

# Groton Daily Independent

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**Thursday, March 17**  
State A Tournament in Rapid City: Groton Area vs. Flandreau at 1:45 p.m. MT (2:45 CT).  
Spring Break - No School

**Friday, March 18**  
State A Tournament in Rapid City  
Spring Break - No School

**Saturday, March 19**  
State A Tournament in Rapid City  
Mitchell Show Choir Competition

**Sunday, March 20**  
5 p.m.: Welcome Home Celebration in the Arena

## 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.



This sign is posted in front of Groton Area Middle/High School for the State A Bound Basketball Team.

**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.

## Pool basin to be completely redone this spring

The Groton City Council approved the bid from Go Get Fred for a complete pool resurfacing for \$181,126.30. The project will be done this spring and completed in time for opening around Memorial Day.

Electric Superintendent Todd Gay came before the council to discuss updating part of the city's infrastructure south of Groton. The secondary line going east and west south of the railroad tracks will be put underground. The cost of the wire is \$30,000.

Gay was authorized to attend the SDMEA Conference and Technology Expo in Watertown April 5-6.

Starting on March 22, the garbage routes will be limited to Main Street, Railroad Avenue, Sixth Street and Broadway during the spring thaw. Those in the Olson Development need to bring their garbage to dumpsters at the bus barns.

Interest was forgiven on the property at 608 N. 2nd Street for the curb and gutter payment that is due. The balance owed was \$11,559.60. The principle amount of \$7,620 will need to be paid but the interest in the amount of \$3,939.60 will be forgiven.

Several bills from IMEG (engineering company) were approved for payment that totaled \$39,138.46.

A family pool pass will be donated to the Lynso Keller Benefit Auction to be held Saturday, April 30.

Election workers were approved for the city's election to be held April 12th: Anita Lowary as supervisor, Julie Hinds and Melanie Sombke. The pay will be \$150 each for the day. March 28th is the first day for absentee ballot voting.

The Allied Health Insurance had a reduction in premiums from 2021 in the total amount of \$4,676.48. That amount will be paid to the current 11 city employees that worked in 2021.

The equalization meeting will be held Monday, March 21, 6 p.m., at City Hall.

The city received \$8,841.20 in an Aeronautics Fund for the airport improvement and \$1,000 of the Stephanie Miller-Davis Library Grant.

Mayor Scott Hanlon proclaimed March 14-20 at Groton Tiger Week to honor the Groton Area Boys' Basketball Team going to the state tournament.

The SDML District 6 annual meeting will be held March 23 at the Groton Legion, 6 p.m.

After an executive session, the council hired the following for the summer:

Brian Gravatt, cemetery maintenance; Aaron Severson, public works; Kami Lipp, Karla Pasteur and Tricia Keith, trig-managers for the swimming pool; and lifeguards Gretchen Dinger, Cadence Feist, Elizabeth Flihs, Madeline Flihs, Carly Guthmiller, Kelli Hanson, Aspen Johnson, Trista Keith, Emma Kutter, Jacob Lewandowski, Tanae Lipp, Allyssa Locke, Lydia Meier, Emma Schinkel, Cody Swanson, Lane Tietz, Marlee Tollifson, Faith Traphagen, Gracie Traphagen and Grace Wambach. The baseball list was tabled.

The council denied a request to allow police officers to exceed vacation time cap.

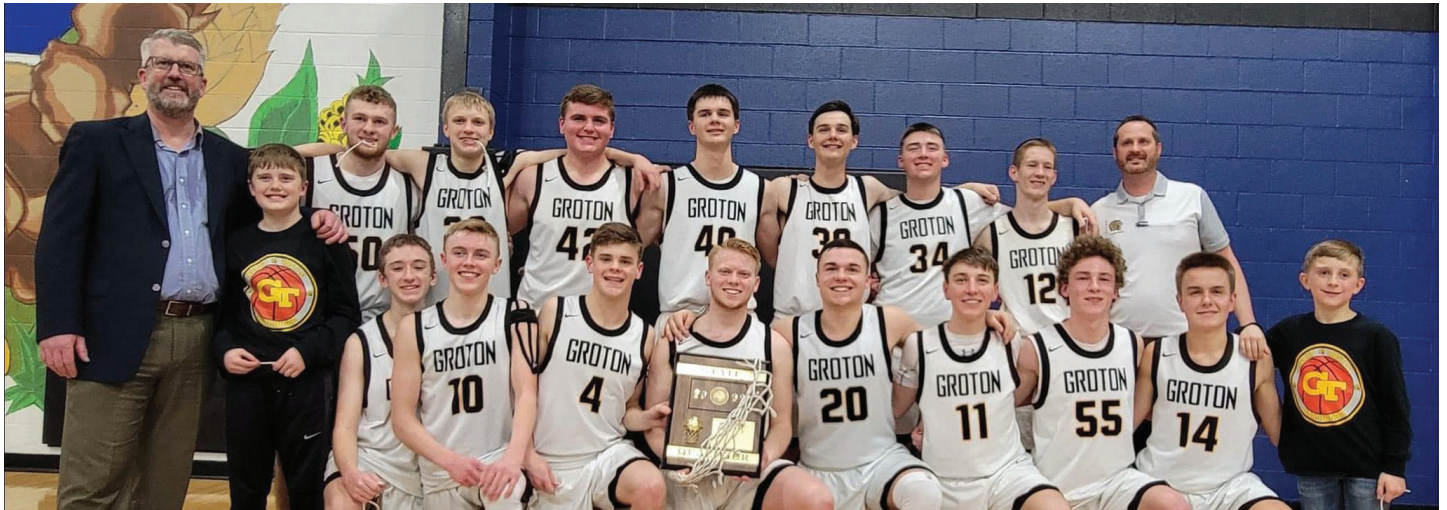
Deputy Finance Officer April Abeln will retain her \$3 raise.



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## Good Luck at the State A Basketball Tournament!



In back, left to right, are Coach Brian Dolan and his son, Major, Holden Sippel, Jacob Zak, Logan Ringgenberg, Tate Larson, Cade Larson, Colby Dunker, Tyson Parrow, and Assistant Coach Kyle Gerlach; in front, left to right, are Braxton Imrie, Lane Tietz, Wyatt Hearnen, Jayden Zak, Kaden Kurtz, Cole Simon, Teylor Diegel, Dillon Abeln and Trey Tietz. (Photo courtesy Kyle Gerlach)

### **The following wish the Tigers good luck at state and are sponsoring the coverage in the Groton Daily Independent and Groton Independent:**

Allied Climate Professionals/Kevin Nehls  
Bahr Spray Foam  
Bary Keith at Harr Motors  
Base Kamp Lodge and Cassels House Inn & Events  
Bierman Farm Service  
BK Custom T's and More  
Blocker Construction  
Dacotah Bank  
Doug Abeln Seed Company  
Fire Safety  
Fliehs Sales & Service  
Full Circle Ag  
GDI  
Grant for Groton City Mayor  
Greg Johnson Construction  
Groton Autoworks  
Groton Chamber of Commerce  
Groton Chiropractic Clinic  
Groton Dairy Queen  
Groton Ford  
Groton Golf Cars  
Groton Legion Post #39  
Groton Vet Clinic  
Hanlon Brothers  
Hanlon for Mayor

Harry Implement  
Heartland Consumers Power District  
J.Simon Photography  
James Valley Telco  
John Sieh Agency  
Jungle Lanes & Lounge  
KR Body Shop, Andover  
Krueger Brothers  
Locke Electric  
Lori's Pharmacy  
Love To Travel / Becah Fliehs  
Marty Weismantel Agency  
Matt's Tree Service  
Mike-N-Jo's Body-N-Glass  
Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.  
MJ's Sinclair  
ML Realty  
Northeast Chiropractic Clinic  
Northern Electric  
Olive Grove  
Poet  
Professional Management Services  
Ryan Likness Agency  
S&S Lumber  
Schultz Construction  
Spanier Trucking & Harvesting  
Subway of Groton  
Thunder Seed with John Sheeting  
TreeLine Tree Service/Sperry Stump  
Weber Landscaping

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## Glimpses From Greenfield 2022—Week 9

After 22 years of weekly updates during Session, I now set out to ink my last one. Before I get into the issues, I want to offer my most sincere thank you! It has been an honor to have worked for you, and I count myself blessed beyond anything I could have ever imagined.

In the waning days of Session, a person can expect some interesting twists. One such twist is with regard to a phone call I received on Feb 8 from an old friend who is a county commissioner. He told me there was a plan to bring a bill to allow them to re-craft their county redistributing plan in a way that was not currently legal. Since redistricting plans were due in Feb, when nothing was brought forth, I assumed cooler heads had prevailed. On the contrary, an ambush happened on Feb 28, when a “hog-house” amendment was brought in Senate State Affairs. HB 1127 had originally been a vehicle bill that had no real content. It was passed over from the House as a title, just in case an instrument would be needed over the final two weeks. Some folks identified 1127 as the bill they would utilize to introduce entirely new language. In its first hearing in the Senate committee, five proponents appeared to speak in favor of an amendment to the bill. Of course, nobody else knew of the effort, so no opponents were present. After a plea from Senator Troy Heinert, who represents the affected area, the committee agreed that they should hold the bill over for another meeting. During that subsequent meeting on Mar. 2, one additional proponent spoke, followed by six opponents representing nine different groups. In the end, this bill which my friend knew about in early Feb was trotted out in the LATE hours of session. Everything was completely reactionary. The hog-house contained an emergency clause, which would’ve allowed the bill to take effect the moment it receives the Governor’s signature. However, the emergency clause requires a 2/3 vote, which the bill did not get. So, the Senators who supported the bill asked for people to send it back to the House, where the House would vote to not concur and to appoint a conference committee. However, the House sponsor—again completely in reactionary mode—moved to concur, and the House agreed with the Senate amendments. In the final analysis, what we have is a bill that purports to help one county. The people who it set out to help were ALL opposed to the final version. And the bill doesn’t go into effect until July 1, so the language that originally was drafted, which was contingent upon a Governor’s signature by the end of March is completely moot. If this bill is signed into law, the earliest it can have an impact is during the 2031 redistricting process. And for the record, this had to do with disagreements between the county commission and the tribes over how the county commission is set up. Since the county has a significant minority population, and the courts have held that such jurisdictions are required to carve out specific districts for the significant minority populations, we know that action is needed in Lyman Co. What they could have done was to expand their commission to seven members, which South Dakota law allows. Then, they could have provided for the two special districts. Instead, we might have a new law that will help NOBODY in the current year—even if everybody said it was the greatest bill ever—and will affect up to 15 counties—some to their own detriment—during the next redistricting process. This is what happens sometimes when hoghouses are trotted out at the last minute and the promoters don’t understand the contents of the bill or fully comprehend the legislative process. The irony is that the bill’s title was originally “An Act to enhance South Dakota” but this does nothing to enhance anything, to promote race relations, or to stave off legal challenges.

I believe I have sufficiently beaten that horse, so I’ll move on to some short takes. HB 1129 states that no person may discriminate against any person during the organ transplant process based on mental or physical disability. This is so fundamental, it passed with only 2 “no” votes throughout the entire process. HB 1012 passed the Senate, 27-8 and the House, 60-10. This bill bans the teaching of Critical Race Theory concepts at the post-secondary level, but a similar bill for K-12 schools was killed. I supported passage of both concepts. (Language in the bills said, people couldn’t teach that “any race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, or national origin is inherently inferior or superior”. The bills went on to say that people shouldn’t

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be discriminated against on those bases and that their moral character isn't determined by those characteristics, among other seemingly common-sense, non-controversial tenets.)

I have spoken numerous times about budgetary considerations. In the end, we supported the Governor's 6% increases for education and our state employees. Moreover, we supported the 6% ongoing (base) increases for health care, with targeted one-time increases for long-term care providers and youth care providers. Further, we earmarked hundreds of millions of federal dollars for long-term infrastructure improvements. We did not want to be short-sighted concerning the use of those federal monies. We recognize it would have been easy to spend on certain short-term projects, but such expenditures would have provided nothing more than a sugar high, while strapping future generations with the tab for investments they would not have been able to benefit from. Instead, we invested in public building projects, water and sewer infrastructure projects, county and township roads and bridges, etc. HB 1281 was passed as a companion bill to the General Appropriations Act. The language of 1281 was originally drafted as a the final sections to the General Bill. However, those sections were split out into their own bill. This bill states that no monies allocated by the federal government after our session closes may be used to create NEW programs without approval of the Appropriations Committee, but additional dollars may be used to fund ongoing programs at enhanced rates. We are working to provide clarifying language through a letter of intent. We are not asking to reinvent the wheel, but this was compromise language between the House and Senate that provided a roadmap to completing the budgeting process without letting things devolve to the House and Senate passing competing budget bills that would have likely resulted in us fighting things out in conference committee for several more days.

Once again, it has been the honor of a lifetime to work for you in the quest to make South Dakota a better place for current and future generations. Thank you, and may God continue to bless you and your families.

Brock

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## Groton City February Financial Report

February 2022

Dacotah Bank Checking Acct	\$ 3,187,891.35
General Cash	\$ 300.00
SD FIT Acct	\$ 1,554,868.29
Dacotah Bank Water CD	\$ 85,379.54
SD FIT CD	\$ 102,514.21
Cemetery Perp Care CD	\$ 32,876.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 4,963,830.08</b>

Invested In		
Cash	\$ 300.00	0.01%
Dacotah Bank	\$ 3,306,147.58	66.60%
SD Fit	\$ 1,657,382.50	33.39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 4,963,830.08</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

	Beginning	Revenue	Expenses	Transfers	Ending
	Cash Balance				Cash Balance
General	\$ 959,792.00	\$ 76,467.01	\$ 57,645.78		\$ 978,613.23
Bed, Board, Booze Tax	\$ 123,364.11	\$ 1,970.17			\$ 125,334.28
Baseball Uniforms	\$ 1,710.20				\$ 1,710.20
Airport	\$ 6,792.05				\$ 6,792.05
**Debt Service	\$ (56,938.80)				\$ (56,938.80)
Cemetery Perpetual Care	\$ 34,756.69				\$ 34,756.69
Water Tower	\$ 180,000.00				\$ 180,000.00
Water	\$ 257,973.22	\$ 38,017.84	\$ 18,303.86		\$ 277,687.20
Electric	\$ 2,664,168.05	\$ 167,441.91	\$ 105,694.79		\$ 2,725,915.17
Wastewater	\$ 452,997.84	\$ 16,308.64	\$ 1,188.31		\$ 468,118.17
Solid Waste	\$ 39,296.06	\$ 8,476.53	\$ 8,427.95		\$ 39,344.64
Family Crisis	\$ 10,873.92				\$ 10,873.92
Sales Tax	\$ 11,782.15	\$ 10,716.91	\$ 10,750.47		\$ 11,748.59
Employment	\$ (5,283.67)		\$ 255.02		\$ (5,028.65)
Utility Prepayments	\$ 78,813.92	\$ (3,226.95)	\$ 50.69		\$ 75,536.28
Utility Deposits	\$ 88,263.01	\$ 1,250.00	\$ 670.00		\$ 88,843.01
Other	\$ 531.89	\$ (7.79)			\$ 524.10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 4,848,892.64</b>	<b>\$ 317,414.27</b>	<b>\$ 202,986.87</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 4,963,830.08</b>

**Debt to be Paid		
**2015 Refinance	\$ 1,972,637.49	by 12/1/2035
**West Sewer	\$ 40,320.11	by 10/15/2022
**RR Sewer Crossing	\$ 20,521.91	by 7/15/22
<b>Total Debt</b>	<b>\$ 2,033,479.51</b>	

\$131,884.64 ARPA GRANT (Received to General)  
 \$89,223.86 Water tower loan payment



## Gov. Noem Signs Public Safety Bills into Law

PIERRE, S.D. – Yesterday, Governor Kristi Noem signed 19 public safety and criminal justice bills into law, including SB 53, which will facilitate the building of a community work center for female offenders in Rapid City.

“My top priority as Governor is keeping South Dakotans safe, and that is what these bills will help us do,” said Governor Noem. “We’re starting to address the needs of our prison system by purchasing land and moving forward with planning for the new women’s work center in Rapid City.”

Governor Noem also signed the following public safety bills into law:

SB 22 revises a reference to the Division of Criminal Investigation.

SB 33 authorizes the Department of Corrections to make healthcare improvements at the South Dakota Women’s Prison and makes an appropriation therefor.

SB 51 makes an appropriation to support firefighter training equipment and recruitment efforts in the state.

SB 77 enhances the penalty on registered sex offenders who commit sexual contact without consent from a person capable of consenting.

SB 81 revises the definition of sexual contact for purposes of sexual contact with a child under eighteen by a person in a position of authority.

SB 83 modifies when a motion for expungement of an arrest record may be made.

SB 119 prohibits sexual contact between prison employees and prisoners.

SB 120 includes intentionally manipulated images or recordings in the crime of invasion of privacy by recording.

SB 136 revises and clarifies certain processes for emergency detainment related to drug and alcohol abuse.

SB 144 creates the incarceration construction fund for the capital construction of such facilities.

SB 195 establishes the burden of proof after a claim of immunity.

SB 199 revises provisions related to a name change for certain crime victims.

HB 1068 clarifies the processing of sexual assault kits performed on individuals ages sixteen and seventeen.

HB 1099 revises provisions related to courtroom modifications for child witnesses.

HB 1100 revises provisions related to the video recording of certain victim testimony at a preliminary hearing or disposition.

HB 1162 defines a loaded firearm.

HB 1174 revises requirements for sales of catalytic converters to scrap metal businesses.

HB 1328 requires law enforcement to report certain seizures of property.

Governor Noem has signed 147 bills into law and vetoed one this legislative session.

## FALLING OIL PRICE HALTS DAILY SURGE IN PUMP PRICES, BUT FOR HOW LONG?

WASHINGTON, D.C. — After cresting above \$123 per barrel shortly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the price of crude oil has gradually fallen below \$110. If this trend holds, it may remove some of the extreme upward price pressure consumers have found at the pump, but not all. The national average price of a gallon of gas hit \$4.33 on Friday, March 11, before falling a penny and holding throughout the weekend and Monday at \$4.32.

"It bears reminding that the cost of oil accounts for about 50% of what drivers pay at the pump," said Andrew Gross, AAA spokesperson. "This war is roiling an already tight global oil market and making it hard to determine if we are near a peak for pump prices, or if they keep grinding higher. It all depends on the direction of oil prices."

According to new data from the Energy Information Administration (EIA), total domestic gasoline stocks decreased by 1.4 million bbl to 244.6 million bbl last week. Meanwhile, gasoline demand rose slightly from 8.74 million b/d to 8.96 million b/d. The increase in gas demand and a reduction in total supply contribute to rising pump prices. But, increasing oil prices play the lead role in pushing gas prices higher. Consumers can expect the current trend at the pump to continue as long as crude prices climb.

Today's national average for a gallon of gas is \$4.32, which is 26 cents more than a week ago, 84 cents more than a month ago, and \$1.47 more than a year ago.

### Quick Stats

The nation's top 10 largest weekly increases: Utah (+51 cents), Arizona (+48 cents), California (+40 cents), Idaho (+40 cents), Nevada (+36 cents), Florida (+34 cents), Alaska (+33 cents), Georgia (+32 cents), New Mexico (+29 cents) and Washington (+29 cents).

The nation's top 10 most expensive markets: California (\$5.74), Nevada (\$4.95), Hawaii (\$4.95), Washington (\$4.73), Oregon (\$4.73), Alaska (\$4.72), Arizona (\$4.60), Illinois (\$4.56), Washington, D.C. (\$4.50) and Connecticut (\$4.46).

### Oil Market Dynamics

At the close of Friday's formal trading session, WTI increased by \$3.31 to settle at \$109.33. Crude prices surged then eased last week in response to President Biden announcing a ban of Russian energy imports, including crude oil. Crude prices have eased as the market continues to find replacement barrels of oil and further supply growth for the tight market becomes apparent. However, the market remains volatile and additional disruptions or escalation of the current crisis in Ukraine could cause prices to surge again this week. Additionally, EIA reported that total domestic crude stocks decreased by 1.8 million bbl last week to 411.6 million bbl. The current stock level is approximately 17% lower than at the end of February 2021, contributing to pressure on domestic crude prices.

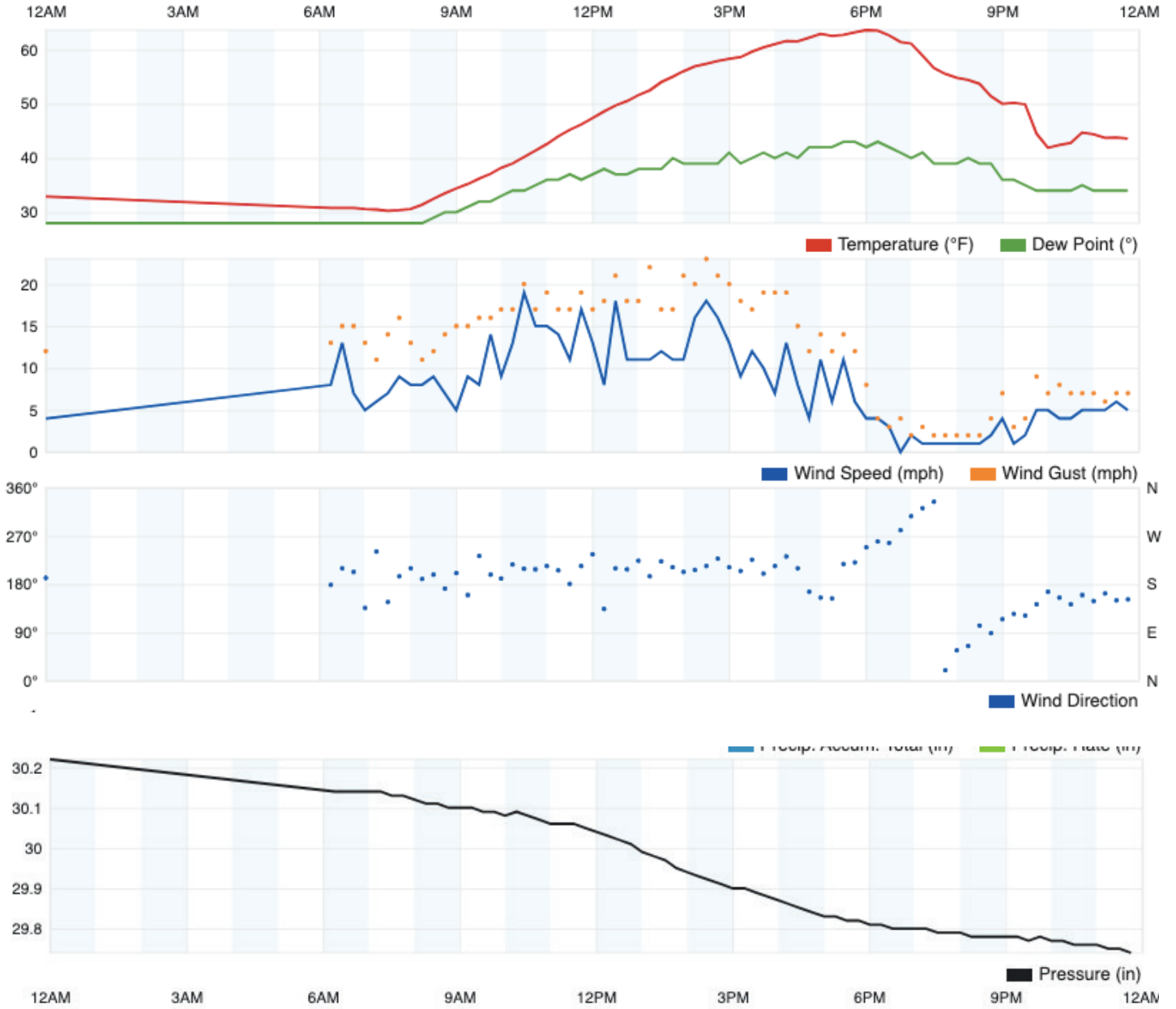
Drivers can find current gas prices along their route with the free AAA Mobile app for iPhone, iPad, and Android. The app can also map a route, find discounts, book a hotel, and access AAA roadside assistance. Learn more at [AAA.com/mobile](http://AAA.com/mobile).



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
Breezy. Slight Chance Rain then Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 58 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 49 °F	Low: 26 °F	High: 53 °F

## Mild, Windy and Dry Today

Driest over portions of **central and northeast South Dakota**, where relative humidity values will fall to around 25 percent and the Grassland Fire Danger will reach the Very High Category. **Winds will increase out of the northwest 15 to 30 mph with gusts 35 to around 45 mph.**

Temperature	11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm												
	Aberdeen	51	53	55	57	59	60	60	57	54	49	45	41
Britton	39	41	42	43	44	45	45	42	39	37	36	34	33
Eagle Butte	48	50	52	53	55	56	56	53	50	47	45	42	40
Eureka	48	51	53	55	56	57	57	54	51	47	43	39	37
Gettysburg	49	51	53	56	58	59	59	56	53	49	45	41	39
Kennebec	52	55	57	59	62	63	63	60	57	53	50	46	43
McIntosh	46	48	50	51	53	54	54	51	48	45	42	39	38
Milbank	47	49	50	52	53	54	54	51	48	45	42	39	38
Miller	53	56	58	61	63	64	64	61	58	54	49	44	41
Mobridge	51	53	55	58	60	61	61	58	55	51	47	43	41
Murdo	50	52	54	55	57	58	58	55	52	50	47	45	43
Pierre	52	55	57	60	62	63	63	60	57	54	50	46	44
Redfield	52	56	59	62	65	66	66	63	60	54	49	43	41
Sisseton	46	47	47	47	47	48	48	45	42	41	39	38	38
Watertown	48	51	52	54	55	56	56	53	50	47	44	41	39
Wheaton	37	39	40	40	41	42	42	39	36	36	35	35	33

**Windy and Dry this Afternoon**

Wind Gusts	11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm												
	Aberdeen	30	31	31	31	31	29	29	29	29	29	26	25
Britton	21	23	25	25	25	25	22	23	23	23	22	22	22
Eagle Butte	36	37	37	36	33	32	30	29	28	25	25	24	23
Eureka	33	33	33	36	37	36	33	31	30	28	26	24	22
Gettysburg	35	35	36	37	37	35	33	31	28	24	23	23	22
Kennebec	31	30	31	32	33	31	30	28	25	20	20	20	21
McIntosh	40	39	41	44	45	45	43	40	37	31	26	22	21
Milbank	18	23	24	24	25	25	24	24	20	20	21	22	20
Miller	30	29	28	29	29	26	25	23	21	21	21	18	18
Mobridge	30	30	30	32	37	32	32	29	29	25	23	21	16
Murdo	32	33	35	35	35	33	32	28	24	20	21	22	22
Pierre	28	30	31	31	31	29	28	25	20	18	18	17	17
Redfield	28	30	29	30	30	29	29	25	24	23	23	24	23
Sisseton	23	28	29	28	28	28	25	22	21	23	25	22	22
Watertown	22	26	25	26	26	28	25	24	24	22	22	21	22
Wheaton	15	18	21	22	22	22	22	21	17	16	17	18	21

Relative Humidity	11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm												
	Aberdeen	61	54	51	43	39	37	39	42	50	58	68	76
Britton	85	82	82	79	76	70	70	76	79	82	85	89	85
Eagle Butte	56	46	39	35	30	29	29	33	37	43	49	53	59
Eureka	68	56	50	43	40	38	38	43	52	60	65	73	79
Gettysburg	58	50	43	34	29	27	28	30	36	42	51	59	62
Kennebec	54	47	42	36	28	25	25	28	31	35	39	45	53
McIntosh	55	49	44	41	36	35	35	39	46	51	50	57	57
Milbank	71	68	68	61	57	52	52	56	63	68	76	82	85
Miller	52	47	40	32	26	24	23	26	29	36	46	57	65
Mobridge	50	44	38	33	29	27	27	32	35	42	49	55	57
Murdo	56	48	43	37	31	29	28	31	35	36	40	45	51
Pierre	52	43	38	32	26	24	23	26	31	35	41	47	51
Redfield	56	49	39	33	26	24	24	26	31	41	52	65	70
Sisseton	73	71	71	71	71	65	65	70	79	76	82	85	79
Watertown	63	59	56	52	47	42	42	46	52	60	70	76	79
Wheaton	85	85	85	89	82	79	76	82	89	85	89	85	89

 **National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD**   Updated: 3/16/2022 5:00 AM CDT

A cold front will sweep across the region today. Winds will increase out of the northwest through the afternoon hours as temperatures climb into the 50s to 60s. This will help to drive down afternoon relative humidity values to around 25 percent across portions of central and northeast South Dakota. The Grassland Fire Danger will reach the Very High category this afternoon across most of central South Dakota and portions of the James Valley in northeast South Dakota. Conditions improve this evening as winds diminish and cooler temperatures filter in.

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## Today in Weather History

March 15, 1941: Beware the Ides of March. The most severe blizzard in modern history strikes North Dakota and Minnesota. The blizzard began on a Saturday night while many are traveling, and thus claims 71 lives. Winds gust to 75 mph at Duluth, Minnesota, and reach 85 mph at Grand Forks, North Dakota. Snow drifts twelve feet high were reported in north-central Minnesota. A cold front traveling 30 mph crosses Minnesota in just seven hours. Click [HERE](#) for more information from History.com.

March 15, 2010: Snowmelt runoff from an extensive snow cover flooded many creeks, roads, along with thousands of acres of pasture and cropland throughout northeast South Dakota. There were numerous road closures. The flooding lasted through the end of the month and for many locations in April. The counties mainly affected were Brown, Marshall, Day, Spink, and Roberts. Numerous communities were affected, including Aberdeen, Claremont, Waubay, Amherst, Kidder, and the Richmond Lake area. The Claremont, Amherst, and Britton areas were the hardest hit with flooded land and roads. Several farms were surrounded by water, with some people stranded. Between Aberdeen and Britton, sixty percent of the area was underwater. Thousands of acres of cropland will not be planted due to too much water, with estimates that 20 to 25 percent of Brown county cropland would not be planted. Many people in northeast South Dakota have had too much water for many years. The road damage was extensive, and repairs will be in the millions of dollars. Many roads across the area will also have to be raised. Many people had extra-long commutes due to flooded streets, with some people having to move out of their homes. Across Day and Marshall Counties, rising lakes threatened many homes and cabins with sandbagging taking place. Most lakes and rivers across northeast South Dakota were at or near record levels. Click [HERE](#) for pictures around northeastern South Dakota.

1938: A tornado hit McPaul, Iowa, while moving from southeast to northwest. Another tornado raced through Batesville, Illinois, at 60 to 65 mph. Another tornado causing F4 damage killed 10 and injured 12 in St. Clair County, Missouri. This tornado was part of an outbreak that produced four different tornadoes and was responsible for 11 deaths and 42 injuries.

1942 - Two tornadoes, 24 minutes apart, struck Baldwin, MS, resulting in 65 deaths. (David Ludlum)

1952: On Reunion Island, some 400 miles east of Madagascar 127.56 inches of rain fell in three days in the spring of 1952. This set a world record for the most rainfall in 72 hours. Also, from the 15th to the 16th, 73.62 inches of rain fell in the 24 hours at Cilaos, La Reunion Island in the South Indian Ocean to set a world record.

1975 - A single storm brought 119 inches of snow to Crater Lake, O,R establishing a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - A small but rare tornado touched down perilously close to Disneyland in Anaheim CA. (Storm Data)

1987 - Softball size hail caused millions of dollars damage to automobiles at Del Rio TX. Three persons were injured when hailstones crashed through a shopping mall skylight. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)

1988 - A winter storm produced heavy snow in the Central Rockies. Winds gusted to 80 mph at Centerville UT. Eighteen cities in the southeastern U.S. reported new record low temperatures for the date, including Tallahassee FL with a reading of 24 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A winter storm brought heavy snow and high winds to the southwestern U.S. Winds gusted to 60 mph at Lovelock NV, Salt Lake City UT, and Fort Carson CO. Snow fell at a rate of three inches per hour in the Lake Tahoe area of Nevada. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced large hail and damaging winds from northwest Florida to western South Carolina. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 75 mph at Floridatown FL. Sixteen cities across the northeastern quarter of the nation reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 78 degrees at Burlington VT smashed their previous record for the date by 23 degrees. New York City reported a record high of 82 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004: Brownsville, Texas, breaks a century-old record for the most significant daily rainfall accumulation for March with 3.23 inches.



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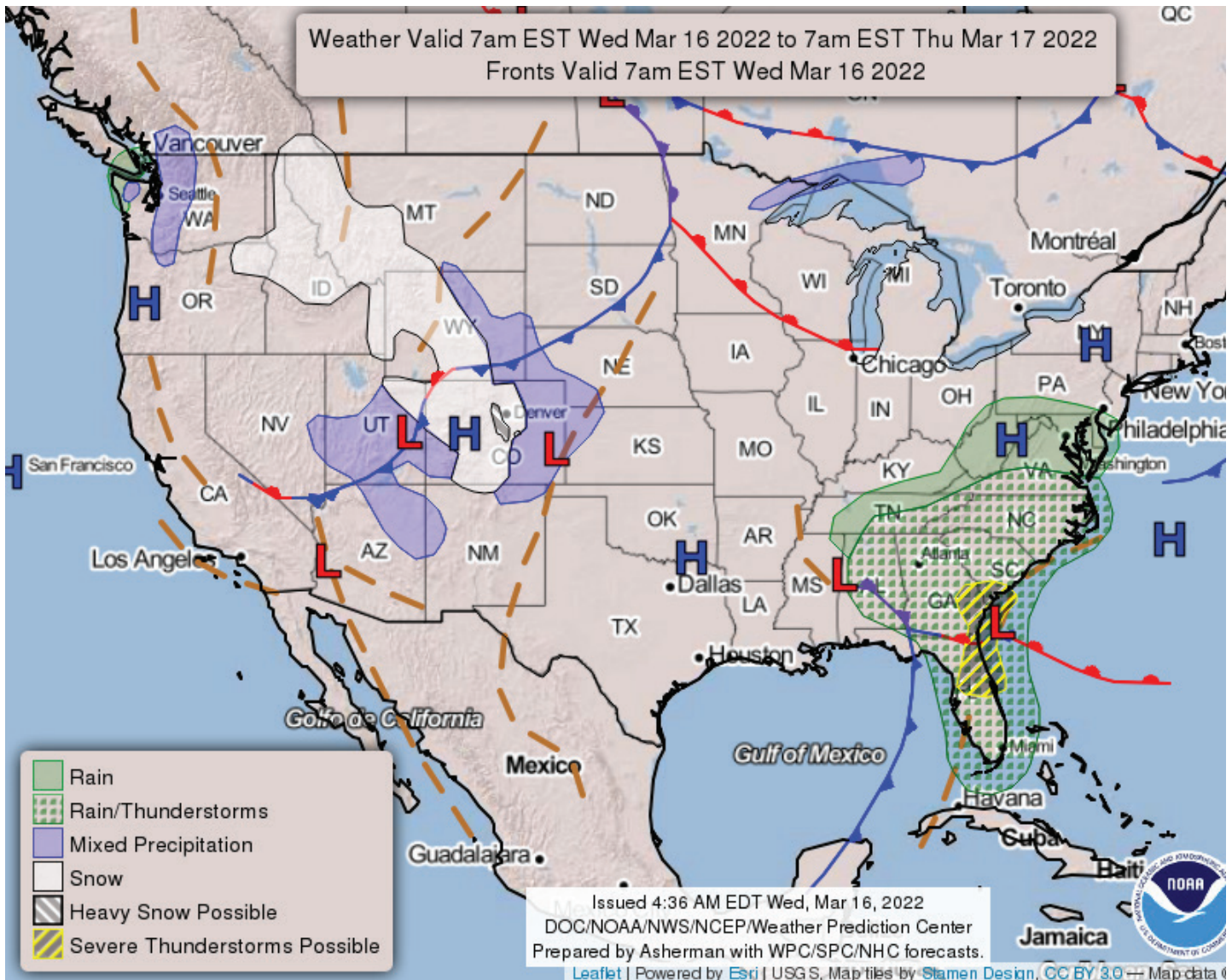
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 64 °F at 6:04 PM**  
**Low Temp: 30 °F at 7:19 AM**  
**Wind: 23 mph at 2:21 PM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

Day length: 12 hours, 00 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 81 in 2012  
Record Low: -17 in 1906  
Average High: 42°F  
Average Low: 20°F  
Average Precip in Mar.: 0.40  
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 1.57  
Precip Year to Date: 0.97  
Sunset Tonight: 7:41:01 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:38:58 AM







## No Big Thing!

A famous watchmaker finished what he considered to be his masterpiece. Carefully, he placed it between two clocks that were much older, yet accurate, timekeepers.

The one on the left turned to it and said, "I'm sorry for you," it sighed. "You're ticking bravely now. But you'll be exhausted when you get through thirty-three million ticks this year."

"Thirty-three million ticks?" gasped the frightened clock. "I can't do that!" And it shook violently and stopped.

"Don't listen to such trash," said the clock on the right. "You've only got to take one tick at a time. There, now, isn't that better? Now, take another tick. And one more. Easy now. Again. Isn't that better?"

"Is that all?" asked the new clock. "That's easy. OK. Here I go!" And it started bravely once again - one tick at a time. At the end of the year, it had made thirty-three million ticks with not one problem.

We do not need to worry about the next hour or day or week. Our Lord asks that we trust Him moment by moment - like a clock: one tick at a time.

The Psalmist talks about giving "understanding to the simple." Often, we complicate our lives and become overwhelmed and depressed by looking at "thirty-three million ticks" rather than "one tick." We awaken in the morning and before we realize it have scheduled a month's worth of activities into those few morning hours.

Dwight Eisenhower once said, "We need to do things that are important, not urgent. Life can be simple."

Prayer: Help us, Father, to carefully separate the "need to dos" from the "want to dos" and live God-guided lives. Guide us step by step. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: It gives understanding to the simple. Psalm 119:130b

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## 2022 Community Events

- 01/30/2022 84th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)  
01/30/2022 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am – 1pm, Groton Community Center, 109 N 3rd St, Groton,  
04/07/2022 Groton CDE  
04/09/2022 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)  
04/09/2022 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/23/2022 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/24/2022 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/07/2022 Lions Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
St John's Lutheran Church VBS 9-11am  
05/30/2022 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
Transit Fundraiser at the Community Center 4-7pm (Thursday Mid-June)  
06/17/2022 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm Start  
06/18/2022 Groton Triathlon  
Ladies Invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration 10am Start  
07/04/2022 Firecracker Couples Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start  
(4th of July)  
07/10/2022 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar 11am-1pm at the Groton Legion  
Baseball Tourney  
07/21/2022 Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start  
How can we... "Love Groton"? United Methodist Church 9:30am  
Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20  
Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm  
08/05/2022 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm  
08/12/2022 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament  
United Methodist Church VBS 5-8pm  
Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot  
09/10/2022 Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm  
09/11/2022 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm  
Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/14/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am (2nd Friday in October)  
10/01/2022 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm  
10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)  
10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/12/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course  
Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm  
01/29/2023 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)

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## News from the Associated Press

### Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined  
Yankton Press & Dakotan. March 14, 2022.  
Editorial: The AG Inquiry And External Pressures

The investigation into South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravensborg is in the hands of a House select committee weighing the evidence to determine whether articles of impeachment are recommended. The committee is expected to make its report when the Legislature convenes for Veto Day later this month, with the House then scheduled to meet on April 12 to consider impeachment.

At this point, the process needs time and patience.

What it doesn't need is external pressure applied by the governor and by others who may or may not be part of a coordinated campaign on this process.

Ravnsborg is under investigation for his actions in connection with a fatal 2020 accident that killed a pedestrian on a Hyde County highway. The details have been reported several times.

That includes last week when Department of Public Safety Secretary Craig Price sent a letter (that was also announced in a press release) to Speaker of the House Spencer Gosch on the eve of the House committee's next meeting. The letter encouraged lawmakers to consider all the facts and evidence in the case while formulating a recommendation. The letter included some detailed information that, Price said, proved that Ravensborg was "unfit" to serve as attorney general.

The timing of this letter, of course, was curious and clumsy.

Or, it was "unfortunate," House Democratic leader Rep. Jamie Smith (D-Sioux Falls) said in response to the letter. "It muddies the water."

This prompted the select committee on Thursday to send a "cease and desist" letter to the office of Gov. Kristi Noem for "attempting to taint the information out there," Gosch said.

The letter does seem to be part of a pattern.

The governor started calling for the attorney general's resignation last winter, releasing videos from his interrogation that were eventually pulled because they could have potentially compromised Ravensborg's ability to receive a fair trial. Other pressure has also been applied from what may or may not be unrelated sources. Several weeks ago, committee members received robocalls originating from Ohio demanding Ravensborg's impeachment. The governor's office denied any connection with the calls. Price's letter materialized last week, and over the weekend, there were reports of digital billboards in Sioux Falls calling out House lawmakers by name in demanding Ravensborg's impeachment. Dakota News Now and KELO of Sioux Falls have attributed the billboard to the "Dakota Institute for Legislative Solutions," a Virginia-based group set up to "generate support for Governor Noem's agenda."

It's hard to see all this as independent or coincidentally timed.

But even if they aren't somehow tied together as a coordinated effort to pressure lawmakers, they represent something intrusive and unwarranted in this process.

"It's disgusting and it's just a poor way to allow the process to run out," Gosch said last week in response to Price's letter, calling out Noem's efforts to pressure the committee "very calculated."

Many people have formed opinions on this situation, but it remains up to the House committee to weigh the evidence and to eventually recommend how to proceed. District 18 Reps. Ryan Cwach and Mike Stevens, who are both members of the committee, have said they are working their way through voluminous amounts of information in the process. This would suggest patience is needed while the due diligence is performed.

The committee must be allowed to finish its work and make its recommendation, and it must do so minus outside pressures.

The more such pressure that is applied in the Ravensborg case, the less it becomes about the attorney



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general. And would be an unfortunate turn, veering more toward politics and power and away from justice.  
END

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:

Mega Millions

09-14-28-59-60, Mega Ball: 24, Megaplier: 5

(nine, fourteen, twenty-eight, fifty-nine, sixty; Mega Ball: twenty-four; Megaplier: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$22 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$133 million

## History-making Providence eyes deep run in NCAA tourney

By KYLE HIGHTOWER AP Sports Writer

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — With his team on the verge accomplishing something that had never been done in Providence basketball history last month, Ed Cooley allowed himself to get lost in the moment.

The Friars were comfortably in front of Creighton, and there was about a minute to play before they could officially celebrate the school's first regular-season Big East Conference title. Cooley suddenly was a kid again.

"I took a deep breath and then when the game was over, I took a step aside — I wasn't Coach Cooley, I was Ed," the Providence native said. "Ed was the kid that used to sneak into the Dunkin' Donuts Center. Ed was the kid that, whoever was a minority, would go in the back door, I would try to ask them if I can go in with them to be their nephew, their son, or somebody. It was a surreal moment with respect to me being the coach of Providence College. ... It was a real emotion."

It's that kind of reflection that Cooley, the Big East Coach of the Year, will carry with him as the No. 13 Friars (25-5) enter the NCAA Tournament as the Midwest Region's No. 4 seed — the highest in program history — and prepare to take on 13th-seeded South Dakota State (30-4) on Thursday.

Providence is back in the tourney for the first time since 2018 and is a sleeper pick to make a deep March Madness run.

But for Cooley, now in his 11th season at Providence following five years at Fairfield, it's simply an opportunity to add to what he says has always felt has been an improbable path here.

That's because the kind of longevity Cooley has had remains a rarity in college basketball's top tier. Only 18 of the 75 coaches at schools in the Power Five — plus Big East — conferences have been at their current programs for at least 10 years.

Cooley enters his sixth NCAA Tournament as part of an even smaller group as one of just three coaches of color (joining Florida State's Leonard Hamilton and Miami's Jim Larranaga) to lead Power Five schools for at least a decade.

It's not something Cooley takes for granted, especially since he began his journey being talked out of a job as a high school history professor in 1996 to take a post as an assistant on Al Skinner's staff at the University of Rhode Island.

"If you grew up the way I grew up and I could actually sit here and talk to you — you have no idea," Cooley said after notching his 300th career win earlier this season. "The percentages say you're not supposed to be sitting here. Zero."

Skinner first noticed Cooley's passion watching him as a captain on Stonehill (Mass.) College's basketball team.

He believes the secret sauce for Cooley at Providence has been a combination of "loving where he's at" and the administration giving him the space to grow the program his way.

"This is America, you have to be successful first and foremost," Skinner said. "But you also want to be in

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an environment where you have that support. ... It has allowed him and the university to flourish because of that understanding."

Picked seventh in the Big East's preseason poll, Cooley has notched his sixth, 20-win season in Providence with a veteran roster full of underdogs. His starting five features four graduate players (Nate Watson, Al Durham, Noah Horchler, Justin Minaya) and a senior (A.J. Reeves) — none of whom who average more than 14 points per game.

The group has also been tested in close games, boasting an 11-2 record in games decided by five or fewer points.

Watson, who likely has the best chance to play in the NBA, said the team's success has validated his decision to return for a fifth season.

"I spoke it into existence last year," Watson said. "I came back for reason, and that was to cut down nets and make it to the NCAA Tournament. That's what we did."

Reeves points to the chemistry they've shared since early in the season despite having to integrate Durham and Minaya (South Carolina transfer) into the mix.

"It just felt like we were around each other for a long time. We never lost that beat," Reeves said.

No matter what happens over the next three weeks, Cooley is thankful to continue the ride he's been on.

"The fact that I've been a head coach for 16 years, I thought I'd get fired after the first game. Honest to God. I didn't know what the hell I was doing," Cooley said. "Over a period of time, you get lucky. You come home and they give you a chance to do something special in your backyard. This (stuff) is real, man."

Asked about what he attributes to his staying power to, Cooley got emotional.

"Everybody worries about when our next win is. I'm just happy to go to practice tomorrow, inspire young men to be the best that they can be and one day, too, people that didn't believe in them they can live the dream beyond their belief," he said. "The fact that I'm here and you asked me that question — you couldn't ask me that question 25, 26 years ago. I would said, man, I'm just trying to make it through the day."

## Feds once again nix Noem's Mount Rushmore fireworks event

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The National Park Service has denied South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem's request to mark the Fourth of July with fireworks at Mount Rushmore, citing opposition from Native American tribes as well as the possibility of igniting wildfires.

"Mount Rushmore is the best place in America to celebrate our nation's birthday — I just wish President Biden could see that," the Republican governor said in a statement Tuesday. "Last year, the President hypocritically held a fireworks celebration in Washington, D.C., while denying us our own event. This year, it looks like they are planning to do the same."

Noem said she would continue a court battle to hold the fireworks. She filed a federal lawsuit against the Biden administration after it refused to issue a permit for a similar celebration last year. A federal judge rejected her arguments in June, prompting an appeal to the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis.

In a letter dated Monday from the U.S. Department of Interior, Mount Rushmore National Memorial Superintendent Michelle Wheatley said a fireworks event would not be "safe and responsible."

Noem successfully pushed for a return of the event in 2020 after a decadelong hiatus. It gave former President Donald Trump an opportunity to be featured at a patriotic display attended by thousands of people during the coronavirus pandemic.

In the letter to the South Dakota Department of Tourism, Wheatley noted the March 2021 wildfire that closed the memorial for three days.

"Current drought conditions and the 2022 wildfire outlook indicate that fireworks would cause a high likelihood of a wildfire ignition," she wrote.

Local Native American tribes objected to the celebration being held on land they hold as sacred.

"There is ample documented opposition for the Tribes to the 2020 event, and we understand from ongoing meetings with the Tribes that these concerns have not diminished," the letter stated.

## Billboards name Ravensborg impeachment investigators

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Billboards targeting members of the legislative panel examining whether Attorney General Jason Ravensborg should be impeached have been popping up around Sioux Falls.

The signs demand the attorney general be impeached and name four members of the House Select Committee on Investigation which has been looking into Ravensborg's conduct related to a 2020 crash that killed pedestrian Joe Boever.

The committee members include Reps. Steven Haugaard, Jamie Smith, Jon Hansen and House Speaker Spencer Gosch, the chairman. A fifth lawmaker, Rep. Scott Odenbach, was added to the billboard names this week. Odenbach, who is not a committee member, voted against a resolution calling for the House to open an investigation into Ravensborg.

The organization which put up the billboards, Dakota Institute for Legislative Solutions, lists itself as a non-profit organized to carry forward Gov. Kristi Noem's agenda.

Noem has expressed her desire to see Ravensborg impeached, but both her office and her campaign deny being behind both the billboard ads or Dakota Institute.

"Zero relationship," said Joe Desilets, Noem's campaign manager told the Argus Leader. "No one on our team set up that organization, is directing it or anything of the sort."

Dakota Institute for Legislative Solutions executive director Rob Burgess says he does not work for Noem or have any direct relationship with her.

## Zelenskyy center stage: Facing Congress, pleading for help

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will address the U.S. Congress, the actor-turned-wartime leader's latest video speech as he uses the West's great legislative bodies as a global stage to orchestrate support against Russia's crushing invasion.

Zelenskyy's livestreamed address Wednesday into the U.S. Capitol will be among the most important in a very public strategy in which he has invoked Winston Churchill, Hamlet and the power of world opinion in his fight to stop Russia.

Nearing the three-week mark in an ever-escalating war, Zelenskyy has used his campaign to implore allied leaders to "close the sky" to prevent the Russian airstrikes that are devastating his country. It has also put Zelenskyy at odds with President Joe Biden, whose administration has stopped short of providing a no-fly zone or the transfer of military jets from neighboring Poland as the U.S. seeks to avoid a direct confrontation with Russia.

Instead, Biden will deliver his own address following Zelenskyy's speech, in which he is expected to announce an additional \$800 million in security assistance to Ukraine, according to a White House official. That would bring the total announced in the last week alone to \$1 billion. It includes money for anti-armor and air-defense weapons, according to the official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Appearing in his now-trademark army green T-shirt as he appeals to world leaders, Zelenskyy has emerged as a heroic figure at the center of what many view as the biggest security threat to Europe since World War II. Almost 3 million refugees have fled Ukraine, the fastest exodus in modern times.

Invoking Shakespeare's hero last week, he asked the British House of Commons whether Ukraine is "to be or not to be." On Tuesday, he appealed to "Dear Justin" as he addressed the Canadian Parliament and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Zelenskyy called on European Union leaders at the start of the war to do the politically unthinkable and fast-track Ukraine's membership — and he has continued to push for more help to save his young democracy than world leaders have so far pledged to do.

"I know he will ask for more help," said Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.

Biden has insisted there will be no U.S. troops on the ground in Ukraine and has resisted Zelenskyy's relentless pleas for warplanes as too risky, potentially escalating into a direct confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia.

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"Direct conflict between NATO and Russia is World War III," Biden has said.

U.S. defense officials say they are puzzled by Zelenskyy's demand for more warplanes. They say Ukraine isn't often flying the planes it has now, while making good use of other weapons the West is providing, including Stinger missiles for shooting down helicopters and other aircraft.

While officials are anticipating that Zelenskyy may once again call on the U.S. and the West for fighter jets or help establishing a no-fly zone, the Biden administration is looking to send Ukraine "more of what's been working well," according to an official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Already the Biden administration has sent Ukraine more than 600 Stinger missiles, 2,600 Javelin anti-armor systems, unmanned aerial system tracking radars; grenade launchers, 200 shotguns, 200 machine guns and nearly 40 million rounds of small arms ammunition, along with helicopters, patrol boats, satellite imagery and body armor, helmets, and other tactical gear, the official said.

Even though Zelenskyy and Biden speak almost daily by phone, the Ukrainian president has found a potentially more receptive audience in Congress.

This won't be the first time he has appealed directly to members of the House and Senate, who have remained remarkably unified in their support of Ukraine. Nearly two weeks ago, Zelenskyy delivered a desperate plea to some 300 lawmakers and staff on a private call that if they could not enforce a no-fly zone, at least send more planes.

"We think the United States needs to do more," said Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., returning from a week-end visit with other lawmakers to Poland.

Congress has already approved \$13.6 billion in military and humanitarian aid for Ukraine, and the newly announced security aid will come from that allotment, which is part of a broader bill that Biden signed into law Tuesday. But lawmakers expect more aid will be needed.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Zelenskyy asked for help in rebuilding his country when they spoke last week. It was in that call that Zelenskyy asked to address the U.S. Congress, something the Democratic leader readily agreed to.

"The Congress, our country and the world are in awe of the people of Ukraine," said Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer in a statement Monday announcing the address.

They said Congress "remains unwavering in our commitment to supporting Ukraine as they face Putin's cruel and diabolical aggression."

Zelenskyy's next stop could be Spain. The speaker of Spain's Congress of Deputies has invited the Ukrainian president to address Spanish lawmakers via videolink.

In a letter to Zelenskyy, Speaker Meritxell Batet wrote that the address "will be a magnificent opportunity for the chamber, all Spanish people and the thousands of Ukrainians living in Spain to listen to your message and express our firmest support."

## UK lawmaker: Zaghari-Ratcliffe at airport to leave Iran

By DANICA KIRKA and JON GAMBRELL undefined

LONDON (AP) — Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian dual national who has been detained in Iran for nearly six years, is at Tehran's airport preparing to leave the country, a U.K. lawmaker said Wednesday.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe was given back her British passport over the weekend, raising hopes that her long ordeal was coming to a close.

"Nazanin is at the airport in Tehran and on her way home," tweeted U.K. lawmaker Tulip Siddiq, who represents Zaghari-Ratcliffe's constituency and has tirelessly pressed for her release. "I came into politics to make a difference, and right now I'm feeling like I have."

Iranian state television in an on-air scrolling text announced Zaghari-Ratcliffe had been "handed over to the British government," without elaborating. Iran's English-language broadcaster Press TV later described Zaghari-Ratcliffe as "leaving Tehran after serving jail term."

Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release comes after the semiofficial Fars news agency suggested she'd be released



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as the British government had paid Iran about \$530 million. Before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the late Iranian Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi paid the sum, in 400 million British pounds, for Chieftain tanks that were never delivered.

A lawyer representing Zaghari-Ratcliffe in Tehran couldn't be immediately reached for comment.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is visiting the Middle East, had confirmed earlier that a negotiating team was at work in Tehran to free Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe served five years in prison. She was later convicted of plotting the overthrow of Iran's government, a charge that she, her supporters and rights groups deny. She had been held under house arrest and unable to leave the country since her release from prison.

While employed at the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of the news agency, she was taken into custody at Tehran's airport in April 2016 as she was returning home to Britain after visiting family.

Rights groups accuse Iran of holding dual-nationals as bargaining chips for money or influence in negotiations with the West, something Tehran denies. Iran doesn't recognize dual nationalities, so detainees like Zaghari-Ratcliffe can't receive consular assistance. A U.N. panel has criticized what it describes as "an emerging pattern involving the arbitrary deprivation of liberty of dual nationals" in Iran.

Family members had been optimistic since the handover of her passport, but were cautious at the positive news.

"We found out about an hour ago that Nazanin had been picked up and taken to the airport with her parents. She is still actually under Iranian control in the airport," her sister in law, Rebecca Ratcliffe told the BBC. "She is still not free but it definitely feels she is about to be."

## **EXPLAINER: What would a Russian bond default mean?**

By The Associated Press undefined

Ratings agencies say Russia is on the verge of defaulting on government bonds following its invasion of Ukraine, with billions of dollars owed to foreigners. That prospect recalls memories of a 1998 default by Moscow that helped fuel financial disruption worldwide.

The possibility of default loomed larger after the head of the International Monetary Fund, Kristalina Georgieva, conceded that a Russian default is no longer an "improbable event."

A look at possible consequences from a Russian default:

**WHY ARE PEOPLE SAYING RUSSIA IS LIKELY TO DEFAULT?**

On Wednesday, Russia faces an interest payment of \$117 million on two bonds denominated in dollars.

Western sanctions from the war in Ukraine have placed severe restrictions on banks and their financial transactions with Russia, and also have frozen much of the government's reserves of foreign currency. Finance Minister Anton Siluanov has said the government has issued instructions to pay the coupons in dollars but added that if banks are unable to do that because of sanctions, the payment would be made in rubles. There's a 30-day grace period before Russia would be officially in default.

So Russia has the money to pay but says it can't because of the sanctions that have restricted banks and frozen much of its foreign currency reserves. The move however is also in line with efforts to restrict the outflow of foreign-currency reserves that have become scarcer due to the sanctions.

Ratings agencies have downgraded Russia's credit rating to below investment grade, or "junk." Fitch said its "C" rating means that "a default or a default-like process has begun."

**WHAT DOES THE FINE PRINT SAY?**

Some of Russia's bonds allow payment in rubles under certain circumstances. But these bonds don't. And indications are that the ruble amount would be determined by the current exchange rate, which has plunged, meaning investors would get a lot less money.

Fitch said Wednesday that payment in local currency on the bonds in question would "constitute a sovereign default on expiry of the 30-day grace period."

Additionally, Russia also would be in default on payments to foreigners on ruble-denominated bonds that were due March 2 after a similar 30-day grace period. Those payments were made into a state depository

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fund but were not sent on to foreign investors because of Russian central bank restrictions.

"This will constitute default if not cured within 30 days of the payments falling due," the ratings agency said.

Even for dollar bonds that allow ruble payments, things could be complicated.

"Rubles obviously aren't worthless, but they're depreciating rapidly," said Clay Lowery, executive vice president at the International Institute of Finance association of financial institutions. "My guess is, it could be a legal issue: Are these extraordinary circumstance or were they brought on by the Russian government itself because the Russian government invaded Ukraine? That could be fought out in court."

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF A COUNTRY IS IN DEFAULT?

Ratings agencies can lower the rating to default, or a court can decide the issue.

Bondholders who have credit default swaps — derivatives that act like insurance policies against default — can ask a "determinations committee" of financial firm representatives to decide whether a failure to pay should trigger a payout, which still isn't a formal declaration of default.

It can be complex. "There will be a lot of lawyers involved," said the IIF's Lowery.

WHAT WOULD BE THE IMPACT OF A RUSSIAN DEFAULT?

Investment analysts are cautiously reckoning that a Russia default would not have the kind of impact on global financial markets and institutions that the 1998 default did. Back then, Russia's default on ruble bonds came on top of a financial crisis in Asia.

The U.S. government had to step in and get banks to bail out Long-Term Capital Management, a large U.S. hedge fund whose collapse, it was feared, could have threatened the stability of the wider financial and banking system.

This time, however, "it's hard to say ahead of time 100%, because every sovereign default is different and the global effects would only be seen once it has happened," said Daniel Lenz, head of euro rates strategy at DK Bank in Frankfurt, Germany. "That said, a Russian default would no longer be any great surprise for the market as a whole. ... If there were going to be big shock waves, you would see that already. That doesn't mean that there won't be significant problems in smaller sectors."

Impact outside Russia could be lessened because foreign investors and companies have reduced or avoided dealings there since an earlier round of sanctions imposed in 2014 by the U.S. and the European Union in response to Russia's unrecognized annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula.

IMF head Georgieva said that while the war has devastating consequences in terms of human suffering and wide-ranging economic impact in terms of higher energy and food prices, a default by itself would be "definitely not systemically relevant" in terms of risks for banks around the world.

Holders of the bonds — for instance, funds that invest in emerging market bonds — could take serious losses. Moody's current rating implies that creditors would experience losses of 35% to 65% on their investment if there's a default.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A COUNTRY DEFAULTS?

Often investors and the defaulting government will negotiate a settlement in which bondholders are given new bonds that are worth less but that at least give them some partial compensation. It's hard, however, to see how that could be the case now with the war going on and Western sanctions barring many dealings with Russia, its banks and companies.

In some cases, creditors can sue. In this case, Russian bonds are believed to come with clauses that permit a majority of creditors to agree to a settlement and then force that settlement on the rest, forestalling lawsuits by minority holdout creditors.

Once a country defaults, it can be cut off from bond-market borrowing until the default is sorted out and investors regain confidence in the government's ability and willingness to pay. Russia's government can still borrow rubles at home, where it mostly relies on Russian banks to buy its bonds.

Russia is already suffering severe economic impact from the sanctions, which have sent the ruble plunging and disrupted trade and financial ties with the rest of the world.

So the default would be one more symptom of Moscow's wider political and financial isolation as a result

of its invasion of Ukraine.

## Live updates: Russian official is upbeat on Ukraine talks

By The Associated Press undefined

MOSCOW — Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says a “business-like spirit” is emerging at talks with Ukraine that are now focused on a neutral status for the war-torn country.

“A neutral status is being seriously discussed in connection with security guarantees,” Lavrov said Wednesday on Russian channel RBK TV. “There are concrete formulations that in my view are close to being agreed.”

He didn’t elaborate, but said “the business-like spirit” starting to surface in the talks “gives hope that we can agree on this issue.”

Russia’s chief negotiator in the latest round of talks with Ukraine, which started Monday and are set to continue Wednesday, said earlier the sides are discussing a possible compromise idea for a future Ukraine with a smaller, non-aligned military.

“A whole range of issues tied with the size of Ukraine’s army is being discussed,” Russian negotiator Vladimir Medinsky said, according to Russian news agencies.

There was no immediate comment from Ukrainian officials. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday that the country realizes it can’t join NATO. Ukraine’s bid to join the Western military alliance has been a sore point for Moscow.

### HERE ARE TODAY’S KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR:

— Russia has stepped up its bombardment of Kyiv, as a series of strikes hit a residential neighborhood in the capital city

— Ukraine’s president is preparing to make a direct appeal to the U.S. Congress for more help

— Ukraine sees possible room for compromise in talks with Russia despite new assaults on Mariupol

— Mariupol descends into despair

— U.S. President Joe Biden will travel to Europe next week for face-to-face talks with European leaders about Russia’s invasion

Go to <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine> for updates throughout the day.

### HERE’S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING TODAY:

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis is begging for prayers and protection for the children of Ukraine as the Vatican intensifies its appeals for peace while still refraining from condemning Russia by name for its invasion.

Francis met with Italian school children in St. Peter’s Basilica on Wednesday and urged them to think of their Ukrainian counterparts who are hungry, cold and have been forced to flee their homes.

Francis has stepped up his criticism of the war but has refrained from condemning Russia by name. That is evidence of his aim to keep open a dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church and reflects the Vatican’s tradition of not calling out aggressors amid its efforts to position itself as a possible mediator.

Meanwhile, Francis is to celebrate a Mass on Friday during which he will consecrate Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in a ritual that holds deep significance for the Catholic faithful. According to tradition, one of the so-called secrets of Fatima concerns the consecration of Russia to “the Immaculate Heart of Mary,” prophesizing that peace will follow if the consecration is done.

St. John Paul II performed the consecration on March 25, 1984, and Francis will repeat the gesture 38 years later. On the same day, Francis’ chief alms-giver, Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, who recently returned from a humanitarian mission to Ukraine, will celebrate a consecration Mass in Fatima, Portugal, the site of the early 20th century Marian apparitions that formed the basis of the “secrets of Fatima.”

DUBAI — Ambulances and trauma and emergency surgery supplies are on their way to Ukraine from Dubai, via Poland.

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The World Health Organization on Wednesday sent the shipment from their warehouses in the United Arab Emirates on two chartered flights provided for free by the government.

These were the third and fourth flights by the WHO to be sent to Ukraine through Dubai and were carrying 36 tons of medical supplies, including medicines for noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes or hyper-tension.

The International Humanitarian City, a Dubai-based hub, has so far sent a total of 36 shipments worth approximately \$4 million in response to the Ukraine emergency. They have included trauma and emergency supplies, shelter and food.

**WARSAW, Poland** — The prime ministers of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia have returned safely from a visit to Kyiv, as invading Russian forces menace the embattled Ukrainian capital.

The visit was meant to show support for Ukraine as it endures heavy bombardment.

The leaders met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday to send the message that Ukraine is not alone and that they support the nation's aspirations to one day join the European Union.

They went ahead with the hours-long train trip despite worries within the European Union about the security risks of traveling within a war zone.

Polish government spokesman Piotr Mueller said Wednesday morning that they had returned safely to Poland.

Officials had not given details about their schedule for security reasons.

**LONDON** — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson says Ukraine is not going to join NATO "any time soon," after the country's president acknowledged Ukraine would not become part of the Western military alliance.

President Vladimir Putin has long depicted Ukraine's NATO aspirations as a threat to Russia, something the alliance denies.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday that Ukraine realized it could not join NATO, his most explicit acknowledgment that the goal, enshrined in Ukraine's constitution, was unlikely to be met.

It came as Russia and Ukraine held a new round of talks, with Zelenskyy saying Wednesday that Russian demands were becoming "more realistic."

On Wednesday, Johnson — one of the most vocal Western supporters of Ukraine — said "the reality of the position" is that "there is no way Ukraine is going to join NATO any time soon." But he said the decision had to be for Ukraine to make.

**LVIV, Ukraine** — Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC analyzed by The Associated Press show a suspected Ukrainian strike on the Russian-held Kherson International Airport and Air Base set several helicopters and vehicles ablaze.

The images Tuesday at the dual-use airfield show thick black smoke rising overhead from the blazes. At least three helicopters appeared to be on fire, as well as several vehicles. At a pad further away, other helicopters appeared damaged from an earlier strike.

The Ukrainian president's office said that fighting had continued at Kherson airport on Tuesday, with "powerful blasts" rocking the area during the course of the day. They said they were assessing damage in the area, without elaborating.

Kherson is about 450 kilometers (275 miles) southeast of Ukraine's capital, Kyiv.

Meanwhile, satellite images Tuesday of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Enerhodar, Ukraine, showed no damage to the site's six reactors after Russian forces engaged in a firefight to seize the facility. Zaporizhzhia is Europe's largest nuclear power plant and the fighting raised fears about safety there.

Zaporizhzhia is about the same distance and direction as Kherson from Kyiv. Residents in the region are building barricades and setting up firing positions.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office said some 4,000 vehicles left Mariupol in the first major evacuation from the besieged southern city, but most of the convoy spent the night on the road out



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toward Zaporizhzhia.

NEW YORK — Russia's Defense Ministry reported fighting near the separatist-held eastern regions Wednesday but did not comment on Russian military activity elsewhere.

Defense Ministry spokesperson Igor Konashenkov claimed Russian forces have destroyed 111 Ukrainian aircraft, 160 drones and more than 1,000 tanks or other military vehicles since the start of what Russia calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine.

The Russian military's daily public statements on the war focus almost exclusively on fighting in the separatist-held Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and on Ukrainian military targets, without acknowledging attacks on civilians.

KHARKIV, Ukraine — Hospital workers in Ukraine's second-largest city find themselves on two frontlines, battling COVID-19 in intensive care units as war rages outside.

The Kharkiv Regional Clinical Infectious Diseases Hospital, the city's leading facility for treating virus patients throughout the pandemic, has barricaded its windows and is adapting every day.

Hospital director Dr. Pavel Nartov said air raid sirens go off multiple times daily, forcing fragile patients into the hospital's makeshift bomb shelter. Handling ICU patients on ventilators is the most difficult and dangerous part of the process, but also the most crucial, given the dangers of exposing oxygen tanks to bombings and shrapnel, he said.

"Bombing takes place from morning into night. Thank God a bomb has not yet hit our hospital. But it could hit at any time," he told The Associated Press.

Kharkiv has been under sustained fire from Russian forces since the outbreak of the war, with shelling hitting residential buildings and sending masses of people fleeing.

Ukraine's official daily COVID-19 cases reached record highs in February but have declined since Russia invaded amid the chaos of war. COVID-19 concerns have fallen by the wayside as people focus on fleeing the fighting.

TOKYO — U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel praised Japan Wednesday for standing with the U.S. and other Western nations in announcing its latest sanctions to oppose Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Emanuel noted Japan's ban on the exports of about 300 goods to Russia and Belarus, including semi-conductors and communications equipment, as well as its stripping Russia of its most favored nation trade status.

"Japan's actions demonstrate its steadfast commitment to stand in unity with the United States, our allies and partners in Europe and around the world, and the Ukrainian people," he said.

The U.S. also welcomed Japan's recent decision to freeze the assets of 17 more Russian politicians, tycoons and their relatives. The number of Russians targeted by Japan's sanctions that freezes their assets now totals 61.

KYIV, Ukraine — A plume of smoke was seen rising up over western Kyiv on Wednesday morning after shrapnel from an artillery shell slammed into a 12-story apartment building in central Kyiv, obliterating the top floor and igniting a fire, according to a statement and images released by the Kyiv emergencies agency.

The neighboring building was also damaged. The agency reported two victims, without elaborating.

Russian forces have intensified fighting in Kyiv suburbs, notably around the town of Bucha in the north-west and the highway leading west toward Zhytomyr, the head of the Kyiv region Oleksiy Kuleba said Wednesday.

He said Russian troops are trying to cut off the capital from transport arteries and destroy logistical capabilities even as they plan a wide-ranging attack to seize Kyiv.

Twelve towns around Kyiv are without water and six without heat.

Russia has occupied the city of Ivankiv, 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Kyiv, and controls the surrounding region on the border with Belarus, Kuleba said.

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Across the Kyiv region, he said, "Kindergartens, museums, churches, residential blocks and engineering infrastructure are suffering from the endless firing."

LVIV, Ukraine — Russian warships around midnight fired missiles and artillery at the Ukrainian sea coast near Tuzla, to the south of Odesa, Interior Ministry adviser Anton Gerashchenko said.

"They fired a huge amount of ammunition from a great distance," he said on Facebook.

Gerashchenko said Russia wanted to test Ukraine's coastal defense system.

He said there was no attempt to land troops. He didn't say whether any of the shelling hit anything.

LVIV, Ukraine — Ukraine said a fourth Russian general has been killed in the fighting.

Maj. Gen. Oleg Mityaev died Tuesday during the storming of Mariupol, said Ukrainian Interior Ministry adviser Anton Gerashchenko, who published a photo on Telegram of what he said was the dead officer.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported the death of another Russian general in his nighttime address but didn't name him.

Mityaev, 46, commanded the 150th motorized rifle division and had fought in Syria, Gerashchenko said. There was no confirmation of the death from Russia.

NEW YORK — The Russian state television employee who was arrested after interrupting a live news program by protesting the war in Ukraine said she was not allowed to sleep in police custody and was interrogated for 14 hours.

"These were very difficult days of my life because I literally went two full days without sleep, the interrogation lasted for more than 14 hours and they didn't allow me to contact my family and close friends, didn't provide any legal support," Marina Ovsyannikova said after she was released.

Ovsyannikova, an employee of Channel 1, walked into the studio during Monday's evening news show with a poster saying "stop the war, don't believe the propaganda, they are lying to you here." In English, it said "no war" at the top of the poster and "Russians against the war" at the bottom.

In a video recorded before her action, she urged Russians to join anti-war protests and said that "Russia is the aggressor country and one person, Vladimir Putin, solely bears responsibility for that aggression."

She was fined 30,000 rubles (about \$270) on charges of organizing unsanctioned actions for her call to take part in demonstrations against the war.

The state news agency Tass said Ovsyannikova was fined for the video, not for her appearance during the news show.

She remains under investigation for that on-air protest, Tass said, citing a law enforcement source. Tass said Ovsyannikova is being investigated under a new law against the dissemination of "deliberately false information" about the use of Russian armed forces, which carries a prison sentence of up to 15 years.

## Russia says Ukraine talks progressing as onslaught continues

By ANDREA ROSA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia's military forces blasted Ukraine's capital region and other major cities Wednesday as they tried to crush a Ukrainian defense that has frustrated their progress nearly three weeks after invading.

With Russia's ground advance on Kyiv stalled despite the sustained bombardment, glimmers of optimism emerged that talks between the two sides could make progress. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said a neutral military status for Ukraine was being "seriously discussed" at the "businesslike" talks. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described Russia's demands for ending the war as becoming "more realistic."

Zelenskyy said Russian forces had been unable to move deeper into Ukrainian territory but had continued their heavy shelling of cities. Kyiv residents huddled in homes and shelters amid a citywide curfew that runs until Thursday morning, as Russia rained shells on areas in and around the city. A 12-story apartment

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building in central Kyiv erupted in flames after being hit by shrapnel.

"Efforts are still needed, patience is needed," he said in his nightly video address to the nation. "Any war ends with an agreement."

British and U.S. intelligence assessments supported the Ukrainian leader's view of the fighting, saying Russian ground forces were still about 15 kilometers (9 miles) from the center of Kyiv.

Hopes for diplomatic progress rose after Zelenskyy said Tuesday that Ukraine realized it could not join NATO, his most explicit acknowledgment that the goal, enshrined in Ukraine's Constitution, was unlikely to be met. Russian President Vladimir Putin has long depicted Ukraine's NATO aspirations as a threat to Russia, something the alliance denies.

Lavrov welcomed Zelenskyy's comment and said "the businesslike spirit" starting to surface in the talks "gives hope that we can agree on this issue."

"A neutral status is being seriously discussed in connection with security guarantees," Lavrov said Wednesday on Russian channel RBK TV. "There are concrete formulations that in my view are close to being agreed."

Russia's chief negotiator, Vladimir Medinsky, said the sides are discussing a possible compromise idea for a future Ukraine with a smaller, non-aligned military.

Still, there was no immediate prospect of an end to the fighting. Zelenskyy was preparing to make a direct appeal for more help Wednesday in a rare speech by a foreign leader to the U.S. Congress, with President Joe Biden set to announce \$800 million in new military assistance to Ukraine, according to a White House official.

Meanwhile, defense ministers from NATO member nations met in Brussels on Wednesday ahead of an emergency summit of the military alliance next week.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24 upended Europe's post-Cold War security order and had driven millions from their homes. The U.N. says the number of people fleeing Ukraine amid Europe's heaviest fighting since World War II has passed 3 million. The U.N.'s human rights body says 691 civilians have been killed and 1,143 injured, but acknowledges those numbers were likely an undercount.

The artillery shrapnel that hit the 12-story apartment building in central Kyiv on Wednesday obliterated the top floor and ignited a fire that sent plumes of smoke over the area. Residents carried possessions and pets from the building as firefighters doused the flames amid a sea of rubble. The Kyiv emergencies agency said there were two victims, without saying if they were injured or killed.

Russian forces have intensified fighting in the Kyiv suburbs, notably around the town of Bucha in the northwest and a highway leading west, regional leader Oleksiy Kuleba said.

Twelve towns around Kyiv were reported to be without water and six without heat. Across the capital region, "kindergartens, museums, churches, residential blocks and engineering infrastructure are suffering from the endless firing," Kuleba said.

He said Russian troops were trying to cut off transportation links to the capital and to destroy logistical capabilities while planning a wide-ranging attack to seize the capital.

Russian forces succeeded in occupying the city of Ivankiv, 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Kyiv, and control the surrounding region on the border with Belarus, Kuleba said.

In addition to airstrikes and shelling by ground forces, Russian naval ships fired overnight on a town south of Mariupol on the Azov Sea and another near Odesa on the Black Sea, according to local officials.

Ukraine also appeared to have successes, with satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC analyzed by The Associated Press showing helicopters and vehicles ablaze at the Russian-held Kherson International Airport and Air Base after a suspected Ukrainian strike on Tuesday.

Zelenskyy's office said Ukrainian forces thwarted Russian efforts to enter Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, which was pounded by almost non-stop strikes over the last 24 hours. A powerful explosion thundered across the city overnight.

Hospital workers found themselves on two frontlines, battling COVID-19 in intensive care units as war rages outside. Air raid sirens go off multiple times daily, forcing fragile patients into the the Kharkiv Regional

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Clinical Infectious Diseases Hospital's makeshift bomb shelter, the hospital's director, Dr. Pavel Nartov, said. "Bombing takes place from morning into night. Thank god a bomb has not yet hit our hospital. But it could hit at any time," Nartov told The Associated Press.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov claimed Russian forces have destroyed 111 Ukrainian aircraft, 160 drones and more than 1,000 tanks or other military vehicles since the start of what Russia calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine.

The Russian military's daily public statements on the war focus almost exclusively on fighting in the separatist-held Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and on Ukrainian military targets, without acknowledging attacks on civilians.

Some relief came to the besieged southern city of Mariupol as 20,000 people managed to escape Tuesday in 4,000 vehicles, according to Zelenskyy's office.

Mariupol, a strategic port city of 430,000 on the Sea of Azov, has been surrounded by Russian troops for two weeks and endured heavy shelling that local officials say has killed more than 2,300 people and left residents struggling for food, water, heat and medicine.

Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk expressed dismay Wednesday at reports that Russian forces had taken hundreds of people hostage at a hospital in Mariupol. She said the Russians were using the hospital as a firing position.

Regional leader Pavlo Kyrylenko said Tuesday that Russian troops forced about 400 people from nearby homes into the Regional Intensive Care Hospital and were using them and roughly 100 patients and staff as human shields by not allowing them to leave.

Kyrylenko said shelling had already heavily damaged the hospital's main building, but medical staff have treated patients in makeshift wards in the basement.

Doctors from other Mariupol hospitals made a video to tell the world about the horrors they've been seeing. "We don't want to be heroes and martyrs posthumously," one woman said. She also said it was insufficient to refer to the patients being treated as wounded: "It's torn off arms and legs, gouged out eyes, bodies torn into fragments, insides falling out."

The prime ministers of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia have returned to Poland on Wednesday after a visit to the embattled Ukrainian capital of Kyiv meant to show support for Ukraine as it faces heavy bombardment.

They went ahead with the hours-long train trip despite worries within the European Union about the security risks of traveling within a war zone.

A Russian state television employee who was arrested after interrupting a live news program by protesting the war in Ukraine was fined about \$270, but still could face a prison sentence.

Marina Ovsyannikova, an employee of Channel 1, walked into the studio during Monday's evening news show with a poster saying "stop the war, don't believe the propaganda, they are lying to you here." In English, it said "no war" at the top of the poster and "Russians against the war" at the bottom.

Two journalists working for Fox News were killed in a vehicle hit by fire Monday on the outskirts of Kyiv. Fox identified them as video journalist Pierre Zakrzewski and Ukrainian journalist Oleksandra "Sasha" Kushynova, who was helping Fox crews navigate the area. Another journalist was killed Sunday in Ukraine.

## UK easing COVID-19 testing, monitoring despite case uptick

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — After dropping nearly all coronavirus restrictions last month, Britain is now ending some of its most widespread COVID-19 testing and monitoring programs, a move some scientists fear will complicate efforts to track the virus and detect worrisome new variants.

Officials have largely dismissed those concerns, despite a recent uptick in cases across Europe, insisting that high immunization rates will help dampen future waves of disease.

Based on how quickly new variants have arisen, some experts suggest the next one could arrive as early as May. They warn that U.K. authorities should be using the time to prepare, rather than winding



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down their pandemic defenses.

Mark Woolhouse, an epidemiologist at the University of Edinburgh, called it "an unfortunate pattern" that has been seen repeatedly throughout the outbreak.

"Every time one wave of COVID passes, the government acts as if it's the end of the pandemic," he said.

Without testing and monitoring, new clusters or signs that the virus is evolving could be missed, Woolhouse said.

"I do not understand why governments are not learning this lesson," he said.

Last week, the U.K. announced it was suspending funding for one of the world's biggest and most comprehensive coronavirus monitoring programs, in addition to ditching research that tracks in real time symptoms and infections in health workers. And as of April, free COVID-19 tests for most people in England will also end.

As most COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed across Europe, including Austria, Britain, Denmark, Germany and France, the numbers of infections have inched higher in recent days. The uptick is driven in part by the slightly more infectious omicron descendant BA.2 and by people largely abandoning masks and gathering in bigger groups.

In the last two weeks, COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths have both risen slightly in Britain.

British Health Secretary Sajid Javid described the increase as "expected" and the country as "in a very good position."

Numerous health leaders in the U.K. have questioned the wisdom of abandoning free testing and measures like stopping financial support for people with infections who are isolating.

"The government cannot wave a magic wand and pretend the threat has disappeared entirely," said Matthew Taylor, chief executive of Britain's National Health Service.

Other officials, however, have pointed out that the testing and monitoring programs are enormously pricey. Last month, Swedish authorities halted wide-scale testing, saying that the cost and relevance was no longer justifiable.

"If we were to have extensive testing adapted to everyone who has COVID-19, that would mean half a billion kronor a week (about \$55 million) and 2 billion a month (\$220 million)," said Swedish Public Health Agency chief Karin Tegmark Wisell last month, when their testing programs were shelved.

U.K. officials have now apparently made the same calculation.

"The question is whether we can afford to keep using these expensive tools if it appears that COVID is becoming endemic," said Julian Tang, a virologist at the University of Leicester.

He said it was likely the virus was evolving into a more transmissible and less dangerous form, but acknowledged that process could take years — and that we would probably face sporadic surges until that happens.

Salim Abdool Karim, an infectious diseases epidemiologist at the University of KwaZulu-Natal who previously advised the South African government, said there were clues in COVID-19's track record that allow for an "educated guess." As the country that first detected omicron and where it spread first, South Africa has been closely monitored by many European and other public health scientists to see what might come next in the pandemic.

Karim predicts the next big surge of disease could come within weeks, noting that South Africa had been hit with COVID-19 surges every three months, meaning the next wave could start in May.

Dr. Paul Hunter, a professor of medicine at Britain's University of East Anglia, said we would likely see another variant or two every year, based on how rapidly coronaviruses mutate.

Still, many experts don't think future waves of COVID-19 will be as brutal as the past.

"We're in a different place, because we have vaccines and we know what works," said Dr. Wafaa El-Sadr, chair of global health at Columbia University.

"In the meantime, it is the wrong time to dismantle the strong public health systems we've relied on throughout the pandemic," El-Sadr said.

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## 'Why? Why? Why?' Ukraine's Mariupol descends into despair

By MYSTYSLAV CHERNOV and EVGENIY MALOLETKA Associated Press

MARIUPOL, Ukraine (AP) — The bodies of the children all lie here, dumped into this narrow trench hastily dug into the frozen earth of Mariupol to the constant drumbeat of shelling.

There's 18-month-old Kirill, whose shrapnel wound to the head proved too much for his little toddler's body. There's 16-year-old Iliya, whose legs were blown up in an explosion during a soccer game at a school field. There's the girl no older than 6 who wore the pajamas with cartoon unicorns, among the first of Mariupol's children to die from a Russian shell.

They are stacked together with dozens of others in this mass grave on the outskirts of the city. A man covered in a bright blue tarp, weighed down by stones at the crumbling curb. A woman wrapped in a red and gold bedsheet, her legs neatly bound at the ankles with a scrap of white fabric. Workers toss the bodies in as fast as they can, because the less time they spend in the open, the better their own chances of survival.

"The only thing (I want) is for this to be finished," raged worker Volodymyr Bykovskyi, pulling crinkling black body bags from a truck. "Damn them all, those people who started this!"

More bodies will come, from streets where they are everywhere and from the hospital basement where adults and children are laid out awaiting someone to pick them up. The youngest still has an umbilical stump attached.

Each airstrike and shell that relentlessly pounds Mariupol — about one a minute at times — drives home the curse of a geography that has put the city squarely in the path of Russia's domination of Ukraine. This southern seaport of 430,000 has become a symbol of Russian President Vladimir Putin's drive to crush democratic Ukraine — but also of a fierce resistance on the ground.

In the nearly three weeks since Russia's war began, two Associated Press journalists have been the only international media present in Mariupol, chronicling its fall into chaos and despair. The city is now encircled by Russian soldiers, who are slowly squeezing the life out of it, one blast at a time.

Several appeals for humanitarian corridors to evacuate civilians went unheeded, until Ukrainian officials said Tuesday that about 4,000 passenger cars carrying civilians had fled Mariupol in a convoy. Airstrikes and shells have hit the maternity hospital, the fire department, homes, a church, a field outside a school. For the estimated hundreds of thousands who remain, there is quite simply nowhere to go.

The surrounding roads are mined and the port blocked. Food is running out, and the Russians have stopped humanitarian attempts to bring it in. Electricity is mostly gone and water is sparse, with residents melting snow to drink. Some parents have even left their newborns at the hospital, perhaps hoping to give them a chance at life in the one place with decent electricity and water.

People burn scraps of furniture in makeshift grills to warm their hands in the freezing cold and cook what little food there still is. The grills themselves are built with the one thing in plentiful supply: bricks and shards of metal scattered in the streets from destroyed buildings.

Death is everywhere. Local officials have tallied more than 2,500 deaths in the siege, but many bodies can't be counted because of the endless shelling. They have told families to leave their dead outside in the streets because it's too dangerous to hold funerals.

Many of the deaths documented by the AP were of children and mothers, despite Russia's claims that civilians haven't been attacked. Doctors say they are treating 10 civilians for every injured Ukrainian soldier.

"They have a clear order to hold Mariupol hostage, to mock it, to constantly bomb and shell it," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on March 10.

Just weeks ago, Mariupol's future seemed much brighter.

If geography drives a city's destiny, Mariupol was on the path to success, with its thriving iron and steel plants, a deep-water port and high global demand for both. Even the dark weeks of 2014, when the city nearly fell to Russia-backed separatists in vicious street battles, were fading into memory.

And so the first few days of the invasion had a perverse familiarity for many residents. About 100,000 people left at that time while they still could, according to Serhiy Orlov, the deputy mayor. But most stayed

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put, figuring they could wait out whatever came next or eventually make their way west like so many others.

"I felt more fear in 2014, I don't feel the same panic now," Anna Efimova said as she shopped for supplies at a market on Feb. 24. "There is no panic. There's nowhere to run, where can we run?"

That same day, a Ukrainian military radar and airfield were among the first targets of Russian artillery. Shelling and airstrikes could and did come at any moment, and people spent most of their time in shelters. Life was hardly normal, but it was livable.

By Feb. 27, that started to change, as an ambulance raced into a city hospital carrying a small motionless girl. Her brown hair was pulled back off her pale face with a rubber band, and her pajama pants were bloodied by Russian shelling. She was no older than 6.

Her wounded father came with her, his head bandaged. Her mother stood outside the ambulance, weeping.

As the doctors and nurses huddled around her, one gave her an injection. Another shocked her with a defibrillator. A doctor in blue scrubs, pumping oxygen into her, looked straight into the camera of an AP journalist allowed inside and cursed.

"Show this to Putin," he stormed with expletive-laced fury. "The eyes of this child and crying doctors."

They couldn't save her. Doctors covered the tiny body with her pink striped jacket and gently closed her eyes. She now rests in the mass grave.

The same geography that for so long worked in Mariupol's favor had turned against it. The city stands squarely between regions controlled by the Russia-backed separatists — about 10 kilometers (six miles) to the east at the closest point — and the Crimean Peninsula annexed by Russia in 2014. The capture of Mariupol would give the Russians a clear land corridor all the way through, controlling the Sea of Azov.

As February ended, the siege began. Ignoring the danger, or restless, or perhaps just feeling invincible as teenagers do, a group of boys met up a few days later, on March 2, to play soccer on a pitch outside a school.

A bomb exploded. The blast tore through Iliya's legs.

The odds were against him, and increasingly against the city. The electricity went out yet again, as did most mobile networks. Without communications, medics had to guess which hospitals could still handle the wounded and which roads could still be navigated to reach them.

Iliya couldn't be saved. His father, Serhii, drops down, hugs his dead boy's head and wails out his grief.

On March 4, it was yet another child in the emergency room — Kirill, the toddler struck in the head by shrapnel. His mother and stepfather bundled him in a blanket. They hoped for the best, and then endured the worst.

"Why? Why? Why?" his sobbing mother, Marina Yatsko, asked in the hospital hallway, as medical workers looked on helplessly. She tenderly unwrapped the blanket around her lifeless child to kiss him and inhale his scent one last time, her dark hair falling over him.

That was the day the darkness settled in for good — a blackout in both power and knowledge. Ukrainian television and radio were cut, and car stereos became the only link to the outside world. They played Russian news, describing a world that couldn't be further from the reality in Mariupol.

As it sunk in that there was truly no escape, the mood of the city changed. It didn't take long for grocery store shelves to empty. Mariupol's residents covered by night in underground shelters and emerged by day to grab what they could before scurrying underground again.

On March 6, in the way of desperate people everywhere, they turned on each other. On one street lined with darkened stores, people smashed windows, pried open metal shutters, grabbed what they could.

A man who had broken into a store found himself face to face with the furious shopkeeper, caught red-handed with a child's rubber ball.

"You bastard, you stole that ball now. Put the ball back. Why did you even come here?" she demanded. Shame written on his face, he tossed the ball into a corner and fled.

Nearby, a soldier emerged from another looted store, on the verge of tears.

"People, please be united. ... This is your home. Why are you smashing windows, why are you stealing

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from your shops?" he pleaded, his voice breaking.

Yet another attempt to negotiate an evacuation failed. A crowd formed at one of the roads leading away from the city, but a police officer blocked their path.

"Everything is mined, the ways out of town are being shelled," he told them. "Trust me, I have family at home, and I am also worried about them. Unfortunately, the maximum security for all of us is to be inside the city, underground and in the shelters."

And that's where Goma Janna could be found that night, weeping beside an oil lamp that threw light but not enough heat to take the chill off the basement room. She wore a scarf and a cheery turquoise snowflake sweater as she roughly rubbed the tears from her face, one side at a time. Behind her, beyond the small halo of light, a small group of women and children crouched in the darkness, trembling at the explosions above.

"I want my home, I want my job. I'm so sad about people and about the city, the children," she sobbed.

This agony fits in with Putin's goals. The siege is a military tactic popularized in medieval times and designed to crush a population through starvation and violence, allowing an attacking force to spare its own soldiers the cost of entering a hostile city. Instead, civilians are the ones left to die, slowly and painfully.

Putin has refined the tactic during his years in power, first in the Chechen city of Grozny in 2000 and then in the Syrian city of Aleppo in 2016. He reduced both to ruins.

"It epitomizes Russian warfare, what we see now in terms of the siege," said Mathieu Boulegue, a researcher for Chatham House's Russia program.

By March 9, the sound of Russian fighter jets in Mariupol was enough to send people screaming for cover — anything to avoid the airstrikes they knew would follow, even if they didn't know where.

The jets rumbled across the sky, this time decimating the maternity hospital. They left a crater two stories deep in the courtyard.

Rescuers rushed a pregnant woman through the rubble and light snow as she stroked her bloodied belly, face blanched and head lolling listlessly to the side. Her baby was dying inside her, and she knew it, medics said.

"Kill me now!" she screamed, as they struggled to save her life at another hospital even closer to the front line.

The baby was born dead. A half-hour later, the mother died too. The doctors had no time to learn either of their names.

Another pregnant woman, Mariana Vishegirskaia, was waiting to give birth at the maternity hospital when the strike hit. Her brow and cheek bloodied, she clutched her belongings in a plastic bag and navigated the debris-strewn stairs in polka-dot pajamas. Outside the ruined hospital, she stared motionless with wide blue eyes at the crackling flames.

Vishegirskaia delivered her child the next day to the sound of shellfire. Baby Veronika drew her first breath on March 10.

The two women — one dead and one a mother — have since become the symbol of their blackened, burning hometown. Facing worldwide condemnation, Russian officials claimed that the maternity hospital had been taken over by far-right Ukrainian forces to use as a base and emptied of patients and nurses.

In two tweets, the Russian Embassy in London posted side-by-side images of AP photos with the word "FAKE" over them in red text. They claimed that the maternity hospital had long been out of operation, and that Vishegirskaia was an actress playing a role. Twitter has since removed the tweets, saying they violated its rules.

The AP reporters in Mariupol who documented the attack in video and photos saw nothing to indicate the hospital was used as anything other than a hospital. There is also nothing to suggest Vishegirskaia, a Ukrainian beauty blogger from Mariupol, was anything but a patient. Veronika's birth attests to the pregnancy that her mother carefully documented on Instagram, including one post in which she is wearing the polka-dot pajamas.

Two days after Veronika was born, four Russian tanks emblazoned with the letter Z took up position near the hospital where she and her mother were recovering. An AP journalist was among a group of medical



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workers who came under sniper fire, with one hit in the hip.

The windows rattled, and the hallways were lined with people with nowhere else to go. Anastasia Erashova wept and trembled as she held a sleeping child. Shelling had just killed her other child as well as her brother's child, and Erashova's scalp was encrusted with blood.

"I don't know where to run to," she cried out, her anguish growing with every sob. "Who will bring back our children? Who?"

By early this week, Russian forces had seized control of the building entirely, trapping doctors and patients inside and using it as a base, according to a doctor there and local officials.

Orlov, the deputy mayor, predicted worse is soon to come. Most of the city remains trapped.

"Our defenders will defend to the last bullet," he said. "But people are dying without water and food, and I think in the next several days we will count hundreds and thousands of deaths."

## Pandemic postcard: COVID outbreak leaves Hong Kong in limbo

By ALICE FUNG and ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — As a COVID-19 outbreak overwhelms Hong Kong, it's hard for its 7.4 million residents to know what's next.

Uncertainty is the only certainty as store shelves are stripped of goods, mainland Chinese companies throw up sprawling isolation and testing centers and the government sends mixed messages on whether it will lock down the population for a citywide mass testing.

Pandemic restrictions have sucked much of the energy out of a cosmopolitan city known for its neon lights and dense crowds. The latest closure, announced Wednesday, is public beaches. An overburdened health system means those who get infected often have to fend for themselves. And the death toll, particularly among the elderly, keeps rising.

"It's a helpless situation," said Wong Wing-tsang, a single mother who spent days trying to get a doctor's appointment for her 10-year-old daughter who tested positive earlier this month. "We can only count on ourselves."

After keeping the virus mostly at bay for nearly two years, Hong Kong authorities have been unable to bring under control an outbreak driven by the highly transmissible omicron variant. So many people have been infected that there aren't enough drivers for the city buses and subways or clerks to keep some stores open.

China has responded by sending experts, medical staff and construction crews, expanding capacity but also raising fears that Hong Kong might adopt tough mainland-style restrictions, notably its lockdowns of entire cities.

Anxious residents have stockpiled daily necessities, as the government flip-flops on plans for mass testing and a possible lockdown. Infections among truck drivers interrupted shipments of meat and vegetables from mainland China, prompting worries of shortages and deliveries by sea.

"Honestly, I think government policies keep changing all the time and it's hard for residents to follow," said Alison Hui, a Hong Kong resident. "We don't know if an announcement is real or not. It really makes us feel very worried."

Last month, officials announced a citywide, mass testing slated for March but said there were no plans for a lockdown. Days later, as cases surged, officials acknowledged that a lockdown was under consideration, prompting residents to wipe out supermarket shelves to stock up on food.

Then, two weeks after the February announcement, Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said that the citywide testing had taken a temporary backseat as authorities focused on reducing the number of deaths and critical cases, but she didn't say when the testing might happen.

Hong Kong was able to stamp out four earlier outbreaks with tough "zero COVID" restrictions that temporarily shuttered businesses, limited public gatherings and imposed entry curbs such as lengthy quarantine stays for arrivals and flight bans from countries deemed high-risk.

That has changed with the fifth wave. Since it began at the end of December, over 760,000 infections

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have been reported, with more than 4,300 deaths. Mortuaries are so full that refrigerated containers had to be set up to store some of the bodies.

Many more infections are likely going unaccounted for as residents self-test with rapid antigen tests and isolate at home. Researchers at the University of Hong Kong estimated that nearly 3.6 million people — about half of the city's population — have been infected as of March 14, based on modelling and data.

Lam, who has begun holding daily news conferences on the outbreak, said Wednesday that it appears to have peaked on March 3 and then showed a downward trend, though it has leveled off since last Friday.

Mainland authorities have helped build emergency hospitals and inflatable testing labs. "This is an unprecedented situation," Lam said earlier, saying it had outgrown the capacity of the city government.

Wong, the single mother, said the only help she got from the government was a pack of five rapid antigen test kits. She sent her daughter to live with her mother-in-law, who was also infected, because there was no way to isolate at their home.

"I had no choice. I couldn't let her isolate at home alone, and we don't have enough bedrooms to separate us properly," she said.

The pandemic has brought many businesses to their knees. Some restaurants, once again restricted to takeout and delivery after 6 p.m., have shuttered for good.

Many shops in malls have temporarily closed — some for lack of business, others because they are understaffed as workers have tested positive. Hair salons were allowed to reopen recently, but gyms and bars were ordered shut in January and won't reopen until after mid-April at the earliest.

Fewer subway trains and buses are running as hundreds of employees contract the coronavirus. Some multinational companies have relocated outside of Hong Kong, while others have temporarily sent senior executives elsewhere amid the uncertainty.

Mak Sin Chang, a Singaporean who has lived in Hong Kong for eight years, said he would consider leaving if he got a job elsewhere. He said the government should offer a road map for exiting the pandemic so people could see light at the end of the tunnel.

"Now we are all living in darkness, guided by the blind," he said.

It's a major setback from late last year, when Hong Kong had gone months without any locally spread cases and was working to get the quarantine requirement in mainland China lifted for people entering from Hong Kong.

"Everything was really starting to look up by the end of 2021, because we were looking forward to opening up with China," said Francis Lun, an investment manager and a veteran market commentator. "But all of a sudden, the omicron hit, and it's completely out of control now."

After two years, he said, "there's no end in sight."

## Trump pick in Georgia governor race not drawing donor flock

By JEFF AMY and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — During his two Senate campaigns, Republican David Perdue had little trouble raking in millions in campaign cash. But as he tries to unseat Georgia's incumbent governor, fellow Republican Brian Kemp, Perdue is struggling to attract donors.

Perdue's top 30 individual contributors pumped in nearly \$450,000 to his Senate campaigns in 2014 and 2020, according to campaign finance disclosures. But that same group and their immediate family members have steered just \$26,200 to his current run for governor. Kemp, meanwhile, has raised \$81,450 from these previous Perdue backers.

Purdue's difficulty winning back previous donors suggests a broader challenge for him ahead of Georgia's May 24 primary, which is being closely watched for signals about the direction of the national Republican Party. Despite the backing of former President Donald Trump, Purdue is well behind Kemp in what is certain to be an expensive race, an Associated Press review of federal and state campaign finance records shows.

Perdue raised just \$1.1 million from the launch of his campaign in December through the end of January, an opening stretch when candidates typically try to post their most impressive numbers, and he had less

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than \$1 million in cash on hand.

Kemp took in \$7.4 million by January 31 and had \$12.7 million on hand. The governor, defending himself against fierce criticism from Trump for being disloyal about the former president's false claims of election fraud in Georgia, has pledged to unleash that cash advantage with plans that include spending \$4.2 million on television ads alone.

"The kind thing to say is maybe the fundraising has not been where he expected," said Alec Poitevint, a former chairman of the Georgia Republican Party who is supporting Kemp.

Perdue is turning to Trump for help on Wednesday, appearing with the former president at his Mar-a-Lago resort, where contributors will have to give \$3,000 to attend. A picture with Trump means spending \$24,200.

That's ahead of a campaign-style rally Trump plans to hold later this month in northeast Georgia that will feature Perdue and former football player Herschel Walker, the lead Republican vying for one of the state's U.S. Senate seats.

Perdue's campaign acknowledges it is behind in the money race and is relying instead on energy from the GOP's most loyal voters.

"We'll be outraised and outspent, but we won't be outworked," said Perdue spokesperson Jenni Sweat. "This is a people versus politicians race, and the silent majority is rising up to reject failed career politicians like Brian Kemp. David Perdue is proud to be supported by a strong network of grassroots conservatives who will propel him to victory in May and November."

For now, Perdue is particularly reliant on one family. Chip Howalt, his wife Cynthia, and their three Dalton-based companies including Textile Rubber & Chemical Co., have given Perdue \$121,000. That's more than 10% of what Perdue raised. Textile Rubber & Chemical Co. also gave \$250,000 in January to the Georgia Values Fund, an independent committee supporting Perdue.

That's the only contribution the fund reported through March 1.

Howalt didn't respond to messages seeking comment. But in January, he emailed the Georgia Recorder regarding his donations to contentious northwest Georgia U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene that he was motivated to support candidates, like Perdue, who back Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen.

"The only financial support our Family will pull will be from ANY RINO's (Republicans in name only) complicit in blocking investigations into Voter Fraud and Irregularities (GA had many) and not Objecting to confirm the Biden Electors where practical and advisable to do so," Howalt wrote to the nonprofit news outlet.

Federal and state election officials and Trump's own attorney general have said there is no credible evidence the election was tainted. The former president's allegations of fraud were also roundly rejected by courts, including by judges Trump appointed.

One option for Perdue, a former CEO of Reebok and Dollar General, would be to infuse the campaign with his own money. He had assets worth between nearly \$15.2 million and \$42.5 million in 2018, according to Open Secrets, a nonpartisan group that tracks political spending. Perdue also loaned or gave his campaign more than \$5 million during his 2014 Senate run. As of Jan. 31, he hadn't offered the same support for the governor's campaign, but has suggested he might.

"We're going to make sure this thing is well funded," Perdue told reporters last week. "We're going to get our message out."

For many years a Republican stronghold, statewide races in Georgia have recently become more competitive. In 2020, Joe Biden was the first Democratic presidential contender to carry the state since 1992, a victory that left the GOP reeling.

After campaigning for Kemp in the 2018 governor's race, Trump turned against him in the wake of the 2020 campaign when the governor refused to overturn Biden's win — something he had no power to do. As revenge, Trump recruited Perdue to challenge Kemp in a primary, a move that some in the party worry will leave the eventual nominee weakened heading into a general election race against Democrat

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Stacey Abrams.

Amid the bitterness, some donors say they will simply wait for the primary to play out without taking a side. Among those is Sunny Park, founder and CEO of Atlanta-based General Building Maintenance, which has thousands of office cleaning employees throughout the U.S. A prolific donor to Georgia Republican causes, Park has previously backed both Kemp and Perdue, and gave Kemp \$3,750 toward his reelection bid before Perdue jumped in.

"Until the primary is over, I'm going to remain neutral," Park said. "I told both, 'You go ahead and win and then I'll be right back with you.'"

Some past Perdue contributors, especially those that gave toward the eye-watering \$100 million that Perdue raised in 2020, are oriented toward congressional giving, and may not care who becomes governor of Georgia. But some big contributors who aren't donating, such as Home Depot founder Bernie Marcus or Atlanta's Delta Air Lines, are Georgia-based and have a stake in the results of the primary.

And for them, they may just prefer Kemp. Take for example, Vince Kolber who previously donated more than \$10,000 to Perdue and said he'd met and admired him, but nonetheless plans to stay out of the governor's primary.

Kolber, founder and chairman of Residco, a Chicago aviation and rail transportation logistics firm and a former two-time Republican House candidate in Illinois, said his sense was that many Republicans nationally "were just mad as hell as Trump for the whole post-election situation." That refers to Trump's lies about the 2020 election playing a role in depressing Republican turnout and costing the party both Perdue's Senate seat and a second Georgia Senate seat in January 2021.

"I sense that's softening now," Kolber added, but perhaps not fast enough to buoy Perdue, especially given that Kemp has been a solid governor.

"I haven't heard anybody say, 'That guy was just out to lunch' or crazy or anything like that," Kolber said of Kemp. "I think that he's been well-received for what he tried to do. Trump's consternation to what happened notwithstanding."

Former Republican Sen. Kelly Loeffler, who also lost her reelection bid in 2021, downplayed tensions within the GOP. And where such divisions exist, she said, they won't determine who ultimately wins.

"The left loves to focus on divisions on our side," said Loeffler, who now runs Greater Georgia, a nonprofit designed to boost conservative outreach and voter registration efforts. "What voters are focused on is the harsh realities of the liberal politics that are playing out in their lives every day." \_\_\_\_

Weissert reported from Washington.

## Live updates: Ukraine says Russian warships fire missiles

By The Associated Press undefined

LVIV, Ukraine — Russian warships around midnight fired missiles and artillery at the Ukrainian sea coast near Tuzla, to the south of Odesa, Interior Ministry adviser Anton Gerashchenko said.

"They fired a huge amount of ammunition from a great distance," he said on Facebook.

Gerashchenko said Russia wanted to test Ukraine's coastal defense system.

He said there was no attempt to land troops. He didn't say whether any of the shelling hit anything.

HERE ARE TODAY'S KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR:

— U.S. President Joe Biden will travel to Europe next week for face-to-face talks with European leaders about Russia's invasion

— Russia has stepped up its bombardment of Kyiv, as a series of strikes hit a residential neighborhood in the capital city

— The European Union has imposed new sanctions, including measures that target Chelsea soccer club owner Roman Abramovich

— The leaders of three European Union countries have traveled to Kyiv

— Fox News says two of its journalists were killed in Ukraine when the vehicle he was traveling in was



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struck by incoming fire

Go to <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine> for updates throughout the day.

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING TODAY:

LVIV, Ukraine -- Ukraine said a fourth Russian general has been killed in the fighting.

Maj. Gen. Oleg Mityaev died Tuesday during the storming of Mariupol, said Ukrainian Interior Ministry adviser Anton Gerashchenko, who published a photo on Telegram of what he said was the dead officer.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported the death of another Russian general in his nighttime address but didn't name him.

Mityaev, 46, commanded the 150th motorized rifle division and had fought in Syria, Gerashchenko said. There was no confirmation of the death from Russia.

The employee of Russian state television who was arrested after interrupting a live news program by protesting the war in Ukraine said she was not allowed to sleep in police custody and was interrogated for 14 hours.

"These were very difficult days of my life because I literally went two full days without sleep, the interrogation lasted for more than 14 hours and they didn't allow me to contact my family and close friends, didn't provide any legal support," Marina Ovsyannikova said after she was released.

Ovsyannikova, an employee of Channel 1, walked into the studio during Monday's evening news show with a poster saying "stop the war, don't believe the propaganda, they are lying to you here." In English, it said "no war" at the top of the poster and "Russians against the war" at the bottom.

In a video recorded before her action, she urged Russians to join anti-war protests and said that "Russia is the aggressor country and one person, Vladimir Putin, solely bears responsibility for that aggression."

She was fined 30,000 rubles (about \$270) on charges of organizing unsanctioned actions for her call to take part in demonstrations against the war.

The state news agency Tass said Ovsyannikova was fined for the video, not for her appearance during the news show.

She remains under investigation for that on-air protest, Tass said, citing a law enforcement source. Tass said Ovsyannikova is being investigated under a new law against the dissemination of "deliberately false information" about the use of Russian armed forces, which carries a prison sentence of up to 15 years.

LVIV, Ukraine -- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said early Wednesday that Russia's demands during negotiations are becoming "more realistic" after nearly three weeks of war. He said more time was needed for the talks, which are being held by video conference.

"Efforts are still needed, patience is needed," he said in his nighttime video address to the nation. "Any war ends with an agreement."

Zelenskyy, who is to address the U.S. Congress on Wednesday, thanked President Joe Biden and "all the friends of Ukraine" for \$13.6 billion in new support included in a spending measure that Biden signed.

He appealed for more weapons and more sanctions to punish Russia, and repeated his call to "close the skies over Ukraine to Russian missiles and planes."

He said Russian forces on Tuesday were unable to move deeper into Ukrainian territory and continued their heavy shelling of cities.

Over the past day, 28,893 civilians were able to flee the fighting along nine humanitarian corridors, although the Russians refused to allow aid into Mariupol, he said.

LVIV, Ukraine -- Russian troops seized a hospital in Mariupol and took about 500 people hostage during another assault on the southern port city late Tuesday, regional leader Pavlo Kyrylenko said.

Russians troops drove 400 people from neighboring houses into Regional Intensive Care Hospital, Kyrylenko said on the messaging app Telegram. About 100 doctors and patients also are believed to be inside, he said.

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The troops are using those inside the hospital as human shields and are not allowing anyone to leave, he said.

"It's impossible to leave the hospital, they are shooting hard," Kyrylenko said.

Kyrylenko said the main building of the hospital has been heavily damaged by shelling, but medical staff are continuing to treat patients in makeshift wards set up in the basement.

He called on the world to respond to these "gross violations of the norms and customs of war, these egregious crimes against humanity."

The Ukrainian army's General Staff says Russian troops are trying to block off the city from the western and eastern outskirts of the city. "There are significant losses," it said in a Facebook post.

WASHINGTON -- President Joe Biden will announce on Wednesday that the U.S. is delivering \$800 million in new military assistance to Ukraine, according to a White House official.

Biden is expected to detail the assistance during a speech on the situation in Ukraine.

The money will come out of \$13.6 billion in additional military and humanitarian aid allocated for Ukraine in a broader \$1.5 trillion government spending measure that Biden signed on Tuesday.

With the new round of aid, Biden will have committed \$2 billion in assistance to Ukraine since taking office.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is also scheduled to deliver video remarks to Congress Wednesday morning.

While officials are anticipating that Zelenskyy could once again call on the U.S. and West to send Ukraine fighter jets or help establish a "no-fly" zone, the Biden administration is looking to send Ukraine "more of what's been working well," including anti-armor and air defense weapons, according to the official who was not authorized to comment and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Associated Press Writer Amer Madhani in Washington contributed to this report.

LYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian forces on Tuesday evening repelled an attack on Kharkiv by Russian troops, who tried to storm the city from their positions in Piatykatky, a suburb 15 kilometers (9 miles) to the north, the head of the Kharkiv region said.

The Ukrainian army was able "to push the enemy back beyond its previous position," Oleh Synehubov said on the messaging app Telegram. He called it a "shameful defeat."

There was no information about casualties on either side.

After dark, Russian forces increased their shelling of the eastern city, Ukraine's second largest. On Tuesday morning, Synehubov had said Russian troops the previous night had fired more than 60 missiles at the historical center of the city.

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate has unanimously approved a resolution seeking investigations of Russian President Vladimir Putin and his regime for war crimes over the invasion of Ukraine.

Senators late Tuesday passed the resolution, which says the Senate strongly condemns the "violence, war crimes, crimes against humanity" being carried out by Russian military forces. The measure does not carry the force of law, but encourages international criminal court investigations of Putin, his security council and military leaders.

"These atrocities deserve to be investigated for war crimes," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

LVIV — A funeral service was held Tuesday in Lviv for four Ukrainian soldiers killed in a Russian attack on a training base in Yavoriv in western Ukraine. The attack on Sunday killed at least 35 people.

Ukrainian soldiers shouldered the caskets into the sanctuary of Church of the Most Holy Apostles Peter and Paul and placed them on bases.

Burials were held Tuesday for three soldiers, Oleg Yaschyshyn, Serhiy Melnyk and Rostyslav Romanchuk.

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The fourth soldier, Kyrylo Vyshyvanyi, was previously buried in his hometown of Duliby in the Lviv region. Vyshyvanyi's family buried his younger brother, Vasyl, on March 4.

**KYIV, Ukraine** — A top Ukrainian negotiator says talks with Russia will continue Wednesday.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who spoke to Russian negotiators via video link on Monday and Tuesday, described the talks as "very difficult and sticky."

He said that "there are fundamental contradictions," but added that "there is certainly room for compromise."

The talks via video link this week follow three round of negotiations in Belarus that have failed to produce any visible progress.

Both Russian and Ukrainian negotiators have voiced cautious optimism but haven't spelled out any details of talks.

**KYIV, Ukraine** — A senior Ukrainian official says about 20,000 people have managed to leave the besieged port city of Mariupol.

Kyrylo Tymoshenko, a deputy head of office of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that the evacuees left Mariupol in private vehicles via a humanitarian corridor on Tuesday.

He said that 570 of some 4,000 vehicles that left the city have reached the city of Zaporizhzhia some 260 kilometers (160 miles) northwest while others will spend the night in various towns along the way.

Mariupol, a strategic port city of 430,000 on the Sea of Azov, has been besieged by Russian troops for more than 10 days, facing heavy shelling that has killed more than 2,300 people and left residents struggling for food, water, heat and medicine.

**WASHINGTON** — Russian ground troops have made limited progress over the last 24 hours in their effort to seize major cities in Ukraine, a senior defense official said Tuesday.

And as deadly airstrikes continue, the U.S. has seen indications that Russia may believe it needs more troops and supplies than it has on hand in the country, and is considering ways to get resources brought in, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss U.S. military assessments.

The official did not elaborate on the indications, and said that as of Tuesday, however, there has been no actual movement of reinforcement troops currently in Russia going into Ukraine.

According to the official, Russian ground forces are still about 15-20 kilometers (9-12 miles) northwest of Kyiv and 20-30 kilometers (12-19 miles) east of the city, which is being increasingly hit by long-range strikes. The official said Ukrainian troops continue to put up stiff resistance in Kharkiv and other areas.

Russia has launched more than 950 missiles so far in the war, and both Russia and Ukraine still retain about 90% of their combat power, the official said.

Associated Press Writer Lolita Bandor contributed to this report.

**MEDYKA, Poland** — Refugees continued to pour into Poland on Tuesday at a border crossing connecting Ukraine to the Polish village of Medyka.

Ludmila Deslichenko, 41, traveled from Cherkasy in central Ukraine.

"We would like to go back home as soon as the war ends and when there's peace," Deslichenko said. "It was very terrifying. There were bombs during the day, also rockets, everywhere in Ukraine. There were a lot of explosions. As soon as it calms down and the war is over, we will go back."

Oksana Voloshen, 59, said she crossed the border to buy groceries to bring back to Mostyska in far western Ukraine.

"We have nothing in the shops," she said.

Nicolas Kusiak, who leads NGOs and volunteers at the Medyka border crossing, said that while they're seeing mostly refugees entering Poland, some are headed the other way.

"We have a lot of military, ex-military from all over the world, the (United) States, U.K., Germany, Den-

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mark, even Poland, joining the international legion," Kusiak said.

**KYIV, Ukraine** — A senior aide to Ukraine's president says that Russia has softened its stance in the talks over a possible settlement.

Ihor Zhovkva, a deputy chief of staff to Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said Tuesday that the talks between Russian and Ukrainian representatives have become "more constructive" and Russia has changed tone and stopped airing demands for Ukraine to surrender — something Russia had insisted upon during earlier stages of talks.

Three rounds of talks in Belarus earlier this month have been followed by video calls between Russian and Ukrainian negotiators, including the one on Tuesday.

Zhovkva said that Ukrainian representatives feel "moderately optimistic" after the talks, adding that it would be necessary for Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin to meet to make major progress.

**ANKARA, Turkey** — Turkey's foreign minister is traveling to Moscow as part of efforts to secure a cease-fire. Mevlut Cavusoglu would hold talks in Moscow on Wednesday before traveling to Ukraine for talks on Thursday, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Tuesday.

In a televised address following a Cabinet meeting, Erdogan also said the Polish President Andrzej Duda would be visiting Turkey on Wednesday for talks expected to focus on the crisis.

Last week the Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers met on the sidelines of a diplomacy forum organized by Turkey, although their talks failed to produce a breakthrough.

**BRATISLAVA, Slovakia** — Slovakia's Parliament has approved a NATO plan to deploy up to 2,100 troops on Slovak territory following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The plan is part of the NATO initiative to reassure member countries on the alliance's eastern flank by sending forces to help protect them.

Germany is supposed to contribute the biggest number of soldiers, up to 700, to the multinational battle-group. The Czech Republic follows with 600 and the U.S. will send up to 400. The Netherlands, Poland and Slovenia will also contribute troops.

Their deployment together with the Patriot air defense system will increase the defensive capabilities of Slovakia's armed forces.

The alliance stationed troops in the Baltic countries — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania — and Poland after the 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula by Russia. After Russia attacked Ukraine, NATO decided to boost its presence along the entire eastern flank by deploying forces in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia.

**MILAN** — Italian museums said Tuesday that they had gotten a reprieve from a Russian request to immediately repatriate artworks on loan from the State Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg.

The director of the State Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg said in a message relayed Monday by the Hermitage Italia collection that an agreement had been reached with Russian cultural officials so that "the paintings of Titian and Picasso can continue to remain on the walls of museums," at Palazzo Reale in Milan and the Fondazione Alda Fendi in Rome. The same goes for works on loan to the Gallerie d'Italia, owned by bank Intesa Sanpaolo, in Milan.

Russian cultural officials had requested the immediate repatriation of the works last week as cultural ties frayed along with the diplomatic tensions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Hermitage director general, Michail Piotrovsky, expressed regret "that cultural relations between our countries have collapsed into such 'darkness.' It can recover only if we conserve an atmosphere of good will and benevolence. We always repeat that the bridges of culture are the last to blow up. It is time to protect them."

**BRUSSELS** — NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg says he's convened a summit for next week of



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the military organization's 30 leaders to discuss Russia's war on Ukraine.

Stoltenberg says the March 24 summit will be led by U.S. President Joe Biden and "will address the consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, our strong support for Ukraine, and further strengthening NATO's deterrence and defense in response to a new reality for our security."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki confirmed that Biden will travel to Brussels for the face-to-face talks with European leaders.

The trip follows on Vice President Kamala Harris' visit to eastern flank NATO countries of Poland and Romania last week to discuss with leaders the growing refugee crisis in eastern Europe sparked by the Russian invasion and to underscore the Biden administration's support for NATO allies.

Stoltenberg said in a statement Tuesday that "at this critical time, North America and Europe must continue to stand together in NATO." NATO has been bolstering its eastern flank with troops and equipment to deter Russia from invading any of its members. NATO refuses to deploy troops to Ukraine as it is concerned about sparking a wider war in Europe.

**BRUSSELS** — The European Union has slapped sanctions on Chelsea FC owner Roman Abramovich as part of a new package of measures targeting Russia.

The EU included the Russian oligarch in its updated list of individuals facing assets freeze and travel bans over their role in the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The 55-year-old Abramovich had already been punished in Britain by Boris Johnson's administration last week. The aluminum magnate was among seven wealthy Russians who had their assets frozen under British sanctions in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Abramovich has also been suspended as director of the Premier League club.

The EU said Abramovich "has had privileged access to the president, and has maintained very good relations with him. This connection with the Russian leader helped him to maintain his considerable wealth."

The Russian Foreign Ministry says Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly, Defense Minister Anita Anand and other Canadian officials have been put on a sanctions list.

The ministry said in Tuesday's statement that they have been barred from entering Russia in retaliation to Canadian sanctions against the Russian leadership. The Russian sanctions also targeted Canadian lawmakers.

The ministry said the decision was a forced move taken in response to "hostile actions by the current Canadian regime that has long tested our patience." The decision followed the announcement of Russian sanctions against U.S. President Joe Biden and senior members of his administration.

The Russian Foreign Ministry says Moscow is withdrawing from the Council of Europe.

The ministry said it handed a formal notice about Russia's decision to leave the continent's leading human rights organization to the Council of Europe's Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić on Tuesday.

It said the move followed the Council of Europe's decision to suspend Russia's membership that was taken on Feb. 25.

The ministry charged that the Council of Europe has become an instrument of exerting pressure on Russia and alleged that it has been heavily influenced by NATO and the European Union. It said in a statement that its withdrawal from the Council of Europe wouldn't impact human rights and freedoms in the country, which officials said are safeguarded by the Russian constitution.

Russia's invasion has sparked widespread allegations of war crimes, as hundreds of Ukrainian civilians have been killed and numerous residential areas have been targeted by Russian troops.

The Kremlin says that President Vladimir Putin has discussed the situation in Ukraine with European Council President Charles Michel.

The Kremlin said in a statement that Putin informed Michel about the Russian view of the talks with

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Ukraine in Tuesday's call, adding that Ukrainian officials haven't yet "demonstrated a serious intention to search for mutually acceptable solutions."

Michel said on Twitter that he told Putin about the "urgent need to stop Russia's fratricidal war against Ukraine" and emphasized that "indiscriminate shelling by Russian forces of Ukraine civilians must stop." He added that "Russia must urgently enable humanitarian access and safe passage.

**WARSAW** — During a news conference with foreign journalists on Monday in Warsaw, Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski said that while solidarity for Ukrainian refugees remains strong, steps must be taken to avoid a backlash.

More than 1.8 million refugees have fled to Poland. Around 390,000 people have traveled to Warsaw, where 300,000 displaced Ukrainians remain. Warsaw has become a major transfer point for Ukrainian refugees fleeing the Russian invasion. Its central train station has become a hub for people awaiting transport further West.

"I need to take care of the normal functioning of the city, because the more problems we have, the more our attention is diverted to other issues for longer, then we will start having problems in schools and hospitals and elsewhere," he told reporters.

**BELGRADE, Serbia** — Another flight from Belgrade to Moscow has received a bomb threat that turned out to be false, Serbia's police said Tuesday.

Unlike two other threats since Friday, this time it came before the plane took off. On Friday and Monday, the aircraft had to turn back shortly after takeoff for inspection.

The police said Tuesday they are investigating the third false claim in five days.

Serbian state media say the threatening emails came from Ukraine.

Besides Turkish carriers, Serbia's national airline AirSerbia is the only airline in Europe still flying to and from Russia.

Serbia, which formally seeks European Union membership but has maintained close relations with ally Russia, has refused to join an international flight ban against Moscow in response to the war in Ukraine.

**UNITED NATIONS** — Russia has circulated a proposed U.N. Security Council resolution demanding protection for civilians "in vulnerable situations" in Ukraine and safe passage for humanitarian aid and people seeking to leave the country — but it makes no mention of Russia's responsibility for the war against its smaller neighbor.

The draft resolution released Tuesday expresses "grave concern" at the deteriorating humanitarian situation and reports of civilian casualties in and around Ukraine. It endorses U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' call for dialogue and negotiations and calls for a negotiated cease-fire to rapidly evacuate "all civilians," and underscores "the need for the parties concerned to agree on humanitarian pauses to this end."

The draft, which never identifies "the parties concerned," could be put to a vote as early as Wednesday, according to a Russian diplomat who was not authorized to speak publicly because discussions have been private.

The Russian measure was circulated a day after France and Mexico announced that a humanitarian resolution on Ukraine they co-sponsored, which had been discussed for two weeks in the Security Council, was being moved to the 193-member General Assembly for discussion and a vote.

That draft resolution called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and deplored the dire humanitarian consequences of the hostilities in Ukraine, provisions which are not in the proposed Russian resolution. The France-Mexico resolution would almost certainly have led to a Russian veto in the Security Council, but there are no vetoes in the General Assembly.

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told reporters that his country is prepared to support a humanitarian resolution and after Monday's announcement by the French and Mexican ambassadors Russia thinks "the chances are still there," so he was putting forward its "roadmap" and will see whether the

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council adopts it.

Associated Press Writer Edith Lederer contributed to this report.

TORONTO — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy asked Canadians to imagine bombs landing in their communities as he told the Canadian Parliament that his people want to live.

Zelenskyy urged Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Canadian lawmakers to help enact a no-fly zone over the Ukraine and called for greater economic pressure on Russia.

"Justin, can you imagine you and your children hearing all these severe explosions, the bombing of the airport, the bombing of the Ottawa airport," Zelenskyy said. "Cruise missiles are falling down and your children are asking you, 'What happened?'"

Speaking by video from Ukraine to a packed Canadian House of Commons chamber, Zelenskyy said the Russian war is designed to annihilate Ukraine and subjugate its people.

Zelenskyy evoked British wartime leader Winston Churchill as he told the U.K. Parliament last week that his country would fight Russia's invasion to the end. Zelenskyy will also speak Wednesday to members of the U.S. House and Senate, an event that will be livestreamed for the public.

MYKOLAIV, Ukraine — In Mykolaiv, a southern Ukraine city bordering the Black Sea, walls of sandbags with mannequins for decoys are placed at checkpoints. A high sandbag wall protects the front of a building serving as a support center for the military.

Rodyin Lavrushin is a volunteer at the center. He lifted a tarp covering plastic crates filled with Molotov cocktails.

"Here we collect everything from food to clothes and military specifics and help our military because the Russian occupiers came here to our home and we will protect it to the end," Lavrushin said Monday.

Mykolaiv resident Svetlana Gryshchenko said her son was killed Feb. 26 in the Donetsk region.

"He went there to the military command," Gryshchenko said. "He was a soldier and he'd just turned 24. He went there to work (with the military), not to fight."

"What is happening now in Mykolaiv cannot be described through words," Gryshchenko said. "We are bombed during the day and during the night. We are peaceful citizens, and I cannot put it into words. It is impossible to put into words. It's a nightmare what Russia is doing on the territory of Ukraine."

Outside the Mykolaiv city morgue, bodies placed in plastic bags lie on the ground because the building had no room for more of the dead.

NEW YORK — Fox News says one of its video journalists was killed in Ukraine when the vehicle he was traveling in was struck by incoming fire.

The network said Tuesday that videographer Pierre Zakrzewski was killed in an incident that also injured reporter Benjamin Hall, who remains hospitalized. Their injuries occurred Monday in Horenka, outside of Kyiv.

Zakrzewski was a veteran journalist who had covered conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria for Fox. Suzanne Scott, CEO of Fox News Media, said in a memo to staff members on Tuesday that "his passion and talent as a journalist were unmatched."

He won an internal award at Fox for helping to get freelancers and their families out of Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal last year.

He was the second journalist killed in Ukraine in two days, following the death of documentary filmmaker Brent Renaud.

## Ukraine sees room for compromise, as 20,000 escape Mariupol

By ANDREA ROSA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine said it saw possible room for compromise in talks with Russia despite

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Moscow's stepped up bombardment Tuesday of Kyiv and new assaults on the port city of Mariupol, from where an estimated 20,000 civilians managed to flee through a humanitarian corridor.

The fast-moving developments on the diplomatic front and on the ground came as Russia's invasion neared the three-week mark and the number of Ukrainians who have left the country amid Europe's heaviest fighting since World War II eclipsed 3 million.

After delegations from Ukraine and Russia met again Tuesday via video, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said early Wednesday that Russia's demands were becoming "more realistic." The two sides were expected to speak again Wednesday.

"Efforts are still needed, patience is needed," he said in his nightly video address to the nation. "Any war ends with an agreement."

Zelenskyy, who was expected to address the U.S. Congress on Wednesday, thanked President Joe Biden and "all the friends of Ukraine" for \$13.6 billion in new support.

He appealed for more weapons and more sanctions to punish Russia, and repeated his call to "close the skies over Ukraine to Russian missiles and planes."

He said Russian forces on Tuesday had been unable to move deeper into Ukrainian territory but had continued their heavy shelling of cities.

Over the past day, 28,893 civilians were able to flee the fighting through nine humanitarian corridors, although the Russians refused to allow aid into Mariupol, he said.

In other developments, the leaders of three European Union countries — Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia — visited the embattled capital Tuesday, arriving by train in a bold show of support amid the danger.

Meanwhile, large explosions thundered across Kyiv before dawn from what Ukrainian authorities said were artillery strikes, as Russia's bombardment of the capital appeared to become more systematic and edged closer to the city center, smashing apartments, a subway station and other civilian sites.

Zelenskyy said Tuesday that barrages hit four multi-story buildings in the city and killed dozens. The strikes disrupted the relative calm that returned after an initial advance by Moscow's forces was stopped in the early days of the war.

A senior U.S. defense official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the Pentagon's assessment, said that the Russians were using long-range fire to hit civilian targets inside Kyiv with increasing frequency but that their ground forces were making little to no progress around the country. The official said Russian troops were still about 15 kilometers (9 miles) from the center of the capital.

The official said the U.S. has seen indications that Russia believes it may need more troops or supplies than it has on hand in Ukraine, and it is considering ways to get more resources into the country. The official did not elaborate.

Before Tuesday's talks, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Moscow would press its demands that Ukraine drop its bid to join NATO, adopt a neutral status and "demilitarize."

In a statement that seemed to signal potential grounds for agreement with Moscow, Zelenskyy told European leaders gathered in London that he realizes NATO has no intention of accepting Ukraine.

"We have heard for many years about the open doors, but we also heard that we can't enter those doors," he said. "This is the truth, and we have simply to accept it as it is."

NATO does not admit nations with unsettled territorial conflicts. Zelenskyy has repeatedly said in recent weeks that he realizes NATO isn't going to offer membership to Ukraine and that he could consider a neutral status for his country but needs strong security guarantees from both the West and Russia.

The U.N. said close to 700 civilians in Ukraine have been confirmed killed, with the true figure probably much higher.

Two journalists working for Fox News were killed when the vehicle they were traveling in was hit by fire Monday on the outskirts of Kyiv, the network said. Fox identified the two as video journalist Pierre Zakrzewski and Ukrainian journalist Oleksandra "Sasha" Kuvshynova, who was helping Fox crews navigate the area. Another journalist was killed Sunday in Ukraine.



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New efforts to bring civilians to safety and deliver aid were underway around the country. The Red Cross said it was working to evacuate people in about 70 buses from the northeastern town of Sumy, near the Russian border.

The exodus from Mariupol marked the biggest evacuation yet from the southern city of 430,000, where officials say a weeklong siege has killed more than 2,300 people and left residents struggling for food, water, heat and medicine. Bodies have been buried in mass graves.

Kyrylo Tymoshenko, a senior aide to Zelenskyy, said that about 20,000 people managed to leave Mariupol on Tuesday in 4,000 private vehicles via a designated safe corridor leading to the city of Zaporizhzhia.

On a day when thousands managed to leave Mariupol, Russian troops seized the city's largest hospital, said regional leader Pavlo Kyrylenko. He said the troops forced about 400 people from nearby homes into the Regional Intensive Care Hospital and were using them and roughly 100 patients and staff as human shields by not allowing them to leave.

Kyrylenko said shelling had already heavily damaged the hospital's main building, but medical staff have been treating patients in makeshift wards in the basement.

Doctors from other Mariupol hospitals made a video to tell the world about the horrors they've been seeing. "We don't want to be heroes and martyrs posthumously," one woman said. She also said it's insufficient to simply refer to people as the wounded: "it's torn off arms and legs, gouged out eyes, bodies torn into fragments, insides falling out."

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian army's general staff said Tuesday evening that Russian troops had launched another assault on the strategically important city.

Fighting has intensified on Kyiv's outskirts in recent days, and air raid sirens wailed inside the capital. The mayor imposed a curfew extending through Thursday morning.

Tuesday's artillery strikes hit the Svyatoshynskiy district of western Kyiv, adjacent to the suburb of Irpin, which has seen some of the worst fighting of the war.

Flames shot out of a 15-story apartment building and smoke choked the air as firefighters climbed ladders to rescue people. The assault blackened several floors of the building, ripped a hole in the ground outside and blew out windows in neighboring apartment blocks. Rescue workers said at least one person was killed.

"Yesterday we extinguished one fire, today another. It is very difficult," a firefighter who gave only his first name, Andriy, said outside the building, tears falling from his eyes. "People are dying, and the worst thing is that children are dying. They haven't lived their lives and they have already seen this."

City authorities also tweeted an image of the blown-out facade of a downtown subway station that had been used as a bomb shelter and said trains would no longer stop at the station.

A 10-story apartment building in the Podilsky district of Kyiv, north of the government quarter, was damaged. Russian forces also stepped up strikes overnight on Irpin and the northwest Kyiv suburbs of Hostomel and Bucha, said the head of the capital region, Oleksiy Kuleba.

"Many streets have been turned into a mush of steel and concrete. People have been hiding for weeks in basements, and are afraid to go out even for evacuations," Kuleba said on Ukrainian television.

In the country's east, Russian forces launched more than 60 strikes overnight Monday into Tuesday on Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, according to regional administration chief, Oleh Sinehubov. The strikes hit the city's historical center, including the main marketplace.

He said the bodies of dozens of civilians were pulled from destroyed apartment buildings.

On Tuesday evening, Ukrainian forces repelled Russian troops who tried to storm Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, from their positions in Piatykhvatky, a suburb 15 kilometers (9 miles) to the north, the regional administration chief, Oleh Sinehubov, said on Telegram. He said the Kharkiv's defenders were able "to push the enemy back beyond its previous position," in what he described as a "shameful defeat" for Russia.

## Russia-Ukraine war: Key things to know about the conflict

Russian forces are pounding Ukrainian cities and edging closer to the capital, Kyiv, in a relentless bom-

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bardment that keeps deepening the humanitarian crisis in this war, now in its third week.

Still, a narrow diplomatic channel remains open, with a Ukrainian official saying Tuesday's talks with the Russians were difficult, but that there was room for compromise.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told European leaders gathered in London on Tuesday that he realizes NATO has no intention of accepting Ukraine. Zelenskyy has this indicated before but this statement was more explicit. Russia has demanded that Ukraine drop its bid to join NATO, adopt a neutral status and demilitarize.

U.S. President Joe Biden will announce Wednesday the U.S. is delivering more military assistance to Ukraine, including anti-armor and air defense weapons. Zelenskyy is scheduled to speak to Congress Wednesday via video.

Here are some key things to know about the conflict:

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN AND AROUND KYIV?

Artillery fire echoed through Kyiv on Tuesday as Russia launched strikes that ignited a huge fire in a 15-story apartment building apartment. Zelenskyy said barrages also hit four multi-story buildings, killing dozens of people.

Explosions caused significant structural damage, with shockwaves from a blast tearing through the entrance of a downtown subway station that residents have used as a bomb shelter.

## SHOWING SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

The leaders of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia traveled to Kyiv by train Tuesday in a show of support for Ukraine. Janez Jansa of Slovenia described the visit as sending the message that Ukraine is a European country that deserves to be accepted into the European Union one day.

The leader of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States appealed Tuesday for humanitarian aid as well as weapons to help Ukrainians fight Russia's invasion. The Most Rev. Borys Gudziak asked what good does it do to feed the citizens of Ukraine "if their brains are going to be blown out, if their apartment buildings are going to be rendered into rubble?"

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN MARIUPOL, OTHER CITIES?

After days of relentless Russian shelling of Mariupol, an estimated 20,000 civilians used a humanitarian corridor to flee the port city. The route runs west for more than 260 kilometers (160 miles) to the Ukraine-held city of Zaporizhzhia.

Russian troops seized a hospital in Mariupol and took about 500 people hostage during another assault on the southern port city late Tuesday, regional leader Pavlo Kyrylenko said. The soldiers drove 400 people from neighboring homes into Regional Intensive Care Hospital and about 100 doctors and patients also are believed to be inside, he said.

Ukraine said a Russian general has been killed during the storming of Mariupol. Maj. Gen. Oleg Mityaev, who commanded the 150th motorized rifle division, died Tuesday, said Ukrainian Interior Ministry adviser Anton Gerashchenko. There was no confirmation from Russia on the fourth reported death of a Russian general in Ukraine.

In the east, Russian forces blasted downtown Kharkiv with artillery, hitting the city's historical center, including its main marketplace. Rescuers were pulling the bodies of dead civilians from destroyed apartment buildings.

## FOX NEWS JOURNALISTS KILLED

Two journalists working for Fox News were killed and one was injured when the vehicle they were traveling in was hit by incoming fire on Monday near Kyiv, the network said Tuesday.

Video journalist Pierre Zakrzewski, 55, died along with Ukrainian journalist Oleksandra "Sasha" Kuvshynova, 24, who was helping the Fox crews navigate the country. Another reporter, Benjamin Hall, was injured.

The London-based Zakrzewski had covered conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria and played a key role last year in getting Fox's freelancers and their families out of Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal, the network said.

The attack happened a day after documentary filmmaker Brent Renaud was killed when Russian forces

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opened fire on his vehicle.

WHAT HAS THE AP DIRECTLY WITNESSED OR CONFIRMED?

Flames gutted an apartment building in the Svyatoshynskiy district of western Kyiv as emergency workers climbed ladders to rescue people.

Thick, dark smoke choked the air. A firefighter at the scene confirmed one person had died and that several have been rescued alive — but more remained trapped inside. A young woman sobbed outside the charred building, where shocked residents assessed the damage.

“People are dying, and the worst thing is that children are dying,” said Andriy, a firefighter at the scene who would only give his first name, before heading back into the burning building.

Meanwhile, a small but growing number of people are heading back to Ukraine to help, from foreign volunteers to Ukrainian expatriate men and more recently women.

“I will go back and help. I am a health worker, so the hospitals need help,” said Iryna Orel, 50, lugging her luggage as she boarded a train from Przemysl, Poland, to Lviv in western Ukraine. “And I will stay until the end.”

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF DIPLOMACY IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR?

Zelenskyy said early Wednesday that Russia’s demands during negotiations are becoming “more realistic.”

After Ukrainian negotiators met with their Russian counterparts, Ukrainian presidential aide Ihor Zhovkva said Tuesday’s talks were more constructive. Talks are scheduled to continue Wednesday.

Russia has circulated a proposed U.N. Security Council resolution demanding protection for civilians “in vulnerable situations” in Ukraine along with safe passage for humanitarian aid and people seeking to leave the country, without mentioning Russia’s responsibility for the war.

Biden is scheduled to travel to Brussels next week for talks with NATO and European leaders to discuss the Russian invasion, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said Tuesday.

In an emotional speech to lawmakers in Canada, Zelenskyy asked the Canadian Parliament and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to help create a no-fly zone over Ukraine. The Ukrainian president spoke by video to a packed House of Commons chamber in Ottawa.

WHAT ABOUT SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA?

The U.S. added more sanctions Tuesday, whose targets include senior Russian military officials. The U.S. also placed additional sanctions on Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko for allowing Russia to use his country as a staging ground for attacks on Ukraine.

The EU also added new sanctions to deny oligarchs luxuries such as purebred horses and sanctioned 15 individuals, including the chief executive of Russia’s state-run television station Channel One, which the EU says is used to spread propaganda.

HOW IS THE SPORTS WORLD BEING AFFECTED BY RUSSIA’S WAR IN UKRAINE?

The EU imposed sanctions Tuesday on Chelsea soccer club owner Roman Abramovich. Britain had already frozen Abramovich’s assets and prevented Chelsea from selling new tickets or merchandise or signing new players.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport upheld a ban on Russian soccer teams from participating in European competition. Russia is also asking CAS to review a similar ban by FIFA, which awarded Poland a bye in its scheduled March 24 World Cup qualifying match against Russia.

The Swiss swimming federation is threatening to boycott this year’s world championships in Budapest, Hungary in June and July if the sport’s governing body allows Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete. FINA, the International Swimming Federation, has said it opposes a ban and would allow them to compete without their national flags.

Wimbledon organizers and the British government are discussing whether Russian tennis players should be allowed to compete at this year’s tournament if they don’t distance themselves from President Vladimir Putin.

**Zelenskyy center stage: Facing Congress, pleading for help**

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By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will address the U.S. Congress on Wednesday, the actor-turned-wartime leader's latest video stop as he employs the West's great legislative bodies as a global stage to orchestrate support against Russia's crushing invasion.

Zelenskyy's livestreamed address into the U.S. Capitol will be among the most important in a unique and very public strategy in his fight to stop Russia.

Invoking Winston Churchill and Hamlet last week, he asked the British House of Commons whether Ukraine is "to be or not to be." On Tuesday, he appealed to "Dear Justin" as he addressed the Canadian Parliament and Prime Minister Trudeau. Appearing in his now trademark army green T-shirt, Zelenskyy called on European Union leaders at the start of the war to do the politically unthinkable and fast-track Ukraine's membership — and he has continued to push for more help to save his young democracy than world leaders have so far pledged to do.

"It was a man showing leadership while at the same time keeping his calm in the toughest of circumstances," said Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte about the address to the Europeans. "I have to say, it had an enormous impact on all the leaders."

Nearing the three-week mark in an ever-escalating war, Zelenskyy has used his public campaign to help ensure a global spotlight that might have faded amid the coronavirus pandemic and fatigue after the end of the long U.S. war in Afghanistan.

Instead, Zelenskyy's video appearances are beaming the boyish but unshaven president into households and smartphones around the world as he speaks from undisclosed locations in Kyiv while Russia bombards his country, a heroic figure at the center of what many view as the biggest security threat to Europe since World War II. Almost 3 million refugees have fled Ukraine, the fastest exodus in modern times.

When Zelenskyy is live-streamed into the U.S. Capitol, his speech could very likely put him at odds with President Joe Biden, who has stopped short of providing a no-fly zone or facilitating the transfer of military planes from neighboring Poland that Zelenskyy has been pleading for since the outbreak of the war.

Biden will give his own address following Zelenskyy's speech in which the president will announce an additional \$800 million in security assistance to Ukraine, bringing the total announced in the last week alone to \$1 billion, according to a White House official familiar with matter.

While officials are anticipating that Zelenskyy may once again call on the U.S. and the West to send fighter jets or help establish a no-fly zone, the Biden administration is looking to send Ukraine "more of what's been working well," including anti-armor and air defense weapons, according to the official, who was not authorized to comment and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Altogether, Biden has authorized \$2 billion in security for Ukraine since the beginning of his administration, making the U.S. by far the largest single donor of security assistance to the country, the official said.

Zelenskyy wants the West to "close the sky" — a rallying cry now in pop culture — to prevent the Russian airstrikes that are devastating his country, perhaps most dramatically in the attack last week on a maternity hospital as pregnant women fled for their lives.

"I know he will ask for more help," said Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.

Congress has been ready to push on economic sanctions and beyond.

At first, the White House resisted calls from Congress to ban Russian oil imports to the U.S. Then it hit the brakes on legislation to revoke Russia's normal trade status — before going ahead on both. It rejected efforts in Congress to stop the Nord Stream 2 energy pipeline, then led allies in halting it.

Can Zelenskyy's address generate more?

Biden "has a very difficult line to walk here, and that is that no one wants to trigger a World War III," Warren said. "You have to keep options on the table. The Ukrainians are fighting for their lives, and they are also fighting for democracy all around."

Biden has insisted there will be no U.S. troops on the ground in Ukraine and has resisted Zelenskyy's relentless pleas for warplanes as too risky, potentially escalating into a direct confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia.



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"Direct conflict between NATO and Russia is World War III," Biden has said.

The Pentagon has rejected an offer from NATO ally Poland to transfer its Soviet-era MiGs to a U.S. base in Germany for re-transfer to Ukraine. And U.S. defense officials say they are puzzled, at any rate, by Zelenskyy's demand for more warplanes. They say Ukraine isn't often flying the planes it has now, while making good use of Stingers and other weapons the West is providing.

Even though Zelenskyy and Biden speak almost daily by phone, the Ukrainian president has found a potentially more receptive audience in Congress.

This won't be the first time he has appealed directly to members of the House and Senate, who have remained remarkably unified in their support of Ukraine with some feeling they have made a commitment to do as much as they can in the fight against Russia. Nearly two weeks ago, Zelenskyy delivered a desperate plea to some 300 lawmakers and staff on a private call that if they could not enforce a no-fly zone, at least send more planes.

"We think the United States needs to do more," said Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., returning from a week-end visit with other lawmakers to Poland. "We need to do what we can to facilitate the delivery of the Russian-made MiGs to the Ukrainian fighter pilots so that they can wage this war themselves."

Congress has already approved \$13.6 billion in military and humanitarian aid for Ukraine, and the newly announced aid will come from that allotment, which is part of a broader bill that Biden signed into law Tuesday. But lawmakers expect more aid will be needed.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Zelenskyy asked for help in rebuilding his country when they spoke last week.

It was in that call that Zelenskyy asked for the opportunity to address the U.S. Congress, something the Democratic leader readily agreed to. Members of the congressional Ukrainian caucus supporting the country had already asked for similar.

"The Congress, our country and the world are in awe of the people of Ukraine," said Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer in a statement Monday announcing the address.

They said Congress "remains unwavering in our commitment to supporting Ukraine as they face Putin's cruel and diabolical aggression."

Zelenskyy's next stop could be Spain. On Tuesday, the speaker of Spain's Congress of Deputies invited the Ukrainian president to address Spanish lawmakers via videolink.

In a letter to Zelenskyy, Speaker Meritxell Batet wrote that the address "will be a magnificent opportunity for the chamber, all Spanish people and the thousands of Ukrainians living in Spain to listen to your message and express our firmest support."

## Emhoff tests positive for COVID-19, VP Harris still negative

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Second gentleman Doug Emhoff has tested positive for COVID-19, the White House announced Tuesday. Vice President Kamala Harris tested negative, but is curtailing her schedule as a result of her husband's positive test.

Harris spokesperson Sabrina Singh said Harris would not participate in a planned Equal Pay Day event on Tuesday evening at the White House with President Joe Biden "out of an abundance of caution."

Harris, in a tweet Tuesday evening, said, "Doug is doing fine and we are grateful to be vaccinated and boosted." She added, "I have tested negative and will continue to test."

Biden and Harris appeared together Tuesday afternoon and mingled with lawmakers at an event marking the signing of a \$1.5 trillion government funding measure.

"He's feeling very well, I'm told," Biden said Tuesday evening at the event, noting Harris had to skip. "Let's send her our love," he told attendees.

Harris and Emhoff both received their first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine weeks before taking office and their second dose just days after Inauguration Day in 2021. They received booster shots in late October.

Fully vaccinated and boosted people have a high degree of protection against serious illness and death from COVID-19, particularly the most common and highly transmissible Omicron variant.

Earlier Tuesday, Emhoff participated in an outdoor event at a Washington park to highlight the work of AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps. The White House did not immediately respond when asked if he was recently in close contact with Biden or first lady Jill Biden.

Before Emhoff's diagnosis was public, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden had tested negative for COVID-19 on Sunday.

## Former police boss denies cover-up in Ronald Greene death

By JIM MUSTIAN and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Gov. John Bel Edwards trusted Louisiana State Police to "do the right thing" and took a hands-off approach in police matters, even after Black motorist Ronald Greene died in a violent confrontation with troopers following a high-speed chase, the former head of the agency told state lawmakers Tuesday.

Kevin Reeves distanced himself — and the Democratic governor — from the investigation of Greene's 2019 death during a three-hour bipartisan grilling that included accusations of racism and gross negligence by the state's premier law enforcement agency.

The hearing became heated at times as lawmakers expressed incredulity and frustration in Reeves' demurrals and refusal to condemn the white troopers captured on body camera video punching, stunning and dragging Greene during his fatal arrest on a rural roadside in northeast Louisiana.

Lawmakers alternatively described his disengagement as "unacceptable" and "suspicious" and promised to continue digging into the case.

But Reeves was unbowed, insisting he will one day face God with a clear conscience: "I can tell you right now that I will not have to account for participating in a cover-up of the death of Mr. Ronald Greene."

Reeves, who stepped down in late 2020 amid criticism over his handling of the Greene case, acknowledged characterizing the arrest as "awful but lawful" and persisted in saying a car crash likely contributed to Greene's death, waving off a revised autopsy commissioned by the FBI that rejected that theory.

He also revealed he kept a journal with contemporaneous notes even after retiring as superintendent but would not commit to providing them to the special committee investigating the state's handling of Greene's death. "My journal is my personal business," he said, "and I'm not here to discuss it."

The eight-member panel was convened last month after The Associated Press reported that Reeves texted Edwards hours after the fact that troopers arresting Greene had engaged in a "violent, lengthy struggle."

On Tuesday, Reeves recalled having a follow-up conversation with Edwards about Greene's death — concerning the initial coroner's findings — but said the two did not discuss the case "in any depth" until late 2020, when word of Greene's mistreatment and a federal civil rights investigation surfaced in media accounts.

The governor has said he did not speak out about the troopers' actions — even after privately watching graphic body camera footage of the arrest — because of the federal investigation.

"The governor trusted that Louisiana State Police were going to do their jobs," Reeves told the committee, describing the governor as a "very busy" man. "Gov. Edwards generally left state police to do their business."

Reeves cast himself as a hands-off leader who similarly trusted his deputies and detectives to investigate Greene's death, insisting he was far removed from an investigation that included a host of irregularities.

"We are going to trust our people until they give us a reason not to trust them," Reeves said. "We should not constantly be looking for someone to do something wrong."

Greene's mother, Mona Hardin, told the panel later that Reeves' testimony "clearly shows that you think you are way above the law."

"All I can say is the video speaks it all," Hardin said. "There is no other way of seeing things than the way we all see it. ... He was literally beaten to death, stomped, dragged while chained and shackled."

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Reeves' testimony came as a federal grand jury in Shreveport is hearing testimony in the yearslong investigation of the troopers who arrested Greene and whether police brass obstructed justice to protect them.

State troopers initially told Greene's family and wrote in reports that he died as the result of a car crash after a high-speed chase outside Monroe. But AP last year published long-withheld body-camera video showing troopers jolting Greene with stun guns, punching him in the face and dragging him by his ankle shackles as he wailed, "I'm your brother! I'm scared! I'm scared!"

A reexamined autopsy commissioned by the FBI rejected the crash theory last year, attributing Greene's death to "physical struggle," troopers repeatedly stunning him, striking him in the head, restraining him at length and Greene's use of cocaine.

Reeves, however, insisted he believed the crash "would definitely be a contributing factor" in Greene's death and said he has not seen the new autopsy.

Lawmakers questioned Reeves closely about when he first viewed the videos of Greene's death. He said he and other commanders watched two of the videos soon after Greene's death but he only saw a third video that showed more of what happened the next year when it was shown to Greene's family. Reeves disputed the contention by the local prosecutor handling Greene's case that the third video, recorded by the body camera of Lt. John Clary, was not initially turned over with evidence.

Clary, the highest-ranking official at the scene of Greene's death, was accused of falsely denying the existence of his own body camera video. He remains under federal investigation even after state police cleared him of wrongdoing after an internal affairs investigation determined it was unclear whether he "purposefully withheld" the footage.

## **AP FACT CHECK: Biden skirts blame on inflation; GOP gas hype**

By JOSH BOAK, CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and DAVID KOENIG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facing political attacks over rising costs, President Joe Biden exaggerated his role in reducing the federal deficit and skirted responsibility by asserting that a flood of government spending into the economy has no impact at all on higher prices. It actually does.

Congressional Republicans, meanwhile, went too far in pinning blame for surging gasoline prices on Biden.

A look at the rhetoric and reality:

### **DEFICIT**

**BIDEN:** "Last year, the deficit dropped for the first time since 2015. It fell by \$360 billion last year and this year it's on track to drop by more than \$1 trillion after four years in a row of increasing deficits before I took office. We're now on a track to see the largest-ever decline in a deficit in American history." — remarks Tuesday.

**THE FACTS:** It's not as big as it sounds.

While it's true the deficit could end up falling by more than \$1 trillion, the decline mostly reflects the improving economy as the pandemic has faded, not tax and spending decisions by the Biden White House or Congress. The government is no longer sending out stimulus checks and extra unemployment benefits as it did for the past two years. And tax revenue has increased as millions of Americans have found jobs and gotten pay raises. As a result, the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget forecasts that the federal government's annual deficit will drop to \$1.2 trillion this year, from \$2.8 trillion in 2021 and a record \$3 trillion in 2020.

Even with that drop, the deficit would still be at one of the highest levels in history.

Some of the decline is also due to a COVID-era policy change that basically deferred some tax collections. The government now is collecting far more payroll taxes, which fund Social Security and Medicare, after allowing businesses to defer them during the pandemic.

In February, for example, the government's tax receipts jumped 17%, while spending dropped 9% compared with a year ago. Spending on unemployment aid dropped \$41 billion last month compared to February 2021, after an extra \$300 in weekly unemployment benefits ended in September.

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## INFLATION

BIDEN, addressing political rhetoric on rising prices: "So, I'm sick of this stuff. We have to talk about it because the American people think the reason for inflation is the government is spending more money. Simply not true." — remarks Friday at a House Democratic conference in Philadelphia.

REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE: "Prices are surging, and Americans are footing the bill. No spring road trips because of #Bidenflation." — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: Biden sidesteps reality. Government spending has been a clear factor behind rising consumer prices, though it's not the only one.

Biden last year signed a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package known as the American Rescue Plan — and many economists say that caused inflation to run higher than it otherwise would. There are multiple sources for inflation including global supply chain issues, the pandemic, stimulus from the Federal Reserve and, now, the Russian war in Ukraine.

But the problem is that Biden pumped more money into the economy than it could handle. Administration officials said before the relief package was passed that the greater risk was do too little to help the economy than to do too much. The implicit risk was inflation, though the tradeoff was faster hiring and stronger growth. Biden got all three: the hiring, the growth and the inflation.

Harvard University economists Jason Furman and Larry Summers — both officials in past Democratic administrations — warned of inflation rising because of the size of the relief package. Many conservative economists joined them, including Michael Strain of the American Enterprise Institute.

Republicans now are casting rising consumer prices as a direct and only result of "Bidenflation." That's incorrect. But Biden is wrong to say that government spending has had nothing to do with it.

## GASOLINE PRICES

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER MITCH MCCONNELL: "Nobody buys Democrats' efforts to blame 14 months of failed policies on three weeks of crisis in Europe. Inflation and gas prices were skyrocketing and hurting families long before late last month. The White House needs to stop trying to deny their mistakes and start fixing them." — tweet Tuesday.

HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADER KEVIN MCCARTHY: "Democrats want to blame surging prices on Russia. But the truth is, their out-of-touch policies are why we are here in the first place. Remember what happened on Day 1 with one-party rule? The president canceled the Keystone pipeline, and then he stopped new oil and gas leases on federal lands and waters." — March 8 remarks.

THE FACTS: The Republican leaders of Congress are overstating Biden's ability to influence energy prices and the impact of the canceled Keystone pipeline.

Gasoline prices have been rising in tandem with oil prices since spring 2020 because demand has grown faster than worldwide production as economies try to shake off the pandemic. More people are driving and flying, and businesses are returning to pre-pandemic levels of activity, leading to more energy consumption, which pushes prices higher.

The price of oil is set on the world market. Even the leading producers — the United States, Saudi Arabia and Russia — don't get to set the price, although they might try by adjusting production up or down, a process that takes time even when it works. U.S. production dropped sharply in 2020, but it wasn't because of anything that then-President Donald Trump did; it was because the pandemic crushed demand, causing producers to idle some of their wells rather than sell their oil too cheaply. U.S. oil production has doubled since 2011, but that didn't stop oil from hitting and surpassing \$100 a barrel.

U.S. oil production dipped about 1% from 2020 to 2021, not the dramatic drop portrayed by some of Biden's critics. The nationwide average gasoline price is up about 80 cents from a month ago, and analysts attribute nearly all of that to the prospect of limiting Russia's oil exports. McConnell and many other Republicans pushed to ban U.S. imports of Russian oil even before Biden acted.

The Keystone XL pipeline was designed to carry up to 830,000 barrels of oil a day from Canada and North Dakota to refineries along the Gulf Coast. The United States consumed nearly 20 million barrels of oil a day last year, and global consumption was close to 100 million barrels, so the pipeline — which was far from completion when Biden revoked a permit — would have contributed less than 1% to the world



supply of oil.

Asked whether the Keystone XL cancellation is the cause of high gas prices, Tom Kloza, analyst for the Oil Price Information Service, said: "A political talking point. Has nothing to do with 2022 price surge."

Biden has announced decisions to release more oil from a strategic reserve, but those releases have been too small to have any effect on pump prices.

## **Pfizer asks US to allow 4th COVID vaccine dose for seniors**

By ZEKE MILLER and LAURAN NEERGAARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pfizer and its partner BioNTech asked U.S. regulators Tuesday to authorize an additional booster dose of their COVID-19 vaccine for seniors, saying data from Israel suggests older adults would benefit.

Currently the U.S. urges two primary shots followed months later by a booster dose for everyone age 12 and older. The new application seeks to add a fourth shot only for the over-65 population that has been hit hardest by the pandemic.

The Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control would have to approve the request. If so, a key question would be how soon seniors would be advised to roll up their sleeves.

While authorities say the vaccinations continue to offer strong protection against severe illness, they haven't held up as well against milder infections especially those due to the omicron mutant. With COVID-19 cases finally plummeting after the intense omicron surge, public health experts are starting to look ahead to what next steps might be needed — if a new variant crops up or, barring that, whether to try shoring up coronavirus protection in the fall at the same time people get flu vaccinations.

Speaking to CBS' "Face the Nation" on Sunday, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla signaled the company's plans.

"The protection that you are getting from the third, it is good enough, actually quite good for hospitalizations and deaths. It's not that good against infections," he said. "But we are just submitting those data to the FDA and then we will see what the experts also will say outside Pfizer."

The U.S. booster campaign was based on evidence that the shots' effectiveness, particularly against milder infections, was waning about six months after the last dose. Calls for a third shot grew once it became clear the vaccines weren't as strong against the omicron mutant as they were against earlier versions of the virus.

Many scientists say the ultimate goal of vaccination is to prevent severe illness, not mild infections, and early CDC data show the shots still are doing a good job at that. During the omicron wave, effectiveness against hospitalization was 91% in people who had gotten their booster two months earlier, and 78% by the fourth month after that booster.

Pfizer based its new application on data from Israel, which already was offering a second booster to people age 60 and older and health care workers.

While some early data left unclear just how much benefit another shot offered — or for how long — Pfizer said Tuesday that an analysis of health records of more than 1.1 million Israeli seniors showed confirmed infections were two times lower and rates of severe illness were four times lower among those who got two boosters instead of just one.

Pfizer also cited an ongoing study of healthcare workers that tracked a jump in virus-fighting antibodies after getting the additional booster.

In the U.S. so far, a fourth dose is recommended only for people with severely weakened immune systems, who need three doses to begin with for the best chance at any protection.

## **Man suspected of stalking, killing homeless people arrested**

By ASHRAF KHALIL, MICHAEL BALSAMO and BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A man suspected of stalking and shooting homeless people asleep on the streets of New York City and Washington was arrested early Tuesday. Police said at least two people were killed

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and three others wounded in the attacks.

The suspect, Gerald Brevard was arrested in Washington on murder, assault and other charges after news of the killings had added new fears to people spending nights on the streets of the two cities and elsewhere.

The 30-year-old man, who lives in the Washington area, was charged Tuesday only in connection with the Washington cases and has not been charged in the New York attacks. Brevard has a criminal history that includes assaulting a police officer and assault with a deadly weapon and was in custody Tuesday. He was being questioned by both New York and Washington detectives.

Police in the two cities earlier released multiple surveillance photographs, including a closeup showing the suspect's face that was obtained from an ATM surveillance camera in Washington, and urged people who might know him to come forward. Investigators used ballistic evidence and tips to help link the shootings, and a tipster called police with information about the suspect's identity, officials said.

Police are now contacting other cities to determine whether or not the suspect might be responsible for attacks elsewhere. Though he hasn't been charged yet in the New York cases, police feel "very confident" they have identified the correct suspect, Metropolitan Police Chief Robert Contee said.

All of the shootings involved .22-caliber bullets, and surveillance photos and video, along with witness statements, all pointed to a single suspect — a man wearing distinctive sneakers, black pants and the same face mask, New York Police Department Chief of Detectives James Essig told reporters.

Police on Tuesday identified the Washington victim who died as 54-year-old Morgan Holmes. The New York victim was not identified.

New York detectives were in Washington and participating in interviews with the suspect, Essig said. But investigators did not immediately find anything further connecting the suspect to New York beyond surveillance video and ballistics evidence or any social media postings or other evidence explaining a motive.

Brevard hasn't offered any inkling of a motive during interviews with detectives, and authorities believe he may have been randomly targeting the victims, Contee said.

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser and New York City Mayor Eric Adams credited the swift coordination between the two police departments and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. ATF agents took Brevard into custody around 2:30 a.m. Tuesday morning before handing him over to detectives in Washington. They have not yet recovered a gun.

"This man targeted those experiencing homelessness with no regard for life, but this criminal is now off the streets," Adams said Tuesday. "Gun violence against anyone, let alone our most vulnerable populations, is sick, but thanks to the coordination between different levels of law enforcement and the public's help, those experiencing homelessness can breathe a sigh of relief today."

Court records show Brevard was arrested in July 2018 on assault charges and later pleaded guilty to attempted assault with a deadly weapon. He was found mentally incompetent to stand trial in June 2019. Records show Brevard was sent to St. Elizabeths Hospital, a psychiatric facility in the District. A month later, he was deemed competent to stand trial. Soon after, records show, he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to a year in prison. That sentence, however, was suspended.

Investigators also are trying to determine why Brevard was out on the streets around 2:30 a.m., when he was arrested.

Advocates for the homeless found comfort in the arrest but urged officials in both cities, which have significant populations of people without permanent shelter, to provide more assistance.

"The urgency of helping people move in off the streets must remain, because this is only the latest example of the risks faced by people without housing," said Jacquelyn Simone, policy director for the Coalition for the Homeless in New York City. "It's not the first time that people have been the victims of violence or even homicides because of their housing status."

Investigators in the two cities began to suspect a link between the shootings on Sunday after a Metropolitan Police Department homicide captain, a former New York City resident, saw surveillance photos that had been released on Saturday night by the New York Police Department while scrolling through

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social media.

The man in those photos looked similar to the one being sought by the MPD homicide captain's own department. Contee credited the coordination between the departments for the timely arrest.

The earliest known shooting happened at around 4 a.m. on March 3 in Washington, police said, when a man was wounded in the city's Northeast section. A second man was wounded on March 8, just before 1:30 a.m.

At 3 a.m. the next day, police and firefighters found Holmes dead inside a burning tent. He initially was thought to have suffered fatal burns, but an autopsy revealed he had died of multiple stab and gunshot wounds.

The killer then traveled north to New York City, police said. Surveillance video showed a man who investigators believe is Brevard at Penn Station in Manhattan around 3:30 a.m.

An hour later, a 38-year-old man sleeping on the street in Manhattan not far from the entrance to the Holland Tunnel was shot in his right arm as he slept. The victim screamed, and the gunman fled, police said.

About 90 minutes later, the gunman fatally shot another man in SoHo, police said.

"He looked around," Adams said. "He made sure no one was there. And he intentionally took the life of an innocent person."

The man's body was found in his sleeping bag just before 5 p.m. Saturday. He had been shot in the head and neck, said Julie Bolcer, a spokesperson for the New York City medical examiner's office.

The victim had lain in the street for hours before authorities were summoned.

Police believe Brevard quickly returned to Washington, D.C. after the attacks.

Kess Abraham, who became homeless last month, said he was "pained" to learn of "a guy who lived on the streets who probably was minding his own business getting murdered for no reason."

It could have been "any one of us who's homeless," Abraham said.

The latest attacks were reminiscent of the beating deaths of four homeless men as they slept on the streets in New York's Chinatown in the fall of 2019. Another homeless man, Randy Santos, has pleaded not guilty to murder charges in those attacks. A year ago, four people were stabbed in New York City, two fatally, by a man who attacked homeless people in the subway system. That accused assailant, who also was homeless, is awaiting trial.

## Russia business deals muddy GOP US Senate primary in Ohio

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Several Republicans competing for the party's nomination to run for U.S. Senate in Ohio are facing scrutiny for their ties to Russia as the country intensifies its war against Ukraine.

Much of the attention has focused on former Ohio Republican Party Chair Jane Timken, whose husband's family founded a company that does business in Russia. But other candidates in the race to succeed retiring GOP Sen. Rob Portman, including J.D. Vance and Mike Gibbons, also have links to business deals in Russia that could become vulnerabilities in the May 3 primary.

While domestic issues generally dominate midterm political contests, Russia's invasion of Ukraine — with its harrowing images of civilian casualties — has become an animating subject of the competitive Senate race in Ohio, which has a large Ukrainian American population. In a race with several millionaire candidates, the war is highlighting the risks that come with being wealthy and having tangled investment interests involving foreign countries.

The easiest target has long been Timken, whose husband sits on the board of the like-named Fortune 500 ball bearing manufacturer based in North Canton, Ohio. Even before Ukraine, her adversaries sought to pin the Timken Co.'s international business dealings on Timken.

Timken Co. last week suspended its operations in Russia, where it has a manufacturing plant and an 8-year-old relationship with United Wagon Co., a Moscow-based manufacturer and servicer of freight cars. The company signed the deal in 2014, around the time Russia seized Crimea.

Conservative PACs, mostly backing Republican Josh Mandel in the race, pilloried Timken in attack ads

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as “shameless” for outwardly supporting Ukraine and calling for tough sanctions on Russia while making money off her investments in the company. She has reported owning roughly 2,800 shares in Timken Co., whose stock price initially rose after the Feb. 24 invasion.

Timken campaign spokesperson Mandi Merritt calls the attacks on Timken unfair.

“It’s a nonsense line of attack that Jane is somehow responsible for every business decision of a multibillion-dollar company where she never even worked,” Merritt said in a statement. “Jane’s record of standing up for Ukraine and championing Ohioans is unmatched.”

Portman, a co-chair of the Senate Ukraine Caucus, has endorsed Timken and campaigned with her around the state earlier this month.

After Timken criticized Vance for voicing indifference to the fate of Ukraine in the days leading up to the invasion, a Vance ally tweeted: “No candidate has business ties in Russia except for Jane Timken. Her husband’s company has provided steel for their tanks, rail, and military.” The attacks continued from the left, with one labor union ally trying to label Timken “Russia Jane.”

But Vance has business interests in Russia of his own.

In May 2021, he joined Peter Thiel and other prominent conservative venture capitalists and invested in the video platform Rumble, a YouTube alternative favored by the political right. After tech companies including Meta and Twitter limited Russia’s state-controlled news network RT to minimize the spread of propaganda, the Russian government announced it would move to Rumble.

“Rumble has consistently supported free speech on its platform — even speech it may find offensive,” Vance campaign spokesperson Taylor Van Kirk said in an email, adding that this is “unlike Twitter, which censors a sitting U.S. President while allowing the Chinese Communist Party, North Korea and the Ayatollah Khomeini (to name a few) to continue their propaganda.”

Gibbons, another Senate candidate, is distancing himself from a Russian business deal announced by his company, Brown Gibbons Lang & Company, in 2011. Campaign spokesperson Samantha Cotten said BGL was merely promoting the transaction of another member of the 38-company Global M&A association.

The transaction — sale of a 57% stake in a Belarusian machine-building plant to Moscow-headquartered HMS Group — “was exclusively executed by another company,” she said. HMS specializes in pipes for the Russian oil industry and one of its main customers is Gazprom, the state-owned gas giant and majority owner of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, whose operation was suspended because of the war.

Lost in the ad attacks against Timken is the fact that their intended beneficiary, Mandel, has taken thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from Timken family members, employees and PACs over the years.

According to campaign finance data made available by the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics, so have many other candidates on Ohio’s 2022 ballot. They include two other Senate candidates — Republican state Sen. Matt Dolan and the best known Democrat in the race, U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan — as well as Republican Gov. Mike DeWine and a rival in the GOP gubernatorial primary, former U.S. Rep. Jim Renacci.

Among other entanglements, the real estate company owned at the time by the family of Mandel’s then-wife, Ilana, sold off its stake in the Brooklyn Nets and Barclays Center to Russian oligarch Mikhail Prokhorov in 2016. The billionaire has since sold the assets.

## White House: Biden will travel to Europe for Ukraine talks

By AAMER MADHANI and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden will travel to Europe next week for face-to-face talks with European leaders about the Russian invasion of Ukraine, White House press secretary Jen Psaki announced Tuesday.

Biden will meet with European leaders at an extraordinary NATO summit in Brussels on March 24. He will also attend a scheduled European Council summit, where efforts to impose sanctions and further humanitarian efforts are underway.

“While he’s there, his goal is to meet in person face-to-face with his European counterparts and talk



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about, assess where we are at this point in the conflict in the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. We've been incredibly aligned to date," Psaki said. "That doesn't happen by accident. The president is a big believer in face-to-face diplomacy. So it's an opportunity to do exactly that."

The White House announced the president's travel shortly before Biden on Tuesday signed a bill providing \$13.6 billion in additional military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine as part of a \$1.5 trillion government spending measure.

Biden said at the bill signing ceremony that the U.S. was "moving urgently to further augment the support to the brave people of Ukraine, as they defend their country."

The trip follows Vice President Kamala Harris' visit to eastern flank NATO countries of Poland and Romania last week to discuss with leaders the growing refugee crisis in eastern Europe sparked by the Russian invasion and to underscore the Biden administration's support for NATO allies.

Poland's foreign minister Zbigniew Rau said Tuesday that a visit by Biden to Poland was "very probable" when he comes to Europe. More than 1.8 million Ukrainians have fled to Poland since the start of the war, according to the United Nations. More than 3 million people have fled Ukraine since Russian launched its invasion.

"It would be hard to imagine a better place for the United States and for the entire alliance to stress their position than the brightest link on the eastern flank, that Poland is," Rau told Polish state TVP INFO.

Psaki said she did not have additional details about whether Biden would visit Poland during the trip.

The White House's announcement of Biden's visit to Brussels came on the same day that leaders of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia set out for Kyiv by train despite the security risks to show their support for Ukraine. It was a visit EU officials said was not sanctioned by other members of the 27-nation bloc.

Daniel Hamilton, a former deputy assistant secretary of state for European affairs, said Biden's trip to Europe comes as the White House looks to continue to maintain what's been a largely unified western opposition to Russia since the invasion.

"As the war continues, it's important that the president show he is not sitting comfortably across the Atlantic, but that he is part of the coalition meeting with European colleagues in Europe and that the United States is a European power," said Hamilton, non-resident fellow at Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank.

## No charges against 2 Chicago officers in fatal shootings

By SARA BURNETT and DON BABWIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — No charges will be filed against the Chicago police officers who chased and fatally shot 13-year-old Adam Toledo and 22-year-old Anthony Alvarez within days of each other last year, prompting sharp criticism of how the department handles foot pursuits, a prosecutor announced Tuesday.

Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx said there was insufficient evidence to charge the officers in the deaths, which were captured on video that showed both suspects appeared to have handguns prior to the shootings.

The public release of the videos in April 2021 renewed calls for reform of the Chicago Police Department, which for decades has had a reputation for brutality, misconduct and racism. And it came as videos of police confrontations put departments around the country under heavy scrutiny, especially after the footage from 2020 that helped lead to a murder conviction in the death of George Floyd.

In both Chicago shootings, officers chased suspects on foot — a highly unpredictable situation that critics, including the U.S. Department of Justice, have said is dangerous for both officers and suspects and leads to too many unnecessary shootings.

The deaths led to protests and calls for Chicago to adopt clear guidelines for officers on pursuits, though a policy still has not been finalized.

In February, Alvarez's family sued the city of Chicago, saying it is partly responsible for his death because of the lack of a foot pursuit policy.

Foxx also was critical Tuesday of the officers in the shooting death of Alvarez, saying they created the

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situation that put them in danger. Alvarez was walking when officers approached him because of a traffic incident the night before.

Alvarez ran away, turned a corner and fell, Foxx said. When Officer Eric Solano turned the corner, Alvarez was getting up off the ground, and it appeared to the officer that Alvarez was about to shoot him, she said.

"As he (Alvarez) began to use both hands to push himself off the ground, Officer Solano arrived at the corner of the residence and observed Mr. Alvarez in a crouching position with a handgun in his right hand," Foxx said. That led Solano, she said, to believe Alvarez "was waiting to ambush him."

But Tim Grace, an attorney who represented Solano as well as the other officer, Eric Stillman, said Foxx's criticism in the shooting of Alvarez was unfair.

"Police have the duty to enforce the law and the idea that someone can break the law, drive without a license and run from the police is wrong," he said. "If you don't want (police officers) to enforce the law, just tell them."

In the Toledo shooting, police were on the scene after a gunshot detection system the city uses recorded eight shots in the area. When they arrived, the only two people they saw were Toledo and Ruben Roman, then 21, both of whom immediately started to run away.

Stillman saw that Toledo had his hands near his waistband, causing him to believe that the teen had a gun, Foxx said. She said that the teen raised his right hand so quickly that it was impossible to determine if he'd dropped the gun.

Between the time he began to turn with the right hand that had been holding the gun and the time the officer shot him when he was no longer holding the gun "was estimated to be 838 milliseconds," Foxx said.

The prosecutor said she met with families of both Toledo and Alvarez earlier Tuesday. In meeting with the Alvarez family and their attorney, Foxx said the family was "unmistakably heartbroken" and had "many, many questions" about how officers approached him, including why they didn't come to their house if they knew they were looking for him.

Foxx also described Toledo's family as "heartbroken."

In a statement, attorneys for the family said they are "profoundly disappointed" that Stillman will not face criminal charges and that they are pursuing a civil case against Stillman and the city.

"Officer Stillman's use of deadly force was excessive and posed a threat to the safety of Adam and others," attorneys Adeena Weiss Ortiz and Joel Hirschhorn said. "We will be contacting the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division to address this horrific travesty."

Foxx said the officers in both cases demonstrated they feared for their lives at the moment they fired. But she added she has "deep concerns" about the Chicago Police Department's foot pursuit policy in both cases. The city has said it is reviewing the policy.

"I think in the instances we've seen, especially with Mr. Alvarez, we have to ask ourselves, was this worth the effort?" Foxx said.

After the shootings last year, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot demanded the police department come up with a clear foot pursuit policy — something that has been discussed for years but has not happened. Chicago police now say they are finalizing a policy, though one still is not in place.

In some other cities, officers are given clear guidance about when and under what conditions to pursue people by foot.

Foxx said she believes there is "a full awareness" among Lightfoot, police Superintendent David Brown and the head of the Civilian Office of Police Accountability that new guidance on foot pursuits is needed.

"I think the deaths that we have seen, the risk to our officers, absolutely necessitates that we have a foot pursuit policy that keeps everyone safe," she said.

Stillman, the officer who fatally shot Toledo, is on active duty and Solano has been relieved of his police powers pending the results of internal investigation by the department, according to CPD spokesman Tom Ahern.

**Embattled Federal Reserve pick Raskin withdraws nomination**

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By ZEKE MILLER and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sarah Bloom Raskin withdrew her nomination Tuesday to a position on the Federal Reserve's Board of Governors after a key Democrat had joined with all Senate Republicans to oppose her confirmation.

West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin announced Monday that he opposed Raskin's confirmation, and all Republicans in the evenly-split 50-50 Senate had indicated that they planned to block her nomination for the position of the Fed's top banking regulator.

Republicans have argued that Raskin would use the Fed's regulatory authority to discourage banks from lending to oil and gas companies. Democrats, as well as many banking executives, countered that Raskin's views aren't out of the mainstream and said she simply wants the Fed to consider the risks that climate change poses to banks, insurance companies and other financial firms.

President Joe Biden, who nominated Raskin in January, said she had "unparalleled experience" in areas like cybersecurity, climate change, and consumer protection.

The president asserted in a statement that "Sarah was subject to baseless attacks from industry and conservative interest groups."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki had reiterated Tuesday that Raskin had Biden's "strong support."

Raskin's nomination had been stuck in the Senate Banking Committee after Republicans last month unanimously refused to vote on it in an effort to prevent her being approved on a party-line vote.

Sen. Pat Toomey from Pennsylvania, the senior Republican on the committee, also charged that Raskin inappropriately used her connections with the Fed to benefit a Colorado financial technology company, Reserve Trust. Raskin joined Reserve Trust in January 2017, after the firm had applied for a "master account" at the Fed, which would enable it to quickly transfer large sums of money without going through a bank. Reserve Trust's application was turned down in mid-2017.

But the company reapplied and won approval the next year from the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. Raskin had contacted the Kansas City Fed in 2017 after the company's application had been denied. The Kansas City Fed said it had approved Reserve Trust's second application because the company changed its business model.

Raskin denied that she had taken any inappropriate action. But Toomey complained that she did not sufficiently respond to committee Republicans' questions on the matter.

In her letter to Biden withdrawing from consideration, Raskin wrote, "It was — and is — my considered view that the perils of climate change must be added to the list of serious risks that the Federal Reserve considers as it works to ensure the stability and resiliency of our economy and financial system."

Chair Jerome Powell, who enjoys broad support among congressional Republicans, has taken steps to increase the Fed's scrutiny of climate change and how it may affect the safety and soundness of banks.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, the Ohio Democrat who is chairman of the Banking Committee, said the panel would vote on Biden's four other nominees for the Fed, who were also delayed by the Republicans' boycott. Biden has nominated Powell, who is now serving as acting chair, to a second four-year term.

The president has also nominated Lael Brainard, a Fed governor, for the central bank's No. 2 post, and economists Lisa Cook and Philip Jefferson for positions on the board.

"Sadly, the American people will be denied a thoughtful, experienced public servant who was ready to fight inflation, stand up to Wall Street and corporate special interests, and protect our economy from foreign cyber attacks and climate change," Brown said.

Raskin previously served as Fed governor from 2010 through 2014 and then as the deputy Treasury secretary. She was approved unanimously by the Senate to both positions.

## March Madness guide: What to look for in the NCAA Tournament

By JOHN MARSHALL AP Basketball Writer

March Madness is about to get its roar back.

A year after attendance was limited, the 2022 NCAA tournaments are a full-go for fans again. Arenas

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will be packed from San Diego to Buffalo, the road to a title paved with the sounds we've come to expect with all those buzzer beaters and breakout performances.

Two years of pent-up energy is about to be released and it's going to be a noisy ride.

Here's a few things to watch on the men's side as the NCAA Tournament kicks off with the First Four in Dayton, Ohio:

## THE FAVORITES

Gonzaga. The Zags went to the title game a year ago. They may be even better this season.

Arizona. Tommy Lloyd has taken what he helped create with Mark Few at Gonzaga and turned the Wildcats into a powerhouse.

Kansas. Ochai Agbaji and the Jayhawks have the type of team that can make a deep run. They may have the easiest road to the Final Four, too.

Baylor. The Bears won last year's national championship despite not winning the Big 12 title. It could be a repeat performance.

## POSSIBLE CINDERELLAS

South Dakota State. The Jackrabbits put points up in bunches and haven't lost since mid-December.

Loyola Chicago. Never doubt a team with Sister Jean on its side.

Murray State. The Racers have three players who can take over a game at any time and hit the tournament on a 20-game winning streak.

Chattanooga. The Mocs have some bite and a big-time scorer in Malachi Smith.

## STAR PLAYERS

Chet Holmgren, Gonzaga. Built like a center, plays like a guard, unlike anyone we've ever seen.

Paolo Banchero, Duke. Potential No. 1 NBA draft pick has the game to take Coach K on a deep run in his final NCAA Tournament.

Oscar Tshiebwe, Kentucky. The Wildcats' big man wants a rebound, he's going to get it. Got an offensive game to go with that tenacity, too.

Keegan Murray, Iowa. Electric and efficient. He could be this year's bracket breakout star.

Jaden Ivey, Purdue. His first step looks like a blur to flailing defenders. His finishes at the rim make the nightly highlight reels.

Peter Kiss, Bryant. Loves to talk trash. Has the game to back it up with a nation-leading 25.1 points per game.

## MUST-WATCH GAMES

No. 4 Arkansas vs. No. 13 Vermont, West Region, Thursday in Buffalo. Eric Musselman's Razorbacks had a bit of trouble with Colgate last year before making a run to the Elite Eight. The veteran Catamounts will be a tough out with their efficient, five-out offense.

No. 6 Texas vs. No. 11 Virginia Tech, East Region, Friday in Milwaukee. The Longhorns have a scrappy defense, but closed the season with three straight losses. The Hokies have gotten hot at the right time, winning four games in four days to win the ACC Tournament.

No. 7 Michigan State vs. No. 10 Davidson, West Region, Friday in Greenville, South Carolina. The Spartans are always dangerous in the bracket with Tom Izzo at the helm. The Wildcats have been known to pull off upsets — remember Steph Curry's run in 2008? — and have two guards who can fill it up in Foster Loyer and Hyunjung Lee.

No. 7 Ohio State vs. No. 10 Loyola Chicago, South Region, Friday in Pittsburgh. The Ramblers have had a knack for pulling off upsets with Sister Jean in their corner, including that memorable run to the 2018 Final Four. The Buckeyes have high-volume scorer E.J. Liddell on their side, but limped down the stretch in the build-up to the bracket.

## ODDS

The favorites to win it all, according to FanDuel Sportsbook: Gonzaga plus-300, Arizona plus-600, Kentucky plus -850, Kansas plus-1,000.

Longest shots: 22 teams are plus-50,000, including Iowa State, TCU, Creighton and Notre Dame.

Best bets to reach the title game: Gonzaga-Arizona plus-950, Gonzaga-Kansas plus-1,100, Gonzaga-



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Auburn plus-1,600.

Conference of national champion: West Coast plus-290, SEC and Big 12 plus-370, Pac-12 plus-500.

Biggest spreads, first round: Gonzaga minus-23.5 vs. Georgia State; Baylor minus-21.5 vs. Norfolk State; Duke minus 18.5 vs. Cal State-Fullerton.

## HOW TO WATCH

Get the remote ready! Find the full TV schedule here, including tipoff times and links to stream. And hurry: First Four games are Tuesday, March 15 and Wednesday, March 16 (truTV). First-round games are Thursday, March 17 and Friday, March 18 (CBS, TNT, TBS and truTV). And second-round games are Saturday, March 19 and Sunday, March 20 (CBS, TNT, TBS and truTV).

## Senate approves bill to make daylight saving time permanent

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate unanimously approved a measure Tuesday that would make daylight saving time permanent across the United States next year.

The bipartisan bill, named the Sunshine Protection Act, would ensure Americans would no longer have to change their clocks twice a year. But the bill still needs approval from the House, and the signature of President Joe Biden, to become law.

"No more switching clocks, more daylight hours to spend outside after school and after work, and more smiles — that is what we get with permanent Daylight Saving Time," Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts, the original cosponsor of the legislation, said in a statement.

Markey was joined on the chamber floor by senators from both parties as they made the case for how making daylight saving time permanent would have positive effects on public health and the economy and even cut energy consumption.

"Changing the clock twice a year is outdated and unnecessary," Republican Sen. Rick Scott of Florida said.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again: Americans want more sunshine and less depression — people in this country, all the way from Seattle to Miami, want the Sunshine Protection Act," Sen. Patty Murray of Washington added.

Nearly a dozen states across the U.S. have already standardized daylight saving time.

Daylight saving time is defined as a period between spring and fall when clocks in most parts of the country are set one hour ahead of standard time. Americans last changed their clocks on Sunday. Standard time lasts for roughly four months in most of the country.

Members of Congress have long been interested in the potential benefits and costs of daylight saving time since it was first adopted as a wartime measure in 1942. The proposal will now go to the House, where the Energy and Commerce Committee had a hearing to discuss possible legislation last week.

Rep. Frank Pallone, the chairman of the committee, agreed in his opening statement at the hearing that it is "time we stop changing our clocks." But he said he was undecided about whether daylight saving time or standard time is the way to go.

Markey said Tuesday, "Now, I call on my colleagues in the House of Representatives to lighten up and swiftly pass the Sunshine Protection Act."

## Tennessee lawmakers introduce Texas-styled abortion bill

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Despite already enacting one of the strictest abortion bans in the U.S., Tennessee Republicans on Tuesday began advancing yet another anti-abortion measure strategically written to sidestep federal court challenges.

The proposal is almost a direct copycat of legislation currently enacted in Texas, which not only prohibits doctors from performing abortion before most people know they're pregnant but also allows private citizens to file civil lawsuits against anyone who helps someone else get the procedure after six weeks into pregnancy.

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The Tennessee version introduced Tuesday would ban all abortions rather than allowing a patient to have a six-week window. But similar to the Texas model, it still would make legal challenges difficult because the government would not be the enforcer.

"This bill is modeled directly after the legislation passed in Texas last year. Abortions since that bill has been passed have dropped 60% in Texas," said GOP Rep. Rebecca Alexander, the legislation's sponsor, while addressing a House subcommittee.

The proposed abortion ban does not have an exception for rape or incest, but those who impregnated a patient "through an act of rape, sexual assault, or incest" would not be allowed to sue an abortion provider. However, a rapist's relatives could each bring a civil action.

"I think you may not understand what your bill does ... this allows people who have no knowledge, no standing, that have not been harmed to bring a lawsuit against any doctor that they believe has performed an abortion," said Democratic Rep. Bob Freeman.

"My intent is to bring a bill that protects the unborn life in this state," Alexander responded.

The House panel agreed to advance the bill, but it still would have to clear the full House and Senate chambers before it could get before Gov. Bill Lee's desk for his signature.

For decades, Republicans across the U.S. have sought to chip away the constitutional right to abortion, which is protected under the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling. Yet the Texas law has been one of the rare strict measures to continue to be implemented even as it faces court challenges.

While at least seven states introduced bills mimicking the Texas anti-abortion law earlier this year, to date only Idaho's GOP-controlled Statehouse has sent a version to the state's governor for approval.

In Tennessee, Gov. Lee had previously signed off on a sweeping anti-abortion ban limiting the procedure at around the six week mark. However, the 2019 law has never been enacted after several abortion providers quickly filed lawsuits against the state and federal courts agreed to block the law's implementation as the challenge makes it way through court.

Lee has been vocal in his opposition to abortion, but he has held off on throwing his support behind the Texas-style legislation.

"We're currently in a situation with the existing legislation in place that is being reviewed by the court and that's a very important process. My sense is that we need to play that out ... we have a very clear footprint on our strategy," Lee told reporters earlier this month.

## A year later, spa shooting victims' families grieve and heal

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Robert Peterson misses spending Sundays with his mother, cooking and running errands. Dana Toole plays a video of her sister over and over just to hear her voice. Michael Webb has started speaking out about gun control since his ex-wife's fatal shooting.

A year after a gunman killed eight people at three Georgia massage businesses, their family members and friends are struggling with grief and trying to heal while dealing with the intense public attention focused on the horrific slayings.

"Our whole world just changed. It blew up in that moment," said Peterson, whose mother, Yong Ae Yue, was among the dead. "It was a bit overwhelming. We didn't ask to be here. It was weird to have people so interested."

Robert Aaron Long, 22, shot and killed four people — Xiaojie "Emily" Tan, 49; Daoyou Feng, 44; Delaina Yaun, 33; and Paul Michels, 54 — and seriously injured a fifth person at Youngs Asian Massage in Cherokee County on March 16, 2021. Authorities say he then drove about 30 miles (48 kilometers) south to Atlanta, where he killed three women — Suncha Kim, 69; Soon Chung Park, 74; and Hyun Jung Grant, 51 — at Gold Spa, crossed the street and killed Yue, 63, at Aromatherapy Spa.

Two of the Cherokee County victims and all of the Atlanta victims were women of Asian descent. The killings heightened anger and fear among Asian Americans already experiencing a rise in hostility, which has continued. The shootings brought increased awareness to that trend and galvanized more people, including non-Asians, to get involved in the movement to fight it.

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Many Asian Americans and their allies bristled at suggestions that Long, who told investigators he felt ashamed of sexual urges and saw the spas as a source of temptation, wasn't motivated by racial bias.

The Cherokee County district attorney, citing the racial diversity of the victims there — two of whom were white and one Hispanic — among other things, did not find evidence of racial animus. But the Fulton County district attorney is pursuing a sentencing enhancement under the state hate crimes law, saying she believes race and gender played a role in the Atlanta killings.

Webb — who was still very close to Tan, his ex-wife — said the shootings opened his eyes to anti-Asian violence and made him worry for his two daughters, who are both of Asian descent.

Noting that Long bought his gun the day of the shootings, Webb speculated that if there had been a waiting period, "there's at least a reasonable likelihood (Tan) would still be alive."

A gun owner for decades, Webb said he's long had moderate views on gun control. Background checks, mandatory safety classes and waiting periods make sense to him and, since the shootings, he's spoken out about that publicly.

Toole, Yaun's half sister, said she was terrified to leave her house after the shootings and is considering getting a gun. A newlywed with an infant daughter and teenage son, Yaun was at the Cherokee County spa with her husband, who survived. If she'd had a gun, maybe she'd be alive, Toole said.

"She had no way of defending herself," said Toole, who fears leaving her own children without a mother.

Long pleaded guilty in July to murder and other charges in the Cherokee County shooting. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Toole said she felt angry watching him in court because she didn't see any remorse. But she agreed with the district attorney's decision not to seek the death penalty.

"Just because he took other people's lives that day, to me it didn't give us the right to take his," she said.

Webb said he and his daughter, Jami — Tan's daughter whom he adopted after they married — favored the death penalty for Long. But after the district attorney explained the lengthy process for a death penalty case, they quickly came around to the idea of locking him up for life and putting it behind them.

"We really felt a relief it was over," he said.

Long still faces charges including murder in the Atlanta killings and has pleaded not guilty. The Fulton County district attorney is seeking the death penalty in addition to a hate crime sentencing enhancement.

Peterson said he and other victims' family members agreed the death penalty was appropriate, but it's more important to him to have the killings labeled a hate crime. As the son of a Korean mother and a Black father, he said he's conflicted because he doesn't generally support the death penalty and its disproportionate use on people of color.

With a background in sociology and social justice, Peterson wants to start an organization in his mother's honor to fight discrimination and promote social equity.

It's the small things about his mother — her laughter, her cooking and the way she loved hearing about her sons' lives — that Peterson misses. He'd get annoyed when she'd call and ask him to drive from Atlanta to her home in the suburbs to change a smoke detector battery or update her computer. But now he lives in his mother's house and doing the same little tasks for his widowed neighbor "fills me with joy," he said, tears welling in his eyes.

"Being and feeling wanted and needed, feeling safe — that's what I miss most," Peterson said.

Toole hasn't visited her sister's grave since her funeral because she doesn't want to believe she's gone. She breaks down when she drives past the cemetery or the spa. On Toole's 30th birthday, seven weeks after the shooting, she stayed in because her sister wasn't there to celebrate as planned.

The close pair loved going to Six Flags amusement park and had water fights at family parties. Toole even recalls Yaun's faults with affection: "She was always late, but it didn't matter because she always showed up."

Though Webb and Tan divorced roughly a decade ago, they spoke regularly. Tan, who owned the Cherokee County spa, worked constantly and saved most of her earnings, planning to retire in her early 50s to travel and spend time with her family.

"The sadness really comes from the fact that her life was cut short before she could fulfill her dream,"

Webb said. "She was healthy and strong. It's just so, so sad."

## 'I will go back to help': Women head home to aid war effort

By RAFAL NIEDZIELSKI and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

PRZEMYSL, Poland (AP) — While over 3 million people have fled Ukraine since Russia's invasion, a small but growing number are heading in the other direction. At first they were foreign volunteers, Ukrainian expatriate men returning to fight and people delivering aid. Now, increasingly, women are also going back.

Motivated by a desire to help loved ones in trouble, or to contribute to the defense and survival of their country and compatriots in ways large and small, these women are braving the bombs that have increasingly pounded Ukraine since Russian forces invaded on Feb. 24.

Many are not refugees but Ukrainian women who had been living and working abroad. Others had already chosen to stay put in their country but were forced to cross the border to shop for needed goods as supplies dried up under the onslaught at home.

"I will go back and help. I am a health worker, so the hospitals need help," said Iryna Orel, 50, lugging her luggage as she boarded a train from Przemysl, Poland, to Lviv in western Ukraine. "And I will stay until the end."

With Ukraine's government ordering men to stay and fight, the vast majority of people fleeing Ukraine have been women, children and the elderly. For those who can't or won't leave, the perils they face are many, and images such as those of a mortally wounded pregnant woman rushed on a stretcher from a maternity hospital in Mariupol testify to the dangers.

Still, some women have chosen to head back toward the gunfire and bloodshed to contribute in whatever way they can.

Reached by phone after arriving in the port city of Odesa, which has so far remained under Ukrainian government control, Orel said she was frightened at first by the air raid sirens and sounds of explosives, but "sitting and shaking with fear does not help."

She envisions her role as providing medical care, but other women might choose to help defend the country militarily, she said.

"Women can fight," she said. "Many women are patriotic to defend Ukraine — why not?"

Women rushing into war zones or taking part in war efforts is nothing new. Female soldiers were a visible part of the Ukrainian military before the war, including in combat roles. Some women, like many men, are taking up arms for the first time. Plus, gender equality in the workplace as well as the military has traditionally been more common in post-Soviet states like Ukraine than many other parts of the world.

Since the invasion, Polish border guards have tallied over 195,000 crossings of people from Poland to Ukraine, more than four in five Ukrainian nationals, spokeswoman Anna Michalska said Tuesday. That includes people who come and return — to buy food and other supplies in Poland and go back, or who bring relatives across and return. So some people are counted a number of times.

Poland has taken in more than 1.8 million refugees — over 60% of the total exodus of 3 million people since the invasion, according to U.N. agencies. The U.N. refugee agency had initially predicted some 4 million refugees would flee — a figure that may soon be eclipsed.

"What to say, really? Three million refugees in the space of just over two weeks. This is frightening and it doesn't stop," the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, said in an interview in the Afghan capital, Kabul, where he was visiting to assure Afghans that despite the horrors of the war raging in Ukraine they have not been forgotten.

"Everybody's asking how many refugees will come out of Ukraine," he said. "The answer is very simple: I simply don't know."

Aid deliveries are making their way into Ukraine, as well as reported flows of weapons and fighters ready to use them. The International Committee for the Red Cross said 200 tons of medical supplies and relief items had arrived in the country, including water, mattresses, blankets, food, first aid kits, plastic tarps and more than 5,000 body bags.



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Less noticed has been the entry or cross-border shuttling of women who are either trying to bring help or stay in the country to continue their lives as best they can.

"I am returning to Ukraine to help people evacuate," said Maria Khalica, who lives in Italy and was headed to the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv. "I am in a more stable state now than my friends, who are under rocket attacks and bombs."

"I know that Kyiv is also going to be occupied and we are taking the last chance to help other people" there, Khalica said, adding that she believes Russian forces will eventually seize the capital.

Some women are returning to join their families and others to help in any way they can, either as health workers or with the army.

"We plan to return to the family and we will decide with the family what to do next" said Olga Simanova, 56, who traveled from Germany to return to her family's hometown of Vinnycja.

Meanwhile, the number of those fleeing continues to grow.

James Elder, a spokesman for UNICEF, said some 1.4 million children have fled Ukraine since the invasion — or about 73,000 per day on average.

That, he said, amounts to "55 every minute. So we are almost — since war started on the 24th of February — (at a point where) a child has become a refugee out of Ukraine every second."

They have fled to countries across Eastern Europe: Romania has taken in more than 450,000, Moldova more than 337,000, Hungary over 263,000 and Slovakia some 213,000, according to the latest UNHCR tally on Tuesday. The Polish capital of Warsaw, alone, has taken in about 300,000 refugees, about a 15% increase of its population of more than 1.7 million.

"These are enormous numbers," said Moldovan Foreign Minister Nicu Popescu, who signed a 10 million-euro (\$11 million) agreement with Italy on Tuesday to help with the refugee crisis. "The number of refugees represents 4% of the whole Moldovan population."

## Poodles pop in popularity, but Labs still No. 1 US dog breed

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Labrador retrievers are still tugging hardest on U.S. dog lovers' heartstrings, but poodles just strutted back into the American Kennel Club's top five most popular dog breeds for the first time in nearly a quarter-century.

The club's annual popularity rankings came out Tuesday, drawn from more than 800,000 purebred puppies and older pooches that joined the nation's oldest canine registry last year.

With 197 recognized breeds, the list ranges from such familiar furry faces as Labs — No. 1 for an unprecedented 31 straight years — to the newly added Biewer terrier (making a strong debut at #82) and unusual pups like the hairless Xoloitzcuintli (#119).

For dog fans, there's plenty to dig into (like a dachshund, #10) and point out (like a pointer, #120). So we've rounded up (like a border collie, #31) some highlights:

### TOP 10

After Labs, the top 10 are: French bulldogs, golden retrievers, German shepherds, poodles, bulldogs, beagles, Rottweilers, German shorthaired pointers and dachshunds.

### OODLES OF POODLES

Poodles reigned as top dog from 1960 to 1982 before falling off somewhat in popularity. But in the new statistics, they reclaimed the fifth spot for the first time since 1997. (The standard, miniature and toy sizes are all counted as one breed.)

With their proud stance and elaborate cut in the show ring, "they do have a reputation, in some circles, as just being froufrou," says longtime poodle owner and sometime breeder Page Hinds-Athan of Roswell, Georgia. "There's definitely more to them."

Poodles historically were water retrievers, and they remain athletic animals renowned for their smarts, not to mention their allergy-friendly coats. Hinds-Athan's poodles have made therapy visits in hospitals and compete in obedience. Other poodles work as guide dogs for the blind, hunt or compete in agility or

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other dog sports.

Their intelligence comes with some high expectations, Hinds-Athan says: In training, "if you're going to fuss at them, you'd better be really right. Because if you're not really fair with them, they remember it."

AND DOODLES?

Poodles also make up part of several popular hybrids, such as Labradoodles, maltipoos and sheepadoodles. The AKC, a governing body for many dog shows, doesn't currently recognize any of those as breeds. But AKC spokesperson Brandi Hunter says poodle-mix fans have made some inquiries about what recognition would involve.

One key requirement is articulating an ideal for the breed, in order to attain some consistency.

"The predictability is one of the things that draws people to purebred dogs," Hunter explains.

ON THE RARE SIDE

The rarest breed last year was the Norwegian lundehund, consistently sparse in the U.S. The smallish dogs boast extra toes and unusual flexibility that once helped them climb Norwegian cliffs to hunt puffins nesting in narrow crevices.

BREEDS ON THE RISE

The standings often don't change a lot from year to year, but they do over time. Eight breeds, from the low-lying Pembroke Welsh corgi (#11) to the towering great Dane (#17), have entered the top 25 since the start of the century.

Some have made Olympian leaps in popularity. French bulldogs, now #2 and a common sight from TV commercials to cosmopolitan streets, ranked a distant 71st in 2000. The cane corso, which wasn't recognized until 2010, has since climbed from 51st to 21st.

The imposing, mastiff-style cane corso goes back many centuries in rural Italy as a farm guardian that also pulled small carts and hunted wild boar. Its versatility endures, says Anthony Simonski, who has owned or bred corsi (that's the proper plural) that compete in agility, dock diving and other sports and have appeared in TV shows and music videos.

While the dogs are protective, "it's not about being mean — it's about understanding its job," says Simonski, of Acworth, Georgia.

Simonski has owned corsi since 1998 and is married to Cane Corso Association of America President Rebecca Simonski. He has mixed feelings about their growing popularity, feeling that it draws questionable breeders.

"There's a side of you going, 'Oh, my God, the cat's out of the bag.' But the real problem is what people are doing with that cat once it's out of the bag," he says.

DOG BREEDING DEBATED

Some animal-rights advocates say dog breeding itself is a problem. They argue that fanciers focus more on dogs' appearance than their health and that promoting purebreds ends up fueling puppy mills and stranding other dogs in shelters.

The AKC says it and its affiliated breed clubs champion and invest in dog health, including through an AKC-affiliated foundation. The club also maintains that properly done breeding has a purpose: to produce dogs with known traits, from size to sniffing ability, that fit different human needs and lifestyles.

New purebred registrations, which are voluntary, have increased by 45% in a decade, the club says.

## Ukraine war may lead to rethinking of US defense of Europe

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine and his push to upend the broader security order in Europe may lead to a historic shift in American thinking about defense of the continent. Depending on how far Putin goes, this could mean a buildup of U.S. military power in Europe not seen since the Cold War.

The prospect of a bigger U.S. military footprint in Europe is a remarkable turnaround from just two years ago.

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In 2020, President Donald Trump ordered thousands of American troops out of Germany as part of his argument that Europeans were undeserving allies. Just days after taking office, President Joe Biden stopped the withdrawal before it could start, and his administration has stressed NATO's importance even as Biden identifies China as the main long-term threat to U.S. security.

Then came Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"We are in a new era of sustained confrontation with Russia," says Alexander Vershbow, a former U.S. ambassador to Russia and former deputy secretary-general of NATO. He argues that the United States, in cooperation with NATO allies, will need to establish a more muscular stance to deal with a more threatening Russia. That is especially so in Eastern Europe, where Russia's proximity poses a problem for the three Baltic nations that are former Soviet states.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was flying to Europe on Tuesday for his second recent round of Ukraine consultations at NATO headquarters in Brussels. He also will travel to two Eastern European NATO countries — Slovakia, which borders Ukraine, and Bulgaria, which does not. After a NATO meeting last month, Austin visited two other allies on the eastern flank — Poland and Lithuania.

As Austin was en route, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg made it clear Tuesday that the 30-nation military alliance is set to radically change its security stance in Europe in response to Russia's war on Ukraine. He said defense ministers will discuss possible changes when they meet Wednesday.

"We need to reset our military posture for this new reality," Stoltenberg told reporters. "On land, this could include substantially more forces in the eastern part of the alliance, at higher readiness, and with more prepositioned equipment."

He added that NATO "will also consider major increases to our air and naval deployments, strengthening our integrated air and missile defense, reinforcing our cyber defenses, and holding more and larger exercises."

In just the past two months, the U.S. presence in Europe has jumped from about 80,000 troops to about 100,000, which is nearly as many as were there in 1997 when the United States and its NATO allies began an expansion of the alliance that Putin says threatens Russia and must be reversed. By comparison, in 1991, the year the Soviet Union dissolved, the United States had 305,000 troops in Europe, including 224,000 in Germany alone, according to Pentagon records. The number then dropped steadily, reaching 101,000 in 2005 and about 64,000 as recently as 2020.

This year's U.S. troop additions are billed as temporary, but there's no certainty how long they'll stay. They include an armored brigade of the 1st Infantry Division, totaling about 4,000 soldiers, to Germany, and a similar-size infantry brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, to Poland. Numerous Army headquarters units also have been sent to Poland and Germany. Austin also sent F-35A fighter jets to NATO's eastern flank and Apache attack helicopters to the Baltic states.

A recent Pentagon review of its worldwide military presence concluded that troop levels and positions in Europe were about right. But in testimony before a House committee several days after Putin invaded Ukraine, Mara Karlin, a senior Pentagon official who oversaw the 2021 review, said that conclusion will have to be reconsidered.

The Pentagon must "ensure that we've got deterrence of Russia and that we can absolutely 150% say that NATO is safe and secure," not just in light of Russia's invasion but for the longer term, she said March 1.

Putin's war in Ukraine has prompted a rethinking of regional defense needs not just by Washington but also some European allies, including Germany, which last month broke with a longstanding policy of not exporting weapons to conflict zones by sending anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons to Ukraine. Germany also committed to a much bigger defense budget.

"A new reality," Chancellor Olaf Scholz declared.

Putin has not only demanded that Ukraine disavow its ambition to join NATO but also insisted the alliance withdraw its forces from NATO's eastern flank — demands the U.S. and NATO reject as counter to the fundamental rights of nations to decide their foreign relations for themselves and of NATO's basic commitment to provide security for all members equally.

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If Russia were to take control of the entirety of Ukraine, it would be on the border of additional NATO countries, including Romania, Slovakia and Hungary. Poland and Lithuania already share a land border with the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, headquarters of the Baltic Fleet of the Russian Navy. There is concern that Putin could decide to make a play for control of that 60-mile-long land corridor, known as the Suwalki Gap, that connects Kaliningrad to Belarus.

Vershbow, the former deputy NATO secretary-general who is now a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council, recommends that the U.S. and NATO move beyond their current reliance on light, battalion-size battle groups in Eastern Europe to instead deploy heavier, larger and permanent forces there.

Such a transition on NATO's eastern flank is just the sort of thing Putin says is a threat to Russia and says he will no longer tolerate. He has demanded a return to the arrangements that existed in 1997, when the NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed.

In that document, Moscow acknowledged that NATO would go ahead with plans to invite Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to join the alliance. Notably, the document also said that "in the foreseeable security environment," NATO would forgo "additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces on the territory of new members."

Does that foreclose the option of a U.S. troop buildup in Eastern Europe? No, says a new report by the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. It argues that the restrictions on NATO's military presence in Eastern Europe as described in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act are irrelevant in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"We are in new, dangerous territory — a period of sustained tensions, military moves and countermoves, and major intermittent military crises in the Euro-Atlantic area that will ebb and flow for at least the remainder of the 2020s, if not longer," the report says.

## War in Ukraine is center stage at Hungary's election rallies

By JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Two mass rallies held by opposing political forces filled the streets of Hungary's capital on Tuesday in mutual displays of strength before the country's April 3 election, a contest that will determine whether populist Prime Minister Viktor Orban wins a fourth consecutive term.

The campaign rallies, organized by supporters of Orban's ruling Fidesz party and a coalition of six opposition parties aiming to unseat the autocratic leader, were dominated by anxiety over Russia's war on neighboring Ukraine and the future of Hungary's position in a changing geopolitical landscape.

Several hundred thousand Orban supporters gathered Tuesday on the west bank of the Danube River before surging across the city's Margaret Bridge toward the Hungarian Parliament, where Orban spoke at length about the need for Hungary to keep out of the war in Ukraine.

"It is in our interests to not be a sacrificial pawn in someone else's war. We can't win anything in this war, but we have everything to lose," said Orban, who has led Hungary since 2010. "Not a single Hungarian can be left between the Ukrainian anvil and the Russian hammer."

Orban's election campaign — previously focused on socially divisive issues like his opposition to immigration and hostility toward the LGBTQ community — was upended by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Orban since has carefully sought to balance Hungary's fraught relationship with its allies in the European Union and the NATO military alliance with its close ties to Russia under President Vladimir Putin.

Widely considered Putin's closest ally in the EU, Orban has in recent weeks agreed to back the sanctions imposed on Russia by the 27-nation bloc and condemned Moscow's violent assault on Ukraine, though without ever mentioning Putin by name.

Yet as Russian forces batter Ukrainian cities and more than 250,000 Ukrainian refugees have fled the violence into Hungary, Orban insisted that his country stay out of the war. He has refused to supply Ukraine with military aid or allow shipments of lethal weapons to cross into Ukraine from Hungary.

Orban has sought to portray himself and his government as the guarantors of Hungary's security, and leveled dubious claims that the opposition parties would send arms and troops to Ukraine.



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"The left wants to send Hungarian weapons and soldiers to the front lines," Orban told his supporters. "We won't allow the left to draw Hungary into this war."

Fidesz supporter Erzsebet Labady, a 79-year-old retiree from Budapest, said she believed the prime minister and his government were working to restore peace in Ukraine, and that Orban's close relations with Moscow had economically benefited Hungary.

"If Orban was ever on good terms with Putin, he only did it for the good of Hungary so that we get raw materials," she said.

That's not the view of United for Hungary, a coalition of six opposition parties that have joined forces to counter the ruling Fidesz party. It has framed the April election as a historic choice between Western democracy and Eastern autocracy symbolized by Putin's Russia, and sought to exact accountability on Orban's government for its close Russian ties.

At a separate rally of thousands on the Danube River, the leader of the opposition coalition, independent conservative Peter Marki-Zay, said the election choice for voters this year has "never been so easy... Instead of the East, we choose Europe."

"Because of the selfishness and lust for power of our own leader ... we have chosen the backward East over the developing West," Marki-Zay said. "We have voluntarily gone back to the wrong side of history, but in 20 days there will be elections in Hungary."

The opposition parties, which polls show narrowly trail Fidesz less than three weeks before the election, have criticized Orban for increasing Hungary's energy dependence on Russia and for pushing for close diplomatic ties with Moscow that they say have betrayed Hungary's commitments to its Western allies.

Opposition supporter Gyorgy Hortobagyi, 54, said while he considered himself a conservative, he feared that "we are again drifting into the Soviet sphere of interest."

"The Russian empire has never brought us any good for hundreds of years, and now, unfortunately, Orban has taken that line," Hortobagyi said. "I'm terribly sad because I see that my children might live in such a Russian sphere of influence again if we don't act."

Also speaking at the opposition rally was former Polish prime minister and EU official Donald Tusk, who said that an "authoritarian, censorious, corrupt state" had developed in Budapest under Orban, one that has taken an ambiguous position on the war in Ukraine.

"No decent, honest man should have any doubt whatsoever which side he is on in this struggle," Tusk said, adding that the results of Hungary's election were important not only for Hungary, but for all of Europe, including Ukraine.

Yet Orban's balancing act between the West and Russia resonates with his supporters. After his speech, Istvan Voros, 74, said Orban's policies were ensuring peace for Hungary.

"This is a double game and Orban is good at it," he said. "I'm not a politician, just a voter who wants to stay on good terms with the Russians."

## Saget's fractures possibly caused by fall on carpeted floor

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Fractures around Bob Saget's eye sockets and bleeding around his brain were possibly caused by the comedian hitting "something hard, covered by something soft," such as a carpeted floor, according to a report released Tuesday that provides more details of the TV's star's death.

In the incident report released by the Orange County Sheriff's Office in Orlando, a detective notes that Chief Medical Examiner Joshua Stephany said the fractures "would have stunned Mr. Saget," and that he would have experienced dizziness.

Had he been with people at the time, they would have noticed "confusion, balance, and/or slurred speech," the report states. It does not pinpoint a location for Saget's fall, but Stephany told the detective it would have been impossible with that type of injury for Saget to make a two-hour drive from the Jacksonville area to Orlando as he did the night before his body was discovered.

The medical examiner concluded after the autopsy in January that Saget died from an accidental blow

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to the head, likely from a backwards fall. Investigators called to the luxury hotel suite found no evidence of struggle, foul play or signs that anyone else had been in Saget's suite during his stay. A toxicology analysis didn't show any illicit drugs or toxins in Saget's body.

There were no signs of blood on the hotel bed's sheets or bedspread, according to the report released Tuesday.

The report ruled out countertops, tables and nightstands in the hotel room since those all had hard surfaces. It noted that most of the hotel suite was carpeted and that the headboard of the bed was lightly padded, listing the two items as "possible mechanisms of injury."

An initial examination of Saget's body in the hotel suite showed that he had slight swelling and small bruises in the corner of his left eye. "There were no other indications of any type of trauma or injury," the report states.

A judge in Florida on Monday agreed to make permanent an order that prohibits the release of photos, video or other records related to the investigation into Saget's death. Saget's family had filed a lawsuit seeking the order.

The 65-year-old entertainer was found by a hotel security officer on his hotel bed at the Ritz Carlton in Orlando on Jan. 9 after he had failed to check out of the hotel and his family had asked for a well-being check.

A hotel maintenance worker had to be called to open the door to Saget's suite since it had been latched from inside. Even though the door between Saget's suite and the adjacent room was found to be unlocked, records on the electronic locks at the hotel showed that no one had been in the abutting room since Jan. 7, two days before Saget's body was discovered, the report says.

Best known for his role as beloved single dad Danny Tanner on the sitcom "Full House" and as the wise-cracking host of "America's Funniest Home Videos," Saget was married to Kelly Rizzo Saget and had three daughters from a previous marriage.

Saget was on the road as part of his "I Don't Do Negative Comedy Tour," and said just before his death that he enjoyed warm audience receptions in Orlando and the Ponte Vedra Beach resort area near Jacksonville.

As part of the investigation, the Orange County Sheriff's Office detective interviewed venue workers in Orlando and the Jacksonville area about Saget's behavior during his concert appearances there. The five workers described the comedian as friendly, outgoing and showing no signs of any impairment, the report said.

After driving back to Orlando from the Jacksonville area in the overnight hours before his body was discovered, Saget chatted and took a photo with a car attendant at the Ritz Carlton. The valet said Saget seemed "fine," and that "he did not see evidence of slurred speech, balance issues, or anything else that caused him concern," the investigative report said.

## EU imposes sanctions on Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union imposed sanctions Tuesday on Chelsea soccer club owner Roman Abramovich as part of a new package of measures targeting Russia and President Vladimir Putin's close allies.

The EU included the Russian oligarch in its updated list of individuals facing assets freeze and travel bans over their role in the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The 55-year-old Abramovich had already been punished in Britain by Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government last week. The aluminum magnate was among seven wealthy Russians who had their assets frozen under British sanctions in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Abramovich has also been suspended as director of the Premier League club.

The EU said Abramovich "has had privileged access to the (Russian) president, and has maintained very good relations with him. This connection with the Russian leader helped him to maintain his considerable

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wealth.”

The European Council added 15 individuals and nine entities to its list of people and bodies sanctioned. According to the 27-nation bloc, Abramovich’s connection with Putin helped him maintain his fortune, while the oligarch’s economic activities provided substantial revenues to the Russian government.

“He is a major shareholder of the steel group Evraz, which is one of Russia’s largest taxpayers,” the European Council said. “He has therefore been benefitting from Russian decision-makers responsible for the annexation of Crimea or the destabilization of Ukraine.”

In addition to his Russian passport, Abramovich also holds Portuguese citizenship, so it was unclear how a travel ban within the EU would affect his capacity to move freely in the region.

The EU sanctions against Abramovich were announced a day after a BBC investigation revealed new evidence about alleged corrupt deals that made the Russian businessman’s fortune.

According to the BBC, Abramovich made billions after buying an oil company from the Russian government in a rigged auction in 1995. The broadcaster said he paid around \$250 million for Sibneft, before selling it back to the Russian government for \$13 billion in 2005.

Abramovich’s lawyers said there is no basis for alleging he has amassed very substantial wealth through criminality.

Following a meeting of EU heads of state and government last week, the bloc decided to impose a fourth package of measures in retaliation for Russia’s invasion

The European Council said it decided to sanction “key oligarchs, lobbyists and propagandists pushing the Kremlin’s narrative on the situation in Ukraine.”

The sanctions on Abramovich are also affecting his soccer club. Under the British government action, Chelsea will operate through the end of this season with a special “Russia Regulations” license that among other restrictions prohibits the team from selling new tickets or merchandise, or signing new players.

The club’s future was already in doubt before Abramovich, whose \$2 billion investment in Chelsea over 19 years transformed the team into a force in European soccer, was sanctioned. He had put the club up for sale amid growing calls that sanctions be imposed on a person the government has labeled a “pro-Kremlin oligarch” linked to “destabilizing ... undermining and threatening” Ukraine.

EU officials said the bloc doesn’t have plans to impose sanctions on Chelsea.

## Zelenskyy appeals for help from Canada in emotional speech

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy asked Canadians Tuesday to imagine bombs landing in their communities as he urged the Canadian Parliament and government to exert greater economic and military pressure on Russia.

Zelenskyy asked Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and lawmakers for help to enact a no-fly zone over the Ukraine.

“Justin, can you imagine you and your children hearing all these severe explosions, the bombing of the airport, the bombing of the Ottawa airport?” Zelenskyy said. “Cruise missiles are falling down and your children are asking you ‘What happened?’”

Speaking by video from Ukraine to a packed House of Commons chamber, Zelenskyy said the Russian war on his country is designed to annihilate Ukraine and subjugate its people.

“Dear Justin, dear guests. Can you imagine that every day you receive memorandums about the number of casualties, including women and children?” he said. “You heard about the bombings. Currently we have 97 children that died during this war.”

Zelenskyy evoked British wartime leader Winston Churchill as he told the U.K. Parliament last week that his country would fight Russia’s invasion to the end in Ukraine’s cities. Zelenskyy also was to speak Wednesday to members of the U.S. House and Senate, an event that will be livestreamed for the public.

Canadian lawmakers gave him two standing ovations before he even spoke.

“Can you imagine if the famous CN Tower in Toronto was hit by Russian bombs?” he said. “This is our

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reality.”

The video of Zelenskyy, wearing a green military t-shirt and sweater, was projected onto big screens in the Canadian Parliament. He thanked Canada for its humanitarian and military support and called the country a steadfast ally.

“Please close the sky, close the airspace,” he said. “Please stop the bombing. How many more cruise missiles have to fall on our cities until you make this happen?”

Zelenskyy said allies are expressing their deep concern, but it’s not enough. “When we talk to our partners, they say please hold on, hold on a little longer,” he said.

Trudeau said Zelenskyy is inspiring democracies and democratic leaders around the world to be more courageous and united.

“Democracies around the world are lucky to have you as their champion,” Trudeau told Zelenskyy.

“Your courage, and the courage of your people, inspires all of us.”

Meanwhile, the Russian Foreign Ministry said that Trudeau, Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly and Defense Minister Anita Anand are among more than 300 Canadians who have been banned from Russia.

“I’m not surprised and I won’t back down,” Joly said.

Canada, for its part, announced new sanctions on 15 more Russians. Canada has also provided weapons to Ukraine.

“You have imposed severe sanctions, serious sanctions. At the same time, we see that unfortunately it did not bring an end to the war,” Zelenskyy said.

Canada is home to 1.4 million Canadians of Ukrainian descent.

## **Fake heiress Anna Sorokin makes new bid to fight deportation**

NEW YORK (AP) — Anna Sorokin, the convicted swindler who claimed to be a German heiress to finance a posh lifestyle in New York, is making a new bid to fight deportation, a lawyer said Tuesday.

Sorokin, whose scheme inspired the recent Netflix series “Inventing Anna,” was taken into U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement custody nearly a year ago. She remained jailed in New York’s Hudson Valley on Tuesday, attorney Manny Arora said.

He said she filed papers Monday seeking to hold off being ejected from the country.

ICE on Tuesday said only that she remains in the agency’s custody.

Sorokin, who was convicted in 2019 and spent more than three years behind bars, has since been challenging deportation. An appellate immigration judge last month declined to stop the 31-year-old German citizen from being removed.

Using the name Anna Delvey, Sorokin maneuvered her way into elite New York social circles by passing herself off as a socialite with a \$67 million (61 million euros) fortune overseas, according to prosecutors. She falsely claimed to be the daughter of a diplomat or an oil baron.

Prosecutors said Sorokin falsified records and lied to get banks to lend, luxury hotels to let her stay and well-heeled Manhattanites to cover plane tickets and other expenses for her, stealing \$275,000 in all.

Her trial lawyer cast her as an ambitious entrepreneur who got in over her head financially and was simply buying time to pay her debts.

## **Germany to disarm far-right extremists, restricts gun access**

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany’s top security officials announced a 10-point plan Tuesday to combat far-right extremism in the country that includes disarming about 1,500 suspected extremists and tightening background checks for those wanting to acquire guns.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said the far right poses the biggest extremist threat to democracy in Germany and said authorities would seek to tackle the issue through prevention and tough measures.

“We want to destroy far-right extremist networks,” Faeser told reporters in Berlin, saying this included



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targeting financial flows that benefit such groups, including merchandising businesses, music festivals and martial arts events.

Authorities will work to remove gun licenses from suspected extremists, crack down on incitement spread online through social networks and combat conspiracy theories online.

Faeser said an emphasis will also be put on rooting out extremists who work in government agencies, including the security forces. Reports about far-right extremists among the police and military in Germany have raised particular concerns because of fears that they could use privileged information to target political enemies.

Parliament's commissioner for the military, Eva Hoegl, said separately Tuesday that there were 252 "reportable events" among German troops in 2021, an increase compared to previous years that she attributed to heightened sensitivity surrounding extremism in the ranks. She called for swifter court martial proceedings so that soldiers found to have broken the law or breached conduct rules can be fired faster.

Thomas Haldenwang, the head of Germany's BfV domestic intelligence service, said his agency planned to release a report in the coming months about extremists who work for the authorities.

The agency is also monitoring the Alternative for Germany political party after a court ruled last week that it can designate the party as a suspected case of extremism, he said.

Haldenwang said authorities have recorded a small number of far-right extremists traveling to Ukraine as foreign fighters, but most of the chatter online by people saying they planned to do so appeared to be "swagger."

## Chicken, turkey farmers struggle to keep birds safe from flu

By DAVID PITT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Nearly 7 million chickens and turkeys in 13 states have been killed this year due to avian influenza, prompting officials and farmers to acknowledge that, despite their best efforts, stopping the disease from infecting poultry is incredibly difficult.

Spread of the disease is largely blamed on the droppings of wild birds, such as ducks and geese, which often show no signs of illness. But studies suggest the virus can be tracked into secure chicken and turkey barns on equipment, workers, mice, small birds, and even dust particles.

Infected wild birds have been found in at least 21 states, and the virus has been circulating in migrating waterfowl in Europe and Asia for nearly a year.

State and federal officials remain hopeful that the disease won't spread as extensively as during an outbreak in 2015 that resulted in the deaths of about 50 million chickens and turkeys, causing egg and meat prices to soar. Bird flu hit more than 200 farms in 15 states, costing the federal government about \$1 billion and the poultry industry an estimated \$3 billion.

Still, without certainty about how to stop the disease this time, officials can't be sure it will peter out on its own. Food prices already are elevated due to inflation and supply chain problems, and if the bird flu outbreak expands to enough farms, chicken, turkey and egg prices could surge even higher.

"We're not seeing a massive outbreak on a large scale, so I think it's too soon to be concerned about food impact or pricing impact at this point, but you have to acknowledge that can be an issue over time," Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig said.

This year, the first case was found in a commercial facility in Indiana in February. Since then, 6.6 million egg-laying and broiler chickens and 341,000 turkeys have been culled, typically buried in trenches on site.

The United States Department of Agriculture says the virus doesn't present a food quality issue since birds on infected farms must be culled and do not enter the food processing system. Still, the proper handling and cooking of all poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165 F is recommended as a general food safety precaution.

Even though scientists feel confident that wild birds are spreading the disease, they remain unsure how the virus enters highly secure barns, which are typically equipped with modern ventilation systems and have strict protocols for people entering the buildings.

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Asked about Iowa's first case in a commercial turkey flock, Iowa State Veterinarian Dr. Jeff Kaisand noted, "We don't know exactly how it got in."

It's an especially big question in Iowa, the leading egg-producing state with 49 million chickens. Last Friday, Iowa saw its first case this year in a commercial egg-laying operation, leading to the killing of about 919,000 hens.

On Monday, the disease was confirmed at an egg-layer farm in Wisconsin with 3 million hens.

The USDA said in a 2017 report that studies of the 2015 outbreak were inconclusive but that spread between facilities occurred mostly on shared equipment, clothing or boots of employees, and on vehicles used for feed distribution and other purposes.

The disease can also be spread by small birds that squeeze into buildings, or tracked inside by mice.

"Even when you look at the final epidemiological analyses from 2015, there was no one source of introduction. They were unable to make a conclusion," said Dr. Yuko Sato, a veterinarian and an associate professor at Iowa State University in veterinary diagnostic and production animal medicine. "I would say each introduction is probably going to be independent. It's not just one weak link."

Minnesota turkey farmer Greg Langmo, who lost 90,000 turkeys in 2015, is thankful his state, the nation's leading turkey grower, has been spared so far. He said farmers are following biosecurity protocols, going so far as to keep starling and barn swallow nests away from their barns.

"We're very hopeful that some of the new strategies that we're employing are going to be enough to stave it off," he said. "We're doing the best we can and we're going to play the cards we have."

Studies in the U.S. and France since 2015 suggest the virus can be carried wind-borne dust particles. This has led to new protocols to mitigate airborne transmission during outbreaks, including killing infected birds within 24 hours, increased testing and extra precautions within a six-mile (10-kilometer) radius of infected facilities.

"The birds that do carry the virus typically are wild waterfowl — your ducks, your geese, your wigeons — so there's no way those birds can get into the barns. It will be something else that's bringing it in. But just knowing the outside's not safe, that's the only inference that we can make," Sato said.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the recent bird flu infections in flocks do not present an immediate public health concern. No human cases of these avian influenza viruses have been detected in the United States. While it can be transmitted to humans, it is unusual and typically due to close contact with infected birds.

## The Big Sneeze: Climate change to make pollen season nastier

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Climate change has already made allergy season longer and pollen counts higher, but you ain't sneezed nothing yet.

Climate scientists at the University of Michigan looked at 15 different plant pollens in the United States and used computer simulations to calculate how much worse allergy season will likely get by the year 2100. It's enough to make allergy sufferers even more red-eyed.

As the world warms, allergy season will start weeks earlier and end many days later — and it'll be worse while it lasts, with pollen levels that could as much as triple in some places, according to a new study Tuesday in the journal *Nature Communications*.

Warmer weather allows plants to start blooming earlier and keeps them blooming later. Meanwhile, additional carbon dioxide in the air from burning fuels such as coal, gasoline and natural gas helps plants produce more pollen, said study co-author Allison Steiner, a University of Michigan climate scientist.

It's already happening. A study a year ago from different researchers found that from 1990 to 2018, pollen has increased and allergy season is starting earlier, with much of it because of climate change.

Allergists say that pollen season in the U.S. used to start around St. Patrick's Day and now often starts around Valentine's Day.

The new study found that allergy season would stretch even longer and the total amount of pollen

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would skyrocket. How long and how much depends on the particular pollen, the location and how much greenhouse gas emissions are put in the air.

With moderate cuts in greenhouse gas emission from coal, oil and natural gas, pollen season would start 20 days earlier by the end of the century. In the most extreme and increasingly unlikely warming scenario, pollen season in much of America will start 40 days earlier than when it has generally started in recent decades.

Already about 30% of the world and 40% of American children suffer pollen allergies, which hurt the economy through lost work days and medical costs, said University of Michigan climate researcher Yingxiao Zhang, lead author of the new study.

Allergies are especially difficult for the 25 million Americans with asthma. This could make the problem much worse for them, said Amir Sapkota, a University of Maryland environmental health professor, who wasn't part of the research.

While allergy suffering will increase across the United States, the Southeast will get hit hardest, said Steiner.

The start of alder tree pollen season will move most dramatically, an issue in the Pacific Northwest. Cypress tree pollen — which is especially bad in Texas — will see among the biggest increases.

Ragweed and grasses — common pollen allergies — will also have longer seasons and higher pollen counts in the future, Zhang said.

The University of Michigan team's projections projects would be about twice as large a jump in pollen problems as has happened since 1990, said University of Utah biologist and climate scientist Bill Anderegg.

"Overall, this is an incredibly important study," said Anderegg, who wasn't involved in the new research. "It tells us that the historical trends of longer and more severe pollen seasons are likely to continue, driven by climate change, and this will absolutely have substantial health consequences in allergies and asthma for Americans."

## War in Ukraine disrupts key supply chains - and lives

By MATT O'BRIEN Associated Press

It can be hard to measure the ways that Russia's war in Ukraine has disrupted the global supply of parts and raw materials needed to complete a variety of products – from cars to computer chips.

But cutting off one of those supply links brought a "depressing feeling" to Andrey Bibik, head of the Interpipe steel plant in Dnipro, Ukraine. He spent the first hours of the war winding down his bustling 24-hour operation and sending almost everyone home.

"It's empty and lonely. You don't hear a sound. You see everything is frozen," he said.

Getting Interpipe's steel transmission pipes to Texas oil companies and its railway wheels to European high-speed train operators has been put on hold. Hundreds of the plant's roughly 10,000 employees have joined the fight against Russia. Others have fled; a remaining skeleton crew runs its canteens and makes spikey metal obstacles to block Russian tanks and convoys. Its bomb shelters house dozens of local families at night.

"It was a hard choice to stop production. We had plenty of orders, a lot of customers awaiting our material. But if you have to choose between safety, and possible profits, I think the answer is obvious," said Bibik, who's worked at the company for nearly two decades. "The most important thing we have is life and we really need to take care of the people we love."

Similar production halts have spread across other industries in Ukraine, motivated not just by safety concerns but also because the war and mass exodus of refugees have closed off roads and railways to commercial freight traffic. Some of Interpipe's finished products bound for overseas export are now stalled at the Black Sea port of Odesa.

Ukraine accounts for only about 0.3% of the world's exports, while Russia's share is about 1.9%, according to a report by the Dutch bank ING. Still, some industries doing business with these nations are starting to feel the war's impact.

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For Russia, a key producer of energy, steel and raw metals such as nickel, copper, platinum and palladium — many of which are important to the auto industry — the supply concerns are tied to punishing Western economic sanctions and Russia's moves to retaliate against them. For Ukraine, the war itself is cutting off supplies.

"We want to give priority to the refugees, people trying to move out of the war zone, and humanitarian and military convoys," said Interpipe's Houston-based chairman and former CEO Fadi Hraibi.

The disruption of another Ukrainian industry — the making of wiring harnesses used in cars — is already hurting European automakers. Ukraine has more than 30 automotive plants, most of them centered near the western border with Poland and other European neighbors, according to a government agency that promotes foreign investment.

German parts supplier Leoni said production has been interrupted at its two western Ukraine plants in Styri and Kolomyja and that it's looking for temporary alternatives. "We are aware that this situation is currently affecting not only Leoni, but the entire industry," said spokesperson Gregor le Claire.

Ukraine is also among the world's largest suppliers of neon, a gas used in lasers that help etch integrated circuits onto computer chips. That worries auto industry executives, who fear that tight neon supplies could worsen a global chip shortage that has already forced production cuts and made vehicles scarce worldwide.

Interpipe has five factories in Ukraine, all located in the industrial hub of Dnipro and its surrounding oblast, or region, which holds a strategic position on the Dnieper River southeast of the capital, Kyiv.

Until Russian airstrikes began targeting Dnipro on Friday, the country's fourth-largest city had been mostly quiet — except for occasional air raid sirens — in the two weeks after Russia invaded the country. But executives at Interpipe made a quick decision on Feb. 24 to shut down all of its facilities.

Russian President Vladimir Putin launched the invasion before dawn and by lunchtime, plant operations were wound down, Bibik said. That evening, he watched the last five workers get shuttled off to the suburb where they live. All of Interpipe's workers are still being paid, Bibik and Hraibi said.

Interpipe's customers in the energy and rail industries typically order their pipes, wheels and other products months in advance, but Hraibi said the disruptions will cause shortages and lead some to look for alternatives. For some wheel customers, such a Saudi Arabian railway operator, Interpipe is the sole supplier, he said. Two of the company's chief steel industry rivals, OMK and Evraz, are in Russia and he hopes customers will avoid them.

"I don't know if our business will survive," he said. "We do all that's necessary to support the people, to keep our employees, to be able to restart in a month or two or three, whenever things get back to — at least closer to — normal. But in reality, nobody can predict what's going to happen."

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## AP-NORC poll: Many Black Americans doubtful on police reform

By AARON MORRISON and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Few Americans believe there has been significant progress over the last 50 years in achieving equal treatment for Black people in dealings with police and the criminal justice system.

Most Americans across racial and ethnic groups say more progress is necessary, according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. But Black Americans, many whom may have held hope in Democrats’ promises on racial justice initiatives in 2020, are especially pessimistic that any more progress will be made in the coming years.

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Overall, only about a quarter of Americans say there has been a great deal or a lot of progress in achieving racial equality in policing and criminal justice. Roughly another third say there's been "some" progress. An overwhelming majority of adults say more progress is needed for racial equality, including about half who say "a lot" more.

"There's more attention around certain issues and there's a realization — more people are waking up to a lot of corruption in the system," said Derek Sims, a 35-year-old bus driver in Austin, Texas, who is Black. He considers himself more optimistic than pessimistic that change will happen.

However, Sims said: "People don't really want to come together and hash out ideas. There's just too much tribalism."

Among those who think more progress is needed on achieving fair treatment for Black Americans by police, 31% say they are optimistic about that happening in the next few years, while 38% are pessimistic. Roughly another third say they hold neither opinion.

Only 20% of Black Americans who think more needs to be done are optimistic; 49% are pessimistic.

The AP-NORC poll results reflect what some criminal justice advocates have warned elected leaders about for more than a year: that unless something definitive is done soon to begin transforming police and the criminal justice system, it could become more difficult to mobilize dissatisfied Black voters in the midterm elections.

And already, Democrats' pivot to the center on racial justice issues has given advocates pause. During his first State of the Union address earlier this month, President Joe Biden said the answer to reported rises in violent crime "is not to defund the police."

"The answer is to fund the police with the resources and training they need to protect our communities," Biden said in remarks that have been seen as a clear disavowal of some Black Lives Matter activists' rhetoric.

In 2020, following the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, many Americans across racial and ethnic backgrounds called for criminal justice reforms in nationwide protests. On Capitol Hill, consensus on reforms, via the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, has not been reached nearly two years later.

"What we saw from the George Floyd case, we in the Black community know that those officers were found guilty because of the outcry," DeAnna Hoskins, president and CEO of JustLeadershipUSA, a New York-based nonprofit criminal justice reform advocacy group, told the AP.

"The only reason why you get results is because there was an outcry that included Black and white people. You've got a much larger voter base saying something has to be done," she said.

Due to vastly different lived experiences, it's been harder to get Americans across racial and ethnic groups to sustain their outcries and demand an end to systemic racism, Hoskins added.

The poll shows there is common ground on the issue across racial and ethnic groups, but also suggests there is urgency felt among Black Americans more than white Americans. More white Americans than Black Americans say there has already been significant progress toward racial equality in policing, 30% vs. 10%. Among Black Americans, 40% say there has been no progress at all.

And while at least three-quarters of white and Black Americans say more progress is needed, Black Americans are much more likely than white Americans to say a lot more needs to be done, 70% vs. 47%.

Last year marked 50 years since a war on drugs was declared in America. The bipartisan public policy at the federal and state levels saw the nation's incarceration rate skyrocket to the highest in the industrialized world. Black Americans, in particular, bore the brunt of police militarization and laws that imposed mandatory minimum prison terms.

There were also post-incarceration consequences, such as losing the right to vote, being barred from public housing and certain college financial aid programs, and struggling to find employment with a felony record.

Compared with views on policing and criminal justice, Americans are more likely to think there has been significant progress over the last 50 years in achieving equal treatment for Black Americans in political representation, access to good education, access to good health care and access to good jobs. And there's more pessimism about progress over the next few years in policing and criminal justice than in the other

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areas.

Heydy Maldonado, 30, blames how crime is covered by TV and print news outlets — which she said often frame violence in a way that suggests it is only endemic to Black and Hispanic communities — for the lack of hope in reforms.

“We get targeted,” said Maldonado, whose family is Honduran and Salvadoran. “I’m sure there’s more crime out there, and it’s not just our race, it’s not just people of color. It’s an ongoing battle.”

“I do feel like we need to be united and speak to each other and keep fighting for change,” she added. “Eventually, hopefully, this could all be a thing of the past.”

## Hoop hype: March Madness brackets get America talking again

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

Wagering on all those parlays and long shots on the betting app — fun.

Filling out a bracket and waiting for the upsets to begin — that’s why they call this March Madness.

Legal sports gambling across wide swaths of the United States might have made the next three weeks’ worth of NCAA Tournament games easier to bet on individually, but it didn’t change one simple truth:

There’s nothing quite like the magic of picking winners of all 60-something games, figuring out the Final Four and national champions, then pacing nervously through every buzzer beater, every agonizing upset, every bad call and every shot that should’ve gone in but didn’t. All have the potential to make a casual fan feel like an armchair genius. Any misstep can wreck the whole thing for even the most seasoned of hoops junkies.

“It holds a special place because you never really have someone come up to you at the end of the NFL season and say ‘Who’s in your bracket for the wild-card game?’” said Dennis Deninger, the Syracuse professor whose latest version of the book “Live Sports Media” dropped this month. “But the NCAA Tournament, it’s just a totally different thing.”

The American Gaming Association, the gambling industry’s national trade group, estimates 45 million Americans will wager some \$3.1 billion on the tournament (a very conservative estimate), and around 36.5 million will bet something on a bracket or office pool.

The average bet per bracket will be somewhere around \$30. And while, sure, those entry fees can net hundreds or sometimes thousands, they can also parlay themselves into something priceless — namely, the chance to show everyone in your office, your poker group or your golf game that you, in fact, know college basketball better than anyone. Or cheer for better mascots. Or always knew that your love of a certain team’s color would pay off big one day.

It is not about being perfect (the odds of that are 1 in 9.2 quintillion — that’s a 9 with 18 zeros after it). It is, instead, a series of choices that can lead to something even better — namely, bragging rights and a(nother) way to show you’re smarter than everyone else.

“In many ways, it’s a social lubricant,” said University of Illinois researcher Sheldon Jacobson.

Jacobson has spent the past decade trying to build the better mousetrap to predict brackets. Last year, he boiled it down to three models. His computers produced 1 million brackets using each. Two of the models produced combinations that would’ve won the ESPN pool contest that included around 17 million entries.

Please, Jacobson warns, do not try this at home. He also reminds us that his goal has never been to pick individual games. It can, however, drastically improve the odds of assembling an above-average bracket. His models only look at seed numbers and how they’ve performed historically. The fact that the name “Auburn,” or “Duke” or “South Dakota State” might be beside the seeding this year means nothing to him or his computers.

“When you’re talking about hardcore gamblers, you’re talking about a much different animal,” Jacobson said. “But I think we’re still preserving the office pool for the vast majority of people because it’s fun, it’s interesting and it gives people a chance to communicate and bond.”

Because of the recent onslaught of legalized gambling — with wagering available at the touch of a cell-phone — the number of brackets being filled out is actually expected to decline this year while the number

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of Vegas-style wagers on individual games and combinations is expected to go up.

More than 30 states offer some sort of legalized sports betting and, as a whole, March Madness will bring in more money than the Super Bowl, which is a one-day event.

The bracket as the ideal fan-engagement tool began around 1985, when the NCAA expanded the tournament to 64 teams, allowing for four perfectly symmetrical regions, each with 15 games on the road to the Final Four.

The stakes have been known to move beyond mere fun and games. Football coach Rick Neuheisel famously got fired from his job at Washington for participating in a basketball pool, in violation of school rules.

Even with gambling infiltrating sports leagues in ways once thought unimaginable — see all that surrounds the NFL and its recent suspension of wide receiver Calvin Ridley — the NCAA has held to its long-draconian stance against wagering on intercollegiate athletics. It is, as the heavily wagered-upon NFL can attest, an irony considering the bracket has long stood as potentially the greatest driver of sports betting in America, however small-time those wagers might be.

But this month — with the tournament returning to “normal,” after being canceled because of COVID-19 in 2020 and then relocated to a bubble in Indianapolis in 2021 — does not feel like the time to talk about things that are wrong about March Madness.

Instead, it’s a time to imagine all the possibilities. How better to do that than by filling out a bracket?

“It’s one of those pride things,” Deninger said. “It creates conversation, and it creates socialization, and after what we’ve been through the last year-and-a-half, it might be just what we need.”

## Olivia Rodrigo, BTS, Billie Eilish to perform at Grammys

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. LOS ANGELES

The Grammy Awards are bringing three of the world’s biggest pop acts — Olivia Rodrigo, BTS and Billie Eilish — to perform during next month’s ceremony in Las Vegas.

The Recording Academy announced the first slate of performers on Tuesday that also includes Brandi Carlile, Brothers Osborne and Lil Nas X with Jack Harlow. The show will air live on April 3 from the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas on CBS and Paramount+.

The Grammys shifted to Las Vegas due to the rising COVID-19 cases and the omicron variant in January, with organizers citing “too many risks” to hosting the performance-filled ceremony at the time.

Trevor Noah returns as host for the second straight time.

The multitalented Jon Batiste is the leading nominee with 11 nods in a variety of genres including R&B, jazz, American roots music, classical and music video. Justin Bieber, Doja Cat and H.E.R. are tied for the second-most nominations with eight apiece.

## US funeral assistance for COVID tops \$2B, more eligible

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal government has provided more than \$2 billion to help cover funeral costs for more than 300,000 families of people who died from COVID-19, the Federal Emergency Management Agency announced Tuesday as it launches a new campaign to raise awareness about the aid to eligible families. More than 965,000 people have died in the U.S. from the virus.

The COVID-19 Funeral Assistance program provides up to \$9,000 per funeral and covers COVID-19 related deaths since Jan. 20, 2020. The average amount awarded per death is \$6,500, according to FEMA.

“FEMA’s COVID-19 Funeral Assistance program has helped provide over 300,000 people with critical financial relief during a time of such unexpected, unimaginable and widespread loss,” said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell in a statement.

On Tuesday, the agency is launching a new paid ad campaign in California, New York, Pennsylvania and Texas targeted at areas with large rates of COVID-19 deaths but lower rates of reimbursement requests to help connect people to available assistance. The agency is also reaching out to community groups and local media outlets to help publicize the program.



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"Our new outreach campaign is designed to reach families, especially across underserved communities, where the cost of a funeral can be a financial burden to a loved one," said Criswell. "Our goal is to help families apply for assistance, as well as submit all required documents for existing applications."

To be eligible for reimbursement, death certificates for those who died after May 16, 2020, must indicate that the death was attributed to COVID-19.

For deaths that occurred in the early months of the pandemic — from Jan. 20 to May 16, 2020 — death certificates must be accompanied with a signed statement from a medical examiner, coroner or the certifying official listed on the certificate indicating that COVID-19 was the cause or a contributing cause of death.

Expenses covered under the FEMA program include funeral services, cremation and interment, as well as the costs for caskets or urns, burial plots or cremation niches, markers or headstones, transportation or transfer of remains, clergy or officiant services, and the use of funeral home equipment or staff.

The program was first signed into law in the waning days of President Donald Trump's administration but began accepting applications weeks into President Joe Biden's term. The initial bill provided \$2 billion for the funeral assistance, which was exhausted in recent days. Funding going forward will come from Biden's 2021 relief bill known as the "American Rescue Plan."

FEMA is not accepting online applications for the reimbursement program. People eligible are directed to call the agency's helpline 844-684-6333 where they will be prompted to submit the required documentation.

## Chinese virus cases climb, raise threat of trade disruption

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese authorities on Tuesday tightened anti-virus controls at ports, raising the risk of trade disruptions after some auto and electronics factories shut down as the government fights coronavirus outbreaks.

Stock prices in China and Hong Kong sank for a second day following the shutdown on Monday of Shenzhen, a tech and finance hub adjacent to Hong Kong in the south, and Changchun, an auto center in the northeast. Bus service to Shanghai, China's business capital and biggest city, was suspended.

China's case numbers are low compared with other major countries. But authorities are enforcing a "zero tolerance" strategy that aims to keep out the virus. It has temporarily shut down major cities to find every infected person.

The restrictions come at a time when the global economy is under pressure from Russia's war on Ukraine, surging oil prices and weak consumer demand.

"We can think of no risk to the global economy, excluding nuclear warfare, that is greater than the risk of a COVID outbreak in China that shuts industrial production," said Carl B. Weinberg of High-Frequency Economics in a report. "Uncountable manufacturing supply chains pass through China."

Economists say for now, smartphone makers and other industries can use factories and suppliers in other parts of China. But a bigger threat looms if business is disrupted at ports in Shenzhen, Shanghai or nearby Ningbo.

They link Chinese factories that assemble most of the world's smartphones and computers, as well as a big share of appliances and other goods, with foreign components suppliers and customers. A one-month slowdown at Shenzhen's Yantian Port last year caused a backlog of thousands of shipping containers and sent shockwaves through global supply chains.

"The risk here is whether COVID will be found at Yantian Port," said Iris Pang, chief China economist for ING. "If the port has to be suspended, it will affect a lot of electronic imports and exports."

There was no sign of major disruption, but port operators announced curbs on face-to-face contact with shippers and sailors.

The agency that manages the Shanghai port closed windows where customers submit documents and said that function would go online. It gave no indication cargo-handling or other operations were affected.

The port of Lianyungang, north of Shanghai, announced foreign sailors were barred from leaving ships or using the city to change crews.

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Shenzhen suspended cross-border freight service at the Liantang crossing into Hong Kong. It said the Man Kam To crossing would be limited to handling fresh and live food to make sure Hong Kong gets adequate supplies.

"The lockdown of Shenzhen creates significant risks of supply chain disruptions," said Rajiv Biswas, chief Asia economist for IHS Markit, in an email. The risk of global disruption "would escalate if authorities in Shanghai also decide to implement a lockdown."

The number of new cases reported Tuesday on the Chinese mainland more than doubled to 3,507. Nearly 90% were in Jilin province, where Changchun is located, with 3,076 cases.

Hong Kong, which reports separately, had 26,908 cases on Monday.

The Yantian Port tried to reassure customers operations were normal. A statement on its social media account promised to "make every effort to ensure the smoothness and stability of this 'lifeline for port supply.'"

China, where the pandemic started in late 2019 in the central city of Wuhan, became the first major economy to rebound after Beijing closed factories, shops and offices to contain the disease.

This year, the ruling Communist Party's growth target is 5.5%. If achieved, that would be well below last year's 8.1% expansion. But forecasters consider it aggressive at a time when construction, which supports millions of jobs, is in a slump due to a crackdown on debt in the real estate industry.

Leaders are promising tax cuts for entrepreneurs and higher spending on building public works. That might help to boost consumer spending and cushion the economy from a slowdown in manufacturing.

The latest infection surge, blamed on a fast-spreading variant dubbed "stealth" omicron, is challenging Beijing's pandemic strategy.

All businesses in Shenzhen and Changchun except those that supply food, fuel and other necessities were ordered to close. Bus and subway services were suspended. Millions of residents were told to undergo virus testing.

Anyone who wants to enter Shanghai, a city of 24 million people with auto factories, China's biggest stock exchange and offices of global companies, must be tested.

On Tuesday, the shutdown was extended to Dongguan, an industrial city with 10.5 million people north-west of Shenzhen. The official Xinhua News Agency said all businesses except suppliers of food and other necessities were ordered to close through March 21 while authorities tested the whole population.

Elsewhere, the populous eastern province of Shandong had 106 new cases on Tuesday. Guangdong in the south, where Shenzhen is located, reported 48. Shanghai had nine and Beijing, six.

Jilin province, where Changchun is located, has barred residents from leaving the province and from traveling between cities within it.

Automakers Volkswagen and Toyota, iPhone assembler Foxconn and smaller companies have announced they are suspending production at some factories.

Others including telecom equipment maker Huawei Technologies Ltd., Apple Inc., General Motors Co. and electric vehicle brand BYD Auto didn't respond Tuesday to questions about how they might be affected.

"The risk of broader lockdowns is increasing," Bank of America economists said in a report.

Volkswagen AG said Changchun factories for the VW and Audi brands shut down from Monday to Wednesday.

Toyota Motor Co. said its Changchun factory that makes RAV4 and Harrier SUVs suspended operations Monday.

Shenzhen, a city of 17.5 million people, is home to some of China's biggest companies including Huawei, BYD Auto, Ping An Insurance Co. of China and Tencent Holding, operator of the popular WeChat message system. Taiwanese-owned Foxconn, which assembles Apple's iPhones, has its China base in Shenzhen.

Foxconn assembles some smartphones and tablet computers in Shenzhen but has moved most production out of the city. Other manufacturers also have shifted to less expensive parts of China or abroad. They keep research and development, finance and marketing in Shenzhen — functions that can be done by employees working from home.

"Manufacturing is in other places, so unless all of China is affected by COVID, it is not going to be really a shortage of particular goods. For example, phones," said ING's Pang.

Also, authorities appear to be trying out a "dynamic 'zero COVID' policy" that still aims to keep out the virus but uses "targeted lockdowns" to try to reduce the economic and social cost, said David Chao of Invesco.

"Many see this as a huge COVID risk that could potentially cause further weakness in the Chinese economy," said Chao. "But I think this gives policymakers the opportunity to evolve their pandemic policies."

## Foreign fighters in Ukraine await weapons in chaos of war

By SUSIE BLANN and ELAINE GANLEY Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — They are idealists who abandoned their jobs for the battlefields of Ukraine, looking for a cause or simply to fight.

The Ukrainian president's call for foreign volunteers to join an international brigade to help bolster his country's defense with a new layer of resistance to Russia's invasion is for now a ragtag army.

Recruits say they are often waiting for weapons and training, leaving them feeling exposed.

"Pure hell: fire, shouting, panic. And a lot more bombs and missiles."

That is how Swedish volunteer Jesper Söder described Sunday's attack on Yavoriv, the military training base in western Ukraine pounded by Russian missiles that killed 35 people, according to Ukrainian authorities. Russia said the death toll was much higher.

Söder said he led a group of foreigners including Scandinavians, British and Americans out of the base and back across the nearby Polish border.

He told The Associated Press by phone from Krakow, Poland, that he said he didn't know how many foreign volunteers were being trained at the base but estimated they were in the hundreds. Unlike Söder, who fought alongside Kurdish fighters in Syria against Islamic State group militants, many of the volunteers at Yavoriv had no previous military training, he said.

Foreigners — some of whom have never handled a firearm yet but are ready to die — have arrived in Ukraine from other European countries, the United States and elsewhere. They are hoping to get equipped, instructed and made battle-ready.

But some arrive to discover that there are no weapons, protective gear or proper training in a multilingual force short on organization and breeding a sense of chaos.

Threats by Russia to target what it calls foreign "mercenaries," as it said it did at the Yavoriv base, increase the level of risk.

"It's chaotic right now. It's disorganized, and you can get yourself in trouble very quickly if you're not with a sensible switched-on group of people," said Matthew Robinson, a British man from the northern England county of Yorkshire who had been living in southern Spain.

Robinson and several other volunteer fighters were interviewed this weekend on the outskirts of Lviv, where foreign fighters are receiving training and instruction.

A recent arrival, Robinson is remaining cautious as he tries to sort things out. He said that there are "multiple legions, lots of false promises, lots of misinformation." In addition, there is a "massive language barrier" and "a lot of people here who haven't fired weapons."

Russia's threats to target what it calls "mercenaries" compounds the dangers facing foreign fighters. Russia has claimed it killed 180 "mercenaries" in Sunday's training base attack, and Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Monday that the Russian forces will show "no mercy for mercenaries wherever they are on the territory of Ukraine."

The Russian military is tracking foreign fighters' movements and will strike again, he said.

Söder's account of the attack on the training base suggested it was not an indiscriminate strike.

Söder said the bombing of the base was different from anything he had experienced.

"They knew exactly what to hit. They knew exactly where our weapons storage was. They knew exactly

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where the administration building was. They hit the nail on the head with all their missiles," he told the AP. Jericho Skye, 26, a Montana native who served in the U.S. Army military police, was relieved he based himself in Kyiv, the capital, far from the attack in the west, all the more so because he was awaiting weapons at a makeshift base. He keeps alive hope that arms soon will be distributed and his belief that Ukrainians are doing their best in a dire situation.

"We're pretty upset that we're in the middle of a combat zone with small arms fire on the road, bombs being dropped almost every day and we haven't been given our weapons yet just because of bureaucracy and paperwork," he said.

Skye spoke in a telephone call from Paris from what he described as a makeshift collection post for foreign fighters in Kyiv, which he reached last week, making his way there a day after arriving in Ukraine.

"This is my first war," Skye said. He came to Ukraine "to help protect," not "do logistics," he said, motivated by images of innocent civilians being targeted. And when he "saw no other countries were going to be able to reinforce Ukrainian troops, I felt a moral obligation to join the fighting," he added.

NATO nations have ruled out direct combat and air defense that Ukraine is pleading for, with leaders saying that could trigger a third world war.

"It's just them against the entire Russian military," Skye said, noting Moscow's call for war-hardened mercenaries from Syria to beef up its own ranks.

"It's a little disorganized. It's nobody's fault," he added. "They weren't really expecting to be invaded, be thrown into a war," he said.

But death is not on his radar. "I'm very keenly aware of the situation," But he added, "I'm going to do my very best to come home."

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced the creation of a foreign defense legion in late February, apparently surprising everyone, including embassies tasked with lending a hand.

It wasn't clear how many people from across the globe have joined Ukraine's international brigade. Zelenskyy said at one point that there were 16,000. The figure, which would now be outdated, couldn't be confirmed, but based on interviews in Ukraine and in some European capitals, a motley volunteer war effort is shaping up.

Skye said volunteers from all points of the globe were with him in Kyiv, but wouldn't give a number, calling that "sensitive information."

En route to the Ukraine battlefields was Tristan Lombardo, a 22-year-old from Evansville, Illinois.

"I feel like it's the right thing to do, and that's the best way to get your passions, in life," he said in an interview Monday at the Polish border.

"If it's a passion, it's a passion that I'm willing to die for," Lombardo said, adding that he was nervous but not fearful.

There was clear evidence that at least some Ukrainian embassies were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of foreigners for Ukraine's cause. In Paris, Ukrainian volunteers, including students, stood on the sidewalk to advise would-be fighters arriving from Bordeaux, Rouen and elsewhere in France to submit an electronic form.

A 27-year-old New York state "relatively successful" business owner and former paratrooper in the Israeli military told the AP on the Polish border that he talked directly with Ukrainian army officials. He said "they got overwhelmed," especially by those with no previous training.

He identified himself only as Alexander, saying he hadn't informed his parents of his plans to fight but signed up because, as a former paratrooper, he felt an "absolute responsibility" to help people of Ukraine. His "cue," he said, was seeing rabbis drafted into the army and given AK-47s.

Saving democracy is among top motives often cited by would-be foreign fighters, and some in place. But saving Ukraine has also become an attractive cause for the far right, neo-Nazis and white supremacists, providing a chance to fight.

Recruiting chats on the encrypted Telegram messaging app are run by the Azov Regiment, popular with neo-Nazis and white supremacists, and American neo-Nazis work to recruit for Azov, the respected SITE



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Intelligence Group says. Azov Regiment originated as a far-right paramilitary unit and is now a subset of the Ukrainian military, according to SITE.

A Chicago police officer who quit his job to join Zelenskyy's defense brigade has high-minded motives for what he sees as a noble cause. Harrison Jozefowicz, who spent five years in the U.S. Army, sees himself, firstly, as a "facilitator."

"There are war crimes being committed here and refugees fleeing in the millions. And I know that I am needed here more right now" than at the Chicago Police Department, he said in an interview on the outskirts of Lviv. He conceded that his family "thought I was a little crazy."

His Task Force Yankee Ukraine, on Facebook, seeks to get Americans into Ukraine safely. While 90% of respondents have military training, "we're not turning anybody away right now," he said, including mechanics or doctors with needed skills.

Still, British citizen Matthew Robinson stressed caution for foreigners eager to help the war effort on the ground.

"If any single person was thinking of coming here, organize yourself into groups and set yourself some limits" and seek information before arriving, Robinson said. "Because you can be railroaded into a legion and sent to the front line very quickly," he said.

He added, "Even though you've got the best of intentions to help people, you could basically be cannon fodder."

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, March 16, the 75th day of 2022. There are 290 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 16, 1968, the My Lai (mee ly) massacre took place during the Vietnam War as U.S. Army soldiers hunting for Viet Cong fighters and sympathizers killed unarmed villagers in two hamlets of Son My (suhn mee) village; estimates of the death toll vary from 347 to 504.

On this date:

In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his crew reached the Philippines, where Magellan was killed during a battle with natives the following month.

In 1802, President Thomas Jefferson signed a measure authorizing the establishment of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

In 1935, Adolf Hitler decided to break the military terms set by the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY') by ordering the rearming of Germany.

In 1945, during World War II, American forces declared they had secured Iwo Jima, although pockets of Japanese resistance remained.

In 1968, Senator Robert F. Kennedy of New York announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In 1972, in a nationally broadcast address, President Richard Nixon called for a moratorium on court-ordered school busing to achieve racial desegregation.

In 1984, William Buckley, the CIA station chief in Beirut, was kidnapped by Hezbollah militants (he was tortured by his captors and killed in 1985).

In 1994, figure skater Tonya Harding pleaded guilty in Portland, Oregon, to conspiracy to hinder prosecution for covering up an attack on rival Nancy Kerrigan, avoiding jail but drawing a \$100,000 fine.

In 2004, China declared victory in its fight against bird flu, saying it had "stamped out" all its known cases.

In 2014, Crimeans voted to leave Ukraine and join Russia, overwhelmingly approving a referendum that sought to unite the strategically important Black Sea region with the country it was part of for some 250 years.

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In 2016, President Barack Obama nominated Merrick Garland to take the seat of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, who had died the previous month. (Republicans who controlled the Senate would stick to their pledge to leave the seat empty until after the presidential election; they confirmed Trump nominee Neil Gorsuch in April 2017.)

In 2020, global stocks plunged again amid coronavirus concerns, with Wall Street seeing a 12% decline, its worst in more than 30 years; the S&P 500 was down 30% from its record set less than a month earlier. Ohio called off its presidential primary just hours before polls were to open, but Arizona, Florida and Illinois went ahead with their plans.

Ten years ago: A jury in New Brunswick, New Jersey, convicted former Rutgers University student Dharun Ravi (dah-ROON' RAH'-vee) in the webcam spying episode that ended in the suicide of his gay roommate, Tyler Clementi. (Ravi served 20 days in jail for invasion of privacy, bias intimidation and other counts.)

Five years ago: President Donald Trump submitted his \$1.15 trillion budget to Congress; it proposed generous increases for the military while slashing domestic programs and riling both fellow Republicans and Democrats by going after favored programs. Steve Penny resigned as president of USA Gymnastics following intensified pressure on the organization for its handling of sex abuse cases.

One year ago: A gunman killed eight people, mostly women of Asian descent, at three Atlanta-area massage parlors in an attack that sent terror through the Asian-American community, which had increasingly been targeted during the pandemic; the white gunman, Robert Long, told police that the attack was not racially motivated, and that he had a "sex addiction." (Long was sentenced to life in prison after pleading guilty in four of the deaths.) A declassified intelligence assessment found that Russian President Vladimir Putin had authorized influence operations to help Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election; the assessment found broad efforts by both the Kremlin and Iran to shape the outcome of the race, but no evidence that any foreign actor had actually disrupted the voting process.

Today's Birthdays: Country singer Ray Walker (The Jordanares) is 88. Game show host Chuck Woolery is 81. Country singer Robin Williams is 75. Actor Erik Estrada is 73. Actor Victor Garber is 73. Country singer Ray Benson (Asleep at the Wheel) is 71. Bluegrass musician Tim O'Brien (Hot Rize; Earls of Leicester) is 68. Rock singer-musician Nancy Wilson (Heart) is 68. World Golf Hall of Famer Hollis Stacy is 68. Actor Clifton Powell is 66. Rapper-actor Flavor Flav is 63. Rock musician Jimmy DeGrasso is 59. Actor Jerome Flynn is 59. Folk singer Patty Griffin is 58. Movie director Gore Verbinski is 58. Country singer Tracy Bonham is 55. Actor Lauren Graham is 55. Actor Judah Friedlander (FREED'-lan-duhr) is 53. Actor Alan Tudyk (TOO'-dihk) is 51. Actor Tim Kang is 49. R&B singer Blu Cantrell is 46. Actor Brooke Burns is 44. Actor Kimrie Lewis is 40. Actor Brett Davern is 39. Actor Alexandra Daddario is 36. R&B singer Jhené Aiko is 34. Rock musician Wolfgang Van Halen is 31. Toronto Blue Jays baseball star Vladimir Guerrero Jr. is 23.