

# Groton Daily Independent

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Chicken Soup  
for the Soul

"Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after another."

-WALTER ELLIOTT

## UpComing Events

### Monday, April 18 - Easter Monday

- No School, Groton City & States offices closed
- 10 a.m.: Girls Golf at Whetstone Creek GC in Milbank
- 1 p.m.: Senior Citizens meet at Groton Community Center
- St. John's: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.
- Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, peas, mandarin oranges, cookie.
- Emmanuel: 6:30 a.m.. Bible Study

### Tuesday, April 19

- 7 p.m.: City Council Meeting
- St. John's: 9 a.m.: Quilting
- School Breakfast: Cereal.
- School Lunch: Pulled pork sandwich, tater tots.
- Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes/gravy, coleslaw, fruit, frosted brownie, whole wheat bread.
- United Methodist: Conde Ad Council.

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

### Wednesday, April 20

- 6 p.m.: FCCLA Banquet in GHS Arena Lobby
- Emmanuel: 6 p.m. Confirmation, Newsletter deadline
- United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.
- School Breakfast: Hash browns, pizza.
- School Lunch: Grilled cheese sandwich, cooked carrots.
- Senior Menu: Baked chicken breast, noodles romanoff, lemon buttered broccoli, pineapple strawberry ambrosia, whole wheat bread.

## Truss Pros Help Wanted

- Truss Pros in Britton is looking to hire a CDL driver to deliver trusses in the tri-state area. Home every night. Competitive wage! Full benefit package!
- To apply call 605-277-4937 or go to [www.uslbn.com/careers](http://www.uslbn.com/careers) and search for jobs in Britton, SD.

## OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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## Groton City Council Meeting Agenda April 19, 2022 – 7:00pm City Hall – 120 N Main Street

**[IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 805-397-8422]**

1. **Public Comments – pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1**  
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
2. **Community Garden – Valerie Baker**
3. **Wastewater Budget Adjustment Request – Dwight Zerr**
4. **Approval of ARPA Funding Resolution**
5. **BDM Rural Water System Hookup Application**
6. **Approval of Size of Street Resurfacing Project**
7. **Minutes**
8. **Bills**
9. **March Finance Report**
10. **Board of Canvassers Certification of Municipal Election Results – Mayor (three-year term)**
11. **First Reading of Ordinance #780 – Amending Rates for Municipal Utility Customers**
12. **May 2, 2022 - Taser Instructor Certification for Officer Tony Garcia – Huron, SD – 8:00AM to 5:00PM**
13. **Spring Baseball Contract Discussion**
14. **Reminder - 2022 Spring City Wide Clean Up: 4/30/2022 – 5/6/2022**
15. **Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)**
16. **Promotion of GPD Officer Justin Cleveland to Assistant Chief and Establishment of Wage**
17. **Adjournment**

## Planning, Experience Is Source of Calm for Rancher, as Drought Persists

MURDO, SD, April 18, 2022 – Brett Nix is concerned, but far from panicked, even as the drought across most of South Dakota shows little evidence of going away any time soon. The Murdo rancher and his wife Lori are very short of moisture—their ranch in central South Dakota falls within the large swath of the state classified as severe drought.

Yet, Nix is remarkably calm, especially considering the likelihood of more dry weather ahead. That calm comes from what he learned as he dealt with drought ten years ago, in 2012, and the changes he's made since. "We were in more of a panic mode then," Nix said. "That's when we got serious about setting up a grazing plan along with a drought plan. We don't look at them as separate plans—they're implemented together."

Before they developed their grazing plan, Nix had different herds of cattle running a month to a month and a half on different pastures. "We tried to manage that to give the grasses time to rest and recover, but having cattle grazing on the whole ranch most of the time didn't work the best," Nix said.

"One of the most powerful things you can do on your ranch is to comingle your herds," Nix said. "It changed everything for us when we grouped them all together. The impactful thing about having all your cattle eating in one spot is that the grass on all the rest of the ranch is resting and recovering."

Nix, the current chair of the producer-led South Dakota Grassland Coalition, said he uses grazing principles to guide rotations of cattle through pastures. "We don't want to take a second bite from a plant after it has started to recover. That means our herd isn't going to be on any piece of land for more than three to five days. We like to change season of use, too."

Those grazing patterns result in soils and grasses that are more resilient in dry weather, and ready to bounce back after a rain, Nix said, resulting in considerably more production. "I think a lot of ranchers focus on their cattle genetics and kind of put their soil and grass aside. That's a real mistake that will get you into trouble real quick," Nix said. "We can have grass without cattle, but we can't have cattle without grass."

### Compounding effect

Matching livestock numbers to production potential is key to navigating through drought years, said Pete Bauman, a range field specialist with South Dakota State University Extension in Watertown. "We



**Murdo ranchers Brett and Lori Nix have transformed their ranch from cropland to grassland. That switch, along with their written grassland and drought plan, are big reasons for happier, less stressful lives, even during a drought, Brett said.** (Photo courtesy of Brett and Lori Nix)

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live in a semi-arid state, where drought is normal, but it's on the harsher side now with two years of drought back-to-back. It's the compounding effect that's going to make it really tough this summer—worse than last year—if we don't get rain.”

Bauman said ranchers who have high-base stocking rates face the most trouble. “The ranchers who understand you can't run your operation with carrying capacities based on only the good years are set up better to weather the drought,” Bauman said.

Nix started de-stocking almost two years ago. “We could see we were short on moisture going into the summer of 2020. We left our bulls in for only 35 days with cows and 25 days with stockers. That generated sales from open cows and tightened up the calving season. So we sold about 20 percent of our cows in 2020. Last year open cows were first to go, then we sold steer stockers early on. We put bulls in for 30 days on our cows and 20 days on heifers—that generated another 100 head of open cows to sell.”

After marketing the remaining steers in late March of this year, Nix is down to the nucleus of his cow herd, which represents about 50 percent of his normal stocking rate. “We have a lot of regrowth left in our pastures from last fall, and the old grass caught all the little bit of snow we got over the winter. So, we're hopeful we can get through this year if we get any kind of moisture. If we get no moisture from here on, we'll start taking off some of our older cows.”

Bauman said he's not surprised that Nix has sold cattle. “He's a forward thinker,” Bauman said. Bauman's best advice to ranchers who know they'll be short on pasture is to seek trusted advice from nearby ranchers like Nix who are in a better position than they are to deal with the drought. “They've got less stress. Ask them what you need to do to get into a better position; learn what they've done to be prepared,” Bauman advised. “And take advantage of the grazing schools and other programs of the South Dakota Grassland Coalition and South Dakota Soil Health Coalition to learn how you can make your ranch more resilient.”

Nix said just having a plan in writing reduces stress. “When you have a drought grazing plan and you have it written down with trigger dates, all you have to do is look at it and it gets your brain rolling—asking yourself what you need to do,” Nix said. “Our motto would be ‘the earlier you start to de-stock, the more grass you'll have left for the cows you want to keep most.’”

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition has established a website for drought information at [www.sd-droughtplan.org](http://www.sd-droughtplan.org).

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and South Dakota State University have drought planning information online as well.



**Brett and Lori Nix**

## Senior Legion Coach Wanted



Groton Legion Post #39 is seeking qualified applicants for Head Coach for the Groton Legion Post #39 Senior Baseball Team. The applicant must have previous coaching experience. The application period will close on April 29, 2022.

Applications can be picked up at Groton City Hall and mailed to:  
Doug Hamilton  
411 N. 4th St.  
Groton, SD 57445

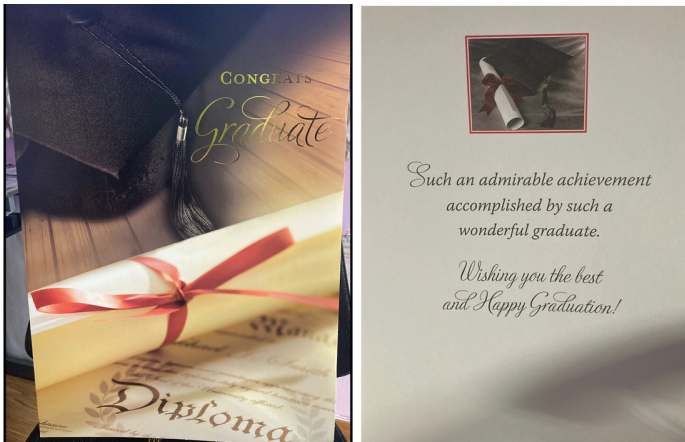
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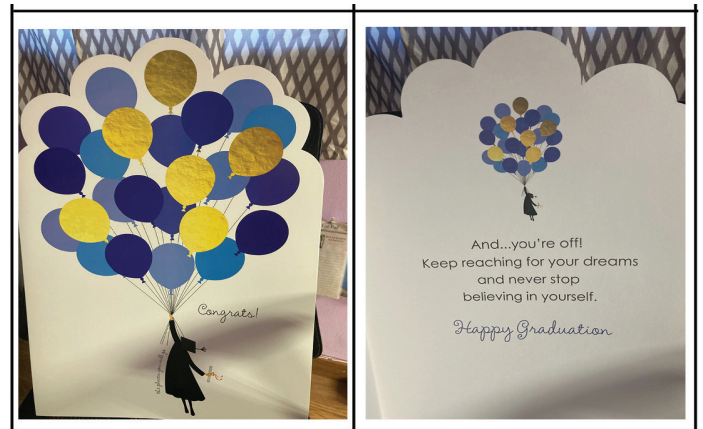
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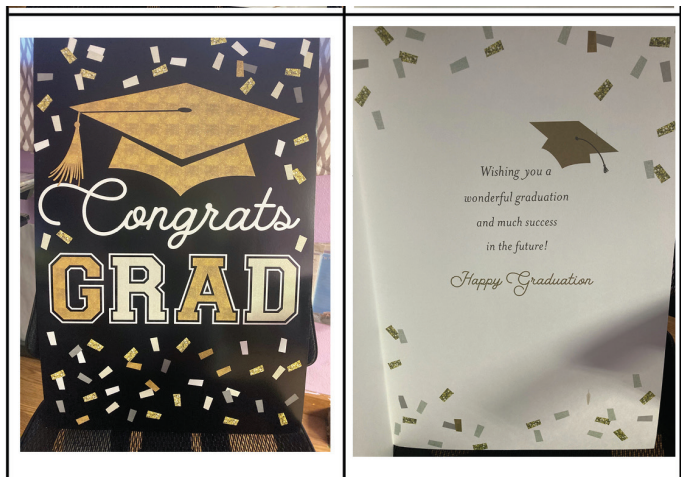
Can now be ordered on-line at [397news.com](http://397news.com) - Link on Black Bar  
Or Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460 or Tina at 605-397-7285  
to reserve your card(s)



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**\$7.99**



**50-9666-C**  
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**50-10977JM-C**  
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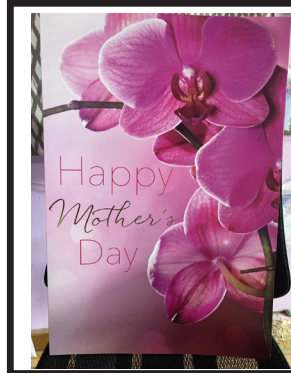
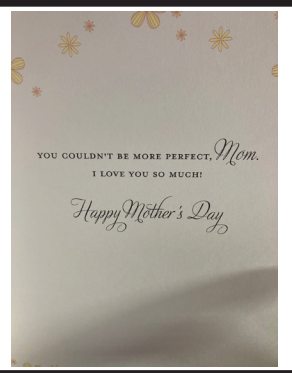
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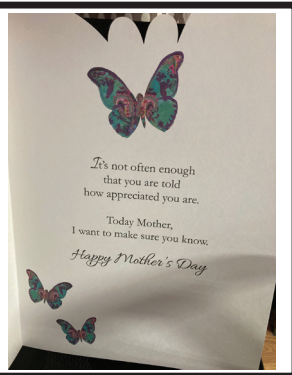
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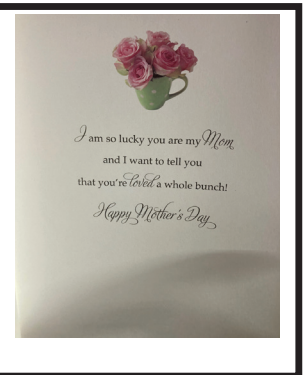
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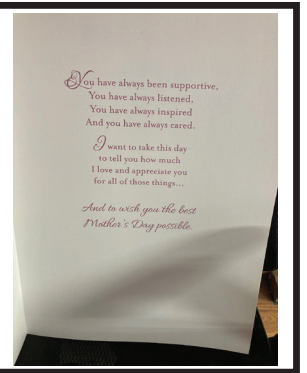
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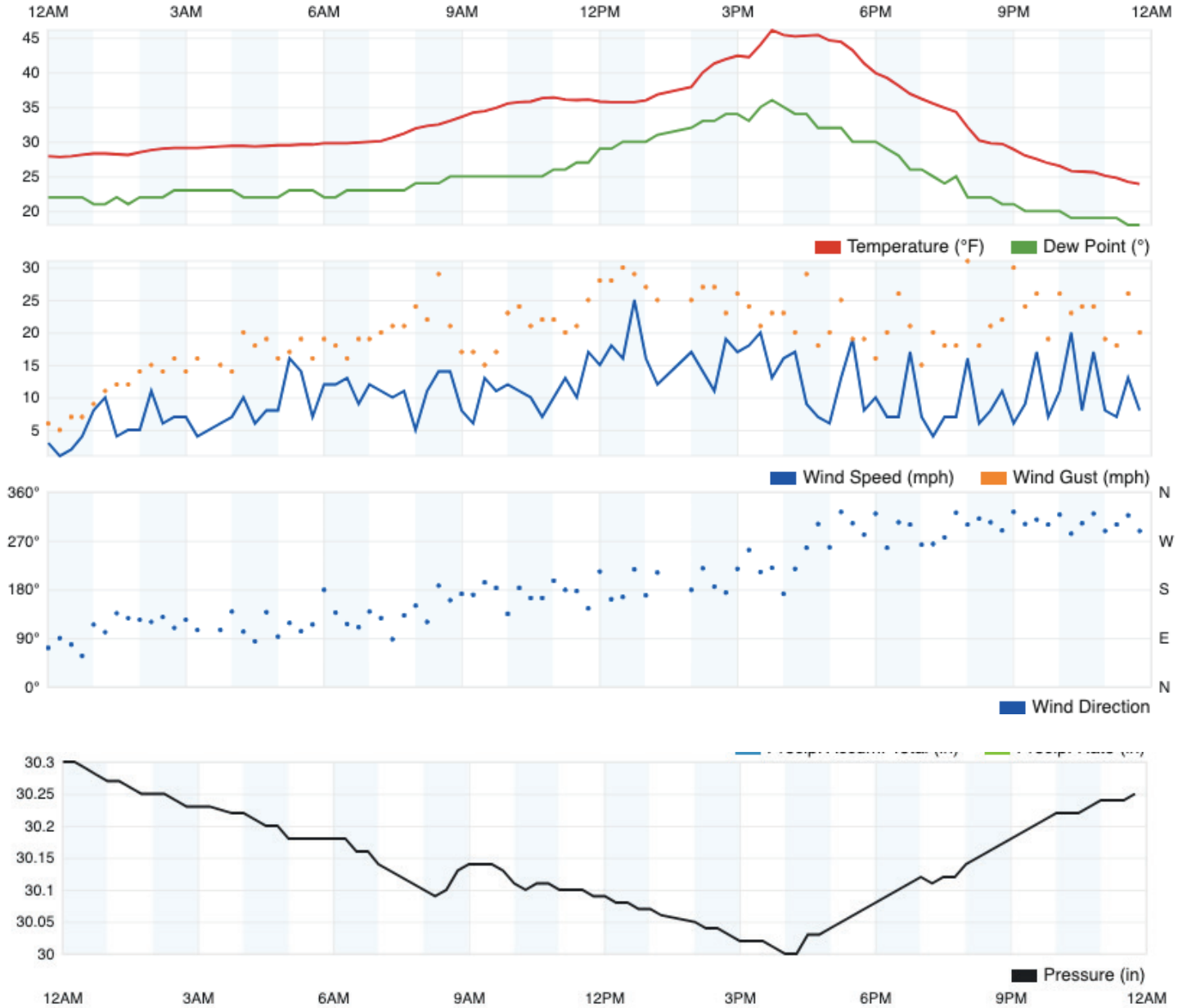
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs












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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
Sunny and Breezy	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy and Breezy	Breezy. Mostly Cloudy then Chance Rain	Chance Rain and Breezy
High: 44 °F	Low: 25 °F	High: 47 °F	Low: 37 °F	High: 58 °F

## CHILLY & WINDY START TO THE WEEK BECOMING MORE SEASONAL

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
				
Eastern SD/Western MN				
Upper 30s to Near 50	Low 40s to Near 70	Upper 40s to Low 60s	Upper 40s to Mid 60s	50s to 70s
				
				

It will be cool and dry to start the week, with windy conditions for parts of the area, especially mid-week when we see increasing temperatures and elevated fire danger. Some moisture possible Wednesday mostly for eastern South Dakota.

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## Today in Weather History

April 18, 1995: Eight inches to two feet of snow fell in central South Dakota in a two day period from the 17th to the 18th. Many businesses, schools, and roads closed on the 18th. Hundreds of power poles were downed due to the heavy snow and high winds in Faulk, Hughes, Sully, Hyde, Hand, Lyman, and Buffalo Counties leaving thousands of people without power. Some significant calf losses also occurred (around 10 to 20 percent in some areas), especially in Hand County. Snowfall amounts included 24.0 inches at Vivian, Ree Heights, and in the Murdo area; 23.0 inches at Kennebec, 18.0 inches at Highmore, 16.0 inches at Blunt, 15.0 inches at Miller and Faulkton, and 8.0 inches at Gettysburg.

1880: More than two dozen tornadoes were reported from Kansas and Arkansas to Wisconsin and Michigan. More than 150 persons were killed, including 99 people in Marshfield, Missouri.

1906: At 5:12 AM, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake hits San Francisco. A devastating fire soon broke out in the city and lasted for several days. About 3,000 people died, and over 80 percent of San Francisco was destroyed.

1944 - California experienced its worst hailstorm of record. Damage mounted to two million dollars as two consecutive storms devastated the Sacramento Valley destroying the fruit crop. (The Weather Channel)

1957 - A dust devil near Dracut MA lifted a small child three feet into the air, and rolled two other children on the ground. Fortunately none of the three were hurt. The dust devil was accompanied by a loud whistling sound as it moved westward. (The Weather Channel)

1970 - Rapid City, SD, received a record 22 inches of snow in 24 hours. (17th-18th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thirty-one cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including International Falls MN with a reading of 88 degrees, and Bismarck ND with a high of 92 degrees. A sharp cold front produced high winds in the western U.S. Winds in Utah gusted to 99 mph at the Park City Angle Station, and capsized a boat on Utah Lake drowning four persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in the southeastern U.S. A strong (F-2) tornado severely damaged seventeen mobile homes near Bainbridge GA injuring three persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. A thunderstorm in Pecos County of southwest Texas produced wind gusts to 90 mph at Imperial. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Heavy snow blanketed the west central valleys and southwest mountains of Colorado with up to 18 inches of snow. Nine cities from the Mid Mississippi Valley to the Middle Atlantic Coast Region reported record low temperatures for the date, including Fort Wayne IND with a reading of 23 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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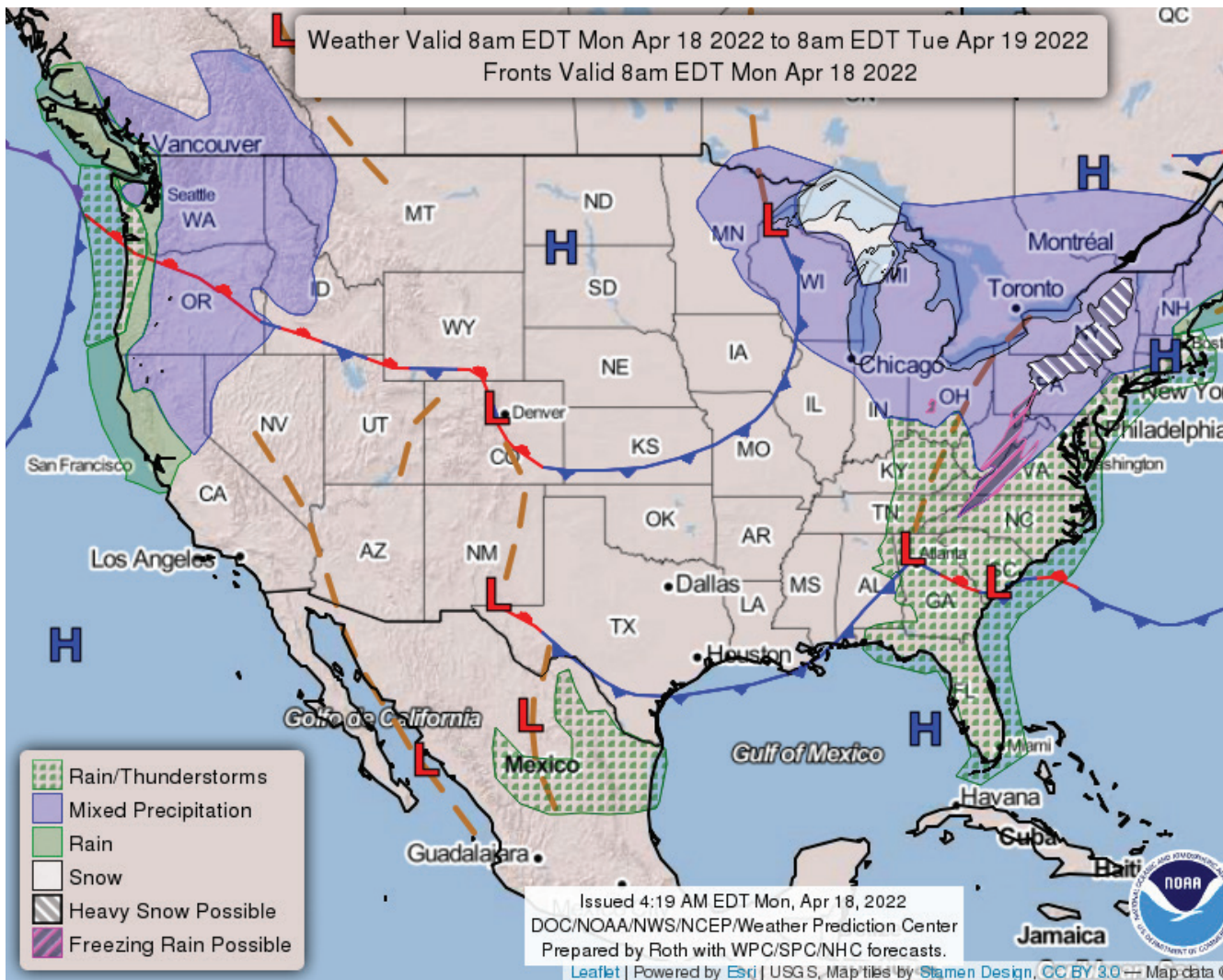
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 46 °F at 3:46 PM**  
**Low Temp: 24 °F at 11:45 PM**  
**Wind: 31 mph at 7:57 PM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

Day length: 13 hours, 44 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 89 in 1985  
Record Low: 13 in 1953  
Average High: 59°F  
Average Low: 32°F  
Average Precip in April.: 0.91  
Precip to date in April.: 1.79  
Average Precip to date: 2.97  
Precip Year to Date: 3.59  
Sunset Tonight: 8:23:49 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:37:48 AM



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## GOOD HABIT FOR CHRISTIANS

The word "habit" cannot be found in the Bible. Now, we might ask, "Is that good or bad?" It's neither. But that does not mean that "good" or "bad" can't be placed in front of the word "habit." For surely there are both good and bad habits, and most of us have some of each.

Most of us develop bad habits without realizing it. They just "seem to happen" when we least expect them and some are troublesome to get rid of once we become attached to them. Some of them can be toxic and troublesome like excessive snacking, texting unnecessary messages or wasting time doing things that lead nowhere. Others can be nourishing and nurturing like walking with a pet, setting aside time for prayer and Bible reading or attending church. So, depending on the nature of a habit it can be helpful or hindering.

A helpful habit for every Christian to cultivate is the habit of praising God for His grace, gifts, and goodness. The Psalmist said, "I praise Your name for Your unfailing love and faithfulness." While this sounds straightforward and simple, we receive so many gifts from God that we scarcely recognize most of them. Unless they are out of the ordinary or we see an answer to a prayer we thought He might have overlooked, we rarely pause and praise Him. How very sad!

Might God's blessings be slow in coming because we do not burst forth in praise each time He shows us His favor? Might His gifts increase if we focus more on His goodness and less on our greed? Let's make praise a habit!

Prayer: How very sad, Father, that we need to be reminded to give You praise. Please forgive us and grant us grateful hearts! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your unfailing love and your faithfulness. Psalm 138:2

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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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## The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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## News from the Associated Press

### Ukrainian officials: Russian strikes kill at least 7 in Lviv

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian missiles hit the western Ukrainian city of Lviv on Monday, killing at least seven people, Ukrainian officials said, as Moscow's troops stepped up strikes on infrastructure in preparation for an all-out assault on the east.

Plumes of thick, black smoke rose over the city after a series of explosions shattered windows and started fires. Lviv and the rest of western Ukraine have seen only sporadic strikes during almost two months of war and have become a relative safe haven for people from parts of the country where fighting has been more intense.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, meanwhile, vowed to "fight absolutely to the end" in strategically vital Mariupol, where the last known pocket of resistance in a seven-week siege was holed up in a sprawling steel plant laced with tunnels. Russia has repeatedly urged forces there to lay down their arms, but those remaining ignored a surrender-or-die ultimatum on Sunday.

Seven people were killed and 11 wounded in overnight missile strikes, according to Lviv Mayor Andriy Sadovyi and the regional governor, Maksym Kozytskyy. The governor said the Russian strikes hit three military infrastructure facilities and a tire shop. He said the wounded included a child, and emergency teams were battling fires caused by the strikes.

A hotel sheltering Ukrainians who had fled fighting farther east was among the buildings badly damaged in the attack, the mayor said.

"The nightmare of war has caught up with us even in Lviv," said Lyudmila Turchak, 47, who fled with two children from the eastern city Kharkiv. "There is no longer anywhere in Ukraine where we can feel safe."

A powerful explosion also rocked Vasylykiv, a town south of the capital of Kyiv that is home to a military airbase, according to residents. Video posted on social media sites showed smoke in the area after the blast. It was not immediately clear what was hit, and there was no official confirmation from authorities.

Military analysts say Russia is increasing its strikes on weapons factories, railways and other infrastructure targets across Ukraine to wear down the country's ability to resist a major ground offensive in the Donbas, Ukraine's mostly Russian-speaking eastern industrial heartland.

The Russian military said its missiles struck more than 20 military targets in eastern and central Ukraine in the past day — including ammunition depots, command headquarters and groups of troops and vehicles. Meanwhile, it said artillery hit another 315 Ukrainian targets, and warplanes conducted 108 strikes on Ukrainian troops and military equipment. The claims couldn't be independently verified.

Gen. Richard Dannatt, a former head of the British Army, told Sky News the strikes were part of a "softening-up" campaign by Russia ahead of a planned ground offensive in the Donbas.

Ukraine's government halted civilian evacuations for a second day on Monday, saying Russian forces were shelling and blocking the humanitarian corridors.

Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said Ukraine had been negotiating passage from cities and towns in eastern and southeastern Ukraine, including Mariupol and other areas in the Donbas. The government of the Luhansk region in the Donbas said four civilians trying to flee were shot dead by Russian forces.

Russia is bent on capturing the Donbas, where Moscow-backed separatists already control some territory, after its attempt to take the capital failed.

"We are doing everything to ensure the defense" of eastern Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly address to the nation on Sunday.

The looming offensive in the east, if successful, would give Russian President Vladimir Putin a badly needed victory to point to amid the war's mounting casualties and the economic hardship caused by Western sanctions.

The capture of Mariupol is seen as a key step in preparations for any eastern assault since it would free

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Russian troops up for that new campaign. The fall of the city on the Sea of Azov would also hand Russia its biggest military victory of the war, giving it full control of a land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized in 2014, and depriving Ukraine of a major port and prized industrial assets.

Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar has described Mariupol as a "shield defending Ukraine."

The city has been reduced to rubble in the siege, but a few thousand fighters, by Russia's estimate, are holding on to the giant, 11-square-kilometer (4-square-mile) Azovstal steel mill.

"We will fight absolutely to the end, to the win, in this war," Shmyhal, Ukraine's prime minister, vowed Sunday on ABC's "This Week." He said Ukraine is prepared to end the war through diplomacy if possible, "but we do not have intention to surrender."

Many Mariupol civilians, including children, are also sheltering at the Azovstal plant, Mikhail Vershinin, head of the city's patrol police, told Mariupol television.

An estimated 100,000 people remained in the city out of a prewar population of 450,000, trapped without food, water, heat or electricity.

The relentless bombardment of Mariupol — including on a maternity hospital and a theater where civilians were sheltering — along with street fighting have killed at least 21,000 people, by Ukrainian estimates.

After the humiliating sinking of the flagship of Russia's Black Sea Fleet last week in what the Ukrainians boasted was a missile attack, the Kremlin had vowed to step up strikes on Ukraine's capital.

Ukraine says it hit the Russian warship Moskva with two Neptune missiles; Russia said only that it sank while being towed after a fire. Russia said its crew evacuated, but their fates remained unclear. Footage posted by the Russian military on Sunday showed Russia's naval commander inspecting rows of sailors, identified as being from the ship, in the Moskva's home port of Sevastopol in Crimea. It was unclear how many sailors were in the group.

Recent aerial attacks have also hit Kyiv and the eastern city of Kharkiv, where shelling on Monday killed at least three people and wounded three others, according to AP journalists on the scene. One of the dead was a woman who appeared to be going out to collect water in the rain. She was found lying bloodied with a water canister and umbrella by her side.

At least five people were killed by Russian shelling in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, on Sunday, regional officials said.

Zelenskyy called Sunday's bombing in Kharkiv "nothing but deliberate terror."

Zelenskyy also appealed for a stronger international response to what he said was the brutality of Russian troops in parts of southern Ukraine, where he accused them of torture and kidnappings. He urged the world to send more weapons and apply tougher sanctions against Moscow.

"Russian forces are destroying Mariupol," he added, claiming Russia wanted to wipe cities in the Donbas "off the face of the Earth."

## Boston Marathon returns to springtime spot for 126th running

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

HOPKINTON, Mass. (AP) — Runners were gearing up for the Boston Marathon on Monday, marking the return of the prestigious race to its springtime spot for the first time since the pandemic began.

At 6 a.m. in Hopkinton, Race Director Dave McGillivray sent out a group of about 20 from the Massachusetts National Guard, which walks the course annually, announcing the start of the 126th Boston Marathon. He told them that the "comeback is greater than the setback."

McGillivray said in an interview that "it's a new normal," with some pandemic protocols still in place — like requiring participants to be vaccinated or show an exemption — "but it's a normal." He said he's using the catchphrase because "we're about to see that come to life."

"We recognize that we're not totally out of the woods. We're still sensitive to the virus and requiring vaccinations," he said. "We're really not back to normal for the time being, but this is what the new normal is. The key is keeping everyone safe."

The wheelchair divisions were to start shortly after 9 a.m., followed by the elite fields. Eleven former



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champions are competing. McGillivray said it's "one of the greatest assembled pro fields of all time."

It has been only six months since athletes raced 26.2 miles (42.2 kilometers) to Copley Square in Boston for the world's oldest and most prestigious annual marathon.

The 2020 race was called off because of the pandemic, the first cancellation since the event began in 1897. And the 2021 version was postponed, then held in October. That was the first fall edition of the marathon. The field was smaller for social distancing and the crowds were smaller too, though no less enthusiastic.

More than 28,000 runners were signed up to run Monday on the Patriots' Day holiday. It's the marathon's traditional spot on the calendar, on the day that commemorates the start of the Revolutionary War.

About one-third of the National Guard group marched in October, too. Capt. Gus Ashton, 29, said the crowds last year were great and he's excited to get back out again and see even more people on the course. "It's still not quite normal, but it's a lot closer to normal," he said.

The Boston Athletic Association is marking the 50th anniversary of the first official women's division, though the eight women who lined up alongside the men that year were not the first ones to run the race.

Bobbi Gibb is acknowledged as the first woman to run Boston. She finished in 1966 among the unofficial runners known as bandits. A year later, Kathrine Switzer signed up as "K.V. Switzer" and got an official bib. Race director Jock Semple tried to shove her off the course.

Nina Kuscsik's 1972 victory is celebrated this year. Five of the original eight women are taking part in the celebrations. Valerie Rogosheske, who finished sixth in the 1972 race, will run again this year, along with her daughters, and serve as the honorary starter for the women's elite field.

Amy Sipe, 46, of Dallastown, Pennsylvania said the anniversary makes this year's race, her fourth time on the course, more exciting and special.

"I am grateful for the pioneering effort they made to make this possible for us today," she said of her forerunners at the starting line. "Their courage and fortitude and determination to overcome all the obstacles made this possible for us today and women athletes everywhere. It spills over into other sports."

Back then, she said, many people thought women could only run a couple of miles: "Here we are today. We are strong."

Sipe traveled to the marathon with a running club based in Delaware, along with Alison McCann, 47, and Mardi Ung, 55. The two women from Pennsylvania both ran in October.

"It was taper, rest, repeat, then get back to training," McCann described the past half year.

This year, the women's field is one of the strongest ever. Reigning Olympic gold medalist Peres Jepchirchir, London and New York marathon winner Joyciline Jepkosgei, and Ethiopia's Degitu Azimeraw all have personal bests that are faster than the Boston course record.

Kenya's Benson Kipruto won the men's race in October and will try to defend his title.

Ukrainians who were registered for the race were offered a refund or deferral to a future race if they could not or did not want to run this year. Residents of Russia and Belarus have been told they are not welcome.

## Turkey launches new ground, air offensive in northern Iraq

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey has launched a new ground and air cross-border offensive against Kurdish militants in northern Iraq, that has left at least 19 suspected Kurdish rebels dead and has wounded at least four Turkish soldiers, Turkey's defense minister said Monday.

Turkish jets and artillery struck suspected targets of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and commando troops — supported by helicopters and drones — then crossed into the region by land or were airlifted by helicopters, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said in a video posted on the ministry's website.

Akar said the jets successfully struck shelters, bunkers, caves, tunnels, ammunition depots and headquarters belonging to the PKK. The group maintains bases in northern Iraq and has used the territory for attacks on Turkey.

At least 19 militants were killed while four Turkish troops were wounded during the offensive, the ministry said. There was no immediate comment from the Kurdish militant group on the incursion and the defense

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ministry statement couldn't be verified independently.

Turkey has conducted numerous cross-border aerial and ground operations against the PKK over the past decades. The latest offensive, named Operation Claw Lock, was centered in northern Iraq's Metina, Zap and Avashin-Basyan regions.

There was no information on the number of troops and jets involved in the latest incursion.

"Our heroic commandoes and maroon berets — supported by attack helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, armed unmanned aerial vehicles — arrived on the scene by land and by air and captured the determined targets," Akar said in a second video. "Many terrorists were neutralized."

"At this point we have reached, all planned targets have been captured," he said.

The Defense Ministry said the new offensive was launched after it was determined that the militants were regrouping and preparing for a "large-scale attack."

The offensive was carried out in coordination with Turkey's "friends and allies," the ministry added, but didn't elaborate. Last week, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Masrour Barzani, the prime minister of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, which controls the areas that were attacked.

The Turkish minister said the incursion was targeting "terrorists" and that "maximum sensitivity" was being shown to avoid damage to civilians and cultural and religious structures.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed since the PKK, which is designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. and the European Union, began an insurgency in Turkey's majority Kurdish southeast region in 1984.

## US, S Korea urge North's return to talks after missile tests

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The U.S. special envoy for North Korea said Monday that Washington and Seoul agreed on the need for a strong response to North Korea's recent spate of missile tests, though they remain open to dialogue with the country.

Sung Kim flew to South Korea on Monday for talks two days after North Korea conducted a new type of missile test in its 13th round of weapons firing this year. Experts say North Korea wants to advance its weapons arsenal and wrest concessions such as sanctions relief from its rivals.

Weapons tested include nuclear-capable missiles able to target both the U.S. mainland and its allies such as South Korea and Japan. There are concerns that North Korea may conduct a nuclear test soon to intensify its pressure campaign.

"We agreed on the need for a strong response to the destabilizing behavior we have seen" from North Korea, Kim told reporters after meeting with his South Korean counterpart. "(We) also agreed on the need to maintain the strongest possible joint deterrent capability on the peninsula."

South Korean nuclear envoy Noh Kyu-duk said he and Kim shared concerns that North Korea will likely continue to engage in acts that raise regional tensions. He urged North Korea to return to talks.

Kim said the allies "have not closed the door on diplomacy" with North Korea and have "no hostile intent" toward the country. He repeated his earlier statement that the United States is ready to meet North Korea "anywhere, without any conditions."

North Korea has so far rejected Kim's outreach, saying the United States must first drop its hostile policy before talks can resume. Some experts say North Korea wants the U.S. to relax sanctions or suspend its regular military drills with South Korea, which it views as an invasion rehearsal.

Earlier Monday, the U.S. and South Korean militaries kicked off their springtime computer-simulated command post exercise. North Korea has previously responded to such drills with missile tests and war-like rhetoric.

North Korea said Sunday it tested a new tactical guided weapon a day earlier which would boost its nuclear fighting capability. Some analysts said the weapon is likely a short-range ballistic missile to be mounted with a tactical nuclear warhead capable of targeting South Korea.

Last month, North Korea test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile potentially capable of reaching the

U.S. homeland in its first long-range weapons test since November 2017.

U.S.-led diplomacy meant to convince North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions in return for economic and political rewards remain largely stalemated since 2019.

## **Alex Jones' Infowars files for bankruptcy protection**

VICTORIA, Texas (AP) — Infowars filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection as the website's founder and conspiracy theorist Alex Jones faces defamation lawsuits over his comments that the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting was a hoax.

The bankruptcy filing Sunday in Texas puts civil litigation on hold while the business reorganizes its finances.

In its court filing, Infowars said it had estimated assets of \$50,000 or less and estimated liabilities of \$1 million to \$10 million. Creditors listed in the bankruptcy filing include relatives of some of the 20 children and six educators killed in the 2012 school massacre in Connecticut.

The plaintiffs in that case have said they have been subjected to harassment and death threats from Jones' followers because of the hoax conspiracy that Jones promoted. Jones has since conceded the shooting did happen. The families have already won defamation lawsuits against Jones.

Another newly filed lawsuit accuses Jones of hiding millions of dollars in assets, but an attorney for Jones has called that allegation "ridiculous."

## **Biden to require US-made steel, iron for infrastructure**

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is taking a key step toward ensuring that federal dollars will support U.S. manufacturing — issuing requirements for how projects funded by the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package source their construction material.

The guidance being issued Monday requires that the material purchased — whether it's for a bridge, a highway, a water pipe or broadband internet — be produced in the U.S., according to administration officials. However, the rules also set up a process to waive those requirements in case there are not enough domestic producers or the material costs too much, with the goal of issuing fewer waivers over time as U.S. manufacturing capacity increases.

"There are going to be additional opportunities for good jobs in the manufacturing sector," said Celeste Drake, director of Made in America at the White House Office of Management and Budget.

President Joe Biden hopes to create more jobs, ease supply chain strains and reduce the reliance on China and other nations with interests that diverge from America's. With inflation at a 40-year high ahead of the 2022 midterm elections, he's betting that more domestic production will ultimately reduce price pressures to blunt Republican attacks that his \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package initially triggered higher prices.

"From Day One, every action I've taken to rebuild our economy has been guided by one principle: Made in America," Biden said Thursday in Greensboro, North Carolina. "It takes a federal government that doesn't just give lip service to buying American but actually takes action."

Biden said that the roughly \$700 billion the government devotes annually to procuring goods is supposed to prioritize U.S. suppliers but regulations going back to the 1930s have either been watered down or applied in ways that masked the use of foreign imports.

The administration could not say what percentage of construction material for existing infrastructure projects is U.S.-made, even though the federal government is already spending \$350 billion on construction this year. The new guidelines would enable government officials to know how many dollars go to U.S. workers and factories.

Tucked into the bipartisan infrastructure package that became law last November was a requirement that starting on May 14 "none of the funds" allocated to federal agencies for projects may be spent "unless all of the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in the project are produced in

the United States.” That’s according to Monday’s 17-page guidance.

The guidance includes three standards for these requirements to be waived: if the purchase “would be inconsistent with the public interest”; if the needed materials aren’t produced “in sufficient and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality”; or if U.S. materials increase a project’s cost by more than 25%.

American manufacturers are about 170,000 jobs short of the 12.8 million factory jobs held in 2019, as manufacturing jobs began to decline before the pandemic began. But the U.S. has 6.9 million fewer manufacturing jobs compared with the 1979 peak, a loss caused by outsourcing and automation.

Getting more industrial jobs will likely mean adding more factories and assembly lines — as manufacturers are operating at a 78.7% capacity, which the Federal Reserve notes is above the historical average.

## Two Palestinians wounded by Israeli troops in West Bank raid

JERUSALEM (AP) — Two Palestinian men were critically injured by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank on Monday, the Palestinian Health Ministry said, the latest incident in a wave of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

The Israeli military were conducting an arrest raid in the village of Yamun, west of Jenin in the northern West Bank, when dozens of Palestinians started throwing rocks and explosives at the troops, who returned fire.

“The soldiers responded with live ammunition toward the suspects who hurled explosive devices. Hits were identified,” the army said in a statement.

The two wounded men were hospitalized, according to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa.

The military said it arrested 11 Palestinians in raids across the West Bank overnight on Monday.

Israel has sent forces to search through Palestinian cities and villages in search of suspects or accomplices linked to two deadly attacks on Israelis in recent weeks. Earlier this month, a Palestinian gunman opened fire at a crowded Tel Aviv bar, killing three, and fled the scene. He was later killed in a shootout with police after an extensive manhunt.

That assault, as well as three other attacks elsewhere in Israel in recent weeks, have killed 14 people, the deadliest outburst of bloodshed against Israelis in years.

At least 25 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces in recent weeks, according to an Associated Press count. Many had carried out attacks or were involved in the clashes, but an unarmed woman and a lawyer who appears to have been a bystander were also among those killed.

Jenin is considered a stronghold of Palestinian militants. Israeli forces often come under fire when operating in the area. Even the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the occupied West Bank and coordinates with Israel on security matters, appears to have little control.

Israel captured the West Bank, along with the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek those territories for a future independent state.

Tensions between Israel and the Palestinians have run high in recent days, during the confluence of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the week-long Jewish holiday of Passover.

Palestinian protesters have clashed with Israeli police at a flashpoint Jerusalem holy site, known to Muslims as the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and to Jews as the Temple Mount. On Monday, Jordan, which serves as custodian of the site, summoned Israel’s charge d’affaires to protest Israel’s actions at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in recent days, the Israeli Foreign Ministry confirmed.

Violence between Israeli security personnel and Palestinians at the shrine last year helped fuel the 11-day war between Israel and Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip.

## Congress seeks compromise to boost computer chip industry

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A global computer chip shortage has made it harder for consumers to get their hands on cars, computers and other modern-day necessities, so Congress is looking to boost chip manufacturing and research in the United States with billions of dollars from the federal government.

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Both the House and the Senate have passed major legislation on the matter, and the effort is one of lawmakers' final opportunities before the November elections to show voters they are addressing the nation's strained supply chains.

Now they have to work out considerable differences in the two bills. And Senate Republicans are already digging in before the negotiations formally begin.

President Joe Biden has made the semiconductor legislation a top priority, but he'll need the support of 10 Senate Republicans, and perhaps more, to get a bill to his desk. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell emphasized that point when congressional leaders recently announced which lawmakers will serve on the committee that works to reconcile the two bills.

"Without major concessions and changes from House Democrats, this legislation has no chance of becoming law," McConnell said.

House Democrats say their voices need to be heard during negotiations.

"We need to make sure that everyone has input," said Rep. Suzan DelBene, D-Wash., chair of the New Democratic Coalition, a group that has 19 members participating in negotiations. "We have a strong bill in the House, and I think there's important components there that the Senate should also consider."

## WHERE THINGS STAND

House and Senate leaders have selected lawmakers to join a committee tasked with merging the two bills into one.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi chose 49 Democrats and one Republican, Rep. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, the only GOP member to vote for the House bill. Republican House leader Kevin McCarthy selected 31 Republicans for the committee.

McConnell and Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer each picked 13 senators.

The House has approved its participants, while the Senate still has some procedural work to do before it can do that.

The Senate bill is projected to increase spending by about \$250 billion over 10 years. The House bill would boost spending by more than \$400 billion over the period.

## WHERE THERE IS MUCH AGREEMENT

The Senate and House bills allot more than \$52 billion for semiconductor production and research. Grants and loans from the federal government would subsidize some of the cost of building or renovating semiconductor plants.

"The chips funding is absolutely the foundation of this bill — it's a bipartisan foundation," said Josh Teitelbaum, senior counsel at Akin Gump, a law and lobbying firm. "I think it is what is driving this toward the finish line."

## SOME OVERLAP, BUT KEY DIFFERENCES

Both bills authorize a big boost in spending for the National Science Foundation, but they have different priorities for the research receiving funding.

The Senate bill provides \$29 billion over five years to a new directorate focused on strengthening U.S. leadership in artificial intelligence, semiconductors, robotics and other cutting-edge technologies.

The House bill provides \$13.3 billion over five years to a new directorate for science and engineering solutions. It lists climate change, environmental sustainability and social and economic inequality as part of the directorate's focus.

The two sides will have to hammer out their competing visions for the National Science Foundation and the new tech directorate.

The two bills also establish regional technology hubs — with the Senate dedicating \$10 billion to the program and the House dedicating \$7 billion. The Senate bill calls for 20 such hubs, while the House bill authorizes at least 10.

The seed money would go to regional organizations seeking to advance a variety of economic and national security priorities.

The approach has bipartisan support from lawmakers with big rural and minority constituencies who

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want to ensure the money is not concentrated in universities or communities where a lot of tech research is already done.

## WHERE THERE ARE MAJOR DIFFERENCES

The bills diverge on supply chain issues, trade, immigration and climate change, to name a few areas of disagreement.

One of the big-ticket items is a \$45 billion program in the House bill to enhance supply chains in the U.S. There was no such provision in the Senate bill. The money would provide grants, loans or loan guarantees to companies, local governments and tribes trying to build or relocate manufacturing plants producing critical goods.

"This is a real area of focus for companies and for communities who want to try to bring back manufacturing," Teitelbaum said. "There's a lot of interest in including this funding in the final package."

Another stark difference is on trade. The House reauthorizes a program that provides training and financial assistance for those who lose their jobs or have their hours cut because of increased imports. The Senate has no such provision.

"It's not going to move without trade adjustment assistance," Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., said of the bill.

Meanwhile, the Senate bill includes a trade provision that would exclude more products from tariffs the Trump administration put in place on goods imported from China. Those exclusions have almost all expired. The Senate bill reinstates them, a priority of business groups such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The House bill addresses immigration, while the Senate bill does not. It would create a new visa category for entrepreneurs and would allow those with an ownership interest in successful ventures to apply to become lawful permanent residents.

The House bill, unlike the Senate bill, also touches on climate change. It dedicates \$8 billion to a fund that helps developing countries adjust to climate change. That could be a nonstarter for Republicans, who object to using U.S. taxpayer money for that purpose.

No one expects the negotiations to be easy.

"I have a hard time explaining to my friends and constituents," said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, "that when the White House is in favor of something, when Democrats are in favor of something, Republicans are in favor of something, the House is in favor of it, and the Senate is in favor of it, we still can't seem to get it done. But I hope that we will take advantage of this opportunity."

## On Tax Day, an extension may be better than rushing a return

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Monday is Tax Day — the federal deadline for individual tax filing and payments — and the IRS expects to receive tens of millions of last-minute filings electronically and through paper forms.

As of April 8, the IRS had received more than 103 million returns for this tax season, and it had issued more than 63 million refunds worth more than \$204 billion.

For comparison, last year more than 169 million people completed an income tax return by the end of the year. That probably leaves nearly 40% of this year's taxpayers still unaccounted for, with many scrambling to submit their documents by Monday.

Nina Tross, executive director of the National Society of Tax Professionals, said that if people haven't filed their taxes by now, "they're better off filing an extension."

But, she added, "People don't realize that filing an extension has zero effect" as long as they have paid their income taxes by Tax Day.

"An extension is merely filing a return at a later date," Tross said. "If you rush through a return to get it out the door, and you have to amend it later, you're more likely to get a double look from the IRS."

"You're much better off extending than amending," she said.

The IRS this year is facing its biggest backlog in history. At the end of the 2021 filing season, the agency had 35.3 million returns waiting for processing. One reason is that every paper document that goes into the IRS is processed by a human, according to the IRS.

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Another is that the agency has administered massive coronavirus pandemic-related relief programs over the last several years — like the advanced Child Tax Credit.

And some forms are reviewed by IRS employees and treated as if submitted on paper even if they are e-filed.

This year will be one of the most challenging for the agency, with its record low staffing numbers. The IRS workforce is the same size it was in 1970, though the U.S. population has grown exponentially and tax laws have become increasingly complicated.

Lisa Greene-Lewis, a certified public accountant and a spokesperson at TurboTax, said that if people still intend to file a return by Tax Day, "I would gather all your documents in one place so you don't leave anything out, like W-2s and 1099s."

Important papers such as the "Letter 6419" that outlines the Child Tax Credit payments a taxpayer should have received this year and the "Letter 6475" for stimulus payments should also be on hand.

Greene-Lewis, who has been doing taxes for more than 20 years, said "you want to report the correct amount you received so you don't have to have to make adjustments to your refund."

Though the agency announced plans in March to hire at least 10,000 more workers to help process returns, administration officials say the IRS is in desperate need of more funding, as its budget has fallen over the last decade.

On a call with reporters, a senior Treasury official who spoke on the condition of anonymity said the IRS backlog could be remedied with higher funding levels, as the IRS' budget has decreased by more than 15% in real terms.

The IRS has put out some information and helpful links for last-minute filers — stressing that "taxpayers should be careful to file a complete and accurate tax return. If a return includes errors or is incomplete, it may require further review.

Keith Kahn, director/chair of the Delaware Society of CPAs, said he encourages everyone to file an electronic return.

When asked whether CPAs will accept clients on Tax Day, Kahn said it's common for people to be turned away. But for those who can get an appointment, "make sure you have everything you could possibly provide to your CPA — there's not a lot of time to hammer out strategy or to ask questions."

## Wall Street heads lower in premarket following Asian losses

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. markets were pointing toward losses before the open on Monday, following Asian markets lower after China reported that its economy expanded at a 4.8% annual pace in January-March.

Futures for the S&P 500 lost 0.3% and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average slipped 0.1%.

Benchmarks fell in Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei and Shanghai. Seoul edged higher. Markets in Europe and in Hong Kong and Sydney were closed for holidays.

Wall Street benchmarks declined last week before closing for the Easter holiday.

China's growth has fallen well below the official target of 5.5% for 2022. In quarterly terms the economy grew 1.3% in the first quarter, compared with 1.4% in the last quarter of 2021.

Authorities have ordered shutdowns in some major cities including Shanghai to battle the country's worst outbreaks of coronavirus since it flared into a pandemic in March 2020. But the biggest impact of the shutdowns will likely be seen in the current quarter.

"Overall, the data suggest that China started the year well, but as the quarter has moved on the headwinds have gotten stronger," Jeffrey Halley of Oanda said in a report.

The Shanghai Composite index fell 0.5% to 3,195.52. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index lost 1.1% to 26,799.71 while the Kospi in Seoul edged 0.1% lower, to 2,693.21. India's Sensex dropped 2.2%.

As trading resumed Monday in some world markets, attention was focused on Ukraine, where Ukrainian fighters were holding out against a capture of their shattered city of Mariupol after a 7-week siege, ignoring a surrender-or-die ultimatum from Russia.

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The fall of Mariupol would be Moscow's biggest victory of the war and free up troops to take part in a potentially climactic battle for control of Ukraine's industrial east.

Ukraine was sending top officials to Washington for this week's spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank amid dire warnings about the impact of the Russian invasion on the global economy.

A World Bank official said Friday that Ukraine's prime minister, finance minister and central bank governor are coming. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the visit had not been officially announced.

The conflict has pushed prices for oil and other commodities sharply higher, compounding difficulties for policy makers trying to nurse along recoveries from the pandemic while also tamping down inflation that is at 40-year highs in many countries.

Central banks are raising interest rates that had stayed at record low levels to counter the devastation of the pandemic to help rein in price increases. But that can also discourage a revival in spending and investment needed to drive recoveries.

U.S. benchmark crude oil lost most of its early gains Monday, edging up 2 cents to \$106.97 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It rose \$2.70 to \$106.95 per barrel on Thursday, before closing for Good Friday.

Brent crude, the basis for pricing international oils, climbed 26 cents to \$111.96 per barrel.

In currency trading, the dollar rose to 126.59 Japanese yen from 126.44 yen late Friday. The euro rose slightly to \$1.0808 from \$1.0807.

## Shanghai reports first deaths in current COVID-19 outbreak

BEIJING (AP) — Shanghai authorities on Monday reported the first COVID-19 deaths in the latest outbreak in China's most populous and wealthiest city.

All three people who died were elderly, had underlying diseases such as diabetes and hypertension and had not been vaccinated against the coronavirus, city Health Commission inspector Wu Ganyu told journalists.

"After entering hospital, their conditions grew worse and they died after attempts to save them were unsuccessful," Wu said.

The deaths raise to 4,641 the number of people that China says have succumbed to the disease since the virus was first detected in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019.

While China has an overall vaccination rate of around 90%, a low rate among the elderly remains a concern. Only 62% of Shanghai residents over age 60 have been vaccinated, according to the latest data available. Some experts say China needs to raise that rate before it can safely live with the virus.

While highly contagious, the omicron BA.2 variant driving the Shanghai outbreak is less lethal than the previous delta variant. However, China's low death toll from COVID-19, which is blamed for more than 988,000 deaths in the United States, has raised questions about how China's authoritarian and often highly secretive government counts such fatalities.

Most of Shanghai's 25 million residents are being confined to their homes for a third week as China continues to employ a "zero-tolerance" strategy to curb the outbreak, demanding isolation of anyone possibly infected.

China on Monday said 23,362 people had tested positive for the virus over the previous 24 hours, most of them showing no symptoms and almost all of them in Shanghai.

The city has reported more than 300,000 cases since late March. Shanghai began easing restrictions last week, although officials have warned that the city doesn't have its outbreak under control.

Shanghai, which is home to China's biggest port and most important stock exchange, appeared unprepared for such a massive undertaking.

Residents have run short of food and other daily necessities while enduring lockdown conditions, and tens of thousands of people put under medical observation have been sequestered in crowded facilities where lights are always on, garbage bins overflow, food is inadequate and hot showers nonexistent.

Anyone who tests positive but has few or no symptoms is required to spend one week in a quarantine



facility.

Concerns have risen about the economic impact of the government's hard-line policy.

China's economic growth edged up to a still-weak 4.8% over a year earlier in the first three months of 2022 as lockdowns cut production in major industrial cities. Official data showed growth accelerated from the previous quarter's 4%.

At a meeting Monday, Vice Premier Liu He, President Xi Jinping's top economic adviser, pledged increased spending to stabilize supply chains and provide financial support for health workers and others on the pandemic front lines.

While the ruling Communist Party has urged more targeted prevention measures, local officials have routinely adopted stringent regulations, possibly for fear of being fired or penalized over outbreaks in their areas.

In the city of Wenzhou, which has seen only a handful of cases, authorities have authorized rewards of up to 50,000 yuan (\$7,800) for information about people who falsify their health status, online news site The Paper reported.

## **Bosnians warn Ukrainians: It's a long journey to justice**

By SABINA NIKSIC Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia (AP) — Regardless of how the Russian war in Ukraine ends, getting justice for human rights abuses suffered during the conflict will inevitably be a long and painful process for those who survive to tell of the atrocities they witnessed.

That's the message from survivors of Bosnia's 1992-95 internecine war, who have dedicated the ensuing years to the re-telling and re-living of their trauma in hope of bringing those responsible to justice and setting the historical record straight.

"For me, it is personal. I am still searching for the remains of my brother. I cannot move on. I cannot focus on something else and leave that behind," said Edin Ramulic from the northwestern Bosnian town of Prijedor.

Ramulic was 22-year-old university graduate when, in April 1992, he and his male relatives, including his older brother and father, were rounded up by Bosnian Serbs, along with thousands of other non-Serb civilians from Prijedor and surrounding villages, to be deported from the area, imprisoned, tortured or killed.

More than 3,000 non-Serbs — including 102 children — were killed in Prijedor. Some were executed in their homes or in the streets, others in three prison camps where prisoners were subjected to including beatings, rape, sexual assaults and torture. Ramulic's brother, uncle and four cousins did not survive the camps.

Much like the graphic evidence of killings and torture in Bucha, outside Kyiv, that emerged earlier this month after Russian forces withdrew from the area, the discovery by international journalists of the camps in Prijedor in August 1992 provoked global outrage and calls by world leaders for those responsible to be held to account.

A process was put in motion by the United Nations Security Council to establish a special U.N. war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. When it was set up in The Hague in 1993, it was the first international court to investigate and prosecute allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide since the tribunals in Nuremberg and Tokyo after World War II.

At first nobody thought it would work, the investigators' access to crime scenes in Prijedor and elsewhere in Bosnia was blocked for years, and political leaders of the Bosnian Serbs and neighboring Serbia continued to deny human right abuses and hide documents and those indicted.

Justice was slow to come. Bosnian Serb wartime leader Radovan Karadzic and his military commander Ratko Mladic were fugitives from international justice until the late 2000s when they were tracked down in Serbia.

But by the time it shut down in 2017, the tribunal had convicted 83 high-ranking wartime political and military officials, most of them from Bosnia. It also transferred a mountain of evidence and cases against

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lower-ranking suspects to their home countries in the Balkans.

Desperate to find information about the fate of their loved ones and force the world to acknowledge their suffering, survivors like Ramulic changed their lives, setting up support groups for potential witnesses, collecting information about missing persons and commemorating the victims.

"I've spent countless months of my life in different courtrooms (as a witness), listening to defense counsels trying to deny the evidence," Ramulic said.

"It sometimes happens that the people you know are guilty are set free because of the lack of evidence, but it is worth it," he added.

Ramulic still does not know where his brother's remains are or exactly who killed him and how, but the court sentences, some of which he had helped bring about, "are the most valuable thing that we have, because the evidence-based truth contained in them cannot be forever ignored and denied."

In Munira Subasic's former life, before the war, she was a shopkeeper, wife and the mother of two sons. Nothing prepared her for what she would become after losing her husband and a son in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in which 8,000 men and boys died. It was the only episode of Bosnia's war to be legally defined as genocide.

Amid their frantic search for their missing loved ones, Subasic and a number of other women created an organization, Mothers of Srebrenica, and engaged in street protests and other direct action to stay in the public eye and demand that mass graves be found, remains identified and those responsible for the massacre brought to justice. To date, almost 90 percent of those reported missing from the fall of Srebrenica have been accounted for.

"We knew the names of the killers, we collected them and shared the information with prosecutors, we visited every mass grave site, we searched for information about where others might be. We have been breathing down everyone's neck, demanding justice," Subasic said.

"Mothers of Ukraine will have to do the same," she added.

Subasic, along with dozens of others, testified before the U.N. war crimes tribunal for former Yugoslavia, helping put behind bars close to 50 Bosnian Serb wartime officials, collectively sentenced to over 700 years in prison.

To get there, however, Subasic and other women of Srebrenica had to overcome the pain of constantly confronting people "who tried to hide that our children ever existed, who basically claimed that we were never mothers, that we never gave birth to anyone."

"Russia's denials of massacres its soldiers are now obviously committing in Ukraine sound to me the same as Srebrenica genocide denial," Subasic said. "But if survivors are persistent, the truth will prevail."

As for absolute justice, in Bosnia it remains elusive. The Bosnian war killed 100,000 people, most of them civilians, and upward of 2 million, or over half of the country's population, were driven from their homes. Three decades since it started, some 7,000 of the war missing remain unaccounted-for and the Bosnian judiciary has a backlog of over 500 unresolved war crimes cases, involving some 4,500 suspects. As the years pass and witnesses and suspects age, fall ill or die, many of the cases that remain open will likely never reach trial.

Jasminka Dzumhur, Bosnia's human rights ombudsperson, was appointed last month by the U.N. Human Rights Council to serve as a member of its three-person commission to investigate possible human rights violations during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"It is very important that we know from experience what information is important to establish the evidence of human rights and humanitarian law abuses and what facts can later help relevant judicial bodies to prove individual criminal responsibility for such violations," said Dzumhur.

"The commission is not a body that shall establish criminal responsibility for possible human rights violations and war crimes (in Ukraine), but it is a mechanism for gathering of facts that can help establish individual criminal responsibility," she added.

Still, Dzumhur warned that it was important for survivors of human rights abuses and possible war crimes in Ukraine to understand "that their path to justice will be long and uncertain, that it will demand

many sacrifices from them and that along the way they are unlikely to find many allies" who will be as committed as they are to the pursuit of truth.

## Syrian fighters ready to join next phase of Ukraine war

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — During a visit to Syria in 2017, Vladimir Putin lavished praise on a Syrian general whose division played an instrumental role in defeating insurgents in the country's long-running civil war. The Russian president told him his cooperation with Russian troops "will lead to great successes in the future."

Now members of Brig. Gen. Suheil al-Hassan's division are among hundreds of Russian-trained Syrian fighters who have reportedly signed up to fight alongside Russian troops in Ukraine, including Syrian soldiers, former rebels and experienced fighters who fought for years against the Islamic State group in Syria's desert.

So far, only a small number appears to have arrived in Russia for military training ahead of deployment on the front lines. Although Kremlin officials boasted early in the war of more than 16,000 applications from the Middle East, U.S. officials and activists monitoring Syria say there have not yet been significant numbers of fighters from the region joining the war in Ukraine.

Analysts, however, say this could change as Russia prepares for the next phase of the battle with a full-scale offensive in eastern Ukraine. They believe fighters from Syria are more likely to be deployed in coming weeks, especially after Putin named Gen. Alexander Dvornikov, who commanded the Russian military in Syria, as the new war commander in Ukraine.

Though some question how effective Syrian fighters would be in Ukraine, they could be brought in if more forces are needed to besiege cities or to make up for rising casualties. Dvornikov is well acquainted with the multiple paramilitary forces in Syria trained by Russia while he oversaw the strategy of ruthlessly besieging and bombarding opposition-held cities in Syria into submission.

"Russia is preparing for a greater battle" in Ukraine and Syrian fighters are likely to take part, said Ahmad Hamada, a Syrian army defector who is now a military analyst based in Turkey.

Syria observers and activists say the Russians have been actively recruiting in Syria for the Ukraine war, particularly among Russian-trained combatants.

Rami Abdurrahman, who heads the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, reported that so far about 40,000 people have registered -- 22,000 with the Russian military and about 18,000 with the Russian private contractor Wagner Group.

Around 700 members of al-Hassan's 25th Special Missions Forces Division, known in Syria as the "Tiger Force," left Syria over the past weeks to fight along Russian forces, Abdurrahman said. The numbers could not be independently confirmed.

Pro-government activists posted videos over the past two weeks on social media showing members of the Tiger Force performing military drills including parachuting from helicopters. Russian officers appeared in one of the videos advising the paratroopers inside a helicopter as al-Hassan praised the young men by tapping on their heads. It was not immediately clear if the videos were new.

Abdurrahman said there are also volunteers from the Russian-trained 5th Division; the Baath brigades, which is the armed wing of Assad's ruling Baath party; and the Palestinian Quds Brigade, made up of Palestinian refugees in Syria. All have fought alongside the Russian military in Syria's war.

"The Russians are looking for experienced fighters. They don't want anyone who was not trained by the Russians," Abdurrahman said.

The Tiger Force took credit for some of the biggest government victories in the 11-year conflict. It was involved in a months-long Russian-backed campaign into the rebels' last enclave, located in the northwest province of Idlib, which ended in March 2020 with government forces capturing a vital north-south highway -- though rebels remain in control of the enclave.

Al-Hassan "is one of Russia's men and Russia will depend on him," said Omar Abu Layla, a Europe-based activist who runs the DeirEzzor 24, a Syria war monitoring group.

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Hundreds of fighters from the 5th Division and the Quds Brigade have registered at Russia's Hmeimeem base in western Syria, which is leading recruitment efforts, and are waiting for orders, he said.

In late March, a Russian-trained force known as the "ISIS Hunters" militia, which fought for years against IS, posted an ad calling on men aged 23 to 49 to come forward for screening, saying those who pass the test and are found suitable will be called on later.

So far, about 100 men have registered their names in the southern province of Sweida, according to Rayan Maarouf of Suwayda24, an activist collective that covers IS activities in the Syrian desert. He added that they were promised a monthly income of no less than \$600, a huge sum of money amid widespread unemployment and the crash of the Syrian pound.

Earlier this month, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said the U.S. had indications that the Wagner Group is trying to recruit fighters, mostly from the Middle East, to deploy in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region.

But he said there has been "no specific information" on numbers recruited. "We just aren't there yet to see anything real demonstrable when it comes to reinforcement," he added.

Gen. Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, told the Senate Armed Services Committee in early March that so far there are only "very small groups" trying to make their way from Syria to Ukraine, calling it a "very small trickle."

Retired Lebanese army general Naji Malaeb, who follows the war in Syria closely, said there is no indication so far of Syrian fighters traveling to Russia, but this could change as the war drags on.

"This all depends on what the Russians plan to do in the near future," Malaeb said.

Syrian and Palestinian officials in Syria have played down reports of fighters heading to Ukraine. The Syrian government is likely wary of having Syrian fighters flock to Ukraine, opening opportunities at the front lines that its many opponents could exploit.

In a potentially worrying sign for the Syrian government, Russia has significantly scaled down its operations in Syria since the war in Ukraine started, with fewer airstrikes targeting IS or opposition positions in Idlib.

"Any change in the posture of Russian forces or pro-regime militias creates security gaps that anti-regime actors including Turkey, ISIS, al-Qaida and Syrian opposition groups can exploit," the ISW report said.

Muhannad Haj Ali, a former legislator and a commander with the armed wing of Syria's ruling Baath party said no Syrians have gone to fight in Ukraine and that he didn't expect any to go.

He said he was certain Russia will win in Ukraine without any need for Syrians' help.

"The way the operations are going is clear indication that Ukraine will not be another Afghanistan," he said.

## Figure Skating in Harlem: 25 years and growing

By BARRY WILNER AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A quarter-century ago, Sharon Cohen founded an organization that, to some, made little sense. After all, how many figure skaters would she find in Harlem?

Figure Skating in Harlem celebrates its 25th anniversary with a gala on April 25, and has become a success story built on academics, social growth and, well, yes, ice time.

"I am incredibly proud because of how many people have come together for such a mission," Cohen said. "We took sort of a 360-degree view and started on a collective journey in doing good, and being a springboard for young people to discover themselves and go out in the world."

The organization's objective is helping girls from various racial and ethnic backgrounds transform their lives by growing in confidence, leadership and academic achievement. Clearly, it has worked. FSH graduates are deep into their careers or attending universities throughout the United States. The current students, emerging from COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, are returning to something like normal. Cohen is even seeing second-generation skaters in the program.

Figure Skating in Harlem combines the power of education with access to the artistic discipline of figure skating "to build champions in life."

Its gala will honor several such champions, from 2022 Olympic gold medalist Nathan Chen to actress/humanitarian Whoopi Goldberg; singer/songwriter Valerie Simpson; Unilever's chief operating officer of

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EVP beauty and personal care Esi Eggleston Bracey; Portfolia Rising America Fund lead partner Lorine Pendleton; and Bernice DeAbreu, a member of the New York Board of Education who specializes in computer literacy and elementary education and is known as the "godmother of FSH."

All of the women have been longtime supporters of the organization, while Chen follows in the line of so many superb skaters.

"It is always great when we have an Olympian come and meet with the girls," Cohen said. "Scott Hamilton was first to get on the ice with the girls, giving them pointers, and his presence meant so much. Same with Sarah Hughes. Right after Sarah won gold in 2002 she came straight to Harlem, and she has gone on to a great career in education and law. She is an incredible role model, like Nathan, a Yale student, a scholar.

"I think it means a lot when they're physically present with us and come to our events to get the word out and share the mission. We're a mission that hits at the heart and that people can understand."

Chen, who has won six straight U.S. titles and three world championships, couldn't agree more.

"The organization has done so much for figure skating and is such, I guess, a great sort of icon with this department of figure skating," he said. "To see how we can spread this sport, exposing figure skating to different communities that might not have that exposure. And I love their education tie-in, and to have these girls get the opportunity to get into figure skating.

"The fact we as skaters have a chance to be involved outside (competition) with organizations like Figure Skating in Harlem a privilege."

With 25 years in the books, Cohen prefers to look to the future. But she knows the experiences of the pandemic are a reminder of the resilience and fortitude needed to succeed on the ice and in the classroom.

"In skating, when you fall down you get up," she said, "and we found a way to never stop our program. Skating outside, Zooms, whatever. You do the best you can with what has been dealt. The young women have had the support of each other and the team. The support was more important during the pandemic than ever in the past. But we wanted them to know education never stops."

## Shanghai quarantine: 24-hour lights, no hot showers

BEIJING (AP) — Beibei sleeps beside thousands of strangers in rows of cots in a high-ceilinged exhibition center. The lights stay on all night, and the 30-year-old real estate saleswoman has yet to find a hot shower.

Beibei and her husband were ordered into the massive National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai last Tuesday after spending 10 days isolated at home following a positive test. Their 2-year-old daughter, who was negative, went to her grandfather, while her nanny also went into quarantine.

The convention center, with 50,000 beds, is among more than 100 quarantine facilities set up in Shanghai for people such as Beibei who test positive but have no symptoms. It is part of official efforts to contain China's biggest coronavirus outbreak since the 2-year-old pandemic began.

Residents show "no obvious symptoms," Beibei, who asked to be identified only by her given name, told The Associated Press in an interview by video phone.

"There are people coughing," she said. "But I have no idea if they have laryngitis or omicron."

The shutdown of Shanghai, which confined most of its 25 million people to their homes, is testing patience of people who are increasingly fed up with China's "zero-COVID" policy that aims to isolate every case.

"At the beginning people were frightened and panicked," Beibei said. "But with the publication of daily figures, people have started to accept that this particular virus is not that horrible."

Beibei was told she was due to be released Monday after two negative tests while at the convention center.

Most of Shanghai shut down starting March 28. That led to complaints about food shortages and soaring economic losses.

Anyone who tests positive but shows few or no symptoms is required to spend one week in a quarantine facility. Beibei said she had a stuffy nose and briefly lost part of her senses of taste and smell, but those symptoms passed in a few days.

On Monday, the government reported 23,460 new cases on the Chinese mainland — only 2,742 of which

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had symptoms. Shanghai accounted for 95% of the total, or 22,251 cases, including 2,420 with symptoms.

The city has reported more than 300,000 cases since late March. Shanghai began easing restrictions last week, though a health official warned the city didn't have its outbreak under control.

At the convention center, residents are checked twice a day for fever and told to record health information on mobile phones, according to Beibei.

Most pass the time by reading, square dancing, taking online classes or watching videos on mobile phones.

The 420,000-square-meter (4.6 million-square-foot) exhibition center is best known as the site of the world's biggest auto show. Other quarantine sites include temporary prefabricated buildings.

Residents of other facilities have complained about leaky roofs, inadequate food supplies and delays in treatment for medical problems.

"We haven't found a place with a hot shower," Beibei said. "Lights are on all night, and it's hard to fall asleep."

A video obtained by AP showed wet beds and floors due a leaky roof in a different facility in a prefabricated building.

"Bathrooms are not very clean" at the NECC, Beibei said. "So many people use them, and volunteers or cleaners can't keep up."

## China's economy grows still-weak 4.8% in January-March

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China's economic growth edged up to a still-weak 4.8% over a year earlier in the first three months of 2022 as industrial cities shut down to fight coronavirus outbreaks, threatening to disrupt global trade and manufacturing.

Growth in the world's second-largest economy crept up from the previous quarter's 4% following a slump triggered by tighter controls on use of debt by China's vast real estate industry, government data showed Monday. Compared with the previous quarter, as other major economies are measured, growth slowed to 1.3% from 1.4%.

"More pain will come" in the current quarter, Iris Pang of ING said in a report. "Further impacts from lockdowns are imminent."

The slowdown hurts China's trading partners by depressing demand for oil, steel, consumer goods, food and other imports. Oil prices, which spiked after Russia's attack on Ukraine, have fallen back somewhat on expectations Chinese consumption will weaken.

The flow of industrial goods has been disrupted by the suspension of access to Shanghai, a business center with 25 million people, and other industrial cities. Global automakers and other manufacturers have reduced or stopped production.

The disruption "will weigh on activity in April and into May, if not longer," Tommy Wu of Oxford Economics said in a report. That is "likely to have a significant impact on global supply chains."

First quarter economic growth was below the ruling Communist Party's annual target of 5.5%. Forecasters have said that will be hard to meet without large government stimulus spending.

Retail spending, factory output and investment in factories, real estate and other fixed assets rose.

"The national economic recovery was sustained and the operation of the economy was generally stable," said a government statement.

China's latest infection numbers are relatively low, but Beijing is responding to its biggest outbreak since the 2020 start of the pandemic with a "zero-COVID" policy that aims to isolate every person who tests positive.

The ruling party already was promising tax refunds and other aid to businesses to pull the economy out of a slide that began in mid-2021. Last week, Premier Li Keqiang, the No. 2 leader, called for quicker action to get help to struggling entrepreneurs.

Forecasters say Beijing is moving cautiously and using targeted stimulus measures instead of across-the-board spending. Chinese leaders worry that might push up politically sensitive housing costs or corporate

debt they worry is dangerously high.

Retail sales rose by a modest 3.3% over a year earlier in the first quarter after demand was dampened by a government appeal to the public to avoid traveling and large gatherings during February's Lunar New Year holiday, normally a period of big spending on gift-giving, banquets and tourism.

Factory output rose 6.5% and investment in factories, real estate and other fixed assets increased 9.3%, possibly reflecting official orders to banks to lend more readily.

Last week, regulators injected an extra 500 billion yuan (\$80 billion) into the pool of money for lending by reducing the amount of deposits commercial banks are required to hold in reserve.

The agency that runs the Shanghai port says operations are normal. But companies say the volume of cargo it handles has fallen.

Other cities affected by suspensions of access include Tianjin, a port and petrochemical center east of Beijing; Shenzhen, a finance and tech center near Hong Kong, and the manufacturing centers of Changchun and Jilin in the northeast. Smaller cities also have suspended access, closed businesses, ordered residents to stay at home or imposed other controls.

Economists have warned spring planting by Chinese farmers who feed 1.4 billion people also might be disrupted. That would hurt economic activity and boost demand for imported wheat and other food, potentially pushing up already high global prices.

China rebounded quickly from the pandemic in 2020, but activity weakened last year as tighter controls on borrowing by real estate developers hit construction, which supports millions of jobs. That made consumers nervous about spending and investors anxious about possible defaults by developers.

Investors are waiting to see what happens to one of China's biggest developers, Evergrande Group, which has struggled since last year to avoid defaulting on \$310 billion owed to banks and bondholders.

Smaller developers have collapsed or defaulted on debts after Beijing reduced the amount of borrowed money they can use.

Chinese officials have tried to reassure investors, saying the impact on lending markets and the economy can be contained. Economists say a potential Evergrande default should have little effect on global financial markets.

## 2 minors dead, 8 wounded in shooting at Pittsburgh party

By The Associated Press undefined

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Shots fired at a house party in Pittsburgh early Sunday killed two 17-year-olds and wounded at least eight other people, police said.

Hundreds of people — the "vast majority" of them minors — had gathered at a short-term rental property when some kind of altercation occurred and shots were fired at around 12:30 a.m., Pittsburgh Police Chief Scott Schubert said at a midday news conference.

Schubert said there was gunfire both inside and outside the rental home, "and potentially back and forth." Bullet casings found at the scene indicating handguns and one rifle were used, he said, and police believe there were multiple shooters.

Two male gunshot victims died at the hospital. The Allegheny County Medical Examiner's Office identified them as Jaiden Brown and Mathew Steffy-Ross, both 17.

Eight people were also being treated for gunshot wounds, and others were injured trying to escape, Schubert said, including two who broke bones after jumping from windows. One victim was injured after a car was "shot up," Schubert said.

George Stevens said he was outside a bar next door to the rental property smoking a cigarette when he heard what he thought were fireworks, then saw kids fleeing.

Stevens told The Associated Press he let three girls hide in his vehicle and call their parents as bullets flew by. He said he saw someone inside the rental property holding a gun, as young people ran screaming and crying away from the building.

"It happened so quick," he said. "It was just crazy. Kids were running everywhere."

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ShotSpotter indicated more than 90 rounds were fired, and Schubert said "we know there was a lot more than that between inside the structure and outside." Police were processing evidence at as many as eight separate crime scenes spanning a few blocks around the rental home. Arriving officers found a "very chaotic" scene with injured victims, medics trying to treat them and people fleeing on foot and in vehicles, he said.

No arrests were immediately reported but Schubert said "it is our top priority to find out who did this and get them off the street." He said he couldn't comment on a possible motive, but he decried the number of illegal guns and too many people with access to them as well as the potent mixture of alcohol, drugs and guns.

"It's heartbreaking; here we are at Easter and we have multiple families, two that won't see a loved one," Schubert said. "Others that are going to be — how can you even have a holiday when your child was involved in something traumatic like this?"

Allegheny General Health reported that seven people were treated at Allegheny General Hospital and one at Jefferson Hospital for gunshot wounds or other injuries, but officials declined to release their conditions or other information.

Pittsburgh Public Schools will impose a limited lockdown Monday "out of an abundance of caution," Interim Superintendent Wayne Walters said in a statement, meaning only people with scheduled appointments will be allowed into the district's buildings.

Neighbor Mitchell Wilston, 30, told the AP that he and his wife weren't at home during the shooting but before leaving saw the neighborhood packed with people, with cars parked the wrong way down the street and a line outside the rented home.

"It was so obvious that there was going to be a problem — there was a line of 14-year-old kids trying to get into this place," he said. The house has been rented for bachelorette parties or other events before, or for families of baseball players due to its proximity to the stadium, but no problems had occurred, he said.

In the morning, Wilston said he found his wife's white car smeared with blood, possibly from someone trying to hide behind the vehicle.

Airbnb spokesperson Ben Breit confirmed the house was rented through the company. He said the booker, who would have had to be 18 or older per Airbnb rules, has received a lifetime ban. Breit's statement says the party was thrown without the knowledge of the host, whose listing banned parties and advertised an overnight noise curfew. Breit said Airbnb was cooperating with authorities.

Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey condemned the violence, which he attributed in part to a failure to get guns off the streets and provide adequate resources to communities. He said the city would call a meeting with local leaders to get feedback on a new, citywide approach to public safety.

"The time is now for us to move with a sense of urgency to bring justice to the victims and peace to our city," Gainey, who is in isolation because of a recent COVID-19 exposure, said in a statement.

## US rocked by 3 mass shootings during Easter weekend; 2 dead

HAMPTON, S.C. (AP) — Authorities in South Carolina are investigating a shooting at a nightclub early Sunday that wounded at least nine people. It was the second mass shooting in the state and the third in the nation during the Easter holiday weekend.

The shootings in South Carolina and one in Pittsburgh, in which two minors were killed early Sunday, also left at least 31 people wounded.

No one was reported killed in the violence at Cara's Lounge in Hampton County, roughly 80 miles (130 kilometers) west of Charleston, according to an email from South Carolina's State Law Enforcement Division, which is investigating the shooting. A phone call to the nightclub was not answered.

In Pittsburgh, two male youths were killed and at least eight people wounded when shots were fired during a party at a short-term rental property. The "vast majority" of the hundreds of people at the party were underage, the city's Police Chief Scott Schubert told reporters. The Allegheny County Medical Examiner's Office identified the two victims as Jaiden Brown and Mathew Steffy-Ross, both 17.



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Investigators believe there were multiple shooters, and Schubert said police were processing evidence at as many as eight separate crime scenes spanning a few blocks around the rental home.

The two shootings come just a day after gunfire erupted at a busy mall in the South Carolina state capital of Columbia, about 90 miles (145 kilometers) north of Sunday's nightclub shooting. Nine people were shot, and five people sustained other kinds of injuries while trying to flee the scene at the Columbiana Centre, Columbia Police Chief W.H. "Skip" Holbrook said Saturday. The victims ranged in age from 15 to 73. None faced life-threatening injuries.

"We don't believe this was random," Holbrook said. "We believe they knew each other and something led to the gunfire."

The only person arrested in the mall shooting so far is Jewayne M. Price, 22, one of three people initially detained by law enforcement as a person of interest. Price's attorney, Todd Rutherford, told news outlets Sunday that his client fired a gun at the mall, but in self-defense. Rutherford said Price faces a charge of unlawfully carrying a pistol because he legally owned his gun but did not have a permit to carry a weapon.

Columbia police said on Twitter that a judge agreed Sunday to let Price leave jail on a \$25,000 surety bond. He was to be on house arrest with an ankle monitor, police said.

"It was unprovoked by him. He called the police, turned himself in, turned over the firearm that was used in this, and gave a statement to the Columbia Police Department," Rutherford said, according to WMBF-TV. "That is why he got a \$25,000 bond."

Police said the judge will allow Price to travel from home to work during certain hours each day. Price is forbidden from contacting the victims and anyone else involved in the shooting.

South Carolina residents age 21 or older can get a weapons permit, which as of last year allows them to carry weapons openly or concealed. They must have eight hours of gun training and pass a background check that includes fingerprinting.

The three Easter weekend mass shootings are in addition to other gun violence in recent days. Last week, a gunman opened fire in a New York subway car, wounding 10 people. A suspect was arrested the next day. Earlier this month, six people were killed and 12 others wounded in Sacramento, California, during a gunfight between rival gangs as bars closed in a busy downtown area just blocks from the state Capitol.

One week ago, a shooting inside a crowded nightclub in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, left a man and a woman dead and 10 people wounded. And last month, 10 people were shot at a spring break party in Dallas and several others were injured as they tried to escape the gunfire.

## For many, Easter Sunday marks a return to in-person worship

By STEVE LeBLANC, GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO and DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — For many U.S. Christians, this weekend marked the first time since 2019 that they gathered in person on Easter Sunday, a welcome chance to celebrate one of the year's holiest days side by side with fellow congregants.

Notable events included a 6 a.m. sunrise Mass outdoors near the waterfront in South Boston, and a joyous, hug-filled service at St. Peter Claver, a historically Black congregation in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Another mostly Black congregation, Watson Grove Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee, had hoped for an outdoors service at a downtown park. But rain forced a last-minute change of plans, and about 700 mask-wearing worshippers met instead in the church's sanctuary for what senior pastor John Faison said was by far their biggest indoor gathering during the pandemic.

"We hadn't seen a crowd like this for two years," Faison said. "Eyes were lighting up. People just felt good."

The pandemic erupted in the country in March 2020, just ahead of Easter, forcing many churches to resort to online or televised worship. Many continued to hold virtual services last spring after a deadly winter wave of the coronavirus and as vaccination campaigns were still ramping up. But this year more churches opened their doors for Easter services with few COVID-19 restrictions, in line with broader societal trends.

Among them were Catholic parishes in the Archdiocese of Boston, which since last June has once again required most churchgoers to attend Mass in person — though those with health risks may still watch

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remotely, and pastors have been asked to make space for social distancing in churches.

MC Sullivan, chief health care ethicist for the archdiocese, said celebrating Mass communally is important to how Catholics profess their faith. Church attendance has been trending upward, and parishioners are excited to gather again to commemorate Christ's resurrection.

"It has been quite wonderful to see how well-attended Mass is right now. ... It seems to have brought a lot of people back to the idea of what's important to them," she said.

At St. Peter Claver in St. Paul, there was whooping, applause and exultant pounding on the wooden pews when the Rev. Joseph Gifford told more than 200 faithful that the church's usual sign of the peace was back – no more pandemic-era nodding or mild handshakes.

"The place just explodes," said longtime parishioner Lynette Graham. "When he said we could do it, people were all over the church," hugging each other.

Another highlight of the service: the first performance by its Cameroonian choir – with its spirited drumming and West African melodies – since the pandemic hit.

"We're back and He's risen and it's huge," choir director Brendan Banteh said. "The ministry in our culture is very celebratory, being one in church – the choir, the priest, the people. Not being able to come to church had created a disconnect that we had never experienced before."

Purpose Church, a non-denominational congregation in Pomona, 30 miles east of Los Angeles, had held its Easter services virtually or outdoors the past two years because of the pandemic.

On Sunday, nearly 4,000 congregants came in person to the church's newly renovated sanctuary for three morning services, with many still watching virtually and others seated outside watching the proceedings on a 40-foot LED screen. This was also the first service in two years featuring the full 150-member choir, band and orchestra, said Tina Tong, worship producer for the 152-year-old church.

"It's a sweet homecoming in so many ways," she said. "We're gathering in our new space, which is also special."

A much smaller Southern California congregation – about 25 people – gathered on the beach in Pacific Palisades for a sunrise service conducted by Pastor Joe Ramirez, founder of Revive LA, an inclusive Lutheran congregation.

"We watched the sun come up, talked about the resurrection and shared the message that hope is alive," he said.

Because of the pandemic, "Our congregation has gotten used to being outside because people are more comfortable, and they can bring their pets," Ramirez added. "We had three dogs at this morning's service."

In Minnesota's Twin Cities, there were differing approaches to COVID precautions as Easter arrived.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, which became a community hub during protests over George Floyd's killing in 2020, ended its mask requirement as of Palm Sunday and returned to shoulder-to-shoulder communion at the rail instead of in the pews.

Ingrid Rasmussen, the pastor, said Easter attendance was expected to be similar to pre-pandemic levels – but split between those in pews and those joining remotely.

Christ Church Lutheran, an architectural landmark also in Minneapolis, was taking a cautious approach to loosening COVID protocols -- masks and social distancing measures remain in place.

"The gift of being in the same physical space for the first time in three years is so grounding and beautiful," said Miriam Samuelson-Roberts, the pastor. "We do not take it for granted."

Hundreds of people lit candles in the vast Cathedral of St. Paul after Catholic Archbishop Bernard Hebda blessed the fire and lit the Paschal Candle to open the Easter Vigil service late Saturday.

The century-old cathedral echoed with the singing of the congregation as candles flickered in the darkness. Well past 8 p.m., wide-eyed children fascinated by the little flames and the cantors far outnumbered people wearing masks – the archdiocese rescinded all COVID protocols on April 1, while allowing the faithful and individual parishes to retain precautions if they wished.

In New York City, Middle Collegiate Church gathered for its first in-person Easter service since 2019, only not in their historic Manhattan church, which was destroyed by fire two Decembers ago.

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While they rebuild, they're sharing space at East End Temple — at a time when the synagogue is observing its own holy days of Passover.

The Rev. Jacqui Lewis, Middle Collegiate's senior minister, said attendance in the 190-person temple was being capped at 150. Those leading the service, plus choir singers and musicians, took rapid COVID tests.

## For 'Fantastic Beasts' series, a case of diminishing returns

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

"Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore" got off to a less than magical start in its first weekend in U.S. and Canadian theaters. The third installment in the Harry Potter spinoff opened to \$43 million in North America, according to studio estimates Sunday.

It was enough to secure the film the top spot on the box office charts, but it's also a low for the franchise. The first film had a \$74.4 million debut in 2016 and the second, "The Crimes of Grindelwald" opened to \$62.2 million in 2018. "The Secrets of Dumbledore," which Warner Bros. released in 4,208 locations in North America, also carries a \$200 million production price tag.

It's more common than not for sequels and threequels to come in lower than their predecessors, but "Dumbledore" also follows several franchise titles that defied that logic, including "Spider-Man: No Way Home," "Venom 2" and "Sonic the Hedgehog 2."

Critics were largely not on board with "Dumbledore." With a 49% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, most came in on the negative side. AP Film Writer Jake Coyle wrote in his review that "the purpose of these movies has never felt like much beyond keeping the Potter train running" and that this iteration is "a bit of a bore." Audiences, which were 56% female, were a little kinder, giving it four stars on PostTrak and an overall B+ CinemaScore.

The eight Harry Potter films were responsible for over \$7.7 billion in box office, while the first two "Fantastic Beasts" films made \$1.5 billion total.

This installment stars Eddie Redmayne, Jude Law, Ezra Miller and Mads Mikkelsen, who replaced Johnny Depp as Grindelwald. In November 2020, following Depp's failed libel case against The Sun tabloid newspaper for an article that labeled him a "wife beater," the actor said Warner Bros. asked him to step down and that he agreed.

As with previous "Fantastic Beasts" films, however, "Dumbledore" has more hope internationally. Its grosses are \$193 million worldwide. Both of the previous films made over 70% of their global totals from international showings.

"Recapturing the original 'Harry Potter' magic that began some 20 years ago in cinemas is a tall order," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "The 'Fantastic Beasts' franchise, while seeing diminishing returns with each successive installment, still has enough of a devoted fanbase to conjure up respectable numbers particularly with international audiences which have always provided the lion's share of the box office for these films."

Dergarabedian added that the true test for "Dumbledore" will be the second weekend.

Also, as Jeff Goldstein, Warner Bros. head of domestic distribution, pointed out, the films are just one part of the Wizarding World.

"It's part of a bigger strategy for the Wizarding World, a bigger business that includes theme parks and stores and merchandising. It's all about the totality of these pieces and not any one on their own," Goldstein said. "There's still a lot of public interest and a lot of fan interest."

Plus, Warner Bros. is celebrating a big milestone for another film: "The Batman" crossed \$750 million globally this weekend.

"It's an enormous achievement," Goldstein said.

In its second weekend, "Sonic the Hedgehog 2" fell 58% and earned an estimated \$30 million to take second place, according to Paramount. The film has grossed \$119.6 million to date. Third place also went to Paramount with the action-adventure "The Lost City," starring Sandra Bullock and Channing Tatum.

Sony also released "Father Stu" in 2,705 locations on Wednesday. Starring Mark Wahlberg, who helped

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finance the film, "Father Stu" is based on a true story and is a rare mainstream Hollywood movie with religious themes. It earned an estimated \$8 million in its first five days in theaters and \$5.7 million over the weekend.

"Father Stu" came in fifth place behind "Everything Everywhere All At Once," A24's stealth hit that just keeps getting bigger. This weekend the buzzy interdimensional film starring Michelle Yeoh played on 2,220 screens — its widest release yet — and earned an additional \$6.2 million. Its overall gross is sitting at \$17.7 million.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore," \$43 million.
2. "Sonic the Hedgehog 2," \$30 million.
3. "The Lost City," \$6.5 million.
4. "Everything Everywhere All At Once," \$6.2 million.
5. "Father Stu," \$5.7 million.
6. "Morbius," \$4.7 million.
7. "Ambulance," \$4 million.
8. "The Batman," \$3.8 million.
9. "K.G.F.: Chapter 2," \$2.9 million.
10. "Uncharted," \$1.2 million.

## Clashes erupt again near flashpoint Jerusalem holy site

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli police on Sunday entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem's Old City to secure the way for Jewish visitors to the flashpoint holy site, fueling clashes that left 17 Palestinians wounded, according to Palestinian medical workers.

The unrest happened just two days after clashes with Palestinians at the same site. Violence in Jerusalem between Israeli security forces and Palestinian demonstrators a year ago escalated into an 11-day Gaza war.

The hilltop compound housing the mosque is the third-holiest site in Islam, while it is the holiest place for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount. The competing claims to the site have sparked numerous rounds of violence.

This year the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Christian holy week culminating in Easter Sunday and the week-long Jewish Passover are all occurring at the same time, with tens of thousands of visitors flocking to the city after coronavirus restrictions have been mostly lifted.

Israeli police accused Palestinians of "defiling and desecrating" a holy site, while Palestinian officials accused Israel of trying to divide the sensitive holy site. "What happened in Al-Aqsa Mosque is a dangerous escalation, the repercussions of which are to be borne by the Israeli government alone," said Nabil Abu Rdeneh, spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Police said they entered the compound to facilitate the routine visit of Jews to the holy site. They said Palestinians had stockpiled stones and set up barriers in anticipation of violence.

Amateur videos circulating on social media appeared to show police officers using batons to subdue arrested Palestinians and clear people from the esplanade, drawing accusations they were using excessive force. In one video, an officer clubbed an apparently unarmed man as he stood next to a child.

Omer Barlev, the Israeli minister in charge of the police, said it was important to ensure freedom of worship "but we will not compromise when violence and terror take place."

The police cleared Palestinians out of the sprawling esplanade outside the mosque itself early Sunday, while dozens of Palestinians remained inside the building chanting "God is Greatest." Video released by police showed small groups of youths throwing stones, as well as fireworks being fired from inside the mosque.

Palestinians reported brief clashes with Israeli police just outside the mosque compound, while police

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said Palestinians had thrown stones at buses outside the Old City. Paramedics said five people riding in buses received treatment for minor injuries in the attacks.

Police released a video showing a crowd of youths pelting a passing bus with stones just outside the Old City. Another video from the police, taken inside one of the buses, showed Jewish families sitting on the floor of the vehicle as it continued on its way.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett ordered additional security on public buses going to the Old City after a situation assessment with top defense officials.

"We are working to calm things down on the one hand and are taking vigorous action against violent individuals on the other," he said.

The Palestinian Red Crescent medical service said 17 Palestinians were wounded, including five people who were hospitalized. Israeli police reported nine arrests. By midday, witnesses said police had moved out of the compound.

Jordan, which serves as custodian of the holy site, issued a statement condemning Israel's actions, saying they undermine "all efforts made to maintain the comprehensive calm and prevent the escalation of violence that threatens security and peace."

Under longtime understandings, Jews are allowed to visit the Temple Mount but are barred from praying there. For decades, Jews avoided worship there for religious reasons.

Israeli authorities say they are committed to maintaining the status quo, but in recent years large groups of nationalist and religious Jews have regularly visited the site with police escorts, something the Palestinians view as a provocation. The number of visitors often rises during religious holidays. Palestinian officials said nearly 550 Jewish visitors entered the compound, compared to just a few dozen on most days.

Such practices have fueled concerns among Palestinians that Israel is plotting to take over the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound or partition it. Israel strongly denies such claims, saying it is committed to protecting freedom of worship for all.

Clashes erupted at the site before dawn on Friday after police said Palestinians had hurled stones toward the Western Wall, an adjacent Jewish holy site. Police entered in force and clashed with dozens of Palestinians shortly after dawn prayers.

Israel captured east Jerusalem, which includes the Old City, along with the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 war. The Palestinians want a future state in all three territories. Israel annexed east Jerusalem in a move not recognized internationally and is building and expanding settlements in the occupied West Bank. Hamas controls Gaza, which has been under an Israeli and Egyptian blockade since the Islamic militant group seized power there in 2007.

A radical Jewish group recently called on people to bring animals to the site in order to sacrifice them for Passover, offering cash rewards for those who succeeded or even tried. Israeli police work to prevent such activities, but the call was widely circulated by Palestinians on social media, along with calls for Muslims to prevent any sacrifices from taking place.

Israeli police accused Palestinians of spreading disinformation on social media, heightening the tensions.

## Ski resorts cheer as spring storm dumps snow in California

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A spring storm brought several feet of snow to the Sierra Nevada and rain to parts of the San Francisco Bay Area, with more stormy weather expected this week.

The seven-day snow total topped 3 feet (.9 meters) in some mountain areas as of Saturday, UC Berkeley's Central Sierra Snow Lab reported.

"We're getting a bit of an abundant April!" the research station in Soda Springs said on Twitter.

Mammoth Mountain in the eastern Sierra reported a foot (30 cm) of fresh snow. The resort has said it would remain open to skiing and snowboarding until Memorial Day.

Lake Tahoe resorts also reported significant snowfall. Drivers heading up to the mountains were urged to use caution because of slippery conditions.

Parts of Northern California including the Bay Area could see pockets of rain for much of the week thanks

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to an unsettled weather pattern stalling over the region, the National Weather Service said.

The welcome precipitation could help slow the start of the fire season, but won't do anything to alleviate the state's drought, said Matt Mehle with the weather service office in San Francisco.

"What this rain is doing is bringing moisture and allowing grasses and finer fuels to grow and green up," Mehle told the San Francisco Chronicle. "It will alleviate fire concerns, at least for the short term."

The wet spring weather follows an exceptionally dry winter that leaves California to face another year of drought and tightening water supplies.

The Sierra Nevada snowpack, a key part of the water supply, was just 30% of the April 1 average, the date when it historically is at its peak, the California Department of Water Resources said earlier this month.

## Wisconsin Democrats aim to beat Sen. Ron Johnson, but how?

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Wis. (AP) — Among the red barns, bins and tractors of a southern Wisconsin dairy farm, Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Mandela Barnes sat at a white picnic table painted with black spots to resemble a dairy cow.

It was the latest stop on his "Barnes for Barns" tour through rural Wisconsin aimed at appealing to the voters who more typically fuel Republican victories in this closely divided state.

The discussion at Hinchley's Dairy Farm with an invited group of farmers covered the expected topics — climate change, affordable health care, the alarming rise in farmer suicides and a decline in the small dairy farms that Wisconsin is known for. But it kept circling back to one key question:

How do you beat Ron Johnson, the Republican incumbent?

"We show up," said Barnes, the state's lieutenant governor. "We talk to people directly about the challenges they face and that Ron Johnson has consistently ignored. I think one of the biggest problems is a lot of places outside of Milwaukee and Madison just haven't seen enough Democrats."

Beating Johnson has vexed Democrats ever since the former plastics manufacturer blew onto the scene as a tea party outsider in 2010 and beat Democratic Sen. Russ Feingold, and did it again in 2016. On the way, Johnson has become one of Donald Trump's most vocal — and to his opponents, most loathsome — supporters.

Johnson was first elected as a fiscal conservative, known for attacking spending and a desire to lower the national debt. His campaign ads featured plenty of bar graphs and charts. In recent years, as the coronavirus rose and Trump fell, he has become a lightning rod as he staked out anti-science positions and embraced conspiracy theories on the 2020 election.

Johnson elevated unproven COVID-19 treatments such as mouthwash and questioned the need for COVID-19 vaccines. He dismissed climate change as "bull—." He joined the many Republicans who have played down the riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, saying he wasn't scared by the insurrectionists but would have been concerned if they had been Black Lives Matter protesters.

More broadly, Johnson voted for a massive tax cut that he recently admitted benefited his business and wealthy campaign donors; blocked proposals to distribute \$1,200 stimulus checks to Americans; and argued against landing a federal contract that would have brought hundreds of jobs to Wisconsin.

Now, with control of the Senate at stake and Wisconsin among a handful of states with toss-up races, Johnson goes before voters with an energized conservative base and with bad poll numbers for a Democratic president whose party historically loses in midterm elections.

Yet still, there is optimism among Democrats that Johnson — whose favorable rating stood at 33% in February in the Marquette University Law School poll — is more vulnerable now than ever.

Democratic strategist Joe Zepecki said Johnson "benefited from two very good Republican years in '10 and '16. He may benefit from one again. The challenge is how do you buck that trend." He added: "I think we can do it. He's given us enough grist for the mill."

Democrats intend to paint Johnson as a different man from the one voters elected in 2010, someone who morphed from an outsider businessman concerned about the national debt to, as Zepecki calls him, "a conspiracy theory-fueled crank."

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They are hoping Johnson's most incendiary comments will turn off just enough of the moderate Republicans who deserted Trump in the Milwaukee suburbs and just enough of the roughly 7% of independent voters to tilt things their way.

The desire to beat Johnson has, for now, largely united the top Democrats in the Senate race before the Aug. 9 primary.

Alex Lasry, an executive with the Milwaukee Bucks — his father, Marc, is part owner — has spent millions on television ads as he courts organized labor and attacks Johnson as anti-worker.

Sarah Godlewski, the state treasurer, portrays Johnson as an out-of-touch extremist in her ads. She has been endorsed by Emily's List.

Tom Nelson, the Outagamie County executive, trails in money but leads in cleverness, cutting creative online videos that include a garage sale fundraiser (his children's dinosaur toys for \$10).

Barnes, who is Black, leads the Democratic field in money, endorsements and early polls. Rural voters aside, his winning strategy almost surely depends on energizing minority voters in his hometown of Milwaukee — a huge cache of liberal votes that is key to any Democrat running statewide.

Republicans dismiss Barnes' swing through rural Wisconsin, pointing to comments he made in the 2018 governor's race in which he said he wasn't interested in winning over Trump voters. (Barnes later said he wanted to appeal to all "forgotten" voters.) They also dismiss the broader Democratic strategy of attacking Johnson as extreme, saying that similar attacks failed in his past two races.

"At this point, I just don't see the game plan where Republicans are going to leave in droves," longtime GOP strategist Brandon Scholz said. "This is a 50-50 state. In a competitive race, if both sides do their job someone is going to win by a point or two."

Johnson campaign spokesman Jake Wilkins said the senator's strategy for winning is to "work hard and simply tell the truth."

"The Democrats' strategy is obvious," Wilkins said. "They will continue to lie about and distort his record and take everything he says out of context to falsely portray his stance on the issues. His biggest challenges will be the massive spending by liberal outside groups, and the partisan liberal media that advocates for Democrats by pushing the radical left's message and agenda."

As long as Johnson can maintain the same margins that Trump did in more rural parts of Wisconsin, and perform as well in suburban Milwaukee counties as he did in 2016, he will win, said Republican strategist Keith Gilkes, who ran former Gov. Scott Walker's first campaign.

Plus, Wisconsin has a long history of electing maverick politicians — like Feingold and Joseph McCarthy, the disgraced communist hunter whom many on the left have increasingly compared to Johnson.

Johnson hasn't always had the full support of the Republican Party establishment, but with so much on the line this year that does not appear to be in doubt. The Senate Leadership Fund, a top Republican super PAC, is "all-in" on reelecting Johnson, its spokesman Jack Pandol said.

Johnson may also benefit from the large Democratic primary where millions have already been spent and where Republicans hope the winner will have to move so far to the left to win, he or she will emerge short on cash and bruised.

If the economy and inflation remain top issues for voters this fall, Johnson will win, said Gilkes, the Republican strategist.

"If it's not relevant to what the current conversation is, people simply don't care," Gilkes said. "I think Trump proved that out in 2016. There are a number of regrettable comments the president made and he still won."

## 'This land is in blood': A Ukraine village digs up the dead

By CARA ANNA and EMILIO MORENATTI Associated Press

MYKULYCHI, Ukraine (AP) — On a quiet street lined with walnut trees was a cemetery with four bodies that hadn't yet found a home.

All were victims of Russian soldiers in this village outside Ukraine's capital, Kyiv. Their temporary caskets were together in a grave. Volunteers dug them up one by one on Sunday — two weeks after the soldiers

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disappeared.

This spring is a grim season of planting and replanting in towns and villages around Kyiv. Bodies given hurried graves amid the Russian occupation are now being retrieved for investigations into possible war crimes. More than 900 civilian victims have been found so far.

All four bodies here were killed on the same street, on the same day. That's according to the local man who provided their caskets. He bent and kissed the cemetery's wrought-iron crosses as he walked to the makeshift grave.

The volunteers tried digging with shovels, then gave up and called an excavator. As they waited, they recounted their work secretly burying bodies during the monthlong Russian occupation, then retrieving them. One young man recalled being discovered by soldiers who pointed guns at him and told him "Don't look up" as he dug a grave.

The excavator arrived, rumbling past the cemetery's wooden outhouse. Soon there was the smell of fresh earth, and the murmur, "There they are."

A woman appeared, crying. Ira Slepchenko was the wife of one man buried here. No one told her he was being dug up now. The wife of another victim arrived. Valya Naumenko peered into the grave, then hugged Ira. "Don't collapse," she said. "I need you to be OK."

The two couples lived next to each other. On the final day before the Russians left the village, soldiers knocked at one home. Valya's husband, Pavlo Ivanyuk, opened the door. The soldiers took him to the garage and shot him in the head, apparently without any explanation.

Then the soldiers shouted, "Is anyone else here?"

Ira's husband, Sasha Nedolezhko, heard the gunshot. But he thought the soldiers would search the homes if no one answered. He opened the door and the soldiers shot him too.

The men's caskets were lifted out with the others, then pried open. The four bodies, wrapped in blankets, were placed in body bags. The lace-edged white lining of each casket was stained red where the head had been.

Ira watched from afar, smoking, but stood by the empty caskets as the others left. "All this land is in blood, and it will take years to recover," she said.

She had known her husband was here. Nine days after his temporary burial, she came to the cemetery scattered with picnic tables, following the local custom of spending time with the dead. She brought coffee and cookies.

"I want this war to end as soon as possible," she said.

The other bodies were a teacher and a local man who lived alone. No one came for them on Sunday.

In the house next to the cemetery, 66-year-old Valya Voronets cooked homegrown potatoes in a wood-warmed room, still getting by without water, electricity or gas. A small radio played, but not for long because the news gets too depressing. A plate of freshly cut radishes rested near the window.

A Russian soldier once came running and pointed his gun at her husband after spotting him climbing onto the roof to get a cellphone signal. "Are you going to kill an old man?" 65-year-old Myhailo Scherbakov replied.

Not all the Russians were like that. Voronets said she cried together with another soldier, barely 21. "You're too young," she told him. Another soldier told her they didn't want to fight.

Still, she feared them all. But she offered them milk from her only cow.

"I felt sorry for them in these conditions," she said. "And if you're nice to them, maybe they won't kill you."

## Pope makes Easter plea for Ukraine peace, cites nuclear risk

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — On what is supposed to be Christianity's most joyful day, Pope Francis made an anguished Easter Sunday plea for peace in the "senseless" war in Ukraine and in other armed conflicts raging in the world, and voiced worry about the risk of nuclear warfare.

"May there be peace for war-torn Ukraine, so sorely tried by the violence and destruction of this cruel



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and senseless war into which it was dragged," Francis said, speaking from the central balcony of St. Peter's Square.

The pontiff had just finished celebrating Easter Mass in the square packed by faithful for the holiday for the first time since the pandemic began in early 2020. Applause erupted from many of the crowd, estimated by the Vatican to number 100,000 in the square and on a nearby avenue, when he mentioned Ukraine.

"Please, please, let us not get used to war," Francis pleaded, after denouncing "the flexing of muscles while people are suffering." Yet again, the pontiff didn't cite Russian President Vladimir Putin for the decision to launch the invasion and attacks against Ukraine on Feb. 24.

People's hearts are filled with "fear and anguish, as so many of our brothers and sisters have had to lock themselves away in order to be safe from bombing," the pontiff said.

"Let us all commit ourselves to imploring peace, from our balconies and in our streets," Francis said. "May the leaders of nations hear people's plea for peace."

In a clear reference to the threat of nuclear warfare, Francis quoted from a noted declaration of 1955: "Shall we put an end to the human race, or shall mankind renounce war?"

He was quoting from a manifesto written by philosopher Bertrand Russell and physicist Albert Einstein. The manifesto's text, sounding a grim warning against the consequences of nuclear warfare, was issued a few months after Einstein died.

Meanwhile, in Britain, the leader of the Anglican church, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, called for Russia to declare a cease-fire and withdraw from Ukraine.

Noting that in the Eastern Orthodox church followed by many in Russia and Ukraine Sunday marks the start of Holy Week — with Easter coming on April 24 — Welby exhorted Russia to withdraw from Ukraine and commit to talks.

Francis also drew attention to other wars in the speech known by its Latin name "Urbi et Orbi" — to the city and to the world.

"May the conflict in Europe also make us more concerned about other situations of conflict, suffering and sorrow, situations that affect all too many areas of our world, situations that we cannot overlook and do not want to forget," Francis said.

Two days after Palestinians and Israeli police clashed in Jerusalem, Francis prayed that "Israelis, Palestinians and all the inhabitants of the Holy City, together with pilgrims, experience the beauty of peace, of living in brotherhood and of accessing Holy Places" in reciprocal respect.

He called for peace and reconciliation for the peoples of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Libya.

Francis spoke plaintively about Yemen, "which suffers from a conflict forgotten by all, with continuous victims." He expressed hope that a recent truce would restore hope to that country's people.

He also prayed that God grant "reconciliation for Myanmar, where a dramatic scenario of hatred and violence persists," and for Afghanistan, which is gripped by a humanitarian crisis, including food shortages.

Francis denounced the exploitation of the African continent and "terrorist attacks — particularly in the Sahel region," as well as the humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia and violence in Congo.

In Latin America, many have seen their plight worsen during the coronavirus pandemic, aggravating social problems stemming from corruption, violence and drug trafficking, the pontiff said.

But Francis found hope in the "open doors of all those families and communities that are welcoming migrants and refugees throughout Europe," referring to the some 10 million people who have either fled Ukraine or are internally displaced by the war.

At the Polish border station of Medyka, a paramedic from Warsaw helped set out a traditional Easter breakfast with ham, cheese and Easter cakes for some of the latest refugees from Ukraine, the majority of whom have streamed into neighboring Poland.

"They lost their homes. They are seeking refuge in our country," said volunteer Agnieszka Kuszaj. She hoped that the meal would help them "forget for a moment about all the terrible things" that have happened.

Maria Dontsova, 31, who is from Kharviv, the heavily bombed city in eastern Ukraine said: "I wish all

families peace who are suffering in Ukraine at this great holiday Easter." Speaking in English, she expressed hope that war will end "as soon as possible, and people stop suffering, and we can prevent the war (from) spreading to Europe"

Earlier, the pontiff, who has a knee ligament problem, limped badly as he made his way to an altar set up in front of St. Peter's Basilica. After Easter morning Mass, Francis boarded the white popemobile for a whirl through the square among the cheering ranks of the crowd.

In Spain, believers and secular enthusiasts flocked back in large numbers to Holy Week processions this week for the first time since the start of the pandemic after most health restrictions were lifted.

## North Korea tests new weapon bolstering nuclear capability

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea has test-fired a new type of tactical guided weapon designed to boost its nuclear fighting capability, state media reported Sunday, a day before its chief rivals the United States and South Korea begin annual drills that the North views as an invasion rehearsal.

The 13th weapons test this year came amid concerns that North Korea may soon conduct an even larger provocation. That may include a nuclear test in an effort to expand the country's arsenal and increase pressure on Washington and Seoul while denuclearization talks remain stalled.

The official Korean Central News Agency said leader Kim Jong Un observed what it called the weapon's successful launch. It released a photo showing a beaming Kim clapping his hands with military officers.

KCNA said the weapon tested has "great significance in drastically improving the firepower of the front-line long-range artillery units, enhancing the efficiency in the operation of (North Korea's) tactical nukes and diversification of their firepower missions."

KCNA didn't elaborate, but its use of the words "tactical nukes" suggested the weapon is likely capable of carrying a nuclear warhead that could hit strategic targets in South Korea, including U.S. military installations. The KCNA dispatch didn't say when and where the launch occurred.

"North Korea is trying to deploy not only long-range nuclear missiles aimed at American cities but also tactical nuclear weapons to threaten Seoul and U.S. bases in Asia," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

"Pyongyang's purposes likely exceed deterrence and regime survival. Like Russia employs the fear it could use tactical nukes, North Korea may want such weapons for political coercion, battlefield escalation and limiting the willingness of other countries to intervene in a conflict," he said.

Some observers said the weapon showed in North Korean photos suggested it might be a smaller, lighter version of its nuclear-capable KN-23 missile that has a highly maneuverable flight aimed at defeating missile defense systems. Others said it could be a new missile that combines the technical characteristics of the KN-23 and another short-range ballistic missile called the KN-24.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement that it had detected two launches from the North's eastern coastal town of Hamhung early Saturday evening.

It said the missiles flew about 110 kilometers (68 miles) at an altitude of 25 kilometers (16 miles) and a maximum speed of Mach 4. South Korea's presidential office said officials have met twice this weekend to discuss the North Korean military activities.

South Korea's military said later Sunday that its nine-day springtime drills with the United States will start on Monday. It said the allies decided to hold computer-simulated command post exercises that don't involve field training after reviewing factors like the COVID-19 pandemic and the allies' combined defense readiness.

The exercises could further intensify animosities on the Korean Peninsula because North Korea has previously responded with its own weapons tests and fiery rhetoric.

North Korea has started this year with a slew of weapons tests, including its first flight test of an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the U.S. homeland since 2017. South Korea recently said it has detected signs that North Korea is rebuilding tunnels at a nuclear testing ground it partially dismantled

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weeks before it entered now-dormant nuclear talks with the United States in 2018.

A possible nuclear test by North Korea would involve a tactical nuclear warhead, said analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at the private Sejong Institute in South Korea. He predicted that North Korea would push to mount a tactical nuclear warhead on the weapon tested this weekend and deploy such nuclear missiles near the border with South Korea.

"North Korea has a domestic imperative to make and perfect weapons ordered by Kim Jong Un last year regardless of what the U.S. does or doesn't do. The test also tells his people that their country is strong despite their apparent economic difficulties," said Duyeon Kim, a senior analyst at Washington's Center for a New American Security. "One reason for the political timing could be to protest anticipated U.S.-South Korea military drills."

On Friday, Kim attended a massive civilian parade in Pyongyang that marked the milestone 110th birthday of his state-founding grandfather, Kim Il Sung. It appeared the country passed its most important national holiday without a highly anticipated military parade to showcase its new weapons systems.

Kim may still hold a military parade on the April 25 founding anniversary of North Korea's army. But if that anniversary goes without a military parade again, some experts say that might mean Kim doesn't have new powerful missiles to display and that his next provocative step will likely be a nuclear test.

## Today in History: April 18, Paul Revere's ride

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, April 18, the 108th day of 2022. There are 257 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 18, 1775, Paul Revere began his famous ride from Charlestown to Lexington, Massachusetts, warning colonists that British Regular troops were approaching.

On this date:

In 1865, Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston surrendered to Union Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman near Durham Station in North Carolina.

In 1906, a devastating earthquake struck San Francisco, followed by raging fires; estimates of the final death toll range between 3,000 and 6,000.

In 1923, the first game was played at the original Yankee Stadium in New York; the Yankees defeated the Boston Red Sox 4-1.

In 1954, Gamal Abdel Nasser seized power as he became prime minister of Egypt.

In 1955, physicist Albert Einstein died in Princeton, New Jersey, at age 76.

In 1966, Bill Russell was named player-coach of the Boston Celtics, becoming the NBA's first Black coach.

In 1978, the Senate approved the Panama Canal Treaty, providing for the complete turnover of control of the waterway to Panama on the last day of 1999.

In 1983, 63 people, including 17 Americans, were killed at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, by a suicide bomber.

In 2002, police arrested actor Robert Blake in the shooting death of his wife, Bonny Lee Bakley, nearly a year earlier (Blake was acquitted at his criminal trial but found liable in a civil trial).

In 2015, a ship believed to be carrying more than 800 migrants from Africa sank in the Mediterranean off Libya; only about 30 people were rescued.

In 2016, "Hamilton," Lin-Manuel Miranda's hip-hop stage biography of America's first treasury secretary, won the Pulitzer Prize for drama.

In 2019, the final report from special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation was made public; it outlined Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election but did not establish that members of the Trump campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government. (Mueller offered no conclusion on the question of whether the president obstructed justice.)

Ten years ago: Defense Secretary Leon Panetta apologized for gruesome photographs published in

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the Los Angeles Times that purported to show U.S. soldiers posing with the bloodied remains of dead insurgents in Afghanistan two years earlier. Dick Clark, the ever-youthful television host and producer who helped bring rock 'n' roll into the mainstream on "American Bandstand" and rang in the New Year for the masses at Times Square, died in Santa Monica, California, at age 82.

Five years ago: Turning back to the economic populism that helped drive his election campaign, President Donald Trump signed an order affecting government contracts and U.S. trade agreements, one that he said should help American workers whose jobs were threatened by skilled immigrants; the signing took place at the headquarters of tool manufacturer Snap-on Inc., in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

One year ago: The government announced that half of all adults in the U.S., or almost 130 million people 18 or older, had received at least one COVID-19 shot. Maren Morris won three awards and Luke Bryan was named entertainer of the year at the Academy of Country Music Awards.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Clive Revill is 92. Actor Robert Hooks is 85. Actor Hayley Mills is 76. Actor James Woods is 75. Actor-director Dorothy Lyman is 75. Actor Cindy Pickett is 75. Actor Rick Moranis is 69. Actor Melody Thomas Scott is 66. Actor Eric Roberts is 66. Actor John James is 66. Rock musician Les Pattinson (Echo and the Bunnymen) is 64. Author-journalist Susan Faludi is 63. Actor Jane Leeves is 61. Ventriloquist-comedian Jeff Dunham is 60. Talk show host Conan O'Brien is 59. Actor Eric McCormack is 59. Actor Maria Bello is 55. Actor Mary Birdsong is 54. Actor David Hewlett is 54. Rock musician Greg Eklund (The Oolahs) is 52. Actor Lisa Locicero is 52. Actor Tamara Braun is 51. TV chef Ludovic Lefebvre is 51. Actor Fredro Starr is 51. Actor David Tennant is 51. Rock musician Mark Tremonti is 48. R&B singer Trina (Trina and Tamara) is 48. Actor Melissa Joan Hart is 46. Actor Sean Maguire is 46. Actor Kevin Rankin is 46. Actor Bryce Johnson is 45. Reality TV star Kourtney Kardashian (kar-DASH'-ee-uhn) is 43. Detroit Tigers first baseman and DH Miguel Cabrera is 39. Actor America Ferrera is 38. Actor Tom Hughes is 37. Actor Ellen Woglom (TV: "Marvel's Inhumans") is 35. Actor Vanessa Kirby is 34. Actor Alia Shawkat is 33. Actor Britt Robertson is 32. Actor Chloe Bennet is 30. Rock singer Nathan Sykes (The Wanted) is 29. Actor Moises Arias is 28.