

# Groton Daily Independent

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## UpComing Events

### Tuesday, April 19

7 p.m.: City Council Meeting

7 p.m.: Olive Grove Annual Meeting

**Cancelled:** Track meet in Britton

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.

### 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

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

**OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton**  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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carrots.

Senior Menu: Baked chicken breast, noodles romanoff, lemon buttered broccoli, pineapple strawberry ambrosia, whole wheat bread.

### Thursday, April 21

Track Meet in Redfield

## 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.uslbm.com/careers](http://www.uslbm.com/careers) and search for jobs in Britton, SD.

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## 30% of South Dakotans Plan to Travel MORE this Summer than Last

Many say it will be their first significant summer travel since the pandemic

SIOUX FALLS, SD – April 19, 2022 – A new poll by AAA Travel finds South Dakota residents making big plans to get away this summer despite the highest gas prices in years. In fact, 30% of South Dakota residents surveyed say they are planning to travel more this summer than last summer, and many say it will be their first significant summer travel since before the pandemic.

“The results of this new AAA Travel poll indicate that COVID concerns have eased dramatically and the majority of South Dakota residents are making plans to get away despite gas prices,” says AAA South Dakota spokesman Shawn Steward. “While domestic travel will dominate, it is interesting to note the number of people making plans to travel internationally as well. That’s something we have not seen since 2019.”

70% of those surveyed say they are planning at least one trip of more than 50 miles from home this summer – with 57% saying they are planning multiple trips.

By the Numbers Family on Beach (Travel)

70% of South Dakotans planning a trip of 50 miles or more this summer

30% of South Dakota residents planning to travel MORE than last summer

14% of South Dakota residents are planning their first significant summer travel since before the pandemic

57% of South Dakotans planning multiple trips

Of those traveling, 88% are doing so domestically; 2% are planning international travel; and 11% are planning to travel both domestically and internationally

Gas Prices

38% of South Dakota residents say gas prices were not even a consideration in their travel planning but:

48% say they are taking fewer or shorter trips because of gas prices

14% say they will adjust their budget for lodging or dining out because of gas prices

For those who are staying home or are unsure about their summer travel plans, more than 40% cite gas prices as the biggest factor influencing that decision.

COVID Concerns

Of the significant number of South Dakotans planning to travel more this summer than last:

32% say it is because their personal COVID concerns have eased

22% say it is because travel concerns have eased at their destinations

Methodology:

The AAA survey of 645 residents in South Dakota was conducted April 11-12, 2022 by Public Policy Polling. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.7%.

## The Skin You're In

Skin is the largest organ in the human body, but it's easy to take it for granted. Unless we notice pain or itching or funny spots, most people don't give it much thought.

However, the skin is critically important. It helps regulate our body temperature and fluid and electrolyte balance. It provides us critical information about our environment, and it protects us from invasion by the sea of germs we encounter every day. Some of the sickest patients doctors ever treat are those who have had significant skin loss, whether due to illness like toxic epidermal necrolysis, or injury like burns.

This important organ can give doctors clues to diseases elsewhere in the body. Rashes might suggest celiac disease, or an overactive immune system, or internal cancers. Skin discoloration might alert us to liver diseases, hormonal conditions, or dangerous exposures.

The skin itself is subject to diseases. Genetics plays a role in conditions like eczema and psoriasis. Sometimes our habits can set the stage for skin problems. Sun exposure increases the risk of skin cancer, but it also accelerates the development of wrinkles. Smoking does, too.

So, what can we do to protect our skin, especially as summer approaches?

One big step is to protect it from the sun. Sunscreen is very useful! Use one that blocks both UVA and UVB light. Choose SPF 30 or higher, and don't forget to re-apply every two hours. Most sunscreens break down when exposed to the sun, so even if you are wearing SPF100 it won't last through the afternoon. Sunscreen takes about 15 minutes to bind to your skin and protect you, so put it on before you head out. Use enough: the average adult needs at least a shot glass worth for each application. One bottle might not last your family through the whole weekend at the lake. Water resistance is useful, but sunscreen is never truly waterproof, so re-apply after swimming or sweating. Ultraviolet light penetrates cloud cover, so sunscreen is important even on overcast days. Don't forget your lips: many skin cancers develop there, so wear lip balm with SPF.

Sunscreen isn't the only protective measure you can take. Consider the tried-and-true approach of covering up. Wear long sleeves and wide brimmed hats. Stay inside, if you can, especially during the parts of the day with the most direct sunlight.

Your skin has a big job, protecting you from the environment. You can return the favor, and protect it, too.

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



**Debra Johnston, MD**

## That's Life by Tony Bender

### Holidays with family

According to the weatherman, we may be between blizzards. Here in McIntosh County we didn't get a ton of snow last week, but the wind exceeded the speed limit making conditions precarious for ranchers and livestock alike.

Fortunately, the wind was from the north, and thanks to my predecessors at my country home, the shelterbelt held back the drifts, and it was a good thing, too, because by the end of the week, I'd gone a bit stir crazy. We ran out of "wet pet food" so Gus the Wonder Pug was disappointed and Squirrel, the World's Grumpiest Cat, was apoplectic. Squirrel's 18 years old, which in dog years is dead. He used his remaining time to remind me that I'm an abject failure as a pet owner.

Fortunately, on Saturday, I was able to get out of the yard without too much trouble, and that meant I could attend an early family Easter dinner at Mom's in Frederick, SD. The sun was out and I found myself smiling early into my drive. And, of course, family and a traditional rib-sticking meal prepared by Mom, were just what I needed.

I remembered one Easter when we were kids when we awakened on Easter Sunday to find that the Easter Santa had left each of us kids large treat-filled baskets. The pièce de résistance in each basket was a giant popcorn bunny—a giant popcorn ball, really—wrapped in different colors of cellophane. Funny, the things that become memories and the things that don't. After dinner, my brother-in-law Dennis reminded me of some subversive, lawless activity I'd engaged in, and wondered if I remembered. No. Probably because when outlawing is your norm, nothing stands out. Anyway, I try not to dredge up such memories because I'm unsure of the statute of limitations and extradition policies.

I suspect that my appearance at such gatherings has grown in import in the wake of a cancer battle and most recently, a broken hip. They just want to look at you, and believe me, I look goooooood. I had a friend interrogate me by e-mail about my saucy-looking date at a recent rock show. "What can I tell you," I said, invoking my brother Joel's mantra, "Chicks dig me."

These family gatherings have always been important and often memorable but every year there are losses to remind us that tomorrow isn't guaranteed. We've all endured a rough stretch. COVID shutdowns kept us apart. Now, the world stands on the precipice of a major war with the very real threat of nuclear weapons deployment. What a bizarre species we are, the only one that has created the tools for our own destruction. Our science exceeds our humanity. How can that not be a drag on the psyche?

I stopped at the grocery store on my way home. It's been a while, so I was astonished by the effects of inflation, a result of a COVID hangover, a reduced workforce, some gouging, and the piles of cash the government threw at the problem. More money in the system means it has less value. You'd think we'd learn. There is no free lunch. And this is coming from a guy my neighbors are convinced is the second coming of Lenin. You know that stimulus check you got? You can use it to pay \$6 for a box of cereal. There's a time and a place for stimulus, a time for the Fed to raise interest rates to cool inflation, but the COVID stimulus was just plain sloppy and unevenly distributed. A lot of people who didn't need it simply padded their pockets.

I bought cat food which, if I'm remembering right, cost more than tuna, and somehow, I resent that. I don't mind feeding Gus because lord knows he's defended us from certain death at the hands of the U.S. Mail, UPS, FedEx, and cows. Squirrel is the epitome of societal drain. I have seen a mouse literally hide under the cat because it's the safest place in the house.

And so it goes. There's always enough sunshine to counterbalance the clouds, and the end result of the most recent blizzard is that it's moved several counties out of the drought category.

That's all for this week. The cat is yowling.

## 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

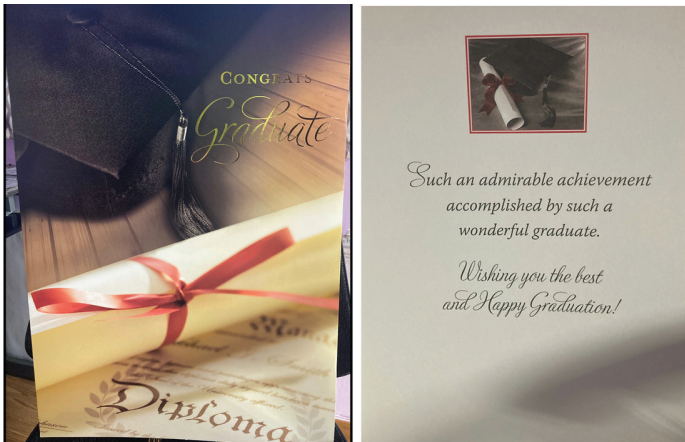
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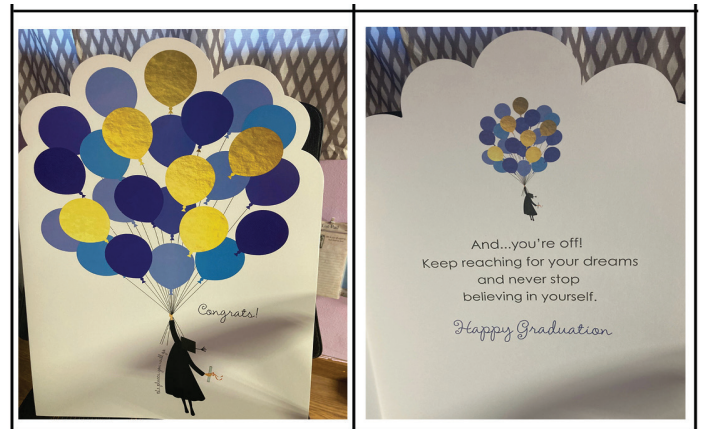
## Jumbo Graduation Cards

Only \$7.99 each ~ Card Size: 16.25" x 24"

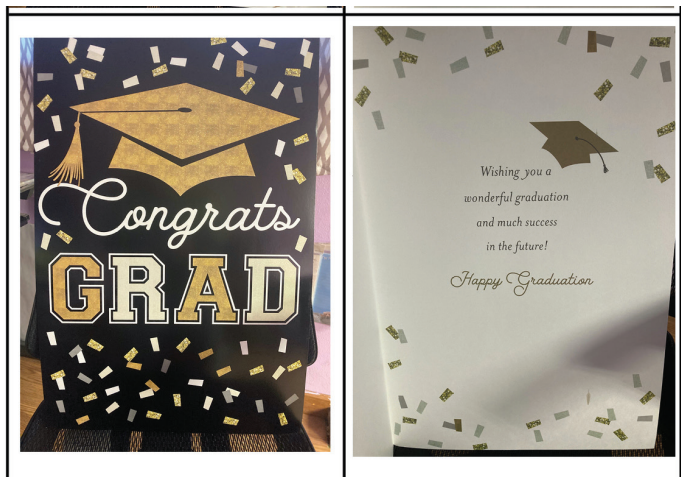
Can now be ordered on-line at [397news.com](http://397news.com) - Link on Black Bar  
Or Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460 or Tina at 605-397-7285  
to reserve your card(s)



**50-9903-C**  
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**50-9666-C**  
**\$7.99**



**50-10977JM-C**  
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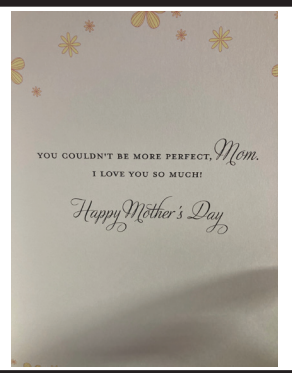
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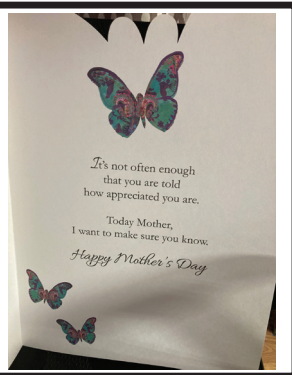
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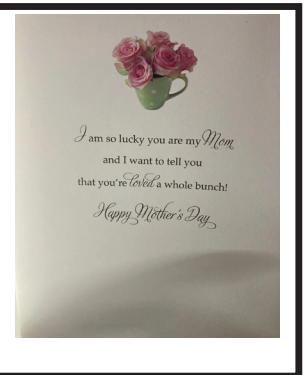
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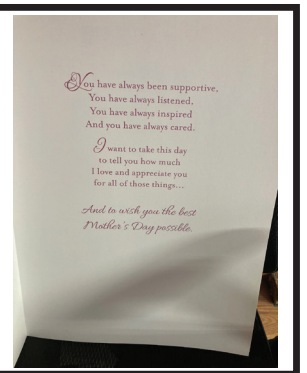
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## Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

### Should the Vikings trade up into the top 10 of the First Round of the 2022 NFL Draft?

Last week, we discussed whether the Vikings should trade down in the first round of this year's draft. This week, we will discuss whether the Vikings should trade up into the top ten picks of the first round of this year's draft. Since the NFL merger in 1970, the Minnesota Vikings have only made a pick in the top ten of a draft ten times.

Of those ten top ten picks, four were made at the Vikings' original draft spot—the ninth pick in 1980, the seventh pick in 1982, the seventh pick in 2002, and the seventh pick in 2007.

Two of the top ten draft picks were received from trading away players—in 1970, the Vikings traded quarterback, Joe Kapp, to the Boston Patriots for the tenth pick in the 1972 NFL Draft; and in 2005, the Vikings traded wide receiver, Randy Moss, to the Oakland Raiders for the seventh pick in the 2005 NFL Draft.

Of the four remaining top ten picks the Vikings have had in their history, the Vikings received those picks by moving back in the draft in some way—trading back from the second to the fourth pick in 1985, moving back from the seventh to the ninth pick in 2003 because the Vikings failed to make their pick before the time expired, trading back from the third to the fourth pick in 2012, and moving back from eighth to the ninth pick in 2014.

The moral of the story is that the Vikings have never traded up into the top ten of the NFL draft using only draft capital. Thus, if the Vikings were to trade up into the top ten of this year's draft, it would be a unique venture for the Vikings. The question now becomes why the Vikings would do such a thing for the first time in the franchise's history.

Often, NFL teams will trade into the top ten of an NFL Draft to draft a quarterback that they envision as the future of their franchise. Based on the Viking's decision to extend Kirk Cousins this offseason and the fact that many experts deem it to be a weak class at the quarterback position, all indications are that the Vikings will likely stay away from using their first-round pick on a quarterback.

There is likely only one position group that the Vikings would be willing to trade up into the top ten of this year's draft for and that position is cornerback. Currently, the Vikings' roster lacks a true #1 cornerback on its roster. Although Patrick Peterson has been a #1 cornerback in the past, it would be unwise for the Vikings to rely on a cornerback who turns 32 in July to guard the opponents' top wide receivers week-by-week. Also, Cam Dantzler lacks the prototypical speed to be a #1 cornerback, and newly signed Chandon Sullivan is used predominately as a slot cornerback.

This year's draft has two cornerback prospects who have true #1 cornerback potential. Ahmad "Sauce" Gardner of Cincinnati, and Derek Stingley Jr. of LSU have been unanimously touted by experts as the clear-cut, best two cornerback prospects in this draft. Gardner, who was a shutdown corner at Cincinnati, gave up a total of zero touchdowns in his college career. Stingley, who was the best cornerback in the country during his freshman year at LSU in 2019, declined in production during his sophomore and junior seasons. However, many experts believe he could become a top-five cornerback in the NFL if he returns to his freshman form.

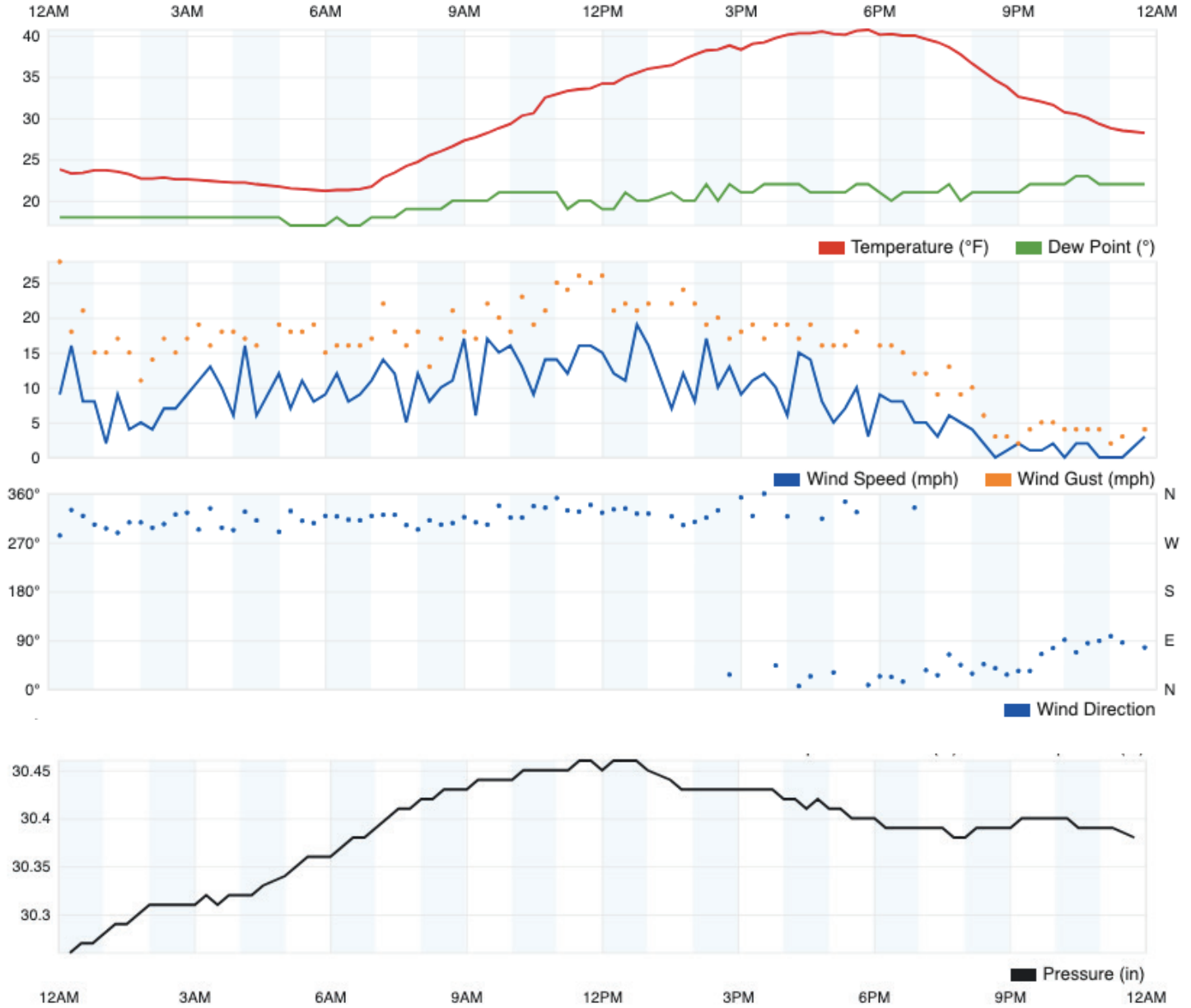
For the Vikings, if either of these two cornerbacks is available in the back half of the top ten of this draft, the front office might feel that they need to trade up to ensure they get one of these guys. Often, NFL teams are reluctant to give up a lot of draft capital for a non-quarterback in the draft, but the Vikings have such a dire need at cornerback that they might have to.



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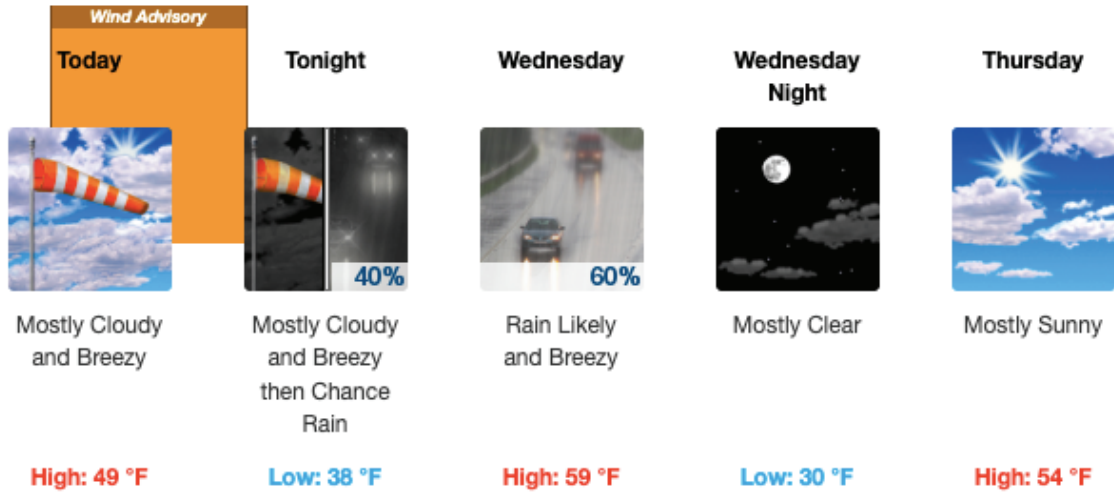
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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## Tuesday, Apr 19<sup>th</sup>: Very High Fire Danger

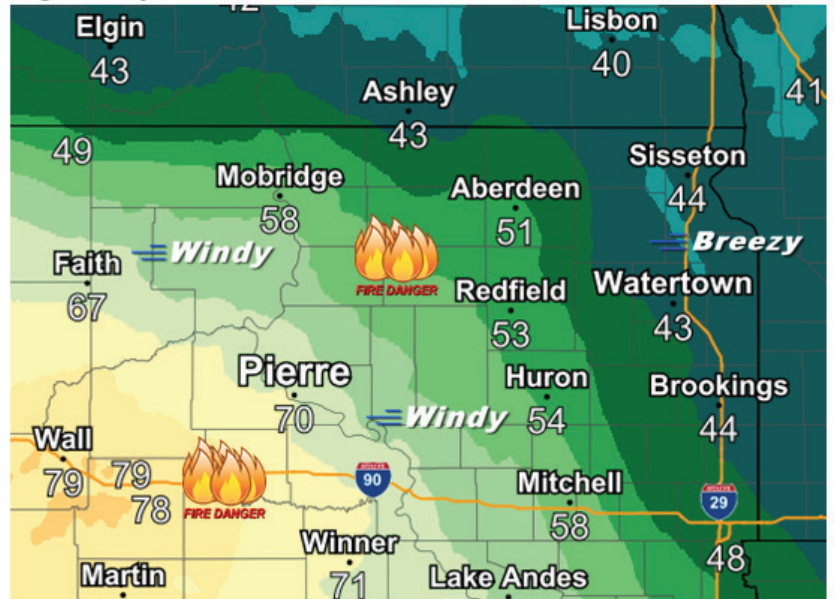
### Forecast

- Southeastery wind gusts of 35 to 45+ mph this morning/afternoon
- Low relative humidity
- Dry fuels
- 0.10 to 0.50" of rain possible tonight through Wednesday AM across and east of the James Valley
- Very high grassland fire danger again Wednesday across central SD

### Impacts

- Fires have the potential to ignite easily from any spark, cigarette, flying ember (including from burning barrels/pits), etc.
- Any fires that form will spread easily

### High Temperature Forecast



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Windy and dry conditions will result in fire weather concerns today for much of the area as an area of low pressure moves in from the west. Rain is most likely across northeastern SD into west central MN tonight through Wednesday morning.

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## Today in Weather History

April 19, 1955: An F2 tornado moved NNW from 16 miles Southwest of Aberdeen, in the Townships of Good Hope and Highland. Only the houses were left intact on the four farms that were torn apart. Also, an F2 tornado destroyed barns 8 miles Southeast of Gettysburg causing \$8,000 in damage. In Corson and Dewey Counties, two F0 tornadoes touched down, one after the other, causing over \$3,000 worth of damage and injuring two people. An additional F2 tornado moved NNW in Clear Lake and Richland Townships. Buildings were destroyed on five farms.

April 19, 1971: An unofficial rainfall amount of 6 inches in 24 hours was reported at White River. An official number of 4 plus inches was reported at Murdo, causing the washout of a railroad and derailment of a freight train. The Ghost Hawk Dam broke on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, and the flood waters damaged a trailer home and two cars. Flooding occurred along the Bad, White, and Little White Rivers and Pine Creek.

April 19, 2006: An intense spring snowstorm swept across the Dakotas, dumping up to 5 feet of snow. The heaviest snow fell in the Black Hills, with 59.4 inches at Lead, SD. Bowman, ND reported 18 inches. The storm closed highways including I-94 in North Dakota, cutting power to thousands and was responsible for at least four deaths. Further west, 1 to 3 feet of snow and 50 to 60 mph winds caused drifts up to 10 feet, widespread power outages, and livestock losses.

1775: The first engagement of the Revolutionary War took place under crisp, clear weather at Lexington-Concord.

1927: A deadly tornado outbreak occurred across the central part of Illinois, killing 21 people. The first tornado touched down near Hardin, traveling northeast through Carrollton, then skimmed the south side of Springfield. At Carrollton, a teacher was killed as she held the door of the school shut, saving the lives of her students. The second tornado, peaking at estimated F4 intensity, touched down on the southeast side of Springfield, then moved to affect the towns of Riverton, Buffalo Hart, Chestnut, and Cornland. In Buffalo Hart, only three houses were left standing, while the northern half of Cornland was leveled. The tornado track was 65 miles, ending in Ford County.

1986: A major storm system produced ten tornadoes in Texas. One of these tornadoes virtually annihilated the town of Sweetwater. The tornado struck at the unlikely time of 7:17 am. One person was killed, and 100 were injured.

1941 - The temperature at Sodus, NY, soared to 95 degrees. The next day Albany, NY, reported a record for April of 93 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1973 - Glenrock, WY, received 41 inches of snow in just 24 hours, and a storm total of 58 inches, to establish two state records. (18th-20th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1976 - The northeastern U.S. was in the midst of an early season heat wave, and the Boston Marathon took place in 90 degree heat. At Providence RI the mercury hit 98 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Forty cities in the central U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 80s and lower 90s for Easter Sunday. Fort Smith AR reported a record high of 95 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms over the southeastern U.S. early in the day spawned a strong (F-3) tornado which destroyed seventeen homes and severely damaged thirty houses near Madison FL killing four persons and injuring eighteen others. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A dozen cities in the southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 98 degrees at Hanksville UT equalled their record for April. Tucson AZ reported their earliest 100 degree reading of record. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Five cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date as readings dipped into the 20s and upper teens. Elkins WV reported a record low of 20 degrees. Thunderstorms over the Southern Plains produced golf ball size hail at San Angelo TX, and up to four inches of rain in southwestern Oklahoma. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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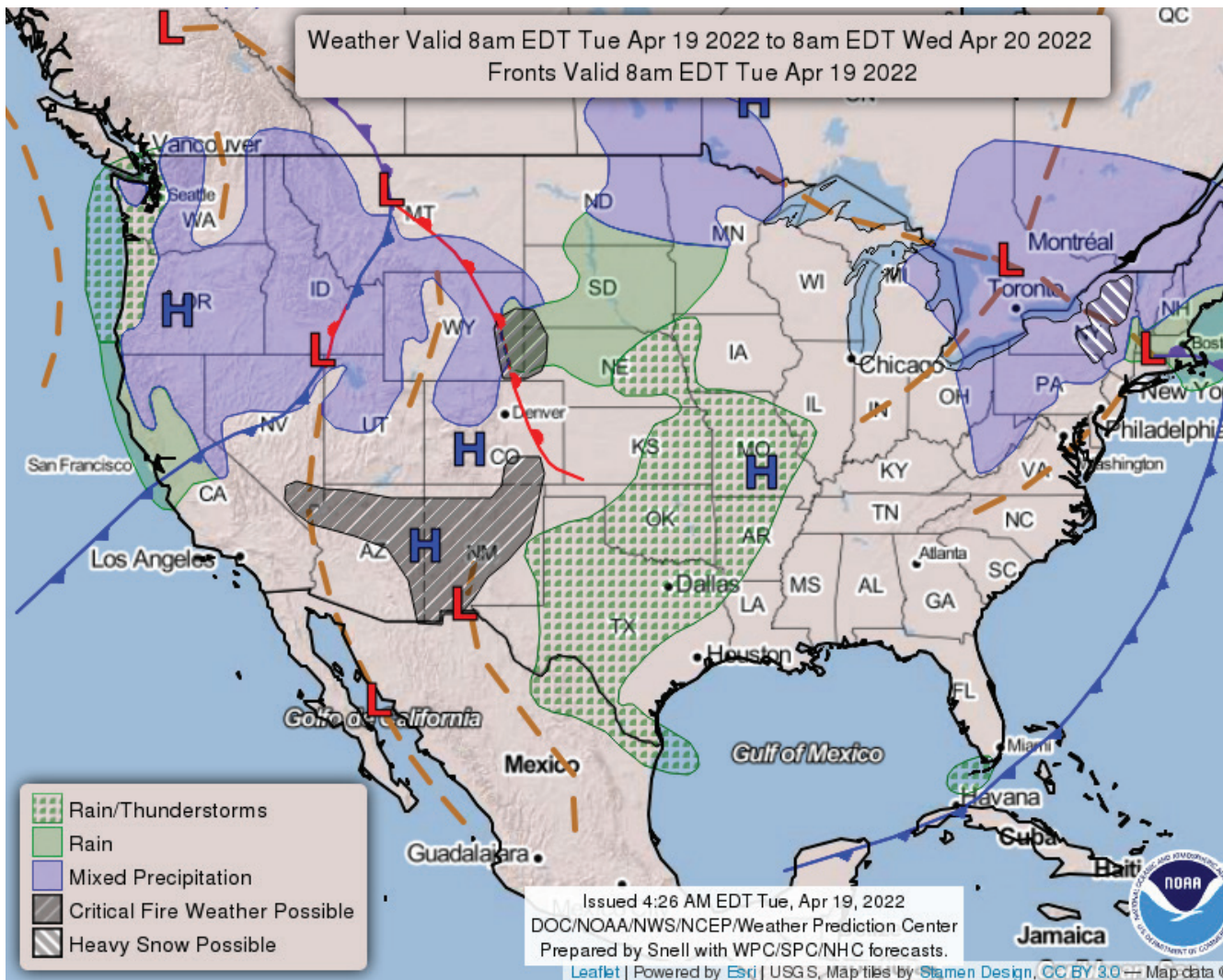
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 41 °F at 5:50 PM**  
**Low Temp: 21 °F at 5:59 AM**  
**Wind: 28 mph at 12:11 AM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

Day length: 13 hours, 47 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1923  
Record Low: 12 in 1988  
Average High: 59°F  
Average Low: 33°F  
Average Precip in April.: 0.97  
Precip to date in April.: 1.79  
Average Precip to date: 3.03  
Precip Year to Date: 3.59  
Sunset Tonight: 8:25:07 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:36:06 AM



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## **COURAGE!**

The battle was long and fierce. Although it was dark, the skies were bright with tracer bullets and bombs bursting everywhere. Frightened soldiers were afraid to move from their trenches fearing that the enemy would see them. Suddenly, one of them began to cry.

"I'm afraid. I'm a coward. Will someone please help me? I don't want to die," he cried out in fear.

His friend, hiding next to him, extended a word of comfort. "It's O.K. to be afraid. I'm right here with you. Let's pray for God's help." Then his friend began to quote Psalm 138:3: "As soon as I pray You answer me, You encourage me by giving me strength."

Fear is a normal feeling when our lives are being threatened. It is a gift from God sending us a signal that we need to reach out to Him for His protection as well as a reminder that He will never leave us nor forsake us no matter how desperate or dangerous our surroundings may be.

Courage can be compared to a muscle: it will grow over time if used. Often, however, we would rather give in to a test or temptation that God sends our way than to call on Him for strength. As the Psalmist said, "As soon as I pray You answer!" Included in the answer are His courage and His strength.

God is the very best resource available to us when we need help in any situation. Friends are helpful, but God is faithful - and will not allow us to be tempted or tested beyond His power or ability to rescue and save us.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for Your promise to give us courage and strength when we face the dangers of life. And, thank You for the speed of Your reply! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: As soon as I pray, you answer me; you encourage me by giving me strength. Psalm 138:3

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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

### Subscription Form

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- Colored ..... \$79.88/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly\* ..... \$31.95/year

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## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$20 million

Powerball

08-33-55-59-62, Powerball: 18, Power Play: 2

(eight, thirty-three, fifty-five, fifty-nine, sixty-two; Powerball: eighteen; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$348 million

### U.S. attorney hangs it up after 43-plus years as prosecutor

ST. JOSEPH, S.D. (AP) — The chief federal prosecutor in South Dakota announced Monday that he's retiring.

U.S. Attorney Dennis Holmes spent more than 43 years as a prosecutor in the state. The Custer native began his career as a prosecutor in 1978 as an intern in the Pennington County States Attorney's Office while he was still in law school at the University of South Dakota.

He went on to serve as an assistant state attorney general, rising to become chief deputy attorney general.

He joined the U.S. attorney's office in Pierre in 1988 and moved to the Sioux Falls office in 1995, where he prosecuted a wide array of cases ranging from large-scale drug conspiracies to environmental crimes.

Attorney General Merrick Garland appointed him as U.S. attorney for 120 days in December following U.S. Attorney Ron Parsons' resignation.

### Authorities find missing Sioux Falls woman's body

ST. JOSEPH, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have discovered the body of a Sioux Falls woman who had been missing for almost two weeks.

The Argus Leader reported Sunday that searchers found Kay Flittie's body in Hanson County on Saturday.

She was last seen by a passerby walking on Interstate 90 on April 5. The Hanson County Sheriff's Office said her body was found about four miles east of where she was last seen.

Sioux Falls police said Flittie was supposed to leave Sioux Falls to drive to Arkansas but never arrived, prompting a missing person's report. The Hanson County Sheriff's Office says her death is under investigation.

### Russia ratchets up battle for control of eastern Ukraine

By ADAM SCHRECK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia ratcheted up its battle for control of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, intensifying assaults on cities and towns along a front hundreds of miles long in what officials on both sides described as a new phase of the war.

After a Russian push to the capital failed to overrun the city, the Kremlin declared that its main goal was the capture of the eastern Donbas region. If successful, that offensive would give President Vladimir Putin a vital piece of Ukraine and a badly needed victory that he could present to the Russian people amid the war's mounting casualties and the economic hardship caused by the West's sanctions.

In recent weeks, Russian forces that withdrew from Kyiv have regrouped in preparation for an all-out offensive in the Donbas, where Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces for the past eight years and have declared two independent republics that have been recognized by Russia.

While Ukraine's president and other officials said the offensive had started, observers noted that it was



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just the beginning of a new massive onslaught.

Ukraine's military said early Tuesday that a "new phase of war" began a day earlier when "the occupiers made an attempt to break through our defenses along nearly the entire frontline." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in an interview that "another phase of this operation is starting now."

In what appeared to be an intensification of attacks, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said that air-launched missiles destroyed 13 Ukrainian troop and weapons locations while the air force struck 60 other Ukrainian military facilities, including missile warhead storage depots. Russian artillery hit 1,260 Ukrainian military facilities and 1,214 troops concentrations over the last 24 hours. The claims could not be independently verified.

The Pentagon cast the stepped-up campaign as "shaping operations" setting the stage for a broader offensive in the mostly Russian-speaking Donbas region.

The United States believes that Russian forces are "continuing to set the conditions for what they believe will be eventual success on the ground by putting in more forces, putting in more enablers, putting in more command and control capability for operations yet to come," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said Monday.

The assaults began that day along a boomerang-shaped front that stretches more than 300 miles (480 kilometers) from northeastern Ukraine to the country's southeast.

Russia said it struck several areas with missiles, including the northeastern city of Kharkiv as well as areas around Zaporizhzhia and Dnipro west of the Donbas. Five civilians were killed in a barrage on Kharkiv, Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said Tuesday.

Moscow's troops seized control of one town in the Donbas on Monday, according to Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai. The breakthrough in Kreminna takes the Russians one small step closer to their apparent goal of encircling Ukrainian troops in the region by advancing on them from the north and south and squeezing them against territory held by Moscow's troops to the east.

Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine's national security council, said that the defensive line had held elsewhere.

The capture of Kreminna also takes the Russians closer to the city of Slovyansk, whose loss by the Russia-backed separatists represented a humiliating setback for Moscow in the early stages of the separatist conflict in 2014.

Key to the campaign to take the east is the capture of Mariupol, a port city in the region that the Russians have besieged since the early days of the war.

Shelling continued there and Russia issued a fresh ultimatum Tuesday to the Ukrainian troops holed up there to surrender, saying those who come out will "keep their lives." The Ukrainians have ignored previous such offers.

Securing Mariupol would free Russian troops up to move elsewhere in the Donbas, deprive Ukraine of a vital port, and complete a land bridge between Russia and the Crimean Peninsula, seized from Ukraine from 2014.

Denys Prokopenko, commander of the Azov Regiment of the Ukrainian National Guard that is guarding the last known Ukrainian pocket of resistance in Mariupol, said in a video message that Russia had begun dropping bunker-buster bombs on the Azovstal steel plant where the regiment was holding out.

Civilians are also believed to be sheltering at the plant, which covers the territory of about 11 square kilometers (over 4 square miles).

On Monday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video address that a "significant part of the entire Russian army" is now concentrated on the battle for the Donbas.

"No matter how many Russian troops are driven there, we will fight," Zelenskyy vowed. "We will defend ourselves."

**Live Updates | Russia says West pushing Ukraine to fight on**

By The Associated Press undefined

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MOSCOW — Russia's defense minister has accused the U.S. and other Western nations of supplying Ukraine with weapons so that it continues fighting "until the last Ukrainian."

Sergei Shoigu said Tuesday at a meeting with the top military brass that Washington and its allies are doing all they can to drag out Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine.

He noted that "the growing supplies of foreign weapons clearly signal their intention to provoke the Kyiv regime to keep fighting until the last Ukrainian."

Shoigu said that the Russian military has "consistently implemented the plan to fully liberate the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics."

Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces for eight years in the mostly Russian-speaking region eastern industrial heartland, Donbas, that includes the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. They have declared two independent republics that have been recognized by Russia.

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR:

- Russian forces attacking along broad east front, Ukraine says
- In an apartment building in Lviv, displaced people from across Ukraine seek shelter
- Yellen to see Ukraine PM, avoid Russians at global meetings
- Global finance meeting focuses on war-driven food insecurity
- Syrian fighters ready to join Russia for next phase of Ukraine war

Follow all AP stories on Russia's war on Ukraine at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>.

## OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

SOFIA, Bulgaria — Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba says security for his country also means security for Bulgaria and all other Black Sea countries.

"We are fighting not only for our safety," Kuleba said after talks Tuesday with his Bulgarian counterpart, Teodora Genchovska. "We are fighting for you too, so that you never have to face the tragedy of Russia's attempts to affect and damage your country."

Kuleba expressed understanding that many in Bulgaria have emotional and historic links to Russia.

"But now it's different — destroying, killing, torturing, raping," he said. "This is not a Russia that deserves sympathy and understanding. I want everyone to understand that."

No details of the talks have been disclosed, but media reports alleged that Kuleba may ask for a stronger engagement of Bulgaria in Ukraine's defense from Russia's aggression. Along with Hungary, Bulgaria is the only EU member that has so far been reluctant to send weapons to Kyiv.

During his unofficial visit to Sofia, Kuleba will also meet Bulgaria's President Rumen Radev and Prime Minister Kiril Petkov.

MOSCOW — The Russian foreign minister says that Moscow's campaign in Ukraine is entering a new stage.

Sergey Lavrov said in an interview with Indian television broadcast Tuesday that "the operation is continuing, and another phase of this operation is starting now."

Lavrov's statement follows Ukrainian statements that Russia on Monday launched an offensive in the country's eastern industrial heartland, Donbas. Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces for eight years in the mostly Russian-speaking region and have declared two independent republics that have been recognized by Moscow.

Lavrov emphasized that the Russian operation is aimed at the "full liberation of the Donetsk and Luhansk republics."

AMSTERDAM — Automaker Stellantis says it is suspending production in Russia because of the impact of sanctions and logistical problems.

Stellantis was making vans in Russia under the Peugeot and Citroen brands at a factory in Kaluga which it shared with Mitsubishi. The Japanese manufacturer suspended its production there earlier this month.

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Stellantis said Tuesday it wanted to “ensure full compliance” with international sanctions and “protect its employees” by suspending production. The company had previously warned the Kaluga factory was running low on parts. Many automakers with operations in Russia have struggled to import the components they need since the invasion of Ukraine began.

Based in the Netherlands, Stellantis is the world’s fourth-largest automaker with brands including Chrysler, Jeep and Fiat. It previously stopped vehicle shipments to and from Russia last month.

Russian authorities have criticized companies which shut down their operations, and warned they could take steps to put production facilities under state control.

**KYIV, Ukraine** — A regional governor in eastern Ukraine says five civilians have been killed by Russian shelling.

Kharkiv region Governor Oleh Synyhubov said Tuesday that another 17 residents were wounded in the Russian rocket barrage of the center of Kharkiv and its outskirts.

Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city, has faced Russian attacks since the start of the Russian invasion on Feb. 24.

**STOCKHOLM** — The Swedish government wants to allocate 9.8 billion kronor (\$1 billion) to the Swedish Migration Board for increased costs for receiving people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

Sweden’s Finance Minister Mikael Damberg presented the budget for 2022 on Tuesday.

The Swedish government repeatedly has said that Sweden will take its share of refugees from Ukraine but not as many as it did in 2015 when it took in a record 163,000 migrants— the highest per capita of any European country.

The government largely wants to take the money for the Ukraine refugees from development aid.

The budget proposal also includes a previously announced increase of non-NATO member Sweden’s military spending in light of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

**MOSCOW** — The Russian military has made a new demand to the Ukrainian defenders of Mariupol to lay down their arms.

Col. Gen. Mikhail Mizintsev gave the Ukrainian troops holed up at the giant Azovstal steel mill in Mariupol until midday (0900 GMT) Tuesday to surrender.

He said that those who surrender will “keep their lives.”

Ukrainian troops who have defended the city for seven weeks have ignored such previous offers. The Azovstal plant, which covers the territory of about 11 square kilometers (over 4 square miles) is the last major Ukrainian pocket of resistance in Mariupol, a strategic port on the Sea of Azov.

Earlier Tuesday, Eduard Basurin, a spokesman for the Russia-backed separatists in the Donbas region, said that assault groups had moved into Azovstal in a bid to uproot the Ukrainian troops following bombing and artillery barrage.

**COPENHAGEN, Denmark** — Danes need to be independent of Russian gas “as quickly as possible,” Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said Tuesday, adding the Scandinavian country “must develop as much renewable energy as can be done.”

“Putin, he must be stopped. The war in Ukraine affects us all,” Frederiksen said.

Denmark is relatively self-sufficient and has other energy sources — onshore and offshore windmill parks, bioenergy, among others, and depend little on the import of Russian gas. Roughly 40% of EU gas imports come from Russia, and Denmark gets around 15% of its total energy from natural gas.

Copenhagen-based Ørsted, where the Danish government owns 50.1% of the stakes, has come under pressure to extricate itself from its 2006 contract with Gazprom that provides Russian gas. It has said that it would remain tied to the Russian company until when the contract expires in 2030 but has chosen not to extend the current deal.

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ATHENS, Greece — Greek authorities say they have seized a Russian tanker in the Aegean Sea as part of European Union sanctions imposed against Russia.

The Greek coast guard said the Russian-flagged Pegas, an oil tanker with 19 Russian crew members on board, was seized April 15 and is currently anchored in the bay of Karystos, on the southern coast of the island of Evia. The coast guard said the seizure order concerned the ship itself, and not its cargo.

The European Union, of which Greece is a member, has adopted a wide range of sanctions against Russia over the latter's invasion of Ukraine, designed to pressure the Russian economy and the government of President Vladimir Putin.

The sanctions include import and export bans for a wide variety of goods, and a ban on access to EU ports by Russian-flagged ships.

TOKYO — Japan will send gas masks, hazmat suits and drones to Ukraine to help defend the country against Russia's invasion amid growing concern of chemical weapons use by the Russian military.

Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said Tuesday that Japan is sending the anti-chemical-warfare equipment at the request of the Ukrainian government.

Japan last month provided bulletproof vests, helmets and other nonlethal arms equipment to Ukraine as an exception to Tokyo's ban on arms exports to countries in conflict, saying Ukraine is being invaded. The shipment has raised controversy in Japan, whose pacifist Constitution renounces war.

"Banding together with the international community and firmly taking action against Russia's invasion, which violates international law, is extremely important from the viewpoint of our own national security as well," Kishi said.

The government has revised its operational guideline of arms transfer to allow provisions of nonlethal equipment to Ukraine and says the new rule covers gas masks and protective gear. Japan is also sending commercially available drones that are not considered arms equipment.

Japan has been quick in joining the United States and European Union in imposing sanctions against Russia and supporting Ukraine and its people because Tokyo fears the impact its invasion could have on East Asia, where China has been increasingly pushing its own territorial claims.

KYIV, Ukraine — The Ukrainian military's General Staff said Tuesday that Russian forces are focusing their efforts on taking full control over the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the east.

It noted that a "new phase of war" began Monday when "the occupiers made an attempt to break through our defenses along nearly the entire frontline in the Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv regions."

It said in a statement issued early Tuesday that "the Russian military has continued to blockade and shell Mariupol and to deal missile strikes on other cities."

## Global finance meeting focuses on war-driven food insecurity

By FATIMA HUSSEIN and PAUL WISEMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Global finance leaders are putting the growing crisis over food insecurity and skyrocketing food prices at center stage as members of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank meet in Washington and grapple with the brutal effects of Russia's war against Ukraine.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen was convening a Tuesday morning meeting with leaders from the IMF, World Bank, Group of Seven and Group of 20 global organizations to "call on international financial institutions to accelerate and deepen their response" to countries affected by food issues exacerbated by Russia's aggression, the Treasury Department said.

Russia and Ukraine produce 14% of the world's wheat supply, according to the United Nations, and the loss of commodities due to the war has resulted in soaring food prices and uncertainty about the future of food security globally, especially in impoverished countries.

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The U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization Food Price Index has made its biggest jump since its inception in 1990, reflecting an all-time high in the cost of vegetable oils, cereals and meat, according to the organization.

A late March report from the organization stated that the global number of undernourished people could increase by 8 million to 13 million people into 2023, "with the most pronounced increases taking place in Asia-Pacific, followed by sub-Saharan Africa, and the Near East and North Africa. If the war lasts, impacts will go well beyond 2022/23."

Anna Nagurney, a crisis management specialist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, said Tuesday's meeting of global leaders was significant and "speaks to the growing fear and the increasing understanding that the world may be on the verge of a hunger catastrophe."

Nagurney predicted that countries that have not yet provided clear support for Ukraine — such as China and India — will come to realize that the food insecurity from a prolonged war in Ukraine will affect their own national stability and the welfare of their citizens.

"This may help to further isolate Russia both morally and economically," she said.

Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo said Monday that the international coalition of countries imposing sanctions on Russia and its allies takes the food security threat seriously.

"One of the things we have to do is take practical steps to demonstrate that this system is helping the people who need it the most," he said, which includes a "focus on those countries that are struggling to pay for things like bread for their people in light of the increase in commodities prices."

Russia is a member of the G-20, which is made up of representatives of industrial and emerging-market nations, but Treasury said that Russians would not be participating in the session on food security.

## UK's Boris Johnson faces wrath of lawmakers over partygate

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prime Minister Boris Johnson is facing British lawmakers on Tuesday for the first time since he was fined by police for attending a birthday party in his office that broke coronavirus lockdown rules.

As the House of Commons returns from an 11-day Easter break, Johnson is expected to apologize for what he insists was a minor slip-up — but rebuff opposition calls to resign for flouting the restrictions that he imposed on the country during the pandemic.

Johnson and his allies argue that it would be wrong to change leaders while Britain faces crises including the war in Ukraine and a cost-of-living squeeze driven by surging energy and goods prices.

Johnson and his Conservative government have faced growing outrage since allegations surfaced late last year that he and his staff held office parties in 2020 and 2021 when millions in the country were barred from meeting with friends and family — or even attending funerals for their loved ones.

Johnson paid a 50-pound (\$66) fine last week for attending his own surprise birthday party in Downing Street in June 2020. The penalty made Johnson the first British prime minister ever found to have broken the law while in office.

The fine followed a police investigation and a civil service probe into the "partygate" scandal. Johnson tried to bat away questions, first by saying there were no parties and then by insisting that he believed no rules were broken.

Opposition politicians accused Johnson of misleading Parliament, usually a resigning offense.

Cabinet Minister Brandon Lewis insisted Johnson wasn't a liar and had always stated "what he believes to be the truth."

"What he said to Parliament he believed to be true at the time," Lewis said.

Johnson's grip on power had appeared to be on a knife-edge earlier this year because of the scandal and the departure of several top aides. Allies feared "partygate" could become a tipping point for a leader who has weathered a series of other storms over his expenses and his moral judgment. Some Conservative lawmakers were openly calling for a no-confidence vote in their leader.

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But Johnson has hung on, partly because Russia's invasion of Ukraine distracted public and political attention.

Johnson's international image, battered by Britain's messy exit from the European Union under his leadership, has been revived by his firm military, political and moral support for Ukraine. Johnson traveled to Kyiv earlier this month to meet with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Johnson could still face more fines. London's Metropolitan Police force is investigating a dozen event, including "bring your own booze" office parties and "wine time Fridays," organized by Johnson's staff. So far at least 50 tickets have been handed out, including those to Johnson, his wife Carrie and Treasury chief Rishi Sunak.

If Johnson is sanctioned again, calls for a no-confidence vote could grow among Conservatives. For now, Conservative lawmaker Geoffrey Clifton-Brown said his colleagues were "withholding their judgment and waiting to see what happens."

But fellow Conservative Tobias Ellwood, who heads the Commons Defense Committee, said the government "shouldn't use the fig leaf of our involvement with Ukraine to somehow say this is not a time to address those difficult challenges."

He said the party should hold a no-confidence vote to determine whether "the prime minister has support and we march forward, or it is time for change."

## 'Not my life': An apartment block reflects the new Ukraine

By CARA ANNA and SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — The Soviet-era apartment blocks at the end of a tram line in this western Ukrainian city show an indifferent face to the world, blank and gray. But behind every lighted window is a story.

There is the couple who lament that they may never live in the house being built for them in bloody Bucha. There is the family that spent hours in their basement shelter in Irpin, trapped between armies. There is the woman who fled Kharkiv, becoming displaced for the second time in a decade.

They all escaped to Lviv, along with some 500,000 others -- a small fraction of the 10 million Ukrainians who have been chased by war from their homes and resettled elsewhere in the country.

Many sleep on mats in cultural centers and schools, shelter in crowded rooms with relatives and friends. Some plan to move on, perhaps crossing the border to nearby Poland and beyond. Others have put down the first fragile roots. The rest have little idea what to do.

Most just want to go home, if home still stands.

As many as 50 have found shelter in a nine-story building on Trylovs'koho Boulevard. It is quiet; they can look through their windows and see a school, a playground, not a tank or rocket fire. It's a world away from the danger that sent them running from their homes, though in recent days, Lviv too has been a target of Russian missiles.

The families live footsteps apart. They don't know each other, but they recognize displaced people like themselves on sight, without exchanging a word. Take the small, clanking elevator, walk down the dim corridors and visit with them in their temporary apartments, and you'll find limbo.

"It's not my flat. It's not my life," Marta Kopan says. "But now I'm here."

Marta is 40 weeks pregnant; the baby, a girl, kicks her vigorously as she goes through bags of children's clothing in the fourth-floor apartment the family borrowed from a cousin. Her birth plan, like so much else, has been abandoned — the place where she had expected to give birth was bombed.

"On the 24th of February, our happy life stopped," says Marta, 36. She remembers looking out the window of the family's Kyiv apartment and watching the lines of cars headed for safety. Within days, the Kopans — Marta, her husband and two sons — joined them.

Now, some 300 miles away, she sometimes feels nothing. Sometimes it is all too much.

"I don't need to read the news," she says, and starts to weep. "I just get the news from my friends." They tell her of homes destroyed and bodies found in pieces. One friend now works to deliver babies in

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an underground shelter. He sent her photos of nearly 200 pregnant women waiting to give birth.

Marta knows that could have been her.

Kyiv is not all the family left behind. A new home, designed by Marta's mother, had been waiting for the family in Bucha, just outside the capital. There are woods nearby, with trails for hiking and chances for mushroom and berry picking. Now the Russian occupiers have pulled back, leaving some of the war's worst horrors in their wake, and the family doesn't know if their dream home was left intact.

They want to stay in Ukraine, but they have no long-term plan. Marta and her husband are doctors and want to stay and help. For now, they live day to day. The elder son, 6-year-old Nazar, continues his schooling online.

Though he knows better, sometimes he asks to return home to Kyiv. "I want my normal life," he says.

Marta does, too. "I want to have my children to have their own rooms with their Legos, with their different pencils," she says.

The boy curls up and kisses his mother's belly, a comfort for her and a greeting for his sister. "I hope he'll like her when she'll be crying," Marta says.

Hours later, just after sunset, the air raid siren wails. The family, like many others here, doesn't go to the shelter. Marta sits in a puffy coat on the swings, alone in the dusk, while Nazar plays.

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Iryna Sanina, 33, speaks in a stairwell on a concrete landing between floors. She leans on her husband, Volodymyr, and wears the only sweater she took with her when they fled Irpin. She has fuzzy slippers and her ankles are bare, even when she steps outside to smoke in the freezing weather.

Her eyes fill with tears as she tells her story. She and her husband were trapped for days between Ukrainian and Russian forces, quickly learning to distinguish between incoming and outgoing fire. The bridge to safety was destroyed by the Ukrainian side to slow the Russian advance. Even though her husband insisted that she leave, she wanted to stay.

They hid in a basement shelter in the yard. Whenever the shelling eased, they climbed out to shout to their neighbors, checking to see whether they were alive.

Volodymyr stayed in Irpin longer than she did, helping with evacuations, but it was a struggle; tires were quickly shredded by shrapnel on the ground. With communications out, Iryna could reach him only by text message. "I could see he received the messages, but he couldn't answer," she says. "I didn't know for days about his fate, and it was terrifying."

Eventually, elderly neighbors persuaded him to leave for the sake of his 14-year-old son. The boy now shelters three hours away from Lviv with his grandmother, in a safer place with no air raid sirens at all.

Iryna and Volodymyr share their sixth-floor apartment with four other adults from Irpin, all of them colleagues at the drug company where the couple works. It's very difficult to live with others, Iryna says, but "we know a lot of people lost everything."

The couple don't want to let others know they come from Irpin. They don't want to look like victims. They want to go home, no matter how devastated it is, and rebuild.

More than anything, says Iryna, "I want to go back and wake up on Feb. 24," before it all began. She is in tears again.

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The kitchen ceiling is peeling. The bed is an air mattress. The rooms are mostly bare. But Olya Shlapak's 8-year-old daughter Zlata is pirouetting in her bedroom with a new friend and telling her parents, "Let's stay in Lviv."

Olya, 28, and her husband, Sasha, worry there's little to return to in Kharkiv, and the home they bought just six months ago. On the first day of Russia's invasion, they left it to seek safety in the subway, along with hundreds of other residents.

Olya recalls the "biggest fear of my life," awakening her daughter to tell her the war had started. Luckily, she says, Zlata didn't see much fighting, but "when she hears loud noises, she tries to hide."

A week later, they drove to Lviv, thinking they would stay a day or two. They live with their cocker spaniel, Letti, in an eighth-floor apartment found by "a friend of a friend of a friend of a friend." Securing a place

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in crowded Lviv was hard; some landlords objected to the dog, or even to Sasha. "Many people say the husband should be at the front," fighting, Olya says.

Sasha continues to work in information technology. Olya can't bring herself to look for a job. That would mean accepting they might be in Lviv forever. "I'm waiting," she says. "This is not life for me now."

Years ago, Olya fled the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine amid the fighting there. That experience taught her not to panic. But she has been shaken by the effects of Russia's war propaganda on the people she loves. She can barely speak with her parents in Donetsk, for years under Russian sway, about the war. It is difficult to convince them that Ukraine isn't attacking its own people.

Friends in Russia sent similar messages, or worse. "You Ukrainians deserve to die," one wrote. Olya told her to lay off the drugs and alcohol. It seemed to be the best answer at the time.

For years, she had avoided watching the news. Now she watches it for hours on end. She cooks. She plays with her daughter. She volunteers, helping other displaced people.

To help fill the time, the family is putting together a jigsaw puzzle on the floor. But the dog has eaten a few of the pieces, and it might never be complete.

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Olha Salivonchuk is not a displaced person, though she has long prepared to be one.

Unlike many Ukrainians, she took seriously the talk in the West about a Russian invasion and packed a "go bag" with clothes, medicine, food and documents in November. On Feb. 24, her husband awakened her: "It's begun." Recalling that moment, she is in tears.

Head of the local association of apartment owners, Olha watched the building empty out at the war's start. "People who lived here, especially with children, they just like disappeared in a moment," she says. "It was like an empty building. No light in the evening. No cars in the parking. It was very scary."

But then, realizing that Lviv wasn't on the front line, people returned. And in the days and weeks that followed, Olha, 41, watched as Ukrainians arrived from places like Chernihiv and Kharkiv, squeezing into apartments with friends, family and co-workers.

Olha herself hosted a dear friend from Kyiv in her ninth-floor apartment for several days before helping her move on. On the eighth floor, a Kyiv family moved in and asked what they could do to help. They pitched in to make the camouflaging nets that cover checkpoints in the city, using spare fabric.

Olha has never considered leaving, even when a Russian airstrike made their building shake. Her family has lived in the city for generations, and she has been in the apartment for a dozen years.

Every time the air raid siren sounds, she and her husband and 13-year-old daughter Solomiya take their bags to their makeshift shelter in their hallway. She has placed tape on her windows after seeing people who had fled eastern Ukraine do it. "Maybe they know something," she says.

Olha is aware of the tender nerves of the newly displaced people around her. "I just say 'You're new,'" she says. "I don't want to ask questions. I'm not sure they're eager to talk about the war. But if they start this conversation, I'm listening."

Little is needed to make a new home, she says: Tea, blankets, photos and conversation. The newcomers are learning that now.

"They are the same now, they are Ukrainians," Olha says. They speak with longing about communities left behind, but "they understand that here they have a home, too."

## East Timor chooses president in runoff amid political feud

DILI, East Timor (AP) — Voters in East Timor chose a president in a runoff Tuesday between former independence fighters who've blamed each other for years of political paralysis.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jose Ramos-Horta had a commanding lead in the election's first round but failed to exceed 50% of the votes and avoid the runoff. Ramos-Horta received 46.6%, incumbent President Francisco "Lu Olo" Guterres won 22.1% and 14 other candidates split the rest of the votes in the March 19 election.



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Ramos-Horta, 72, and Guterres, 67, were resistance figures during Indonesia's occupation of East Timor. More than 76% of the votes last month went to resistance-era figures, showing how much they dominate politics after two decades despite younger voices emerging.

Polls closed at 3 p.m. and vote-counting began at 1,200 polling centers across the tiny country. Preliminary results may not be known until Wednesday.

The winner of the runoff takes office on May 20, the 20th anniversary of the restoration of East Timor's independence.

"I call on people to accept whatever the results of this election wisely," Guterres told reporters while voting in Dili, the capital.

Ramos-Horta, East Timor's president from 2007 to 2012, and Guterres have blamed each other for years of political paralysis.

In 2018, Guterres refused to swear in nine Cabinet nominees from the National Congress of the Reconstruction of East Timor, known as CNRT, a party led by former prime minister and independence leader Xanana Gusmao, who backed Ramos-Horta's run for president.

Guterres is from the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, known by its local acronym Fretilin, which had led resistance to Indonesian rule.

Fretilin says Ramos-Horta is unfit for president, accusing him of causing a crisis as prime minister in 2006, when dozens were killed as political rivalries turned into open conflict on the streets of Dili.

The latest impasse led to the resignation of Prime Minister Taur Matan Ruak in February 2020. But he agreed to stay until a new government is formed and to oversee the response to the coronavirus pandemic. His government has operated without an annual budget and has relied on monthly injections from its sovereign fund savings, called the Petroleum Fund.

During his campaign, Ramos-Horta declared he would call an early parliamentary election if a new majority — based centrally on the CNRT — couldn't be negotiated among the parties in the current parliament. Many are concerned that calling an election early will inflame rather than calm inter-party tensions.

Ramos-Horta's commanding lead in the first round may yet weaken the current ruling alliance — Fretilin, People's Liberation Party or PLP, and Khunto — in backing Guterres. Ruak's PLP party and the rural-based Khunto party, have publicly committed to continuing their alliance with Fretilin until the 2023 parliamentary elections are due.

Ramos-Horta, after casting his vote in Dili, said people are too tired of the political feud, which he said has led to ignoring social and economic problems as well as soaring food prices. "People in East Timor want a new leader to solve the economic problems in this country," he said.

He pledged to reduce poverty, providing health services for mothers and children and create more jobs if he is elected, and vowed to build communication with the governing parties to restore the constitutional mandate and to prevent a more severe economic downturn.

He also said that he will push for East Timor to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in the next two years. "This is a very important matter for us and I'll maintain diplomatic contacts with ASEAN leaders to make it happen," he told reporters.

The former Portuguese colony was occupied by Indonesia for a quarter century and gained independence after a U.N.-sponsored referendum in 1999. Indonesia's military responded with scorched-earth attacks that devastated the East Timorese half of the island of Timor.

The transition to a democracy has been rocky, with leaders battling massive poverty, unemployment and corruption. Its economy is reliant on dwindling offshore oil revenues.

Turnout in the March 19 election was 77.26%, or 6% higher than in 2017, the election commission said. Four women were among 16 candidates, the highest number of women taking part in the fifth election since independence.

## Griner's ordeal in Russia weighs on minds of teammates

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

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PHOENIX (AP) — While the practice facility for the WNBA's Phoenix Mercury was filled with laughter and the echoes of bouncing basketballs during the team's preseason workout, there was no denying the presence and spirit of 6-foot-9 center Brittney Griner was missing.

"I definitely wake up in the middle of the night sometimes, worrying about BG," first-year Mercury coach Vanessa Nygaard said.

"BG" is one of the nicknames for Griner, who remains in Russia after being detained following her arrival at a Moscow airport in mid-February. Russian authorities said a search of her luggage revealed vape cartridges that allegedly contained oil derived from cannabis, which could carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

"We've just got to keep praying for her," Mercury teammate Sophie Cunningham said. "We hope she's well. That's all we know, you guys know as much as we do. No one wants to be in her situation. We miss her like crazy."

The two-time Olympic gold medalist recently had her detention extended to May 19.

Her arrest came at a time of heightened political tensions over Ukraine. Since then, Russia has invaded Ukraine and remains at war.

Phoenix guard Diana Taurasi, who also has played in Russia, said Monday afternoon that the sensitive nature of Griner's situation — being played out on a diplomatic stage rather than a basketball court — has made things even more difficult.

Taurasi and Cunningham want to show their support — verbal and otherwise — but realize their words carry weight. Nobody wants to say anything that could potentially complicate the situation.

"I spent 10 years there, so I know the way things work," Taurasi said. "It's delicate."

Griner's ordeal continues as WNBA teams opened preseason camp Sunday and Monday. The WNBA also is taking a cautious approach in its support of Griner, though Commissioner Kathy Engelbert said there will be a league-wide charity initiative spearheaded by the Mercury to support Griner's philanthropic project, called BG's Heart and Sole Shoe Drive.

Cunningham stressed her concerns are about Griner the person and not about how the situation affects the Mercury's season.

"It's BG, there's no one like her in the whole world," Cunningham said. "We definitely miss her, but it's not even about basketball anymore. We just want her to be well as a human being. She has a big stage, a lot of people know her, so we want her to be on the court.

"Everyone who loves her just wants her to be home safe."

Griner, one of many top WNBA players who play in Russia during the league's offseason, was returning to the country after the Russian League took a break for the FIBA World Cup qualifying tournament.

Her detainment in Russia has highlighted why many top U.S. women's basketball players feel the need to go overseas to supplement their income. WNBA salaries have risen in recent years, but there's still ample financial incentive to play in other countries during the offseason.

In the early 2000s, top WNBA players could boost their incomes to about \$125,000 by entering a marketing deal with the league. Today, elite players can take home about \$500,000 with their salaries, bonuses and WNBA marketing contracts. By playing in Russia, however, they can earn another \$1 million to \$1.5 million.

Nygaard hopes those financial disparities will soon come to an end.

"I see people all the time, they're like 'Man, I can't believe they don't pay those WNBA players. I can't believe they're underpaid,'" Nygaard said. "Well, when was the last time you bought season tickets? When is the last time you bought gear for WNBA?"

"If people seriously care about keeping our athletes over here and making sure female athletes are paid at a higher rate, then they need to put their dollars behind our league. Support us."

Griner is not the only American detained in Russia. Marine veteran Trevor Reed was sentenced to nine years in prison in 2020 on charges alleging that he assaulted police officers in Moscow. And Michigan corporate security executive Paul Whelan is serving a 16-year sentence on espionage charges that his family and the U.S. government have said are false. U.S. officials have publicly called for Moscow to release them.

## Cheers, fear as judge strikes down U.S. transit mask mandate

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — A federal judge's decision to strike down a national mask mandate was met with cheers on some airplanes but also concern about whether it's really time to end one of the most visible vestiges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The major airlines and many of the busiest airports rushed to drop their requirements on Monday after the Transportation Security Administration announced it wouldn't enforce a January 2021 security directive that applied to airplanes, airports, taxis and other mass transit.

But the ruling still gave those entities the option to keep their mask rules in place, resulting in directives that could vary from city to city.

Passengers on an United Airlines flight from Houston to New York, for instance, could ditch their masks at their departing airport and on the plane, but have to put them back on once they land at Kennedy Airport or take a subway.

In a 59-page lawsuit ruling, U.S. District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle in Tampa said the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention overstepped its authority in issuing the original health order on which the TSA directive was based. She also said the order was fatally flawed because the CDC didn't follow proper rulemaking procedures.

Mizelle, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, said the only remedy was to throw out the mandate for the entire country because it would be impossible to end it only for the people who objected in the lawsuit.

The White House said the mask order "is not in effect at this time" and called the court decision disappointing.

The Justice Department declined to comment on whether it would seek an emergency stay to block the judge's order. The CDC also declined to comment.

United Airlines, Delta Air Lines and Alaska Airlines all quickly announced they were yanking the mask requirement for domestic and some international flights. So did American Airlines, Southwest Airlines and JetBlue Airways.

Sleepy passengers on a Delta flight between Atlanta and Barcelona, Spain, cheered, whistled and applauded when a flight attendant announced the news mid-flight over the ocean.

"No one's any happier than we are," the attendant says in a video posted by Dillon Thomas, a CBS Denver reporter, who was on the flight. She added that people who wanted to keep on their masks were encouraged to do so.

"But we're ready to give 'em up," she added. "So thank you and happy unmasking day!"

Major airports dropped their requirements but sided with the CDC in recommending that people be voluntarily masked. They included Los Angeles International Airport, the world's fifth-busiest by passenger volume, and Salt Lake City International Airport, which announced it would hand out masks to anyone requesting them.

New York City's public transit system planned to keep its mask requirement in place. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority said it would make masks optional for riders on its buses and trains.

The websites of ride sharing companies Lyft and Uber as of Monday evening still said masks were required.

The CDC had recently extended the mask mandate, which was set to expire Monday, until May 3 to allow more time to study the BA.2 omicron subvariant of the coronavirus now responsible for the vast majority of cases in the U.S. But the court ruling puts that decision on hold.

Since the pandemic began two years ago, many state or local governments had issued various orders requiring masks to be worn inside schools, restaurants, stores or elsewhere. The rules were largely rolled back as the deadliest, most infectious months of the pandemic eased.

But the national rule for travelers remained and was arguably the most widespread, visible and irksome measure of its kind.

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The wearing of masks aboard airplanes sparked online flame throwing between those who felt they were crucial to protecting people and those who saw it as an unnecessary inconvenience or even government overkill.

Some flight attendants found themselves cursed and even attacked by passengers who refused to comply.

The lawsuit was filed in July 2021 by two plaintiffs and the Health Freedom Defense Fund, described in the judge's order as a nonprofit group that "opposes laws and regulations that force individuals to submit to the administration of medical products, procedures and devices against their will."

Republicans in Congress waged a running battle to kill the mandate.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who was not directly involved in the case but has battled against many government coronavirus requirements, praised the ruling.

"Both airline employees and passengers deserve to have this misery end," DeSantis tweeted.

## In Iran, Russia's war on Ukraine is a political flash point

By NASSER KARIMI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — During its 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran embraced the protest cry of "neither East nor West," rejecting both the U.S. and the Soviet Union, then locked in the Cold War. The phrase to this day hangs over the doors of Iran's Foreign Ministry.

Russia's war on Ukraine, however, has exposed just how much Tehran has tilted toward Moscow in recent years as the collapse of its nuclear deal with world powers stoked decades-old, hard-line anger at America. Members of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard train on Russian surface-to-air missile systems and aircraft. Hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi visited Russian President Vladimir Putin on one of his first trips abroad.

The war also exposes deeper fault lines even within Iran's domestic politics. Among ordinary Iranians, there is a great deal of sympathy for Ukraine, a nation that staged a pro-democracy "Orange Revolution" similar to the "Green Revolution" that shook Iran more than a decade ago but was forcefully put down.

Iran's historic enmity with Russia has combined with a wider feeling among some that backing Moscow betrays the Islamic Republic's often-stated message that it stands against the world's major powers.

"We have to help oppressed people of Ukraine as we do support people of Palestine and Yemen simply because they are targeted by powers," said Zohreh Ahmadi, a mother of two in downtown Tehran's Sarcheshmeh neighborhood. "A bullying power is killing children and women in Ukraine."

Iran's state-controlled television network, whose English-language service Press TV describes itself as "the voice of the voiceless," hews close to Russian talking points. It used Moscow's euphemistic term "special operation" to describe the war's early days. Stories referencing the killings of civilians in Bucha by Russian forces include headlines falsely describing it as a "fake attack" or "provocation" on Press TV's website.

Part of the Iranian government's anger at Ukraine likely stems from the aftermath of the Guard's 2020 shooting down of an Ukrainian airliner, which killed 176 people on board. Tehran denied for days it shot down the plane before saying troops made a mistake after Iran fired ballistic missiles at U.S. forces in Iraq in response for the killing of a top general.

Ukraine's criticism of Iran grew more direct as time went on. That's something Tehran's Friday prayer leader, Kazem Sedighi, mentioned in a March sermon after Russia began its war on Ukraine.

"In the case of the airplane, Ukraine misbehaved against us and misused it in support to the U.S.," Sedighi said.

He also engaged in the "whataboutism" common in both Iranian and Russian state media — bringing up a separate topic to charge hypocrisy while deflecting the issue at hand.

"Wars claim the lives of innocent people in Yemen and Syria but there is huge propaganda over Ukraine and this is racism," Sedighi said.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on all matters of state, said his nation opposed "war and destruction" while blaming America for the conflict. He also brought up a longtime suspicion that he shares with Putin — that the U.S., rather than ordinary citizens, fuels what he described as the "color

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coups" that back democracy.

For Khamenei, it is memory of the Green Movement protests that followed Iran's disputed 2009 presidential election that directly challenged the theocracy he leads. Iran's security services used violence and mass arrests to put down the demonstrations. But unrest has re-emerged in recent years over economic issues.

For Putin, it is Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution and its later Maidan protest movement that dislodged the Kremlin-leaning politician Viktor Yanukovich.

But others from within Iran's Shiite theocracy have raised concerns about Tehran's stance on the war.

Mohsen Aminzadeh, a former deputy foreign minister under reformist President Mohammad Khatami who was later imprisoned after the disputed 2009 election, went as far as to call Iran's position "very bad" in a recent interview.

"It was possibly the worst, the most passive stance of Iran's diplomacy since 1979," Aminzadeh recently told the monthly magazine Ayandeh Negar.

On the streets of Tehran recently, 17 people were willing to speak to an Associated Press journalist about the war, with others declining. Of them, 12 supported Ukraine, three reiterated Iran's official stance and two supported Russia.

"I support Ukraine," said Sajjad, a 26-year-old computer programmer. Like others, he spoke on condition he be identified only by his first name for fear of reprisals. "Russians are killing innocent people for nothing. Why should we remain silent?"

A retired Iranian captain, Mehrdad, called Russia's reasons for the war "ridiculous" and similar to those used by Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein to launch a bloody eight-year war on Iran in the 1980s. Saddam at the time pointed to supporting Iran's Arab minority in its oil-rich southwest as a justification for his invasion.

"It is stealing Saddam's reasons for attacking Iran; possible threats by revolutionary Iran and supporting an ethnic group," said Mehrdad, 75. "By this excuse, every country can attack others — even Russia."

Ali Nemati, a 64-year-old retired teacher, praised Putin as "very brave" for challenging NATO, also a new preoccupation of Iran's hard-line government under Raisi. However, Iran has been living quietly next to Turkey, which joined NATO in 1952.

"Iran should support Russia since it is alone in its fight against imperialism," Nemati said.

However, in its imperial past, Russia fought multiple wars against Persia, which ceded territory to the czar. Russia invaded Iran alongside Britain in World War II to secure oil and trade routes in their war against Germany. After the war, Russia refused to leave, sparking the first global crisis of the newly formed United Nations.

That memory hasn't faded. Russia's brief use of an Iranian air base amid the war in Syria, in which both backed embattled Syrian President Bashar Assad, similarly sparked widespread anger.

Now, Iran may be feeling like a poker chip in a wider game rather than a player at the geopolitical table. A sudden demand by Russia for sanctions-relief guarantees threw negotiations in Vienna over Iran's tattered nuclear deal into disarray. Russia's demand seems to have eased, while now it appears American sanctions on the Guard remain the last hurdle.

Iranians have noticed Russia's gambit.

"The point that Putin made a strategic mistake and sent forces to Ukraine and is now drowning in an Ukrainian quagmire cannot be a (logical) reason for Russia to take the deal as hostage," the conservative daily newspaper Jomhuri Eslami said in a March editorial.

Taxi driver Abbas Najafi suggested Iran stay out of it all together.

"It is not our war. It is not our problem," he said. "We are under the U.S. sanctions now and we should not look for more headaches."

## Court ruling creates mishmash of transportation mask rules

By The Associated Press undefined

A decision by a federal judge in Florida to throw out a national mask mandate for public transportation across the U.S. created a confusing patchwork of rules for passengers as they navigate airports and transit

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systems.

The ruling gives airports, mass transit systems, airlines and ride-hailing services the option to keep mask rules or ditch them entirely, resulting in rules that vary by city and mode of transportation.

Passengers on an United Airlines flight from Houston to Kennedy Airport, for instance, could ditch their masks at their departing airport and on the plane, but have to put them back on once they land in New York or take a subway.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had recently extended the mandate until May 3 to allow more time to study the BA.2 omicron subvariant of the coronavirus now responsible for the vast majority of U.S. cases. But the court decision put the mandate on hold.

Here's a look at how U.S. transportation centers and providers are responding:

## AIRLINES

Major airlines were some of the first to update their rules after the court decision. United, Southwest, American, Alaska, Delta and JetBlue announced that, effective immediately, masks would no longer be required on domestic flights.

"While this means that our employees are no longer required to wear a mask – and no longer have to enforce a mask requirement for most of the flying public – they will be able to wear masks if they choose to do so, as the CDC continues to strongly recommend wearing a mask on public transit," United Airlines said.

The Association of Flight Attendants, the nation's largest union of cabin crews, has recently taken a neutral position on the mask rule because its members are divided about the issue. On Monday, the union's president appealed for calm on planes and in airports.

Alaska Airlines said some passengers who were banned for violating the mask policy will remain banned.

## AIRPORTS

Airports weren't as fast to do away with masks, with several expressing uncertainty about the ruling and taking a wait-and-see approach.

But others, including the two main airports in Houston, did away with mask requirements soon after the Transportation Security Administration said it would no longer enforce the mask mandate. Los Angeles International and Phoenix Sky Harbor also eliminated their mask requirements. San Francisco International Airport said it was waiting for further guidance from TSA.

The New York City airports appeared to keep the mandate intact.

## TRAINS AND BUSES

The rules for train and bus passengers vary by city and transit agency.

In New York, Metropolitan Transportation Authority communications director Tim Minton said the system was keeping the mask mandate, meaning face coverings are still required on the subway, buses and commuter rail lines, as they have since early in the pandemic.

But the regional train system serving the Washington, D.C., area said Monday that masks will be now optional for its customers and employees going forward.

"Our mask mandate has been based on federal guidance," said Paul J. Wiedefeld, general manager and CEO of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. "We will continue to monitor this situation as it unfolds, but masks will be optional on Metro property until further notice."

Amtrak also said it was making masks optional.

## AP source: Kimberly Guilfoyle meets with Jan. 6 committee

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Kimberly Guilfoyle, the fiancée of former President Donald Trump's eldest son, met with the House committee investigating the U.S. Capitol insurrection Monday — more than a month after she abruptly ended a voluntary interview with lawmakers — according to a person familiar with the matter.

Guilfoyle, 53, arrived Monday morning at the federal office building on Capitol Hill where the committee has been conducting its virtual and in-person interviews to sit down with lawmakers, according to the

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person who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity to discuss private testimony.

The committee investigating the attack had requested testimony and records from Guilfoyle, who spoke at the rally Trump held on the White House Ellipse on Jan. 6, 2021, before the riot at the Capitol aimed at overturning Trump's election loss. Lawmakers say that Guilfoyle, who was a chair of the Trump Victory Committee, the fundraising arm of his campaign, also raised funds for the rally and was in direct contact with its key participants and organizers.

Members of the nine-member panel issued a subpoena to Guilfoyle last month after she cut the voluntary interview short over her objection to the presence of lawmakers. The committee's decision to subpoena her was unusual, as lawmakers have tried to bring in most members of Trump's family on a voluntary basis.

Joe Tacopina, an attorney representing Guilfoyle, did not respond to a request for comment Monday but has previously stated that his client "has done nothing wrong," and will testify truthfully to any question.

The committee has said it has received a number of the documents it initially requested from Guilfoyle but is now looking to learn more about her meetings with the former president and members of his family in the Oval Office the morning of the attack.

"Ms. Guilfoyle met with Donald Trump inside the White House, spoke at the rally that took place before the riot on January 6th, and apparently played a key role organizing and raising funds for that event," Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, the committee's Democratic chairman, said in a March 3 statement.

Guilfoyle's appearance is the latest in a series of sit-down interviews the committee has conducted with those in Trump's inner circle in the past few weeks. On Tuesday, Stephen Miller, who served as a top aide to Trump, was questioned virtually for eight hours.

The former president's daughter Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, have also spoken to the committee in the past month, providing hours of testimony that members have cited as helpful to their probe.

## Judge rules Amazon must reinstate fired warehouse worker

By HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writer

A judge has ruled Amazon must reinstate a former warehouse employee who was fired in the early days of the pandemic, saying the company "unlawfully" terminated the worker who led a protest calling for Amazon to do more to protect employees against COVID-19.

The dispute involving Gerald Bryson, who worked at an Amazon warehouse in the New York City borough of Staten Island, has stretched on since June 2020, when Bryson filed an unfair labor practice complaint with The National Labor Relations Board, claiming Amazon retaliated against him.

Later that year, the NLRB said it found merit in Bryson's complaint that Amazon illegally fired him for workplace organizing. Amazon didn't accept the findings, and the federal board filed a formal complaint against the company, triggering a lengthy administrative court process.

On Monday, administrative law judge Benjamin Green said Amazon must offer Bryson his job back, as well as lost wages and benefits resulting from his "discriminatory discharge." Amazon spokesperson Kelly Nantel said in a statement that the company will appeal the ruling.

"We strongly disagree with this ruling and are surprised the NLRB would want any employer to condone Mr. Bryson's behavior," Nantel said. "Mr. Bryson was fired for bullying, cursing at and defaming a female co-worker over a bullhorn in front of the workplace. We do not tolerate that type of conduct in our workplace and intend to file an appeal with the NLRB."

Bryson first participated in a March 2020 protest over working conditions led by Chris Smalls, another warehouse employee who was fired by the online retail giant and is heading up the Amazon Labor Union, the nascent group which won a union election earlier this month at the Amazon facility where both men worked.

After Smalls was fired, Bryson led another protest in April 2020 in front of the warehouse. While off the job during the protest, Bryson got into a dispute with another worker. He was later fired for violating Amazon's vulgar-language policy.

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Court filings give an account of the altercation between Bryson and a female employee. A recording of their dispute detailed by the NLRB showed both Bryson and the woman using profanities during a heated exchange that lasted several minutes. The agency's account shows the woman began the exchange, and twice tried to provoke Bryson into a physical altercation with her, which he did not do. The woman was given a "first warning."

The woman also told Bryson, who is Black, to "go back to the Bronx," which the judge said Bryson could construe as "racial" since "since he is African-American and might question why, other than his race, someone would assume he is from the Bronx."

Bryson testified that he informed an Amazon manager who spoke with him about the incident about that comment. The manager has denied Bryson made a reference to a racial comment. But the judge sided with Bryson's account, saying it was unlikely that he would "fail to convey such a prominent remark to which he had a strong reaction."

The judge said in his decision that Amazon rushed to judgment and pursued a "skewed investigation" into the argument designed to blame only Bryson for that incident, adding the company wanted discharge Bryson for his "protected concerted activity instead of fairly evaluating" what happened.

In its investigation into the altercation, Greene said Amazon "preferred not to obtain information from someone who was protesting with Bryson even though that person was likely in the best position to explain what happened."

Instead, he said multiple witness accounts of the incident submitted by the company were coincidentally "one-sided," adding he found it implausible the statements were made "unless such accounts were solicited from them."

The NLRB had also pushed for Bryson's reinstatement in a federal lawsuit filed last month, using a provision of the National Labor Relations Act that allows it to seek temporary relief in federal court while a case goes through the administrative law process. Amazon has used the case as one of its objections over the Staten Island election results, accusing the agency of tainting the vote by pursuing Bryson's reinstatement in the lead-up to the election.

## California gives rivers more room to flow to stem flood risk

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

MODESTO, Calif. (AP) — Between vast almond orchards and dairy pastures in the heart of California's farm country sits a property being redesigned to look like it did 150 years ago, before levees restricted the flow of rivers that weave across the landscape.

The 2,100 acres (1,100 hectares) at the confluence of the Tuolumne and San Joaquin rivers in the state's Central Valley are being reverted to a floodplain. That means when heavy rains cause the rivers to go over their banks, water will run onto the land, allowing traditional ecosystems to flourish and lowering flood risk downstream.

The Dos Rios Ranch Preserve is California's largest single floodplain restoration project, part of the nation's broadest effort to rethink how rivers flow as climate change alters the environment. The land it covers used to be a farm, but the owners sold it to the nonprofit River Partners to use for restoring wildlife habitat.

The state wants to fund and prioritize similar projects that lower risks to homes and property while providing other benefits, like boosting habitats, improving water quality and potentially recharging depleted groundwater supplies. By notching or removing levees, swelling rivers can flow onto land that no longer needs to be kept dry.

"It's giving new life ecologically but in a way that's consistent with, complementary to, the human systems that have developed over the 150 years since the Gold Rush," said Julie Renter, president of Rivers Partners.

The Central Valley covers about 20,000 square miles (51,800 square kilometers) and is an agricultural powerhouse — more than 250 crops are grown there. The region constitutes about 1% of U.S. farmland but produces 25% of the nation's food while accounting for one-fifth of all groundwater pumping in the U.S.

A flood in the 1860s demonstrates the potential for disaster; up to 6,000 square miles (15,500 square



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kilometers) of the valley were submerged. As the state's population rapidly expanded and farming boomed through the 20th century, the government engineered vast systems to move water around to supply people and farms, and erected levees to protect cities and crops.

Some of those levees cut off rivers from their natural floodplains. As climate change causes temperatures to warm, mountain snow that typically trickles into the state's watershed may fill rivers much faster, increasing the flows beyond what levees can take.

Floodplain restoration can help. For projects like Dos Rios, land that farmers no longer want to manage is being turned into space where rivers can breathe. Farther north, barriers on the Feather River have been altered to allow more water to flow into an existing wildlife area. In West Sacramento, 4 miles (6.4 kilometers) of levee along the Sacramento River is being set back.

California officials began centralizing valley flood planning a decade ago. Though some of the worst and most notable floods in recent decades have occurred in places like Houston and New Orleans, parts of California are at serious risk that's only expected to increase due to climate change. In 1997, major storms caused levees to break throughout the valley, including on the Tuolumne River, causing nearly \$2 billion in damage and destroying more than 20,000 homes. Nine people died.

An update to the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan is set for release this week. It will detail ways to lower flood risk and protect the roughly 1.3 million people who live on floodplains, along with key infrastructure, agricultural lands and ecosystems.

In the last update five years ago, the state put a premium on flood plain restoration projects. Dos Rios is one of 17 identified by the state. Four have been completed since 2013, three are under construction, and 10 are proposed. They've cost \$300 million so far, with money coming from bond funds and local and federal dollars.

"Dos Rios is an amazing example, but we need like 30 more of those," said Jane Dolan, chair of the Central Valley Flood Protection Board.

Floodplain restoration isn't unique to California. Washington state launched a program in 2013 called Floodplains by Design, and projects are popping up along the Mississippi River. But experts say California stands out for its emphasis on projects that provide ecological support.

"There's tremendous potential for this kind of work, and I'm quite impressed by how deliberate and thoughtful California is being in this space," said Todd Bridges, head of the Army Corps' Engineering with Nature program, which takes a similar approach.

The Biden administration set aside at least \$1.75 billion in the infrastructure bill for multipurpose projects aimed at reducing flood risk.

Just as climate change is making California's dry periods drier, it's expected to make the wet periods wetter. The state experienced an atmospheric river in October and major rain and snowfall in December, followed by its driest January through March on record.

"One of the things that drives me crazy about California water is that decision makers want to talk about floods in flood years and droughts in drought years," said Barry Nelson, a water consultant who worked on the Dos Rios project. "The weather whiplash we're seeing this year is really teaching us we need to break out of that pattern."

Since the 1850s, 95% of the historical wetlands and river habitats in the Central Valley have been eliminated, according to state flood planners. It would be impossible to restore all of that in a state of 40 million people, where major cities like the capital of Sacramento and Stockton have been built in floodplains.

But the valley's vast open spaces offer opportunities, such as on farmland that's no longer in use. The property Dos Rios sits on was most recently a dairy, and the owners approach River Partners about selling the land for conservation in the mid-2000s.

River Partners has notched berms to allow river water to flow onto 1,000 acres (400 hectares). The nonprofit is going through government hurdles to breach a federal levee keeping the Tuolumne River at bay. Eventually Dos Rios could hold up to 10,000 acre-feet of flood water, keeping it from flowing toward cities like Stockton. An acre-foot is about 325,850 gallons (about 1.23 million liters).

Fourteen kinds of woody trees and shrubs are planted in a way that's designed to attract native spe-

cies. River Partners said the habitat available at Dos Rios has allowed the Aleutian Cackling Goose to be delisted as an endangered species. The riparian brush rabbit, chinook salmon, steelhead trout, the yellow warbler, and the sandhill crane are among the species that call Dos Rios home.

Advocates for such projects would like to see them built faster in California and beyond. Renter, of River Partners, said while there's broad agreement on the value of restoring floodplains, concerns about the impact of land conversion on local tax bases and debates about how broadly to expand public access can slow things down.

But in the messy world of California water, floodplain restoration stands out, said Nelson, the water consultant.

"In this sort of ocean of disagreements about water policy, about all these other issues, flood management is this place where enormous change has happened in the last decade in a way that is incredibly broadly supported," he said.

## Parents charged in Michigan school shooting seek lower bond

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — The parents of a Michigan teen who is accused of a fatal school shooting are asking a judge to lower their bond and help release them from jail.

James and Jennifer Crumbley have been locked up since Dec. 4, unable to come up with \$500,000 each to leave custody and await trial on involuntary manslaughter charges.

In a court filing, lawyers said the Crumbleys are not a risk to the public and would wear electronic monitoring devices. Oakland County Judge Cheryl Matthews will hear arguments Tuesday on a request to lower bond to \$100,000 each.

Ethan Crumbley, who turns 16 next week, is charged with murder and other crimes. Four students were killed and more were injured during a shooting at Oxford High School on Nov. 30.

The parents are accused of failing to keep a gun secure at home and failing to reasonably care for their son when he showed signs of mental distress. They have pleaded not guilty.

"The Crumbleys were absolutely shocked parents who had no reason to foresee what would happen," defense attorneys Shannon Smith and Mariell Lehman wrote.

The Oakland County prosecutor's office opposes a lower bond for the Crumbleys, noting that a similar request was denied by a judge in a lower court.

## Florida judge voids US mask mandate for planes, other travel

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — A federal judge in Florida struck down a national mask mandate on airplanes and mass transit Monday, and airlines and airports swiftly began repealing their requirements that passengers wear face coverings.

The judge's decision freed airlines, airports and mass transit systems to make their own decisions about mask requirements, resulting in a mix of responses.

The major airlines switched to a mask optional policy, with some eliciting cheers from passengers when the changes were announced over loudspeakers. The Transportation Security Administration said Monday night that it will no longer enforce the mask requirement, and airports in Houston and Dallas almost immediately did away with their mandates after the TSA announcement.

Los Angeles International Airport, the world's fifth-largest by passenger volume, also dropped its mandate but the Centers for Disease Control continued to recommend masking on transportation "and I think that's good advice," LAX spokesman Heath Montgomery said.

Sleepy passengers on a Delta Air Lines flight between Atlanta and Barcelona, Spain, cheered and applauded when a flight attendant announced the news mid-flight over the ocean.

"No one's any happier than we are," the attendant says in a video posted by Dillon Thomas, a CBS Denver reporter, who was on the flight. She added that people who wanted to keep on their masks were

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encouraged to do so.

"But we're ready to give é m up," she added. "So thank you and happy unmasking day!"

New York City's public transit system planned to keep its mask requirement in place. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority said it would make masks optional for riders on its buses and trains.

The Association of Flight Attendants, the nation's largest union of cabin crews, has recently taken a neutral position on the mask rule because its members are divided about the issue. On Monday, the union's president appealed for calm on planes and in airports.

"The last thing we need for workers on the frontlines or passengers traveling today is confusion and chaos," union leader Sara Nelson said.

Nelson said it takes airlines 24 to 48 hours to put new procedures in place and tell employees about them. She said passengers should check with airlines for updates about travel requirements.

The mask requirement covered airlines, airports, mass transit and taxis, and was the biggest vestige of pandemic restrictions that were once the norm across the country.

The decision by U.S. District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle in Tampa, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, also said the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention failed to justify its decision and did not follow proper rulemaking procedures that left it fatally flawed.

In her 59-page ruling, Mizelle said the only remedy was to vacate the rule entirely across the country because it would be impossible to end it for the limited group of people who objected in the lawsuit.

The judge said "a limited remedy would be no remedy at all" and courts have full authority to make a decision such as this — even if the CDC's goals in fighting the virus are laudable.

The Justice Department declined to comment when asked if it would seek an emergency stay to block the judge's order. The CDC also declined to comment.

The White House said the court ruling means that for now the mask order "is not in effect at this time."

"This is obviously a disappointing decision," White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters. "The CDC is recommending wearing a mask on public transit."

The CDC had recently extended the mask mandate, which was set to expire Monday, until May 3 to allow more time to study the BA.2 omicron subvariant of the coronavirus now responsible for the vast majority of cases in the U.S.

In New York, Metropolitan Transportation Authority communications director Tim Minton said the system was "continuing to follow CDC guidelines and will review the Florida court order."

The MTA operates New York City buses and subway trains as well as two commuter rail lines. Face coverings have been mandatory on all trains and buses since early in the pandemic.

United Airlines said in a statement that, effective immediately, masks would no longer be required on domestic flights or certain international flights.

"While this means that our employees are no longer required to wear a mask — and no longer have to enforce a mask requirement for most of the flying public — they will be able to wear masks if they choose to do so, as the CDC continues to strongly recommend wearing a mask on public transit," United said.

Delta Air Lines and Alaska Airlines also made similar announcements.

The federal mask requirement for travelers was the target of months of lobbying from the airlines, which sought to kill it. The carriers argued that effective air filters on modern planes make transmission of the virus during a flight highly unlikely. Republicans in Congress also fought to kill the mandate.

Critics have seized on the fact that states have rolled back rules requiring masks in restaurants, stores and other indoor settings, and yet COVID-19 cases have fallen sharply since the omicron variant peaked in mid-January.

There have been a series of violent incidents on aircraft that have mainly been attributed to disputes over the mask-wearing requirements.

The lawsuit was filed in July 2021 by two plaintiffs and the Health Freedom Defense Fund, described in the judge's order as a nonprofit group that "opposes laws and regulations that force individuals to submit to the administration of medical products, procedures and devices against their will."

Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who was not directly involved in the case but has battled against many government coronavirus requirements, praised the ruling in a statement on Twitter.

"Great to see a federal judge in Florida follow the law and reject the Biden transportation mask mandate. Both airline employees and passengers deserve to have this misery end," DeSantis tweeted.

## **Zelenskyy: Russian offensive in eastern Ukraine has begun**

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia launched its long-feared, full-scale ground offensive to take control of Ukraine's east on Monday, attacking along a broad front over 300 miles (480 kilometers) long, Ukrainian officials said in what marked the opening of a new and potentially climactic phase of the war.

"The Russian troops have begun the battle for the Donbas," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced in a video address. He said a "significant part of the entire Russian army is now concentrated on this offensive."

The Donbas is Ukraine's mostly Russian-speaking industrial heartland in the east, where Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces for the past eight years and have declared two independent republics that have been recognized by Russia.

In recent weeks, the Kremlin declared the capture of the Donbas its main goal of the war after its attempt to storm Kyiv failed. After withdrawing from the capital, Russia began regrouping and reinforcing its ground troops in the east for an all-out offensive.

"No matter how many Russian troops are driven there, we will fight," Zelenskyy vowed. "We will defend ourselves. We will do it every day."

The offensive got underway after Russia bombarded the western city of Lviv and a multitude of other targets across Ukraine in what appeared to be an intensified bid to grind down the country's defenses.

The Ukraine military's general staff said Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces were increasing assaults in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions — both of which are part of the Donbas — as well as in the area of Zaporizhzhia.

"This morning, almost along the whole front line of the Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv regions, the occupiers attempted to break through our defenses," Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine's national security council, was quoted as telling Ukrainian media. "Fortunately, our military is holding out. They passed through only two cities. This is Kreminna and another small town."

He added: "We are not giving up any of our territories."

A Ukrainian military official said street battles had begun in Kreminna and that evacuation was impossible. Luhansk regional military administrator Serhiy Haidai said heavy artillery fire set seven residential buildings on fire and targeted the sports complex where the nation's Olympic team trains.

Haidai later told Ukrainian television that Russians took control of the city after "leveling everything to the ground," so his forces retreated to regroup and keep on fighting.

Meanwhile, in the besieged southern port city of Mariupol, Denys Prokopenko, commander of the Azov Regiment of the Ukrainian National Guard that was holding out against Russian forces, said in a video message that Russia had begun dropping bunker-buster bombs on the Azovstal steel plant where the regiment was holed up.

The sprawling plant contains a warren of tunnels where both fighters and civilians are sheltering. It is believed to be the last major pocket of resistance in the shattered city.

At least seven people were reported killed in missile strikes on Lviv, a city close to the Polish border that has seen only sporadic attacks during almost two months of war and has become a haven for civilians fleeing the fighting elsewhere. To the Kremlin's increasing anger, Lviv has also become a major gateway for NATO-supplied weapons.

The attack on Lviv hit three military infrastructure facilities and an auto shop, according to the region's governor, Maksym Kozytskyy. He said the wounded included a child.

A Lviv hotel sheltering Ukrainians who had fled the fighting in other parts of the country was also badly

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damaged, Mayor Andriy Sadovyi said. The city has seen its population swell with elderly people, mothers and children trying to escape the war.

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

Lviv, the biggest city and a major transportation hub in western Ukraine, is about 80 kilometers (50 miles) from Poland, a NATO member.

Russia has strongly complained about the increasing flow of Western weapons to Ukraine and warned that such aid could have consequences. On Russian state media, some anchors have charged that the supplies amount to direct Western engagement in the fight against Russia.

A powerful explosion also rocked Vasylykiv, a town south of the capital of Kyiv that is home to an air base, according to residents. It was not immediately clear what was struck.

Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, was hit by shelling that killed at least three people, according to Associated Press 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 with a water canister and an umbrella by her side.

Military analysts say Russia was increasing its strikes on weapons factories, railroads and other infrastructure ahead of its assault on the Donbas.

Moscow 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.

It also reported that its artillery hit an additional 315 Ukrainian targets and that warplanes conducted 108 strikes on troops and military equipment. The claims could not be independently verified.

Gen. Richard Dannatt, a former head of the British Army, told Sky News that Russia was waging a "softening-up" campaign ahead of the Donbas offensive.

A senior U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the Pentagon's assessments of the war, said there are now 76 Russian combat units, known as battalion tactical groups, in eastern and southern Ukraine, up from 65 last week.

That could translate to around 50,000 to 60,000 troops, based on what the Pentagon said at the start of the war was the typical unit strength of 700 to 800 soldiers, but the numbers are difficult to pinpoint at this stage in the fighting.

The official also said that four U.S. cargo flights arrived in Europe on Sunday with an initial delivery of weapons and other materials for Ukraine as part of a \$800 million package announced by Washington last week. And training of Ukrainian personnel on U.S. 155 mm howitzers is set to begin in the next several days.

The capture of Mariupol, where Ukraine estimates 21,000 people have been killed, is seen as key, and not just because it would deprive Ukraine of a vital port and complete a land bridge between Russia and the Crimean Peninsula, seized from Ukraine from 2014.

The U.S. defense official said that if Russian forces succeed in taking full control of Mariupol, that could free up nearly a dozen battalion tactical groups for use elsewhere in the Donbas.

## Migrant crossings spike as US plans to lift curbs on asylum

By BEN FOX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Migrants attempted to cross the U.S.-Mexico border at the highest level in two decades as the U.S. prepares for even larger numbers with the expected lifting of a pandemic-era order that turned away asylum seekers.

Immigration authorities stopped migrants 221,303 times along the Southwest border in March, a 33% increase from a month earlier, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection data released Monday.

The new figures were disclosed as the Biden administration comes under increasing pressure over the looming expiration of a public health order that enabled U.S. authorities to turn back most migrants, including people seeking asylum from persecution.

The number of migrant encounters has gone up nearly every month since President Joe Biden took office, becoming fodder for political opponents who point to the increase as evidence that this administration is

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weaker on border security than its predecessor.

A backlog of people waiting outside the country to seek asylum, as well as dire economic and political conditions in much of Latin America and the Caribbean, is partially responsible for the increase in migrants. Administration critics blame Biden, arguing his administration's moves to roll back Trump-era policies has encouraged people to come.

The number of illegal crossings, or those outside official ports of entry, totaled 209,906 in March, surpassing the previous high of Biden's presidency of 200,658 set in July, and the highest level since March 2000, when it reached 220,063.

Former President Donald Trump also faced a sharp increase in migrant border crossings but the number plummeted with the start of the pandemic. In March 2020, the previous administration invoked Title 42, a little-used public health authority to quickly expel nearly anyone encountered along the Southwest border.

U.S. authorities have expelled migrants more than 1.7 million times under Title 42 authority, named for a 1944 public health law, using the threat of COVID-19 to deny migrants a chance to seek asylum as required under U.S. law and international treaty.

With COVID-19 cases in decline, the Biden administration has said it intends to end the use of Title 42 at the border on May 23.

Several moderate Democrats have joined Republican leaders to call for an extension of Title 42 authority. Sen. Mark Kelly, an Arizona Democrat up for election this year, toured the border last week and warned that the Biden administration is unprepared for asylum restrictions to be lifted.

Human rights groups and other migrant advocates say the U.S. has a legal obligation to permit people to seek asylum and have called for the lifting of the public health order. "The United States can and must welcome people seeking asylum because it is the law, because it is right, and because we can," the Catholic Legal Immigration Network said in a statement Monday to mark Holy Week.

The rapid expulsions under Title 42 are a significant component of the recent increases. Migrants are turned back without any legal consequences, and many simply try to cross again and are therefore counted more than once in the total.

CBP said the number of unique individuals encountered nationwide in March came to 159,900, a 37% increase from the prior month.

More than half of the total 221,303 stopped were quickly turned away, without being given a chance to apply for asylum, either to Mexico or their homelands, according to data supplied to a federal court in Texas as part of that state's challenge of Biden administration immigration policies.

CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus said in a statement that the agency planned to send additional staff to the Southwest border to handle the "likely" increase expected when Title 42 is lifted.

Most of the rest were processed under immigration authority, known as Title 8, and their ultimate fate varies. About 34,000 were allowed to remain in the U.S. under parole, which will allow them to pursue asylum or legal residency through other avenues. If they are unsuccessful, they could face deportation.

Mexicans made up the largest group by nationality of those encountered at the border, followed by Cubans. The number of Ukrainians, who are generally being allowed into the country on humanitarian parole, increased to over 200 in March from just 5 in November.

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## **EXPLAINER: What does Infowars' bankruptcy filing mean?**

By PAUL J. WEBER and DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Alex Jones' company Infowars has filed for bankruptcy protection after the conspiracy theorist lost defamation lawsuits over his comments that the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre was a hoax.

Jones filed for Chapter 11 protection in Texas and told his listeners Monday he was "totally maxed out" financially. He urged his audience to contribute money or buy products off his Infowars website.

Attorneys for Sandy Hook families have accused Jones of trying to hide millions of dollars in assets as

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juries later this year are set to determine how much he should pay in damages.

Here's what to know:

## WHAT DOES ALEX JONES CLAIM?

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

Two other companies with ties to Jones, Prison Planet TV and IW Health, also filed for bankruptcy.

An attorney for InfoWars did not return messages seeking comment but Jones has addressed the bankruptcy in recent days on his show. He has been banned from major social media platforms for hate speech and abusive behavior.

"We have less than \$3 million cash and we need that money" to operate, Jones said.

## WHAT IS JONES FACING?

Jury selection had been set to begin next week in Austin in a trial to determine how much Jones should pay the families of Sandy Hook victims. He faces similar trials in Connecticut later this year.

The plaintiffs in those cases have said they were subjected to harassment and death threats from Jones' followers because he promoted the hoax conspiracy that crisis actors faked the shooting in an effort by the federal government to take away guns and restrict firearms.

Jones has since conceded that the shooting did happen.

"Alex Jones is just delaying the inevitable: a public trial in which he will be held accountable for his profit-driven campaign of lies against the Sandy Hook families who have brought this lawsuit," said Christopher Mattei, who represents the families in a Connecticut lawsuit against Jones.

Neil Heslin, whose 6-year-old son, Jesse Lewis, died in the Newtown school shooting, said he did not immediately know how the bankruptcy would affect his defamation lawsuit against Jones in Texas,

"It is what it is," Heslin said. "We'll see where it all goes. He's tried everything to avoid everything."

## WHAT ARE JONES' FINANCES?

A separate lawsuit earlier this month accused Jones of hiding millions of dollars in assets. An attorney for Jones has called the allegation "ridiculous."

Last month, Jones was fined \$75,000 for failing to appear for a deposition in a defamation case but a judge last week ordered the return of the money because Jones eventually showed up.

The bankruptcy court filings claim that Jones has paid \$10 million in legal fees. He claimed in court records last year that he had a negative net worth of \$20 million, but attorneys for Sandy Hook families have painted a different financial picture.

Court records show that Jones' Infowars store, which sells nutritional supplements and survival gear, made more than \$165 million between 2015 and 2018.

"He's going to come under far more scrutiny under a bankruptcy court than in state court," said Sid Scheinberg, a bankruptcy attorney with Godwin Bowman in Dallas, which is not involved in the Jones case.

## WHAT EFFECT WILL THIS HAVE ON THE SANDY HOOK CASES?

Filing for Chapter 11 puts civil litigation on hold while the business reorganizes its finances.

It is not the first time a bankruptcy filing has affected a lawsuit filed by the Sandy Hook families. While suing gun maker Remington, which manufactured the AR-15-style rifle used in the school shooting, the company filed for bankruptcy twice. In the second case filed in 2020, Remington's assets were eventually sold off to other companies.

The 2020 bankruptcy delayed proceedings for a year in the Connecticut lawsuit, which sought damages against Remington for how it marketed its rifles. In February, the families of nine victims of the school shooting announced they had agreed to settle the case for \$73 million.

## Gaza militants fire rocket into Israel as tensions soar

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinian militants fired a rocket into southern Israel for the first time in months on Monday, in another escalation after clashes at a sensitive holy site in Jerusalem, a series of deadly at-

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tacks inside Israel and military raids across the occupied West Bank.

Israel said it intercepted the rocket, and there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage. Israel holds Gaza's militant Hamas rulers responsible for all such projectiles and usually launches airstrikes in their wake. It was the first such rocket fire since New Year's Eve.

Early Tuesday, Israeli fighter jets carried out a series of airstrikes in southern Gaza Strip, targeting a "weapons manufacturing site" for Hamas, the Israeli military said. There were no reports of injuries.

Hours earlier, the leader of the Islamic Jihad militant group, which boasts an arsenal of rockets, had issued a brief, cryptic warning, condemning Israeli "violations" in Jerusalem.

Ziad al-Nakhala, who is based outside the Palestinian territories, said threats to tighten an Israeli-Egyptian blockade on Gaza imposed after Hamas seized power 15 years ago "can't silence us from what's happening in Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank."

However, no Palestinian group claimed responsibility for the rocket fire.

Palestinians and Israeli police clashed over the weekend in and around the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem, which has long been an epicenter of Israeli-Palestinian violence. It is the third holiest site in Islam and the holiest for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount because the mosque stands on a hilltop where the Jewish temples were located in antiquity.

Protests and clashes there this time last year helped trigger an 11-day Gaza war.

Police said they were responding to Palestinian stone-throwing and that they were committed to ensuring that Jews, Christians and Muslims — whose major holidays are converging this year — could celebrate them safely in the Holy Land. Palestinians view the presence of Israeli police at the site as a provocation and said they used excessive force.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said Monday, ahead of the rocket fire, that Israel has been the target of a "Hamas-led incitement campaign."

The latest tensions come during the rare confluence of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the week-long Jewish holiday of Passover. Christians are also celebrating their holy week leading up to Easter. Tens of thousands of visitors have flocked to Jerusalem's Old City — home to major holy sites for all three faiths — for the first time since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

Jordan and Egypt, which made peace with Israel decades ago and coordinate with it on security matters, have condemned its actions at the mosque. Jordan — which serves as custodian of the site — summoned Israel's charge d'affaires on Monday in protest.

Jordan's King Abdullah II discussed the violence with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, agreeing on "the need to stop all illegal and provocative Israeli measures" there, according to a statement. Jordan planned to convene a meeting of other Arab states on the issue.

Israel has been working to improve relations with Jordan over the past year and has recently normalized relations with other Arab states. But the latest tensions have brought renewed attention to the unresolved conflict with the Palestinians, which Israel has sought to sideline in recent years.

The U.S. State Department urged all sides to "exercise restraint, to avoid provocative actions and rhetoric, and preserve the historic status quo" at the holy site. Spokesman Ned Price said U.S. officials were in touch with counterparts across the region to try and calm tensions.

U.N. Security Council scheduled a closed-door meeting on the tensions for Tuesday.

In Israel, an Arab party that made history last year by joining the governing coalition suspended its participation on Sunday — a largely symbolic act that nevertheless reflected the sensitivity of the holy site, which is at the emotional heart of the century-old conflict.

Israel captured the West Bank, along with the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem — which includes the Old City — in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek those territories for a future independent state. Israel annexed east Jerusalem in a move not recognized internationally and is building and expanding Jewish settlements across the West Bank, which it views as the biblical and historical heartland of the Jewish people.

The last serious and substantive peace talks collapsed more than a decade ago.

The Palestinians have long feared that Israel plans to take over or partition the mosque compound. In



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recent weeks, calls by Jewish extremists to sacrifice animals there have circulated widely among Palestinians on social media, sparking calls to defend the mosque.

Israeli authorities say they have no intention of changing the status quo, and police are enforcing a prohibition on animal sacrifices. Israel allows Jews to visit the site but not to pray there. In recent years large numbers of nationalist and religious Jews have regularly visited under police escort, angering the Palestinians and Jordan.

Israel says police were forced to enter the compound early Friday after Palestinians stockpiled stones and hurled rocks at the gate through which Jewish visitors typically enter. That gate also leads to the Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews can pray.

Recent weeks have seen a series of Palestinian attacks inside Israel that killed 14 people. Israel has launched near-daily arrest raids and other military operations in the occupied West Bank that it says are aimed at preventing more.

The military said Monday it arrested 11 Palestinians in operations across the territory overnight. In a raid near the city of Jenin, the army said dozens of Palestinians hurled rocks and explosives toward troops.

Soldiers "responded with live ammunition toward the suspects who hurled explosive devices," the military said. The Palestinian Health Ministry said two men were hospitalized after being critically wounded.

Two of the recent attackers came from in and around Jenin, which has long been a bastion of armed struggle against Israeli rule.

At least 26 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 clashes, but an unarmed woman and a lawyer who appears to have been a bystander were also among those killed.

## Live Updates | Russians fight in streets of Ukrainian town

By The Associated Press undefined

KVIV, Ukraine — A Ukrainian military official said street battles have begun and evacuation is impossible in the town of Kreminna. That's one of only two spots where the Ukrainians said the Russians managed to break through on Monday along a front stretching for hundreds of miles.

Luhansk regional military administrator Serhiy Haidai said the town came under heavy artillery overnight, setting seven residential buildings on fire, and that the Olympus sports complex where the nation's Olympic team trains was targeted.

Haidai later said on Ukrainian TV that Russians took control of the city after "leveling everything to the ground," so his guys retreated to regroup and keep on fighting. "It simply makes no sense to stand in one place, to die for everyone, without causing significant damage to the enemy," he said.

### KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR:

- 'No surrender': Ukrainians fight on in Mariupol steel plant
- Russia renews strikes on Ukraine capital, hits other cities
- Syrian fighters ready to join next phase of Ukraine war
- Bosnians warn Ukrainians: It's a long journey to justice
- Mother, grandmother weep over 15-year-old killed in Kharkiv

Follow all AP stories on Russia's war on Ukraine at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>.

### OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

KVIV, Ukraine — Russian forces are attacking along a broad front, over 300 miles (480 kilometers) long, Ukrainian officials said Monday.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces were increasing assaults in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions — both of which are part of the Donbas — as well as in the area of Zaporizhzhia, they said.

"The occupiers attempted to break through our defenses," said Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine's national security council. "Fortunately, our military is holding out. They passed through only two cities —

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this is Kreminna and another small town.”

He added: “We are not giving up any of our territories.”

Russia also bombarded the relative safe haven of Lviv and a multitude of other targets across Ukraine in what appeared to be an intensified bid to grind down the country’s defenses.

Moscow said its missiles struck more than 20 military targets, including ammunition depots, command headquarters and groups of troops and vehicles, while its artillery hit an additional 315 targets and its warplanes conducted 108 strikes. The claims could not be independently verified.

KVIV, Ukraine — Russia has begun dropping bunker-buster bombs on a Mariupol steel plant where Ukrainians are refusing to surrender, the commander of the Azov Regiment of the National Guard said Monday.

Denys Prokopenko, whose soldiers have been holding out against Russian forces in the key southern port city, said in a video message that the bombs are dropping even though civilians are sheltering in the plant’s tunnels.

“Russian occupational forces, and their proxy ... know about the civilians, and they keep willingly firing on the factory,” he said.

Russia estimated that 2,500 Ukrainian troops and about 400 foreign mercenaries were dug in. The U.S. said nearly a dozen Russian battalion tactical groups have been tied up trying to defeat them.

The head of the city’s patrol police, Mikhail Vershinin, told Mariupol television on Sunday that many civilians including children are hiding in the plant, seeking shelter from Russian shelling and forces occupying other parts of the city.

Ukraine estimates that 21,000 people have been killed in Mariupol. Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk warned Russia on social media that refusing to open humanitarian corridors will justify war crimes trials. The Russians, for their part, said “neo-Nazi nationalists” have hampered evacuations.

KVIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia has launched its long-feared, full-scale offensive to take control of Ukraine’s east,

“Now we can already state that the Russian troops have begun the battle for the Donbas,” he said in a video address. Zelenskyy said a “significant part of the entire Russian army is now concentrated on this offensive.”

The Donbas is Ukraine’s mostly Russian-speaking industrial heartland in the east, where Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces for the past eight years and have declared two independent republics recognized by Russia.

The Kremlin declared the capture of the Donbas its main goal of the war after failing to storm. After withdrawing from the capital, it began regrouping and reinforcing its ground troops in the east for what could be a climactic battle.

“No matter how many Russian troops are driven there, we will fight,” Zelenskyy vowed. “We will defend ourselves. We will do it every day.”

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations’ humanitarian chief said it seems “the time is not quite ripe yet” to establish a cease fire to get humanitarian aid into Ukraine, but he held out hope as the Orthodox Easter holiday approaches this weekend.

“Maybe there will be some ripeness,” Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths said at a news conference on Monday.

After traveling to Kviv and Moscow for high-level meetings with Ukrainian and Russian officials this month, Griffiths told The Associated Press he had sensed little trust between the adversaries and was “not optimistic.”

Griffiths called for Russia and Ukraine to return to talks aimed at ending the war and for “much, much more willing acceptance, primarily of the Russian federation, to allow convoys in and convoys out.”

“For now, let’s get aid to people where they need it,” Griffiths said.

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The U.N. says 12 million people have been uprooted by the war, with about 5 million of them pouring across borders and the rest seeking safety elsewhere in Ukraine.

**BERLIN** — Germany's employers and unions have joined together in opposing an immediate European Union ban on natural gas imports from Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. They say a boycott would lead to factory shutdowns and job losses in the bloc's largest economy.

"A rapid gas embargo would lead to loss of production, shutdowns, a further de-industrialization and the long-term loss of work positions in Germany," said Rainer Dulger, chairman of the BDA employer's group, and Reiner Hoffmann, chairman of the DGB trade union confederation.

Their joint statement Monday to Germany's dpa news agency comes as European leaders discuss possible new energy sanctions against Russian oil, following a decision April 7 to ban Russian coal imports beginning in August.

Ukraine's leaders say revenues from Russia's energy exports are financing Moscow's destructive war on Ukraine and must be ended.

That won't be easy to do. The EU's 27 nations get around 40% of their natural gas from Russia and around 25% of their oil.

**UKRAINE** rejected as baseless and false the accusations made by Serbia's president that Ukraine's secret service is behind a series of hoax bomb threats against Air Serbia flights to Russia.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic has claimed that the foreign intelligence services of Ukraine and an unidentified European Union nation are responsible.

The pro-Russian Serbian leader did not provide evidence for his claim. Other Serbian officials alleged that the threats were being sent from Ukraine or Poland. Ukraine's Foreign Ministry spokesman Oleg Nilolenko on Monday called the allegations false.

The Serbian national carrier is the only European airline besides Turkish air companies that has not joined EU flight sanctions against Russia over its war in Ukraine.

**BRUSSELS** — The European Union's top diplomat condemned Russia's "indiscriminate and illegal" attacks on Ukraine on Monday as the country experienced the most intense missile strikes in weeks.

Josep Borrell, the high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, said in a statement that the EU supports the work of the International Criminal Court and other efforts to ensure accountability for human rights violations.

"There can be no impunity for war crimes," said Borrell, who called for Russia to immediately cease hostilities and withdraw forces from Ukraine.

**WASHINGTON** — The Pentagon says Russia has added artillery, ground combat forces and other capabilities in recent days ahead of a new ground offensive in the Donbas region in Ukraine.

A senior U.S. defense official said the number of combat units known as battalion tactical groups in eastern and southern Ukraine has grown to 76 from 65 last week. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal U.S. military assessments of the war.

It's difficult to know at this stage of the war, but that could add up to 50,000 to 60,000 Russian troops, depending on how developed the groups are.

The official said that if Russian forces succeed in fully controlling the southern port of Mariupol it could free up nearly a dozen battalion tactical groups for use elsewhere in the Donbas region.

The official also said that four U.S. cargo flights arrived in Europe on Sunday with weapons and other materials, part of \$800 million in assistance announced last week.

The official said training of Ukrainian personnel on U.S. Army and Marine Corps 155mm howitzers is set to begin at an undisclosed location outside of Ukraine in the next several days. The U.S. pledged 18 howitzers to bolster Ukrainian forces in the Donbas fight, and these trainees can in turn train more soldiers

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inside Ukraine.

— AP Military Writer Robert Burns in Washington contributed to this report.

**KVIV, Ukraine** — President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has formally submitted Ukraine's answers to a questionnaire from the European Union, the first step in his campaign to obtain accelerated EU membership.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said when presenting the questions to Zelenskyy in early April that a preliminary decision on Ukraine's candidacy could come in weeks.

Ukraine's drive to join the bloc has been a provocative issue with Russia for years.

"The people of Ukraine are united by this goal -- to feel they are an equal part of Europe," Zelenskyy said Monday as he handed two thick binders of Ukrainian responses to Matti Maasikas, the EU's envoy for Ukraine.

**SARAJEVO, Bosnia** — Survivors of war crimes committed during Bosnia's war 30 years ago say the victims of human rights abuses in Ukraine can learn from their experience, which was lengthy and painful.

It took decades to arrest and try the wartime Bosnian Serb leaders, and more than 7,000 people still remain unaccounted-for. But the U.N. war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia eventually convicted 83 high-ranking political and military officials and transferred a mountain of evidence against lower-ranking suspects to their home countries for prosecution.

The guilty were collectively sentenced to over 700 years in prison.

Munira Subasic helped create Mothers of Srebrenica to demand that bodies be identified and those responsible brought to justice. To date, almost 90 percent of those reported missing from the fall of Srebrenica have been accounted for.

"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."

**BEIRUT** — Kremlin officials boasted early in their war on Ukraine that thousands of experienced fighters from the Middle East would join Russian forces. Military analysts say only a small number appears to have arrived in Russia for training before being deployed to the front lines, but they say that could change as Russia prepares for a full-scale offensive.

U.S. officials and activists monitoring Syria say the Russians have been actively recruiting. Rami Abdurrahman leads the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. He reported that about 40,000 people have registered so far with the Russian military and with Wagner Group, which is a Russian private contractor.

Rayan Maarouf of Suwayda24, an activist collective that covers IS activities in the Syrian desert, said fighters were promised no less than \$600 a month. That's a huge sum of money amid widespread unemployment in Syria.

Analysts say fighters from Syria are more likely to be deployed in coming weeks, especially after Gen. Alexander Dvornikov was named war commander. Dvornikov is well acquainted with the paramilitary forces Russia trained in Syria. 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.

**MOSCOW** — Russia's President Vladimir Putin says that the barrage of Western sanctions against Russia has failed.

Putin said Monday that the West "expected to quickly upset the financial-economic situation, provoke panic in the markets, the collapse of the banking system and shortages in stores." He added that "the strategy of the economic blitz has failed."

The Russian leader spoke in televised remarks during a video call with top economic officials.

Putin noted that "Russia has withstood the unprecedented pressure," arguing that the ruble has strengthened and the country has recorded a historic high trade surplus of \$58 billion in the first quarter of the year.

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Instead, he contended that the sanctions backfired against the U.S. and its European allies, speeding up inflation and leading to a drop in living standards.

Putin acknowledged a sharp hike in consumer prices in Russia, saying they rose by 17.5% as of April on a year-to-year basis and directing the government to index wages and other payments to alleviate the impact of inflation on people's incomes.

KYIV, Ukraine -- Ukraine's deputy prime minister said Russia can be prosecuted for war crimes over its refusal to allow humanitarian corridors for civilians trapped in the city of Mariupol.

Earlier on Monday, Iryna Vereshchuk had said no evacuations were possible for the second day in a row because of Russian attacks on civilian convoys.

"Your refusal to open these humanitarian corridors will in the future be a reason to prosecute all involved for war crimes," she wrote on her Telegram and Facebook channels.

Vereshchuk called again on Russia to allow safe evacuation of civilians from Mariupol, especially the Azovstal steel mill, which covers more than 11 square kilometers (4 square miles) and is laced with tunnels.

According to Vereshchuk, the government had been negotiating passage from Mariupol and Berdyansk, among other towns, as well as from the Luhansk region. The Luhansk government said four civilians trying to flee the region were shot to death by Russian forces.

The Russians, in their turn, have accused the "neo-Nazi nationalists" in Mariupol of hampering the evacuation of civilians from Mariupol.

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's state security service has posted a video of a Ukrainian politician held on a treason charge offering himself in exchange for the evacuation of Mariupol's trapped civilians, while two British men who surrendered to Russian forces in Mariupol appeared on Russian media asking to be part of an exchange.

The video of Viktor Medvedchuk, the former leader of a pro-Russian opposition party with personal ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, was posted Monday. In it, he appeals to Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy by name to consider the exchange.

Medvedchuk was detained last Tuesday in a special operation carried out by Ukraine's state security service, or the SBU. The 67-year-old oligarch had escaped from house arrest several days before the hostilities broke out Feb. 24 in Ukraine. He is facing 15 years to life in prison on charges of treason and aiding and abetting a terrorist organization for mediating coal purchases for the separatist Russia-backed Donetsk republic in eastern Ukraine.

The British men identified themselves as Sean Pinner and Aiden Aslin. In one video, Pinner asked British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to be exchanged. Pinner had deep circles beneath his eyes and appeared exhausted, but said he and Aslin had been treated appropriately.

Ukrainian officials have said Kyiv wants try Medvedchuk and ultimately exchange him for Ukrainian prisoners.

The circumstances of the videos were unclear. The two videos were released within an hour of each other.

ROME — Italian officials will go ahead with an energy-deal trip to Africa this week as part of Premier Mario Draghi's efforts to quickly reduce the country's heavy reliance of Russian gas, but he won't be going because he has tested positive for COVID-19.

The premier's office, announcing the infection, said on Monday that Draghi has no symptoms. The mission to Angola and Congo, set for Wednesday and Thursday, will instead see the government represented by its ministers of foreign affairs and of ecological transition.

Italy buys almost 40% of its gas from Russia. Draghi is determined to drastically reduce that reliance in the next two or three years, in large part by sealing deals with other energy producing countries. Draghi recently traveled to Algeria to make such an agreement as part of the strategy.

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MADRID -- Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez says Spain will reopen its embassy in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv in a few days.

Following similar decisions by several European neighbors, Sánchez said the reopening will "show again the commitment of the Spanish government and Spanish people with the Ukrainian people."

"Spain is with Ukraine and we are against (Russian President Vladimir) Putin," Sánchez said in an interview on Spain's Antena 3 television. "This is a war by Putin against what the European Union stands for." Spain closed the embassy within hours of the Russian invasion on Feb. 24.

KYIV, Ukraine — Lviv Mayor Andriy Sadovyi said seven people were killed and another 11, including a child, were wounded by Russian strikes in the western Ukrainian city.

Plumes of thick black smoke were seen by Associated Press journalists in Lviv, rising over the city amid multiple explosions believed to be caused by missiles strikes.

Lviv Regional Governor Maksym Kozytskyy said there were four Russian missile strikes, three of which hit military infrastructure facilities and one struck a tire shop. He said emergency teams were putting out the fires.

Oleksandr Kamyshin, the chairman of the Ukrainian rail service, said the strikes hit near railway facilities. He said train traffic has resumed with some delays, and he vowed to restore the damaged network.

Lviv and the rest of western Ukraine has been less affected by the fighting than other parts of the country, and is considered to be a relatively safe haven.

MOSCOW — The Russian military says it has struck over 20 Ukrainian military targets with missiles.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Monday that precision-guided air-launched missiles destroyed 16 military facilities, including five command headquarters, a fuel depot, three ammunition depots and concentrations of Ukrainian military vehicles and personnel in the Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia and Dnipro regions.

Konashenkov said the military also fired Iskander land-based missiles to destroy four ammunition depots and three groups of Ukrainian troops near Popasna and Kramatorsk in the east and Yampil in central Ukraine.

He said that the military used artillery to hit 315 Ukrainian targets, and Russian warplanes performed 108 strikes targeting Ukrainian troops and military equipment.

Konashenkov's claims couldn't be independently verified.

LONDON — Britain's defense ministry says the continuing siege of Mariupol is tying up Russian forces and slowing its advance ahead of a planned major offensive in eastern Ukraine.

In a daily intelligence update, Britain's military says "concerted Ukrainian resistance has severely tested Russian forces and diverted men and materiel, slowing Russia's advance elsewhere."

The Sea of Azov port city has been devastated in weeks of Russian pummeling. Britain says "large areas of infrastructure have been destroyed" and there are "significant" civilian casualties.

Britain accuses Russia of using tactics of all-out war on civilian areas similar to its attacks in Chechnya and Syria, despite Russian claims at the start of its invasion "that Russia would neither strike cities nor threaten the Ukrainian population."

LVIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russian troops in southern Ukraine have been carrying out torture and kidnappings, and he called on the world Sunday to respond.

"Torture chambers are built there," Zelenskyy said in an evening address to the nation. "They abduct representatives of local governments and anyone deemed visible to local communities."

Zelenskyy said humanitarian aid has been stolen, creating famine.

In occupied parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, he said, the Russians are creating separatist states and introducing Russian currency, the ruble. Intensified Russian shelling of Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, has killed 18 people and wounded 106 in the last four days alone, Zelenskyy said.

"This is nothing but deliberate terror. Mortars, artillery against ordinary residential neighborhoods, against ordinary civilians," he said.

He said a planned Russian offensive in eastern Ukraine "will begin in the near future."

Zelensky again called for increased sanctions against Russia targeting its entire banking sector and oil industry.

"Everyone in Europe and America already sees Russia openly using energy to destabilize Western societies," Zelenskyy said. "All of this requires greater speed from Western countries in preparing a new, powerful package of sanctions."

## Patrick Lyoya shooting raises issue of officer name release

By COREY WILLIAMS and DON BABWIN Associated Press

Patrick Lyoya's father says he and his family have a right to know the name of the white officer who fatally shot the 26-year-old Black man.

But the police chief in Grand Rapids, Michigan, says he will only do so if the officer is charged in the April 4 shooting that followed a brief foot chase and a struggle over the officer's Taser.

Eric Winstrom's department is among those across the U.S. that have faced scrutiny for withholding identities of officers in cases where Black people were wounded or killed during interactions with police. Some have said it's to protect the officers from retribution. Others, like Grand Rapids, point to policies that prohibit the release of an officer's name before charges are filed.

"I'm asking for the law to release his face, his image and his identification because I would love to know the person who has killed my son. I have the right," Peter Lyoya said through a translator during an emotional news conference after video of the shooting of his son was released last week.

Andrew Shannon, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Peninsula Chapter and vice president for the SCLC Virginia State Unit, said police departments should treat officers who are under investigation like they would anyone else.

"They always report who the suspect is and they report who the victim is, except in cases of rape," Shannon told The Associated Press. "There should be no special treatment when law enforcement are involved in these types of matters. They should want to demonstrate transparency and openness so everyone can be fully apprised of the process."

Lyoya was facedown on the ground when an officer shot him in the back of the head while straddling Lyoya. The officer had stopped Lyoya for driving with a license plate that didn't belong to the vehicle.

The funeral for Lyoya, a native of Congo, is scheduled Friday in Grand Rapids, about 150 miles (240 kilometers) northwest of Detroit. The Rev. Al Sharpton is scheduled to deliver the eulogy.

While Winstrom said he could not release the officer's name, he did release videos of the shooting, citing a need for transparency. The officer could be heard repeatedly ordering Lyoya to "let go" of his Taser, at one point demanding: "Drop the Taser!"

Ben Crump, an attorney for Lyoya's family, planned to release results of an independent autopsy on Tuesday.

Michigan State Police are investigating. The prosecutor who will determine whether the officer will face any charges has said not to expect a quick decision.

A Grand Rapids police spokeswoman said Monday in an email that a person's name, age, other basic information and the charges against him can be released following an arrest or issuance of an arrest warrant.

"Not releasing the officer's name is consistent with" the procedure, Jennifer Kalczuk wrote.

Such policies vary from city to city.

Chicago, for example, changed how it handles such cases after Black teenager Laquan McDonald was shot 16 times by a white police officer in October 2014. In that case, it was prosecutors who released Officer Jason Van Dyke's name — 13 months later, when he was charged with murder and video for the shooting was also released. On Monday, Federal authorities said they will not criminally charge Van Dyke.

In response to criticism of how the McDonald shooting was handled, the city made changes. While police

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still will not release an officer's name unless he's charged, the agency that reviews those shootings does so regardless. City policy also requires that video be released within 60 days.

Last year, within a month of two separate fatal shootings by police, including of a 13-year-old boy, the Civilian Office of Police Accountability released officers' names. Prosecutors have said the officers won't face charges.

Ephraim Eaddy, spokesman for the agency, said it has concluded that officers' names cannot be held back because they are public servants.

If the release of the names of the Chicago officers involved in the two 2021 shootings seemed to come quickly, the name of the Kenosha, Wisconsin, police officer who shot Jacob Blake several times in 2020 was made public in lightning speed.

Three days after that shooting, the Wisconsin Department of Justice issued a news release that included Officer Rusten Sheskey's name.

The decision came after the Kenosha Police Department handed the investigation over to the state's Justice Department "for complete transparency," said Kenosha police Lt. Joseph Nosalik.

Nosalik said he agreed with the decision. Had the department refused to release the name, Nosalik said he would have called to ask why.

"The public has a right to know ... and unless there's a logical reason like it might put the officer's safety and his family in jeopardy, I don't see a reason why the name can't be released," he said.

In fact, he said, the Kenosha police moved to "extricate" Sheskey's family from their home after learning that they might be in danger, and suggested the same concern might be part of the reason why authorities in Grand Rapids have not released the officer's name.

Crump, the Lyoyas' attorney, said having the officer's name would allow the family to find out more about him.

"We want to know his history," Crump said last week. "I can guarantee you, they're going to do everything in their power to try to learn the history of Patrick to assassinate his character."

## Van Dyke avoids federal charges in Laquan McDonald's death

By DON BABWIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Federal authorities on Monday said they will not criminally charge Jason Van Dyke, the Chicago police officer convicted of murder in the 2014 shooting death of Black teenager Laquan McDonald.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Chicago said in a news release that the decision was made after consulting with the McDonald family and that the "family was in agreement not to pursue a second prosecution."

According to the release, prosecuting Van Dyke on federal charges would have been much more difficult than it was to prosecute him in state court because the burden of proof is far higher.

Federal prosecutors "would have to prove not only that Mr. Van Dyke acted with the deliberate and specific intent to do something the law forbids, but also that his actions were not the result of mistake, fear, negligence, or bad judgment," the office explained in the release. "It requires federal prosecutors to prove beyond a reasonable doubt what Mr. Van Dyke was thinking when he used deadly force, and that he knew such force was excessive. "

Van Dyke, who was captured on video shooting the teenager 16 times, was convicted in Chicago in 2018 of second-degree murder and aggravated battery and sentenced to 81 months in state prison. The former officer served less than half that sentence before he was released from prison in February.

Civil rights leaders, community activists, and others who were angry about what they saw as a lenient sentence had called for federal prosecutors to charge Van Dyke again.

None of McDonald's relatives were immediately available to comment Monday, but shortly after the news broke that Van Dyke was going to be released in February, some of them had demanded a federal investigation and the pursuit of federal charges.

But McDonald's great-uncle, the Rev. Marvin Hunter, said that while he thought Van Dyke should have received a much longer sentence, he did not want to see Van Dyke charged in federal court.



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"If you set this precedent of reconvicting people because you don't think he got enough time, then hundreds of thousands of Black men in Illinois alone could be harmed," Hunter said at the time. "They will use this case as a way to keep them incarcerated. This is a back door to perpetuate slavery. We should be very careful of this kind of precedent."

The U.S. Attorney's Office statement Monday suggested another prosecution would not satisfy critics and that even if Van Dyke were convicted again, a federal judge would consider factors such as the time he has already served and his good conduct behind bars that led to his early release.

"Given these factors, there is a significant prospect that a second prosecution would diminish the important results already achieved," it reads.

The office of U.S. Attorney John R. Lausch Jr. also pointed out that not only will Van Dyke never be a police officer again, his arrest and conviction — he was the first Chicago police officer in half a century to be convicted for an on-duty shooting — led to a host of reforms.

Today, for example, video of police shootings must be released within 60 days; Chicago fought for months to prevent the release of police video showing McDonald's killing before a judge ordered the city to make it publicly available.

Also, Van Dyke's name was not made public until he was charged in McDonald's death more than a year after the shooting. Today, while police still do not release an officer's name who hasn't been charged, the agency that reviews those shooting does.

## Shareholders await Musk's next move in Twitter takeover bid

By TOM KRISHER and MATT O'BRIEN AP Business Writers

DETROIT (AP) — Twitter has dropped a major roadblock in front of Elon Musk's effort to take over the company, leaving investors to wonder about the mercurial Tesla CEO's next move.

The social media company has adopted a "poison pill" defense that makes it difficult for Musk or any other investor to buy Twitter without the board of directors' approval. Musk, who currently owns about 9% of the company, last week disclosed an offer of about \$43 billion, or \$54.20 per share.

Twitter's next likely move is to formally reject Musk's offer, although it could negotiate. Musk has a number of options which also include talks with the board, sweetening his offer, or even triggering the poison pill, which experts say would be disastrous for the company.

In a regulatory filing on Monday, Twitter's board said it approved the defensive move to protect the company from "coercive or otherwise unfair" takeover tactics.

The board is leaving open the possibility of negotiating with Musk or another suitor. The filing says the shareholder rights agreement should not interfere with any merger or offer approved by the board.

Although he said his offer was "final," Musk may have to raise his bid to satisfy other shareholders. A Saudi prince who is among Twitter's major shareholders scoffed at the offer last week in a tweet. Al Waleed bin Talal said he didn't believe \$43 billion is close to Twitter's value given its growth prospects. Twitter shares hit an all-time high of \$77.63 in March 2021.

When he made his offer public, Musk provided no details on financing, but such a disclosure could improve his chances. He could raise money by borrowing billions using his stakes in Tesla and SpaceX as collateral, and he could bring in other investors.

The poison pill would give stockholders as of April 25 the right to buy one one-thousandth of a share of preferred stock for each common share they own, at a price of \$210. The rights are triggered if any person or group of investors buys 15% or more of the company's shares without board approval.

The preferred stock would have the same voting rights as a common share, according to the filing, which does not specifically mention Musk.

The poison pill essentially would spell the end of Twitter if Musk or another investor acquires 15% or more of the company, said James Cox, a professor of corporate and securities law at Duke University.

Shareholders who exercise the rights and buy preferred stock at \$210 would get \$420 in Twitter stock or assets, he said. That would be more than Twitter can afford to pay, and likely would send the company

into receivership, Cox said.

"You want to create an event that Musk would never want to trigger because it would be the death of Twitter," Cox said. He predicts that Musk and the board will negotiate, at least for a while, adding that no investor has ever crossed the line to activate a poison pill.

If Musk triggered the poison pill, he risks wiping out much of the money he has invested in Twitter because his stake would be diluted, said Columbia University law professor Eric Talley. "You want to deter someone from deliberately triggering the poison pill," Talley said.

Twitter's board has information that the average shareholder doesn't, such as earnings or market growth projections, and whether there's reason to believe that the share value is artificially depressed, Talley said. The board, he said, could just hold out.

"They're sitting right now on top of a poison pill that's a bit of a showstopper. From a corporate law perspective, they're on pretty solid footing right now if they just keep that in place and say they're not comfortable bargaining at this stage."

Musk said in making his bid that Twitter "needs to be transformed as a private company" in order to build trust with users and do better at serving what he calls the "societal imperative" of free speech. He said shareholders, not the board, should decide whether Twitter goes private.

Shares of Twitter closed Monday up 7.5% at \$48.45, still \$5.75 shy of Musk's offer. That's a sign that investors are skeptical of whether Musk can pull off the deal.

Musk began accumulating Twitter shares in late January, ending up with a stake of about 9%. Only Vanguard Group controls more shares. A lawsuit filed last week in New York federal court alleged Musk illegally delayed disclosing his stake so he could buy more shares at lower prices.

Musk took to Twitter to criticize board members in recent days, saying he'd save about \$3 million per year by bringing the board salary to zero if his bid succeeds, and noting that board members collectively owning just a tiny financial stake in Twitter shows that their "economic interests are simply not aligned with shareholders."

Musk, who has more than 82 million followers, is a prolific tweeter who has criticized other celebrity accounts for not tweeting enough, suggesting that as a sign that Twitter is dying.

The takeover episode will put pressure on Twitter executives to show that the company is not underperforming, said Olaf Groth, a business professor at the University of California, Berkeley. Even the entire social media business model of making money through advertising -- which Musk has questioned -- is now "up for discussion," Groth said.

"He may decide it's not worth it, and that he sent a political signal to exert pressure," Groth said. "Now all eyes are on Twitter and the clock is ticking."

## Olympic champ Jepchirchir wins 50th women's Boston Marathon

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Reigning Olympic champion Peres Jepchirchir capped the celebration of a half-century of women in the Boston Marathon with a finish to top them all.

The 28-year-old Kenyan won a see-saw sprint down the stretch on Monday, when the world's oldest and most prestigious annual marathon returned to its traditional spring start for the first time since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

On the 50th anniversary of the first official women's race, Jepchirchir traded places with Ethiopia's Ababel Yeshaneh eight times in the final mile before pulling ahead for good on Boylston Street and finishing in 2 hours, 21 minutes, 1 second.

"I was feeling she was strong. I pushed it," said Jepchirchir, who earned \$150,000 and the traditional gilded olive wreath to go with her Olympic gold medal and 2021 New York City Marathon title. "I fell behind. But I didn't lose hope."

Evans Chebet completed the Kenyan sweep, breaking away from Gabriel Geay with about four miles to go to finish in 2:06:51 for his first major marathon victory. The 2019 winner Lawrence Cherono was

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second, 30 seconds back, defending champion Benson Kipruto was third, and Geay fell back to fourth.

Daniel Romanchuk of Champaign, Illinois, won his second career wheelchair title in 1:26:58. Switzerland's Manuela Schar won her second straight Boston crown and fourth overall, finishing in 1:41:08.

Sharing a Patriots' Day weekend with the Red Sox home opener — the city's other sporting rite of spring — more than 28,000 runners returned to the streets from Hopkinton to Copley Square six months after a smaller and socially distanced event that was the only fall race in its 126-year history.

Fans waved Ukrainian flags in support of the runners whose 26.2-mile run Monday was the easiest part of their journey. Forty-four Ukrainian citizens had registered for the race; only 11 started, and all finished.

"I decided to come here and show that Ukrainians are strong, we're fighting and we hope peace will come soon," said Dmytro Molchanov, a Ukrainian who lives in New York.

"It's really tough, basically, being here while all my family, my friends and Ukrainians are fighting over there for peace in my country, in Europe and the world overall," said Molchanov, who finished in 2:39:20. "When it was really tough I tried not to give up and tried pushing, kind of fight with myself the way Ukrainians are fighting against Russia right now."

Athletes from Russia and Belarus were disinvented in response to the invasion. Ukrainians who were unable to make it to Boston were offered a deferral or refund.

"Whatever they want to do, they can do," Boston Athletic Association President Tom Grilk said. "Run this year, run next year. You want a puppy? Whatever. There is no group we want to be more helpful to."

Jepchirchir and Yeshaneh, who was third in New York last fall, spent most of the morning running shoulder to shoulder — or even closer: Just after the 25-kilometer marker, the Ethiopian's eyes wandered from the course and she drifted into Jepchirchir.

Yeshaneh reached out to apologize, and the two clasped each other's arms as they continued on.

"In running, we understand each other and we maybe somebody came and bumps, but it's OK," Jepchirchir said. "It was not rivalism; it was just an accident."

Beaten, Yeshaneh finished four seconds back. Kenya's Mary Ngugi finished third for the second time in six months, following her podium in October after the 125th race was delayed, canceled and delayed again.

About 20 men stayed together — with American CJ Albertson leading for much of the way — before Chebet and Geay broke from the pack coming out of Heartbreak Hill. Chebet pulled away a couple of miles later.

"We had communicated earlier, all of us. We wanted to keep running as a group," said Chebet, who finished fourth in London last fall. "I observed that my counterparts were nowhere near me and that gave me the motivation."

This race marked the 50th anniversary of Nina Kuscsik's victory in the first official women's race. (But not the first woman to finish: That honor belongs to Bobbi Gibb, who first ran in 1966 among the unofficial runners known as bandits.)

At Wellesley College, the women's school near the halfway point, the iconic "scream tunnel" was back after the pandemic-induced absence — and louder than ever. One spectator in Wellesley held a sign that read "50 Years Women Running Boston," along with names of the eight who broke the gender barrier in 1972.

Five of the original pioneers returned for this year's celebration, including Valerie Rogosheske, who finished sixth in '72; she served as the honorary starter for the women's elite field and ran the race with her daughters, who held up banners marking the anniversary as they crossed the finish.

Rogosheske, who wore Bib No. 1972, said at the starting line that she had been planning to hide in the bushes and run as a bandit 50 years ago until women got the go-ahead a few weeks before the race.

"It's a reminder that we've got it pretty easy," said 2018 winner Des Linden, who finished 13th on Monday. "Fifty years ago, they were breaking barriers and doing the hard part."

"It's really not lost on me that there's 126 years of race history here, and we're 'Rah! Rah!'-ing 50," she said. "But you can't look back, you look forward."

**California woman pleads guilty to 2016 kidnapping hoax**

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By DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A Northern California woman pleaded guilty Monday to faking her own kidnapping and lying to the FBI about it, leaving her motive unanswered in the carefully planned hoax that set off a massive three-week search before she resurfaced on Thanksgiving Day in 2016.

Sherri Papini, 39, of Redding, offered no explanation for her elaborate hoax during the half-hour court hearing.

"I feel very sad," she said tearfully when Senior U.S. District Judge William Shubb asked her how she was feeling.

"Were you kidnapped?" he asked her later in the hearing.

"No, Your Honor," she replied.

"Did you lie to government agents when you told them you were kidnapped?" Shubb continued.

"Yes, Your Honor," she responded.

Papini agreed to plead guilty in a deal with prosecutors reached last week and is scheduled to be sentenced July 11.

Prosecutors agreed to recommend a sentence on the low end of the sentencing range, estimated to be between eight and 14 months in custody, down from the maximum 25 years for the two charges.

She also agreed to pay restitution topping \$300,000. That includes the cost of the search for her that covered several Western states, and the subsequent investigation into the "two Hispanic women" she said had kidnapped her at gunpoint.

Papini was actually staying with a former boyfriend nearly 600 miles (966 kilometers) away in Southern California's Orange County. Three weeks later, he dropped her off along Interstate 5 nearly 150 miles (240 kilometers) from her home.

She had bindings on her body and self-inflicted injuries including a swollen nose and blurred "brand" on her right shoulder. She had other bruises and rashes on many parts of her body, ligature marks on her wrists and ankles, and burns on her left forearm.

The married mother of two kept lying about it as recently as August 2020 when in fact there was no kidnapping, she admitted in her guilty plea.

Papini has offered no rationale for why she did it.

Her attorney, William Portanova, said last week that he doubts even she knows.

He suggested "a very complicated mental health situation," and said her long-delayed acceptance of responsibility and punishment is part of the healing process.

Papini said Monday that she has been receiving psychiatric care for anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder ever since her return — more than \$30,000 worth of treatment for which she billed a state victim compensation fund and which is now part of her restitution.

Prosecutors say her faked kidnapping wasn't impulsive, and that she planned it for more than a year without her husband knowing. The former boyfriend told investigators they didn't have sex while she stayed with him.

Papini's organization and planning would seem to make conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression an unlikely explanation, two mental health experts said independently.

Both cautioned that they have not examined Papini and that many factors in the case remain unknown to the public.

She may have expected that the kidnapping hoax would bring her "fame and fortune," said Dr. Ian Lamoureux, a forensic psychiatrist and frequent expert witness who teaches at the University of Arizona College of Medicine and the Mayo Clinic.

And she did benefit financially: Aside from the victim compensation, she must repay nearly \$128,000 in disability payments. Separately, a GoFundMe campaign raised more than \$49,000 to help the family.

As a possibly related factor, Lamoureux has researched the false hero or "pathological hero" phenomenon that takes advantage of society's treatment of victims as heroes. Those who fake their own victimization may be seeking recognition or popularity, and if mental illness is involved it may suggest a narcissistic or histrionic personality disorder.

Another possible explanation is that she faked her kidnapping to avoid some other adverse consequence,

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he said, typically something like a divorce or being fired, though Papini was a stay-at-home mom.

Lamoureux, who specializes in complicated criminal and civil cases, said manufacturing a crisis may be a way for those with fragile egos and poor coping skills to seek to prevent the bad outcome from happening.

And there are such things as compulsive liars, as well as those who do "not have a great distinction between fantasy and reality," sometimes because of an earlier trauma, said Dr. Ziv Cohen, founder and medical director of Principium Psychiatry in New York City.

This case is unusual in that Papini had no clear motive and "this is consciously creating some kind of false traumatic situation," said Cohen, who teaches at Weill Cornell Medical College and Columbia University. "She harmed herself — she wasn't actually abused by anyone."

But for some pathological liars the motivation is simply in fooling others, he said, in this case perhaps her husband and investigators.

"These patients can sometimes remain quite mysterious and they often can deny their lies right until the end," Cohen said. "They will persist and say in the face of all evidence that their version is true."

## TV's 'black-ish' ends 8-season run with legacy, fans secure

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A surprise awaited "black-ish" creator Kenya Barris and his family on a 2016 visit to the newly opened National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington: An exhibit on the TV series was on display.

"I was very, very emotional" at seeing the honor, Barris said. He returned to the Smithsonian museum earlier this month for a splashy salute to "black-ish" as the end of its eight-season run approached.

"It was just surreal. The Smithsonian, as a brand, is tied to things that are lasting, that are part of what the core DNA of this world is. To put our show in that, it meant a lot to me," he said.

Sitcoms, especially family-centric ones, are more likely to be enshrined in viewers' memories than museums. Shows such as "The Brady Bunch," "Good Times" and "Full House" were part of their viewers' coming of age, with the shows and their characters beloved well beyond their original runs.

Talk to admirers of "black-ish" and the same seems probable for the series, which airs its half-hour finale at 9 p.m. EDT Tuesday (midnight EDT on Hulu), followed by ABC News' "black-ish: A Celebration" on ABC. The series was a network TV rarity: A depiction of a prosperous, tight-knit family of color, the Johnsons, with Black creators shaping their stories.

"I remember when it first came out, I was concerned that it was going to be either serious and off-putting, or really sad and comical," drawing on stereotypical characters that may or may not exist in life, said viewer Onaje Harper. The pandemic turned him into a binge-viewing convert, one who swats away online carping that the show isn't "real."

"It's not real to them, but this is my everyday," said Harper, an educator-turned-businessman in Dallas who is the grandson and son of Black professionals. He remembers feeling the same way about criticism of "The Cosby Show," a 20th-century TV depiction of a well-off African American family.

But "black-ish" has a distinctly more layered view of race, starting with the title that reflects dad Andre "Dre" Johnson's fear that affluence is separating his children from their ethnic identity. It also has a sharper take on race relations, Harper said.

He cited an episode in which Dr. Rainbow "Bow" Johnson, played by Tracee Ellis Ross, is being a supportive parent and volunteers for a private school fundraiser. One of the white parents offers her help, which the show reimagines as code for, "I think you're going to fail and you're over your head," as Harper recalled the scene.

"I died laughing, because the parents at my daughter's school are amazing, but we often leave that place thinking, 'Oh, my goodness, I hope our daughter's loving it, at least,'" Harper said.

Jerry McCormick grew up watching Bob Newhart's sitcoms and "Good Times" in the 1970s and '80s, among others. He compared "black-ish" to another comedy of the time.

"We never saw affluent Black people on TV, except for 'The Jeffersons,'" said McCormick of San Diego,

who works in communications and as a journalism instructor. "I grew up in South Carolina and it helped having it on because it was aspirational."

He sees "black-ish" as akin to "the grandchild of 'The Jeffersons' and the child of 'the Cosby Show.' You have Dre and Bow, a couple who truly care about each other. They parent their children. They run the house. The children are not overtaking them."

Ladinia Brown, a New York City fraud investigator, said she loves "the reality of it. The stuff is funny because a lot of it is just so true." She cited a favorite episode that tackled colorism — discrimination within an ethnic community against those with darker skin.

"That resonated with me because my kids are like different colors of the rainbow, all different complexions, and the same thing with my family," she said. "I really understood when they were addressing how people are treated differently within the African American race."

Her daughter, 19-year-old Emily Johnson, welcomed the show's handling of issues, major and mundane, that are part of Black life but largely ignored on screen. One example: a teen's quandary over whether to keep straightening her hair or go natural.

"When I was younger, I really didn't like my hair because I felt it was hard to manage and I didn't like the way it looked," Johnson said. "But over time, I appreciated my hair, and when I watched the episode I liked when (they) talked about all the things that Black people's hair can do."

"Black-ish" also became a vehicle for sobering, nuanced chapters about racism, police violence and, in a hard-edged 2018 episode, the impact of Donald Trump's presidency. (The episode, shelved by ABC, was released two years later on Hulu.)

The goal is "telling stories that are about something, telling stories that have a point, that are actually trying to say something. It was what television for a long time used to be about," Barris said — whether it was dad's moral sermons in "Leave It to Beaver" or the social satire of Norman Lear's "All in the Family" and "Maude."

While "black-ish" took on thorny issues, it never surrendered the laughs in its more than 170 episodes, said Courtney Lilly, a writer on the series since its first season who became an executive producer and its showrunner.

"Obviously, there were episodes where we made sure we approached issues. But even in doing those we were relevant and funny," Lilly said.

The series earned a prestigious Peabody Award and other awards — including multiple NAACP Image Awards for Anderson, Ross, Deon Cole and young actor Marsai Martin — but top Emmys have remained out of reach.

Asked about the show's legacy, Barris points to its focus on those who feel unseen in the world, whatever their ethnicity, and how "black-ish" sought to breach divisions.

"It's often considered rude to talk about certain subjects that make people feel uncomfortable. We did that and, in the comfort of their homes," he said. "I think it made people feel a little bit closer to people they may not have been close to before."

## Doctors suggest new names for low-grade prostate cancer

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

A cancer diagnosis is scary. Some doctors say it's time to rename low-grade prostate cancer to eliminate the alarming C-word.

Cancer cells develop in nearly all prostates as men age, and most prostate cancers are harmless. About 34,000 Americans die from prostate cancer annually, but treating the disease can lead to sexual dysfunction and incontinence.

Changing the name could lead more low-risk patients to skip unnecessary surgery and radiation.

"This is the least aggressive, wimpiest form of prostate cancer that is literally incapable of causing symptoms or spreading to other parts of the body," said University of Chicago Medicine's Dr. Scott Eggener, who is reviving a debate about how to explain the threat to worried patients.

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The words "You have cancer" have a profound effect on patients, Eggener wrote Monday in Journal of Clinical Oncology. He and his co-authors say fear of the disease can cause some patients to overreact and opt for unneeded surgery or radiation.

Others agree. "If you reduce anxiety, you'll reduce overtreatment," said Dr. David Penson of Vanderbilt University. "The word 'cancer,' it puts an idea in their head: 'I have to have this treated.'"

Diagnosis sometimes starts with a PSA blood test, which looks for high levels of a protein that may mean cancer but can also be caused by less serious prostate problems or even vigorous exercise.

When a patient has a suspicious test result, a doctor might recommend a biopsy, which involves taking samples of tissue from the prostate gland. Next, a pathologist looks under a microscope and scores the samples for how abnormal the cells look.

Often, doctors offer patients with the lowest score — Gleason 6 — a way to avoid surgery and radiation: active surveillance, which involves close monitoring but no immediate treatment.

In the U.S., about 60% of low-risk patients choose active surveillance. But they might still worry.

"I would be over the moon if people came up with a new name for Gleason 6 disease," Penson said. "It will allow a lot of men to sleep better at night."

But Dr. Joel Nelson of University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, said dropping the word "cancer" would "misinform patients by telling them there's nothing wrong. There's nothing wrong today, but that doesn't mean we don't have to keep track of what we've discovered."

Name changes have happened previously in low-risk cancers of the bladder, cervix and thyroid. In breast cancer, there's an ongoing debate about dropping "carcinoma" from DCIS, or ductal carcinoma in situ.

In prostate cancer, the 1960s-era Gleason ranking system has evolved, which is how 6 became the lowest score. Patients may assume it's a medium score on a scale of 1 to 10. In fact, it's the lowest on a scale of 6 to 10.

What to call it instead of cancer? Proposals include IDLE for indolent lesion of epithelial origin, or INERT for indolent neoplasm rarely requiring treatment.

"I don't really give a hoot what it's called as long as it's not called cancer," Eggener said.

Steve Rienks, a 72-year-old civil engineer in Naperville, Illinois, was diagnosed with Gleason 6 prostate cancer in 2014. He chose active surveillance, and follow-up biopsies in 2017 and 2021 found no evidence of cancer.

Calling it something else would help patients make informed choices, Rienks said, but that's not enough: Patients need to ask questions until they feel confident.

"It's about understanding risk," Rienks said. "I would encourage my fellow males to educate themselves and get additional medical opinions."

## Rain dampens 1st White House Easter Egg Roll since 2019

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Snoopy, Charlie Brown and "Tonight Show" host Jimmy Fallon roamed the soggy White House grounds on Monday for the first Easter egg roll since before the coronavirus pandemic.

Undaunted by rain, President Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, kicked off the equivalent of a daylong garden party for some 30,000 kids and adults, including celebrities and costumed characters.

A pair of Easter bunnies escorted the Bidens onto the Blue Room balcony to welcome the crowd to their backyard. The first lady chose "egg-ucation" as the theme.

The South Lawn was turned into a school community because "education never stops," said Jill Biden, a community college professor.

"The determined spirit of education is what we wanted to honor in this Easter Egg Roll," she said.

President Biden said it was "so special" to be able to gather this year after the pandemic forced the White House to cancel the 2020 and 2021 Easter egg rolls.

"It means so much to see and hear the children and all the families show up to be here today," he said, citing their joy, laughter and occasional outbursts of "there's the Easter bunny."

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Biden's infant grandson, Beau, was among several family members present, including the boy's parents, Hunter Biden and his wife, Melissa. Also on hand were the Bidens' daughter Ashley Biden, and Natalie Biden, one of their granddaughters.

After their remarks, the president and first lady went down to the lawn to watch as groups of children used wooden spoons to coax brightly dyed hard-boiled eggs across a patch of wet grass to the finish line.

"Ready, set," Biden said before blowing a whistle to start the competition. He later coached a young egg-roller, saying "Go, You got it!"

The couple then visited the reading nook, where Biden held up a copy of "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" as the first lady quickly read aloud "so you're all not soaking wet," she told those who had been waiting in the light rain. Fallon joined them afterward and read his own children's book, "Nana Loves You More." Jill Biden's grandchildren call her "Nana."

Hunter Biden introduced himself to people sitting in the reading area, and to others lined up on the other side of a fence, at times carrying his infant son Beau in his arms.

The Easter egg roll featured several other stations, including a talent show, a place to teach kids about farming, a photo-taking station, a physical "egg-ucation" zone with an obstacle course, and a "cafetorium" where children learned to make treats.

Actor-singer Kristin Chenoweth also appeared in the reading nook.

The White House gates opened at around 7 a.m., with the first of five waves of people streaming through. Many came prepared for the cold, damp weather with umbrellas, rain ponchos and plastic covers over baby strollers.

Maya Kennedy, 10, of Portland, Oregon, said she was having a good time at her first White House Easter egg roll despite the weather. She had seen some of the PBS KIDS characters and had heard the first lady speak. The fifth grader said she also wanted to meet Jill Biden.

"She's really cool," Maya said near the reading nook as she watched the first lady pose for photos with participants after her reading, including with White House press secretary Jen Psaki and her family.

The White House Easter Egg Roll dates to 1878.

## Mass shooting wave rattles communities large and small in US

By The Associated Press undefined

Three mass shootings in the U.S. over the Easter holiday weekend capped a monthlong spate of gun violence that has touched both big cities and small, rural communities across the nation.

The gunfire has rattled large population centers such as Dallas, Pittsburgh and Sacramento, California, as well as much smaller communities, including Hampton County, South Carolina, which has a population of 18,000, and Dumas, Arkansas, which is home to about 4,000 people.

A look at some of the major shootings:

DALLAS, March 19

Ten people were shot at a teen spring break party in Dallas and several others were injured as they tried to escape the chaos. One of the injured, an 18-year-old man, later died of his injuries. The gunfire happened at The Space Dallas event venue. Joe Morgan, who was working crowd control, told reporters that he heard gunshots being fired from outside the venue and later saw people with gunshot wounds to the chest, arms and legs.

DUMAS, Arkansas, March 19

More than two dozen people were hurt and one man was killed when two people got into a gunfight during a car show that's part of an annual community event. Innocent bystanders were sprayed by gunfire, among them several children, two of whom were under the age of 2, Arkansas State Police Col. Bill Bryant said.

DALLAS, April 3

One person was killed and 15 others were wounded by gunfire during a concert at an outdoor field. The victims ranged in age from 13 to 29, Dallas Police Chief Eddie Garcia said. One person fired a gun into the



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air, then an argument broke out and another person fired in the crowd's direction, Garcia said. The event didn't have a permit, he said.

SACRAMENTO, California, April 3

Six people were killed and 12 wounded outside bars located a few blocks from the state Capitol in a gunfight involving at least five shooters from rival gangs, Sacramento police said. More than 100 rapid-fire gunshots echoed through the streets as terrified patrons ran for their lives and others were hit by bullets. Police said they identified at least five gunmen, but there may have been more. Police said at least two gangs were involved.

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa, April 10

A shooting inside a crowded nightclub in Cedar Rapids left a man and a woman dead and 10 others wounded. More than 100 people were inside the Taboo Nightclub and Lounge at the time, police said. Officers helped treat the people who were wounded and used their squad cars to rush several of the victims to hospitals.

NEW YORK CITY, April 12

A gunman set off smoke bombs and opened fire in a crowded subway car in Brooklyn, wounding 10 commuters and leaving the train car and a subway platform splattered in blood. After a 30-hour manhunt, police arrested a suspect near a McDonald's on Manhattan's Lower East Side after a tip led them there. Part of the evidence in the case includes YouTube videos in which the suspect rants about race, violence and his struggles with mental illness.

COLUMBIA, South Carolina, April 16

A gunman opened fire at a busy shopping mall in South Carolina's capital city, wounding nine people, police said. Five other people were injured while trying to flee the Columbiana Centre. The victims ranged in age from 15 to 73, but none of their injuries was considered life-threatening, Columbia Police Chief W.H. "Skip" Holbrook said Saturday. Investigators believe those responsible knew each other, and that others were hurt when they began shooting at each other.

HAMPTON COUNTY, South Carolina, April 16

A shooting at a nightclub wounded at least nine people. The attack happened at Cara's Lounge in Hampton County, according to South Carolina's State Law Enforcement Division. Hampton County is located about 80 miles (130 kilometers) west of Charleston.

PITTSBURGH, April 17

Two teenage boys were killed and at least eight people were wounded when a shooting broke out during a party at a short-term rental property. Pittsburgh Police Chief Scott Schubert said there was gunfire both inside and outside the rental home, "potentially back and forth." Bullet casings found at the scene indicated handguns and one rifle were used, he said. Police believe there were multiple shooters.

## Gulf Coast, Mississippi River cities eager for flood funding

By MICHAEL PHILLIS Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — When Hurricane Ida hit last summer, a storm surge overwhelmed a levee and gushed into Ted Falgout's coastal Louisiana home, destroying his furniture and the beloved framed photos of his twin sons kissing him on their first day of school, then again when they graduated high school.

"That water was probably 60% mud," said Falgout, who's hoping relief is on the way for his community in Larose, about 30 miles southwest of New Orleans.

As climate change makes hurricanes stronger and wetter and increases storm surges, cities on the Louisiana coast and Mississippi River are hoping President Biden's \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package will provide badly needed funding to fortify locks, levees and other flood protections. But community groups and advocates fear smaller cities will struggle to navigate the maze of government programs and miss out on the rare chance to protect against rising waters and heavy rains.

"I think the agencies are still figuring a lot of this out," said Colin Wellenkamp, executive director of the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative, which advocates for communities along the river.

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While many swaths of the country are at risk for flooding, the Louisiana coast has long been especially vulnerable and the Upper Mississippi is part of a region where flood severity is increasing faster than in any other area of the country.

La Crosse, Wisconsin is among the cities trying to figure out how to benefit as infrastructure funds start rolling out.

The city's levees were built after devastating flooding in 1965 and don't meet federal standards that would help lower insurance rates and make it easier for residents to fix up their homes without having to spend more to protect against floods, said Brad Woznak of SEH, a flood planning consultant for the city.

Upgrading the levees would be so expensive it's hard for the city to know how to get started, he said.

"But with this potential infrastructure bill funding, that's what I keep telling them — don't rule anything out yet," Woznak said, noting that it could be a chance to pay for an initial evaluation for the project.

Some advocates want agencies to make it easier for communities to learn about funding opportunities and ensure that simple applications from small towns will be able to compete against more sophisticated proposals from richer cities. They also want more clarity into how the Biden administration considers factors like economic and environmental inequality in its funding decisions.

The Biden administration is asking states to make climate resilience a part of their long-term planning and encouraging projects that factor in flood risk. It tapped Mitch Landrieu, the former mayor of New Orleans, to help coordinate the law's implementation and outreach to communities.

"There needs to be a concerted effort by the administration and federal government to engage states and localities now," said Forbes Tompkins, a flood policy expert at Pew Charitable Trusts.

The Environmental Protection Agency also said it will offer assistance to disadvantaged areas and states have money to help small communities access funding for drinking and wastewater projects. Rural communities are also getting special guidance on tapping into the money.

But further complicating the scramble for funding is debate about the best approaches for protecting against floods. In addition to protections like levees and floodgates, Congress directed the Army Corps to more seriously consider natural solutions like the restoration of wetlands.

Wetlands help absorb water before it can reach communities while restoring wildlife habitat, recharging groundwater and providing more green space, noted Olivia Dorothy of the conservation group American Rivers.

After flooding in 2019 breached a levee in northwest Missouri on the Missouri River, for example, the levee was moved back to create more than 1,000 acres of floodplain and added wetlands.

Dorothy said more natural protections are especially needed along the Mississippi.

In Louisiana, Larose is among the small communities that were lucky enough to benefit from early funding from the infrastructure law because of a long-running project in the broader area.

In January, the Army Corps allocated \$379 million to continue work on a series of locks, levees and other structures that will help protect 150,000 residents in coastal Louisiana. Once completed, local officials said the Morganza-to-the-Gulf project will likely shield Falgout's home from another storm like Ida.

For now, Falgout and his wife are living in their boathouse while their home is repaired. The property had escaped flooding in the past but Falgout said the shrinking Louisiana coast is making it more vulnerable.

"It would be a shame to walk away," he said.

## Abortion training under threat for med students, residents

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

Browse any medical dictionary, and before hitting appendectomy and anesthesia, you'll find abortion.

The first two procedures are part of standard physician education. But for many U.S. medical school students and residents who want to learn about abortions, options are scarce.

And new restrictions are piling up: Within the past year, bills or laws seeking to limit abortion education have been proposed or enacted in at least eight states. The changes are coming from abortion opponents emboldened by new limits on the procedure itself, as well as a pending Supreme Court decision that could

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upend the landmark Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion.

"It's quite terrifying what's going on," said Ian Peake, a third-year medical student in Oklahoma, where the governor on April 12 signed a measure outlawing most abortions.

Abortion training is not offered at Oklahoma's two medical schools and education on the topic is limited. Aspiring doctors who want to learn about it typically seek out doctors providing abortions outside the traditional medical education system.

Peake, 32, said if he wanted to learn to do colonoscopies, for example, he could work with school staff to shadow a doctor doing research or working in a clinic.

"That would be easy," he said. "To do the same for abortion, that's almost impossible." He said it took him six months to find a provider willing to teach him.

Nevada medical student Natasha McGlaun got outside training and created a workshop on how to perform a standard medical procedure used in abortions. She offers it at night, in her own free time.

The 27-year-old is the daughter of "pro-feminist" parents and the mother of two young girls whose right to reproductive choice she wants to protect.

"It was kind of a joke in my family: If people tell me I can't do something, I'm going to do it twice as hard," she said. "I kind of feel this moral, righteous drive to go for it."

## 'GLARINGLY ABSENT' LESSONS

U.S. physician education typically includes four years of medical school, where students learn the basics of general medicine and hands-on patient care. They graduate with a medical degree that officially makes them doctors. Most then spend at least three years in residency programs where they receive intense on-the-job training and specialty skills.

U.S. medical schools require students to complete a clerkship in obstetrics and gynecology, but there is no mandate that it include abortion education. At the post-graduate level, OB-GYN residency programs are required by an accrediting group to provide access to abortion training, though residents who object can opt out of performing abortions.

OB-GYNs perform most U.S. abortions, followed by family medicine specialists. But these aren't always the first doctors that women encounter when they learn of an unintended pregnancy. Abortion rights supporters argue all physicians should know enough about the procedure to inform and counsel patients, and that such education should start in medical school.

In 2020, Stanford University researchers said they found that half of medical schools included no formal abortion training or only a single lecture.

"Abortion is one of the most common medical procedures," they wrote. "Yet abortion-related topics are glaringly absent from medical school curricula."

McGlaun helped sponsor a measure last year that asked the American Medical Association to support mandated abortion education in medical schools, with an opt-out provision. The influential group has long opposed curriculum mandates and turned down the proposal, but it said it supports giving medical students and residents the chance to learn about abortion and opposes efforts to interfere with such training.

## FURTHER RESTRICTIONS

Legislative efforts to curb abortion target all levels of medical education.

An Idaho law enacted last year exemplifies the trend. It bars using tuition and fees for abortion and related activities in school-based clinics at institutions that receive state funds.

Other efforts include a Wisconsin bill that would bar employees of the University of Wisconsin and its hospitals from participating in abortions, including training. It failed to advance in March but its sponsor plans to reintroduce the measure. Similar proposals target public universities in Missouri and Ohio.

Divya Jain's introduction to abortion came not at her Missouri medical school — where she said the procedure is rarely discussed — but at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Kansas. She was a clinic volunteer and saw the hurdles out-of-state women faced in obtaining the procedure. Some mistakenly ended up at a crisis pregnancy center across the street that tried to change their minds, Jain said.

Jain, 23, said her first experience observing an abortion was "anti-climactic," far from the scary image she'd heard opponents describe.

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"It's just a normal in-house procedure," she said. "It's just patients seeking medical treatment."

At that moment, she knew she wanted to provide abortions. "It was like a snap of finger. That kind of changed it for me," said Jain, who is studying public policy at Harvard while on leave from medical school at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

The daughter of open-minded but traditional parents who immigrated to Kansas from India, Jain recalls growing up feeling trapped by her family's traditional culture and a conservative white community where abortion was never discussed.

"I liked to stir the pot" and push boundaries, she said.

Jain knows the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on whether to uphold Mississippi's ban on abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy could drastically change the U.S. abortion landscape. Regardless of the decision — expected by summer — Jain said her goal is set: to perform abortions in "hostile" states where providers are scarce.

"It's really hard for patients to get the care that patients deserve and need, and I just think it's wrong," Jain said.

## EXPANDING TRAINING

Dr. Keith Reisinger-Kindle, 33, associate director of the OB-GYN residency program at Wright State University's medical school in Dayton, Ohio, said his aim to boost abortion training "has been an uphill battle" because of legislative obstacles.

When he arrived at the school almost two years ago, he said, "there was zero formal abortion education available." He created and implemented abortion coursework for medical students and residents, with support from his university, and offers training at a nearby clinic where he also performs abortions.

The physician said a state legislator has lobbied university administrators to fire him. And in December, Ohio's governor signed into law a measure that limits doctors who work at state institutions from working as backup doctors at abortion clinics when rare complications occur. The clinic where Reisinger-Kindle works is suing to block the law.

"There are days that are certainly challenging," Reisinger-Kindle said. Young doctors eager to learn help keep him going. The program currently has 24 residents. They can opt out of abortion training, but he said nearly all have chosen to participate "in at least some capacity."

He fears more abortion restrictions are coming, but adds: "In the long-term, I believe we will get this right. I just hope that my students don't have to suffer."

## Today in History: April 19, Revolutionary War begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, April 19, the 109th day of 2022. There are 256 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 19, 1775, the American Revolutionary War began with the battles of Lexington and Concord.

On this date:

In 1865, a funeral was held at the White House for President Abraham Lincoln, assassinated five days earlier; his coffin was then taken to the U.S. Capitol for a private memorial service in the Rotunda.

In 1897, the first Boston Marathon was held; winner John J. McDermott ran the course in two hours, 55 minutes and 10 seconds.

In 1912, a special subcommittee of the Senate Commerce Committee opened hearings in New York into the Titanic disaster.

In 1943, during World War II, tens of thousands of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto began a valiant but ultimately futile battle against Nazi forces.

In 1977, the Supreme Court, in *Ingraham v. Wright*, ruled 5-4 that even severe spanking of schoolchildren by faculty members did not violate the Eighth Amendment ban against cruel and unusual punishment.

In 1989, 47 sailors were killed when a gun turret exploded aboard the USS Iowa in the Caribbean. (The Navy initially suspected that a dead crew member had deliberately sparked the blast, but later said there

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was no proof of that.)

In 1993, the 51-day siege at the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas, ended as fire destroyed the structure after federal agents began smashing their way in; about 80 people, including two dozen children and sect leader David Koresh, were killed.

In 1995, a truck bomb destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people. (Bomber Timothy McVeigh, who prosecutors said had planned the attack as revenge for the Waco siege of two years earlier, was convicted of federal murder charges and executed in 2001.)

In 2005, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger of Germany was elected pope in the first conclave of the new millennium; he took the name Benedict XVI.

In 2013, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (joh-HAHR' tsahr-NEYE'-ehv), a 19-year-old college student wanted in the Boston Marathon bombings, was taken into custody after a manhunt that had left the city virtually paralyzed; his older brother and alleged accomplice, 26-year-old Tamerlan (TAM'-ehr-luhn), was killed earlier in a furious attempt to escape police.

In 2015, Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old Black man, died a week after suffering a spinal cord injury in the back of a Baltimore police van while he was handcuffed and shackled. (Six police officers were charged; three were acquitted and the city's top prosecutor eventually dropped the three remaining cases.)

In 2018, Raul Castro turned over Cuba's presidency to Miguel Mario Diaz-Canel Bermudez, the first non-Castro to hold Cuba's top government office since the 1959 revolution led by Fidel Castro and his younger brother Raul.

Ten years ago: Republicans rammed an election-year, \$46 billion tax cut for most of America's employers through the House, ignoring a veto threat from President Barack Obama. (The measure went down to defeat in the Senate.) India announced the successful test launch of a new nuclear-capable missile. Levon Helm, drummer and singer for The Band, died in New York City at age 71.

Five years ago: Fox News Channel's parent company fired Bill O'Reilly following an investigation into harassment allegations, bringing a stunning end to cable news' most popular program. Former New England Patriots tight end Aaron Hernandez, 27, who was serving a life sentence for a 2013 murder, hanged himself in his cell in a maximum-security prison in Massachusetts five days after being acquitted of murder charges in the shooting deaths of two men in Boston in 2012.

One year ago: Former Vice President Walter Mondale, a liberal icon who served as a Democratic senator from Minnesota and as Jimmy Carter's vice president before losing one of the most lopsided presidential elections in the nation's history to Republican Ronald Reagan in 1984, died at the age of 93. The D.C. medical examiner's office ruled that Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, who was injured during the Jan. 6 insurrection, suffered a stroke and died from natural causes. NASA's experimental Mars helicopter named Ingenuity took flight on Mars, rising 10 feet into the thin air above the dusty red surface to achieve the first powered flight by an aircraft on another planet.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Elinor Donahue is 85. Rock musician Alan Price (The Animals) is 80. Actor Tim Curry is 76. Pop singer Mark "Flo" Volman (The Turtles; Flo and Eddie) is 75. Actor Tony Plana is 70. Former tennis player Sue Barker is 66. Motorsports Hall of Famer Al Unser Jr. is 60. Actor Tom Wood is 59. Former recording executive Suge Knight is 57. Singer-songwriter Dar Williams is 55. Actor Kim Hawthorne (TV: "Greenleaf") is 54. Actor Ashley Judd is 54. Singer Bekka Bramlett is 54. Latin pop singer Luis Miguel is 52. Actor Jennifer Esposito is 50. Actor Jennifer Taylor is 50. Jazz singer Madeleine Peyroux (PAY'-roo) is 48. Actor James Franco is 44. Actor Kate Hudson is 43. Actor Hayden Christensen is 41. Actor Catalina Sandino Moreno is 41. Actor-comedian Ali Wong is 40. Actor Victoria Yeates is 39. Actor Kelen Coleman is 38. Actor Zack Conroy is 37. Roots rock musician Steve Johnson (Alabama Shakes) is 37. Actor Courtland Mead is 35. Retired tennis player Maria Sharapova is 35. NHL forward Patrik Laine is 34.