



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 19 of 69

panies that would carry out the proposed project, South Dakota Public Broadcasting reported.

"One component of the project is to remove the spruce that's encroached into these stands that were historically aspen and pine stands, and they've grown unnaturally dense with the spruce," Wudtke said. "They're going to go in and remove that spruce and kind of reset that stand to what it was naturally."

Some opponents say the project would destroy the ecosystem of spruce stands. Mary Zimmerman, vice president of the Norbeck Society, a conservation group in Rapid City, said prescribed burns and removing small trees are better methods for preventing wildfires.

"We're already at a pretty dire shortage of mature landscapes in our forest," Zimmerman said. "That's where you really find ecological strength. It's in diversification and complexity, and the forest has already suffered quite a bit of change."

## 9 people hurt when car crashes into Sioux Falls coffee shop

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police say nine people were injured when a vehicle crashed into Starbucks Coffee Shop around lunchtime on Saturday.

Police said none of the injuries are believed to be life threatening. It happened when a 65-year-old man driving a 2014 Jeep Grand Cherokee crashed into the corner of the store after having a medical event, investigators said. The driver and his 71-year-old passenger were being treated at an area hospital.

Seven people inside the coffee shop were hurt, including three who were brought to area medical centers via ambulance and four who found other transportation to hospitals.

No charges have been filed in the case, which remains under investigation.

## Live updates: UN says refugee numbers surge to 1.7 million

By The Associated Press undefined

The latest developments on the Russia-Ukraine war:

GENEVA -- The United Nations' refugee agency says the number of people who have fled the war in Ukraine has increased to more than 1.7 million.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees on Monday put the number of people who have arrived in other countries since the Russian invasion started on Feb. 24 at some 1.735 million. That's up from more than 1.53 million on Sunday.

Nearly three-fifths of the total - nearly 1.03 million -- arrived in Poland, according to the agency. Over 180,000 went to Hungary and 128,000 to Slovakia.

In Montpellier, France, EU foreign affairs policy chief Josep Borrell called on mobilizing "all the resources" of the bloc of 27 nations to help countries welcoming refugees from Ukraine, including neighboring Poland and Romania. Borrell spoke ahead of a meeting of development ministers of the EU.

LVIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called Monday for a global boycott of all Russian products — including oil.

"If the invasion continues and Russia does not abandon its plans against Ukraine, then we need a new sanctions package," Zelensky said in a video address Monday, including "a boycott of Russian exports, in particular, the rejection of oil and oil products from Russia."

"The international community must act even more decisively."

He also said that Russia should also not receive goods and services from abroad "if (Russia) doesn't want to abide by civilized rules." "It can be called an embargo, or it can be just morality," Zelensky said.

"Let the war feed them," Zelensky said. "When someone loses his mind, you need to lose fear and forget about commerce."

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea says it will end transactions with Russia's central bank and two sovereign wealth funds as it lends further support to a U.S.-led economic pressure campaign against Moscow over an escalating invasion of Ukraine.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 20 of 69

South Korea's Foreign Ministry said Monday the Seoul government will prohibit financial transactions with the Russian central bank, the National Wealth Fund of the Russian Federation and the Russian Direct Investment Fund starting Tuesday.

South Korea will also stop transactions with Rossiya Bank, which is one of seven Russian banks the European Union is aiming to exclude from the SWIFT global payment system, the ministry said in a press release.

The ministry said exemptions could be given to certain transactions related to agricultural products, energy and pandemic supplies and that Seoul will apply the same licensing standards the United States is using in permitting such exchanges.

South Korean Defense Ministry spokesperson Boo Seung-Chan said during a briefing that South Korea was also reviewing the possibility of humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine, but that such assistance would not include weapons.

LVIV, Ukraine — A senior Ukrainian official on Monday rejected a Russian proposal to evacuate civilians from besieged Ukraine to Russia and Belarus.

"This is an unacceptable option for opening humanitarian corridors," Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Irina Vereshchuk said at a briefing.

According to the Russian proposal, the only options for civilians fleeing Kyiv and its suburbs would be to go to Gomel in neighboring Belarus. Civilians in Kharkiv and Sumy in eastern Ukraine would have to flee to the Russian city of Belgorod.

Belarus is a key ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin and served as a launching ground for the invasion.

The Ukrainian government is proposing eight humanitarian corridors, including from the southern port of Mariupol, that would allow civilians to travel to the western regions of Ukraine, where there is no Russian shelling.

"We demand that the Russian Federation stop manipulating and abusing the trust of the leaders of France, China, Turkey and India," Vereshchuk said

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — A representative for Kyiv urged the United Nations' top court on Monday to order Russia to halt its devastating invasion of Ukraine, at a hearing snubbed by Russia.

Ukrainian representative Anton Korynevych told judges at the International Court of Justice: "Russia must be stopped and the court has a role to play in stopping it."

Russia's seats at the Great Hall of Justice in the court's Peace Palace headquarters were empty for the hearing into Ukraine's request for the court to order Moscow to end its attack.

BEIJING — China's Foreign Minister on Monday called Russia Beijing's "most important strategic partner," amid its continued refusal to condemn the invasion of Ukraine.

Wang Yi told reporters ties with Moscow constituted "one of the most crucial bilateral relationships in the world," adding "no matter how perilous the international landscape, we will maintain our strategic focus and promote the development of comprehensive China-Russia partnership in the new era."

China has broken with the U.S., Europe and others that have imposed sanctions on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine. It says Washington is to blame for the conflict in Ukraine.

VILNIUS, Lithuania — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has begun a lightning visit to the three Baltic states that are increasingly on edge as they watch Russia press ahead with its invasion of Ukraine.

The former Soviet republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia are all members of NATO and Blinken aims to reassure them of the alliance's protection in the event Russia chooses to expand its military operations to other neighboring countries.

Memories of Soviet occupation are still fresh in the Baltics and since the invasion of Ukraine last month, NATO has moved quickly to boost its troop presence in its eastern flank allies while the U.S. has pledged

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 21 of 69

additional support.

Blinken's Baltic tour opened Monday in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, where support for Ukraine's resistance to the invasion government is palpable with signs of solidarity with Ukrainians in many businesses and on public buildings and buses.

"Unfortunately, the worsening security situation in the Baltic region is of great concern for all of us and around the world," Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda told Blinken. "Russia's reckless aggression against Ukraine once again proves that it is a long-term threat to European security, the security of our alliance."

Nauseda said that a policy of deterrence was no longer enough and that "forward defense" was now needed. He predicted that "Putin will not stop in Ukraine if he will not be stopped Putin. It is our collective duty as a nation to help all Ukrainians with all means available. By saying all, I mean, indeed all means, if we want to avoid the Third World War. The choice is in our hands."

Later Monday, Blinken will travel to Riga, Latvia before visiting Tallinn, Estonia on Tuesday

**LONDON** — Britain's defense ministry says Russian forces made little progress on the ground in recent days but appear to be targeting Ukraine's communications infrastructure "in order to reduce Ukrainian citizens' access to reliable news and information."

The ministry said on social media that Russian forces "probably made minimal ground advances over the weekend.

It said a TV tower in Kharkiv was reportedly struck Sunday, suspending broadcasting output. A TV tower in Kyiv was hit March 1.

Britain said Ukrainian internet access is also highly likely being disrupted as a result of collateral damage from Russian strikes on infrastructure.

**LVIV, Ukraine** — Russia has announced a cease-fire and the opening of humanitarian corridors in several areas of Ukraine after two failed attempts to evacuate civilians from the city of Mariupol.

A Russian task force said a cease-fire would start Monday morning, the 12th day of the war, for civilians from Ukraine's capital Kyiv, the southern port city of Mariupol, Kharkiv, the second-largest city, and Sumy. It wasn't immediately clear if fighting would stop beyond the areas mentioned in the task force's statement, or when the ceasefire would end.

Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian civilians attempting to flee to safety Sunday were forced to shelter from Russian shelling that pummeled cities in Ukraine's center, north and south. Ukraine officials described a "catastrophic" situation during failed evacuation efforts in Kyiv's suburbs.

Officials from both sides also planned a third round of talks Monday.

Russia and Ukraine have traded blame for the earlier failed evacuation attempts.

Evacuation routes published by Russia's RIA Novosti news agency, citing the Defense Ministry, show that civilians will be able to leave to Russia and Belarus. Russian forces will be observing the ceasefire with drones, the task force said.

**WELLINGTON, New Zealand** — New Zealand's government plans to rush through legislation that will allow it to impose economic sanctions against Russia over the invasion of Ukraine.

New Zealand's existing laws don't allow it to impose meaningful sanctions except as part of a broader United Nations effort. That has left New Zealand hamstrung since Russia has U.N. Security Council veto power.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Monday the new legislation would allow New Zealand to target people, companies and assets associated with the invasion, including Russian oligarchs. New Zealand also could freeze assets and stop superyachts or planes from arriving.

Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta said the bill "will send a very clear signal that New Zealand will not be a safe haven for those wishing to move their investments here."

The Russia Sanctions Bill is scheduled to be heard by lawmakers on Wednesday and could pass as quickly as the same day. Ardern said she's hoping it will be supported by lawmakers across all parties although a

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 22 of 69

unanimous vote wasn't guaranteed.

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi says the House is exploring legislation to further isolate Russia from the global economy, including banning the import of its oil and energy products into the U.S.

Amid rising gasoline prices in the U.S., the Biden administration has yet to call for an oil import ban on Russia.

In a letter to Democrats released Sunday night, Pelosi says the legislation under consideration would also repeal normal trade relations with Russia and Belarus and begin the process of denying Russia access to the World Trade Organization.

Pelosi says the House would also empower the Biden administration to raise tariffs on Russian imports.

Congress intends to approve the Biden administration's request for \$10 billion in humanitarian, military and economic support for Ukraine, Pelosi said, as part of omnibus government funding legislation this week.

LVIV, Ukraine -- Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said more than 20,000 people from 52 countries have already volunteered to fight in Ukraine, where they will serve in a newly created international legion. He did not say how many of the foreign volunteers have arrived in Ukraine.

"The whole world today is on Ukraine's side not only in words but in deeds," Kuleba said on Ukrainian television Sunday night.

He did not name the home countries of the volunteers, saying that some of them forbid their citizens from fighting for other countries.

Kuleba also urged Ukrainians living in other countries to begin a campaign to push for Ukraine's membership in the European Union.

## Russia sets cease-fire for evacuations amid heavy shelling

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia announced yet another cease-fire and a handful of humanitarian corridors to allow civilians to flee Ukraine starting Monday, but previous such measures have fallen apart and Moscow's armed forces continued to pummel some Ukrainian cities with rockets even after the announcement.

A day earlier, hundreds of thousands of civilians attempting to flee to safety were forced to shelter from what Ukrainian officials said was Russian shelling in cities in the center, north and south.

Ahead of a third round of talks planned for Monday, the Russian Defense Ministry said a cease-fire would start in the morning, and safe passages would open for civilians from the capital of Kyiv, the southern port city of Mariupol, and the cities of Kharkiv and Sumy. Some of the evacuation routes, however, would funnel civilians toward Russia or its ally Belarus — unlikely destinations for many Ukrainians who would prefer to head toward countries on the western and southern borders.

A senior Ukrainian official rejected those proposals.

It wasn't immediately clear if fighting would stop beyond the areas mentioned or when the cease-fire would end. Hopes were dim that the latest round of talks would yield any breakthroughs.

Well into the second week of war, Russia's plan to quickly overrun the country has been stymied by fierce resistance. Its troops have made significant advances in southern Ukraine and along the coast, but many of its efforts have become stalled, including an immense military convoy that has been almost motionless for days north of Kyiv.

The fighting has sent energy prices surging worldwide, stocks plummeting, and is threatening the food supply and livelihoods of people around the world who rely on farmland in the Black Sea region.

The death toll from the fighting, meanwhile, remains unclear. The U.N. says it has confirmed just a few hundred civilian deaths but also warned that the number is a vast undercount. Police for the Kharkiv region said Monday that 209 people have died there alone — 133 of them civilians.

The Russian invasion has also pushed 1.5 million people to flee the country, creating what the head of the U.N. refugee agency called "the fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II."



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 23 of 69

But many others have become trapped in cities under fire. Food, water, medicine and almost all other supplies were in desperately short supply in the southern port city of Mariupol, which an estimated 200,000 people are trying to flee but where an earlier cease-fire collapses. Russia and Ukraine have traded blame for the failure.

The Russian task force said the new pledge for humanitarian corridors was announced at the request of French President Emmanuel Macron, who spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday. Macron's office said he asked for a broader end to military operations in Ukraine and protections for civilians.

Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Irina Vereshchuk called the proposed evacuation routes to Russia and Belarus "unacceptable." Belarus is a key ally of Putin and served as a launching ground for the invasion.

The Ukrainian government is proposing eight humanitarian corridors, including from Mariupol, that would allow civilians to travel to the western regions of Ukraine where there is no Russian shelling.

"Providing evacuation routes into the arms of the country that is currently destroying yours is a nonsense," said U.K. Europe Minister James Cleverly.

The Russian proposal was reminiscent of similar ones in Syria. In 2016, a joint Russian and Syrian proposal to set up humanitarian corridors out of besieged opposition-held eastern Aleppo was deeply criticized on humanitarian grounds. Human rights activists said the tactic, coupled by brutal sieges, effectively gave residents a choice between fleeing into the arms of their attackers or dying under bombardment.

Meanwhile, Russian forces continued their offensive, opening fire on the city of Mykolaiv, 480 kilometers (300 miles) south of the capital, according to Ukraine's General Staff. Rescuers said they were putting out fires in residential areas caused by rocket attacks.

Emergency officials in the Kharkiv region said that overnight shelling killed at least eight people and wrecked residential buildings, medical and education facilities and administrative buildings.

Shelling also continued in the suburbs of Kyiv, including Irpin, which has been cut off from electricity, water and heating for three days.

"Russia continues to carry out rocket, bomb and artillery strikes on the cities and settlements of Ukraine," the General Staff said.

The General Staff also repeated earlier Ukrainian accusations that the Russians have targeted humanitarian corridors. The statement also accused Russian forces of taking women and children hostage and placing weapons in residential areas of cities — though it did not elaborate or provide evidence.

"Instead of humanitarian corridors, they can only make bloody ones," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Sunday. "Today a family was killed in Irpin. Man, woman and two children. Right on the road. As in a shooting gallery."

Putin earlier said Moscow's attacks could be halted "only if Kyiv ceases hostilities." As he has often done, Putin blamed Ukraine for the war, telling Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday that Kyiv needed to stop all hostilities and fulfill "the well-known demands of Russia."

Putin launched his invasion with a string of false accusations against Kyiv, including that it is led by neo-Nazis intent on undermining Russia with the development of nuclear weapons.

As Russian attacks worsened, a brief reprieve from fighting in Mariupol collapsed. Heavy artillery hit residential areas in other large cities, local officials reported.

"There can be no 'green corridors' because only the sick brain of the Russians decides when to start shooting and at whom," Ukrainian Interior Ministry adviser Anton Gerashchenko said on Telegram.

On what is known as Forgiveness Sunday in Orthodox Christianity, Zelenskyy said Ukraine will never forgive the shelling of its homes, the killing of unarmed people and the destruction of its infrastructure.

"And God will not forgive, either today or tomorrow — never. And instead of a day of forgiveness, there will be a judgment day. Of this I am sure," he said in a video address.

His adviser, Oleksiy Arestovich, described a "catastrophic" situation in the Kyiv suburbs of Bucha, Hostomel and Irpin, where efforts to evacuate residents on Sunday failed. About eight civilians were killed by Russian shelling in Irpin, according to Mayor Oleksander Markyshin.

Video footage showed a shell slamming into a city street, not far from a bridge used by people fleeing the fighting.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 24 of 69

British military officials compared Russia's tactics to those Moscow used in Chechnya and Syria, where surrounded cities were pulverized by airstrikes and artillery.

"This is likely to represent an effort to break Ukrainian morale," the U.K. Ministry of Defense said.

The handful of residents who managed to flee Mariupol before the humanitarian corridor closed said the city of 430,000 had been devastated.

"We saw everything: houses burning, all the people sitting in basements," said Yelena Zamay, who fled to one of the self-proclaimed republics in eastern Ukraine held by pro-Russian separatists. "No communication, no water, no gas, no light, no water. There was nothing."

Russia has made significant advances in southern Ukraine as it seeks to block access to the Sea of Azov. Capturing Mariupol could allow Moscow to establish a land corridor to Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014 in a move that most other countries considered illegal.

But much of the Russian advance has become stalled, including an immense military convoy north of Kyiv.

A senior US defense official said Sunday that the U.S. assesses that about 95% of the Russian forces that had been arrayed around Ukraine are now inside the country. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military assessments, said Russian forces continue to advance in an attempt to isolate Kyiv, Kharkiv and Chernihiv, but are being met with strong Ukrainian resistance.

The West has broadly backed Ukraine, offering aid and weapon shipments and slapping Russia with vast sanctions. But no NATO troops have been sent to Ukraine.

Zelenskyy has heaped criticism on Western leaders for not responding with more force to Russia. He reiterated a request for foreign forces to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine, which NATO so far has ruled out because of concerns such an action would lead to a far wider war.

Zelenskyy also asked the United States and NATO countries to send more warplanes to Ukraine and for more sanctions against Russia.

Russia has become increasingly isolated in the days since the invasion began, as sanctions forced dozens of multinational companies to end or scale back their work in the country and Moscow dramatically restricted independent reporting on the conflict. The ruble has plunged in value, and Russia's extensive trade ties with the West have been all but severed.

## Russia snubs UN court hearings in case brought by Ukraine

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — A representative for Kyiv urged the United Nations' top court on Monday to order Russia to halt its devastating invasion of Ukraine, at a hearing snubbed by Russia amid its ongoing assault on its neighbor.

Ukrainian representative Anton Korynevych told judges at the International Court of Justice: "Russia must be stopped and the court has a role to play in stopping it."

Ukraine has asked the court to order Russia to "immediately suspend the military operations" launched Feb. 24 "that have as their stated purpose and objective the prevention and punishment of a claimed genocide" in the separatist eastern regions of Luhansk and Donetsk.

Lawyers for Kyiv dismissed the Russian claim.

"Ukraine comes to this court because of a grotesque lie and to seek protection from the devastating consequences of that lie," David Zions told the court. "The lie is the Russian Federation's claim of genocide in Ukraine. The consequences are unprovoked aggression, cities under siege, civilians under fire, humanitarian catastrophe and refugees fleeing for their lives."

A decision on Ukraine's request is expected within days.

If the court were to order a halt to hostilities, "I think the chance of that happening is zero," said Terry Gill, a professor of military law at the University of Amsterdam. He noted that if a nation does not abide by the court's order, judges could seek action from the United Nations Security Council, where Russia holds a veto.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 25 of 69

Russia's seats at the Great Hall of Justice in the court's Peace Palace headquarters were empty for the hearing.

The court's president, American judge Joan E. Donoghue, said Russia's ambassador to the Netherlands, Alexander Shulgin, informed judges that "his government did not intend to participate in the oral proceedings."

Korynevych condemned Moscow's snub.

"The fact that Russian seats are empty speaks loudly," he said. "They are not here in this court of law. They are on a battlefield waging aggressive war against my country."

The request for so-called provisional measures is linked to a case Ukraine has filed based on the Genocide Convention. Both countries have ratified the 1948 treaty, which has a clause allowing nations to take disputes based on its provisions to the Hague-based court.

"Ukraine emphatically denies that any such genocide has occurred, and that the Russian Federation has any lawful basis to take action in and against Ukraine for the purpose of preventing and punishing genocide," the country said in its claim to the court.

Ukraine's nine-page legal filing launching the case argues that "Russia has turned the Genocide Convention on its head" by making a false claim. It adds that "Russia's lie is all the more offensive, and ironic, because it appears that it is Russia planning acts of genocide in Ukraine."

The success of Ukraine's request will depend on whether the court accepts it has "prima facie jurisdiction" in the case, which is not a guarantee that the court ultimately would proceed with the suit. Cases at the International Court of Justice typically take years to complete.

Regardless of the outcome of the hearings, they give Ukraine another platform to air grievances about Moscow's invasion.

"It's part of, I think, an overall diplomatic strategy to try to put maximum pressure on Russia," said Gill.

## Death toll surpasses 6 million for pandemic now in 3rd year

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The official global death toll from COVID-19 eclipsed 6 million on Monday — underscoring that the pandemic, now entering its third year, is far from over.

The milestone, recorded by Johns Hopkins University, is the latest tragic reminder of the unrelenting nature of the pandemic even as people are shedding masks, travel is resuming and businesses are reopening around the globe.

Remote Pacific islands, whose isolation had protected them for more than two years, are just now grappling with their first outbreaks and deaths, fueled by the highly contagious omicron variant.

Hong Kong, which is seeing deaths soar, is testing its entire population of 7.5 million three times this month as it clings to mainland China's "zero-COVID" strategy.

As death rates remain high in Poland, Hungary, Romania and other Eastern European countries, the region has seen more than 1.5 million refugees arrive from war-torn Ukraine, a country with poor vaccination coverage and high rates of cases and deaths.

And despite its wealth and vaccine availability, the United States is nearing 1 million reported deaths on its own.

Death rates worldwide are still highest among people unvaccinated against the virus, said Tikki Pang, a visiting professor at the National University of Singapore's medical school and co-chair of the Asia Pacific Immunization Coalition.

"This is a disease of the unvaccinated — look what is happening in Hong Kong right now, the health system is being overwhelmed," said Pang, the former director of research policy and cooperation with the World Health Organization. "The large majority of the deaths and the severe cases are in the unvaccinated, vulnerable segment of the population."

It took the world seven months to record its first million deaths from the virus after the pandemic began in early 2020. Four months later another million people had died, and 1 million have died every three

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 26 of 69

months since, until the death toll hit 5 million at the end of October. Now it has reached 6 million — more than the populations of Berlin and Brussels combined, or the entire state of Maryland.

But despite the enormity of the figure, the world undoubtedly hit its 6 millionth death some time ago. Poor record-keeping and testing in many parts of the world has led to an undercount in coronavirus deaths, in addition to excess deaths related to the pandemic but not from actual COVID-19 infections, like people who died from preventable causes but could not receive treatment because hospitals were full.

Edouard Mathieu, head of data for the Our World in Data portal, said that — when countries' excess mortality figures are studied — as many as nearly four times the reported death toll have likely died because of the pandemic.

An analysis of excess deaths by a team at The Economist estimates that the number of COVID-19 deaths is between 14.1 million and 23.8 million.

"Confirmed deaths represent a fraction of the true number of deaths due to COVID, mostly because of limited testing, and challenges in the attribution of the cause of death," Mathieu told The Associated Press. "In some, mostly rich, countries that fraction is high and the official tally can be considered to be fairly accurate, but in others it is highly underestimated."

The United States has the biggest official death toll in the world, but the numbers have been trending downward over the last month.

Lonnie Bailey lost his 17-year-old nephew, Carlos Nunez Jr., who contracted COVID-19 last April — the same month Kentucky opened his age group to vaccinations. The Louisville resident said the family is still suffering, including Carlos' younger sibling, who had to be hospitalized himself and still has lingering symptoms. The aggressive reopening of the country has been jarring for them to witness.

"For us it is hard to let our guard down; it's going to take a while for us to adjust," Bailey said.

The world has seen more than 445 million confirmed COVID-19 cases, and new weekly cases have been declining recently in all regions except for the Western Pacific, which includes China, Japan and South Korea, among others, the World Health Organization reported this week.

Although the overall figures in the Pacific islands seeing their first outbreaks are small compared to larger countries, they are significant among their tiny populations and threaten to overwhelm fragile health care systems.

"Given what we know about COVID ... it's likely to hit them for the next year or so at least," said Katie Greenwood, head of the Red Cross Pacific delegation.

Tonga reported its first outbreak after the virus arrived with international aid vessels following the Jan. 15 eruption of a massive volcano, followed by a tsunami. It now has several hundred cases, but — with 66% of its population fully vaccinated — it has so far reported people suffering mostly mild symptoms and no deaths.

The Solomon Islands saw the first outbreak in January and now has thousands of cases and more than 100 deaths. The actual death toll is likely much higher, with the capital's hospital overwhelmed and many dying at home, Greenwood said.

Only 12% of Solomon Islanders are fully vaccinated, though the outbreak has provided new impetus to the country's vaccination campaign and 29% now have at least one shot.

Global vaccine disparity continues, with only 6.95% of people in low-income countries fully vaccinated, compared to more than 73% in high-income nations, according to Our World in Data.

In a good sign, at the end of last month Africa surpassed Europe in the number of doses administered daily, but only about 12.5% of its population has received two shots.

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is still pressing for more vaccines, though it has been a challenge. Some shipments arrive with little warning for countries' health systems and others near the expiration date — forcing doses to be destroyed.

Eastern Europe has been particularly hard hit by the omicron variant, and with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a new risk has emerged as hundreds of thousands of people flee to places like Poland on crowded trains. Health officials there have been offering free vaccinations to all refugees, but have not been making

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 27 of 69

them test upon arrival or quarantine.

"This is really tragic because great stress has a very negative effect on natural immunity and increases the risk of infections," said Anna Boron-Kaczmarek, a Polish infectious disease specialist. "They are in very high stress, being afraid for their lives, the lives of their children, their family members."

Mexico has reported 300,000 deaths, but with little testing, a government analysis of death certificates puts the real number closer to 500,000. Still, four weeks of falling infection rates have left health officials optimistic.

In India, where the world was shocked by images of open-air pyres of bodies burned as crematoria were overwhelmed, the scars are fading as the number of new cases and deaths has slowed.

India has recorded more than 500,000 deaths, but experts believe its true toll is in the millions, primarily from the delta variant. Migrants from India's vast hinterland are now returning to its megacities in search of jobs, and the streets are packed with traffic. Shopping malls have customers, albeit still masked, while schools and universities are welcoming students after a months-long gap.

In Britain, infections have fallen since an omicron-driven surge in December, but remain high. England has now lifted all restrictions, including mask mandates and the requirement that all who test positive isolate at home.

With about 250,000 reported deaths, the African continent's smaller death toll is thought to stem from underreporting, as well as a generally younger and less mobile population.

"Africa is a big question mark for me, because it has been relatively spared from the worst so far, but it could just be a time bomb," Pang said, noting its low vaccination rates.

In South Africa, Soweto resident Thoko Dube said she received news of the deaths of two family members on the same day in January 2021 — a month before the country received its first vaccines.

It has been difficult, but "the family is coping," she said. "We have accepted it because it has been happening to other families."

## Russia-Ukraine War: What to know on Russia's war in Ukraine

By The Associated Press

Russia's invasion of Ukraine entered its 12th day following what Ukrainian authorities described as increased shelling of encircled cities and another failed attempt to start evacuating hundreds of thousands of civilians from the besieged southern port of Mariupol.

Russian and Ukrainian forces had agreed to an 11-hour cease-fire Sunday, but Ukrainian officials said Russian attacks quickly closed the safe-passage corridor. Another cease-fire was to begin Monday morning.

A third round of talks between Russian and Ukrainian leaders was planned for Monday.

More than 1.5 million Ukrainians had been forced from the country. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged his people to keep resisting, and Ukraine's foreign minister said more than 20,000 people from 52 countries had volunteered to fight in Ukraine's newly created international legion.

Russian President Vladimir Putin likened the West's sanctions on Russia to "declaring war."

Here's a look at key things to know about the conflict:

### VIOLENCE STOPS PLANNED CIVILIAN EVACUATIONS AGAIN

Russia announced a cease-fire starting Monday morning and the opening of humanitarian corridors in several areas to allow hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian civilians to flee the fighting, even as its armed forces continued to pummel Ukrainian cities.

Ukrainian Interior Ministry adviser Anton Gerashchenko had blamed Russian artillery fire for halting a second attempt in as many days to evacuate an estimated 200,000 civilians from Mariupol, where food, water and medicine are scarce.

A day earlier, Ukrainian officials similarly said Russian artillery fire and airstrikes had prevented residents from leaving. Putin accused Ukraine of sabotaging the effort.

Russia has sought to cut off Ukraine's access to the Sea of Azov in the south. Capturing Mariupol could allow Russia to establish a land corridor to Crimea, which it annexed in 2014.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 28 of 69

## WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING ON THE GROUND?

Russian forces launched hundreds of missiles and artillery attacks across the country, including powerful bombs dropped on residential areas of Chernihiv, a city north of the capital of Kyiv, Ukrainian officials said. But a miles-long Russian armored column threatening the capital remained stalled outside Kyiv.

Sunday evening, heavy shelling also came to Mykolaiv in the south and Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city. Efforts to evacuate residents from the Kyiv suburbs of Bucha, Hostomel and Irpin on Sunday were mostly unsuccessful.

A senior American defense official said Sunday the U.S. believes that about 95% of the Russian forces that had been arrayed around Ukraine are now inside the country. Ukrainian air and missile defenses remain effective and in use, and the Ukrainian military continues to fly aircraft and to employ air defense assets, the official said.

Ukrainian forces were also defending Odesa, Ukraine's largest port city, from Russian ships, Ukrainian presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovich said.

The Russian Defense Ministry on Sunday announced plans to strike Ukraine's military-industrial complex, and it alleged that Ukrainian forces were plotting to blow up an experimental nuclear reactor in Kharkiv and to blame it on Russia. The ministry offered no evidence to back its claims, which could not be independently verified.

## ZELENSKY PUSHES CALL FOR NO-FLY ZONE

Zelenskyy pushed his call for foreign countries to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine. Establishing a no-fly zone would risk escalating the conflict by involving foreign militaries directly. Although the United States and many Western countries have backed Ukraine with weapons shipments, they have sent no troops.

Zelenskyy said in a video address on Sunday that "the world is strong enough to close our skies" and over the weekend he urged U.S. officials help his country obtain warplanes to fight the invasion and retain control of its airspace.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said Sunday that some Ukrainian combat planes had redeployed to Romania and other Ukraine neighbors he didn't identify. He warned an attack from planes operating out of those nations could be deemed an engagement by them in the conflict.

## DIRECTLY WITNESSED OR CONFIRMED BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Onlookers in Chernihiv cheered as a Russian military plane fell from the sky and crashed, according to video released by the Ukrainian government. In Kherson, hundreds of protesters waved blue and yellow Ukrainian flags and shouted, "Go home."

In Mariupol, Associated Press journalists saw doctors make futile attempts to save wounded children. Pharmacies ran bare and hundreds of thousands of people faced food and water shortages in freezing weather.

In Irpin, near Kyiv, a sea of people on foot and even in wheelbarrows trudged over the remains of a destroyed bridge to cross a river and leave the city. Assisted by Ukrainian soldiers, they lugged pets, infants, purses and flimsy bags stuffed with minimal possessions. Some of the weak and elderly were carried along the path in blankets and carts.

Kyiv's central train station remained crowded with people desperate to leave, and frequent shelling could be heard from the center of the capital city.

## DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

Intense diplomatic efforts continued. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken landed in Vilnius, Lithuania, for a lightning trip to three Baltic states increasingly on edge as they watch Russia press ahead with its invasion of Ukraine.

Blinken said Sunday that the United States and its allies are having a "very active discussion" about banning the import of Russian oil and natural gas, while the New Zealand government plans to rush legislation that will allow it to impose economic sanctions against Russia.

China's foreign minister has called Russia Beijing's "most important strategic partner" and has continued to refuse to condemn the invasion of Ukraine.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 29 of 69

While most of the world is shunning Putin, one of the few leaders keeping an open line of communication is French President Emmanuel Macron.

Meanwhile, Russia lawyers snubbed a hearing at the United Nations' top court into a legal bid by Kyiv to halt Moscow's devastating invasion of Ukraine.

The director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael Mariano Grossi, said Sunday that Ukrainian staff at the country's largest nuclear plant are now required to seek approval for any operation, even maintenance, from the Russians. The Zaporizhzhya plant was seized by the Russians last week.

Putin continued to blame the war on the Ukrainian leadership, saying, "They are calling into question the future of Ukrainian statehood." In a call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday, Putin said the invasion could be halted only "only if Kyiv ceases hostilities," according to a Kremlin account.

## THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

The death toll of the conflict has been difficult to measure. The U.N. human rights office said at least 364 civilians have been confirmed killed since the Feb. 24 invasion, but the true number is probably much higher.

The World Health Organization said it verified at least six attacks that have killed six health care workers and injured 11 others.

The U.N. World Food Program says millions of people inside Ukraine, a major global wheat supplier, need food aid "immediately."

Ukrainian refugees continued to pour into neighboring countries, including Poland, Romania and Moldova. The number of people who have left since fighting began has now reached 1.5 million, according to U.N. refugee agency.

Ukraine has rejected a Russian proposal for refugee evacuation routes to Russia and Belarus "unacceptable."

## BUSINESS IN RUSSIA

A growing number of multinational businesses have cut off Russia from vital financial services, technology and a variety of consumer products in response to Western economic sanctions and global outrage over the war.

Two of the so-called Big Four accounting firms — KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers — said Sunday they were pulling out of Russia, ending relationships with member firms based in the country.

TikTok said users won't be able to post new videos in Russia in response to the government's crackdown on what people can say on social media about the invasion, and American Express announced it was suspending all operations in Russia and Belarus.

Netflix also announced it was suspending its service in Russia.

## 'Squid Game Election': South Korean campaign gets ugly

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The race between South Korea's two leading presidential candidates has seen unprecedented levels of toxic rhetoric, mudslinging and lawsuits.

How bad is it?

"Hitler," "beast," and "parasite" are some of the choicer insults leveled by both camps. Some are even calling it "The Squid Game Election," in reference to Netflix's megahit survival drama where people are killed if they lose children's games.

And the stakes? There's widespread speculation that the loser will be arrested.

"It's a dreadful presidential election when the losing contender faces prison. Please survive this dogfight in the mire!" senior opposition politician Hong Joon-pyo wrote on Facebook.

Just days before Wednesday's election, Lee Jae-myung from the liberal governing Democratic Party and Yoon Suk Yeol from the main conservative opposition People Power Party are locked in an extremely tight race.

Their negative campaigns are aggravating South Korea's already severe political divide at a time when

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 30 of 69

it faces a battered, pandemic-hit economy, a balancing act over competition between its main ally, Washington, and its top trading partner, China, and a raft of threats and weapons tests from rival North Korea.

Opinion surveys show that both candidates have more critics than supporters.

"Isn't our national future too bleak with an unpleasant and bitter presidential election that calls for choosing the lesser of two evils?" the mass-circulation Dong-A Ilbo newspaper said in an editorial.

Yoon has slammed Lee over his possible ties to an allegedly corrupt land development scandal. Lee has denied any connection, and in turn has tried to link Yoon to the same scandal, while separately criticizing him for his reported ties to shamanism — an ancient, indigenous religious belief.

There have also been attacks on the candidates' wives, both of whom have been forced to apologize over separate scandals.

Yoon described Lee's party as "Hitler" and "Mussolini" while an associate called Lee's purported aides "parasites." Lee's allies called Yoon "a beast," "dictator" and "an empty can" and derided his wife's alleged plastic surgery.

Their campaign teams and supporters have filed dozens of lawsuits charging libel and the spread of false information, among other issues.

"This year's presidential election has been more overwhelmed by negative campaigning than any other previous election, and the mutual hatred won't easily die down after the election," said Choi Jin, director of the Seoul-based Institute of Presidential Leadership.

Among the fault lines in the electorate are South Korean regional rivalries, views on North Korea, a conflict between generations, economic inequality and women's rights issues.

Yoon is more popular with older voters and those in the southeastern region of Gyeongsang, where past conservative and authoritarian leaders came from. His supporters typically advocate a stronger military alliance with the United States and a tougher line on North Korea, and they credit past authoritarian rulers for quickly developing the economy after the Korean War.

Lee enjoys greater support from younger people and those from Jeolla province, Gyeongsang's rival region in the southwest. His supporters generally want an equal footing in relations with the United States and rapprochement with North Korea while being extremely critical of past authoritarian rulers' human rights records.

In a notable development, many surveys showed Yoon has received greater approval ratings than Lee from voters aged 18 and 29, most of whom were born after South Korea became a developed country.

"They didn't experience poverty and dictatorships. ... They are very critical of China and North Korea, and they have rather friendly feelings toward the U.S. and Japan," said Park Sung-min, head of Seoul-based MIN Consulting, a political consulting firm.

South Korea's deep divisions are reflected in the troubles of the last three leaders. Their supporters say intense corruption investigations after they left office were politically motivated by their rivals.

During a corruption probe of his family, former liberal President Roh Moo-hyun jumped to his death in 2009, a year after he left office. His successor, the conservative Lee Myung-bak, and Lee's conservative successor, Park Geun-hye, were separately convicted of a range of crimes, including corruption, and given lengthy prison terms after Roh's friend and current President Moon Jae-in took office in 2017.

Park was pardoned in December, but Lee is still serving a 17-year prison term.

Moon's government took a big hit with a scandal involving Moon's former justice minister and close associate, Cho Kuk. Cho and his family members are alleged to have participated in financial crimes and the faking of credentials to help Cho's daughter enter medical school.

Cho was seen as a reformist and potential liberal presidential hopeful. Moon's early attempts to keep Cho in office split the public, with his critics calling for Cho's resignation and supporters rallying to his side during large street protests.

Yoon originally served as Moon's prosecutor general and spearheaded investigations of previous conservative governments. But he eventually left Moon's government and joined the opposition last year after a conflict with Moon's allies over the Cho case helped him emerge as a potential presidential contender.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 31 of 69

"Cho's case was a watershed in South Korean politics. It made Yoon a presidential candidate, and many in their 20s and 30s switched their support from Moon," said Choi, the institute director.

During a recent TV debate, Yoon and Lee agreed not to launch politically motivated investigations against the other side if they win. But some question their sincerity.

In a newspaper interview last month, Yoon said that if elected, his government would investigate possible wrongdoing by the Moon government and also the land development scandal that Lee has been allegedly linked to.

When Moon's government was conducting widespread investigations of past conservative governments, Lee said they were necessary to eradicate "deep-rooted evils and injustice."

Cho Jinman, a professor at Seoul's Duksung Women's University, said a new president must exercise restraint and calm calls for political revenge by hard-line supporters.

"We now have an election race like 'Squid Game,' but it will be a new president's responsibility to pull us out of it," he said.

## Brent crude up \$10, shares sink as Ukraine conflict deepens

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — The price of oil jumped about \$10 a barrel and shares were sharply lower Monday as the conflict in Ukraine deepened amid mounting calls for harsher sanctions against Russia.

Brent crude oil surged more than 12% during the day in Asia, while benchmark U.S. crude gained about \$10 at more than \$125 a barrel.

The latest market turmoil followed a warning from Russian President Vladimir Putin that Ukrainian statehood was imperiled as Russian forces battered strategic locations. A temporary cease-fire in two Ukrainian cities failed over the weekend — and both sides blamed each other.

France's CAC 40 dipped 3.6% in early trading to 5,841.82, while Germany's DAX lost nearly 4.1% to 12,564.78. Britain's FTSE 100 dropped 2.0% to 6,848.87. U.S. shares were set to drift lower with Dow futures down 1.6% at 33,048.00. S&P 500 futures fell 1.7% to 4,252.00.

The price of gold, which is viewed as an investor safe haven in times of crisis, jumped \$26 an ounce to \$1,992.90.

Oil prices came under additional pressure after Libya's national oil company said an armed group had shut down two crucial oil fields. The move caused the country's daily oil output to drop by 330,000.

U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the House was exploring legislation to further isolate Russia from the global economy, including banning the import of its oil and energy products into the U.S.

Brent crude, the international pricing standard, hit \$139.13 per barrel before falling back. It was trading up \$9.22 at \$127.33 a barrel in London.

U.S. crude soared \$9.70 to \$125.38 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Its all-time high was marked in July 2008, when the price per barrel of U.S. crude climbed to \$145.29.

That pushed the average price for regular gasoline in the U.S. up almost 41 cents past \$4 per gallon (3.8 liters) on average for the first time since 2008, according to the AAA motor club.

The all-time high for average gasoline prices was set July 17, 2008 at \$4.10 per gallon.

Higher fuel costs are devastating for Japan, which imports almost all its energy. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 dipped 2.9% to finish at 25,221.41.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 3.9% to 21,057.63, while South Korea's Kospi slipped 2.3% to 2,651.31. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 shed 1.0% to 7,038.60. The Shanghai Composite lost 2.2% to 3,372.86.

"The Ukraine-Russia conflict will continue to dominate market sentiments and no signs of conflict resolution thus far may likely put a cap on risk sentiments into the new week," said Yeap Jun Rong, market strategist at IG in Singapore.

"It should be clear by now that economic sanctions will not deter any aggression from the Russians, but will serve more as a punitive measure at the expense of implication on global economic growth. Elevated

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 32 of 69

oil prices may pose a threat to firms' margins and consumer spending outlook," Yeap said.

China reported Monday that its exports rose by double digits in January and February before Russia's attack on Ukraine roiled the global economy.

Customs data show exports grew by 16.3% over a year earlier in a sign global demand was recovering before President Vladimir Putin's Feb. 24 invasion. Imports advanced 15.5% despite a Chinese economic slowdown that the war threatens to worsen.

China's No. 2 leader, Premier Li Keqiang, warned Saturday global conditions are "volatile, grave and uncertain" and achieving Beijing's economic goals will require "arduous efforts."

Markets worldwide have swung wildly recently on worries about how high prices for oil, wheat and other commodities produced in the region will go because of Russia's invasion, inflaming the world's already high inflation.

The list of companies exiting Russia has grown to include Mastercard, Visa and American Express, as well as Netflix.

The conflict in Ukraine also threatens the food supply in some regions, including Europe, Africa and Asia, which rely on the vast, fertile farmlands of the Black Sea region, known as the "breadbasket of the world."

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar edged up to 115.03 Japanese yen from 114.86 yen. The euro cost \$1.0872, down from \$1.0926.

## Macron keeps an open line to Putin as war in Ukraine rages

By BARBARA SURK Associated Press

NICE, France (AP) — While most of the world is shunning President Vladimir Putin over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, one of the few leaders keeping an open line of communication is French President Emmanuel Macron.

Macron's diplomatic efforts to prevent the war failed, but he's not giving up: the two men have spoken four times since Russian forces attacked Ukraine on Feb. 24, and 11 times over the past month.

The French leader, whose country holds the European Union's rotating presidency, is now one of the few outsiders with a view into Putin's mindset at the time of the largest military invasion in Europe since World War II. Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett is also becoming a mediator, meeting Putin on a surprise visit to Moscow on Saturday and speaking with him again by phone on Sunday.

Macron's relentless push for dialogue reflects France's post-World War II tradition of carving out its own geopolitical path and its refusal to blindly follow the United States.

After Russian troops pushed deep into Ukraine, Macron's resolve to maintain communication channels with Putin is providing Western allies with insight into the Russian leader's state of mind, his intentions on the battlefield and at home in Russia as the Kremlin cracks down on opponents.

"He is keeping a diplomatic channel open for the West in case Putin might want to de-escalate and look for a way out of this crisis," said Benjamin Haddad, a senior director for Europe at the Atlantic Council in Paris and a member of Macron's party.

Macron has also spoken to Putin on behalf of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Haddad said, trying to extract some mercy from Putin: local cease-fires, safe passage for trapped civilians and access to humanitarian aid.

During their most recent call on Sunday that came at Macron's request, the French leader and Putin focused for nearly two hours on the safety of Ukraine's nuclear plants.

Putin said he doesn't intend to attack them and agreed on the principle of "dialogue" between the International Atomic Energy Agency, Ukraine and Russia on the issue, according to a French official who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with the French presidency's practices.

There is "absolutely no illusion at the Elysee that Putin will keep his word on anything he promises," Haddad said, or that Putin will change his mind about the invasion. But Haddad said that it's important that Macron keeps trying to engage Putin even as the West punishes Russia and strengthens Ukraine's defenses.

And breaking with the diplomatic norm of keeping such conversations secret, the French presidency



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 33 of 69

has widely shared the content of Macron's talks with Putin. Macron's advisers and the president himself detailed the excruciating efforts to prevent the war and then laid bare Putin's broken promises of peace.

That helped Macron galvanize support for the toughest sanctions against Russia, uniting the notoriously divided 27-member EU and revive NATO's geopolitical role.

To the extent that keeping lines of communication open can be useful during a conflict to relay messages, warnings or threats, and hear the response, the Biden administration believes that such contacts can be useful for at least getting some insight into Putin's mood, demeanor and mindset. Hence, Secretary of State Antony Blinken will go to Paris Tuesday to hear from Macron directly about his latest conversations with Putin.

But U.S. officials remain unconvinced that Macron's efforts — or any other leader's — have had any significant impact on Putin's decision-making process. They note that despite a series of interventions by the French president, Putin has not only gone ahead with the invasion but also intensified the conflict.

The French president has been clear from the start: Putin alone is to blame for the death and destruction in Ukraine and the major consequences of the war for France and Europe. But on the other hand if Putin wants to talk, he will listen.

Putin called on Thursday. The number of refugees fleeing Ukraine had already topped 1 million and several towns in the east were in ruins. Macron picked up and they talked for 90 minutes.

An official in the French presidency rushed to brief reporters on the conversation. Putin told Macron the military operation in Ukraine is "going according to plan" and he will continue "until the end," the official said.

Putin claimed that "war crimes" were being committed by Ukrainians. He called them "Nazis," the official said. There's no need to negotiate, Putin said. He will achieve the "neutralization and disarmament of Ukraine" with his army. The official couldn't be named in keeping with Elysee practices.

Macron "spoke the truth" to Putin, the official said, and explained how his war on Ukraine is perceived by the West. "I spoke to President Putin. I asked him to stop attacks on Ukraine. At this point, he refuses," Macron tweeted.

He said dialogue will continue. "We must prevent the worst from happening."

Since he was elected president in 2017, Macron has shown a keen interest in forging personal relationships with world leaders, including those who value a degree of pragmatism when discussing democracy and human rights while pursuing business opportunities.

His business-friendly diplomacy paid off in the Persian Gulf in December when he signed a multi-billion euro weapons contract with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nayhan. Macron drew fierce criticism on that trip for traveling to Saudi Arabia to become the first Western leader to meet with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman after the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

"Macron stands out among European Union leaders with his willingness to be in the spotlight, to drive the foreign policy and push things ahead," said Silvia Colombo, an expert on EU foreign relations at the International Institute in Rome.

There is no other foreign leader that Macron has tried to bring closer to his corner than Putin. Macron, a staunch European, was confident that a mixture of personal charm and the splendor of France's past would convince Putin to keep Russia within the European security habitat.

Macron first hosted Putin in the sumptuous Place of Versailles in 2017. Two years later they discussed stalled Ukraine peace talks in Macron's summer residence at the Fort de Bregancon on the French Riviera as Macron tried to build on European diplomacy that had helped ease hostilities in the past.

It's become clear over the past several weeks that Putin was on the war path even as he denied it, sitting across from Macron at a very long table during his last visit to Moscow.

Macron wanted to believe him, Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said after critics claimed the French president has fallen into the old European trap of appeasing Putin's Russia.

"The president is not naive," Le Drian said on the eve of Russia's invasion. "He knows the methods, the character and the cynical nature of Putin."

## At Romania hotel, ballroom welcomes refugees fleeing Ukraine

By RENATA BRITO Associated Press

SUCEAVA, Romania (AP) — As Olga Okhrimenko walked into a bustling ballroom-turned-refugee shelter at a four-star Romanian hotel, her corgi, Knolly, strained at the leash anxiously seeking the warmth inside. It had taken them three days to flee Ukraine by car, bus and taxi in the bitter cold.

The 34-year-old Ukrainian marketing manager could hardly contain her emotions, and a simple “are you OK?” filled her eyes with tears she thought she no longer had.

The first refugees began arriving more than a week ago at the Mandachi Hotel and Spa in Suceava in Romania, where the owner decided to make the lavish, 850-square-meter ballroom available to them. Since then, more than 2,000 people and 100 pets have taken shelter here, with row upon row of numbered mattresses under an incongruous glittering disco ball.

They are part of the swiftest refugee exodus so far this century, in which more than 1.5 million people have fled Ukraine in just 10 days, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency. Since the war started on Feb. 24, more than 227,000 Ukrainians have crossed into neighboring Romania, according to local authorities.

Like Okhrimenko, some of the refugees at the Mandachi have fled cities on the front lines of the war.

“Whenever somebody asks me where I am from, and I say Kharkiv, their expression, it’s like I arrived from Hiroshima,” Okhrimenko told The Associated Press from mattress number 60. “Then, I remember everything going on there and I break down.”

After five days of shelling, she decided to flee Kharkiv on March 1 with Knolly, a couple of friends and their two cats. Their car passed by the city’s central Freedom Square just 20 minutes before it was engulfed by a giant ball of fire in a Russian military strike.

“It was difficult for me before to say I’m a great patriot of my land,” she said. “But on Feb. 24, I became one 100%.”

As she spoke, volunteers on megaphones interrupted several times to announce buses leaving for Italy, Germany, Bulgaria and other European nations. The room was chaotic, filled mostly with women and children, as men stayed in Ukraine to fight. Some spoke Russian, underlining the sense of a war on family.

The majority of the refugees were Ukrainian, but there were also Nigerians, Moroccans, Italians, Chinese and Iranians. Toddlers cried in the arms of exhausted mothers, who took deep breaths to calm their children and themselves. Cats and dogs of all sizes shared beds with their owners, and one stressed Chihuahua with bulging eyes bit anyone who attempted to pet it.

Some 300 volunteers, translators and social workers take turns to help here. In the mornings, they change the mismatched sheets on vacated mattresses, placing a “reserved” or “free” handwritten sign over them. In the reception area, the two bars display not alcohol but an array of diapers, toothbrushes, snacks and even surgical masks and disinfectant gel.

At the opposite end of the King Salon, at mattress number 82 near stacks of red velvet chairs, 85-year-old Nellya Nahorna sat in silence combing her gray hair with her fingers.

It was the second time this Ukrainian grandmother had fled war. In 1941, when she was just 4 years old, Nahorna was injured by shrapnel in Nazi Germany’s invasion of Ukraine, she said.

“The first night of the war, my mother grabbed me from my cradle and ran to take the last car that carried the wounded to the border,” Nahorna recalled in a soft, low voice.

Now, more than 80 years later, it was her daughter, 57-year-old Olena Yefanova, who grabbed her on the first day of the war and crossed the border. They came from the town of Zaporizhzhia, where Europe’s largest nuclear power plant was hit by Russian shelling last week.

“This war is different,” Nahorna said in Russian. In World War II, the enemies were German “fascists,” she said. But now, she was fleeing from her “brothers.” They had to make stops along the way to get her a Ukrainian passport.

“I would like to tell the Russian mothers .... help by keeping your sons right next to yourselves and don’t let them fight and attack other countries,” Nahorna said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 35 of 69

In an astonishing accomplishment, the same grandmother who leaned on a cane to make it from her mattress to a table a few steps away had walked the last 5 km (3 miles) to Romania by foot. At one point, Nahorna's heart seemed like it was giving up, and a doctor gave her some pills so she could continue, her daughter said.

"My mother clenched her will into a fist and left," Yefanova said proudly. "She understood that this is going to be hard but she took it steadfastly."

Yefanova had left her husband and one son behind, enlisted to fight the Russians. She wept as she showed a photo of them on her phone screensaver.

"Our kids play a game called little tanks - (Russian President Vladimir Putin) is playing his own version of this game," she said. "And he is (using) his people in this game."

A row behind Yefanova on mattress 34, Anna Karpenko thought of her partner as their 6-year-old son played with a yellow balloon.

Before she left him at their home in Chornomorsk, on the outskirts of Ukraine's biggest port city of Odesa, he promised they would get married after the war. But "when we said goodbye, it felt like it was forever," Karpenko said, wiping tears from her eyes.

Normally, she said, she's an optimistic person. Now she and her son both cry every day.

Russian ships have made repeated attempts to fire on the Black Sea port of Odesa, according to Ukrainian officials. Karpenko said people in her town had gathered on beaches to fill bags with sand.

Originally from Crimea, Karpenko speaks Russian, worked for a Russian language school and has relatives in Donetsk, one of two Russian-backed separatist regions in eastern Ukraine. The war in Ukraine has divided her family, with her Donetsk relatives supporting Putin.

"They think that all of their problems are caused by Ukraine," she explained in frustration. "They worship (Putin) as if he was a God."

She's given up trying to tell them it was Russian strikes she was fleeing.

By the next morning, Okhrimenko and her corgi had left. Her husband, who had moved to Germany only a few months ago, drove down to pick them up. She had planned to join him eventually, but never thought she would suddenly be chased out by sirens and explosions.

"We just took a deep sigh of relief together and hugged each other so strong," Okhrimenko told AP by text message from the road to Germany.

Karpenko, her son and her mother boarded a bus also bound for Germany. On the same bus were Yefanova and Nahorna, the 85-year-old grandmother.

Thirty hours after leaving the makeshift shelter, they were still on the road. "The longest journey in my life," Karpenko texted AP from a gas station in Austria.

As one bus left, others arrived at the Hotel Mandachi, full of freezing refugees carrying their children and their belongings. With no end to the war in sight, the wedding parties that once took place in the ballroom have been postponed indefinitely.

## Live updates: Australian missiles "on the ground" in Ukraine

By The Associated Press undefined

The latest developments on the Russia-Ukraine war:

SYDNEY — Australia's prime minister has described Russia and China's closer relationship as opportunistic rather than strategic.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Monday labeled the alliance an "Arc of Autocracy" and said Russia and China would prefer a new world order to the one that has been place since World War II.

Morrison has criticized Beijing's failure to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's expansion of trade in Russian wheat while other countries are imposing sanctions.

Australia last week promised Ukraine \$50 million in missiles, ammunition and other military hardware to fight Russian invaders.

Morrison said on Monday: "Our missiles are on the ground now."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 36 of 69

— WASHINGTON — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi says the House is exploring legislation to further isolate Russia from the global economy, including banning the import of its oil and energy products into the U.S. Amid rising gasoline prices in the U.S., the Biden administration has yet to call for an oil import ban on Russia.

In a letter to Democrats released Sunday night, Pelosi says the legislation under consideration would also repeal normal trade relations with Russia and Belarus and begin the process of denying Russia access to the World Trade Organization.

Pelosi says the House would also empower the Biden administration to raise tariffs on Russian imports. Congress intends to approve the Biden administration's request for \$10 billion in humanitarian, military and economic support for Ukraine, Pelosi said, as part of omnibus government funding legislation this week.

— LVIV, Ukraine -- Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said more than 20,000 people from 52 countries have already volunteered to fight in Ukraine, where they will serve in a newly created international legion. He did not say how many of the foreign volunteers have arrived in Ukraine.

"The whole world today is on Ukraine's side not only in words but in deeds," Kuleba said on Ukrainian television Sunday night.

He did not name the home countries of the volunteers, saying that some of them forbid their citizens from fighting for other countries.

Kuleba also urged Ukrainians living in other countries to begin a campaign to push for Ukraine's membership in the European Union.

— NEW YORK — Two of the so-called Big Four accounting firms are pulling out of Russia over its war in Ukraine.

KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers both said Sunday they would end their relationships with their Russia-based member firms. KPMG said it was also pulling out of Belarus.

KPMG International said in a statement it would be "incredibly difficult" to have its Russia and Belarus firms leave the network. KPMG has more than 4,500 employees in the two countries.

PricewaterhouseCoopers said it has 3,700 employees at its PwC Russia firm and is working on an "orderly transition" for the business.

The two other Big Four companies – Deloitte and Ernst & Young – didn't immediately return requests for comment Sunday.

— LVIV, Ukraine — Russian forces stepped up their shelling of Ukrainian cities in the center, north and south of the country late Sunday, presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovich said.

"The latest wave of missile strikes came as darkness fell," he said on Ukrainian television.

He said the areas that came under heavy shelling include the outskirts of Kyiv, Chernihiv in the north, Mykolaiv in the south, and Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city.

Kharkiv officials said the shelling damaged the television tower and heavy artillery was hitting residential areas.

In Chernihiv officials said all regions of the city were coming under missile attack.

Arestovich described a "catastrophic" situation in the Kyiv suburbs of Bucha, Hostomel and Irpin, where efforts to evacuate residents on Sunday failed. He said the government was doing all it could to resume evacuations.

Evacuations also failed in Mariupol in the south and Volnovakha in the east because of the shelling.

— LVIV, Ukraine — As Russian forces increased their shelling of Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appealed to the West to strengthen sanctions.

In a video statement Sunday evening, Zelenskyy heaped criticism on Western leaders for not responding to the Russian Defense Ministry's announcement that it would strike Ukraine's military-industrial complex,



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 37 of 69

while telling employees of these defense plants not to go to work.

"I didn't hear even a single world leader react to this," Zelenskyy said. "The audacity of the aggressor is a clear signal to the West that the sanctions imposed on Russia are not sufficient."

Zelenskyy called for organizing a "tribunal" to bring to justice those who order and carry out such crimes. "Think about the sense of impunity of the occupiers that they can announce such planned atrocities," he said.

The Russian Defense Ministry announced Sunday that its forces intend to strike Ukraine's military-industrial complex with what it said were precision weapons.

"We urge all personnel of Ukrainian defense industry plants ... to leave the territory of their enterprises," ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said in a statement carried by the state news agency Tass.

Netflix said Sunday that it's suspending its service in Russia.

A statement from the company cited "circumstances on the ground" for its decision to suspend its Russian service but didn't offer any additional details.

The announcement comes after TikTok said users on its platform in Russia have been blocked from posting and viewing videos shared from elsewhere in the world. American Express also announced earlier in the day it would suspend operations in Russia, as well as in Russian-allied Belarus.

NEW YORK — TikTok said Sunday that users won't be able to post new videos in Russia in response to the government's crackdown on social media.

"In light of Russia's new 'fake news' law, we have no choice but to suspend livestreaming and new content to our video service while we review the safety implications of this law," the company said in a statement on Twitter. "Our in-app messaging service will not be affected."

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday intensified a crackdown on media outlets and individuals who fail to hew to the Kremlin line on Russia's war in Ukraine, blocking Facebook and Twitter and signing into law a bill that criminalizes the intentional spreading of what Moscow deems to be "fake" reports.

TikTok is part of the larger Chinese tech company ByteDance.

NEW YORK — American Express announced Sunday it is suspending all operations in Russia and Belarus.

Globally issued American Express cards will no longer work at merchants or ATMs in Russia, the company said in a statement. AmEx cards issued locally in Russia by the country's banks will also no longer work outside of Russia.

The company previously halted its relationships with banks in Russia impacted by the U.S. and international government sanctions, the company said.

JERUSALEM — Israel's prime minister spoke Sunday evening by phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin, a day after his snap trip to Moscow to discuss the more than weeklong Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Naftali Bennett also spoke with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, whom he visited in Berlin on Saturday as well, and French President Emmanuel Macron, his office said.

Bennett has also spoken on the phone multiple times with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy — most recently Sunday morning — as part of his shuttle diplomacy to mediate between Ukraine and Russia after more than a week of fighting.

Additionally, Israeli foreign minister Yair Lapid will fly to Riga, Latvia, on Monday to meet with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the Foreign Ministry said.

While Israel has condemned Russia's invasion, it has also refrained from taking action that could anger Moscow, out of concern of jeopardizing military coordination in neighboring Syria.

VIENNA, Austria — The International Atomic Energy Agency has said Russian forces are tightening their grip on the Zaporizhzhya nuclear plant, Ukraine's largest, that they seized last week.

The director general of the agency, Rafael Mariano Grossi, said Sunday Ukrainian staff members are

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 38 of 69

now required to seek approval for any operation, even maintenance, from the Russians, and that they have impeded normal communications by switching off some mobile networks and internet at the site.

Ukraine's regulatory authority said that phone lines, as well as e-mails and fax, are no longer working. Grossi said he is "extremely concerned about these developments," adding that for the plant to operate safely, "staff must be allowed to carry out their vital duties in stable conditions, without undue external interference or pressure."

NEW YORK — The Russian military has warned Ukraine's neighboring countries from hosting its warplanes, saying Moscow may consider them a part of the conflict if Ukrainian aircraft fly combat missions from their territory.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov charged Sunday that some Ukrainian combat planes had redeployed to Romania and other Ukraine neighbors he didn't identify.

Konashenkov warned that if those warplanes attack the Russian forces from the territory of those nations, it "could be considered as those countries' engagement in the military conflict."

PARIS — The French presidency said the call between Russian President Vladimir Putin and French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday focused primarily on the safety of Ukraine's nuclear plants.

The call was on request from Macron and lasted almost two hours, the Elysee said.

A French official said Macron insisted on the need to ensure the International Atomic Energy Agency's safety standards are respected at Chernobyl and in other nuclear plants. He told Putin these facilities must not be targeted by a Russian offensive or caught in the fighting.

Putin said he does not intend to attack nuclear plants and agreed on the principle of a "dialogue" between IAEA, Ukraine and Russia on this issue, according to the official, who spoke anonymously in line with the French presidency's practices. Potential talks are to be organized in the coming days, he said.

Macron reiterated his call for Russia to stop its military operations and insisted on the need to protect the civilians and allow access to humanitarian aid.

"The (humanitarian) situation is difficult" including in Mariupol on Sunday, the official stressed. "Our demands remain the same: we want Russia to respond to these demands... very quickly and clearly."

— By Sylvie Corbet

PARIS — European Union leader Charles Michel said Sunday closing Ukraine's airspace could spark a world war.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has repeatedly called on NATO countries to stop the Russian onslaught on his country by imposing a no-fly zone. Western leaders have refused for fear of triggering a wider war in Europe. Deploying fighter jets over Ukraine could "in current circumstances" be considered as "NATO's entry into the war and therefore risk World War III," Michel said in an interview with the public broadcaster France Inter.

Michel denied that economic sanctions against Russia constitute "a war of the EU or NATO against Russia." Russian President Vladimir Putin has linked the West's economic punishment for his invasion of Ukraine to "declaring war" on Moscow.

Michel said European and American allies imposed sanctions "to create pressure and hurt the (Russian) regime", not the people.

JERUSALEM — A group of 100 Ukrainian Jewish orphans who were evacuated from the country after Russia invaded have landed in Israel.

The children arrived Sunday a few hours before two flights carrying around 300 other Ukrainian Jewish immigrants landed.

The children were evacuated from the central Ukrainian city of Zhytomyr and brought to Israel by the KKL-JNF organization.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 39 of 69

The Jewish Agency for Israel, a quasigovernmental organization that manages immigration affairs, said that it had received 5,500 urgent requests by Ukrainian Jews to move to Israel since Russia attacked on Feb. 24.

WASHINGTON — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken says the United States and its allies are having a “very active discussion” about banning the import of Russian oil and natural gas in the latest escalation of their sanctions in retaliation for its invasion of Ukraine.

Asked about oil and gas imports, Blinken told CNN on Sunday that President Joe Biden convened a meeting of his National Security Council on the subject the day before. Biden and Western allies have until now held off on sanctions against Russia’s lucrative energy industry to avoid blowback on their own economies.

“We are now talking to our European partners and allies to look in a coordinated way at the prospect of banning the import of Russian oil while making sure that there is still an appropriate supply of oil on world market,” said Blinken. “That’s a very active discussion as we speak.”

BERLIN — The U.N. human rights office says it has confirmed the deaths of 364 civilians in Ukraine since the Russian invasion began on Feb. 24.

The Geneva-based office said that another 759 civilians had been injured as of midnight Saturday.

The rights office uses strict methodology and only reports casualties it has confirmed.

It says it believes the real figures are considerably higher, “especially in government-controlled territory and especially in recent days.” That’s because the flow of information has been delayed amid the fighting and many reports still need to be corroborated.

Ukrainian officials have presented far higher numbers.

NEW YORK — The Kremlin says President Vladimir Putin told his Turkish counterpart that Russia’s military action in Ukraine could be halted “only if Kyiv ceases hostilities and fulfills the well-known demands of Russia.”

Putin has listed “demilitarization” and “denazification” of Ukraine, recognition of Russian-annexed Crimea as part of Russia and separatist regions in eastern Ukraine as independent states as the Kremlin’s main demands.

According to the readout of Sunday’s call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, “hope was expressed that during the planned next round of negotiations, the representatives of Ukraine would show a more constructive approach, fully taking into account the emerging realities.”

A third round of talks is scheduled for Monday.

MEDYKA, Poland — The head of the United Nations’ refugee agency says the international Red Cross and the U.N. are negotiating access to the cities in Ukraine most impacted by fighting since Russia invaded Feb. 24.

Filippo Grandi, the U.N. high commissioner for refugees, said Sunday that “those discussions continue” with hope for success, but didn’t name specific cities. He said during a visit to Poland’s border with Ukraine that “these corridors are mainly to bring humanitarian goods basic goods to people that are really in desperate need and also to extract maybe the most vulnerable people.”

Grandi stressed that wide international assistance is needed for Poland and other countries receiving refugees from Ukraine. He said that “predictions are difficult, hundreds of thousands are on the move inside Ukraine, and it is very likely that we will see a large influx continuing in the next few days.”

Grandi said that “what is needed really is a ceasefire, is the end to hostilities because that’s the only way to stop this tragedy.”

LVIV, Ukraine — A Ukrainian official says a second attempt to evacuate civilians from a southern city under siege for a week has failed due to continued Russian shelling.

Ukrainian military authorities said earlier Sunday that evacuations from the port city of Mariupol were

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 40 of 69

scheduled to begin at noon local time (10 a.m. GMT) during a 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. local ceasefire.

Interior Ministry adviser Anton Gerashchenko said the planned evacuations along designated humanitarian corridors were halted because of an ongoing assault.

He said on Telegram that "there can be no 'green corridors' because only the sick brain of the Russians decides when to start shooting and at whom."

A similar cease-fire planned for Mariupol and the nearby city of Volnovakha collapsed Saturday, trapping residents under more shelling and aerial bombardment by Russian forces.

ISTANBUL — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's office says he has called for an urgent cease-fire in Ukraine in a telephone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In a statement following Sunday's one-hour call, the Turkish presidency said Erdogan had urged a halt to fighting to "address humanitarian concerns" and "seek a political solution" to the conflict. The war is now in its 11th day.

Erdogan called for the opening of humanitarian corridors and a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine.

Turkey has extensive ties with both Russia and Ukraine and has sought to place itself as a mediator. It has invited both to a diplomatic forum in Antalya next week.

Erdogan's office said he told Putin that he was "ready to make every contribution" to resolving the crisis.

WARSAW, Poland — Poland's border guard agency says that over 922,000 refugees have crossed the border from Ukraine since Feb. 24, when Russia launched its invasion.

The agency said on Twitter that a record one-day number of over 129,000 crossed into Poland on Saturday, and almost 40,000 between midnight and 7 a.m. on Sunday.

A nation of some 38 million people, Poland is receiving the largest number of refugees among Ukraine's neighbors. Some who entered Poland have continued to other countries.

HELSINKI -- The top U.S. military officer says Ukrainian soldiers and civilians alike have put up an "extraordinarily courageous" fight since the Russian invasion.

Gen. Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke Sunday during a visit to an air base in Amari, Estonia. He is visiting the three Baltic nations to pledge U.S. and NATO support to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, former Soviet republics that border Russia.

Milley said that "the will of the Ukrainian people, the importance of their national leadership and the fighting skills of the Ukrainian army has come through loud and clear."

He said Ukrainians have put up "an extraordinarily courageous and brave fight" and "they've been doing very, very well. But it's a little bit early to draw any definitive lessons."

Milley said the U.S. currently has no indications that Moscow is planning to attack on the Baltic countries and "we want to make sure it stays that way."

## Rural Idaho town part of trend: Conservatives seeking space

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS Associated Press

SANDPOINT, Idaho (AP) — Linda Navarre moved to Sandpoint, Idaho, from Cleveland in 1978, when the town consisted of people in the timber industry and hippies "and they all got along."

Now she barely recognizes the small resort community near the Canadian border that is quickly growing as people disenchanted with big city life move there. Many are conservatives fed up with liberal politics in blue states.

"The division gets wider and wider," Navarre said, adding many of the new arrivals are changing the civility of the community. "My concern is there are so many people who are not nice."

Sandpoint is a four-season resort town built along the shores of scenic Lake Pend Oreille. It had 7,300 residents in the 2010 Census, but grew 21% in the decade to about 8,900 in the 2020 Census. In addition to the natural beauty, "people come here because it's a red state," said longtime resident Gail Cameron, 67.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 41 of 69

To capitalize on that trend, a growing number of real estate companies are advertising themselves to people on the right, saying they can take them out of liberal bastions like Seattle and San Francisco and find them homes in places like rural Idaho.

Sandpoint-based Flee The City is a consortium of four businesses which specialize in selling property to conservatives in northern Idaho and western Montana. The company calls itself "a real estate firm for the vigilant."

Flee the City has partnered with a company that provides "sustainable homes design with integrated ballistic and defensive capabilities."

Todd Savage, whose Black Rifle Real Estate firm is part of Flee The City, said in a brief email exchange that his business is booming, thanks to "insane" left wing politics.

One of the bigger players among right-leaning real estate companies is Conservative Move, based in a suburb of Dallas. Founder and chief executive Paul Chabot said blue states have only themselves to blame for driving out conservatives.

"People are tired of out-of-control crime and forced masking," Chabot said.

Idaho has been the fastest growing state in the nation for five years running, growing 2.9% in 2021, mostly from in-migration.

But the influx of people to places like Idaho has made it harder for some long-time residents. People struggle to find housing in Sandpoint, with many houses sold the same day they are listed, after bidding wars, Cameron said.

Many of those homes are converted into vacation rentals, which tightens the market for people who live in the area, Cameron said.

Carolyn Knaack, associate director of the Lake Pend Oreille Waterkeeper conservation group, has lived in town for a year.

She said the confluence of the coronavirus pandemic and politics "has created a divisiveness among folks."

"I've been applauded and belittled for wearing a mask," she said. "I have friends who refused to get vaxxed."

Savage was asked if it was desirable for people to segregate themselves by political ideology.

"I don't agree with the term 'segregate,'" he wrote. "Folks simply 'vote with their feet' relating to issues such as crime, taxes, homeschooling, gun laws, mask and vaccine mandates, Orwellian laws and out of control tyranny in the sanctuary states."

Not everyone is a fan of what Savage and conservative realtors are doing in Sandpoint and elsewhere.

Mayor Shelby Rognstad, a Democrat, worries real estate firms that serve only conservatives "pushes Idaho more and more into a playground for extremism."

"It doesn't bode well for our sense of community here," said Rognstad, who is mounting a campaign for governor. "It's a challenge to civility."

Barbara Russell, who lives in nearby Bonners Ferry, Idaho, expressed similar concerns.

Bonners Ferry feels like it's been overrun with white nationalists, said Russell, who owns a dance studio in the town of 2,600 residents.

"What they are doing is preparing for war," Russell said of new arrivals, who often carry guns when in town.

"New people are moving in and they go to City Council meetings and tell people who grew up here to go back to California," Russell said. "They are selling fear is what they are doing."

The National Association of Realtors does not keep records of if any of its members market themselves by political ideology, spokesman Quintin Simmons said. And not all real estate agents are members of the Realtors. So it's tough to determine if the trend of targeting conservative customers is widespread.

The Western States Center, a human rights group based in Portland, Oregon, is keeping an eye on right-leaning real estate firms, said member Kate Bitz.

"It's just the latest of several waves of politically motivated relocation to the inland Northwest," Bitz said.

Indeed, in past decades a variety of extremist groups, most prominently the Aryan Nations, sought to

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 42 of 69

create a white homeland in northern Idaho because of the region's small number of minorities.

"People in the United States relocate all the time," Bitz said. "What concerns us is when white nationalists and anti-democracy actors relocate to the region with the aim of organizing, recruiting and seizing control of local institutions."

## Republican 'unforced errors' threaten path to Senate control

By STEVE PEOPLES and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the prospect of a red wave grows, a series of Republican missteps including recruiting stumbles, weak fundraising and intense infighting is threatening the GOP's path to the Senate majority.

Arizona's Republican Gov. Doug Ducey dealt his party its latest setback late last week by announcing he would not challenge Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly this fall. His decision, which leaves no obvious front-runner in a crowded Republican primary, disappointed Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell and his allies who had spent months privately encouraging Ducey to run.

But the GOP's shortcomings extend well beyond Arizona.

Republican candidates in Arizona, Georgia and Nevada are struggling to keep pace with Democratic fundraising. Recruiting failures have dashed GOP hopes in reach states like Maryland and threaten a prime pickup opportunity in New Hampshire. And a recent plan that would raise taxes on low-income Americans and seniors, released by the Republican Senate midterm chief, Florida Sen. Rick Scott, is putting GOP candidates in a difficult position across states like Wisconsin, Ohio and Florida.

The challenges amount to an early warning sign for Republicans less than two months before the opening Senate primaries of the 2022 election season. With Democrats confronting historic headwinds and the weight of an unpopular president, a Republican Senate majority is easily within reach. But, sensing discord within the GOP, Democrats are suddenly optimistic they may have a path to hold — or even expand — their majority.

Rep. Val Demings, the leading Democrat in the race to unseat Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, acknowledged that her party has struggled to highlight its accomplishments — including sweeping pandemic relief and a massive infrastructure package — in the face of President Joe Biden's political woes. But she seized on Scott's plan as a clear contrast for how Democrats and Republicans would govern differently.

"This plan is toxic. It would hurt working families. It would hurt seniors. And Rubio's going to own it," Demings said in an interview.

Rubio's campaign declined to say specifically whether he supported Scott's plan when asked, issuing a statement instead that called Demings "a do-nothing member of Congress who has never even passed a real law, much less a tax cut."

With eight months until Election Day, the political landscape remains in flux. The health of the economy, a Supreme Court decision on abortion and the war in Eastern Europe remain major variables. But history suggests Democrats would be lucky to preserve their fragile Senate majority in November.

In a 50-50 Senate, Democrats would lose control of Congress' upper chamber if they lose a single seat. And without the majority, they lose any hope of enacting Biden's plans to bolster child care, education, family leave and environmental protection while protecting voting rights.

The GOP's best pickup opportunities rest in Arizona, Georgia and Nevada, according to Steven Law, a McConnell ally who leads the most powerful Republican-aligned Senate super PAC. He said he's increasingly optimistic about the state viewed as the Democrats' best pickup opportunity, Pennsylvania, and sees competitive races in Republican-held states like North Carolina, Florida and Missouri trending in the right direction.

Given historic trends against the party that occupies the White House, Law predicted that a state like Colorado or Washington state could become more competitive than expected this fall as well.

"The fundamentals of this election cycle are still very, very good," Law said. "I don't think recent challenges or setbacks or issues are going to define it at all. There are going to be bumps in the road. But at

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 43 of 69

the end of the day, this election is going to be about the historic unpopularity of Joe Biden and his agenda, which virtually all Democrats have blindly supported."

A February AP-NORC poll found that more people disapproved than approved of how Biden is handling his job, 55% to 44%, while just 29% of Americans thought the nation was on the right track.

Democratic strategists acknowledge their party's uphill odds in the months ahead. But on paper, at least, the current Senate landscape gives them an inherent advantage.

"Frankly, Democrats just need to hold seats in states Biden won," said Jessica Floyd, the president of the pro-Democratic super PAC American Bridge, which launched a \$5 million paid advertising campaign late last week across four states: Arizona, Georgia, Nevada and Pennsylvania. "The map matters."

While Biden did win all four of American Bridge's target states, the Democratic president won three of them by 1 percentage point or less and the other by just 2 percentage points. Those margins should give Democrats little comfort.

Republican Glenn Youngkin narrowly defeated former Democratic Gov. Terry McAuliffe in Virginia's high-profile governor's race last fall, even though Biden had carried the state by 10 percentage points a year earlier. Longer-term historical trends are no less daunting for Democrats: Over the last 40 years, the party that holds the White House has won Senate seats in only two midterm elections.

Meanwhile, escalating tensions among Republican leaders at the highest levels threatens to undercut the party's ambitions. McConnell and former President Donald Trump have long sparred over Republican messaging and candidate endorsements. In some states, Trump favors far-right nominees who struggle in statewide general elections.

But for now, a simmering feud between McConnell and Scott has taken center stage.

Scott, the leaders of the GOP's Senate midterm efforts, released an 11-point plan late last month that would impose a modest tax increase for many of the lowest paid Americans, while opening the door for cutting Social Security and Medicare. The Senate Democrats' political arm released a radio ad within 24 hours declaring, "If Senate Republicans win, we pay the price."

Staffers from Scott's Senate committee moved into triage mode almost immediately, reaching out to Republican campaigns across the country to gauge their frustration while offering messaging help, according to senior Republican strategists with direct knowledge of the situation.

The strategists, who requested anonymity to discuss private deliberations, said many Senate Republicans had been willing to ignore what they viewed as Scott's presidential ambitions over the last year. But that changed when the Florida senator released his latest proposal, which they considered an "unforced error" that triggered a wave of anger across the party.

McConnell could not stay silent as he faced reporters last week on Capitol Hill.

The Senate Republican leader forcefully rebuked Scott's plan during the Republican leadership's weekly news conference, which Scott was part of.

"Let me tell you what would not be a part of our agenda," McConnell said moments after Scott stepped away from the event. "We will not have as part of our agenda a bill that raises taxes on half of the American people and sunsets Social Security and Medicare within five years."

Scott refused to respond on Sunday when asked about McConnell's comments during an appearance on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures," offering instead a defiant defense of his broader plan. "It's my ideas," Scott said. "There's going to be other ideas."

Amid such Republican infighting, Democrats are pressing their cash advantage on the ground in key states, even as GOP campaign committees in Washington report record fundraising hauls.

In Nevada, Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, one of the nation's most endangered Democrats, reported \$10.5 million cash on hand at the end of last year, compared to Republican former state Attorney General Adam Laxalt's \$1.7 million.

Georgia Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock finished the year with \$22.9 million in the bank, while likely Republican challenger Herschel Walker, the former football star who has been endorsed by Trump, reported \$5.4 million.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 44 of 69

And Arizona Democrat Kelly, a former astronaut who won a 2020 special election to serve out the final two years of the late Sen. John McCain's term, reported \$18.6 million in the bank. Arizona's Republican state Attorney General Mark Brnovich, the best-known Republican in a crowded primary field, reported less than \$800,000 in the bank.

Warnock and Kelly pressed their financial advantages by launching an initial round of television ads in recent weeks as Republican candidates in both states focus on fighting each other. It's much the same in New Hampshire, where Democratic Sen. Maggie Hassan placed \$13 million in initial TV and radio advertising reservations for the fall, much of it in the expensive Boston media market, while two Republicans will be locked in a primary through mid-September.

Back in Washington, Scott seemed to be in good spirits as he described Biden and his agenda as "wildly unpopular."

"The Democrats are simply failing American families and the voters are ready to give them a butt kicking this November," Scott told AP.

Meanwhile, in Florida, Demings offered a window into the Democrats' challenge by refusing to say whether she wanted Biden to campaign in the state on her behalf when asked.

"I grew up poor, Black and female in the South," Demings told The Associated Press. "I've never depended on someone else to do the work for me or someone to give me a pass or come to rescue me."

"I'm excited about where we are in this race," she said.

## Russia-Ukraine War: What to know on Russia's war in Ukraine

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia's invasion of Ukraine entered its 12th day following what Ukrainian authorities described as increased shelling of encircled cities and another failed attempt to evacuate civilians from the besieged southern port of Mariupol.

Russian and Ukrainian forces had agreed to an 11-hour cease-fire Sunday, but Ukrainian officials said Russian attacks quickly closed the safe-passage corridor.

A third round of talks between Russian and Ukrainian leaders was planned for Monday.

More than 1.5 million Ukrainians had been forced from the country. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged his people to keep resisting, and Ukraine's foreign minister said more than 20,000 people from 52 countries had volunteered to fight in Ukraine's newly created international legion.

Russian President Vladimir Putin likened the West's sanctions on Russia to "declaring war."

Here's a look at key things to know about the conflict:

### VIOLENCE STOPS PLANNED CIVILIAN EVACUATIONS AGAIN

Ukrainian Interior Ministry adviser Anton Gerashchenko blamed Russian artillery fire for halting a second attempt in as many days to evacuate civilians from Mariupol, where food, water and medicine are scarce.

A day earlier, Ukrainian officials similarly said Russian artillery fire and airstrikes had prevented residents from leaving. Putin accused Ukraine of sabotaging the effort.

Russia has sought to cut off Ukraine's access to the Sea of Azov in the south. Capturing Mariupol could allow Russia to establish a land corridor to Crimea, which it annexed in 2014.

### WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING ON THE GROUND?

Russian forces launched hundreds of missiles and artillery attacks across the country, including powerful bombs dropped on residential areas of Chernihiv, a city north of the capital of Kyiv, Ukrainian officials said. But a miles-long Russian armored column threatening the capital remained stalled outside Kyiv.

Sunday evening, heavy shelling also came to Mykolaiv in the south and Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city. Efforts to evacuate residents from the Kyiv suburbs of Bucha, Hostomel and Irpin on Sunday were mostly unsuccessful.

A senior American defense official said Sunday the U.S. believes that about 95% of the Russian forces that had been arrayed around Ukraine are now inside the country. Ukrainian air and missile defenses remain effective and in use, and the Ukrainian military continues to fly aircraft and to employ air defense



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 45 of 69

assets, the official said.

Ukrainian forces were also defending Odesa, Ukraine's largest port city, from Russian ships, Ukrainian presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovich said.

The Russian Defense Ministry on Sunday announced plans to strike Ukraine's military-industrial complex, and it alleged that Ukrainian forces were plotting to blow up an experimental nuclear reactor in Kharkiv and to blame it on Russia. The ministry offered no evidence to back its claims, which could not be independently verified.

## ZELENSKY PUSHES CALL FOR NO-FLY ZONE

Zelenskyy pushed his call for foreign countries to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine. Establishing a no-fly zone would risk escalating the conflict by involving foreign militaries directly. Although the United States and many Western countries have backed Ukraine with weapons shipments, they have sent no troops.

Zelenskyy said in a video address on Sunday that "the world is strong enough to close our skies" and over the weekend he urged U.S. officials help his country obtain warplanes to fight the invasion and retain control of its airspace.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said Sunday that some Ukrainian combat planes had redeployed to Romania and other Ukraine neighbors he didn't identify. He warned an attack from planes operating out of those nations could be deemed an engagement by them in the conflict.

## DIRECTLY WITNESSED OR CONFIRMED BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Onlookers in Chernihiv cheered as a Russian military plane fell from the sky and crashed, according to video released by the Ukrainian government. In Kherson, hundreds of protesters waved blue and yellow Ukrainian flags and shouted, "Go home."

In Mariupol, Associated Press journalists saw doctors make futile attempts to save wounded children. Pharmacies ran bare and hundreds of thousands of people faced food and water shortages in freezing weather.

In Irpin, near Kyiv, a sea of people on foot and even in wheelbarrows trudged over the remains of a destroyed bridge to cross a river and leave the city. Assisted by Ukrainian soldiers, they lugged pets, infants, purses and flimsy bags stuffed with minimal possessions. Some of the weak and elderly were carried along the path in blankets and carts.

Kyiv's central train station remained crowded with people desperate to leave, and frequent shelling could be heard from the center of the capital city.

## DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

Intense diplomatic efforts continued, with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Moldova pledging America's support to the small Western-leaning former Soviet republic. The country is coping with an influx of refugees from Ukraine and keeping an eye on Russia's intensifying war with its neighbor.

Blinken says the United States and its allies are having a "very active discussion" about banning the import of Russian oil and natural gas.

In a call with Putin that lasted nearly two hours on Sunday, French President Emmanuel Macron repeated calls for Russia to halt military operations, protect civilians and allow humanitarian aid. A French official reported that Putin said he does not intend to attack nuclear plants.

The director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael Mariano Grossi, said Sunday that Ukrainian staff at the country's largest nuclear plant are now required to seek approval for any operation, even maintenance, from the Russians. The Zaporizhzhya plant was seized by the Russians last week.

Putin continued to blame the war on the Ukrainian leadership, saying, "They are calling into question the future of Ukrainian statehood." In a call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday, Putin said the invasion could be halted only "only if Kyiv ceases hostilities," according to a Kremlin account.

Israel's prime minister spoke with Putin on Sunday, a day after they met directly in Russia. Israel is one of the few countries that has good working relations with both Russia and Ukraine.

## THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

The death toll of the conflict has been difficult to measure. The U.N. human rights office said at least

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 46 of 69

364 civilians have been confirmed killed since the Feb. 24 invasion, but the true number is probably much higher.

The World Health Organization said it verified at least six attacks that have killed six health care workers and injured 11 others.

The U.N. World Food Program says millions of people inside Ukraine, a major global wheat supplier, need food aid "immediately."

Ukrainian refugees continued to pour into neighboring countries, including Poland, Romania and Moldova. The number of people who have left since fighting began has now reached 1.5 million, according to U.N. refugee agency.

## BUSINESS IN RUSSIA

A growing number of multinational businesses have cut off Russia from vital financial services, technology and a variety of consumer products in response to Western economic sanctions and global outrage over the war.

Two of the so-called Big Four accounting firms — KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers — said Sunday they were pulling out of Russia, ending relationships with member firms based in the country.

TikTok said users won't be able to post new videos in Russia in response to the government's crackdown on what people can say on social media about the invasion, and American Express announced it was suspending all operations in Russia and Belarus.

Netflix also announced it was suspending its service in Russia.

## Netflix, TikTok block services in Russia to avoid crackdown

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Netflix and TikTok suspended most of their services in Russia on Sunday as the government cracks down on what people and media outlets can say about Russia's war in Ukraine.

Pulling the plug on online entertainment — and information — is likely to further isolate the country and its people after a growing number of multinational businesses have cut off Russia from vital financial services, technology and a variety of consumer products in response to Western economic sanctions and global outrage over the invasion of Ukraine.

U.S. credit card companies Visa, Mastercard and American Express all said over the weekend they would cut service in Russia. South Korea's Samsung Electronics, a leading supplier of both smartphones and computer chips, said it would halt product shipments to the country, joining other big tech companies such as Apple, Microsoft, Intel and Dell.

And two of the so-called Big Four accounting firms said Sunday they were cutting ties to the country. KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers both they would end their relationships with their Russia-based member firms, each of which employs thousands of people.

Ukraine's minister of digital transformation, Mykhailo Fedorov, called on U.S. technology companies to do more Sunday to hit back against Russia. He tweeted open letters asking Apple and Google to shut down their app stores in Russia and for Amazon and Microsoft to suspend their cloud computing services.

Providers of internet-based services and apps have been mostly reluctant to take actions that could deprive Russian citizens of social media services and other sources of information.

That changed Friday when Russian President Vladimir Putin intensified a crackdown on media outlets and individuals who fail to hew to the Kremlin line on the war, blocking Facebook and Twitter and signing into law a bill that criminalizes the intentional spreading of what Moscow deems to be "fake" reports.

Netflix didn't specify a reason for suspending services Sunday except to say it reflected "circumstances on the ground." The company had previously said it would refuse to air Russian state TV channels.

TikTok said Russian users of its popular social media app would no longer be able to post new videos or livestreams and they also wouldn't be able to see videos shared from elsewhere in the world.

"In light of Russia's new 'fake news' law, we have no choice but to suspend livestreaming and new content to our video service while we review the safety implications of this law," TikTok said in a statement

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 47 of 69

on Twitter. "Our in-app messaging service will not be affected."

TikTok spokesperson Hilary McQuaide said the TikTok app in Russia now appears in "view-only" mode and won't let people post or see new videos or livestreams. They can still see older videos, but not if they came from outside the country, she said.

"The safety of employees is our top priority," she said, adding that the video-sharing service — part of China-based tech company ByteDance — didn't want to put either its Russian employees or users at risk of severe criminal penalties. Some protesters who've taken to the streets in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other Russian cities to decry the invasion of Ukraine have used social media platforms to broadcast their cause.

The new "fake news" legislation, quickly rubber-stamped by both houses of the Kremlin-controlled parliament and signed by Putin, imposes prison sentences of up to 15 years for those spreading information that goes against the Russian government's narrative on the war.

Multiple news outlets have also said they would pause their work inside Russia to evaluate the situation. Russian authorities have repeatedly and falsely decried reports of Russian military setbacks or civilian deaths in Ukraine as "fake" news. State media outlets refer to Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a "special military operation" rather than a war or an invasion.

The law envisages sentences of up to three years or fines for spreading what authorities deem to be false news about the military, but the maximum punishment rises to 15 years for cases deemed to have led to "severe consequences."

## Gas tops \$4 per gallon average, 1st time since 2008

NEW YORK (AP) — The price of regular gasoline broke \$4 per gallon (3.8 liters) on average across the U.S. on Sunday for the first time since 2008.

During the first full week of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the price of regular gas rose by almost 41 cents, according to the AAA motor club.

That represents the second largest jump in average national prices in a week, GasBuddy reported.

"As Russia's war on Ukraine continues to evolve and we head into a season where gas prices typically increase, Americans should prepare to pay more for gas than they ever have before," Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy, said in a statement.

The all-time high for average gasoline prices was set in July 17, 2008 at \$4.10 per gallon.

Neither President Joe Biden nor Congress has moved to ban the import of Russian oil or place energy sanctions on the country, which could have major global economic repercussions.

On Sunday, California had the highest average price per gallon among U.S. states at \$5.29, while Missouri had the lowest at around \$3.60.

## AP PHOTOS: Day 11, death on Ukraine's bombarded streets

By The Associated Press undefined

Ukrainian soldiers carry civilians away from Russian attacks. Others who couldn't be saved from the barrage lie dead in the street.

Amid the deaths, the fires and the crowds of desperate people fleeing the fighting, there were glimmers of hope, like the wedding of two members of the Ukrainian Territorial Defense Forces, with flowers, fatigues and a helmet for a wedding crown.

Ukrainians absorbed continued Russian attacks on cities across their country on Sunday, with some attending church services amid the lethal fallout from the 11-day-old war.

A Ukrainian presidential adviser said that as the sun went down the largest wave of missile strikes began, with heavy shelling in the outskirts of Kyiv but also hitting Chernihiv, Mykolaiv and Kharkiv.

Diplomatic efforts to end the crisis continued with meetings and calls among leaders in Europe and beyond on Sunday. So far some 1.5 million Ukrainians have been driven from their country by the violence.

## Officials: 7 dead after tornadoes tore through central Iowa

By SCOTT MCFETRIDGE and JOSH FUNK Associated Press

WINTERSET, Iowa (AP) — Seven people were killed, including two children, when several tornadoes swept through central Iowa, destroying homes and knocking down trees and power lines in the state's deadliest storm in more than a decade, authorities said.

Emergency management officials in Madison County said four were injured and six people were killed Saturday when one tornado touched down in the area southwest of Des Moines near the town of Winterset around 4:30 p.m. Among those killed were two children under the age of five and four adults.

In Lucas County, about 54 miles (87 kilometers) southeast of Des Moines, officials confirmed one death and multiple reported injuries when a separate tornado struck less than an hour later.

The state Department of Natural Resources said that person who died was in an RV at a campground at Red Haw State Park in Chariton, Iowa.

Thunderstorms that spawned tornadoes moved through much of Iowa from the afternoon until Saturday night with storms also causing damage in the Des Moines suburb of Norwalk, areas just east of Des Moines and other areas of eastern Iowa. The storms were fueled by warm, moist air from the Gulf of Mexico.

Officials reported a number of homes were damaged or destroyed, roads were blocked by downed lines and tree branches were shredded by the strong winds. At one point, power outages affected more than 10,000 in the Des Moines area. About 800 customers remained without power Sunday evening.

The storms are the deadliest to occur in Iowa since May 2008 when one tornado destroyed nearly 300 homes and killed nine people in the northern Iowa city of Parkersburg. Another tornado a month later killed four boys at the Little Sioux Boy Scout ranch in western Iowa.

Northern Illinois University meteorology professor Victor Gensini said there have been plenty of examples of deadly storms in March even though they are more common in April and May. Saturday's storms were not nearly as unusual as the mid-December tornado outbreak that Iowa saw last year, he said.

"The storms that produce these tornadoes — these supercell storms — they don't care what the calendar says," Gensini said. "It doesn't have to say June. It doesn't have to say May. They form whenever the ingredients are present. And they were certainly present yesterday."

Scientists have said that extreme weather events and warmer temperatures are more likely to occur with human-caused climate change. However, scientifically attributing a storm system to global warming requires specific analysis and computer simulations that take time, haven't been done and sometimes show no clear connection.

Gensini said Saturday's storms likely caused more than \$1 billion in damages over their entire track when the severe damage in Iowa is combined with wind damage as far away as Illinois.

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds issued a disaster proclamation for Madison County, which allows state resources to be used to assist with response and recovery efforts. Madison County Emergency Management Director Diogenes Ayala said 52 homes were damaged or destroyed across nearly 14 miles.

The White House said President Joe Biden was briefed Sunday on the storm devastation in Iowa. Biden reached out Reynolds and directed the leaders of the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency to remain in close contact with state and local officials as they assessed damage and determined what federal assistance was needed, the White House said in a statement.

After touring the storm damage near Winterset, Reynolds described "unimaginable destruction."

Reynolds teared up as she described the hundreds of people who streamed into the area to volunteer their help to clear debris that blocked roads and littered the hardest hit areas. Homeowners and volunteers were picking up wood debris and beginning to clear it away Sunday in the rolling hills south of Winterset as chainsaws whirred away in the background.

"It's just unbelievable. I tried to walk through and thank them and over and over (and) the response was, we're Iowans and that's what we do," she said.

The foundation was all that was left of several homes. The tornado carved a path of destruction along a ridge while several hundred feet away other homes were undamaged.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 49 of 69

Ayala said emergency responders navigated narrow roads blocked by downed trees and debris Saturday night to help after the storm.

"With trees and debris and everything around, just to go out there and start the search and rescue and get the people affected out of there, I cannot express the heroism of the first responders who were out there last night," Ayala said.

Officials identified the six people who were killed in Madison County as Melissa Bazley, 63; Rodney Clark, 64; Cecilia Lloyd, 72; Michael Bolger, 37; Kenley Bolger, 5; and Owen Bolger, 2. The victims came from three different households.

Lucas County officials didn't immediately identify the person who died there Sunday afternoon.

Six people hurt in Madison County, which is known for the "Bridges of Madison County" book and movie, were being treated for injuries Sunday, but their conditions weren't immediately available.

The National Weather Service in Des Moines said Sunday that the tornado that killed one person in Lucas County remained on the ground for more than 16 miles (25.75 kilometers) and rated an EF-3 on the Enhanced Fujita scale with peak winds of 138 mph. The damage assessment for the Winterset tornado isn't likely to be completed until Monday, but the Weather Service tweeted Saturday that initial photos of the damage there suggested that tornado was also at least an EF-3 tornado.

Elsewhere, the National Weather Service said the storms generated an EF-1 tornado in southeastern Wisconsin near Stoughton that included winds up to 80 mph. The storm flattened trees, snapped power poles and blew out windows in homes. No injuries were reported.

## **They're off: Mushers begin trek to Nome; Seavey seeks record**

WILLOW, Alaska (AP) — The 50th running of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race started Sunday with 49 mushers setting their sights on Alaska's western coast.

The race will take the mushers across Alaska's untamed and unforgiving terrain, including two mountain ranges, the frozen Yukon River and the unpredictable Bering Sea ice.

The winner is expected to cross the finish line in the western Alaska coastal community of Nome about nine days after the start.

For the first time ever in 2021, the race did not finish in Nome because of the pandemic. Instead, the race started in Willow, went to the ghost town of Iditarod and then doubled back to Willow.

Dallas Seavey won the 2021 race, matching musher Rick Swenson for the most wins ever with five apiece. Swenson, 71, last won in 1991 and hasn't raced the Iditarod since 2012.

Seavey is looking to make history by becoming the first musher to hold six titles. Seavey has said he will likely take a break after this year's race to spend time with his daughter.

There are two four-time champions in the race with Martin Buser and Jeff King. Buser is running in his 39th Iditarod, and King stepped in just days before the race started to run musher Nic Petit's team after Petit said on Facebook he contracted COVID-19. Also in the race are 2018 winner Joar Leifseth Ulsom and 2019 winner Pete Kaiser.

Fifteen mushers signed up but withdrew from the race before it started, including Petit and the 2020 winner Thomas Waerner of Norway, who wasn't able to secure travel documents to the U.S.

## **Mexico suspends league soccer matches after massive brawl**

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's top-division soccer league suspended all matches scheduled for Sunday after a huge brawl among fans during the previous day's match between host Queretaro and Atlas from Guadalajara, the reigning league champion.

"We regret and condemn these events, which run contrary to the spirit of our soccer," the Mexican Soccer Federation said in a statement. The suspension affected three matches scheduled for Sunday.

The Saturday match was suspended in the 62nd minute after multiple fights broke out in the stands. Security personnel opened the gates to the field so that fans, including women and children, could escape the stands.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 50 of 69

Queretaro state authorities said 23 remained hospitalized. Ten were in serious condition and three others were in critical condition with very severe injuries.

They may have been the three men who were seen unconscious or badly beaten on the ground, being repeatedly kicked and pummeled in videos posted on social media.

FIFA, the international soccer governing body, said in a statement that it was "shocked at the tragic incident that took place at La Corregidora stadium in the city of Queretaro during the fixture between Queretaro and Atlas." It called the violence "unacceptable and intolerable."

"FIFA joins the Mexican Football Association and Concacaf (the North American soccer federation) in condemning this barbaric incident and encouraging the local authorities to bring swift justice to those responsible. Our thoughts are with all those who suffered its consequences," the statement said.

Queretaro Gov. Mauricio Kuri said Sunday: "What happened yesterday fills me with pain, with shame and a lot of rage. I have no words strong enough to condemn the violence, the abusiveness and the senselessness of what happened yesterday."

After the melee broke out, players from visiting Atlas quickly fled to the locker rooms as did some from the Queretaro side. Other Queretaro players, including Uruguayan goalie Washington Aguerre, stayed near the bench trying to calm the fans.

After several minutes some of the fights moved to the field where they continued punching and kicking. Some people were armed with chairs and metal bars.

One fan could be seen pulling a knife to cut the nets of one goal. Others destroyed one side's bench and some fought in the tunnel to the field.

"The darkest day for Mexican soccer," was the front-page headline in the Mexican newspaper El Universal on Sunday.

In fact, violence between gangs of rival soccer fans is commonplace at stadiums in Mexico.

Guadalajara is the capital of Jalisco state, and Atlas has also had issues recently with violence among its fans. Last year, the "classic" with crosstown rival Chivas saw a brawl in the stands.

"Unfortunately, what is happening in Queretaro ...is happening in my country," said Rafael Márquez, a former captain of the Mexican national team who started his career with Atlas and later became its coach.

Kuri condemned the violence and said the owners of the Queretaro club would have to answer for what happened. He also pledged to investigate whether authorities or anyone else had been remiss in not quelling the violence.

"I have given instructions that the law be applied with all of its consequences," he said. Both teams issued statements condemning the violence.

Mikel Arriola, president of the MX League, said it would likely adopt biometric or facial recognition systems at stadiums to identify troublemakers.

"We have to implement digital security measures to identify those who attend, starting with the barras," Arriola said, referring to organized fan clubs that are often implicated in violence.

Arriola said he would propose at a club owners meeting Tuesday that those clubs be barred from their teams' away matches.

State authorities said some police were on duty at the stadium, but that it was largely staffed by private security officers. Video footage of the match suggested the security force was largely made up of female officers, who unsuccessfully tried to break up fights.

"If the company (soccer team) does not have enough officers or they lack training, we are going to work to hold them responsible," said Guadalupe Murguía, the state interior secretary.

Large squads of police are assigned to security at some soccer matches in Mexico.

"The security at the stadium is a private responsibility, but despite that, I recognize that law enforcement was insufficient and did not act with sufficient speed," Gov. Kuri said.

## Convoy protesting COVID-19 mandates does beltway circuit

HAGERSTOWN, Md. (AP) — A large group of truck drivers who object to COVID-19 mandates drove two

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 51 of 69

loops around the beltway surrounding Washington, Sunday, deliberately moving slowly to impact traffic and make their feelings known to lawmakers in the nation's capitol.

People crowded onto overpasses, waving at the "People's Convoy" and holding signs and American flags. Within the convoy, there were tractor-trailers with horns blaring and some recreational vehicles and pickup trucks occasionally going by, mixed with the normal traffic on Interstate 495 in Silver Springs, Maryland.

The convoy was moving normally — albeit slowly — and while some congestion was noted, news outlets reported traffic was able to flow around the convoy. Many vehicles had American flags, while some flew Don't Tread on Me banners.

"We're not even sure we can call it a convoy any more because it's so dispersed among routine traffic at this point," Virginia State Police spokeswoman Corinne Geller told The Washington Post.

Protesters staged at the Hagerstown Speedway in Maryland during the weekend before heading down a single lane of Interstate 81. Their plan was to drive onto the Capital Beltway, circle it twice and then return to Hagerstown.

The convoy follows similar demonstrations by truckers in Canada who are upset at vaccine requirements to cross the Canadian border. The Washington Post also reported that convoy organizer Brian Brase intends for protesters to travel on the beltway every day during the upcoming week until their demands are met.

A video posted on Twitter showed trucks passing under a large American flag hoisted in the air by two cranes. Supporters stood along a road waving as the drivers left the speedway.

Officials with state police in Maryland and Virginia have said they will monitor the activities.

Authorities in the District of Columbia said Sunday they are monitoring demonstration activity that is expected to begin disrupting travel on roadways in and around the region. The majority of the activity is expected to occur on the beltway. Travelers were advised to consider alternate modes of transportation.

## **EXPLAINER: Why WNBA players go overseas to play in offseason**

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

Russia has been a popular destination for WNBA players like Brittney Griner over the past two decades because of the money they can make playing there in the winter.

With top players earning more than \$1 million — nearly quadruple what they can make as a base salary in the WNBA — Griner, Breanna Stewart, Diana Taurasi, Sue Bird and Jonquel Jones have been willing to spend their offseason playing far from home. It's tough for WNBA players to turn down that kind of money despite safety concerns and politics in some of the countries where they play.

The 31-year-old Griner, a seven-time All-Star for the Phoenix Mercury, has played in Russia since 2014. She was returning from a break for the FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup qualifying tournaments when she was arrested at an airport near Moscow last month after Russian authorities said a search of her luggage revealed vape cartridges.

On Saturday, the State Department issued a "do not travel" advisory for Russia because of its invasion of Ukraine and urged all U.S. citizens to depart immediately, citing factors including "the potential for harassment against U.S. citizens by Russian government security officials" and "the Embassy's limited ability to assist" Americans in Russia.

Turkey, Australia, China and France also have strong women's basketball domestic leagues where some of the WNBA's best play in their offseason.

### **WHY RUSSIAN SALARIES ARE SO HIGH**

Russian sports leagues have been able to pay top players these high salaries because some of the teams are funded by government municipalities while others are owned by oligarchs who care more about winning championships and trophies than being profitable. There are stories of Russian owners putting up players in luxury accommodations and taking them on shopping sprees and buying them expensive gifts in addition to paying their salaries.

In 2015, Taurasi's team, UMMC Ekaterinburg — the same one Griner plays for — paid her to skip the WNBA season and rest.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 52 of 69

"We had to go to a communist country to get paid like capitalists, which is so backward to everything that was in the history books in sixth grade," Taurasi said a few years ago.

The Russian league has a completely different financial structure from the WNBA, where there is a salary cap, players' union and collective bargaining agreement.

The WNBA has made strides to increase player salaries and find other ways to compensate players in the last CBA, which was ratified in 2020. The contract, which runs through 2027, pays players an average of \$130,000, with the top stars able to earn more than \$500,000 through salary, marketing agreements, an in-season tournament and bonuses.

The CBA also provides full salaries while players are on maternity leave, enhanced family benefits, travel standards and other health and wellness improvements.

## WHO PLAYS THERE?

More than a dozen WNBA players were playing in Russia and Ukraine this winter, including league MVP Jones and Courtney Vandersloot and Allie Quigley of the champion Chicago Sky. The WNBA confirmed Saturday that all players besides Griner had left both countries.

Almost half of the WNBA's 144 players were overseas this offseason, although stars Candace Parker, Bird, Chiney Ogwumike and Chelsea Gray opted to stay stateside.

## WILL THIS LAST?

From purely a basketball stand point, the CBA will make it more difficult for WNBA players to compete overseas in the future. Beginning in 2023, there will be new WNBA prioritization rules that will be enforced by the league. Any player with more than three years of service who arrives late to training camp will be fined at a rate of 1% of base salary per day late. In addition, any player who does not arrive before the first day of the regular season will be ineligible to play at all that season. In 2024 and thereafter, any player who does not arrive before the first day of training camp (or, with respect to unsigned players, finish playing overseas) will be ineligible to play for the entire season.

The WNBA typically begins training camp in late April and the regular season starts in early May. Some foreign leagues don't end before those dates.

## **EXPLAINER: Why does Ukraine need foreign warplanes?**

By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — In a private video call with American lawmakers over the weekend, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a "desperate" plea to the United States to help Kyiv get more warplanes to fight Russia's invasion and retain control of its airspace.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken says Washington has given a "green light" to the idea and is currently "very, very actively" looking at a proposal under which Ukraine's neighbor Poland would supply Kyiv with Soviet-era fighters and in turn receive American F-16s to make up for their loss.

However, the proposition is fraught with uncertainty and Poland has been less than enthusiastic about it in public, largely because Russia has warned that supporting Ukraine's air force would be seen in Moscow as participating in the conflict and open up suppliers to possible retaliation. Official comment from NATO and European Union member Poland has been only to confirm continuing talks on the subject.

## WHY DOES UKRAINE NEED WARPLANES?

Ukraine's air force uses Soviet-made Mig-29 and Su jet fighters to defend its skies and territory from Russia's military invasion that began Feb. 24 and has appealed for more warplanes to be able to continue the mission in the long run.

The air force has been far outnumbered by the much more powerful Russian air force, but Ukrainian pilots have continued to fly combat sorties and claim kills in combat despite repeated assertions by the Russian military that it has suppressed Ukraine's air power and air defense assets.

## WHY NOT US WARPLANES?

Ukraine's military pilots aren't trained to fly U.S. jet fighters and would be far more equipped to handle MiG-29 or Su planes that are currently used by former Soviet-bloc NATO members Poland, Bulgaria and Slovakia.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 53 of 69

Ukrainian pilots would be able to fly MiGs right away, but Poland isn't eager to lose significant amounts of its air force without replacements. U.S.-made F-16s are becoming the mainstay of Poland's air force as it modernizes its military.

## WHAT IS POLAND'S RESPONSE?

Blinken has said there is a "green light" for Poland to send planes to Ukraine.

"We are looking actively now at the question of airplanes that Poland can provide to Ukraine and looking at how we might be able to backfill should Poland decide to supply those planes. I can't speak to a timeline, but I can just tell you we're looking at it very, very actively," Blinken said on Sunday in Moldova.

The response from Poland was restrained, though.

"As far as sending planes, I can only repeat that no decisions have been taken on the subject," government spokesman Piotr Mueller said.

Mueller denied allegations that Poland could be making its airfields available to Ukrainian warplanes. Russia alleges that Romania and some other countries it didn't name are hosting Ukraine's warplanes.

Meanwhile, Poland has been supportive of Ukraine both politically, supporting its territorial integrity and sovereignty, and on a humanitarian level, opening its border to refugees from the non-EU country.

## WHY IS POLAND NON-COMMITAL?

Despite its supportive stance toward Ukraine in its struggle, Warsaw is facing a crucial and challenging decision regarding making its planes available to Ukraine.

Russia has warned Ukraine's neighbors against hosting its warplanes on their territory saying Moscow could consider that as their "engagement in the military conflict." That could mean an opening of hostilities.

Russia's words could be taken as a wider warning against aiding Ukraine's air forces.

Poland also borders Russia, through the Kaliningrad exclave, and has a long border with Russia's close ally Belarus. Relations between Warsaw and Moscow have been at a low point since a right-wing government took office in Poland in 2015.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

One of the main issues is where these MiGs, if made available, would be based as they couldn't be on NATO soil. It isn't clear if Ukraine would be able to safely house and service them in the long run, given the warfare on its territory.

Another question to resolve would be how to deliver the planes to Ukraine. Polish pilots, who are also NATO pilots, couldn't fly them to Ukraine without risking NATO involvement in the conflict, and sending Ukrainian pilots to Poland to fly them back could present similar issues.

There is also an F-16 production backlog, which means the countries that potentially give away their MiGs and Su fighters to Ukraine would need to wait for the backfill for some time.

U.S. Senator Marco Rubio summed it up by saying: "There's complications that come with. It's not just as easy as handing it over. You got to fly those in. You got to station them somewhere on the ground.

"And ... the Russians have launched a pretty -- anywhere in between eight to 12 rockets at an airport in the sort of west of Ukraine. And it's just a part of a strategy to deny them places to move that airframe," said Rubio, a Republican from Florida.

## Fleeing sanctions, oligarchs seek safe ports for superyachts

By MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The massive superyacht Dilbar stretches one-and-a-half football fields in length, about as long as a World War I dreadnought. It boasts two helipads, berths for more than 130 people and a 25-meter swimming pool long enough to accommodate another whole superyacht.

Dilbar was launched in 2016 at a reported cost of more than \$648 million. Five years on, its purported owner, the Kremlin-aligned Russian oligarch Alisher Usmanov, was already dissatisfied and sent the vessel to a German shipyard last fall for a retrofit reportedly costing another couple hundred million dollars.

That's where she lay in drydock on Thursday when the United States and European Union announced economic sanctions against Usmanov — a metals magnate and early investor in Facebook — over his ties

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 54 of 69

to Russian President Vladimir Putin and in retaliation for the invasion of Ukraine.

"We are joining with our European allies to find and seize your yachts, your luxury apartments, your private jets," President Joe Biden said during his State of the Union speech Tuesday night, addressing the oligarchs. "We are coming for your ill-begotten gains."

But actually seizing the behemoth boats could prove challenging. Russian billionaires have had decades to shield their money and assets in the West from governments that might try to tax or seize them.

Several media outlets reported Wednesday that German authorities had impounded Dilbar. But a spokeswoman for Hamburg state's economy ministry told The Associated Press no such action had yet been taken because it had been unable to establish ownership of the yacht, which is named for Usmanov's mother.

Dilbar is flagged in the Cayman Islands and registered to a holding company in Malta, two secretive banking havens where the global ultra-rich often park their wealth.

Still, in the industry that caters to the exclusive club of billionaires and centimillionaires that can afford to buy, crew and maintain superyachts, it is often an open secret who owns what.

Working with the U.K.-based yacht valuation firm VesselsValue, the AP compiled a list of 56 superyachts — generally defined as luxury vessels exceeding 24 meters (79 feet) in length — believed to be owned by a few dozen Kremlin-aligned oligarchs, seaborne assets with a combined market value estimated at more than \$5.4 billion.

The AP then used two online services — VesselFinder and MarineTraffic — to plot the last known locations of the yachts as relayed by their onboard tracking beacons.

While many are still anchored at or near sun-splashed playgrounds in the Mediterranean and Caribbean, more than a dozen were underway to or had already arrived in remote ports in small nations such as the Maldives and Montenegro, potentially beyond the reach of Western sanctions. Three are moored in Dubai, where many wealthy Russians have vacation homes.

Another three had gone dark, their transponders last pinging just outside the Bosphorus in Turkey — gateway to the Black Sea and the southern Russian ports of Sochi and Novorossiysk.

Graceful, a German-built Russian-flagged superyacht believed to belong to Putin, left a repair yard in Hamburg on Feb. 7, two weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine. It is now moored in the Russian Baltic port of Kaliningrad, beyond the reach of Western sanctions imposed against him this past week.

Some Russian oligarchs appear to have not gotten the memo to move their superyachts, despite weeks of public warnings of Putin's planned invasion.

French authorities seized the superyacht Amore Vero on Thursday in the Mediterranean resort town of La Ciotat. The boat is believed to belong to Igor Sechin, a Putin ally who runs Russian oil giant Rosneft, which has been on the U.S. sanctions list since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014.

The French Finance Ministry said in a statement that customs authorities boarded the 289-foot Amore Vero and discovered its crew was preparing for an urgent departure, even though planned repair work wasn't finished. The \$120 million boat is registered to a company that lists Sechin as its primary shareholder.

On Saturday, Italian financial police in the port of San Remo seized the 132-foot superyacht Lena, which is flagged in the British Virgin Islands. Authorities said the boat belongs to Gennady Timchenko, an oligarch close to Putin and among those sanctioned by the European Union. With an estimated net worth of \$16.2 billion, Timchenko is the founder of the Volga Group, which specializes in investments in energy, transport and infrastructure assets.

The 213-foot Lady M was also seized by the Italians while moored in the Riviera port town of Imperia. In a tweet announcing the seizure on Friday, a spokesman for Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi said the comparatively modest \$27 million vessel was the property of sanctioned steel baron Alexei Mordashov, listed as Russia's wealthiest man with a fortune of about \$30 billion.

But Mordashov's upsized yacht, the 464-foot Nord, was safely at anchor on Friday in the Seychelles, a tropical island chain in the Indian Ocean not under the jurisdiction of U.S. or EU sanctions. Among the world's biggest superyachts, Nord has a market value of \$500 million.

Since Friday, Italy has seized 143 million euros (\$156 million) in luxury yachts and villas in some of its

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 55 of 69

most picturesque destinations, including Sardinia, the Ligurian coast and Lake Como.

Most of the Russians on the annual Forbes list of billionaires have not yet been sanctioned by the United States and its allies, and their superyachts are still cruising the world's oceans.

The evolution of oligarch yachts goes back to the tumultuous decade after the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union, as state oil and metals industries were sold off at rock-bottom prices, often to politically connected Russian businessmen and bankers who had provided loans to the new Russian state in exchange for the shares.

Russia's nouveau riche began buying luxury yachts similar in size and expense to those owned by Silicon Valley billionaires, heads of state and royalty. It's a key marker of status in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and size matters.

"No self-respecting Russian oligarch would be without a superyacht," said William Browder, a U.S.-born and now London-based financier who worked in Moscow for years before becoming one of the Putin regime's most vocal foreign critics. "It's part of the rite of passage to being an oligarch. It's just a prerequisite."

As their fortunes ballooned, there was something of an arms race among the oligarchs, with the richest among them accumulating personal fleets of ever more lavish boats.

For example, Russian metals and petroleum magnate Roman Abramovich is believed to have bought or built at least seven of the world's largest yachts, some of which he has since sold off to other oligarchs.

In 2010, Abramovich launched the Bermuda-flagged Eclipse, which at 533 feet was at the time the world's longest superyacht. Features include a wood-burning fireplace and swimming pool that transforms into a dance floor. Eclipse also boasts its own helicopter hangar and an undersea bay that reportedly holds a mini-sub.

Dennis Cauiser, a superyacht analyst with VesselsFinder, said oligarch boats often include secret security measures worthy of a Bond villain, including underwater escape hatches, bulletproof windows and armored panic rooms.

"Eclipse is equipped with all sorts of special features, including missile launchers and self-defense systems on board," Cauiser said. "It has a secret submarine evacuation area and things like that."

Eclipse was soon eclipsed by Azzam, purportedly owned by the emir of Abu Dhabi, which claimed the title of longest yacht when it was launched in 2013. Three years after that, Usmanov launched Dilbar, which replaced another slightly smaller yacht by the same name. The new Dilbar is the world's largest yacht by volume.

Abramovich, whose fortune is estimated at \$12.4 billion, fired back last year by launching Solaris. While not as long as Eclipse or as big as Dilbar, the \$600 million Bermuda-flagged boat is possibly even more luxurious. Eight stories tall, Solaris features a sleek palisade of broad teak-covered decks suitable for hosting a horde of well-heeled partygoers.

But no boat is top dog for long. At least 20 superyachts are reported to be under construction in various Northern European shipyards, including a \$500 million superyacht being built for the American billionaire Jeff Bezos.

"It's about ego," Cauiser said. "They all want to have the best, the longest, the most valuable, the newest, the most luxurious."

But, he added, the escalating U.S. and EU sanctions on Putin-aligned oligarchs and Russian banks have sent a chill through the industry, with boatbuilders and staff worried they won't be paid. It can cost upwards of \$50 million a year to crew, fuel and maintain a superyacht.

The crash of the ruble and the tanking of Moscow stock market have depleted the fortunes of Russia's elite, with several people dropping off the list of Forbes billionaires last week. Cauiser said he expects some oligarch superyachts will soon quietly be listed by brokers at fire-sale prices.

The 237-foot Stella Maris, which was seen by an AP journalist docked this past week in Nice, France, was believed to be owned by Rashid Sardarov, a Russian billionaire oil and gas magnate. After publication of an earlier version of this story, AP was contacted Sunday by yacht broker Joan Plana Palao, who said his company represents a U.S. citizen from California who purchased the Stella Maris last month. He declined to disclose the name of the buyer or the person from whom the boat had been purchased.

On Thursday, the U.S. Treasury Department issued a new round of sanctions that included a press release

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 56 of 69

touting Usmanov's close ties to Putin and photos of Dilbar and the oligarch's private jet, a custom-built 209-foot Airbus A340-300 passenger liner. Treasury said Usmanov's aircraft is believed to have cost up to \$500 million and is named Bourkhan, after his father.

Usmanov, whose fortune has recently shrunk to about \$17 billion, criticized the sanctions.

"I believe that such a decision is unfair and the reasons employed to justify the sanctions are a set of false and defamatory allegations damaging my honor, dignity and business reputation," he said in a statement issued through the website of the International Fencing Federation, of which he has served as president since 2008.

Abramovich has not yet been sanctioned. Members of the British Parliament have criticized Prime Minister Boris Johnson for not going after Abramovich's U.K.-based assets, which include the professional soccer club Chelsea. Under mounting pressure, the oligarch announced this past week he would sell the \$2.5 billion team and give the net proceeds "for the benefit of all victims of the war in Ukraine."

Meanwhile, location transponders showed Solaris moored in Barcelona, Spain, on Saturday. Eclipse set sail from St. Maarten late Thursday and is underway in the Caribbean Sea, destination undisclosed.

## 'The Batman' gives movie theaters a new hope with big launch

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Batman has his fair share of pressures, from saving Gotham to saving movie theaters. And while they're both still decidedly works in progress, "The Batman," starring Robert Pattinson, managed to give a little glimmer of hope to both by grossing \$128.5 million in North America, according to studio estimates Sunday.

The latest relaunch of the 80-year-old comic book character is well above Warner Bros.' conservative estimates going into the weekend, which had the film pegged for a debut in the \$90 million range. It's the best opening of 2022 and the second best of the pandemic, though it's more than \$100 million shy of "Spider-Man: No Way Home's" still unbelievable \$260 million opening weekend in December.

"The Batman" opened this weekend exclusively in theaters in 4,217 locations on over 12,500 screens in North America. There were some fan events on Tuesday and Wednesday leading into Thursday pre-shows in about 3,300 locations. All told, by the close of Friday, "The Batman" had already grossed \$57 million. No other major studio dared compete with their own new film.

Internationally, "The Batman" earned \$120 million, bringing its global total to \$248.5 million. Warner Bros. halted its release in Russia following the country's invasion of Ukraine, saying that the company would monitor the situation as it evolves. Many major studios made similar decisions with their films.

Reviews have been largely positive for this new iteration of the caped crusader. Director Matt Reeves and co-writer Peter Craig set "The Batman" in Bruce Wayne's second year of donning the cape. Corruption is rampant in Gotham and some well-known villains are not yet fully formed, but there's a serial killer afoot and Pattinson's Batman and Gordon, played by Jeffrey Wright, are on a mission to find the mysterious Riddler (Paul Dano).

It's been a long road for "The Batman" to make it to theaters. The original plan was for it come out in June 2021, but that was pushed several times due in part to COVID-related production shutdowns.

The film cost around \$200 million to produce, not to mention the millions spent on marketing and distribution. And a lot is riding on "The Batman," with future films and an HBO Max spinoff series both planned.

As the omicron variant surged in December, Warner Bros. was faced once more with a hard decision: Delay the release further or commit to the March opening. Under the advice of epidemiologists, in January they decided to go forward and start spending significant money on marketing.

"We knew the movie was exceptional. We knew fans would embrace it. But we didn't know what the pandemic would hold," said Jeff Goldstein, Warner Bros.' president of domestic distribution. "Theater owners really stepped up and showed their showmanship ... it was really a collective win."

"The Batman" is also the first movie in over a year that Warner Bros. has released exclusively in theaters. In 2021, the studio adopted a hybrid release strategy debuting films from "Dune" to "Suicide Squad" in



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 57 of 69

theaters and on HBO Max simultaneously, which may have helped streaming subscriptions, but not the box office or movie theaters.

"The box office is back with a vengeance," said Paul Dergarabedian, Comscore's senior media analyst. "This is a real turning point for the industry. The box office year has been moving in fits and starts. There have been some solid performances but no blockbuster breakout opener in 2022. This is great for movie theaters."

So how does Pattinson's stack up against his predecessors? It's the fourth biggest opening for a Batman movie in North America. As far as lifetime profits, only time will tell, but Batman as a \$1 billion franchise is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Tim Burton's "Batman" starring Michael Keaton and released in 1989, made around \$252 million in North America and just over \$400 million worldwide. None of the Batman movies crossed \$500 million worldwide until 2008. Christopher Nolan's "The Dark Knight," starring Christian Bale, broke the \$1 billion mark, which repeated with "The Dark Knight Rises." The Ben Affleck/Zack Snyder era peaked with "Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice," which grossed \$873 million worldwide.

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

1. "The Batman," \$128.5 million.
2. "Uncharted," \$11 million.
3. "Dog," \$6 million.
4. "Spider-Man: No Way Home," \$4.4 million.
5. "Death on the Nile," \$2.7 million.
6. "Sing 2," \$1.5 million.
7. "Jackass Forever" \$1.4 million.
8. "Cyrano," \$682,607.
9. "Scream," \$570,000.
10. "Marry Me," \$530,000.

## **EXPLAINER: Why Israel is mediating between Russia, Ukraine**

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — With his surprise visit to Moscow on Saturday, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett is assuming the unlikely role of mediator between Russia and Ukraine.

Bennett, who has helmed the country for less than a year and is largely untested on the world stage, positioned Israel in an uncomfortable middle ground between Russia and Ukraine in the lead up to the war, creating a launching pad from which to emerge as a player in diplomatic efforts.

But wading into international mediation in the midst of war could be a minefield for Israel. It relies on its ties with the Kremlin for security coordination in Syria, and with Moscow sitting at the negotiating table with Iran over its nuclear program, Israel cannot afford to anger President Vladimir Putin. What's more, it's unclear whether the efforts, said to have been coordinated with the U.S., will bear fruit.

Success in getting the sides to compromise would elevate Bennett to an international statesman and boost Israel's standing after decades of global criticism over its lengthy, open-ended military rule over the Palestinians.

Here is a look at the unexpected new player in the Ukraine crisis:

### **BENNETT'S BET**

Bennett came to power last year as part of a pact by eight ideologically disparate parties bent on ousting former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

A religious Jew who made millions in the country's hi-tech sector, Bennett has served in various Cabinet positions in the past but lacks the charisma and the international experience of his predecessor. Mediating between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Putin, a former KGB agent, will test him like never

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 58 of 69

before.

Opponents at home see Bennett's rule as illegitimate because they disapprove of the way he was brought to power and public opinion has in recent months not been in his favor. Additional criticism mounted in the lead-up to Russia's war with Ukraine over Bennett's reticence to censure Russia — breaking with Israel's allies in the West who were stepping up sanctions.

While Bennett repeatedly expressed his support for the Ukrainian people, he stopped short of condemning Russia's invasion.

As Western sanctions mounted, Bennett was maintaining contact with both Putin and Zelenskyy, who reportedly asked Bennett to begin mediating between the sides. With his visit to Moscow, he became the only Western leader to meet the Russian president since the war erupted.

His involvement in such a high-profile, high stakes conflict could breathe life into his political fortunes. "Bennett has reinvented himself," said Esther Lopatin, a European affairs expert at Tel Aviv University. "Here's someone who was suffering in polls, who was facing public criticism. Turns out he can pull rabbits out of his hat."

## A DIPLOMATIC MINEFIELD

Israel is one of the few countries that has good working relations with both Russia and Ukraine. It has delivered 100 tons of humanitarian aid to the country and has announced it will be setting up a field hospital there. Ukraine is also home to some 200,000 Jews, hundreds of whom have already fled to Israel, with many more expected.

But Israel's ties with Russia are of strategic importance. Israel relies on Russia for security coordination in Syria, where Russia has a military presence and where Israeli jets have frequently struck targets said to be weapons caches destined for Israel's enemies.

Russia is also among the powers negotiating with Iran over its nuclear program in Vienna, where a deal is imminent. Israel opposes the deal, saying it doesn't adequately restrain Iran's nuclear activities and has discussed that opposition with Russia frequently in the past.

If Israel's outreach morphs into outright mediation, Israel will have to maintain that neutral position, breaking from the West, even if Russia's onslaught intensifies. Any wrong move and relations with Putin could sour. If talks fail, Bennett could appear to have been outsmarted by Putin's cunning and could be blamed for the conflict having worsened.

And as one of the only Western-allied countries that has not engaged in openly hostile rhetoric toward Moscow, Israel will be the West's main diplomatic link to the Kremlin, a high-pressure, delicate position.

## CHANCES FOR SUCCESS?

Hours after returning from his trip, Bennett told his Cabinet that it was Israel's moral duty to step in, "even if the chance is not great." With that, a country that has traditionally been a beneficiary of international mediation with the Palestinians and Arab nations was inching toward becoming the mediator.

"There's a feeling that there is an opening, that no one is talking to Putin. Israel is a player who can talk to both sides," said Vera Michlin-Shapir, a former official at Israel's National Security Council and the author of "Fluid Russia," a book about the country's national identity. "But what happens going forward?"

Michlin-Shapir warned that Israel doesn't necessarily have the diplomatic tools to properly mediate such a complex crisis, no matter the goodwill. Efforts by France and Turkey — bigger players internationally — failed to avert the conflict.

"On the one hand, (Bennett) has upgraded his international standing overnight and has won a lot of political points within Israel. On the other, he is taking a huge risk, not only for himself as a politician but for the state of Israel and its standing in the world," commentator Barak Ravid wrote on the Israeli Walla News site.

"The prime minister has waded into the Ukrainian mud without knowing entirely just how deep it is."

## Teachers reimagine US history lessons with eye on diversity

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY and ANNIE MA Associated Press

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 59 of 69

PHOENIX (AP) — Sit down. Be quiet. Follow instructions.

Brandon Brown followed these rules when he started teaching, seeking order in a classroom setting he was all too familiar with growing up. But he quickly realized that was not working for his students and that they were just regurgitating what he told them. So, he decided to get creative.

Brown, a former history teacher and assistant elementary school principal, is now a Billboard-charting educational rapper who performs around the U.S. He founded School Yard Rap, a California-based company that produces music about historical Black, Latino and Indigenous people often not found in traditional textbooks.

"By state standards, my students had to learn about old white slave owners, but they were young Black kids, and it wasn't connecting," said Brown, who released his latest album under his stage name, "Griot B." "This education system is whitewashed completely. But doing what I do, I'm able to introduce and refocus on people of color so students are getting the full range of American history."

Teachers have long sought ways to deliver a complete version of U.S. history that engages their students and includes contributions by people of color. They have been reenergized after the 2020 police killing of George Floyd to take different approaches in the classroom that would challenge an education system many believe doesn't allow for critical thinking and forces a narrow worldview.

They also are facing increased pressure from politicians and other critics who take issue with how schools address diversity and representation, including a recent push to ban critical race theory, an academic framework centered on the idea that racism is systemic in the nation's institutions. While there is little evidence that critical race theory itself is being taught to K-12 public school students, some ideas central to it, such as lingering consequences of slavery, have been.

Teaching has evolved significantly in the past decade to focus more on critical thinking as opposed to rote memorization, said Anton Schulzki, a history teacher in Colorado Springs and the president of the National Council for the Social Studies. Some of the shift started with the implementation of Common Core, which placed an emphasis on teaching students how to find and analyze sources. Instead of just learning dates and names, students learn how to form arguments, to find factual evidence to support their claims and to challenge and defend different viewpoints.

"We're trying to get students into this notion of asking questions and being able to take what they are able to do and put into practice that whole inquiry method," Schulzki said. "We want them to be good citizens and the way you become a good citizen is you ask questions, and then you try to do something about it."

Students also need to learn more about the resilience and accomplishments of marginalized communities, said John Deville, who has been an educator in Macon County in North Carolina for nearly three decades.

Teachers need to show people of all backgrounds as more than victims and as individuals with agency and power, he said.

In his classroom, Deville, who is white, avoids framing individuals as either "villains or plaster heroes," and he incorporates more than just European and white perspectives on historical events. In a unit on Christopher Columbus, Deville said he spends time creating a vision of the Western Hemisphere prior to European contact and does not diminish the violent ways Native Americans were treated.

There is no standardized curriculum across the U.S.; those decisions are made at the local level. As a result, parents, teachers, politicians, and other critics can voice concerns over what some consider a free-for-all of perspectives allowed in the classroom.

Morgan Dick, a spokesperson for the Arizona Department of Education, said civics education, which prepares students to become well-informed, participating members of society, is important because it allows students to engage in "rigorous debate and civil discourse in order to develop their own opinions and learn to respect the perspectives of others."

She also said some topics could at-times force people out of their comfort zone.

Last month, Republicans in the Arizona House approved a measure that would ask voters to amend the state constitution to ban the teaching of "critical race theory" in schools and bar any preferential treatment based on race. The state Supreme Court struck that law down because it was unconstitutionally included

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 60 of 69

in the budget. In the end, the House passed a resolution, which is not enforceable.

For many teachers, presenting students with different perspectives is the most important part of the job. "Every kid in America knows 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue and they know the three ships, and that's great," said Katie Eddings, a middle school social studies teacher in North Carolina's Lee County. "But do you know what his motivation was during that time period?"

Eddings, whose mother is Lumbee, shows her students excerpts from Columbus' diary and pushes them to discuss what forces might have shaped the voyages, the achievements that resulted, and the harm caused.

"I want you to ask questions," she said. "I want you to be curious about why this happened and why that happened. What was the cause and effect, and is there lasting impact now? What happened then? Is there an impact to us now? Are we better off? I just want them to be thinkers."

Some students may not know the benefit this type of shift in education will have on them until later in life.

It is easy to ask someone to read a book, but you can't force that person to connect with it, said Kendall Antoine, one of Brown's former students who challenged Brown to create his first educational rap in 2012.

Antoine, who graduated last year from Morehouse College, a historically Black college, said he still learned what was assigned, but Brown presented it in a more engaging way. He added that he still remembers some of the raps from nearly a decade ago.

"It is amazing what Mr. Brown is doing. Something that started off as a passion for music and history, turned into how he could relate to kids to better their education," Antoine said.

## **EXPLAINER: What is the US doing to help Ukraine refugees?**

By BEN FOX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Russia's invasion of Ukraine has set off the largest mass migration in Europe in decades, with more than 1.5 million people having crossed from Ukraine into neighboring countries — "the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II," the head of the U.N. refugee agency tweeted on Sunday. Nearly all the refugees have gone to other countries in Europe, where they have generally encountered a warm welcome. But some may eventually need permanent resettlement in the United States if they are unable to return to Ukraine.

A look at the situation:

**WHAT HAS THE U.S. DONE TO HELP REFUGEES SO FAR?**

The U.S. has provided \$54 million in food and other assistance to people inside Ukraine and has pledged to send more, according to Samantha Power, head of the U.S. Agency for International Development. That aid is critical because conditions in Ukraine are horrific and growing worse. Food is scarce as millions of displaced people inside the country try to escape the Russian attack.

On Thursday, the Biden administration announced it would offer temporary protected status to Ukrainians already inside the United States. Members of Congress and advocates welcomed the announcement, but the effects are modest. The Department of Homeland Security estimates that about 75,000 people are eligible for the program and it's only good for 18 months unless extended. Moreover, the program leaves people in immigration limbo because beneficiaries cannot necessarily convert their status into permanent legal residency or U.S. citizenship.

**WILL THE U.S. BE TAKING IN UKRAINIAN REFUGEES FOR RESETTLEMENT?**

It might. White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki says the U.S. would accept Ukrainian refugees. But the administration says that, for now at least, most of the refugees apparently want to stay in Europe. That's where many have families, they can work and then return home if that is possible at some point.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken told CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday: "The United States is committed to doing anything we can, first of all, to support the countries that are bearing the immediate burden of taking in Ukrainians. And then, as appropriate, if people seek refugee status in the United States, of course we will look at that and I'm sure act on that."

The administration previously said it would accept up to 125,000 refugees in the 2022 budget year. That annual cap had been cut to a record low 15,000 under President Donald Trump. In setting the annual



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 61 of 69

target for refugees, the Biden administration set aside 10,000 refugee visas for people from Europe, but it could expand that number to take in more Ukrainians if needed. The White House has said it will work with the United Nations and European countries to determine whether people who have fled Europe will need permanent resettlement in the U.S. or elsewhere.

The 125,000 does not include the 76,000 Afghans who came to the United States after the American withdrawal from Afghanistan in August.

One thing the U.S. could do immediately to help Ukrainians would be to expedite the processing of several thousand members of religious minority groups, including Jews and evangelical Christians, who have family in the United States and have already applied to come under what's known as the Lautenberg program.

## CAN THE U.S. REFUGEE SYSTEM ABSORB A NEW WAVE OF REFUGEES?

Yes, although it won't be easy, according to refugee resettlement experts.

The Trump administration cuts to the refugee program forced resettlement agencies to lay off staff and close offices. They have been struggling for months to help the tens of thousands of Afghan refugees who came after their country fell to the Taliban, and a complex problem was made more so by high housing costs and the coronavirus pandemic.

Despite the difficulties, the U.S. could handle the arrival of more refugees, says Mark Hetfield, president and CEO of HIAS, one of the nation's nine resettlement agencies.

"There's so much interest in helping these people that the resources would be there, the volunteers would be there," Hetfield said. "It would be a challenge because we are all stretched too thin. But we would definitely make it work."

## Experts: Alleged plot against governor signals ominous shift

By JOHN FLESHER Associated Press

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) — They railed against politicians, conducted military-style exercises and spoke darkly of confronting tyrants scheming to seize their guns and enslave them.

Yet historian JoEllen Vinyard says the "citizen militia" activists she got to know in the 1990s didn't seem like the types who would abduct a governor or stage a coup.

"I don't think they were dangerous," said Vinyard, an Eastern Michigan University professor emeritus and author of a book about far-right movements in the state. "They reminded me of the good old boys I knew growing up in Nebraska."

But as four men charged with conspiring to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer go on trial Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Grand Rapids, Vinyard and other political extremism scholars say things have changed in recent years. Their arrests came about three months before the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection that led to charges against many right-wing extremists and militants.

In contrast to militants from before, who mostly avoided bloodshed with the horrific exception of the Oklahoma City bombing, some modern successors have taken a more radical and potentially violent turn.

"This is a different type of domestic terrorism phenomenon than we've faced in previous decades — completely different from anything I've observed," said Javed Ali, a University of Michigan professor who served with the FBI and intelligence agencies.

"You've got all these points on a very diverse threat spectrum — not centralized in any one corner, no single groups, no national leadership, completely disorganized and disaggregated," Ali said. "It's difficult for law enforcement to spot these threats. The Whitmer plot is a case in point."

The alleged kidnapping conspiracy involved members of a little-known cell called the "Wolverine Watchmen" and others who attended a July 2020 meeting in Ohio of self-styled "militia" leaders from several states, according to court documents.

They were angry about pandemic lockdowns and other policies they considered dictatorial, investigators said. Some had joined a protest months earlier at the Michigan Capitol in Lansing, where armed demonstrators faced off with police and some carried guns into the Senate gallery.

Federal prosecutors in October 2020 charged six suspects in the alleged plot, including Ty Garbin and

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 62 of 69

Kaleb Franks, who have pleaded guilty. Garbin received a six-year prison term; Franks will be sentenced later.

The other four defendants are Adam Fox, Daniel Harris, Brandon Caserta and Barry Croft Jr. All are Michigan residents except Croft, who is from Delaware.

Eight other men accused of aiding the conspiracy have been charged in state court.

The Wolverine Watchmen are among the small, secretive groups that have appeared in Michigan since the initial burst of paramilitary activism faded, Ali said.

They began recruiting members on Facebook in November 2019 and communicated through an encrypted messaging platform, according to a state police affidavit. It said they held firearms training and tactical drills to prepare for "the boogaloo," an anticipated "uprising against the government or impending politically motivated civil war."

The scheme against Whitmer was hatched the following summer during a meeting at which Watchmen discussed invading the statehouse and using explosives to distract law enforcement, Garbin acknowledged in his plea agreement.

They considered executing the Democratic governor or putting her on trial, eventually deciding to abduct her at her family's vacation home in northern Michigan, the document said. Informants and undercover agents helped foil the alleged plot.

Vinyard, who attended meetings of self-described militia groups in southeastern Michigan for her research during the 1990s, said threatening language was rare then.

Members had long lists of grievances, some targeting the United Nations and a federal government they believed had exceeded its constitutional authority, she said. But others involved local law enforcement and courts.

"People talked about police harassment, truckers getting stopped by cops, fathers who had not been treated fairly when they got divorced and couldn't see their kids," she said.

Norman Olson, an Air Force veteran, gun shop owner and Baptist preacher who initially led the Michigan Militia, said then its members were outraged by deadly sieges involving federal agents at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and Waco, Texas.

The militia drew international attention after the 1995 bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building, which killed 168 people. Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, convicted in the case, had attended meetings in Michigan. Olson said they'd been kicked out for advocating violence.

By the early 2000s the movement appeared to lose steam, experts said, perhaps because of public revulsion over the bombing, internal strife, the presidency of gun-friendly George W. Bush and a crackdown on terrorism after the 9/11 attacks.

Following President Barack Obama's election, it resurfaced on a wave of right-wing populism embodied by the Tea Party movement and Donald Trump that crested amid fury at COVID-19 restrictions.

In 2010, the FBI charged nine members of a fundamentalist Christian sect in southeastern Michigan called Hutaree with conspiring to rebel against the government. The judge dismissed most of the case, but it signaled what some observers describe as the rise of a more incendiary segment of the far right.

Even other paramilitary groups were uneasy with the Hutaree and notified authorities, according to a paper by Vanderbilt University sociologist Amy Cooter, who studies right-wing militancy.

Lee Miracle, a longtime leader of the Southeast Michigan Volunteer Militia, urged restraint in a statement on the group's website after the Wolverine Watchmen arrests in 2020.

"Our capacity for violence, as a free people, should always be well maintained, and kept within reach, but it should always be the LAST option," said Miracle, who did not return an email seeking additional comment.

But organizations that track the more belligerent groups say they've made inroads in Michigan, which has an extensive history as a far-right breeding ground.

The nonprofit Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project says among the most active are newcomers such as the Boogaloo Boys and the Proud Boys, a self-described "Western chauvinist" association. Another is the Michigan Liberty Militia, which had a visible presence at the state Capitol protest.

The movement has splintered into many factions over the years because of leadership rivalries and

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 63 of 69

ideological differences, said retired FBI agent Greg Stejskal, who dealt with the Michigan Militia in its early days. Still, it has remained overwhelmingly white, male and rooted in conspiratorial fear of losing guns and freedom.

"They feel like they're subjugated, and this is their way of fighting back," he said.

They've kept a somewhat lower profile since the kidnapping arrests and the invasion of the U.S. Capitol by Trump supporters seeking to overturn the 2020 election, said Rachel Goldwasser, a research analyst with the nonprofit Southern Poverty Law Center.

The outcome of the Michigan conspiracy trial, she said, may "indicate whether they stay in their foxholes or come out as a force in public again."

## Jehovah's Witnesses flee Russia for worship without fear

By KWASI GYAMFI ASIYEDU Associated Press

Over the past five years, hundreds of Jehovah's Witnesses have been subjected to raids, arrests and prosecution in Russia. Many others have fled – including one couple, Dmitrii and Nellia Antsybor, who flew to Mexico last year, walked across the U.S. border to seek asylum, and now hope to build a new life for themselves in Washington state.

After entering the U.S., the couple were separated and sent to different immigration detention centers; Nellia in Arizona, Dmitrii in California. Nearly three months passed before they reunited in late February.

Yet despite that ordeal, and missing her twin sister and her mother left behind in Russia, Nellia welcomes her newfound freedom in Federal Way, a suburb of Seattle.

"It is nice to not be afraid to gather with our brothers and sisters even if it is via Zoom," she said through a translator. "I have a sense of ease now."

One new source of concern: Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"I am very worried about what's happening with my brothers and sisters in that country," Dmitrii said. "We pray for them."

About 5,000 Witnesses in Ukraine have left, seeking protection in other countries, said Jarrod Lopes, a U.S.-based spokesperson for the Jehovah's Witnesses.

For Witnesses in Russia – Lopes estimates there are about 170,000 of them – there's been anxiety since the country's Supreme Court declared the Christian denomination an extremist group in 2017.

Hundreds have been arrested and imprisoned. Their homes and places of worship, known as Kingdom Halls, have been raided, and the national headquarters seized. The Witnesses' modern, Russian-language translation of the Bible has been banned along with its globally circulated magazines, *Awake* and *Watchtower*.

Nellia said she and Dmitrii had long been on the radar of authorities in the cities where they lived. They decided to flee, she said, after her mother called in October and said police had a warrant for their arrest.

"To be a Jehovah's Witness in Russia is to be constantly in legal jeopardy, constantly in fear of either an invasion of your privacy, confiscation of your property, or in many cases, being locked up," said Jason Morton, a policy analyst at the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, a bipartisan federal agency that tracks religious freedom violations worldwide.

Last year, there were 105 guilty verdicts against Witnesses in Russia, according to the commission. The maximum sentences issued to them have increased from six to eight years.

The Russian government has never given a detailed justification for the crackdown.

"I don't think that there's any reasonable person that can substantiate that the Witnesses are fundamentally extremists," said Emily Baran, a Middle Tennessee State University history professor. She has studied Soviet and post-Soviet Witness communities.

It is a label that even Russian President Vladimir Putin described as "complete nonsense" when asked about it in 2018.

"Jehovah's Witnesses are Christians, too, so I don't quite understand why (they) persecute them," he said.

Although Witnesses are Christians, they are guided by distinctive beliefs and practices, including the refusal

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 64 of 69

of blood transfusions, abstinence from voting, conscientious objection to military service, and avoidance of participation in national ceremonies and holidays. Pre-pandemic, Witnesses engaged in door-to-door proselytizing, a key part of their faith.

Aside from Russia, Witnesses experience persecution in several former Soviet republics, including Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. One notable case is the imprisonment of a 70-year-old Tajik citizen, Shamil Khakimov, who received a seven-year sentence in 2019.

In Eritrea, where military conscription is mandatory, there are several Witnesses in prison. In South Korea, where most young men must perform military service, Witnesses were routinely imprisoned for refusing until a 2018 court decision affirmed their rights to conscientious objection.

The Witnesses "seem to really ruffle the feathers of your more authoritarian-minded governments who require a baseline of participation in the state," Morton said. "The fact that they want to remain separate from some of the typical functions of celebrating the state or participating in certain state rituals puts them on the radar."

The recent crackdown is not the first endured by Witnesses in Russia. During the Soviet era, they were deported to remote areas of Siberia. They often faced employment discrimination and lost custody of their children.

"They didn't do the kinds of performative aspects of being part of Soviet life," said Baran.

The denomination's American origins put Witnesses under scrutiny during the Cold War, Baran said. "Because they were part of an international religious group, the Soviet Union thought this was evidence of a larger capitalist conspiracy."

Nellia and Dmitrii decided to flee Russia after weeks of playing hide-and-seek with police officers and disguising their appearances to outwit security cameras.

"We figured that they would eventually find us," Dmitrii said.

They left on a one-way flight from Moscow to the resort city of Cancun, Mexico. After a brief stay, they flew to the border town of Mexicali in December, then approached U.S. border agents to request asylum.

While in U.S. detention, the couple celebrated their 12th anniversary and Nellia continued her tradition of writing love poems to mark the occasion.

"I beg God that this time passes quickly and better times are ahead," she wrote. "My beloved, wait for me, wait for me, and don't be overly sad about me."

Dmitrii said he studied tax law in Russia, but now hopes to be licensed as a truck driver – if he can avoid long hauls that would take him far from his wife. Nellia isn't sure what job she might pursue.

The Antsybors are among many Witnesses – likely several thousand, according to Lopes -- who have fled Russia since the crackdown began in 2017. Many have found refuge in other European countries.

Evgeniy Kandaurov fled Russia with his wife in August 2021 and has resettled in Germany. He said their home was raided by police officers in February 2021 with an officer of the internal intelligence agency giving orders remotely.

The officers took custody of bags of their belongings, including all but one wedding photo.

Kandaurov, whose father was a Communist, became interested in the Jehovah's Witnesses after two years of army service. He was baptized in 1994 and became a "special pioneer", expected to devote at least 130 hours each month to ministry work.

He traveled across Russia to advocate for the rights of Witnesses to evangelize and worship peacefully, often helping those who had encounters with police.

"This was in fact my favorite form of service: defending our rights in court," he said in an interview from his new home in Wiesbaden, a town west of Frankfurt.

Kandaurov said he was interrogated for several hours on multiple occasions.

"We couldn't sleep: every knock at the door, every heavy footstep out in the hallway, it deprived us of our sleep, it was nerve-racking," he said.

Last summer, he and his wife left Russia - driving through Moldova and Ukraine, then flying to Germany. Their modest belongings included their one surviving wedding photo.

He now spends much of his time writing to those left behind and worshipping on Zoom with his new



friends, thankful to be practicing his faith freely.  
"I don't have to whisper," he said.

## UN envoy Angelina Jolie in Yemen ahead of fundraising summit

BY SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie on Sunday visited war-wrecked Yemen to show solidarity with displaced families in hopes of mobilizing support for an incoming fundraising conference, the United Nations said.

Jolie, who is special envoy for the U.N. on refugee issues, landed in the southern coastal city of Aden to meet with families and refugees there. Aden is the seat of the internationally recognized government.

The U.N. refugee agency said it hopes that Jolie's visit would draw attention to growing humanitarian needs in Yemen, the Arab World's poorest country, ahead of the annual High Level Pledging Conference for Yemen on March 16.

"As we continue to watch the horrors unfolding in Ukraine and call for an immediate end to the conflict and humanitarian access, I am here in Yemen to support people who also desperately need peace. The situation here is one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world," Jolie said in a post on her Instagram account.

Yemen has been convulsed by civil war since 2014, when the Iran-backed Houthi rebels took control of the capital, Sanaa, and much of the country's north, forcing the government to flee to the south, then to Saudi Arabia. A Saudi-led coalition, backed at the time by the United States, entered the war in 2015 to try to restore Yemen's government to power.

The conflict has since become a regional proxy war that has killed more than 150,000 people, including over 14,500 civilians, according to 2022 data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Project. It also created the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

According to the U.N. refugee agency, about 66% of Yemen's 30 million people rely on humanitarian assistance for their daily survival, including over 4.2 million displaced people and 102,000 refugees and asylum-seekers.

The head of the World Food Program, David Beasley, told The Associated Press last month that around 13 million people were heading toward starvation in Yemen due to the protracted conflict and lack of funding.

The U.N. humanitarian office has reported that its 2021 humanitarian plan for Yemen received \$2.27 billion out of its \$3.85 billion requirement, the lowest funding level since 2015.

## 1 dead, over 20 hurt in grenade attack in Kashmir market

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — One person was killed and more than 20 others injured on Sunday when an assailant lobbed a grenade at a busy market in the main city in Indian-controlled Kashmir, police said.

According to local media reports, the target of the attack in Srinagar appeared to have been security personnel in the area. There was a huge crowd in the market when the grenade exploded.

The injured were taken to a hospital.

Police officer Sujit Kumar said that security forces were investigating and that the attacker would be found soon.

Kashmir is divided between India and Pakistan, which both claim the region in its entirety.

India accuses Pakistan of supporting armed rebels who want to unite the region, either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country. Islamabad denies the accusation and says it only provides diplomatic and moral support for the Kashmiri people.

In Indian-controlled Kashmir, tens of thousands of civilians, rebels and government forces have been killed in the past two decades.

## Watching Ukraine, Bosnians relive the trauma of their war

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 66 of 69

By SABINA NIKSIC Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — News reports from Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities under unrelenting bombardment by the Russian military have been triggering painful memories among the survivors of the 1990s siege of Bosnian capital Sarajevo.

And yet, many have been spending hours on end glued to their television screens since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched the invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24.

“Not so long ago, we were them,” said Amra Muftic who survived the 1992-95 siege, watching news reports showing civilians taking refuge from Russian rocket attacks, shelling and gunfire in basements and subway stations.

“If our experience is anything to go by — and I have a gut feeling that it is — things are about to get much worse” for them, she added.

Bosnian Serb forces laid siege to Sarajevo in the early 1990s, during the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia. About 350,000 people were trapped, for 46 months, in their multiethnic city, subjected to daily shelling and sniper attacks and cut off from regular access to electricity, food, water, medicine and the outside world.

More than 11,000 people were killed during the siege, including over 1,000 children. Countless others were wounded.

“We know how they feel. We survived the longest siege in modern history” said Elma Vukotic, an anesthesiologist, as she and her fellow health care workers stood earlier this week outside their Sarajevo hospital, clad in their medical robes and holding balloons in the blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag — and, coincidentally, also the Bosnian one. Vukotic said their spontaneous show of solidarity was the least they could do for their Ukrainian colleagues.

“All wars are painful, all attacks against civilians abhorrent, but what is happening to Ukrainians right now is especially traumatic for us, because they are so near and in a situation very similar to ours” three decades ago, Vukotic said.

“Television images of pregnant women waiting to give birth in the basement of the Kyiv hospital, hastily converted into an emergency bomb shelter, gave me a strong sense of déjà vu; I know exactly how they feel, how terrified they must be,” she added. “Also, I think we all can empathize with how unwilling ordinary Ukrainians were to accept that the war was coming until Russian rockets and bombs started raining down on their homes, schools and hospitals.”

The Bosnian war started when Bosnian Serbs, with the help of the Yugoslav army, tried to create ethnically pure territories with the aim of joining neighboring Serbia. More than 100,000 people were killed and 2 million — more than half the country’s population — were left homeless during the conflict.

The Serb leadership argued throughout the war that multiethnic Bosnia wasn’t a country at all and that, along with its Catholic Croats and its Bosniaks, who are mostly Muslim and account for about half of the population, it should be split between neighboring Serbia and Croatia. Bosniaks, they insisted, were just treacherous Serb converts who centuries ago abandoned their original (Orthodox Christian) faith.

Many in Sarajevo heard the echoes of those old insults in Putin’s recent statements, offered to justify Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

A U.N. arms embargo maintained in Bosnia throughout the 1990s conflict gave Bosnian Serb militias, armed and backed by the Serbia-controlled Yugoslav Army, an edge in the fight. They conquered 60% of Bosnia’s territory in less than two months, committing horrendous atrocities against their Bosniak and Croat compatriots.

In 1995, the U.S.-brokered Dayton Peace agreement put an end to the bloodshed in Bosnia by dividing the country into two semi-autonomous parts — one run by the Serbs and the other shared by Bosniaks and Croats. The two are linked by weak multiethnic institutions.

But living together in the aftermath of a brutal, fratricidal conflict has proven to be difficult.

The postwar power-sharing system perpetuates the polarized and venomous political climate in Bosnia, while its entrenched nationalist leaders continuously stoke ethnic animosities for political gain.

With Moscow’s backing, the strongly pro-Russia Bosnian Serbs, in particular, have been advocating for

years for the independence of their region. Meanwhile, sectarian networks of patronage and pervasive corruption, which gradually became integral to the system, ensure that Bosnia remains one of the poorest countries in Europe, increasingly losing its best and brightest to other countries.

"Right now, Ukrainians are subjected to torture, they are pleading for help and hoping for who knows what," said Zoka Catic, a filmmaker and journalist from Sarajevo who has spent years documenting the devastating impact of war on the mental health of Bosnians of all ethnicities.

No matter how the conflict in Ukraine ends, he argued, there is no such thing as a happy ending to a war. "It is just a matter of time ... before (Ukrainians) turn into us: sad, unhappy people who experienced the worst feeling in the world — helplessness."

## Foreigners who fled Ukraine team up to help others escape

By CHINEDU ASADU and CARA ANNA Associated Press

Jarred by discriminatory treatment and left to evacuate themselves from Ukraine, people from African, Asian and Latin American countries who succeed in getting out are forming impromptu networks to help thousands of others hoping to flee.

Stepping into the gap was an easy decision for Alexander Somto Orah, 25, a Nigerian student in Ukraine who, like some others, described xenophobia and threats of violence as he approached the border with Poland shortly after Russia's invasion.

Ukrainian border guards "separated Africans, together with Indians, from the rest and directed us to the Romanian border" scores of miles away, Orah said. "They told us that if we try to push our way through, they are going to shoot us." Video shared with The Associated Press shows the confrontation.

United by fear and outrage after days in the freezing weather, the young foreigners started to protest. "We raised our hands and told them we are students and just want to go home," Orah said. Eventually, they were allowed to cross.

Since reaching Poland's capital, Warsaw, he has returned to the border multiple times to help other foreigners leave Ukraine, drawing on his experience.

Almost 80,000 third-country nationals from 138 countries have fled, the International Organization for Migration said Friday.

Some have reported being denied access to bomb shelters, transportation and even access to consulates of their countries of origin in neighboring countries, the U.N. special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, Tendayi Achiume, said Thursday, calling the racist and xenophobic treatment "life-threatening."

The experiences are shaping the grassroots efforts to help others leave.

Ojonugwa Zakari, 21, a medical student from Nigeria, said she and hundreds of other foreigners remain stuck in Sumy, a city in northeastern Ukraine. As they wake to the sound of shelling, their phones now fill with tips on how to escape: Phone numbers of friendly locals across the border. Guidance on emergency supplies and what documents to show at checkpoints.

"Basically, the basic war advice," said Zakari, who's never been in war before.

She added: "It's no longer about where people are from. People are just trying to make sure that if you're a foreigner in Ukraine, you get to safety."

Ukraine's government has addressed allegations of discrimination against fleeing foreigners amid sharp comments like the one by the African Union continental body, which called dissimilar treatment of Africans "shockingly racist" and in breach of international law.

"Africans seeking evacuation are our friends and need to have equal opportunities to return to their home countries safely," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba tweeted Wednesday. He later shared on Twitter a hotline number established to help African, Asian and other students wishing to leave.

Within 12 hours, the phone number had been retweeted more than 21,000 times. The following day, however, the hotline rang unanswered.

Other official statements of aid, even from foreigners' home countries, have felt remote as well.

Shortly after Russia's invasion started on Feb. 24, Zimbabwe's government told its citizens in Ukraine to

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 68 of 69

contact their embassy in Germany, on the other side of Poland. Kenya's government suggested its embassy in Austria, similarly far away.

Since then, some countries have announced deals with Ukraine's neighbors to facilitate the entry of their citizens. Others are trying to evacuate those who can't make it out. But the death of an Indian student in Russian shelling in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, created new urgency.

Worried students and others have created WhatsApp and Telegram messaging groups for Africans, Brazilians and other populations with large numbers trying to leave. Some platforms offer financial or even mental health assistance.

Faith Chemari said she has helped over 50 Zimbabwean students by coordinating their bus travel toward Poland.

"I was putting students in groups, with boys leaving first, so as to give feedback to the rest of the students on whether it was safe," she said.

Along Ukraine's borders, a global community has begun to gather to welcome exhausted countrymen making their way out. Others inside Ukraine assist travelers to the next destination. "In Odesa, our Azeri people welcomed us and they helped us get to the Moldova border," said Elxan Salmanov Ilham, a 28-year old student from Azerbaijan who fled Kharkiv.

As support grows, some locals in Ukraine's neighboring countries are taking part.

After spending the night at the train station in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, Nigerian student Sanusi Salihu urgently needed food and shelter. He found both from a resident he met shortly after entering Slovakia.

"We are seven in his house," Salihu said. "He just took us all out for lunch (and) ... has been very nice."

Now, Salihu, too, does what he can from his new position of safety, messaging foreigners still in Ukraine.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, March 7, the 66th day of 2022. There are 299 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 7, 1965, a march by civil rights demonstrators was violently broken up at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, by state troopers and a sheriff's posse in what came to be known as "Bloody Sunday."

On this date:

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell received a U.S. patent for his telephone.

In 1911, President William Howard Taft ordered 20,000 troops to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border in response to the Mexican Revolution.

In 1916, Bavarian Motor Works (BMW) had its beginnings in Munich, Germany, as an airplane engine manufacturer.

In 1926, the first successful trans-Atlantic radio-telephone conversations took place between New York and London.

In 1936, Adolf Hitler ordered his troops to march into the Rhineland, thereby breaking the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY) and the Locarno Pact.

In 1945, during World War II, U.S. forces crossed the Rhine at Remagen, Germany, using the damaged but still usable Ludendorff Bridge.

In 1975, the U.S. Senate revised its filibuster rule, allowing 60 senators to limit debate in most cases, instead of the previously required two-thirds of senators present.

In 1994, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that a parody that pokes fun at an original work can be considered "fair use." (The ruling concerned a parody of the Roy Orbison song "Oh, Pretty Woman" by the rap group 2 Live Crew.)

In 1999, movie director Stanley Kubrick, whose films included "Dr. Strangelove," "A Clockwork Orange"



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, March 7, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 243 ~ 69 of 69

and "2001: A Space Odyssey," died in Hertfordshire, England, at age 70, having just finished editing "Eyes Wide Shut."

In 2005, President George W. Bush nominated John Bolton to be U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, an appointment that ran into Democratic opposition, prompting Bush to make a recess appointment.

In 2016, Peyton Manning announced his retirement after 18 seasons in the National Football League.

In 2020, health officials in Florida said two people who had tested positive for the new coronavirus had died; the deaths were the first on the East Coast attributed to the outbreak.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama, speaking at a Daimler truck plant in Mount Holly, North Carolina, made his most urgent appeal to date for the nation to wean itself from oil, calling it a "fuel of the past" and demanding that the United States broaden its approach to energy. The Indianapolis Colts released injured quarterback Peyton Manning, who went on to play for the Denver Broncos.

Five years ago: WikiLeaks published thousands of documents described as secret files about CIA hacking tools the government employed to break into users' computers, mobile phones and even smart TVs from companies like Apple, Google, Microsoft and Samsung. The Commerce Department reported the U.S. trade deficit jumped in January 2017 by 9.6 percent to \$48.5 billion, the highest level in nearly five years as a flood of mobile phones and other consumer products widened America's trade gap with China. A freight train smashed into a charter bus at a rail crossing in Biloxi, Mississippi, leaving four people dead.

One year ago: In an interview with Oprah Winfrey, their first since they stepped aside from royal duties, Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, spoke of racism and mistreatment from within the royal family; Meghan, who is biracial, said the palace had failed to help her when she had suicidal thoughts, and that a member of the royal family had raised "concerns" about the color of her baby's skin when she was pregnant with her son, Archie. Pope Francis wrapped up a historic whirlwind tour of Iraq that sought to bring hope to the country's marginalized Christian minority. Team LeBron romped to a 170-150 win over Team Durant in the NBA's 70th All-Star Game.

Today's Birthdays: International Motorsports Hall of Famer Janet Guthrie is 84. Actor Daniel J. Travanti is 82. Entertainment executive Michael Eisner is 80. Rock musician Chris White (The Zombies) is 79. Rock singer Peter Wolf is 76. Rock musician Matthew Fisher (Procol Harum) is 76. Pro Football Hall of Famer Franco Harris is 72. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Lynn Swann is 70. R&B singer-musician Ernie Isley (The Isley Brothers) is 70. Rock musician Kenny Aronoff (BoDeans, John Mellencamp) is 69. Actor Bryan Cranston is 66. Actor Donna Murphy is 63. Actor Nick Searcy is 63. Golfer Tom Lehman is 63. International Tennis Hall of Famer Ivan Lendl is 62. Actor Mary Beth Evans is 61. Singer-actor Taylor Dayne is 60. Actor Bill Brochtrup is 59. Author E.L. James is 59. Author Bret Easton Ellis is 58. Opera singer Denyce Graves is 58. Comedian Wanda Sykes is 58. Actor Jonathan Del Arco is 56. Rock musician Randy Guss (Toad the Wet Sprocket) is 55. Actor Rachel Weisz (vys) is 52. Actor Peter Sarsgaard is 51. Actor Jay Duplass is 49. Classical singer Sebastien Izambard (Il Divo) is 49. Rock singer Hugo Ferreira (Tantric) is 48. Actor Jenna Fischer is 48. Actor Tobias Menzies is 48. Actor Sarayu Blue is 47. Actor Audrey Marie Anderson is 47. Actor TJ Thyne is 47. Bluegrass singer-musician Frank Solivan is 45. Actor Laura Prepon is 42. Actor Bel Powley is 30. Poet and activist Amanda Gorman is 24. Actor Giselle Eisenberg (TV: "Life in Pieces") is 15.