

Groton Daily Independent

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"The words of kindness are more healing to a drooping heart than balm or honey."

SARAH FIELDING

Tuesday, April 26

State FFA Convention at SDSU

11:30 a.m.: Track Meet in Groton (Aberdeen Central, Aberdeen Christian, Aberdeen Roncalli, Britton-Hecla, Frederick, Griggs-Midkota, Ipswich, James Valley Christian, Langford, Milbank, Miller, Sisseton, Tiospa Zina, Tri-State, Wagner Community, Warner @ Groton Area High School)

School Breakfast: Doughnuts.

School Lunch: Popcorn chicken, tater tots.

Senior Menu: Lemon chicken breast, creamy noodles, spinach salad, baked apple slices, whole wheat bread.

Wednesday, April 27

Emmanuel: 6 p.m. Confirmation, 6:30 p.m. League.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Sub sandwiches, chips.

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, green beans, grape juice, sour cream apple pie square, whole wheat bread.

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

Truss Pros Help Wanted

Truss Pros in Britton is looking to hire a CDL driver to deliver trusses in the tri-state area. Home every night. Competitive wage! Full benefit package!

To apply call 605-277-4937 or go to www.uslbn.com/careers and search for jobs in Britton, SD.

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

SDDP Elects Jennifer Slight-Hansen as Vice Chair



SIOUX FALLS - On Saturday, the South Dakota Democratic Party (SDDP) State Central Committee voted to elect Jennifer Slight-Hansen as SDDP Vice Chair.

Vice Chair Jennifer Slight-Hansen released the following statement:

"I am honored to be elected Vice Chair of the South Dakota Democratic Party. Thank you to the State Central Committee for this opportunity to serve South Dakota. I am excited to work alongside the SDDP staff and membership to elect Democrats up and down the ballot in 2022. This year we need to be laser-focused on engaging our youth and building a South Dakota that works for everyone."

Jennifer Slight-Hansen has served on the Executive Board of the South Dakota Democratic Party and as Chair of the Brown County Democrats for over a decade. Slight-Hansen was elected to the Aberdeen City Council in 2008 and served the city in that role for 10 years. Outside of politics, she helped found the Aberdeen Downtown Association, served for nearly 20 years on the Board of Directors of Homes Are Possible, Inc., and volunteered for Junior Achievement for

18 years. Jennifer Slight-Hansen lives in Aberdeen with her two children and husband.

The State Central Committee held a special election to fill the Party's vice chair role vacated by Nikki Gronli. Gronli resigned last month to accept a Biden Administration appointment as State Director of the South Dakota Rural Development Agency.

The Life of Wanda Stange



Services for Wanda Stange, 84, of Stratford will be 10:30 a.m., Thursday, April 28th at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Ferney. Rev. Lloyd Redhage will officiate. Burial will follow in Sunset Memorial Gardens under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the chapel from 6-7 p.m. on Wednesday with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m.

Wanda passed away April 23, 2022 at Bethesda Home of Aberdeen.

Wanda (Vitense) Stange was born to Rudy and Lois Vitense on March 1, 1938 and grew up with 10 siblings. She graduated salutatorian from Columbia High School and gave up a scholarship to Jamestown College to marry Leon Stange May 25th 1956. They farmed with Leon's parents, Hubert and Viola Stange for many years. As part of the farming operation, Leon regularly took livestock to Sioux Falls in a semi, and one became two and so on. Behold Stange Trucking began and needed a bookkeeper. So along with Wanda's mom duties, cooking, 4-H leadership, gardening, sewing, helping at church, cleaning, and keeping kids in line, she added bookkeeping and bossing truck drivers around, who lovingly called her "the old Lion".

Stange Trucking Inc. grew and moved to Redfield where Leon, Wanda (and Channon) went daily, while at the same time also managing the family farm. A 10 to 12-hour workday wasn't abnormal for them. Stange Trucking Inc. operated from 1968 until 1975. Leon and Wanda

returned to the family farm and Wanda went to work for Braun Trucking in Warner. She got so skilled at doing truck drivers' paperwork that she created her own service bureau in 1976. Wanda ran Wanda Stange Prorate Services from her home, becoming the second largest service bureau in SD, and doing drug and alcohol testing for over 500 companies. She also kept books for the farm and Truck World, a company that was created by Leon, Wanda, and Loy in 1979. She rarely sat down.

In her 'spare' time she was an officer for LWML, embroidered baptism napkins, made baby blankets & other crafts and printed Playlists for Stratford Community Theatre. She was secretary for the Northland Independent Automobile Dealers Assn for many years which Leon and Wanda attended annually. She was also secretary of North American Transportation Services Assn and enjoyed attending national events with her sister-in-law, Darlene Wahl in tow. Leon and Wanda spent many February's in Yuma, Arizona with friends and Wanda's extended family.

Wanda sold the company in 2015 and it is still growing strong in Stratford today. Wanda retired to the family farm until 2018, when Leon passed away on their 62nd wedding anniversary. Later that year, Wanda moved to a memory care unit in Sioux Falls to be closer to children and grandchildren. After a repaired broken hip she moved to Bethesda Home in January of this year.

Wanda was one smart lady, an incredible cook, and her potato salad is legend around these parts. She loved her 14 grandchildren so very much and always had a large pan of rice crispy bars waiting. Holidays with the extended family was one of the joys of her life. She loved every minute of watching her family engage without her being the center of it.

She leaves behind children Cal Stange of Sioux Falls, Pam (Tim) O'Neil of Overland Park KS, Loy Stange of Stratford, Von (Cathy) Stange of Coralville IA, and Channon (Julie) Stange of Sioux Falls; 14 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren; sisters Ione Schelbitzki, Shirley Dayton, Mavis Leif, Murriel Oles, brothers Forrest Vitense and Neil (Nan) Vitense, and sisters-in-laws Kathy Vitense and Darlene Wahl.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to LWML St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Ferney, the Stratford Community Theater, or the Alzheimer's Association SD Chapter.

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Local Tae Kwon Do compete well at Martial Arts Tourney

The Strongheart Martial Arts Academy, Groton family Tae Kwon Do competed last Saturday in the Greenquest Academy Invitational Martial Arts Tournament held in Breckenridge MN. L-R Jagger and Jameson Penning of Pierpont, Instructor Master Paul Moulsoff of Aberdeen, Trace Peterson and Kason Oswald of Groton. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

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Kason Oswald, right, competing in 12 year old group sparring championship round. Kason won the final round for first place. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Group photo with contestants from MN, ND, SD, MT, and WI. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

Groton Area looking at lack of numbers to field a boys varsity soccer team

It is highly unlikely that there will be a boys varsity soccer team this fall. A decision will need to be done in May. "We don't have enough to field a team and it's unfortunate," said Superintendent Joe Schwan. He would at least like to see a JV team fielded, if they can find a coach.

A program presentation for the second grade was given. It was stated that a big blessing for the second graders is the iPads for all students. They no longer have to rely on the computer cart. The students are learning how to use them more.

Becky Hubsch was one of 30 applicants to attend an Aspiring School Leaders Retreat April 25-26 in the Black Hills. The event is sponsored by School Administrators of South Dakota, TIE and the Department of Education.

There were several constitutional amendments to the SDHSAA portfolio. All but one were approved by the Groton board. The final one has to do with using free and reduced meals to factor into the average daily membership in determining classifications. It was stated that students with free and reduced meals have fewer access to activities. Board President Deb Gengerke questioned that statement. She pointed out that one school on the borderline of AA and A would stay A because of the criteria. She said she would like to see data that actually proves that those students have less access to more activities. She said she finds it hard that there is a limitation to any schools surrounding a large city like Sioux Falls or Rapid City. The board tabled making a decision pending more answers to questions.

The board approved for the Groton Youth Football program to use a bus to transport students to the NSU Football Camp May 22-23.

Jennifer Furman has resigned as the MS/HS Special Education Professional effective at the end of the school year.

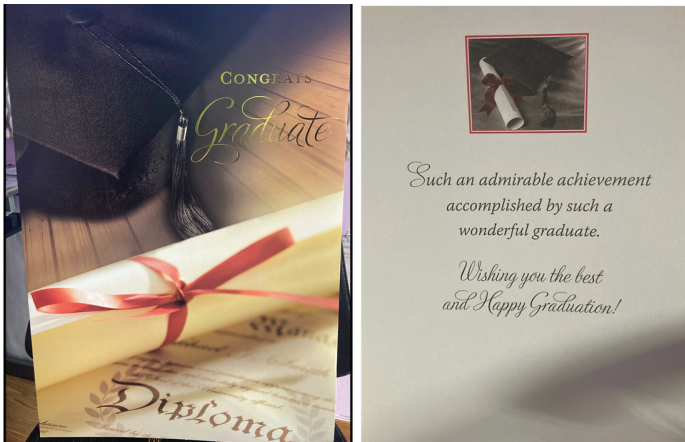
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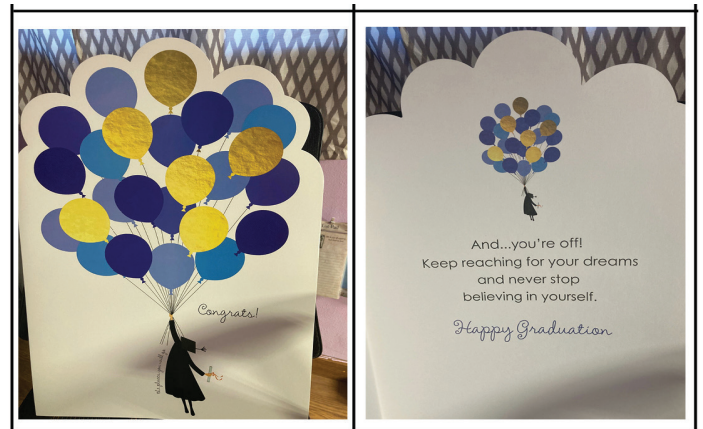
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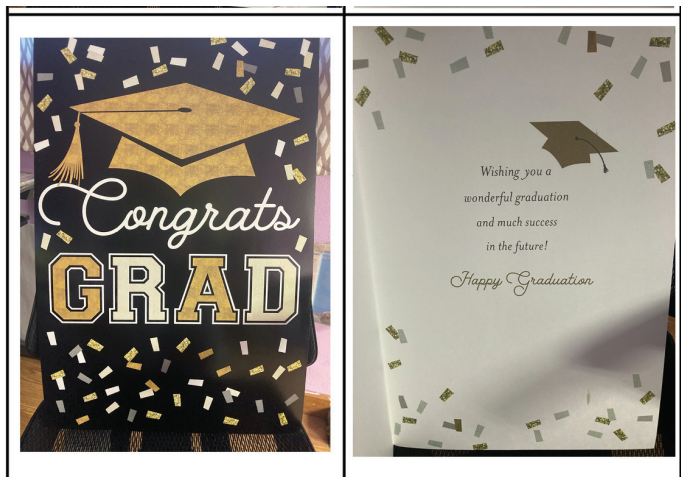
Can now be ordered on-line at 397news.com - Link on Black Bar
Or Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460 or Tina at 605-397-7285
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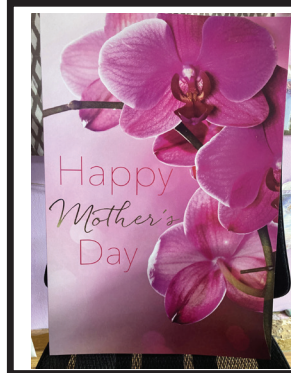
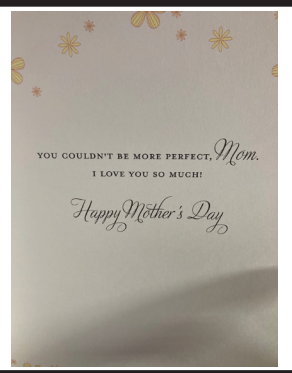
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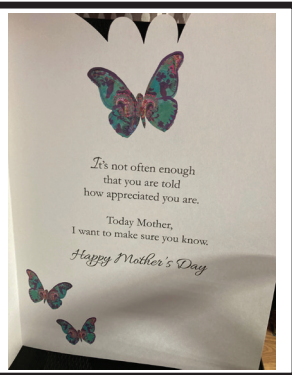
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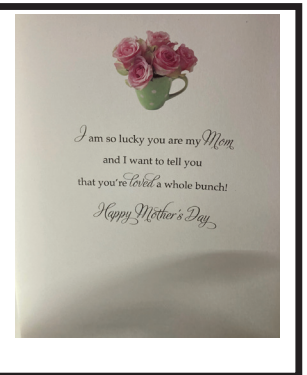
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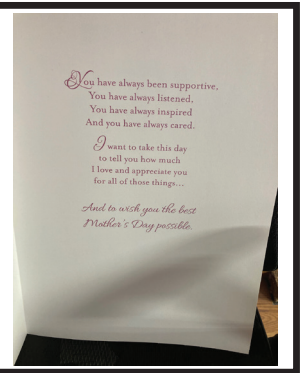
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#5 - \$5



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\$3.50 - 9" on a stick



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#9 - \$5



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#11 - \$5



#12 - \$5



#13 - \$8 35"



#14 - \$5



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#18 - \$5



#19 - \$5



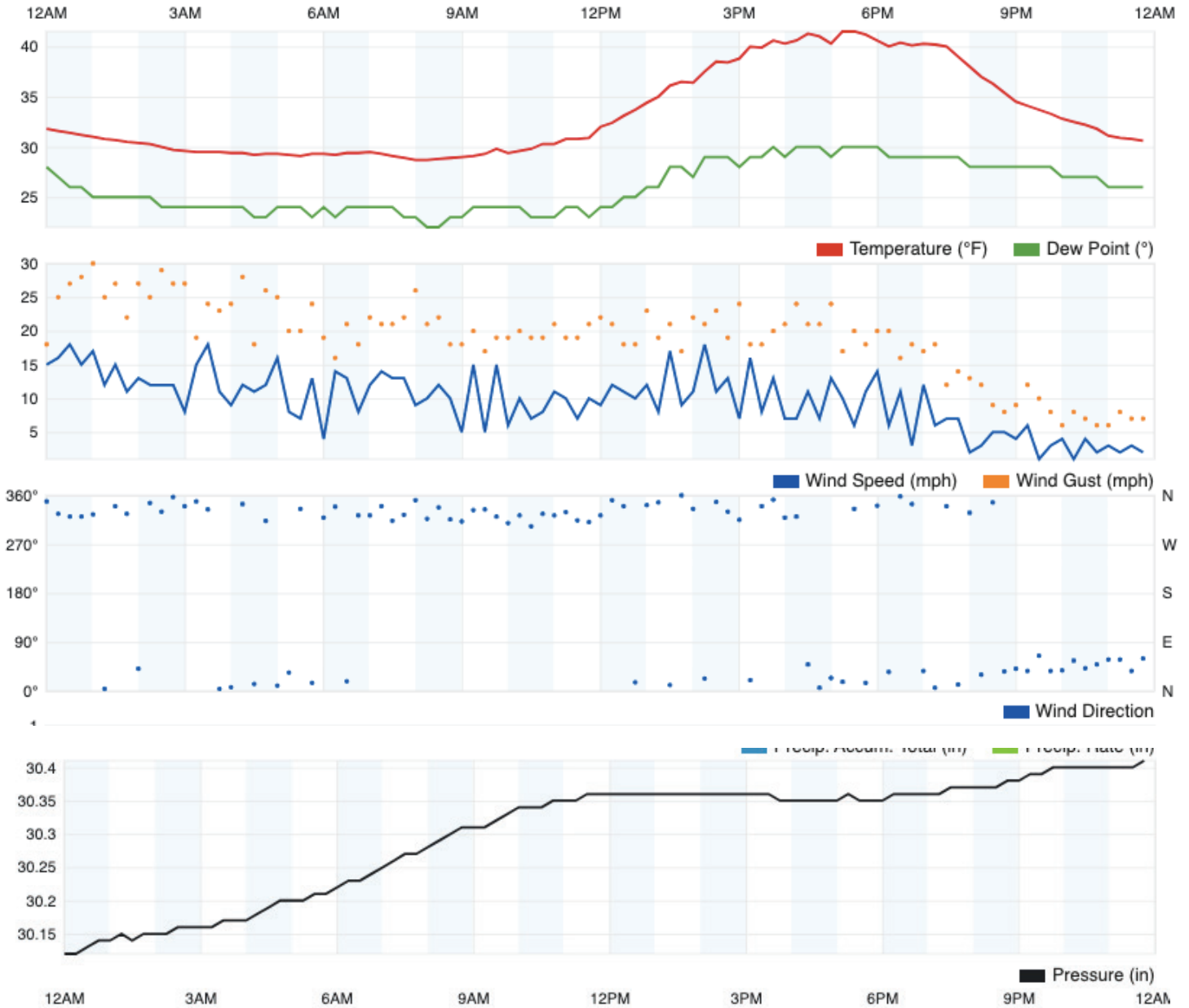
#20 - \$5

We have many other balloons available as well. We now offer locker pickup in the laundromat so you can pick up your order ANY TIME once the order is completed!

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Becoming
Sunny

High: 50 °F

Tonight



Increasing
Clouds

Low: 32 °F

Wednesday



Mostly Sunny
and Breezy

High: 54 °F

Wednesday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 36 °F

Thursday



Slight Chance
Rain

High: 57 °F

Warmer but Breezy Today and Wednesday

Partly Cloudy
Highs

Today: 43 to 70°

Wednesday: 50 to 70°



East to southeast winds will be breezy over the next couple of days. Warmer and dry conditions are expected through Thursday.

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Today in Weather History

April 26, 1986: Intense thunderstorms swept across southeast South Dakota, southwest Minnesota, and northwest Iowa. Baseball size hail fell in a 15-mile wide swath from near Pickstown to Scotland, South Dakota. The large hail caused extensive damage to windows, roofs, siding, and vehicles in the path of the storm. Wind gusts of 70 to 80 mph and rain amounts of 2 or more inches in a short period (including 5 inches at Centerville) were reported in southeast South Dakota. Several tornadoes moved across northwest Iowa including one that ran across part of Lyon County destroying several farmsteads. Another tornado moved through Lyon County, Iowa into Nobles County, Minnesota damaging, at least, 16 separate farms. Another tornado touched down briefly on the south side of Okebena in Jackson County destroying or damaging several houses.

April 26, 1991: During a severe thunderstorm event, large hail fell over parts of Brown, Spink, Hand, and Buffalo Counties. Both Brown and Hand Counties received hail up to 1.75 inches in diameter.

April 26, 2008: An area of low-pressure brought widespread heavy snow of 6 to 20 inches to most of northeast South Dakota for much of the 25th and into the early morning hours of the 26th. The precipitation began as light freezing rain in the early morning across parts of the area before changing to all snow by mid-morning. As the low-pressure area intensified, snowfall rates and the north winds also increased. The heavy snow combined with the high winds created widespread visibility problems along with large snowdrifts. Snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Andover, Britton, Gann Valley, and 15 miles south of Miller, 8 inches at Roy Lake, 9 inches at Clark, Big Stone City, Hillside Colony, and Sisseton, 10 inches 7 miles south of Bristol, and 11 inches at Hayti. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included 12 inches at Wilmot, Webster, and Waubay, 13 inches at Milbank, 15 inches at Castlewood, 16 inches near Victor, and near Summit, 17 inches at Clear Lake, 19 inches at Watertown, and 20 inches at Bryant.

Some automobiles went into the ditch along with many other vehicles damaged in accidents. Many stranded motorists had to abandon their cars in the hardest hit areas. Travel was not advised across the entire region. A school bus slid into a ditch east of Castlewood with no injuries occurring. Interstate-29 was closed from 3 pm the 25th until 3 pm on the 26th from Brookings north to the North Dakota border. Also, South Dakota State Highway 12 was closed from Webster to the Minnesota line from the afternoon of the 25th until the late morning of the 26th. Most counties affected by the storm opened emergency shelters when Interstate 29 was closed to house stranded motorists. Also, many schools were closed across the area.

The very heavy snow set several records across the area. The 19 inches at Watertown broke its all-time 24-hour snowfall record of 16 inches. Both Victor and Clear Lake had their second-highest snowfall ever recorded in a 24 hour period. Watertown, along with several other locations in northeast South Dakota, received near-record or record snowfall for April. In fact, Watertown's 29.5 inches of snow for April was almost their average seasonal snowfall.

1834 - Killer frosts were reported in the Deep South. The frost was quite severe around Huntsville AL, and highlighted a backward spring in the South that year. (David Ludlum)

1884: Tornadoes were hard to capture on old cameras with their hard to use glass plate negatives. The first recorded photograph of a tornado was taken on this date by A.A. Adams near Garnett, Kansas.

1978: An unusually strong occluded front swept out of the Gulf of Alaska and produced the first April thunderstorm of record at Fairbanks. Pea-size hail fell northeast of Fairbanks from thunderstorms whose tops were less than 8000 feet.

1986: The Chernobyl nuclear power station in Kiev Ukraine suffered a massive explosion. The radioactive cloud of particles and gas carried westward and northwestward, contaminating large areas of Europe in the following week.

2003 - Twenty inches of snow falls in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains. Alpine Meadows ski resort just north of Lake Tahoe reports more than 100 inches and Kirkwood south of Tahoe reports 112 inches.

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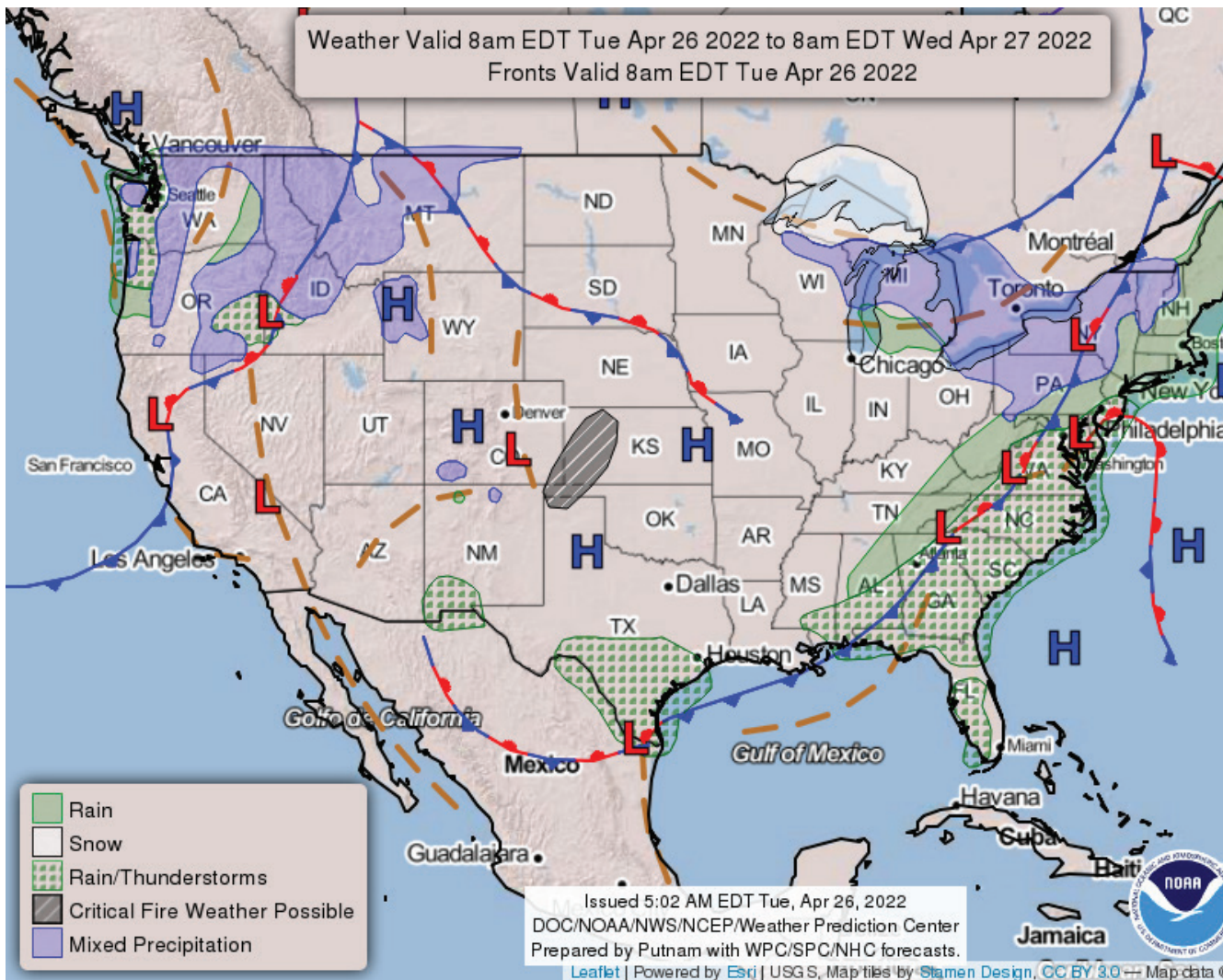
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 42 °F at 5:35 PM
Low Temp: 29 °F at 7:56 AM
Wind: 30 mph at 12:50 AM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 07 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 86 in 1952
Record Low: 20 in 1931
Average High: 63°F
Average Low: 35°F
Average Precip in April.: 1.54
Precip to date in April.: 3.15
Average Precip to date: 3.60
Precip Year to Date: 4.95
Sunset Tonight: 8:34:07 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:24:35 AM



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ARE WE THERE YET?

One of the most frustrating questions I ever tried to answer was the one my children would ask whenever we started on a journey: "Are we there yet?" And, the longer the journey, the more frequently the question was asked.

The Christian life is a journey. As soon as we surrender our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the journey begins. The goal of our journey is to become Christ-like in all that we think or do or say. So, it begins in a moment in history and continues until we are with Him in glory. Often, when we are born again, we expect our life to be filled with sunshine and roses, skies with no clouds and waters with no waves. But that never happens.

Our days continue to be filled with difficulties and our nights are no easier: the unending and unanswered questions remain. What is going on? What's happening? Why me?

The Psalmist gives us insight into those questions: "The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me; Your love, O Lord, endures forever - do not abandon the works of Your hands!"

The journey is the plan, and the plan that He designed for each of us includes His purpose for our lives. The Psalmist reminds us that, "He will fulfill His purpose." There can be no doubt that God has a unique purpose for each of us. That's why we are all different: our tastes are different, our interests are different, our talents are different, and our gifts are different. God created each of us to be different because the plan He has for each of us is different.

When the Psalmist spoke of God's enduring love or the fear of being abandoned, he must have been going through a difficult time. So, he reminded himself that he is a "work of God's hand" as is each of us. This thought reminds us, too, that "we not there, yet."

Prayer: Give us patience and perseverance, Lord, to trust You always, knowing that You are fulfilling the plan You have for us. Thank You! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me; Your love, O Lord, endures forever - do not abandon the works of Your hands. Psalm 138:8

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2022 Community Events

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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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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: \$31 million

Powerball

12-18-20-39-61, Powerball: 10, Power Play: 2

(twelve, eighteen, twenty, thirty-nine, sixty-one; Powerball: ten; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$421 million

Wildfires tear across several states, driven by high winds

By MARGERY A. BECK and SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Firefighters across the country are battling multiple wildfires as tinder-dry conditions and high winds whip up flames from Arizona to Florida — including a prairie fire in rural southwestern Nebraska that has killed one person, injured at least 15 firefighters and destroyed at least six homes.

A break in the weather in parts of the Midwest and West allowed crews to make progress Monday on some of the nearly dozen new large fires that were reported in recent days across the nation — four in New Mexico, three in Colorado and one each in Florida, Nebraska, South Dakota and Texas.

With more than 1,350 square miles (3,496 square kilometers) burned so far this year, officials at the National Interagency Fire Center said the amount of land singed to date is outpacing the 10-year average by about 30%.

Hotter, drier weather has combined with a persistent drought to worsen fire danger across many parts of the West, where decades of fire suppression have resulted in overgrown and unhealthy forests and increasing development have put more communities at risk.

In northern New Mexico, evacuations remained in place for several communities Monday and conditions were still too volatile for authorities to assess the damage caused Friday and Saturday. The blaze has grown into the largest wildfire burning in the U.S., charring more than 88 square miles (228 square kilometers).

Members of New Mexico's congressional delegation joined Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on a call Monday with officials from the White House and federal agencies to appeal for more federal ground resources ahead of another blast of strong fire-fueling winds expected later in the week.

Thanks to lighter winds in the Midwest on Monday, firefighters made significant progress on the fire that's burned about 70 square miles (181 square km) of mostly grasslands and farmland near the Nebraska-Kansas state line. It's now estimated to be about 47% contained.

They made the most of the opportunity Monday to dump water in dry creeks and draws filled with cottonwoods where dense fuels and brush has built up ahead of the return of more dangerous conditions expected on Tuesday, said Jonathan Ashford, spokesman for the Rocky Mountain Complex Incident Management Team.

"It's supposed to be about 20 degrees warmer tomorrow, lower humidity and increased wind," he said Monday night.

In Arizona, firefighters also took advantage of lighter winds to boost containment of a more than 33-square-mile (85 square-kilometer) blaze that has been burning outside of Flagstaff for more than a week. Strong winds that had fueled the fire are expected to return later this week. Meanwhile, hundreds of evacuated residents were given the go-ahead on Sunday to return home.

About 160 firefighters, emergency management personnel and others — twice as many as the day before — were helping fight the fire in Nebraska by Monday evening.

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Known as the Road 702 Fire, it has destroyed at least six homes and threatened 660 others, along with 50 commercial or farm buildings, Ashford said.

A retired Cambridge, Nebraska, fire chief who was helping as a fire spotter in Red Willow County died Friday night after his truck went off the road in a blinding haze of smoke and dust. The body of John Trumble, 66, of Arapahoe, was recovered around early Saturday.

Trumble was the second person in a month to die while fighting a wildfire in southwest Nebraska. Elwood Volunteer Fire Chief Darren Krull, 54, was killed in a collision with a water tanker on April 7 in Furnas County as smoke cut visibility to zero.

Nebraska remains critically dry, said Ashford, who urged residents to use caution when doing anything that could spark a fire.

"The last thing we need is to have another fire started that we have to then fight," he said.

N Dakota St still waits for home game after 36 in a row away

By ERIC OLSON AP Sports Writer

Spending the first month of the season or so on the road is part of the deal for cold-weather programs like North Dakota State. The Bison, however, have never experienced anything like this.

NDSU has played its first 36 games on the road or at neutral sites because of an unusually wet and cold spring in Fargo. That number is heading toward 39 after Tuesday's home opener was canceled because of cold and unplayable field conditions due to recent snow and rain.

The Bison have logged 21,860 air and bus miles so far — they've played in California, Florida and seven other states — and are projected to travel 27,918 through the Summit League Tournament. For comparison, it's about 25,000 miles around the world.

The Bison (23-13, 11-4) seem no worse for the wear. They're in first place in the Summit League.

"That probably doesn't get the credit it deserves, honestly," coach Tyler Oakes said while riding on the team bus somewhere in Kansas. "It's very hard to win on the road, especially when we've been on the road nine, 10 weeks straight. We're leaving campus Wednesday or Thursday and getting back late Sunday night or Monday morning and then doing it all over again."

Other than having to stop every two hours to fill the bus engine with coolant during a trip to Northern Colorado, the travel has been mostly hassle-free, Oakes said. The players have embraced the situation and used it to bond because "they have no other choice."

NDSU was supposed to open a seven-game homestand April 9. Instead, bad weather forced back-to-back, three-game conference series to be moved to the opponents' fields and the cancellation of a non-conference game.

Now the Bison's home opener is set for May 3 against Mayville State, a nearby NAIA school. Then it's back to Florida for a three-game series at Miami before two straight home conference series. If all goes right from here, they will play seven home games.

"We get stereotyped: How can we possibly be any good in baseball at North Dakota State?" Oakes said. "Within the recruiting process, it's about getting the right fit and guys who aren't afraid of the cold and want an opportunity to play at a high level."

The bulk of NDSU's roster comes from the upper Midwest. This year's team includes one player from Hawaii (Logan Williams) and one from Arizona (Terrell Huggins).

Williams said Fargo's cold weather and the heavy travel schedule didn't cross his mind when he decided to transfer from Kansas after last season. He acknowledged it's a bit of a grind.

"It's not something you can control," he said. "We're just happy to be able to go somewhere when it's cold and know that wherever we're going has a lot better weather than where we are."

IN THE POLLS

D1Baseball.com and Baseball America agree on the top three this week: Tennessee (37-3), Oregon State (31-8) and Miami (31-9). Collegiate Baseball newspaper's top three are Tennessee, Miami and Arkansas (31-9).

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Tennessee posted its first sweep at Florida since 2001 and became the first SEC team to open conference play 17-1. Oregon State pitchers struck out 41 in a three-game sweep of Washington that kept the Beavers 1 1/2 games ahead of Arizona in the Pac-12.

Miami took two of three against Pittsburgh and, at 16-5, has matched its best ACC start since 2014. Arkansas dropped two of three at Texas A&M.

PITCHING FEATS

Vanderbilt's Chris McElvain and Christian Little combined for the first no-hitter of the season by a Power Five team in a 10-0 win over Kentucky on Friday. McElvain went seven innings, Little went two and they combined for 13 strikeouts.

Florida Gulf Coast's Tyler Shuck threw a one-hitter in a 4-0 win over Stetson on Friday, striking out 11 and retiring 22 in a row over one stretch.

Fairfield's Jake Noviello and Grambling's Shemar Page pitched seven-inning perfect games. Noviello's came in a 10-0 win over Saint Peter's on Sunday and Page's in a 16-0 win over Alcorn State on Friday.

ANOTHER JOLTIN' JOE

Michigan's Joe Stewart homered in three straight at-bats, including two grand slams, and drove in a Big Ten-record 11 runs in a 16-13 win over Ohio State on Saturday.

HARD LUCK

Ben Seiler of Siena struck out a national season high 19 in nine innings against Niagara on Saturday but his team lost 6-5 in 10 innings. Seiler allowed eight hits and walked three. Three of the five runs against him were unearned.

CHIPPEWAS CHIPPING AWAY

Central Michigan's sweep of Akron extended the Chippewas' win streak in Mid-American Conference games to a record 21. Kent State had won 20 MAC games in a row over the 2012-13 seasons.

The Chippewas' overall win streak of 18 games is longest in the country.

Grassland group: Ranchers need a plan to deal with drought

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Ranchers say moisture from recent scattered rains are a welcome addition but nowhere near the amount needed to get South Dakota pastures back on track for normal production.

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition is urging ranchers to plan ahead. Bart Carmichael, of Faith, a coalition board member, said part of his drought plan included selling half of his cow herd over the last year.

"Not planning is a plan to fail, I really believe that," Carmichael said.

Almost 90 percent of the state remains in severe or moderate drought or abnormally dry, according to the latest U.S. Drought Monitor.

Ryan Beer, a rangeland management specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Bison, said up 150 percent of normal rainfall would be needed in May and June to get back to normal forage production.

Carmichael said he looks at drought as a way to improve his management skills, in part by ranking his cows from most desirable to least desirable. Once you put a cow in the cull group, he said, it takes the emotion out of selling them.

"It's hard to look at drought making things better but that's our outlook on it," Carmichael said.

North Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska are also experiencing widespread drought, Drought Monitor statistics show.

South Dakota inmate who left work release job apprehended

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a South Dakota prison inmate who walked away from a minimum-security facility is back in custody.

The state Department of Corrections said Phillip Richards left his work release job in Rapid City on Saturday without permission and didn't return to his housing unit. He was apprehended Monday in Pennington County.

Richards is serving time on charges out of Bennett County for ingestion of a controlled substance and eluding a police officer.

Failing to return to custody following an assignment constitutes second-degree escape, a felony punishable by up to five years in prison.

Southwest wildfire outlook grim as flames char New Mexico

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Bulldozers were busy Monday scraping through New Mexico's high country as firefighters scouted more rugged terrain, looking for places where they could wield tools to dig lines that stop what has grown into the largest wildfire burning in the U.S.

Nearly a dozen new large fires were reported over the weekend across the nation — four in New Mexico, three in Colorado and one each in Florida, Nebraska, South Dakota and Texas. With more than 1,350 square miles (3,496 square kilometers) burned so far this year, officials at the National Interagency Fire Center said the amount of land singed so far is outpacing the 10-year average by about 30%.

Hotter, drier weather has combined with a persistent drought to worsen fire danger across many parts of the West, where decades of fire suppression have resulted in overgrown and unhealthy forests and increasing development have put more communities at risk.

In northern New Mexico, evacuations remained in place for several communities Monday and conditions were still too volatile for authorities to assess the damage caused Friday and Saturday as fierce winds pushed flames across tinder-dry mountainsides in multiple counties.

Fire officials said they were able to protect pockets of homes threatened by the largest fire, which had joined over the weekend with another blaze that was sparked in early April when a prescribed fire escaped containment. Together, they have charred more than 88 square miles (228 square kilometers).

Operation sections chief Jayson Coil said Monday that crews working on the complex were trying to take advantage of better weather to keep the flames from moving closer to the villages and homes that dot the valleys along the eastern side of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

"There's a whole bunch of effort going on around this fire right now," Coil said during a briefing.

In Arizona, firefighters were taking advantage of lighter winds to boost containment of a more than 33-square-mile (85 square-kilometer) blaze that has been burning outside of Flagstaff for more than a week. Strong winds that had fueled the fire are expected to return later this week. Meanwhile, hundreds of residents who were evacuated were given the OK on Sunday to return home.

Crews in Nebraska continued securing fire lines Monday after a blaze that started last week near the Kansas border had spread rapidly — moving nearly 30 miles (48 kilometers) in a short period of time. The blaze killed one person and injured at least 11 firefighters.

Elected officials in Arizona and New Mexico have declared emergencies related to the latest wildfires, freeing up disaster aid. Meanwhile, local, state and federal land managers in some areas have started to impose burn bans and fire restrictions, citing the continued dry conditions that plague much of the region.

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Monday signed an executive order urging municipalities and counties around the state to ban the retail sale of fireworks. While state statutes don't allow the governor to implement a statewide ban on fireworks, the executive order follows the implementation of statewide fire restrictions prohibiting fireworks, outdoor smoking, campfires and open burning for all non-municipal, non-federal and non-tribal lands.

Lujan Grisham called the situation extremely dangerous.

"It's essential that we mitigate potential wildfires by removing as much risk as possible," she said.

The latest blazes follow one earlier this month in southern New Mexico that destroyed more than 200 homes in the mountain community of Ruidoso. Two residents who were attempting to evacuate were found dead outside their charred home.

Beijing enforces lockdowns, expands COVID-19 mass testing

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By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Workers put up fencing and police restricted who could leave a locked-down area in Beijing on Tuesday as authorities in the Chinese capital stepped up efforts to prevent a major COVID-19 outbreak like the one that has all but shut down the city of Shanghai.

People lined up for throat swabs across much of Beijing as mass testing was expanded to 11 of the city's 16 districts.

Another 22 cases were found in the last 24 hours, Beijing health officials said at a late afternoon news conference, bringing the total to 92 since the outbreak was discovered five days ago. That is tiny in comparison to Shanghai, where the number of cases has topped 500,000 and at least 190 people have died. No deaths have been reported from the still-nascent outbreak in Beijing.

An initial announcement of testing in one Beijing district had sparked panic buying in the city of 21 million on Monday, but the situation appeared to calm on Tuesday even as testing was expanded. Public transport appeared to be running largely normally and roads were filled with commuters.

"I'm not worried that Beijing would suffer from a shortage of supplies so I don't plan to stock up," said Zhang Yifan, who was on his way to get tested in Dongcheng district. "Because if people stock up blindly, it may cause a waste of resources. If people keep too much supplies at home, it will cause a shortage."

Beijing has locked down some apartment buildings and residential complexes and on Monday added a larger urban area measuring about 2 by 3 kilometers (1 by 2 miles). Workers put up blue metal fencing along part of the area Tuesday, and police restricted who could leave. Residents are being kept inside their compounds.

Fears of a total lockdown have been fed by disruptions in the supply of food, medicine and daily necessities in Shanghai, a southeast coast business hub whose 25 million residents have only gradually been allowed to leave their homes after three weeks of confinement.

However, 86-year-old Beijing resident Chen Shengzhen said the capital had been given more time to prepare than its southern cousin.

Shanghai's lockdown "came all of a sudden, so the policies and other aspects were not able to be in place," leading to short-term hardships in the city, Chen told The Associated Press.

"My daughter works in a government department and they have prepared very well, such as beds, quilts, and articles for women's use. Even if we need to go into lockdown, we will be fine," said Chen.

Shanghai residents, confined to their complexes or buildings, had trouble ordering food deliveries and also faced higher prices. The lockdown of China's largest city has had ripple effects elsewhere as goods have backed up at Shanghai's port, affecting factory production, global supply chains and China's own economic growth.

Zhong Xiaobing, the general manager of the Lianhua Supermarket chain in Shanghai, said that shipments of goods from elsewhere in China have gotten smoother since the government organized trucks 10 days ago to bring in goods from key transfer stations, but that imports remain slower because of port and other transport restrictions.

Other cities have also been locked down in China as the omicron variant proves difficult to control, with Baotou in Inner Mongolia the latest to enforce one.

Beijing tested nearly 3.8 million people in an initial round of mass testing in Chaoyang district on Monday. All the results were negative except for one in a group of five that were tested together, a Chaoyang official said. Those five people were being tested to determine who among them is infected.

Chaoyang has had the most cases in the Beijing outbreak, but authorities decided to extend the testing to 10 more districts on Tuesday.

Biden pardons former Secret Service agent and 2 others

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has granted the first three pardons of his term, providing clemency to a Kennedy-era Secret Service agent convicted of federal bribery charges that he tried to sell

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a copy of an agency file and to two people who were convicted on drug-related charges but went on to become pillars in their communities.

The Democratic president also commuted the sentences of 75 others for nonviolent, drug-related convictions. The White House announced the clemencies Tuesday as it launched a series of job training and reentry programs for those in prison or recently released.

Many of those who received commutations have been serving their sentences on home confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several were serving lengthy sentences and would have received lesser terms had they been convicted today for the same offenses as a result of the 2018 bipartisan sentencing reform ushered into law by the Trump administration.

"America is a nation of laws and second chances, redemption, and rehabilitation," Biden said in a statement announcing the clemencies. "Elected officials on both sides of the aisle, faith leaders, civil rights advocates, and law enforcement leaders agree that our criminal justice system can and should reflect these core values that enable safer and stronger communities."

Those granted pardons are:

— Abraham Bolden Sr., 86, the first Black Secret Service agent to serve on a presidential detail. In 1964, Bolden, who served on President John F. Kennedy's detail, faced federal bribery charges that he attempted to sell a copy of a Secret Service file. His first trial ended in a hung jury.

Following his conviction in a second trial, key witnesses admitted lying at the prosecutor's request. Bolden, of Chicago, was denied a retrial and served several years in federal prison. Bolden has maintained his innocence and wrote a book in which he argued he was targeted for speaking out against racist and unprofessional behavior in the Secret Service.

— Betty Jo Bogans, 51, was convicted in 1998 of possession with intent to distribute crack cocaine in Texas after attempting to transport drugs for her boyfriend and his accomplice. Bogans, a single mother with no prior record, received a seven-year sentence. In the years since her release from prison, Bogans has held consistent employment, even while undergoing cancer treatment, and has raised a son.

— Dexter Jackson, 52, of Athens, Georgia, was convicted in 2002 for using his pool hall to facilitate the trafficking of marijuana. Jackson pleaded guilty and acknowledged he allowed his business to be used by marijuana dealers.

After Jackson was released from prison, he converted his business into a cellphone repair service that employs local high school students through a program that provides young adults with work experience. Jackson has built and renovated homes in his community, which has a shortage of affordable housing.

Civil rights and criminal justice reform groups have pushed the White House to commute sentences and work harder to reduce disparities in the criminal justice system. Biden's grants of clemency also come as the administration has faced congressional scrutiny over misconduct and the treatment of inmates in the beleaguered federal Bureau of Prisons, which is responsible for inmates serving sentences of home confinement.

Biden, as head of the Senate Judiciary Committee, helped shepherd through the 1994 crime bill that many criminal justice experts say contributed to harsh sentences and mass incarceration of Black people.

During his 2020 White House run, Biden vowed to reduce the number of people incarcerated in the U.S. and called for nonviolent drug offenders to be diverted to drug courts and treatment.

He also has pushed for better training for law enforcement and called for criminal justice system changes to address disparities that have led to minorities and the poor making up a disproportionate share of the nation's incarcerated population.

Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, granted 143 pardons and clemency to 237 during his four years in office.

Trump sought the advice of prison reform advocate Alice Johnson, a Black woman whose life sentence for a nonviolent drug offense he commuted in 2018. He was also lobbied by celebrity Kim Kardashian as well as advisers inside the White House, including daughter Ivanka Trump and son-in-law Jared Kushner, as he weighed applications for clemency.

The Republican used his pardon authority to help several political friends and allies, including former

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campaign chairman Paul Manafort, Republican operative Roger Stone and Charles Kushner, the father-in-law of Ivanka Trump.

Among Trump's final acts as president was pardoning his former chief strategist Steve Bannon and Al Pirro, the husband of Fox News host and Trump ally Jeanine Pirro.

Prosecutors alleged that Bannon, who had yet to stand trial when he was pardoned, had duped thousands of donors who believed their money would be used to fulfill Trump's chief campaign promise to build a wall along the southern border. Instead, Bannon allegedly diverted more than \$1 million, paying a salary to one campaign official and personal expenses for himself. Pirro was convicted in 2000 on tax charges.

With the slate of pardons and commutations announced Tuesday, Biden has issued more grants of clemency than any of the previous five presidents at this point in their terms, according to the White House.

In addition to the grants of clemency, Biden announced several new initiatives that are meant to help formerly incarcerated people gain employment — an issue that his administration is driving home as key to lowering crime rates and preventing recidivism.

The Labor Department is directing \$140 million toward programs that offer job training, pre-apprenticeship programs, digital literacy training and pre-release and post-release career counseling and more for youth and incarcerated adults.

The \$1 trillion infrastructure bill passed by Congress last year includes a trio of grant programs that the administration says promote hiring of formerly incarcerated individuals. And the Labor and Justice Departments announced on Tuesday a collaborative plan to provide \$145 million over the next year on job skills training as well as individualized employment and reentry plans for people serving time in the Bureau of Prisons.

Biden said the new initiatives are vital to helping the more than 600,000 people released from prison each year get on stable ground.

"Helping those who served their time return to their families and become contributing members of their communities is one of the most effective ways to reduce recidivism and decrease crime," Biden said.

Putin gets what he didn't want: Ukraine army closer to West

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The longer Ukraine's army fends off the invading Russians, the more it absorbs the advantages of Western weaponry and training — exactly the transformation President Vladimir Putin wanted to prevent by invading in the first place.

The list of arms flowing to Ukraine is long and growing longer. It includes new American battlefield aerial drones and the most modern U.S. and Canadian artillery. Also, anti-tank weapons from Norway and others; armored vehicles and anti-ship missiles from Britain; and Stinger counter-air missiles from the U.S., Denmark and other countries.

If Ukraine can hold off the Russians, its accumulating arsenal of Western weapons could have a transformative effect in a country that has, like other former Soviet republics, relied mainly on arms and equipment from the Soviet era.

But sustaining that military aid won't be easy. It is costly and, for some supplier nations, politically risky. It also is being taken out of Western stockpiles that at some point will need to be replenished. That is why U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin convened a meeting Tuesday at Germany's Ramstein air base to work out ways to keep it going, now and for the long run. Defense ministers and top military leaders from approximately 40 countries participated.

The goal, Austin said, is not just to support Ukrainian defenses but to help them prevail against a larger invading force. Speaking Tuesday at the event's opening, he said that Ukraine's allies will "keep moving heaven and earth" to meet Ukraine's near-term security requirements.

"We believe they can win if they have the right equipment, the right support," Austin said on Monday in Poland after returning from a visit to Kyiv with Secretary of State Antony Blinken that included discussion of Ukraine's military needs. He also said the goal is to "see Russia weakened to the degree that it can't

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do the kinds of things it has done in invading Ukraine.”

Despite its early failings, the Russian military still holds some advantages that will be put to the test in the eastern Donbas region, where they are assembling more combat troops and firepower even as the U.S. and its NATO allies scramble to get artillery and other heavy weaponry to that area in time to make a difference.

With the war’s outcome in doubt after two months of fighting, the Pentagon is providing 90 of the U.S. Army’s most modern howitzers, along with 183,000 rounds of artillery — and other sophisticated weaponry that could give the Ukrainians an important edge in looming battles. The U.S. also is arranging more training for Ukrainians on key weaponry, including howitzers and at least two kinds of armed drone aircraft.

On Monday, Austin and Blinken announced \$713 million in foreign military financing for Ukraine and 15 allied and partner countries in Europe; some \$322 million is earmarked for Kyiv, in part to help Ukraine transition to more advanced weapons and air defense systems. The remainder will be split among NATO members and other nations that have provided Ukraine with critical military supplies since the war with Russia began, officials said.

Such financing is different from previous U.S. military assistance for Ukraine. It is not a donation of weapons and equipment from Pentagon stockpiles but rather cash that countries can use to purchase supplies that they might need.

The Ukrainians say they need even more, including long-range air defense systems, fighter jets, tanks and multiple-launch rocket systems.

“It will be true to say that the United States now leads the effort in ensuring this transition of Ukraine to Western-style weapons, in arranging training for Ukrainian soldiers,” Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said, adding, “and I only regret that it didn’t happen a month or two months ago from the very beginning of the war.”

Philip Breedlove, a retired U.S. general who led NATO in Europe from 2013 to 2016, says his shorthand summary of what Putin wants in Ukraine and elsewhere on the Russian periphery is, “Weapons out, NATO back, and no America.”

“What has happened is, Mr. Putin is getting exactly what he did not want. He’s getting more weapons forward, he’s getting more NATO forward, and he’s getting more America in Europe,” Breedlove said in an interview.

The complexities of keeping up Western military aid to Ukraine, even as its troops are fully occupied with a brutal war, are a reminder of what is at stake. Putin said before launching the invasion that Moscow could not tolerate what he saw as a Western effort to make Ukraine a de facto member of NATO. He argued that Ukraine’s interest in westernizing and in remaining outside of Russia’s orbit was due to “external forces” such as U.S. pressure.

Putin has demanded that Ukraine forswear membership in the NATO alliance, and beyond that he has insisted on turning back the clock to 1997, before NATO had begun adding former Soviet and Soviet-allied nations to its ranks.

There is little prospect of Ukraine joining NATO, but Russia’s war has in fact brought NATO closer to Ukraine. The result has been a boost to Ukraine’s prospects for mounting a successful defense, even in the eastern Donbas region where the Russians hold certain advantages and where Russian-backed separatists have been fighting since 2014.

Can Musk deliver on his vision for Twitter? Questions remain

By TOM KRISHER and MATT O’BRIEN Associated Press

Tesla CEO Elon Musk stands to be the next owner of Twitter, having pledged roughly \$44 billion to buy the social platform and take it private. Assuming that happens, next up on his agenda will be planning how to fulfill his promises to develop new Twitter features, open its algorithm to public inspection and defeat “spambots” on the service that mimic real users.

He’ll also need to have the company start “authenticating all humans,” as he described it in a statement

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quoted in the Monday press release announcing the acquisition. What exactly Musk meant by the phrase remains unclear.

So does the question of whether his ideas are technologically possible and how we'll know if these changes would benefit users or serve some other purpose.

Experts who have studied content moderation and researched Twitter for years have expressed doubt that Musk knows exactly what he is getting into. After all, there are plenty of fledgling examples of "free speech" focused platforms launched in the past few years as Twitter antidotes, largely by conservatives unhappy with the company's crackdowns on hate, harassment and misinformation. Many have struggled to deal with toxic content, and at least one has been cut off by its own technology providers in protest.

"This move just shows how effective (moderation features) have been to annoy those in power," said Kirsten Martin, a professor of technology ethics at the University of Notre Dame. "I would be worried as to how this would change Twitter's values."

The fact that no other bidders emerged in public before Musk's deal was a sign that other would-be acquirers might find Twitter too difficult to improve, said Third Bridge analyst Scott Kessler.

"This platform is pretty much the same one we've had over the last decade or so," Kessler said. "You've had a lot of smart people trying to figure out what they should do, and they've had trouble. It's probably going to be tough to make a lot of headway."

Musk received some effusive, if highly abstract, praise from an unexpected quarter — Twitter co-founder and former CEO Jack Dorsey, who praised Musk's decision to take Twitter "back from Wall Street" and tweeted that he trusts Musk's mission to "extend the light of consciousness" — a reference to Dorsey's notion that "Twitter is the closest thing we have to a global consciousness."

But others familiar with Twitter say they're still dismayed at Musk's successful bid for the company.

"Twitter is going to let a man-child essentially take over their platform," said Leslie Miley, a former Twitter employee who has also worked for Google and Apple. Miley, who was the only Black engineer at Twitter in a leadership position when he left the company in 2015, echoed doubts about Musk's grasp of the platform's complexities.

"I am not sure if Elon knows what he is getting," Miley said. "He may just find that having Twitter is a lot different than wanting Twitter."

The more hands-off approach to content moderation that Musk envisions has many users concerned that the platform will become more of a haven for disinformation, hate speech and bullying, something it has worked hard in recent years to mitigate. Wall Street analysts said if he goes too far, it could also alienate advertisers.

Shares of Twitter Inc. rose more than 5% Monday to \$51.70 per share. On April 14, Musk announced an offer to buy Twitter for \$54.20 per share. While the stock is up sharply since Musk made his offer, it is well below the high of \$77 per share it reached in February 2021.

Musk has described himself as a "free-speech absolutist" but is also known for blocking or disparaging other Twitter users who question or disagree with him.

In recent weeks, he has proposed relaxing Twitter content restrictions — such as the rules that suspended former President Donald Trump's account — while ridding the platform of fake "spambot" accounts and shifting away from advertising as its primary revenue model. Musk believes he can increase revenue through subscriptions that give paying customers a better experience — possibly even an ad-free version of Twitter.

Asked during a recent TED interview if there are any limits to his notion of "free speech," Musk said Twitter would abide by national laws that restrict speech around the world. Beyond that, he said, he'd be "very reluctant" to delete posts or permanently banning users who violate the company's rules.

It won't be perfect, Musk added, "but I think we want it to really have the perception and reality that speech is as free as reasonably possible."

After the deal was announced, the NAACP released a statement urging Musk not to allow Trump, the 45th president, back onto the platform.

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"Do not allow 45 to return to the platform," the civil rights organization said in a statement. "Do not allow Twitter to become a petri dish for hate speech or falsehoods that subvert our democracy."

As both candidate and president, Trump made Twitter a powerful megaphone for speaking directly to the public, often using incendiary and divisive language on hot-button issues. He was permanently banned from the service in the aftermath of the Jan. 6 storming of the Capitol.

"If Musk either fires or drives away the team at Twitter that's committed to keeping it clean and making it less hate-filled, he'll see an immediate drop in user activity," said Siva Vaidhyanathan, a media studies professor at the University of Virginia. "I think he's going to find pretty fast that inviting the bigots back in is bad for business."

Some users said Monday that they were planning to quit the platform if Musk took it over. To which he responded on Twitter: "I hope that even my worst critics remain on Twitter, because that is what free speech means."

While Twitter's user base of more than 200 million remains much smaller than those of rivals such as Facebook and TikTok, the service is popular with celebrities, world leaders, journalists and intellectuals. Musk himself is a prolific tweeter with a following that rivals several pop stars in the ranks of the most popular accounts.

'Constantly depressing': Ukrainian town watches war close in

By YESICA FISCH and EVGENIY MALOLETKA Associated Press

TORETSK, Ukraine (AP) — War has again drawn near to Toretsk in eastern Ukraine. Even the sudden crackling of a plastic water bottle puts residents on edge.

"Anything that is happening, any noise, if our neighbors bang the door, a metal door, you are shocked," said resident Andriy Cheromushkin. "You feel so helpless."

Half of the more than 32,000 residents have fled. Many who remain lack money and basic resources. Depression is growing, along with anger.

"I collect rainwater. Yes, and I do the dishes with this rainwater. I cook the food for my dog with this water. I clean the floors with this water. I do the washing with this water. Clean the house with it. Is it normal? It is the 21st century. The nuclear power century!" said resident Irina Anatolievna.

She waited in a long line with other exhausted residents on Monday for a water distribution now that running water has disappeared. As people walked away with bottles, they passed monuments to World War I and World War II.

Before Russia's invasion, conflict last gripped Toretsk in 2014, when it was captured by pro-Russian separatists. Ukrainian forces retook it later that year.

Now the mining town is just a few kilometers from the separatist-controlled part of the Donetsk region. Not so far away, Ukrainians forces are trying to stop the advance of Russian ones.

The explosions and sounds of artillery are loud, residents said.

But it is not so easy to leave. Some are elderly. Some have small children. Some, like Cheromushkin, have no job.

"You don't know what will happen tomorrow, let alone the next minute," Cheromushkin said. His wife, Tatiana, called the situation "constantly depressing."

It is also a constant source of worry for Vasyl Chynchyk, the head of civil and military administration of Toretsk.

"The enemy is cunning. The enemy doesn't care about infrastructure, doesn't care about civilians," he said. "The enemy acts deliberately, using intimidation, conducting mass shelling."

The most important task now is evacuating residents while the town is more or less calm, he said.

But evacuation takes energy, and Tatiana says she has none left.

"I want to believe that it will come to an end soon," she said. "They will come to some kind of an agreement."

Musk's 'free speech' push for Twitter: Repeating history?

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

Elon Musk, the world's richest man, is spending \$44 billion to acquire Twitter with the stated aim of turning it into a haven for "free speech." There's just one problem: The social platform has been down this road before, and it didn't end well.

A decade ago, a Twitter executive dubbed the company "the free speech wing of the free speech party" to underscore its commitment to untrammelled freedom of expression. Subsequent events put that moniker to the test, as repressive regimes cracked down on Twitter users, particularly in the wake of the short-lived "Arab Spring" demonstrations. In the U.S., a visceral 2014 article by journalist Amanda Hess exposed the incessant, vile harassment many women faced just for posting on Twitter or other online forums.

Over the subsequent years, Twitter learned a few things about the consequences of running a largely unmoderated social platform — one of the most important being that companies generally don't want their ads running against violent threats, hate speech that bleeds into incitement, and misinformation that aims to tip elections or undermine public health.

"With Musk, his posturing of free speech — just leave everything up — that would be bad in and of itself," said Paul Barrett, the deputy director of the Center for Business and Human Rights at New York University. "If you stop moderating with automated systems and human reviews, a site like Twitter, in the space of a short period of time, you would have a cesspool."

Google, Barrett pointed out, quickly learned this lesson the hard way when major companies like Toyota and Anheuser-Busch yanked their ads after they ran ahead of YouTube videos produced by extremists in 2015.

Once it was clear just how unhealthy the conversation had gotten, Twitter co-founder and former CEO Jack Dorsey spent years trying to improve what he called the "health" of the conversation on the platform.

The company was an early adopter of the "report abuse" button after U.K. member of parliament Stella Creasy received a barrage of rape and death threats on the platform. The online abuse was the result of a seemingly positive tweet in support of feminist campaigner Caroline Criado-Perez, who successfully advocated for novelist Jane Austen to appear on a British banknote. Creasy's online harasser was sent to prison for 18 weeks.

Twitter has continued to craft rules and invested in staff and technology that detect violent threats, harassment and misinformation that violates its policies. After evidence emerged that Russia used their platforms to try to interfere with the 2016 U.S. presidential election, social media companies also stepped up their efforts against political misinformation.

The big question now is how far Musk, who describes himself as a "free-speech absolutist," wants to ratchet back these systems — and whether users and advertisers will stick around if he does.

Even now, Americans say they're more likely to be harassed on social media than any other online forum, with women, people of color and LGBTQ users reporting a disproportionate amount of that abuse. Roughly 80% of users believe the companies are still doing only a "fair or poor" job of handling that harassment, according to a Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults last year.

Meanwhile, terms like "censorship" and "free speech" have turned into political rallying cries for conservatives, frustrated by seeing right-leaning commentators and high-profile Republican officials booted off Facebook and Twitter for violating their rules.

Musk appeared to criticize Twitter's permanent ban of President Donald Trump last year for messages that the tech company said helped incite the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol last year.

"A lot of people are going to be super unhappy with West Coast high tech as the de facto arbiter of free speech," Musk tweeted days after Trump was banned from both Facebook and Twitter.

Trump's allies, including his son Donald Trump Jr., have even pleaded for Musk to buy out the company. "If Elon Musk can privately send people into space I'm sure he can design a social network that isn't biased," Trump Jr. said in the caption of a video posted to Instagram last April.

Kirsten Martin, a professor of technology ethics at the University of Notre Dame, said Twitter has con-

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sistently worked at being a "responsible" social media company through its moderation system, its hires in the area of machine learning ethics and in whom they allow to do research on the platform. The fact that Musk wants to change that, she added, suggests that he's focused on "irresponsible social media."

Twitter declined to comment for this story. A representative for Musk did not immediately respond to a message for comment.

New social media apps targeted at conservatives, including Trump's Truth Social, haven't come remotely close to matching the success of Facebook or Twitter. That's partly because Republican politicians, politicians and causes already draw large audiences on existing, and much better established, platforms.

It's also partly due to floods of inflammatory, false or violent posts. Last year, for example, right-wing social media site Parler was nearly wiped off the internet when it became evident that rioters had used the app to promote violent messages and organize the Jan. 6 siege of the U.S. Capitol. Apple and Google barred its app from their online stores, while Amazon stopped providing web-hosting services for the site.

Musk himself regularly blocks social media users who have criticized him or his company and sometimes bullies reporters who have written critical articles about him or Tesla. He regularly tweets at reporters who write about his company, sometimes mischaracterizing their work as "false" or "misleading."

His popular tweets typically send a swarm of his social media fans directly to the accounts of the reporters to harass them for hours or days.

"I only block people as a direct insult," Musk tweeted in 2020, responding to a tweet from a reporter.

Evan Greer, a political activist with Fight for the Future, said Musk's lack of experience in moderating an influential social media platform will be a problem if he successfully takes over the company.

"If we want to protect free speech online, then we can't live in a world where the richest person on Earth can just purchase a platform that's millions of people depend on and then change the rules to his liking," Greer said.

Administration expands availability of COVID antiviral pill

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's administration is taking steps to expand availability of the life-saving COVID-19 antiviral treatment Paxlovid, as it seeks to reassure doctors that there is ample supply for people at high risk of severe illness or death from the virus.

Paxlovid, produced by Pfizer, was first approved in December. Supply of the regimen was initially very limited, but as COVID-19 cases across the country have fallen and manufacturing has increased it is now far more abundant. The White House is now moving to raise awareness of the pill and taking steps to make it easier to access.

The White House said Tuesday it is stepping up outreach to doctors, letting them know that they shouldn't think twice about prescribing the pill to eligible patients. It is also announcing that the drug will now be distributed directly to pharmacies, in addition to existing distribution channels run by states. That is expected to boost the number of sites from 20,000 to more than 30,000 next week and eventually to 40,000 locations.

The administration believes the pharmacy channel, which it used to boost availability of COVID-19 vaccines more than a year ago, will similarly make the antiviral pills more available to people.

Paxlovid, when administered within five days of symptoms appearing, has been proven to bring about a 90% reduction in hospitalizations and deaths among patients most likely to get severe disease. About 350 Americans are now dying each day from the coronavirus, down from more than 2,600 during the height of the omicron wave earlier this year.

The U.S. has ordered enough supply of the pills for 20 million people, which is estimated to last for several more months. The administration has warned that subsequent deliveries are dependent on Congress approving additional COVID-19 response funding.

The Food and Drug Administration authorized Pfizer's drug for adults and children age 12 or older with a positive COVID-19 test and early symptoms who face the highest risk of severe outcomes. That includes

older people and those with conditions like obesity and heart disease, though the drug is not recommended for patients with severe kidney or liver problems.

The administration is also working to expand the number of test-to-treat sites that provide a one-stop shop for those with COVID-19 to get tested for the virus, consult with a medical professional if they're positive and fill a prescription for Paxlovid on site. Currently there are 2,200 locations nationwide, and the administration hopes support from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and pharmacy companies will enable more sites to come online in the coming weeks.

Russia's war heats up cooking oil prices in global squeeze

By DEE-ANN DURBIN, AYSE WIETING and KELVIN CHAN Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — For months, Istanbul restaurant Tarihi Balikca tried to absorb the surging cost of the sunflower oil its cooks use to fry fish, squid and mussels.

But in early April, with oil prices nearly four times higher than they were in 2019, the restaurant finally raised its prices. Now, even some longtime customers look at the menu and walk away.

"We resisted. We said, 'Let's wait a bit, maybe the market will improve, maybe (prices) will stabilize. But we saw that there is no improvement,'" said Mahsun Aktas, a waiter and cook at the restaurant. "The customer cannot afford it."

Global cooking oil prices have been rising since the COVID-19 pandemic began for multiple reasons, from poor harvests in South America to virus-related labor shortages and steadily increasing demand from the biofuel industry. The war in Ukraine — which supplies nearly half of the world's sunflower oil, on top of the 25% from Russia — has interrupted shipments and sent cooking oil prices spiraling.

It is the latest fallout to the global food supply from Russia's war, and another rising cost pinching households and businesses as inflation soars. The conflict has further fueled already high food and energy costs, hitting the poorest people hardest.

The food supply is particularly at risk as the war has disrupted crucial grain shipments from Ukraine and Russia and worsened a global fertilizer crunch that will mean costlier, less abundant food. The loss of affordable supplies of wheat, barley and other grains raises the prospect of food shortages and political instability in Middle Eastern, African and some Asian countries where millions rely on subsidized bread and cheap noodles.

Vegetable oil prices hit a record high in February, then increased another 23% in March, according to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. Soybean oil, which sold for \$765 per metric ton in 2019, was averaging \$1,957 per metric ton in March, the World Bank said. Palm oil prices were up 200% and are set to go even higher after Indonesia, one of the world's top producers, bans cooking oil exports starting Thursday to protect domestic supply.

Some supermarkets in Turkey have imposed limits on the amount of vegetable oil households can purchase after concerns about shortages sparked panic-buying. Some stores in Spain, Italy and the United Kingdom also have set limits. German shoppers are posting photos on social media of empty shelves where sunflower and canola oil usually sit. In a recent tweet, Kenya's main power company warned that thieves are draining toxic fluid from electrical transformers and reselling it as cooking oil.

"We will just have to boil everything now, the days of the frying pan are gone," said Glaudina Nyoni, scanning prices in a supermarket in Harare, Zimbabwe, where vegetable oil costs have almost doubled since the outbreak of the war. A 2-liter bottle now costs up to \$9.

Emiwati, who runs a food stall in Jakarta, Indonesia, said she needs 24 liters of cooking oil each day. She makes nasi kapau, traditional mixed rice that she serves with dishes like deep-fried spiced beef jerky. Since January, she's had trouble ensuring that supply, and what she does buy is much more expensive. Profits are down, but she fears losing customers if she raises prices.

"I am sad," said Emiwati, who only uses one name. "We accept the price of cooking oil increasing, but we cannot increase the price of the foods we sell."

The high cost of cooking oil is partly behind recent protests in Jakarta. Indonesia has imposed price caps

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on palm oil at home and will ban exports, creating a new squeeze worldwide. Palm oil has been sought as an alternative for sunflower oil and is used in many products, from cookies to cosmetics.

The Associated Press has documented human rights abuses in an industry whose environmental effects have been decried for years.

Across the world in London, Yawar Khan, who owns Akash Tandoori restaurant, said a 20-liter drum of cooking oil cost him 22 pounds (\$28) a few months ago; it's now 38 pounds (\$49).

"We cannot pass all the price (rises) to the consumer, that will cause a catastrophe, too," said Khan, who also struggles with rising costs for meat, spices, energy and labor.

Big companies are feeling the pain, too. London-based Unilever — maker of Dove soap and Hellmann's mayonnaise — said it has contracts for critical ingredients like palm oil for the first half of the year. But it warned investors that its costs could rise significantly in the second half.

Cargill, a global food giant that makes vegetable oils, said its customers are changing formulas and experimenting with different kinds of oils at a higher rate than usual. That can be tricky because oils have different properties; olive oil burns at a lower temperature than sunflower oil, for example, while palm oil is more viscous.

Prices could moderate by this fall, when farmers in the Northern Hemisphere harvest corn, soybeans and other crops, said Joseph Glauber, a senior research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute. But there's always the danger of bad weather. Last year, drought pummeled Canada's canola crop and Brazil's soybean crop, while heavy rains affected palm oil production in Malaysia.

Farmers may be hesitant to plant enough crops to make up for shortfalls from Ukraine or Russia because they don't know when the war might end, said Steve Mathews, co-head of research at Gro Intelligence, an agriculture data and analytics company.

"If there were a cease-fire or something like that, we would see prices decline in the short run for sure," he said.

Longer term, the crisis may lead countries to reconsider biofuel mandates, which dictate the amount of vegetable oils that must be blended with fuel in a bid to reduce emissions and energy imports. In the U.S., for example, 42% of soybean oil goes toward biofuel production, Glauber said. Indonesia recently delayed a plan to require 40% palm oil-based biodiesel, while the European Commission said it would support member states that choose to reduce their biofuel mandates.

In the meantime, consumers and businesses are struggling.

Harry Niazi, who owns The Famous Olley's Fish Experience in London, says he used to pay around 22 pounds (\$29) for a 20-liter jug of sunflower oil; the cost recently jumped to 42.50 pounds (\$55). Niazi goes through as many as eight jugs per week.

But what worries him even more than rising prices is the thought of running out of sunflower oil altogether. He's thinking of selling his truck and using the cash to stock up on oil.

"It's very, very scary, and I don't know how the fish and chips industry is going to cope. I really don't," he said.

So far, Niazi has held off on raising prices because he doesn't want to lose customers.

At Jordan's Grab n' Go, a small restaurant in Dyersburg, Tennessee, known for its fried cheeseburgers, owner Christine Coronado also agonized about price increases. But with costs up 20% across the board — and cooking oil prices nearly tripling since she opened in 2018 — she finally hiked prices in April.

"You hate to raise prices on people, but it's just that costs are so much higher than they were a couple of years ago," she said.

N. Korea's Kim vows to bolster nuke capability during parade

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to accelerate the development of nuclear weapons and threatened to use them if provoked in a speech he delivered at a military parade that featured powerful missiles capable of targeting the country's rivals, state media reported Tuesday.

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Kim's remarks suggest he will continue provocative weapons tests in a pressure campaign aimed at wresting concessions from the United States and its allies. The parade Monday night marked the 90th anniversary of North Korea's army — the backbone of the Kim family's authoritarian rule — and was held as the country's economy is battered by pandemic-related difficulties, punishing U.S.-led sanctions and its own mismanagement.

State media photos showed Kim, dressed in a white military ceremonial coat, smiling and waving from a balcony along with his wife Ri Sol Ju and top deputies.

"(We) will continue to take measures for further developing the nuclear forces of our state at the fastest possible speed," Kim told his troops and the crowd gathered at a plaza in Pyongyang, the capital, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

He said North Korea could preemptively use its nuclear weapons when threatened by attacks and called for his nuclear forces to be fully prepared to go "in motion at any time."

"The fundamental mission of our nuclear forces is to deter a war, but our nukes can never be confined to the single mission of war deterrent even at a time when a situation we are not desirous of at all is created on this land," Kim said. "If any forces try to violate the fundamental interests of our state, our nuclear forces will have to decisively accomplish its unexpected second mission," which would leave any invading force "perished," he said.

The parade featured thousands of goose-stepping troops and several of North Korea's most powerful missiles. Some of the intercontinental ballistic missiles could put the U.S. homeland well within range, and a variety of shorter-range solid-fuel missiles pose a growing threat to South Korea and Japan.

One of the weapons showcased at the brightly illuminated Kim Il Sung Square, named after Kim's late grandfather and state founder, was North Korea's biggest and newest ICBM, the Hwasong-17.

North Korea claimed to have test-fired that missile successfully last month, but South Korea concluded the launch was of the smaller Hwasong-15 and that a launch of the Hwasong-17 had failed. Whichever weapon it was, the launch on March 24 was North Korea's first full-range ICBM flight test in more than four years and flew longer and higher than any other missile North Korea has previously launched.

KCNA said spectators at the parade raised loud cheers when they saw the Hwasong-17, which it said showed "the absolute power of Juche (self-reliance), Korea and the strategic position of our republic to the world."

North Korea often commemorates key state anniversaries by mobilizing huge crowds to boost internal unity. Tuesday's KCNA dispatch praised Kim for accomplishing "the historic great cause of completing the nuclear forces by making a long journey of patriotic devotion with a death-defying will" to make his people free of war.

Kim has been reviving nuclear brinkmanship aimed at forcing the United States to accept North Korea as a nuclear power and to remove crippling economic sanctions, exploiting a favorable environment to push forward its weapons program as the U.N. Security Council remains divided over Russia's war in Ukraine.

Nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang have been stalled since 2019 because of disagreements over a potential easing of U.S.-led sanctions in exchange for North Korean disarmament steps. Kim has stuck to his goals of simultaneously developing nuclear weapons and the country's dismal economy in the face of international pressure and has shown no willingness to fully surrender a nuclear arsenal he sees as his biggest guarantee of survival.

Kim's comments about the possible use of nuclear weapons and his decision to attend the parade in a military coat, rather than his regular suit and tie, signal a tough approach toward South Korea's incoming conservative government, which may take a harder line toward Pyongyang than current liberal President Moon Jae-in, according to analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at South Korea's Sejong Institute.

Calls by Kim for his people to brace for long-term confrontation with "imperialists" show he has no immediate plan to re-engage in denuclearization talks with the United States as he monitors the geopolitical fallout of the Russia-Ukraine war and the rivalry between the U.S. and China, Cheong said.

South Korean President-elect Yoon Suk Yeol, who takes office on May 10, has accused Moon of seeking

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engagement with North Korea while ignoring a gathering North Korean threat. He has vowed to strengthen South Korea's defenses in conjunction with its alliance with the U.S., including enhancing preemptive strike capabilities.

"North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles have become a serious and realistic threat for our country and acquiring an ability to deter (the North's threat) is an urgent task," Yoon's office said in a statement.

North Korea has conducted 13 rounds of weapons tests this year. There are also signs North Korea is rebuilding tunnels at a nuclear testing ground that was last active in 2017, possibly in preparation for exploding a nuclear device.

In 2017, North Korea claimed to have acquired the ability to launch nuclear strikes on the U.S. mainland after a torrid run of nuclear and missile tests. It halted such high-profile tests before entering its now-dormant diplomacy with the United States.

Kim's aggressive military push could also be motivated by domestic politics since he doesn't otherwise have significant accomplishments to show to his people as he marks a decade in power. He failed to win badly needed sanctions relief from his talks with then-President Donald Trump, and the COVID-19 pandemic unleashed further shocks to the country's broken economy, forcing him to acknowledge last year that North Korea was facing its "worst-ever situation."

Top Russian diplomat warns Ukraine against provoking WWIII

By DAVID KEYTON and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia's top diplomat warned Ukraine against provoking World War III and said the threat of a nuclear conflict "should not be underestimated" as his country unleashed attacks against rail and fuel installations far from the front lines of Moscow's new eastern offensive.

Meanwhile, the British Defense Ministry said Tuesday that Russian forces had taken the Ukrainian city of Kreminna in the Luhansk region after days of street-to-street fighting.

"The city of Kreminna has reportedly fallen and heavy fighting is reported south of Iziurm as Russian forces attempt to advance towards the cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk from the north and east," the British military said in a tweet. It did not say how it knew the city, 575 kilometers (355 miles) southeast of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, had fallen. The Ukrainian government did not immediately comment.

Ukraine's General Staff said Russian forces were shelling Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, as they fought to take full control of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which comprise the Donbas in Ukraine's industrial heartland, and establish a land corridor to Crimea.

In the area of Velyka Oleksandrivka, a village in the Kherson region largely controlled by Russians, Ukrainian forces destroyed an ammunition depot and "eliminated" more than 70 Russian troops, the General Staff said.

The governor of the Luhansk region, Serhiy Haidai, said on the messaging app Telegram that the Russians had shelled civilians 17 times over the previous 24 hours, with the cities of Popasna, Lysychansk and Girske suffering the most.

Four people died and nine more were wounded on Monday in the Russian shelling of the Donetsk region, its governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said on Telegram. He said a 9-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy were among those killed.

The U.S. has been rushing more weaponry to Ukraine and said the assistance from Western allies is making a difference in the 2-month-old war.

"Russia is failing. Ukraine is succeeding," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken declared Monday after he and the U.S. secretary of defense made a bold visit to Kyiv to meet with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Blinken said Washington approved a \$165 million sale of ammunition — non-U.S. ammo, mainly if not entirely for Ukraine's Soviet-era weapons — and will also provide more than \$300 million in financing to buy more supplies.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin went further, saying the U.S. wants to see Ukraine remain a sovereign, democratic country, but also wants "to see Russia weakened to the point where it can't do things

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like invade Ukraine.”

Austin’s remarks appeared to represent a shift in U.S. strategic goals since earlier Washington said the goal of American military aid was to help Ukraine win and to defend Ukraine’s NATO neighbors against Russian threats.

In an apparent response to Austin, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia has “a feeling that the West wants Ukraine to continue to fight and, as it seems to them, wear out, exhaust the Russian army and the Russian military industrial war complex. This is an illusion.”

Weapons supplied by Western countries “will be a legitimate target,” said Lavrov, who accused Ukrainian leaders of provoking Russia by asking NATO to become involved in the conflict. NATO forces are “pouring oil on the fire,” Lavrov said, according to a transcript on the Russian Foreign Ministry’s website.

“Everyone is reciting incantations that in no case can we allow World War III,” he said in a Russian television interview.

Lavrov said he would not want to see risks of a nuclear confrontation “artificially inflated now, when the risks are rather significant.”

“The danger is serious,” he said. “It is real. It should not be underestimated.”

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter that Lavrov’s comments underscore Ukraine’s need for Western help: “Russia loses last hope to scare the world off supporting Ukraine. Thus the talk of a ‘real’ danger of WWIII. This only means Moscow senses defeat in Ukraine.”

When Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, its apparent goal was to seize Kyiv, the capital. But the Ukrainians, helped by Western weapons, forced President Vladimir Putin’s troops to retreat.

Moscow now says its goal is to take the Donbas, the mostly Russian-speaking industrial region in eastern Ukraine, where residents are struggling to survive without many of the basics, collecting rainwater for cleaning and washing up and fervently hoping for an end to the fighting.

“When you open a plastic bottle and it makes a crackling sound, you are worried at once (thinking that it’s an explosion) because of all those blasts. Anything that is happening, any noise, if our neighbours bang the door, a metal door, you are startled,” said Andriy Cheromushkin, a resident of Toretsk, a small city south of Kramatorsk.

“It’s bad. Very bad. Hopeless,” he said. “You feel so helpless that you don’t know what you should do or shouldn’t do. Because if you want to do something, you need some money; and there is no money now.”

On Monday, Russia was focusing its firepower beyond the Donbas, with missiles and warplanes striking far behind the front lines to try to thwart Ukrainian supply efforts.

Five railroad stations in central and western Ukraine were hit, and one worker was killed, said Oleksandr Kamyshin, head of Ukraine’s state railway. Missiles struck Lviv, the western city near the Polish border jammed by Ukrainians fleeing their home.

Ukrainian authorities said at least five people were killed by Russian strikes in the central Vynnytsia region.

Russia also destroyed an oil refinery and fuel depots in Kremenchuk, in central Ukraine, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said. In all, Russian warplanes destroyed 56 Ukrainian targets, he said.

The strikes on fuel depots are meant to deplete vital Ukrainian war resources. Strikes against rail targets, both disrupt supply lines and intimidate people trying to use the railways to flee the fighting, said Philip Breedlove, a retired U.S. general who was NATO’s top commander from 2013- 2016.

An estimated 2,000 Ukrainian troops holed up in a steel plant in the strategic southern port city of Mariupol are tying down Russian forces, apparently preventing them from joining the offensive elsewhere in the Donbas. Over the weekend, Russian forces launched new airstrikes on the Azovstal plant to try to dislodge the holdouts.

Some 1,000 civilians were also said to be taking shelter at the steelworks.

The city council and mayor of Mariupol said a new mass grave was identified about 10 kilometers (6 miles) north of the city. Mayor Vadym Boychenko said authorities were trying to estimate the number of victims. It was at least the third new mass grave discovered in Russian-controlled areas near Mariupol in the last week.

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Mariupol has been gutted by bombardment and fierce street fighting over the past two months. Russia's capture of the city would deprive Ukraine of a vital port and give Moscow a land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014.

In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy said Ukraine was maintaining its resistance to "make the occupiers' stay in our land even more intolerable," while Russia drains its resources.

Britain said it believes 15,000 Russian troops have been killed in Ukraine since Russia's invasion began. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said 25% of the Russian combat units sent to Ukraine "have been rendered not combat effective."

Ukrainian officials have said about 2,500 to 3,000 Ukrainian troops had been killed as of mid-April.

France's victorious Macron boosts weapons, stakes in Ukraine

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — When Vladimir Putin congratulated Emmanuel Macron on his re-election as France's president and wished him "success in your activities," the Russian leader probably was being more polite than sincere.

As he embarks on a second term, with the intention of keeping France at the forefront of international efforts to force Putin to change course in Ukraine, Macron has given a green light for the delivery of modern artillery pieces to Kyiv that could help stem Russia's new offensive in the east of the country.

Firing six rounds per minute over 40 kilometers (25 miles) or more, the truck-mounted Caesar cannons will allow Ukrainian crews to pound Russian troops from afar, then move and pound them again. Used to great effect against Islamic State forces in Iraq and in other conflicts, they represent a step up in France's assistance to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government.

In another remarkable move, Macron is talking openly about the guns, lifting a veil of secrecy he'd thrown over French military aid. The delivery and the publicity together signal a tougher line from Macron in his dealings with Putin — talking less and engaging more in brinkmanship with the Kremlin.

"Initially, we were a bit shy to show what was being provided," said retired Gen. Dominique Trinquand, a former head of France's military mission at the United Nations. But "we have been escalating week after week, testing the reaction."

Macron was in the closing stages of his presidential re-election campaign when he name-dropped the Caesar cannons in an April 21 interview with the newspaper Ouest-France. He also mentioned Milan anti-tank missiles, although those supplies had already been reported.

Macron didn't give numbers. Citing unidentified French sources, Ouest-France said 12 Caesars will be drawn from the French arsenal and that 40 Ukrainian artillery soldiers were arriving for training at a military base in the south of France.

Macron said his "red line" remains not entering into direct conflict with Russia, but within that limit, "we must provide maximum help to the Ukrainians."

"We are delivering consequential equipment," he said. "We need to continue down this path."

His armed forces minister tweeted that thousands of shells would also be part of the delivery. Sunil Nair, an analyst who specializes in artillery systems for the defense publication Janes, said the cannons could be used independently of each other or together as a battery.

"It does give you firepower, no doubt about it," he said. "It's a question of how they use it and where they use it."

Before and after Russia's Feb. 24 invasion, Macron had kept an open line with Putin. But the horrors discovered by Ukrainian troops as they retook control of villages near Kyiv once Russian soldiers withdrew gave Macron pause. His office said last week that the two leaders haven't spoken since March 29.

Macron says that, eventually, he'll need to pick up the phone again — because not talking to Putin will allow the leaders of China, India and Turkey to take the lead in trying to negotiate the peace, whenever that time comes.

"We'll have to prepare a cease-fire at some stage, and Europe will have to be around the table," Macron

said last week.

In the meantime, French weapons will do some of the talking — in hopes of adding to the pressure on Putin.

“The best way to have successful talks is to have successful Ukrainians throwing back the Russian invasion,” said François Heisbourg, a French analyst on defense and security questions at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

The Caesars will allow their crews to go hunting for Russian artillery pieces being used in eastern Ukraine that are indiscriminately pummeling civilian targets.

“The Americans and the Poles and the Slovaks and the Belgians and the French and the Canadians are all sending heavy artillery to the Ukrainians,” Heisbourg said.

“That’s a really, really big improvement to the situation of Ukraine in the new phase of the war.”

Son of famed American artist charged in Jan. 6 Capitol riot

By STEVE LeBLANC and BEN FOX Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — For years, Vincent Gillespie waged a legal battle to try to gain control of hundreds of paintings by his father — renowned postwar American artist Gregory Gillespie.

On Jan. 6, 2021, prosecutors say, Gillespie engaged in a very different kind of battle, joining rioters as they tried to wrest control of the U.S. Capitol from the federal government in one of the most violent confrontations of the riot.

Gillespie, who investigators say was identified by half a dozen sources from images taken that day, was among a mob trying to force its way through a tunnel at the Lower West Terrace of the Capitol — an assault that almost succeeded by his own description.

“We were almost overpowering them,” Gillespie, blood visible on his scalp from the clash, told an Associated Press journalist at the scene that day. “If you had like another 15, 20 guys behind us pushing I think we could have won it.”

The AP video that captured a flushed Gillespie that day milling about outside the Capitol speaking defiantly about his role in the attack — and his lament that more like-minded individuals didn’t join the fight — reveal both the depth of resolve of many of the rioters, and the uncertainty others felt about just what they would do once inside the building.

What is clear, federal investigators said, is that Gillespie participated in a violent struggle against law enforcement officials trying to prevent rioters from entering the building as a joint session of Congress was engaged in certifying Electoral College votes.

The Athol, Massachusetts, resident was spotted outside the Capitol pouring water into his eyes apparently to combat the effects of chemical spray used to try to control the crowd.

Gillespie told the AP at the scene that day that he was among those attempting to storm the building. Gillespie said he and others tried to burst through an opening.

“I was with some other guys. And then we were starting to push against them and they were beating us and putting that pepper spray stuff in your eyes. But there were a bunch of people pushing behind us,” Gillespie told the AP.

“What you guys need to know, and no one is going to listen to this, we were very (expletive) close.” If more people had been behind him, he said, “then there’s that second set of doors we would have just burst through it.”

What was apparently less clear to Gillespie that day was what he and the others with him would do if they had been able to take control of the Capitol.

“I would hope they would flood in so there’s nothing they can do. That’s what I would hope they would do. Take it over. Take it over. Own it for a few days. I’m not an anarchist, but you can’t let stand what happened in this election,” he said, an apparent reference to former President Donald Trump’s claims of a stolen election.

Although he was quick to offer up his name when asked by the AP reporter, Gillespie hesitated before

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saying where he was from.

"They'll come after me, man," he said, hesitating before adding, "I'm in Massachusetts."

Gillespie ultimately faced seven criminal counts including civil disorder, assaulting officers and disorderly conduct in the Capitol. He has pleaded not guilty.

He's one of more than 775 people arrested in nearly all 50 states and the District of Columbia in connection with the Jan. 6 assault in which the pro-Trump mob sought to stop the certification of Joe Biden's 2020 election victory. Rioters smashed windows, broke through doors and beat and bloodied law enforcement officers who were vastly underprepared for the mob.

Vincent Gillespie is the son of Gregory Gillespie, the artist whose self-portraits, fantasy landscapes and geometric abstractions are included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and other museums.

His paintings are also at the center of a long-running and so far unsuccessful legal battle waged by Gillespie against his stepmother and her lawyers in an effort to contest control of the paintings. In a court filing from 2020, Vincent Gillespie described his father as a renowned artist who left more than 400 valuable paintings when he died.

Gillespie's participation in the events of Jan. 6, 2021, appears well documented, including in photos and videos that helped tipsters identify him, investigators said.

Open-source video and security cameras captured multiple images of Gillespie participating in the riot, according to the Justice Department.

Investigators were tipped off by a former neighbor, the manager of a local hardware store and employees of the town of Athol, where Gillespie attends meetings and pays his tax bills at the town hall. In all, six witnesses independently identified him from images taken from the riot.

In the chaos of the insurrection, Gillespie shoved, yelled and pushed and fought with police, the FBI said. Images included in his court papers show him struggling through the crowd, eventually maneuvering through the rioters to the line of police officers and getting control of a police shield.

He's seen and heard on the body camera of a Metropolitan Police Department officer pushing his way through the crowd, using a police shield to ram officers and screaming "traitor" and "treason" as he points to a law enforcement officer, officials said.

After his arrest, Gillespie, 60, was ordered by a judge to stay away from Washington, except for court-related business. He was ordered not to possess a firearm or other weapons.

Gillespie's next court appearance is scheduled for April 29 before U.S. District Chief Judge Beryl Howell of the District of Columbia.

Contacted by the AP following his arrest, Gillespie declined to comment.

"My attorney advised against it. He said there's only downsides to it," he told the AP. "I'd like to talk. There's a lot of stuff out there that's wrong."

It's not the first time Gillespie has been in court.

Years earlier, Gillespie made local headlines by contesting a \$15 parking ticket — despite having to pay \$250 in filing fees. He ended up fighting the filing fee, which was not refundable, all the way to the state's highest court in 2011.

He did not receive a refund.

Perdue hugs Trump as he runs to right in Georgia GOP primary

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

RINGGOLD, Ga. (AP) — As he met with voters recently in a part of northwest Georgia where Donald Trump is still very popular, David Perdue invoked his belief in the lie that elections in 2020 and 2021 were stolen from the former president and himself.

"First of all, it was stolen," Perdue said. "The facts are coming out."

When the rally was over, Perdue visited the storefront office of a group that similarly espouses election falsehoods. Perdue posted a photo on his Facebook page of himself beaming as the group's cofounder

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talks under a banner proclaiming "a legal vote requires the rule of law."

The emphasis on false election claims is a reminder of how far Perdue has veered to the right ahead of next month's primary against incumbent Republican Gov. Brian Kemp. He's evolved from a business-minded conservative who won a U.S. Senate seat in 2014 by focusing on federal spending to a hard-liner who associates with conspiracy theorists.

That tracks with the broader shifts in the Republican Party under Trump. But some in the GOP warn that the fixation on past elections will do little to win a general election in Georgia, where moderate voters are crucial.

"I think David Perdue had a broad appeal in 2014," said Eric Tanenblatt, former chief of staff to ex-Georgia Republican Gov. Sonny Perdue and a former fundraiser for David Perdue who is backing Kemp in the primary. "I think he was a lot more relatable because he was talking about issues that were a lot more appealing to the broader electorate."

Perdue, who was personally courted by Trump to enter the race as retribution for Kemp not going along with election lies, has trailed in the governor's race. But as the May 24 primary nears, the former chief executive of Reebok and Dollar General insists he hasn't changed.

"Even in the Senate, I was an outsider," Perdue said in Ringgold. "I was never part of the good ol' boys club up there, trust me."

Still, Perdue's sharpest focus is on claims that Georgia's 2020 presidential election and 2021 Senate runoffs, in which Perdue lost to Democrat Jon Ossoff, were fraudulently won by Democrats. No credible evidence has emerged to support Perdue and Trump's claims of mass voter fraud. Federal and state election officials and Trump's own attorney general have said the election was fair, and the former president's allegations were also roundly rejected by courts, including by judges Trump appointed.

During the speech, he touted his lawsuit that seeks to unseal physical ballots for examination in Atlanta's Fulton County, making allegations without evidence that poll workers took bribes and people were paid to gather and deliver ballots illegally.

"Who paid you to deliver those harvested ballots?" Perdue asked, suggesting that was a question his lawsuit would settle.

Perdue in 2014 was channeling some of the same businessman-outsider themes that Trump harnessed so powerfully two years later. But he was more subtle then, introducing himself to voters as a "different type of person" who cared most about reforming federal spending.

Perdue wasn't generally seen as the most conservative choice in 2014. After winning the primary, he defeated Democratic candidate Michelle Nunn, whom he said he still considered a friend years later, a nod to a bipartisanship out of vogue among hardcore partisans.

While Perdue was considered a strong conservative in the Senate, there were times he could reach across the aisle. He sought to curb school shootings by promoting better practices for campus safety and security. Perdue offended some conservatives by voting for \$900 billion in additional COVID-19 relief in December 2020, while locked in a runoff with Ossoff.

Perdue was never afraid to play to the far right. In 2016 he asked an evangelical Christian audience to pray for President Barack Obama, citing a psalm that calls for vengeance on the enemies of God: "Let his days be few, and let another have his office." Perdue denied wishing actual harm on the president.

Today, Perdue blames inflation, high gas prices, immigration and American deaths in Afghanistan on Kemp's failure to block Democrats from winning in Georgia. He warns only he can bring Trump voters to the ballot box to defeat Democrat Stacey Abrams. And he says that without Republican control in Georgia, a Republican will lose in 2024.

"You can't win the presidency, a Republican can't win, without Georgia," Perdue said. "And if Stacey Abrams wins this governor's job, no Republican's going to win this state for president. Just trust me."

After Perdue finished speaking to Catoosa County Republicans, he and his wife drove the 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) to an office of VoterGA, wedged between a discount grocer and a Dollar Tree. VoterGA has been protesting Georgia's election system for years, including a failed lawsuit to toss a previous generation of electronic voting machines. VoterGA co-founder Garland Favorito has risen to prominence with Trump's

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relentless focus on fraud claims.

Favorito has also questioned the official version of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. He's claimed Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh improperly covered up the 1993 death of Vince Foster, a lawyer for then-President Bill Clinton.

Perdue's embrace of VoterGA could be trouble in a general election in closely divided Georgia, but many primary voters appreciate his stances. Bonnie Evans, a Fort Oglethorpe retiree, said he liked Perdue's promises to bolster the state police and crack down on immigrants in the country illegally.

"I'm a 100% for him," Evans said. "I was about 80% for him coming in. I think he has common sense. He's not a career politician."

Perdue also lines up behind other proposals that divide Republicans. Perdue and Trump want Atlanta's affluent, white-majority Buckhead neighborhood to get a vote on seceding from the Blacker, poorer remainder of Atlanta. Those who favor a divorce claim Atlanta will never be able to reduce violent crime, but got nowhere in the state legislature this year amid intractable opposition from business groups.

The candidate also amplifies opponents of a \$5 billion, 7,500-job electric truck plant announced east of Atlanta by Rivian Automotive of Irvine, California. Residents knock the plant for ruining their rural quality of life and the state for not consulting them. Perdue in an ad blames "RINO Brian Kemp" for a "secret backroom deal" for a "scheme to give away hundreds of millions of tax dollars" to a company owned by "liberal billionaire George Soros."

Those claims overstate Soros' role. He bought \$2 billion worth of shares about the same time Rivian chose Georgia, but Soros owns only 2% of Rivian and there's no evidence he had any influence on the announcement. The deal is secretive, but no more secretive than other incentive deals Georgia hands out.

The Anti-Defamation League has said that misinformation about Soros is a cornerstone of antisemitic activity.

The attacks on Rivian show Perdue's alienation from some parts of the business community. The Georgia Chamber of Commerce, which endorsed Perdue in 2020 and has endorsed Kemp this year, said in February that politicians criticizing Rivian "are counterproductive and harmful to the long-term economic prosperity for our communities."

Polls show Perdue trailing Kemp and the challenger has so far raised less money, but he told the group in Ringgold, part of a Republican-dominated north Georgia region key to Perdue's hopes, that he could win. "It's right here in our hands," Perdue said. "We have the numbers, if we all vote."

Justices hear fight over asylum-seekers waiting in Mexico

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is seeking the Supreme Court's go-ahead to end a controversial Trump-era immigration program that forces some people seeking asylum in the U.S. to wait in Mexico for their hearings.

The justices are hearing arguments Tuesday in the administration's appeal of lower-court rulings that required immigration officials to reinstate the "Remain in Mexico" policy that the administration "has twice determined is not in the interests of the United States," according to court filings.

Texas and Missouri, which sued to keep the program in place, said it has helped reduce the flow of people into the U.S. at the southern border. "Many raise meritless immigration claims, including asylum claims, in the hope that they will be released into the United States," the states told the Supreme Court in a filing.

About 70,000 people were enrolled in the program, formally known as Migrant Protection Protocols, after President Donald Trump launched it in 2019 and made it a centerpiece of efforts to deter asylum-seekers.

President Joe Biden suspended it on his first day in office and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas ended it in June 2021. In October, DHS produced additional justifications for the policy's demise, to no avail in the courts.

The program resumed in December, but barely 3,000 migrants had enrolled by the end of March, during a period when authorities stopped migrants about 700,000 times at the border.

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The heart of the legal fight is whether the program is discretionary and can be ended, as the administration argues, or is essentially the only way to comply with what the states say is a congressional command not to release the immigrants at issue in the case into the United States.

Without adequate detention facilities in the U.S., Texas and Missouri argue that the administration's only option is to make the immigrants wait in Mexico until their asylum hearings.

The two sides separately disagree about whether the way the administration went about ending the policy complies with a federal law that compels agencies to follow rules and spell out reasons for their actions.

Those being forced to wait in Mexico widely say they are terrified in dangerous Mexican border cities and find it very hard to find lawyers to handle their asylum hearings.

Democratic-led states and progressive groups are on the administration's side. Republican-led states and conservative groups have sided with Texas and Missouri. Those include the America First Legal Foundation, led by former Trump aides Stephen Miller and Mark Meadows.

As the court is weighing the asylum policy, the administration is expected to end another key Trump-era border policy that was put in place because of the coronavirus pandemic. It allows authorities to expel migrants without a chance to seek asylum. The decision to end Title 42 authority, named for a 1944 public health law, on May 23 is being legally challenged by 22 states and faces growing division within Biden's Democratic Party.

Asian shares advance on back of rally on Wall Street

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

Asian shares were mostly higher Tuesday after U.S. stocks stormed back from sharp losses to log strong gains.

Tokyo, Hong Kong, Seoul and Shanghai advanced while Sydney declined. Oil prices rose and U.S. futures also were higher.

South Korea reported that its economy grew at a 3.1% annual pace in the first quarter of the year, up 0.7% from the previous quarter, suggesting a rebound from the travails of the pandemic.

The government has recently lifted most COVID restrictions as case numbers have abated after a wave of the omicron variant.

"This should drive a bounce back in downtrodden parts of the service sector. And a further drop in precautionary savings should provide an extra boost to consumption," Alex Holmes of Capital Economics said in a commentary. "With private consumption still well below pre-pandemic levels, there is plenty of scope for a rebound," he said.

The Kospi in Seoul gained 0.7% to 2,675.21. In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 rose 0.5% to 26,726.65 while Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 1.2% to 20,112.90. The Shanghai Composite index climbed 0.5% to 2,943.22.

US benchmark oil gained 60 cents to \$99.14 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost \$3.53 to \$98.54 on Monday.

Brent crude, the standard for pricing international oil, gained 77 cents to \$102.93 per barrel.

The dollar slipped to 127.75 Japanese yen from 128.14 yen late Monday. The euro rose to \$1.0730 from \$1.0713.

On Monday, the S&P 500 climbed 0.6% to 4,296.12 after erasing an early 1.7% loss. The rally was led by stocks of internet-related companies, including Twitter, which jumped 5.7% after agreeing to let Tesla CEO and tweeter extraordinaire Elon Musk buy it.

The Dow Jones industrial average rose 0.7% to 34,049.46, while the Nasdaq composite rallied 1.3% to 13,004.85.

The S&P 500 is coming off a three-week losing streak, dogged by worries about the Federal Reserve's plans to move faster in raising interest rates to curb high inflation.

Gains for several big tech-related stocks were the strongest forces lifting the S&P 500 Monday, including a 2.4% gain for Microsoft and a 2.9% rise for the Class A shares of Google's parent, Alphabet.

Both are set to report their latest quarterly results on Tuesday.

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Wall Street is in the midst of one of the most important stretches of the earnings season. Apple, Microsoft, Amazon and the parent company of Google are all on deck to report this week. Since they're among the biggest companies by market value, their movements hold the most sway over the S&P 500.

The week started out on a downbeat note, particularly in China, over fears that strict lockdown measures there might further crimp the world's second-largest economy, potentially hurting global economic growth. Stocks in Shanghai slumped 5.1% Monday, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 3.7%.

China's capital, Beijing, has begun mass testing of more than 3 million people and restricted residents in one part of the city to their compounds, sparking worries of a wider lockdown similar to Shanghai. That city has been locked down for more than two weeks and that has already prompted the International Monetary Fund to trim its growth forecast for China's economy.

Worries are also high that the U.S. economy might slow sharply or even fall into a recession because of the big interest-rate increases the Fed is expected to push through.

Besides their bottom-line profit numbers, investors are also looking for a better sense of how big companies in the technology, industrial and retail sectors are handling rising inflation and supply chain issues.

Inflation remains a key concern for investors. Investors are worried about whether the Fed will be able to hike rates enough to quell inflation but not so much as to cause a recession. The chair of the Federal Reserve has indicated the central bank may hike short-term interest rates by double the usual amount at upcoming meetings, starting next week. The Fed has already raised its key overnight rate once, the first such increase since 2018.

Wall Street will also get some key economic data this week. The Conference Board will release its measure of consumer confidence for April on Tuesday. The Commerce Department will release its first-quarter gross domestic product report on Thursday.

Michigan chief IDs officer who fatally shot Patrick Lyoya

By JOHN FLESHER, BERNARD CONDON and ED WHITE undefined

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — The Michigan police officer who killed Patrick Lyoya with a shot to the head has been with the Grand Rapids department for seven years, after starring as a pole vaulter at a small college and marrying his longtime girlfriend during a church mission trip to Africa.

Christopher Schurr's name had been circulating since his face was seen in videos of the April 4 confrontation with Lyoya, a Black man. But his identity wasn't publicly acknowledged until Monday when the police chief changed course and released it, three days after passionate demands at the funeral of the 26-year-old native of Congo.

Chief Eric Winstrom said he was acting "in the interest of transparency, to reduce ongoing speculation, and to avoid any further confusion," though no other information about Schurr's service with the department was released.

Lyoya, who was unarmed, was face down on the ground when he was shot in the back of the head, moments after a traffic stop in Michigan's second-largest city. Schurr was on top of him and can be heard on video demanding that he take his hand off the white officer's Taser.

A forensic pathologist who conducted an autopsy at the family's request said the gun was pressed to Lyoya's head when he was shot.

The Associated Press left a phone message Monday seeking comment from Schurr, who remains off the job while state police investigate the shooting. The AP reached out to him several times over the past week, including knocking at the door of his suburban home. There was no answer.

Schurr, 31, grew up in Byron Center, just south of Grand Rapids, and joined the police in 2015 after attending Siena Heights University in Adrian, Michigan, where he studied accounting and was a star pole vaulter.

He won an NAIA national championship with a vault clearing 17 feet, $\frac{3}{4}$ inches and, as a junior, the university's scholar-athlete award, according to Siena Heights' alumni magazine.

Schurr was active in his church when he was younger, taking missionary trips for Corinth Reformed Church in Byron Center, according to a 2014 story in Vaulter Magazine, a publication dedicated to the sport.

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Schurr said he was getting married that year, and couldn't afford to have a wedding celebration and take a separate trip to Kisi, Kenya, to build homes, so he decided to get married there.

"We're going to do a wedding their style," Schurr told the magazine. "I have an African outfit already and my fiancée will pick out some fabric and she'll make a Kenyan-style dress."

A Twitter account with his name that appears to belong to the officer follows a few national track and field athletes, including a pole vaulter. There are no Tweets associated with the account. A Facebook page with Schurr's name appears to have been taken down.

A college teammate, Ryan Hopson, said Schurr was mild-mannered and quiet in college, friendly and quick with a smile.

"He always had a good vibe," Hopson said. "I can't say nothing bad about him. I really can't. ... I was shocked to see it was him, but I don't know what it's like to be a cop and have my life on the line."

Lyoya's family wants Schurr fired and charged. Prosecutor Chris Becker said he's waiting for the state police report.

"I want to do the right thing. But I realize even if I do the right thing, there is a segment of the population that is not going to be happy," Becker told MLive.com.

The police department's decision to reveal Schurr's name was a reversal. After the release of video of the shooting, Winstrom insisted he would withhold the officer's name unless he was charged with a crime. It was described as a long-standing practice that applied to the public as well as city employees.

But Lyoya's family and Black leaders, including the Rev. Al Sharpton, repeatedly pressed for it, including at Lyoya's funeral, which drew 1,000 people Friday.

"We want his name!" Sharpton shouted, saying authorities cannot set a precedent of withholding the names of officers who kill people unless the officer is charged.

Ven Johnson, an attorney for the family, said it's important that Lyoya's parents now know Schurr's name, though he scoffed at the police chief citing "transparency."

"It's not transparent when you hide something for three weeks. It's quite the opposite," Johnson said. "It's cops taking care of the cops instead of treating it like a normal investigation."

After Lyoya's funeral, Grand Rapids City Manager Mark Washington acknowledged the demand for the officer's name and said he would discuss the matter with Winstrom and city employment officials.

Grand Rapids, population about 200,000, is in western Michigan, 160 miles (257.5 kilometers) west of Detroit.

Russia hits faraway targets; diplomat warns of risk of WWIII

By DAVID KEYTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia unleashed a string of attacks Monday against rail and fuel installations deep inside Ukraine, far from the front lines of Moscow's new eastern offensive, as Russia's top diplomat warned against provoking World War III and said the threat of a nuclear conflict "should not be underestimated."

The U.S., meanwhile, moved to rush more weaponry to Ukraine and said the assistance from the Western allies is making a difference in the 2-month-old war.

"Russia is failing. Ukraine is succeeding," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken declared, a day after he and the U.S. secretary of defense made a bold visit to Kyiv to meet with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Blinken said Washington approved a \$165 million sale of ammunition — non-U.S. ammo, mainly if not entirely for Ukraine's Soviet-era weapons — and will also provide more than \$300 million in financing to buy more supplies.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin took his comments further, saying that while the U.S. wants to see Ukraine remain a sovereign, democratic country, it also wants "to see Russia weakened to the point where it can't do things like invade Ukraine."

Austin's comments about weakening Russia appeared to represent a shift in broader U.S. strategic goals. Previously, the U.S. position had been that the goal of American military aid was to help Ukraine win and to defend Ukraine's NATO neighbors against Russian threats.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said weapons supplied by Western countries "will be a legitimate

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target," adding that Russian forces had already targeted weapons warehouses in western Ukraine.

"Everyone is reciting incantations that in no case can we allow World War III," Lavrov said in a wide-ranging interview on Russian television. He accused Ukrainian leaders of provoking Russia by asking NATO to become involved in the conflict.

By providing weapons, NATO forces are "pouring oil on the fire," he said, according to a transcript on the Russian Foreign Ministry's website.

Regarding the possibility of a nuclear confrontation, Lavrov said: "I would not want to see these risks artificially inflated now, when the risks are rather significant."

"The danger is serious," he said. "It is real. It should not be underestimated."

When Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, its apparent goal was the lightning capture of Kyiv, the capital. But the Ukrainians, with the help of Western weapons, thwarted the push and forced President Vladimir Putin's troops to retreat.

Moscow now says its goal is to take the Donbas, the mostly Russian-speaking industrial region in eastern Ukraine. While both sides say the campaign in the east is underway, Russia has yet to mount an all-out ground offensive and has not achieved any major breakthroughs.

On Monday, Russia focused its firepower elsewhere, with missiles and warplanes striking far behind the front lines in an effort to thwart Ukrainian efforts to marshal supplies for the fight.

Five railroad stations in central and western Ukraine were hit, and one worker was killed, said Oleksandr Kamyshin, head of Ukraine's state railway. The bombardment included a missile attack near Lviv, the western city close to the Polish border that has been swelled by Ukrainians fleeing the fighting elsewhere around the country.

Ukrainian authorities said at least five people were killed by Russian strikes in the central Vynnytsia region.

Russia also destroyed an oil refinery in Kremenchuk, in central Ukraine, along with fuel depots there, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said. In all, Russian warplanes destroyed 56 Ukrainian targets overnight, he said.

Philip Breedlove, a retired U.S. general who was NATO's top commander from 2013 to 2016, said the latest strikes against fuel depots are part of a strategy to deplete key Ukrainian war resources. The strikes against rail targets, on the other hand, are a newer tactic, he said.

"I think they're doing it for the legitimate reason of trying to interdict the flow of supplies to the front," he said. "The illegitimate reason is they know people are trying to leave the country, and this is just another intimidation, terrorist tactic to make them not have faith and confidence in traveling on the rails."

Phillips P. O'Brien, professor of strategic studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, said the war is, for now, settling into a campaign of incremental battlefield losses and gains.

"The two sides are sort of every day weakening each other," he said. "So it's a question of what can you bring in that's new" and "what can you destroy on the other side."

In Transnistria, a breakaway region of Moldova that sits along the Ukrainian border, several explosions believed caused by rocket-propelled grenades hit the territory's Ministry of State Security. There was no immediate claim of responsibility or reports of injuries. Transnistria is a strip of land with about 470,000 people and about 1,500 Russian troops based there.

Moldova's Foreign Ministry said "the aim of today's incident is to create pretexts for straining the security situation in the Transnistrian region." The U.S. warned previously that Russia may launch "false-flag" attacks against its own side to create a pretext for invading other nations.

Last week, Rustam Minnekayev, a Russian military commander, said the Kremlin wants full control of southern Ukraine, which he said would open the way to Transnistria.

An estimated 2,000 Ukrainian troops holed up in a steel plant in the strategic southern port city of Mariupol are tying down Russian forces and apparently keeping them from being added to the offensive elsewhere in the Donbas. Over the weekend, Russian forces launched new airstrikes on the Azovstal plant to try to dislodge the holdouts.

Some 1,000 civilians were also said to be taking shelter at the steelworks, and the Russian military

pledged to open a humanitarian corridor Monday for them to leave.

The Russian offer was met with skepticism by Ukraine. Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said on the Telegram messaging app that Ukraine does not consider the route safe and added that Russia had breached agreements on similar evacuation routes before. She called on the United Nations to oversee an evacuation.

The city council and mayor of Mariupol said a new mass grave has been identified about 10 kilometers (6 miles) north of the city. Mayor Vadym Boychenko said authorities were trying to estimate the number of victims. It was at least the third new mass grave discovered in Russian-controlled areas near Mariupol in the last week.

Mariupol has been gutted by bombardment and fierce street fighting over the past two months. In addition to freeing up Russian troops, the capture of the city would deprive Ukraine of a vital port and allow Moscow to establish a land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014.

In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy said his country's goal is to maintain resistance and "make the occupiers' stay in our land even more intolerable," while Russia drains its resources.

A top Ukrainian official cast doubt on the prospect of further talks between the two countries. Recent sessions in Istanbul ended without resolution earlier this month.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told The Associated Press in an interview that any negotiations other than talks between Zelenskyy and Putin would bring little resolution.

Britain said it believes 15,000 Russian troops have been killed in Ukraine since Moscow began its invasion. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said 25% of the Russian combat units sent to Ukraine "have been rendered not combat effective."

Ukrainian officials have said about 2,500 to 3,000 Ukrainian troops had been killed as of mid-April.

Most of Beijing to be tested for COVID amid lockdown worry

By EMILY WANG and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Beijing will conduct mass testing of most of its 21 million people, authorities announced Monday, as a new COVID-19 outbreak sparked stockpiling of food by residents worried about the possibility of a Shanghai-style lockdown.

The Chinese capital began mass testing people in one of its 16 districts where most of the new cases have been found. The city also imposed lockdowns on individual residential buildings and one section of the city. Late in the day, health officials said the testing would be expanded Tuesday to all but five outlying districts.

While only 70 cases have been found since the outbreak surfaced Friday, authorities have rolled out strict measures under China's "zero-COVID" approach to try to prevent a further spread of the virus.

Some residents worked from home and many stocked up on food as a safeguard against the possibility that they could be confined indoors, as has happened in multiple cities, including the financial hub of Shanghai. The city of Anyang in central China and Dandong on the border with North Korea became the latest to start lockdowns as the omicron variant spreads across the vast country of 1.4 billion people.

Shanghai, which has been locked down for more than two weeks, reported more than 19,000 new infections and 51 deaths in the latest 24-hour period, pushing its announced death toll from the ongoing outbreak to 138.

Beijing residents snapped up rice, noodles, vegetables and other food items as long lines formed in supermarkets and store workers hastily restocked some empty shelves. State media issued reports saying supplies remained plentiful despite the buying surge.

Shoppers appeared concerned but not yet panicked. One woman, carrying two bags of vegetables, eggs and frozen dumplings, said she was buying a little more than usual. A man said he isn't worried but is just being cautious since he has a 2-year-old daughter.

Beijing health officials said 29 new cases had been identified in the 24 hours through 4 p.m. Monday, raising the total to 70 since Friday.

The city has ordered mass testing across sprawling Chaoyang district, where 46 of the cases have been found. The 3.5 million residents of Chaoyang, as well as people who work in the district, need to be tested on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Testing sites were set up overnight and in the early morning in Chaoyang at residential complexes and office buildings around the district. Residents and workers lined up at the temporary outdoor stations for a quick throat swab by a worker in full protective gear. The testing is free.

"I think Beijing should be fine," said Gao Haiyang as he waited on line for a COVID-19 test. "Based on the previous response made by my community, if there's any emergency, I think supply can be guaranteed. Plus there were lessons we learned from other cities. I think we can make good preparations."

Shanghai has buckled under a strict lockdown that has driven residents to band together to get food delivered through group buying. Goods have backed up at the port of Shanghai, affecting supplies and factory production and putting a crimp on economic growth.

Beijing locked down residents in an area about 2 by 3 kilometers (1 by 2 miles), telling them to work from home and stay in their residential compounds. It wasn't a total lockdown but cinemas, karaoke bars and other entertainment venues were ordered closed.

Elsewhere, the city also shut down some or all buildings in five residential compounds, adding to others that were locked down on Sunday.

Melissa Lucio's execution delayed by Texas appeals court

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A Texas appeals court on Monday delayed the execution of Melissa Lucio amid growing doubts about whether she fatally beat her 2-year-old daughter in a case that has garnered the support of lawmakers, celebrities and even some jurors who sentenced her to death.

The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals granted a request by Lucio's lawyers for a stay of execution so a lower court can review her claims that new evidence would exonerate her.

Lucio had been set for lethal injection Wednesday for the 2007 death of her daughter Mariah in Harlingen, a city of about 75,000 in Texas' southern tip.

Prosecutors have maintained that the girl was the victim of abuse and noted that her body was covered in bruises. Lucio's lawyers say Mariah died from injuries she sustained in a fall down a steep staircase several days before she died.

"I am grateful the court has given me the chance to live and prove my innocence," Lucio said in a statement provided by her lawyers. "Mariah is in my heart today and always. I am grateful to have more days to be a mother to my children and a grandmother to my grandchildren. I will use my time to help bring them to Christ. I am deeply grateful to everyone who prayed for me and spoke out on my behalf."

Lucio's mother, Esperanza Treviño, tearfully thanked all of her daughter's supporters, saying, "Thank God for the miracle."

Lucio was first told her execution had been delayed in a phone call with state Rep. Jeff Leach, a Republican who has helped lead a bipartisan effort to halt her execution, said Vanessa Potkin, one of Lucio's attorneys who is with the Innocence Project.

"She sobbed. She was just overwhelmed," said Potkin.

In a statement, Leach said he was grateful the appeals court had "pushed the pause button on her execution, saving the state of Texas from the irreversible blunder of potentially killing an innocent citizen."

The execution stay was announced minutes before the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles had been set to consider Lucio's clemency application to either commute her death sentence or grant her a 120-day reprieve. The paroles board did not review her clemency petition because of the execution stay. If the case were to come back before the board in the future, Lucio's lawyers would have to file a new petition.

Lucio's attorneys say her capital murder conviction was based on an unreliable and coerced confession that was the result of relentless questioning and her long history of being sexually, physically and emotionally abused. They say Lucio wasn't allowed to present evidence questioning the validity of her confession.

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Her lawyers also contend that unscientific and false evidence misled jurors into believing Mariah's injuries could have been caused only by abuse and not by medical complications from a severe fall.

"It would have shocked the public's conscience for Melissa to be put to death based on false and incomplete medical evidence for a crime that never even happened," said Potkin. "All of the new evidence of her innocence has never before been considered by any court. The court's stay allows us to continue fighting alongside Melissa to overturn her wrongful conviction."

Cameron County District Attorney Luis Saenz, whose office prosecuted the case, said in a statement he expected the execution to be delayed because various legal issues remain unresolved.

"I welcome the opportunity to prosecute this case in the courtroom: where witnesses testify under oath, where witnesses may be cross-examined, where evidence is governed by the rules of evidence and criminal procedure ... That is our criminal jurisprudence system, and it is working," said Saenz, who was not in office when Lucio was tried in 2008.

During a sometimes contentious Texas House committee hearing on Lucio's case this month, Saenz had said he disagreed with Lucio's lawyers' claims that new evidence would exonerate her. Prosecutors say Lucio had a history of drug abuse and at times had lost custody of some of her 14 children.

In its three-page order, the appeals court asked that the trial court in Brownsville that handled Lucio's case review four claims her lawyers have made: whether prosecutors used false evidence to convict her; whether previously unavailable scientific evidence would have prevented her conviction; whether she is actually innocent; and whether prosecutors suppressed evidence that would have been favorable to her defense.

It was not immediately known when the lower court would begin reviewing her case. Tivon Schardl, one of Lucio's lawyers, said they hope to convince the trial judge to recommend a new trial. If such a recommendation is made, that would then be sent to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, which would make the final decision on a new trial.

More than half the members of the Texas Legislature had asked that her execution be halted. A bipartisan group of state lawmakers traveled this month to Gatesville, where the state houses female death row inmates, and prayed with Lucio.

One of those lawmakers, El Paso Democratic state Rep. Joe Moody, tweeted that he was relieved for Lucio. "A stay confirms what we've said all along: Melissa Lucio shouldn't be on death row," he wrote.

Five of the 12 jurors who sentenced Lucio and one alternate juror have questioned their decision and asked that she get a new trial.

Lucio's cause also has the backing of faith leaders and celebrities such as Kim Kardashian, and it was featured on HBO's "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver."

White House: Without funding US will lose COVID treatments

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For much of the past two years, America has been first in line for COVID-19 vaccines and treatments. Now, as drugmakers develop the next generation of therapies, the White House is warning that if Congress doesn't act urgently the U.S. will have to take a number.

Already the congressional stalemate over virus funding has forced the federal government to curtail free treatment for the uninsured and to ration monoclonal antibody supplies. And Biden administration officials are expressing increasing alarm that the U.S. is also losing out on critical opportunities to secure booster doses and new antiviral pills that could help the country maintain its reemerging sense of normalcy, even in the face of potential new variants and case spikes.

Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Hong Kong have all placed orders for treatments and vaccine doses that the U.S. can't yet commit to, according to the White House.

Months ago, the White House began warning that the country had spent through the money in the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan that was dedicated directly to COVID-19 response. It requested an additional \$22.5 billion for what it called "urgent" needs in both the U.S. and abroad.

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The Senate last month closed in on smaller \$10 billion package focused on domestic needs. But even that deal fell apart as lawmakers objected to an announcement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that it would end Trump-era border restrictions related to the pandemic.

The White House this week is mounting a push for doctors to get less stingy about prescribing the antiviral pill Paxlovid, which was initially rationed for those at the highest risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19 but is now more widely available. A 20 million-dose order placed last year by the government helped boost manufacturing capacity.

Paxlovid, when administered within five days of symptoms appearing, has been proven to bring about a 90% reduction in hospitalizations and deaths among patients most likely to get severe disease. Some 314 Americans are now dying each day from the coronavirus, down from more than 2,600 during the height of the omicron wave earlier this year.

The U.S. used similar advance-purchase agreements to boost the domestic supply and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines, through what was known in the Trump administration as "Operation Warp Speed."

Now, with a new generation of treatments on the horizon, the U.S. is falling behind.

Japan has already placed an initial order for drugmaker Shionogi's upcoming COVID-19 antiviral pill, which studies have shown to be at least as effective as Pfizer's treatment and has fewer drug-to-drug interactions and is easier to administer.

Because of the funding delays, officials say, the U.S. has yet to place an advance order, which would help the company scale manufacturing to widely produce the pill.

"We know companies are working on additional, promising life-saving treatments that could protect the American people, and without additional funding from Congress, we risk losing out on accessing these treatments, as well as tests and vaccines, while other countries get in front of us in line," said White House spokesman Kevin Munoz. "Congress must act urgently upon return from recess to provide the funding needed to secure new treatments for the American people and to avoid this dangerous outcome."

Complicating matters further are the long lead times to manufacture the antiviral and antibody treatments. Paxlovid takes about six months to produce, and monoclonal antibody treatments used to treat COVID-19 and prevent serious disease in the immunocompromised take similarly long, meaning the U.S. is running out of time to replenish its stockpile before the end of the year.

Last month the White House began cutting back shipments of monoclonal antibody treatments to states to make supplies last longer.

Administration officials declined to discuss specific treatments they are stymied from ordering because of contracting requirements.

The funding debate is also holding up U.S. purchases of COVID-19 vaccine booster doses, including an upcoming new generation of vaccines that may better protect against the omicron variant.

Moderna and Pfizer both are testing what scientists call "bivalent" shots — a mix of each company's original vaccine and an omicron-targeted version — with Moderna announcing last week it hopes to have its version ready this fall.

The Biden administration has said that while the U.S. has enough vaccine doses for children under 5, once they are approved by regulators, and for fourth shots for high-risk people over 50, it doesn't have the money to order the new generation of doses.

Earlier this month, former White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients said Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Hong Kong had already secured future booster doses.

Republicans have shown no signs of backing down from their insistence that before supplying the 10 GOP votes needed for the COVID-19 funding package to pass the Senate, the chamber must vote on their effort to extend the Trump-era Title 42 order. That COVID-linked order, which requires authorities to immediately expel nearly all migrants at the border, is set to be lifted on May 23.

An election-year vote to extend that order would be perilous for Democrats, and many hope no such vote occurs. Many say privately they hope Biden will keep the immigration curbs in place or that a court will postpone the rules' termination, but Republicans could well force a vote anyway.

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"Congress would have to take action in order for the day not to be May 23," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said early this month that he expected legislation this spring that would wrap together funds for COVID-19 and Ukraine. Aid for Ukraine has wide bipartisan support and could help propel such a package through Congress, but Republican opposition has already forced legislators to strip out pandemic response funding once.

There are at least six Democrats, and potentially 10 or more, who would be expected to back the Republican amendment to extend the immigration order, enough to secure its passage.

Such a vote would be dangerous for Democrats from swing districts, who must appeal to pro-immigration core Democratic voters without alienating moderates leery of the increase in migrants that lifting the curbs is expected to prompt.

Republicans haven't said what language they would embrace, but they could turn to a bipartisan bill by Sens. James Lankford, R-Okla., and Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz.

It would delay any suspension of the immigration limits until at least 60 days after the U.S. surgeon general declares the pandemic emergency to be over. The administration would also have to propose a plan for handling the anticipated increase in migrants crossing the border. Democrats expressing support for keeping the immigration restrictions in place have cited a lack of planning by the administration as their chief concern although the Biden administration has insisted it is preparing for an increase in border crossings.

Parents sue after death of teen from Florida drop-tower ride

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The parents of a 14-year-old boy who fell to his death from a 430-foot (131-meter) drop-tower ride in central Florida's tourist district sued its owner, manufacturer and landlord on Monday, claiming they were negligent and failed to provide a safe amusement ride.

The parents of Tyre Sampson said in the lawsuit filed in state court in Orlando that the defendants failed to warn their 6-foot-2-inch (188-centimeter), 380-pound (172-kilogram) son about the risks of someone of his size going on the ride and didn't provide an appropriate restraint system on the ride.

While most free-fall rides have a shoulder harness and a seatbelt, the Orlando Free Fall ride had only an over-the-shoulder harness. Adding seatbelts to the ride's 30 seats would have cost \$660, the lawsuit said.

At the time of the accident last month, Sampson was on spring break, visiting from the St. Louis area.

"The defendants in Tyre's case showed negligence in a multitude of ways," said attorney Benjamin Crump, who is representing Sampson's family. "From the ride and seat manufacturers and the installer to the owners and operators, the defendants had more than enough chances to enact safeguards, such as seatbelts, that could have prevented Tyre's death."

An attorney for the ride's owner, Orlando Slingshot, said the company was continuing to cooperate with state investigators into what happened. "We reiterate that all protocols, procedures and safety measures provided by the manufacturer of the ride were followed," attorney Trevor Arnold said in an emailed statement.

A spokesman for the landlord, ICON Park, didn't comment immediately on the lawsuit.

Last week, an initial report by outside engineers hired by the Florida Department of Agriculture said that sensors on the ride had been adjusted manually to double the size of the opening for restraints on two seats, resulting in Sampson not being properly secured before he slipped out and fell to his death.

The Orlando Free Fall ride, which is taller than the Statue of Liberty, didn't experience any electrical or mechanical failures, the report said.

The report said there were many other "potential contributions" to the accident and that a full review of the ride's design and operations was needed.

Supreme Court tackles case about praying football coach

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By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A coach who crosses himself before a game. A teacher who reads the Bible aloud before the bell rings. A coach who hosts an after-school Christian youth group in his home.

Supreme Court justices discussed all those hypothetical scenarios Monday while hearing arguments about a former public high school football coach from Washington state who wanted to kneel and pray on the field after games. The justices were wrestling with how to balance the religious and free speech rights of teachers and coaches with the rights of students not to feel pressured into participating in religious practices.

The court's conservative majority seemed sympathetic to the coach while its three liberals seemed more skeptical. The outcome could strengthen the acceptability of some religious practices in the public school setting.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh, who played basketball in high school himself and has coached his daughters' teams, suggested that there's a difference between a coach praying in a huddle with students or in the locker room and "when players are disbursing after the game." "This wasn't, you know, 'Huddle up, team,'" Kavanaugh said at one point, suggesting the coach's practice was acceptable.

Justice Amy Coney Barrett asked what if the coach had instead run an after-school religious youth group at his home, with students free to join or not. Would the school have been able to object to that, she asked.

Arguments at the high court lasted nearly two hours, despite being scheduled for just one. The justices and the lawyers arguing the case at various points discussed teachers and coaches who might wear ashes on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday, oppose racism by kneeling during the national anthem or express a political opinion by putting signs in their home's yard. Former NFL player Tim Tebow, who was known for kneeling in prayer on the field, and Egyptian soccer star Mohamed Salah, a Muslim who kneels and touches his forehead to the ground after a goal, also came up.

Justice Samuel Alito, borrowing from the news, asked about protesting the Russian invasion of Ukraine and what if the coach had, instead of praying, gone out to the center of the field and "all he did was to wave a Ukranian flag." Would he have been disciplined? Yes, a lawyer for the school district said, because the district "doesn't want its event taken over for political speech."

The Supreme Court previously declined to get involved in the case at an earlier stage in 2019. At that time Alito wrote for himself and three other conservatives — Kavanaugh and Justices Neil Gorsuch and Clarence Thomas — that a lower court decision in favor of the school district was "troubling" for its "understanding of the free speech rights of public school teachers." But they agreed with the decision not to take the case up at the time.

The case has returned to the court at a time when the court's conservative majority has been sympathetic to the concerns of religious individuals and groups, such as groups that brought challenges to coronavirus restrictions that applied to houses of worship. But cases involving religion can also unite the court. Already this term in an 8-1 decision the justices ruled for a Texas death row inmate who sought to have his pastor pray aloud and touch him while his execution was carried out.

The case before the justices on Monday involves Joseph Kennedy, a Christian and former football coach at Bremerton High School in Bremerton, Washington. Kennedy started coaching at the school in 2008 and initially prayed alone on the 50-yard line at the end of games. But students started joining him, and over time he began to deliver a short, inspirational talk with religious references. Kennedy did that for years and also led students in locker room prayers. The school district learned what he was doing in 2015 and asked him to stop.

Kennedy stopped leading students in prayer in the locker room and on the field but wanted to continue praying on the field himself, with students free to join if they wished. Concerned about being sued for violating students' religious freedom rights, the school asked him to stop his practice of kneeling and praying while still "on duty" as a coach after the game. The school tried to work out a solution so Kennedy could pray privately before or after the game. When he continued to kneel and pray on the field, the school put him on paid leave.

Kennedy's lawyer, Paul Clement, told the justices that the Constitution's freedom of speech and freedom

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of religion guarantees protect his "private religious expression."

Richard Katskee, a lawyer for the school district, said public school employees can have quiet prayers by themselves at work even if students can see. But, he said, Kennedy's actions pressured students to pray and also caused a safety issue.

After Kennedy publicized his dispute with the school district in the media, spectators stormed the field to pray with him, knocking down students in the process. He noted that coaches have a power that is "awesome." "The coach determines who makes varsity, who gets playing time" and who gets recommended for college scholarships, he said. "The students know you have to stay in the good graces of the coach if ... you have those aspirations."

Justice Elena Kagan said the court has in past cases cared about "coercion on students and having students feel that they have to join religious activities that they do not wish to join, that their parents do not wish them to join."

Kagan is one of three justices on the court to have attended a public high school while the rest attended Catholic schools.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor questioned why Kennedy had to pray on the 50-yard-line immediately after the game rather than other options the school offered: "Why there?" she asked at one point.

Clement said "his religious beliefs" compelled Kennedy to express his thanks there. "I don't think there's anything unusual about that," he said.

A decision is expected before the court begins its summer recess.

The case is Kennedy v. Bremerton School District, 21-418.

Judge finds Donald Trump in contempt in New York legal fight

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York judge found former President Donald Trump in contempt of court and set in motion \$10,000 daily fines Monday for failing to adequately respond to a subpoena issued by the state's attorney general as part of a civil investigation into his business dealings.

Judge Arthur Engoron said a contempt finding was appropriate because Trump and his lawyers hadn't shown they had conducted a proper search for records sought by the subpoena.

"Mr. Trump, I know you take your business seriously, and I take mine seriously," Engoron said in a Manhattan courtroom that was packed with reporters, but absent of Trump. "I hereby hold you in civil contempt and fine you \$10,000 a day" until the terms of the subpoena are met.

New York Attorney General Letitia James, a Democrat, had asked the court to hold Trump in contempt after he failed to produce any documents to satisfy a March 31 court-imposed deadline to meet the terms of the subpoena.

Trump, a Republican, has been fighting James in court over her investigation, which he has called a politically motivated "witch hunt." During oral arguments Monday, Trump attorney Alina Habba said that "Donald Trump does not believe he is above the law."

Habba said in a statement that the ruling will be appealed.

"We respectfully disagree with the court's decision. All documents responsive to the subpoena were produced to the attorney general months ago," she said.

James has been conducting a lengthy investigation into the Trump Organization, the former president's family company, centering around what she has claimed is a pattern of misleading banks and tax authorities about the value of his properties.

"Today, justice prevailed," James said in a release after Engoron's ruling. "For years, Donald Trump has tried to evade the law and stop our lawful investigation into him and his company's financial dealings. Today's ruling makes clear: No one is above the law."

The contempt finding by the judge came despite a spirited argument by Habba, who insisted repeatedly that she went to great lengths to comply with the subpoena, even traveling to Florida to ask Trump specifically whether he had in his possession any documents that would be responsive to the demand.

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The judge, though, criticized the lack of detailed explanation in the Trump team's formal response to the subpoena, telling Habba: "You can't just stand here and say I searched this and that."

And after saying he felt "like there's an 800-pound gorilla in the room here," he asked why the response to the subpoena didn't include an affidavit from Trump.

Habba noted that Trump does not send emails or text messages and has no work computer "at home or anywhere else." She described the search for documents as "diligent."

"The contempt motion is inappropriate and misleading," she said. "He complied. ... There are no more documents left to produce by President Trump."

She also derided the James probe as a "political crusade" and "truly a fishing expedition," saying Trump and his companies had turned over more than 6 million documents and paperwork related to 103 Trump entities for an eight-year period.

"We've turned over everything as fast as possible. This is a waste of judicial resources," Habba added.

She also defended Trump's character, saying: "My client is an honest person much to the dismay of certain people in this room."

Trump spokespeople did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Investigators for James have said in court filings that they uncovered evidence that Trump may have misstated the value of assets like golf courses and skyscrapers on his financial statements for more than a decade.

At the hearing, Assistant Attorney General Andrew Amer said the investigation was being hampered "because we don't have evidence from the person at the top of this organization."

And he said the failure to turn documents over in response to the subpoena was "effectively Mr. Trump thumbing his nose at this court's order."

Still, Assistant Attorney General Kevin Wallace signaled the probe was about to move to a new phase, saying: "We plan to bring enforcement action in the near future."

A parallel criminal investigation is being conducted by the Manhattan District Attorney, Alvin Bragg, also a Democrat.

Monday's contempt finding was not the first for someone who has held the nation's highest office.

While in the White House, then-President Bill Clinton was found in civil contempt of court in April 1999 in connection to his deposition in a sexual harassment lawsuit filed against him in Arkansas by Paula Jones.

Judge Susan Webber Wright held him in contempt for his testimony, where he falsely said he hadn't had a sexual relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. That contempt citation came two months after his acquittal in Congress on articles of impeachment over his testimony.

Depp finishes 4 days on stand; filed lawsuit to 'fight back'

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

FAIRFAX, Va. (AP) — Actor Johnny Depp concluded a grueling four days on the witness stand Monday, telling jurors in a calm voice that he filed his libel lawsuit against his ex-wife because it was his best chance to reclaim his reputation, just hours after they heard audio clips of him berating his wife with coarse vulgarities.

"It was the only time I was able to fight back and use my own voice," Depp said of his decision to sue Amber Heard for a 2018 op-ed piece in The Washington Post in which she refers to herself as "a public figure representing domestic abuse."

He continued to deny that he ever hit Heard, and accused her of hitting him and throwing items including paint cans and vodka bottles at him. And jurors heard an audio clip of a conversation between Depp and Heard in which she seems to taunt him and suggests he won't be believed or respected if he were to publicly cast her as an abuser.

"Tell them, I, Johnny Depp, I'm a victim of domestic abuse ... and see how many people believe or side with you," Heard says on the recording.

Earlier Monday, though, they heard recordings in which Depp referred to the violence that could ensue

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if their arguments were allowed to escalate.

"The next move, if I don't walk away ... it's going to be a bloodbath, like it was on the island," Depp says on the recording.

In other clips, Depp loudly shouts vulgarities at his wife, calling her a degrading name and yelling, "You stupid f---" at her.

Depp winced on the stand as one of the clips was played; Heard appeared to fight back tears at several points as she listened to the recordings.

Heard's op-ed never mentions Depp by name, but he argues that he was defamed nonetheless because parts of the piece clearly refer to allegations of abuse she made in 2016 when she filed for divorce and obtained a temporary restraining order.

The clips were part of a lengthy cross-examination of Depp that began last week and concluded late Monday morning.

Heard's lawyers focused throughout the cross-examination on Depp's drinking, drug use and charged interactions with Heard during their relationship.

During Monday's cross-examination, Depp actually said very little. Most of the questioning consisted of Heard's lawyer playing audio clips or reading vulgar text messages sent by Depp and asking Depp if he'd read them correctly.

Throughout the cross-examination, Depp showed his displeasure with Rottenborn's questions. When Rottenborn interrupted one response, Depp said, "I was talking." When Rottenborn said he considered the question to be fully answered, Depp responded, "as long as you're happy."

Depp also expressed disapproval as Rottenborn read headlines from a series of negative articles written about the actor, some dating back to 2014.

"These are all hit pieces. These are dreck," Depp said.

Rottenborn introduced the articles to try to demonstrate that it was Depp's long history of bad behavior, not the 2018 Post article, that damaged his reputation.

While the libel lawsuit is supposed to center on whether Depp was defamed in the article, most of the trial has focused on ugly details of the couple's brief marriage. Heard's attorneys say Depp physically and sexually abused her and that Depp's denials lack merit because he was often drunk and high to the point of blacking out.

On redirect Monday afternoon, Depp sought to explain some of his coarse language. He said he was often speaking figuratively or making inside jokes with friends, but added, "I'm ashamed that that has to be spread on the world like peanut butter."

And he again denied that he cut off his own finger during a fight with Heard, even though he told people as much at the time. He now says the finger was severed when Heard threw a vodka bottle at him.

"Why would I start lopping off digits in my 50s?" he said, showing his right hand to the jury. "I can't take responsibility for what I now call Little Richard, my chopped finger."

The jury has seen dozens of Depp's texts to friends regarding his drinking, drug use and interactions with his then-wife, as well as his notes of contrition to Heard and her father.

He called the drug addiction accusations against him "grossly embellished," though he acknowledged taking many drugs.

Depp says the Post article contributed to an unfairly ruined reputation that made him a Hollywood outcast and cost him his role in the lucrative "Pirates of the Caribbean" movie franchise. Heard's attorneys say only Depp is to blame for his marred career.

The AP Interview: Kyiv wants UN to seek Mariupol evacuation

By DAVID KEYTON and OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's foreign minister on Monday urged the U.N. chief to press Russia for an evacuation of the besieged port of Mariupol, calling it something the world body is capable of achieving.

Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told The Associated Press in an interview he was concerned that by

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visiting Moscow on Tuesday before traveling to Kyiv, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres could be vulnerable to falling into a Kremlin "trap" in the war.

"Many other foreign officials were trapped visiting Moscow and played around just to show the supremacy of Russian diplomacy and how great they are and how they dictate the world how to behave," he said.

Guterres "should focus primarily on one issue: evacuation of Mariupol," Kuleba said, referring to the the seaside city where an estimated 100,000 people are trapped while a contingent of Ukrainian fighters hold out against Russian forces in a steel mill where hundreds of civilians also are taking shelter.

"This is really something that the U.N. is capable to do. And if he demonstrates political will, character and integrity, I hope that will allow us to make one step forward," he said.

In New York, deputy U.N. spokesman Farhan Haq said Guterres would be bringing many initiatives and suggestions, adding, "I don't want to give too many details at this stage of the sort of proposals he will have," calling it "a fairly delicate moment."

As for going to Moscow before Kyiv, Haq said the itinerary was worked out with both sides and there was "no particular significance in him visiting one country ahead of the other. ...I don't think anyone can say that he is being, as you had put it, pandering to a side on this."

Kuleba spoke a day after U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv, the highest-level American visit to the capital since Russia invaded on Feb. 24.

They told Zelenskyy the U.S. would provide more than \$300 million in foreign military financing and had approved a \$165 million sale of ammunition.

Kuleba praised the visit and called them representatives of "the country that did more than any other country in the world" for Ukraine.

Asked whether the new announcements went far enough, Kuleba said that "as long as Russian soldiers put a foot on Ukrainian soil, nothing is enough."

"We appreciate everything that has been done, including by the United States," Kuleba said. "We understand that, for some, what has been done is already a revolution, but this is not enough as long as the war continues.

"It's not because Ukrainians are greedy, it's not because we want to grasp the opportunity and get as much as we want. No, it's because we need to win this war," he said.

Kuleba emphasized the need for the West to speedily provide weapons needed by Ukraine to win the war and stop Russian President Vladimir Putin from going "deeper into Europe."

"You know, every conversation about weapons starts with us saying 'we need this.' And the initial answer is 'we don't think you need exactly this. ... Let us reflect on it.' It takes some time for partners to reflect, but the problem is that the war continues here," he said.

"In the end, we do get what we need, and then we start getting it in sufficient quantities. But time has been lost. This is the main issue that needs to be addressed, and we were very open with our in particular American counterparts and also with other countries on that. Start doing things fast."

Although Ukraine and Russia have held talks on ending the war since its early days, Kuleba said he thought anything lower than discussions between Zelenskyy and Putin would bring little resolution.

On his Russian counterpart, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Kuleba said: "I don't think he's ready for a serious conversation."

He added that he didn't think Russia is ready to find "solutions at the negotiating table."

"But if I see that they change this attitude and they are ready to seriously look for mutually acceptable solutions, I will overcome my disgust and sit down with him and talk," Kuleba said.

"The sooner President Putin agrees to meet with President Zelenskyy, the more likely it will be to bring the moment of the end of the war closer," he added.

"I don't give a 100% guarantee, but I have confidence in my president. I understand that he's prepared for that conversation and he knows how to negotiate. The longer President Putin escapes this meeting, the (more) likely it is that he is focused entirely on the war scenario," Kuleba said.

He reiterated Zelenskyy's position that an escalation in Mariupol would ruin chances of negotiating with

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Russia.

"We sent a very clear message: If you want to kill those people or you want to take them in as prisoners and humiliate, that will be it. That will be the red line," he said. "But it's not enough to keep things as they are. It's really important to evacuate all of them, to save them."

French President Macron reelected: What's happening next?

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — After winning another five years in the French presidential palace, Emmanuel Macron intends to go back to work straightaway on domestic and foreign policy — but he will soon face crucial parliamentary elections where he may struggle to keep his majority.

Here's a look at what comes next for Macron and his leadership of France.

INAUGURATION CEREMONY

The Constitutional Council will publish the presidential election's official results on Wednesday and Macron will hold a Cabinet meeting.

Macron will then need to set a date for his inauguration ceremony, which must be held by May 13, at the Elysee Palace. He will receive the National Guards' honors and make a speech.

Usually, 21 cannon shots are fired to mark an inauguration, although Presidents Francois Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac both skipped that tradition for their reelections in 1988 and 2002. Macron is the only other leader of modern France to win a second term at the ballot box.

MACRON'S FIRST MOVES

Like five years ago, Macron plans to quickly head to Berlin, in line with the tradition that newly elected French presidents make their first trip abroad to neighboring Germany to celebrate the countries' friendship after multiple wars. He will meet with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, with efforts to try to end the war in Ukraine topping the agenda.

At some point, he may also travel to Kyiv to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a trip he said he would only do on condition that it would have "a useful impact." Macron spoke to both Zelenskyy and Scholz within hours of his victory.

U.S. President Joe Biden tried to congratulate Macron on Sunday night too, but told reporters, "I spoke to his staff and he was at the Eiffel Tower having a good time." The two leaders spoke briefly Monday instead, and agreed to hold longer talks soon about support for Ukraine, pressure on Russia to negotiate an end to the war, food security and deepening U.S.-EU relations, according to Macron's office.

On May 9, Macron is expected to make a speech on Europe in Strasbourg, home to the EU parliament.

At home, he said one of his priorities will be to pass by summer a law to support purchasing power amid the surge in food and energy prices fed by the conflict in Ukraine.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Prime Minister Jean Castex is expected to submit his government's resignation in the coming days. Macron will then appoint a new caretaker government, but ministers will only be in place for a few weeks.

France's nationwide parliamentary election, held in two rounds on June 12 and June 19, will decide who controls a majority of the 577 seats at the National Assembly. If Macron's party wins, he will name a new government and will be able to pass laws.

If another party gets a majority of seats, he will be forced to appoint a prime minister belonging to that new majority. In such a situation, called "cohabitation" in France, the government would implement policies that diverge from Macron's project. The French president would have sway, however, over the country's foreign policy.

Turkish court gives philanthropist Kavala life in prison

By SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — A Turkish court on Monday sentenced prominent Turkish civil rights activist and philanthropist Osman Kavala to life in prison without parole, finding him guilty of attempting to overthrow the government with mass protests in 2013. Western governments and rights groups strongly criticized

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the ruling, with one calling it "a travesty of justice of spectacular proportions."

The court in Istanbul also sentenced seven other defendants, including 71-year-old architect Mucella Yapici, to 18 years in prison each for "aiding" the attempt. It ordered that the activists, who were not in custody, be immediately arrested, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported.

The verdict, which is likely to harm Turkey's ties with Western nations, comes as Europe's top human rights body, the Council of Europe, launched infringement procedures against Turkey for refusing to abide by a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights, which in 2019 called for Kavala's release on grounds that his rights had been violated.

Kavala, 64, has been jailed in Silivri prison, on the outskirts of Istanbul, since he was detained Oct. 18, 2017, accused of financing the protests. He and other defendants denied all the accusations and are expected to appeal the verdicts.

Human rights groups say Kavala was prosecuted with flimsy evidence and that the case is politically motivated. Kavala is the founder of a nonprofit organization, Anadolu Kultur, which focuses on cultural and artistic projects promoting peace and dialogue.

Supporters of Kavala and the seven other defendants immediately protested the verdicts Monday, shouting slogans in support of the 2013 protests that morphed from a dispute over building a mall in an Istanbul park into wider demonstrations against the government of then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said the verdict "blatantly contradicts the constitutional standards and international obligations that Turkey commits itself to as a member of the Council of Europe and EU accession candidate."

"We expect Osman Kavala to be released immediately -- the European Court of Human Rights has bindingly obliged Turkey to do so," Baerbock said.

The rights group PEN America called the verdict a "dark moment for Turkey" while Nils Muiznieks, Amnesty International's director for Europe, said it amounted to a "travesty of justice of spectacular proportions."

"The court's decision defies all logic. The prosecuting authorities have repeatedly failed to provide any evidence that substantiates the baseless charges of attempting to overthrow the government," Muiznieks said in a statement. "We continue to call for Osman Kavala's and his co-defendants' immediate release as they appeal these draconian verdicts."

Ozgur Ozel, an opposition legislator whose party frequently questions the independence of Turkey's courts, accused the judiciary of allegedly meeting the wishes of Erdogan, who is now president.

"Justice did not prevail here today — the will of the person who rules this country was carried out," he told reporters outside the courthouse.

Ozel also denounced the trial as an attempt by Erdogan to "demonize the protests that were extremely peaceful and were staged out of environmental concerns."

Asked for his final words in court on Monday, Kavala said: "The aggravated life sentence demanded against me is an assassination that cannot be explained through legal reasons," according to the Media and Law Studies Association group which has been monitoring the trial.

In his defense statements Friday, Kavala rejected the accusations once again, insisting that he had merely taken pastries and face masks to the protesters. He said allegations that he directed the protests are "not plausible."

"The fact that I spent 4.5 years of my life in prison is an irreparable loss for me. My only consolation is the possibility that my experience will contribute to a better understanding of the grave problems of the judiciary," Kavala told the court by videoconference from Silivri.

Kavala was initially acquitted in February 2020 of charges that connected him with the 2013 Gezi Park protests. As supporters awaited his release, Kavala was rearrested on new charges linking him to Turkey's 2016 coup attempt. The acquittal was later overturned and the case was merged with that relating to the coup attempt, which the Turkish government blames on the network of U.S.-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen. Gulen denies any links to the attempted coup.

The court on Monday acquitted Kavala of charges linked to the coup attempt, saying there was insuf-

ficient evidence, Anadolu reported.

In October, Kavala's continued detention sparked a diplomatic crisis between Turkey and 10 Western countries, including the United States, France and Germany, after they called for his release on the fourth anniversary of his imprisonment.

Erdogan has accused Kavala, of being the "Turkish branch" of billionaire U.S. philanthropist George Soros, whom the Turkish leader alleges has been behind insurrections in many countries. He has threatened to expel Western envoys for meddling in Turkey's internal affairs.

The European Court of Human Rights' 2019 decision said Kavala's imprisonment aimed to silence him and other human rights defenders and wasn't supported by evidence of an offense.

The lengthy infringement process by the Council of Europe, a 47-member bloc that upholds human rights, could lead to the suspension of Turkey's voting rights or membership in the organization.

Erdogan has dismissed the infringement process, saying Turkey would not "recognize those who do not recognize our courts." Turkey had argued that Kavala's detention was linked to the 2016 attempted coup and not the previous charges that were reviewed by the European court.

Egypt: Ruins of ancient temple for Zeus unearthed in Sinai

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Egyptian archaeologists unearthed the ruins of a temple for the ancient Greek god Zeus in the Sinai Peninsula, antiquities authorities said Monday.

The Tourism and Antiquities Ministry said in a statement the temple ruins were found in the Tell el-Farma archaeological site in northwestern Sinai.

Tell el-Farma, also known by its ancient name Pelusium, dates back to the late Pharaonic period and was also used during Greco-Roman and Byzantine times. There are also remains dating to the Christian and early Islamic periods.

Mostafa Waziri, secretary-general of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, said archaeologists excavated the temple ruins through its entrance gate, where two huge fallen granite columns were visible. The gate was destroyed in a powerful earthquake in ancient times, he said.

Waziri said the ruins were found between the Pelusium Fort and a memorial church at the site. Archaeologists found a set of granite blocks probably used to build a staircase for worshipers to reach the temple.

Excavations at the area date back to early 1900 when French Egyptologist Jean Clédat found ancient Greek inscriptions that showed the existence of the Zeus-Kasios temple but he didn't unearth it, according to the ministry.

Zeus-Kasios is a conflation of Zeus, the God of the sky in ancient Greek mythology, and Mount Kasios in Syria, where Zeus once worshipped.

Hisham Hussein, the director of Sinai archaeological sites, said inscriptions found in the area show that Roman Emperor Hadrian (117-138) renovated the temple.

He said experts will study the unearthed blocks and do a photogrammetry survey to help determine the architectural design of the temple.

The temple ruins are the latest in a series of ancient discoveries Egypt has touted in the past couple of years in the hope of attracting more tourists.

The tourism industry has been reeling from the political turmoil following the 2011 popular uprising that toppled longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak. The sector was also dealt further blows by the coronavirus pandemic and most recently Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

UK women slam sexism of 'Basic Instinct' slur on lawmaker

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Women from across British politics called Monday for action to tackle misogyny after a newspaper ran a story accusing the deputy opposition leader of trying to "distract" the prime minister

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during debates by crossing and uncrossing her legs.

The Mail on Sunday quoted an anonymous Conservative lawmaker as saying Labour Party Deputy Leader Angela Rayner tried to throw Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson "off his stride" as she sat across from him in the House of Commons. The article called it "a fully-clothed Parliamentary equivalent of Sharon Stone's infamous scene in the 1992 film 'Basic Instinct,'" in which Stone distracts police interrogators while wearing a short skirt.

Rayner accused "Boris Johnson's cheerleaders" of using "desperate, perverted smears."

"I stand accused of a 'ploy' to 'distract' the helpless PM - by being a woman, having legs and wearing clothes," she wrote on Twitter. "Women in politics face sexism and misogyny every day — and I'm no different."

Rayner, who comes from a working-class family in northern England, left school when she was 16 and got her political start in the trade union movement. That makes a sharp contrast with Johnson, who was educated at the elite private school Eton and Oxford University. Johnson has sometimes struggled to parry her attacks during debates.

The prime minister condemned the article, writing on Twitter: "As much as I disagree with Angela Rayner on almost every political issue, I respect her as a parliamentarian and deplore the misogyny directed at her anonymously today."

Johnson said Monday he had gotten in touch with Rayner about the article, which he called "the most appalling load of sexist, misogynist tripe."

He said the anonymous lawmaker who made the "Basic Instinct" comments would face "the terrors of the Earth" if identified.

"It's totally intolerable, that kind of thing," Johnson told British broadcasters.

More than a century after the first female lawmaker was elected to Britain's Parliament, women make up 34% of the 650 legislators in the House of Commons. Long known for its boozy, macho atmosphere, Parliament is now a more diverse place.

Still, some say change has not gone far enough. Many female U.K. politicians said the article was an extreme example of the sexism they encounter daily.

Labour legislator Rachel Reeves said she hoped the article would prompt people to "call out this misogyny and sexism for what it is (so) that we get some change, because Angela and no other MP should have to put up with this sort of rubbish."

Senior Conservatives also condemned the remarks. Health Secretary Sajid Javid tweeted: "No woman in politics should have to put up with this."

Conservative lawmaker Caroline Nokes, who heads Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee, said she had asked the Speaker of the House of Commons, Lindsay Hoyle, to censure Glen Owen, the journalist who wrote the article.

Hoyle said he had summoned the paper's editor to discuss the article.

Hoyle told lawmakers that media freedom was "one of the building blocks of our democracy," but that publishing such "misogynistic and offensive" comments "can only deter women who might be considering standing for election, to the detriment of us all."

Associated Newspapers, which publishes The Mail on Sunday, declined to comment on the topic.

US promises more Ukraine aid, Biden announces veteran envoy

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

NEAR THE POLISH-UKRAINIAN BORDER (AP) — Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Monday after a secrecy-shrouded visit to Kyiv that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is committed to winning his country's fight against Russia and that the United States will help him achieve that goal.

"He has the mindset that they want to win, and we have the mindset that we want to help them win," Austin told reporters in Poland, the day after the three-hour face-to-face meeting with Zelenskyy in Ukraine.

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Austin said that the nature of the fight in Ukraine had changed now that Russia has pulled away from the wooded northern regions to focus on the eastern industrial heartland of the Donbas. Because the nature of the fight has evolved, so have Ukraine's military needs, and Zelenskyy is now focused on more tanks, artillery and other munitions.

"The first step in winning is believing that you can win," Austin said. "We believe that they can win if they have the right equipment, the right support, and we're going to do everything we can ... to ensure that gets to them."

Asked about what the U.S. sees as success, Austin said that "we want to see Ukraine remain a sovereign country, a democratic country able to protect its sovereign territory. We want to see Russia weakened to the point where it can't do things like invade Ukraine."

The trip by Blinken and Austin was the highest-level American visit to the capital since Russia invaded in late February.

They told Zelenskyy and his advisers that the U.S. would provide more than \$300 million in foreign military financing and had approved a \$165 million sale of ammunition.

"We had an opportunity to demonstrate directly our strong ongoing support for the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian people," Blinken said. "This was, in our judgment, an important moment to be there, to have face-to-face conversations in detail."

Blinken said their meeting with the Ukrainians lasted for three hours for wide ranging talks, including what help the country needs in the weeks ahead.

"The strategy that we've put in place, massive support for Ukraine, massive pressure against Russia, solidarity with more than 30 countries engaged in these efforts, is having real results," Blinken said. "When it comes to Russia's war aims, Russia is failing. Ukraine is succeeding. Russia has sought as its principal aim to totally subjugate Ukraine, to take away its sovereignty, to take away its independence. That has failed."

Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, praised the visit to Kyiv by Blinken and Lloyd and called them representatives of "the country that did more than any other country in the world." Asked whether the new announcements went far enough, Kuleba said that "as long as Russian soldiers put a foot on Ukrainian soil, nothing is enough."

"We appreciate everything that has been done, including by the United States," Kuleba said. "We understand that, for some, what has been done is already a revolution, but this is not enough as long as the war continues."

Kuleba warned that if Western powers want Ukraine to win the war and stop Russian President Vladimir Putin from going "deeper into Europe," then they to speed up the delivery of the weapons requested by Ukraine. He said it takes longer for partner nations to decide to provide Ukraine with the most sophisticated equipment than it does for the Ukrainians to learn how to use it.

"It will be true to say that the United States now lead the effort in ensuring this transition of Ukraine to Western-style weapons, in arranging trainings for Ukrainian soldiers," he said, "and I only regret that it didn't happen a month or two months ago from the very beginning of the war."

Meanwhile, as expected, President Joe Biden announced on Monday his nomination of Bridget Brink to serve as U.S. ambassador to Ukraine. Brink, a career foreign service officer, has served since 2019 as ambassador to Slovakia. She previously held assignments in Serbia, Cyprus, Georgia and Uzbekistan as well as with the White House National Security Council. The post requires confirmation by the U.S. Senate.

The announcement comes as American diplomats prepare to return to Ukraine this coming week, although the U.S. embassy in Kyiv will remain closed for now.

Journalists who traveled with Austin and Blinken to Poland were barred from reporting on the trip until it was over, were not allowed to accompany them on their overland journey into Ukraine, and were prohibited from specifying where in southeast Poland they met back up with the Cabinet members upon their return. Officials at the State Department and the Pentagon cited security concerns.

Austin and Blinken announced a total of \$713 million in foreign military financing for Ukraine and 15 allied and partner countries; some \$322 million is earmarked for Kyiv. The remainder will be split among

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NATO members and other nations that have provided Ukraine with critical military supplies since the war with Russia began, officials said.

Such financing is different from previous U.S. military assistance for Ukraine. It is not a donation of drawn-down U.S. Defense Department stockpiles but rather cash that countries can use to purchase supplies that they might need.

The new money, along with the sale of \$165 million in non-U.S.-made ammunition that is compatible with Soviet-era weapons the Ukrainians use, brings the total amount of American military assistance to Ukraine to \$3.7 billion since the invasion, officials said.

Biden has accused Putin of genocide for the destruction and death wrought on Ukraine. Just on Thursday, Biden said he would provide a new package of \$800 million in military aid to Ukraine that included heavy artillery and drones.

Congress approved \$6.5 billion for military assistance last month as part of \$13.6 billion in spending for Ukraine and allies in response to the Russian invasion.

From Poland, Blinken plans to return to Washington while Austin will head to Ramstein, Germany, for a meeting Tuesday of NATO defense ministers and other donor countries.

That discussion will look at battlefield updates from the ground, additional security assistance for Ukraine and longer-term defense needs in Europe, including how to step up military production to fill gaps caused by the war in Ukraine, officials said. More than 20 nations are expected to send representatives to the meeting.

Hunter Biden is prime target if Republicans win Congress

By NOMAAN MERCHANT, FARNOUSH AMIRI and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Intelligence officials had gathered to brief select members of Congress on future threats to U.S. elections when a key lawmaker in the room, No. 3 House Republican Elise Stefanik of New York, tried to move the discussion to a new topic: Hunter Biden's laptop.

Stefanik, who serves on the House Intelligence Committee, asked the officials during the April 1 briefing whether they had any evidence of Russian involvement in the release of Biden's laptop to the news media in the fall of 2020 — a possibility floated by high-ranking former government officials in the weeks before the presidential election. Intelligence officials told Stefanik the question would be better answered by law enforcement.

Stefanik's query, shared with The Associated Press by a person who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the classified meeting, reflects a widespread sentiment in the GOP that questions about the financial dealings of President Joe Biden's son remain unanswered. And they say they intend to do something about it.

As Republicans prepare for a possible return to power amid rising hopes of winning the House and the Senate in the November elections, they are laying the groundwork to make Hunter Biden and his business dealings a central target of their investigative and oversight efforts.

Republican lawmakers and staff have discussed analyzing specific messages and financial transactions found on the laptop and have also discussed issuing congressional subpoenas to foreign entities involved in paying Hunter Biden, according to people familiar with the matter who were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity. The conversations have been in the early stages but have included talks of bringing on Republican lawyers and former Justice Department officials to help lead the investigations, the people said.

The White House in turn is preparing to defend the Democratic president from any allegations of wrongdoing and make the case that Republicans are driven by opportunism. Democrats are likely to point out how Republicans did not seek investigations into President Donald Trump's own business pursuits in Russia and China or into the foreign dealings of his children and son-in-law while they held key campaign or White House roles.

It all raises the possibility of a messy, politically explosive showdown between a GOP-controlled Congress

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and the White House, one that could delve deeply into the affairs of the president's family and shape the contours of the 2024 race for the White House.

Hunter Biden's taxes and foreign business work are already under federal investigation, with a grand jury in Delaware hearing testimony in recent months. While he never held a position on the presidential campaign or in the White House, Hunter Biden's membership on the board of a Ukrainian energy company and his efforts to strike deals in China have long raised questions about whether he traded on his father's public service, including reported references in his emails to the "big guy."

Joe Biden has said he's never spoken to his son about his foreign business. And there are no indications that the federal investigation involves the president in any way. The White House declined to comment, and a lawyer for Hunter Biden did not respond to an email.

Republican leaders see Hunter Biden as a unifying force that can bring together different factions of the GOP and potentially satiate those calling for more dramatic action. Some members of the hard-line House Freedom Caucus have said the first order of business for a Republican majority should be an impeachment trial of Joe Biden in retaliation for the two impeachments of Trump.

There's also increasing discussion among Republicans about urging the Justice Department to appoint a special counsel, said people familiar with the matter.

"Hunter Biden's fair game because I believe Hunter Biden is a national security risk," said Rep. James Comer of Kentucky, who is in line to take over the House Oversight Committee if Republicans win the House. "Hopefully, when I get the gavel, we'll take it a step further."

In preparation, Comer's oversight staff has already begun to make document requests and archived information related to the president's son.

The New York Post first reported in October 2020 that it had received from Trump's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, a copy of a hard drive of a laptop that Hunter Biden had dropped off 18 months earlier at a Delaware computer repair shop and never retrieved.

The story was greeted with skepticism due to questions about the laptop's origins, including Giuliani's involvement, and because top officials in the Trump administration had already warned that Russia was working to denigrate Joe Biden ahead of the November election. The Kremlin had also interfered in the 2016 race by hacking Democratic emails that were subsequently leaked.

Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee now want to probe the origins of a widely shared letter from 50 former intelligence officials released a week after the New York Post story. The letter claimed the laptop carried "all the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation" and suggested that "the Russians are involved in the Hunter Biden email issue."

Joe Biden in the second presidential debate, responding to Trump's reference to the "laptop from hell," said "there are 50 former national intelligence folks who said that what he's accusing me of is a Russian plant." That statement went further than the letter, though it was immediately and widely reported as having labeled the laptop as disinformation. Trump and many Republicans accused Biden of invoking Russia to avoid scrutiny about his son.

No evidence has emerged since of any Russian connections to the laptop or the emails. A declassified U.S. intelligence assessment of the 2020 election alleged that Russian leader Vladimir Putin authorized multiple efforts in support of Trump. Russian state media amplified "disparaging content" about Biden "including stories centered on his son," the assessment said, which also alleges Putin had "purview" over the activities of a Ukrainian lawmaker who met with Giuliani.

Giuliani's attorney, Robert Costello, called allegations that the Russians were behind the laptop "absurd." Stefanik in a statement said "any alleged attempt by the intelligence agencies or intelligence community leadership to portray the facts surrounding Hunter Biden's laptop as misinformation needs to be investigated and prosecuted."

Meanwhile, GOP Sens. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin and Chuck Grassley of Iowa, who in 2020 issued a report on Hunter Biden and his work on behalf of Ukraine gas company Burisma, recently made a presentation on the Senate floor laying out allegations they say the media have ignored but the Justice Department and Congress need to investigate.

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"The Biden administration has been totally unresponsive to our oversight requests," Grassley said.

For now, the Biden administration and many top Democrats are not commenting publicly on Hunter Biden. But the White House has already reassigned communications staff to prepare to respond to GOP investigations of Hunter Biden and other likely targets, including the origins of the coronavirus and the American withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Democrats are expected to argue that Hunter Biden is ultimately a distraction to most voters concerned about domestic issues. The current House Oversight chair, Rep. Carolyn Maloney of New York, previewed that argument in a statement responding to Comer, her Republican counterpart.

Said Maloney: "I'd hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would be more focused on delivering for the American people than on phony outrage."

Buffett to auction off one last private lunch for charity

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The world's most expensive lunch will go on sale again this spring when investor Warren Buffett auctions off a private meal to raise money for a California homeless charity one last time.

Buffett, Berkshire Hathaway's CEO, held the lunch auction once a year for 20 years before the pandemic began to raise money for the Glide Foundation, which helps the homeless in San Francisco. The auction has been on hiatus for the past two years, but Glide said Monday — a few days before thousands of shareholders are expected to gather at this week's Berkshire annual meeting — that the event will be revived this year.

Every winning bid since 2008 has topped \$1 million, and Buffett has raised nearly \$34.5 million for the charity over the years.

Many of the past winners have been investors who revere Buffett for his remarkable track record of finding undervalued companies and stocks to buy for his Omaha, Nebraska-based conglomerate. But in the last auction, a cryptocurrency pioneer paid \$4,567,888 in 2019 for the chance to dine with Buffett.

Buffett's first wife, Susie, introduced him to Glide after she volunteered there. She died in 2004, but the connection endured.

Buffett has said he supports Glide because they help people in difficult situations find hope again in life. Glide provides meals, health care, job training, rehabilitation and housing support to the poor and homeless.

The 91-year-old billionaire didn't immediately respond to questions about why he decided the end the auction after this year.

Glide's President and CEO Karen Hanrahan said Buffett's "friendship and generosity over the past 22 years have been invaluable" to the charity.

The weeklong eBay auction will begin June 12 with an opening bid of \$25,000 and continue through June 17. The winner will get to bring up to seven people to eat with Buffett at the Smith & Wollensky steak house in New York City. The only topic that's off limits at the lunch is what Buffett might buy next.

Buffett's company owns more than 90 companies including Geico insurance, BNSF railroad, several major utilities and an assortment of manufacturing and retail businesses. Berkshire Hathaway also has major investments in companies including Apple, Coca-Cola Co., American Express and Bank of America.

Ukraine removes Hirohito from video after Japan protests

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Ukraine's government has apologized and removed a photo of Japanese wartime Emperor Hirohito from a video showing him with Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini after Japan protested, officials said Monday.

Japan will continue to support Ukrainians who are defending their country from Russia's invasion despite the "completely inappropriate" portrayal of Hirohito, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihiko Isozaki said.

The video, posted by the Ukrainian government on Twitter on April 1, criticized Russia's invasion as "rashism." Underneath the photos of the three World War II-era leaders were the words "Fascism and

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Nazism were defeated in 1945.”

Japan fought World War II in the name of Hirohito, who was revered as a god until he renounced his divinity after Japan’s defeat. Historical evaluations of his role in the war remain divided. He is known posthumously in Japan as Emperor Showa.

“Portraying Hitler, Mussolini and Emperor Showa in the same context is completely inappropriate,” Isozaki told reporters. “It was extremely regrettable.”

Isozaki said Japan lodged a protest and demanded the removal of the emperor’s image, which Ukraine has done.

“Our sincere apologies to Japan for making this mistake,” the Ukrainian government tweeted Sunday. “We had no intention to offend the friendly people of Japan.”

Ukraine Ambassador to Japan Sergiy Korsunsky also apologized in a tweet Monday, saying the creator of the video lacked an understanding of history.

Hirohito’s son, former Emperor Akihito, devoted his reign to atoning for the impact of the war in and outside Japan.

The video has been replaced with one without Hirohito’s photo, but many Japanese on social media continued to criticize the original as an insult and said Japan should stop supporting Ukraine. Others said Hideki Tojo, the Japanese wartime prime minister who was later convicted of war crimes and hanged, would have been a better choice than Hirohito for the video.

Some, however, raised concern that Japan’s demand that the video be revised was censorship and said Ukraine’s concession set a bad precedent that would embolden Japanese conservatives to further rewrite Japan’s wartime history.

Japan has worried that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine could have an impact in East Asia, where China’s military has grown increasingly assertive and has threatened to unite with Chinese-claimed Taiwan by force if necessary. Japan has tried to play a greater role as part of the Group of Seven industrialized nations in response to the invasion, joining a series of sanctions against Moscow and providing support for Ukraine in line with other members.

Japan provided \$300 million for Ukraine and neighboring countries that have accepted displaced Ukrainians, and has also accepted hundreds of evacuees since Russia’s invasion in late February.

Today in History: April 26, Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, April 26, the 116th day of 2022. There are 249 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On April 26, 1986, an explosion and fire at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine caused radioactive fallout to begin spewing into the atmosphere. (Dozens of people were killed in the immediate aftermath of the disaster while the long-term death toll from radiation poisoning is believed to number in the thousands.)

On this date:

In 1607, English colonists went ashore at present-day Cape Henry, Virginia, on an expedition to establish the first permanent English settlement in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1865, John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln, was surrounded by federal troops near Port Royal, Virginia, and killed.

In 1913, Mary Phagan, a 13-year-old worker at a Georgia pencil factory, was strangled; Leo Frank, the factory superintendent, was convicted of her murder and sentenced to death. (Frank’s death sentence was commuted, but he was lynched by an anti-Semitic mob in 1915.)

In 1933, Nazi Germany’s infamous secret police, the Gestapo, was created.

In 1964, the African nations of Tanganyika and Zanzibar merged to form Tanzania.

In 1968, the United States exploded beneath the Nevada desert a 1.3 megaton nuclear device called “Boxcar.”

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In 1977, the legendary nightclub Studio 54 had its opening night in New York.

In 1984, bandleader Count Basie, 79, died in Hollywood, Florida.

In 1994, voting began in South Africa's first all-race elections, resulting in victory for the African National Congress and the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president.

In 2000, Vermont Gov. Howard Dean signed the nation's first bill allowing same-sex couples to form civil unions.

In 2009, the United States declared a public health emergency as more possible cases of swine flu surfaced from Canada to New Zealand; officials in Mexico City closed everything from concerts to sports matches to churches in an effort to stem the spread of the virus.

In 2018, comedian Bill Cosby was convicted of drugging and molesting Temple University employee Andrea Constand at his suburban Philadelphia mansion in 2004. (Cosby was later sentenced to three to 10 years in prison, but Pennsylvania's highest court threw out the conviction and released him from prison in June 2021, ruling that the prosecutor in the case was bound by his predecessor's agreement not to charge Cosby.)

Ten years ago: Former Liberian President Charles Taylor became the first head of state since World War II to be convicted by an international war crimes court as he was found guilty of arming Sierra Leone rebels in exchange for "blood diamonds" mined by slave laborers and smuggled across the border. (Taylor was sentenced to 50 years in prison.)

Five years ago: Dismissing concerns about ballooning federal deficits, President Donald Trump proposed dramatic tax cuts for U.S. businesses and individuals. NASA's Cassini spacecraft survived an unprecedented trip between Saturn and its rings, sending back amazing pictures to show for it. Jonathan Demme (DEM'-mee), the Oscar-winning director of "The Silence of the Lambs" and "Philadelphia," died in New York at age 73.

One year ago: The Census Bureau said U.S. population growth had slowed to its lowest rate since the Great Depression; Americans continued their march to the South and West, as Texas and Florida added enough population to gain congressional seats while New York and Ohio saw slow growth and lost political muscle. The Justice Department opened a sweeping probe into policing in Louisville, Kentucky, over the March 2020 death of Breonna Taylor, who was shot by police during a raid at her home. Apple rolled out a new privacy feature, following through on its pledge to crack down on Facebook and other snoop apps that secretly shadowed people on their iPhones in order to target more advertising at users.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-comedian Carol Burnett is 89. R&B singer Maurice Williams is 84. Songwriter-musician Duane Eddy is 84. Rock musician Gary Wright is 79. Actor Nancy Lenehan is 69. Actor Giancarlo Esposito is 64. Rock musician Roger Taylor (Duran Duran) is 62. Actor Joan Chen is 61. Rock musician Chris Mars is 61. Actor-singer Michael Damian is 60. Actor Jet Li (lee) is 59. Actor-comedian Kevin James is 57. Author and former U.S. Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey (TREHTH'-eh-way) is 56. Actor Marianne Jean-Baptiste is 55. Rapper T-Boz (TLC) is 52. Former first lady Melania Trump is 52. Actor Shondrella Avery is 51. Actor Simbi Kali is 51. Country musician Jay DeMarcus (Rascal Flatts) is 51. Rock musician Jose Pasillas (Incubus) is 46. Actor Jason Earles is 45. Actor Leonard Earl Howze is 45. Actor Amin Joseph is 45. Actor Tom Welling is 45. Actor Pablo Schreiber is 44. Actor Nyambi Nyambi is 43. Actor Jordana Brewster is 42. Actor Stana Katic is 42. Actor Marnette Patterson is 42. Actor Channing Tatum is 42. Americana/roots singer-songwriter Lilly Hiatt is 38. Actor Emily Wickersham is 38. Actor Aaron Meeks is 36. Electro pop musician James Sunderland (Frenship) is 35. New York Yankees outfielder Aaron Judge is 30.