

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday, May 16

Senior Menu: Chicken Alfredo, broccoli, spinach salad, mandarin oranges, bread stick.

School Breakfast: Oatmeal with toppings.

School Lunch: Mac and cheese, cooked carrots.

6:30 a.m.: Emmanuel Bible Study

10 a.m.: NEC GIRLS Golf at Moccasin Creek CC

10 a.m.: JH Track Meet at Hamlin

1 p.m.: Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center

7:30 p.m.: St. John's Christian Literature Circle

Tuesday, May 17

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes, stewed tomatoes, apricots, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Hashbrowns, pizza.

School Lunch: Popcorn chicken, mashed potatoes.

9 a.m.: St. John's Quilting

2 p.m.: DARE Graduation in the Arena

7 p.m.: City Council Meeting

Methodist: Bible Study at 9:30 a.m.; Conde Ad Council

Wednesday, May 18

Senior Menu: Teriyaki chicken, almond rice with peas, pineapple strawberry ambrosia, orange sherbet, dinner roll.

School Breakfast: Cook's Choice.

School Lunch: Sack lunch made by kitchen.

LAST DAY OF SCHOOL (Full Day)

Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m., Groton Ad Council at 7 p.m.

Ken's **HELP WANTED!** **Groton Store**

Part time cashier & part time deli.
Deli must be 18 years of age or older.
Apply at Ken's in Groton.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Groton Daily Independent
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The Groton Area Class of 2022 held its commencement ceremony on Sunday. Forty-five students walked the stage to receive their diplomas. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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*Weber Landscaping
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Opening May 9th at the Groton Community Center

Mondays: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Tuesdays: 4 p.m. to 8 p.m

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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

Here is a look at the Vikings 2022 schedule as well as some insight for each matchup.

Week 1: vs. Green Bay Packers (Sunday/3:25)

This will be the first time in Vikings' history that they open the season at home against the Packers with fans in attendance. In 2020, the Vikings faced the Packers at home to start the season but had no fans in attendance due to COVID protocols.

Week 2: @ Philadelphia Eagles (Monday/7:30)

The Vikings have met the Eagles on Monday night twice before (1990 & 2004) and lost both times.

Week 3: vs. Detroit Lions (Sunday/12:00)

Despite the Vikings leading the all-time series against Detroit, 79-40-2, newly hired Vikings' head coaches are a measly 3-5-1 in their first home game against the Lions.

Week 4: vs. New Orleans Saints - @London (Sunday/8:30am)

The Vikings and Saints have both played twice in London prior to this year and are both undefeated in those games.

Week 5: vs. Chicago Bears (Sunday/12:00)

Prior to 2016, the NFL automatically gave the London game teams a bye the next week. Now, the NFL offers those teams the option to decline such a bye week. Since the London game is so early in the season, the Vikings requested a later bye week and in turn get to face the Bears at home immediately after the trip home from overseas.

Week 6: @ Miami Dolphins (Sunday/12:00)

The Vikings have only played the Dolphins on the road five times in the team's history. In those five games, the Vikings are 1-4, with their only win coming all the way back in 1976.

Week 7: BYE

Week 8: vs. Arizona Cardinals (Sunday/12:00)

The last time the Vikings lost to the Cardinals at home was in 1977, when the Arizona Cardinals were the St. Louis Cardinals.

Week 9: @ Washington Commanders (Sunday/12:00)

Head Coach, Kevin O'Connell, will make his first trip back to Washington where he was the quarterbacks coach for Kirk Cousins

Week 10: @ Buffalo Bills (Sunday/12:00)

This will be the first time that the Vikings will meet the high-powered Bills since the Stefon Diggs trade in 2020. Interesting to note that in the Vikings last five trips to Buffalo, the most points a Vikings defense has given up to the Bills is 17.

Week 11: vs. Dallas Cowboys (Sunday/3:25)

Similar to when the Vikings had to travel to Seattle three years in a row from 2018-2020, this will be the third straight year the Cowboys come to US Bank Stadium to face the Vikings. The Vikings are winless in the previous two games against the Cowboys.

Week 12: vs. New England Patriots (Thursday/7:20) [THANKSGIVING]

This will be the first time in Vikings' history that the Vikings will host a Thanksgiving game rather than travelling to Detroit or Dallas for the Thanksgiving game.

Week 13: vs. New York Jets (Sunday/12:00)

Despite winning the last two games against the Jets, the Vikings are only 3-8 all-time versus the Jets.

Week 14: @ Detroit Lions (Sunday/12:00)

By this point, Lions' newly drafted wide receiver, Jameson Williams, will be fully recovered from his ACL injury and could validate whether the Vikings made the wrong call giving Detroit the 12th pick in the draft to take him.

Week 15: vs. Indianapolis Colts (TBD)

The Vikings will look to defeat the Colts for the first time since 1997.

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Week 16: vs. New York Giants (Sunday/12:00) [CHRISTMAS EVE]

The Vikings have played on Christmas Eve five times, winning only one time in 2011 against Washington.

Week 17: @ Green Bay Packers (Sunday/3:25) [NEW YEAR'S DAY]

This will be the third game for the Vikings this season that falls on a holiday. It will also be the second straight time the Vikings will travel to the frozen tundra for the penultimate game of the season.

Week 18: @ Chicago Bears (TBD)

Since the NFL required the last week of the season to feature division opponents in 2010, the Vikings have played the bears at home to finish the season seven times. However, this will be the first time the Vikings travel to Chicago to finish the season during that time.

East River Electric Restores Wholesale Power Supply Outages following Severe Weather

MADISON – On Sunday, East River Electric Power Cooperative restored power to all of the cooperative's wholesale power supply substations after severe weather caused extensive damages on May 12 throughout much of eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. East River Electric's wholesale power supply service area covers eastern South Dakota and portions of western Minnesota, and high winds damaged the utility's transmission power lines and substation infrastructure across much of their system. Although East River has reenergized its substations, some member consumers may remain out of power until their local distribution cooperative is able to repair power lines damages to their local distribution system.

At the height of the event on Thursday evening, 56 East River Electric substations as well as seven municipal customers served by East River were out of power across the cooperative's service area. East River had over 200 transmission structures damaged spanning a range from Yankton, S.D. to Dumont, M.N. Repairs will continue on those broken transmission power line structures over the coming days. The cooperative's transmission system is built such that, even if a transmission line is out of service, power can be rerouted to prevent power outages while the lines are being repaired.

"Thank you to the region's cooperative consumers for your patience and understanding as we worked over the past few days to repair damages and restore power throughout the region," said East River Electric General Manager and CEO Tom Boyko. "I would also like to thank our teams for their incredible work and dedication to safely restore our system following this severe weather event. As an example of the dedication shown by East River's employees, in just a 12-hour span on Friday, employees energized 24 substations and restored power to more than 8,000 member consumers."

The cooperative is reminding the public to never approach downed or damaged power lines and to always treat damaged lines as if they are energized.

Parenting Advice

I don't know how you feel, but in my opinion, parenting is hard! Someone must have forgotten to hand me the instruction manual when my children came home. I have yet to meet a parent who wouldn't appreciate one.

New parents can count on getting lots of advice from well-meaning friends and relatives, and sometimes even perfect strangers. Some of that advice is welcome and useful. Some, not so much. And sometimes that advice is downright dangerous.

Many grandparents raised their own children at a time when doctors thought it was best to put babies on their stomachs to sleep. Research in the 1990s showed that this sleeping position significantly increased the risk of sudden infant death syndrome. And all those cute stuffed animals and fluffy blankets increase the risk of suffocation.

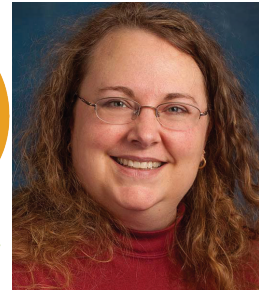
Many great grandparents started their newborns on solid food soon after birth. Now we understand more about infant nutrition and recommend waiting until six months for most babies. This helps ensure the baby is developmentally ready to swallow solids and reduces the risk of some health problems that can persist well into adulthood.

My own generation was told to avoid exposure to common allergens like nuts and fish in the hopes of reducing the risk of food allergies. More recent research indicates the opposite: early introduction to these foods reduces that risk. Of course, parents still need to be mindful of choking hazards. Try thinned smooth peanut butter, not whole peanuts. We still recommend avoiding honey, because of the risk of botulism, and liquid milk, because it is more difficult to digest. Besides, formula and breast milk provide more complete nutrition.

Parents today often swear by sleep nests or wedges. These are cushions meant to prop babies in a particular position. Although these devices are popular, they are dangerous and increase the risk of suffocation. Walkers are popular too, but they are associated with injuries, and have not been shown to help babies learn to walk. In fact, motor skills may be delayed if baby uses a walker.

So how can families sort out all this advice? Look for trustworthy sources of information, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics' on-line resource, healthychildren.org, or the American Academy of Family Physicians' educational website, familydoctor.org. Best of all, take advantage of regular well-child visits with your primary care provider. Your doctor desires a strong relationship and will work with you to help your child grow up safe and healthy.

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

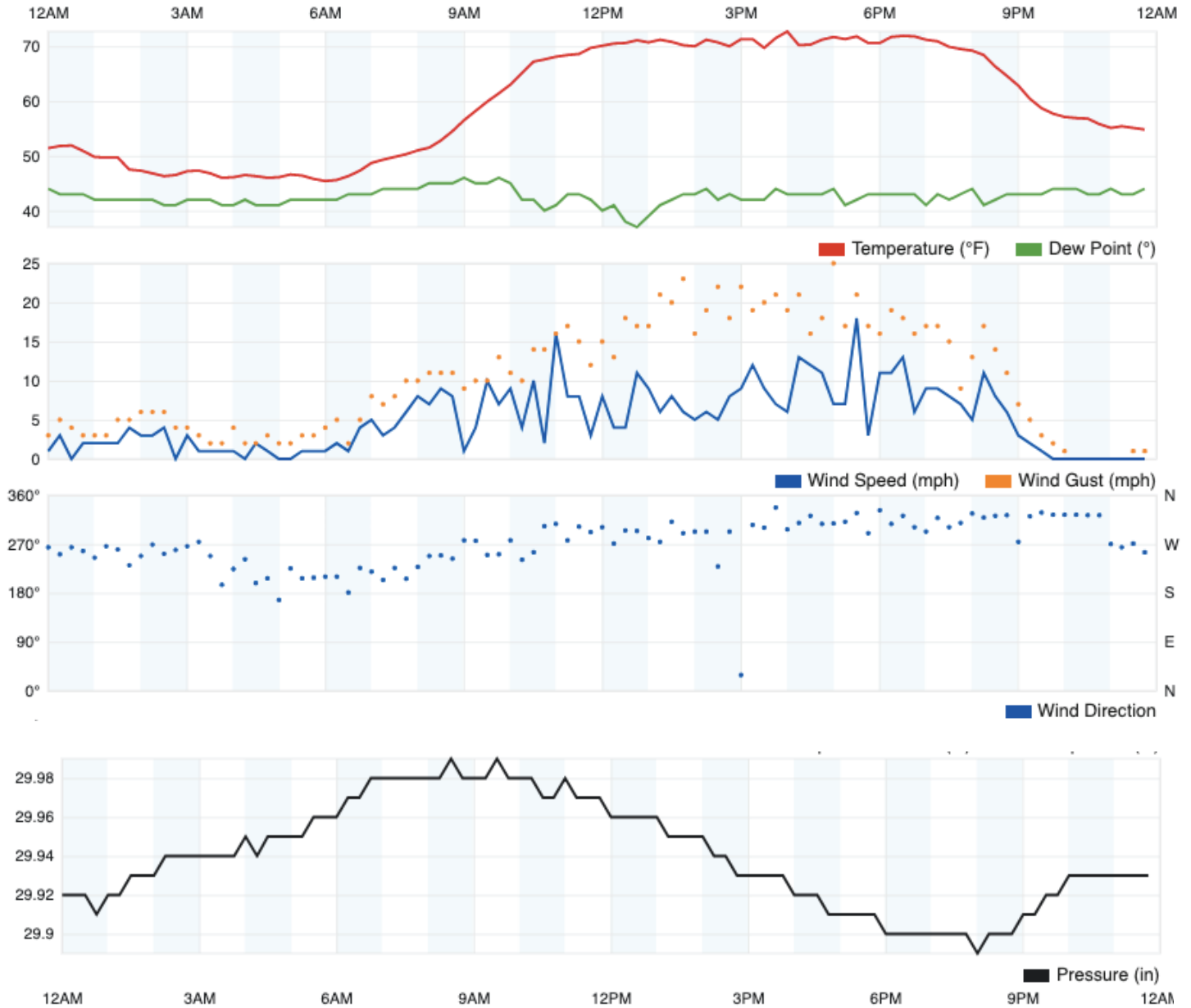


Debra Johnston, MD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today in Weather History

May 16, 1883: Benchmark flooding in the Black Hills occurred in 1883, with extremely high flows reported throughout the hills that resulted from heavy rainfall on top of snowmelt. Click [HERE](#) for more images from USGS.

May 16, 1929: On this day, Aberdeen recorded 3.0 inches of snow. This snowfall is the latest measurable snow for the city of Aberdeen on record.

May 16, 1992: It was a wild day across the tri-state region of Nebraska, South Dakota, and Iowa, with tornadoes and destructive straight-line winds. A tornado damaged three-grain bins and two farm wagons in Cedar County of northeast Nebraska before crossing into Dixon County. As it traveled east, it destroyed two barns and a garage and was responsible for killing between 5,000 and 10,000 chickens at a chicken farm. In northwest Iowa, Sioux City reported winds of around 60 miles an hour causing some minor damage. Elsewhere, winds gusted as high as 75 miles an hour in Spencer and 74 miles an hour in Le Mars.

1874: The Mill Creek disaster occurred west of North Hampton, MA. Dam slippage resulted in a flash flood that claimed 143 lives and caused a million dollars property damage. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the New England Historical Society.

1924 - The temperature at Blitzen OR soared to 108 degrees to set a state record for the month of May. The record was later tied at Pelton Dam on the 31st of May in 1986. (The Weather Channel)

1952 - High winds in the Wasatch Canyon of Utah struck Ogden and Brigham City. Winds at Hill Air Force Base gusted to 92 mph. (The Weather Channel)

1983: An unyielding spring storm dumped heavy snow across the Front Range in Colorado. High winds of 20 to 40 mph with gusts to 55 mph produced blizzard conditions at times. The Foothills received 1 to 2 feet of snow with 4 to 12 inches along the Foothills. Blowing snow whipped the snow into drifts several feet deep closing schools and highways. Power outages occurred; with 20 square miles of Denver blacked out. Hundreds of passengers were stranded as only half of the runways were open at Stapleton International Airport. The high temperature at Denver the next day of just 40° set a record low maximum. Much of the snow melted on the 18th as temperatures rebounded into the middle and upper 50s causing widespread street flooding.

1987 - It was a summer-like day as thunderstorms abounded across the nation. Thunderstorms in Texas drenched Guadalupe County with more than three inches of rain resulting in flash flooding. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from Florida to New York State. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Havre, MT, reported a record high of 95 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989: Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather in the south-central U.S. Thunderstorms spawned twenty tornadoes, and there were 180 reports of large hail and damaging winds. A tornado in Cleburne, Texas caused thirty million dollars damage. A violent F-4 tornado touched down near Brackettville, Texas and a strong F-3 tornado killed one person and injured 28 others at Jarrell, Texas.

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Oklahoma and northeastern Texas to the Upper Ohio Valley. Thunderstorms spawned seventeen tornadoes, including a twister which killed one person and injured another north of Corning, AR. There were 128 reports of large hail or damaging winds. Strong thunderstorm winds killed one person and injured six others at Folsomville, IN, and injured another five persons in southeastern Hardin County KY. In Arkansas, baseball size hail was reported near Fouke and near El Dorado. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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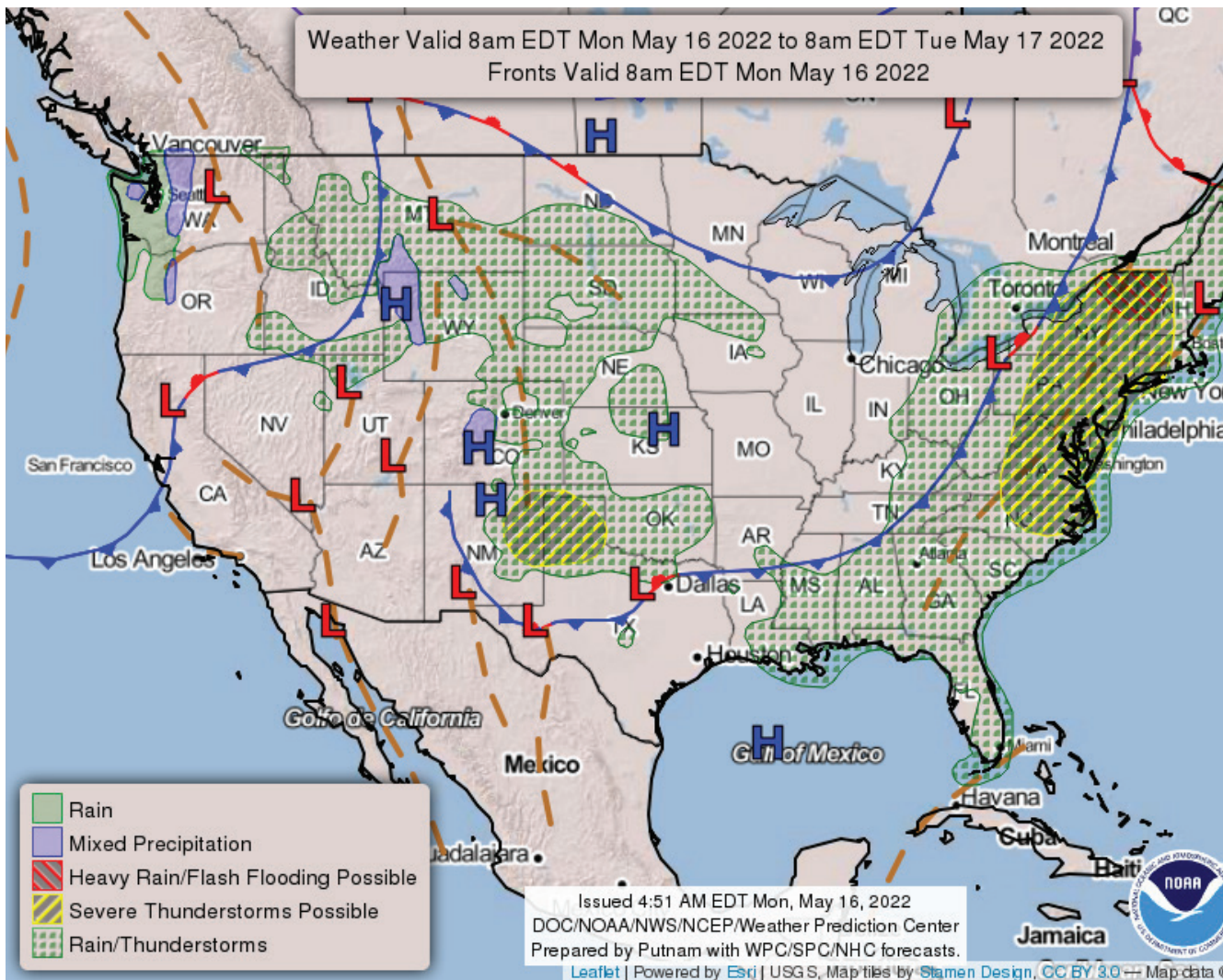
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 72.7 °F at 4:00 PM
Low Temp: 45.4 °F at 6:00 AM
Wind: 25 mph at 5:00 AM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 00 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 101 in 1934
Record Low: 23 in 2014
Average High: 71°F
Average Low: 44°F
Average Precip in May.: 1.77
Precip to date in May.: 2.40
Average Precip to date: 5.74
Precip Year to Date: 8.90
Sunset Tonight: 8:58:53 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:57:34 AM



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WHAT'S SO AMAZING ABOUT GRACE?

Shortly after John Newton turned eight years old, he was orphaned and became a "wanderer." He eventually began working on ships, and the sea captain became his "father." It was not long before he joined the Royal Navy. Dissatisfied, he deserted his post, was caught, put in irons and whipped publicly before being thrown in prison.

Leaving prison angry and defiant, he signed on with the lowest of all seagoing ships - one that carried slaves.

Aboard the new ship, life continued to deteriorate. The wife of the captain treated him with great disdain. When meals were served, his food was thrown on the floor, and he was forced to eat like a dog. If he refused to eat, he was beaten. He finally escaped, made his way to shore where he built a fire and attracted a ship that rescued him.

John could hardly read, but his knowledge of the sea and sailing ships earned him a promotion. One day he served the crew too much rum, and they became drunk. It so angered the captain, that while brutally beating him, John was knocked overboard. But instead of allowing him to drown, the captain threw a harpoon at John and rescued him. The harpoon speared him, and as a result, he carried a scar the rest of his life.

On a voyage from Brazil, a severe storm nearly sank the ship. Newton became so frightened that he fell on his knees and asked God to save him. Years later, reflecting on his sordid life, he fell on his knees again. This time to write the great hymn, "Amazing Grace," to honor "The Lord who was gracious, compassionate, and slow to anger."

Prayer: Father, "sin is sin" and all of us have compiled our own list. We thank You that Your grace exceeds every sin! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. Psalm 145:8

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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

Subscription Form

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News from the Associated Press

In Ukraine and internationally, scenario darkens for Russia

By OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI and CIARAN McQUILLAN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Europe pushed Monday to sharpen and expand its response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with Sweden poised to follow Finland in seeking membership of NATO and European Union officials working to rescue proposed sanctions that would target Russian oil exports helping the Kremlin finance its war.

On the ground, Russia saw more setbacks in its offensive in eastern Ukraine, where Ukrainian defenders are fighting desperately against attempted Russian advances and even successfully rolling back the front lines in some areas.

In a small but symbolic boost for Ukrainian morale, a patrol of soldiers recorded triumphant video of their push right up to the Russian border in the region of Kharkiv. Already, Ukrainian forces have pushed Russian troops back from the region's capital, making it harder for them to hit the battered city with artillery.

As fighting raged, international efforts to respond to Russia's aggression continued to pick up pace. The Swedish government is expected to announce its intention to seek NATO membership later Monday — as its neighbor Finland has done. Those are seismic developments for the Nordic countries that have traditionally positioned themselves as militarily "nonaligned."

An enlargement of NATO to include Sweden and Finland would be a serious blow to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has called the alliance's post-Cold War expansion in Eastern Europe a threat and cited it as a reason for attacking Ukraine. NATO says it is a purely defensive alliance.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has said the membership process for both Finland and Sweden could be very quick — though member Turkey has cast doubts over the move.

In Brussels, EU officials worked to overcome opposition from a small group of countries led by Hungary to a proposed embargo on imports of Russian oil. Hungary is one of a number of landlocked countries that are highly dependent on Russian oil, along with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Bulgaria also has reservations.

"We will do our best in order to deblock the situation," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said. "I cannot ensure that it is going to happen because positions are quite strong."

Weapons from NATO countries to Ukraine and western sanctions against Russia have helped the outgunned and outnumbered Ukrainian forces bog down the Russian advance — and even turn it back in places.

Stoltenberg, the NATO chief, said Sunday the war "is not going as Moscow had planned."

"Ukraine can win this war," he said, adding that NATO must continue to offer military support to Kyiv.

Since Russia's failure to overrun Kyiv, the capital, in the early stages of its Feb. 24 invasion, much of the fighting has shifted to the Donbas, Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland.

Determining a full picture of the unfolding battle there is difficult. Airstrikes and artillery barrages make it extremely dangerous for reporters to move around, and reporting is restricted by Ukraine and the Moscow-backed separatists it has been fighting in the Donbas for eight years.

Still, Ukrainian forces are grinding down the Russians, and the two sides have been battling village-by-village.

A Ukrainian patrol in the Kharkiv region, where Russian troops have been pushed back by a counteroffensive, reached the Russian border and made a victorious video there addressed to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The video posted Sunday on Facebook by Ukraine's Ministry of Defense shows a dozen fighters around a post covered with blue and yellow, Ukraine's colors. It was not clear exactly where the video was shot.

One soldier said the unit went "to the dividing line with the Russian Federation, the occupying country. Mr. President, we have reached it. We are here." Other fighters made victory signs and raised their fists.

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Along another section of the frontier with Russia, Ukrainian border guards said they defeated a Russian attempt Monday morning to send troops into the northern Sumy region. The border guard service said Russian forces deployed mortars, grenade launchers and machine guns in an attempt to cover a "sabotage and reconnaissance group" crossing the border from Russia.

The border guard service said its officers returned fire and forced the Russian group to retreat back into Russia. The area is largely rural and hasn't seen intense fighting in more than a month. There was no immediate word from Russia.

In the Donbas, the Ukrainian military said that Russian forces targeted civilian and military sites in multiple towns.

Russia troops continued air and artillery strikes around the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, the last hold-out of several hundred Ukrainian forces in the strategically important city, the Ukrainian General Staff said.

In an online news conference, many wives of the besieged soldiers urged the international community to help gain the release of "the entire garrison," which is suffering from a dire lack of food, water and medicine.

Turkey's presidential spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, said his country had offered to evacuate wounded Ukrainian soldiers and civilians by ship from Azovstal, the official state broadcaster TRT said.

Britain's Defense Ministry said Monday that Belarus was deploying special operations forces along its border with Ukraine and air defense, artillery and missile units to training ranges in the west of the country. Belarus' forces have not been directly involved in the conflict, though its territory was used as a staging ground for the invasion.

But the presence of Belarusian troops near the border may keep Ukrainian troops pinned down there, preventing them from moving to support the counteroffensive in the Donbas.

Despite the fighting in the wider Kharkiv region and the threat of Russian missile attacks, many people were returning home to Kharkiv and other cities around Ukraine, Anna Malyar, deputy head of the Ministry of Defense, said.

Refugees were returning not just because of optimism that the war might ebb.

"Living somewhere just like that, not working, paying for housing, eating ... they are forced to return for financial reasons," Malyar said in remarks carried by the RBK-Ukraine news agency.

Lawyer charged with lying to FBI in Russia probe faces trial

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal trial begins Monday for a lawyer for the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign who is accused of lying to the FBI as it investigated potential ties between Donald Trump and Russia in 2016.

The case against Michael Sussmann, a cybersecurity attorney who represented the Clinton campaign in 2016, is the first trial arising from the ongoing investigation by special counsel John Durham and will test the strength of evidence he and his team have gathered while scrutinizing the early days of the Trump-Russia probe for potential misconduct.

An acquittal is likely to hasten questions about the Durham probe's purpose and cost to taxpayers while a guilty verdict will almost certainly energize Trump supporters who have long looked to Durham to expose what they see as biased mistreatment of the former president.

Sussmann is accused of misleading the FBI's then-general counsel during a September 2016 meeting in which he presented research showing what he said might be a suspicious backchannel of communications between computer servers of the Trump Organization and Russia-based Alfa Bank.

Prosecutors allege Sussmann lied by saying that he wasn't attending the meeting on behalf of any particular client when they say he was actually acting on behalf of two clients: the Clinton campaign and a technology executive who had helped assemble the computer data.

Durham's team says that had the FBI been told the truth, it would have factored into the bureau's assessment of the credibility of the Alfa Bank claims as it weighed whether to begin investigating. The FBI

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did look into the matter but ultimately found nothing suspicious.

Sussmann's lawyers deny he lied but say the alleged misstatement isn't relevant in any event since there's no evidence that what the FBI knew or didn't know about his political affiliations had any bearing on its decision-making.

Jurors will be selected in Washington's federal court on Monday. In a nod to the politically loaded nature of the case, prospective jurors are being asked questions such as whether they voted in 2016 and whether they or anyone they are close with was involved in investigating potential ties between the Trump campaign and Russia.

Durham was appointed in 2019 by then-Attorney General William Barr to look for any misconduct as the U.S. government was examining potential coordination between Russia and the 2016 Trump campaign to tip the outcome of the election. An investigation by an earlier special counsel, Robert Mueller, did not find a criminal conspiracy between Russia and the Trump campaign though it did find that Russia sought to aid Trump's election bid.

Durham's work has resulted in three criminal cases, but only the one against Sussmann has reached trial. In 2020, a former FBI lawyer named Kevin Clinesmith pleaded guilty to altering an email related to secret FBI surveillance of an ex-Trump campaign adviser, Carter Page. In applying for warrants to eavesdrop on Page, the FBI relied on a dossier of anti-Trump research known colloquially as the "Steele dossier" that contained rumors and uncorroborated claims.

Last year, Durham charged a Russia analyst who was a source for that dossier with lying to the FBI about his own sources of information — among them, a longtime Hillary Clinton supporter. Igor Danchenko has pleaded not guilty. The case is pending and set for trial in October.

McDonald's to sell its Russian business, try to keep workers

By DAVID KOENIG AP Business Writer

McDonald's said Monday that it has started the process of selling its Russian business, which includes 850 restaurants that employ 62,000 people, making it the latest major Western corporation to exit Russia since it invaded Ukraine in February.

The fast food giant pointed to the humanitarian crisis caused by the war, saying holding on to its business in Russia "is no longer tenable, nor is it consistent with McDonald's values."

The Chicago-based company announced in early March that it was temporarily closing its stores in Russia but would continue to pay employees. On Monday, it said it would seek to have a Russian buyer hire those workers and pay them until the sale closes. It did not identify a prospective buyer.

CEO Chris Kempczinski said the "dedication and loyalty to McDonald's" of employees and hundreds of Russian suppliers made it a difficult decision to leave.

"However, we have a commitment to our global community and must remain steadfast in our values," Kempczinski said in a statement, "and our commitment to our values means that we can no longer keep the arches shining there."

As it tries to sell its restaurants, McDonald's said it plans to start removing golden arches and other symbols and signs with the company's name. It said it will keep its trademarks in Russia.

The first McDonald's in Russia opened in the middle of Moscow more than three decades ago, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was a powerful symbol of the easing of Cold War tensions between the United States and Soviet Union.

McDonald's was the first American fast food restaurant to open in the Soviet Union, which would collapse in 1991. McDonald's decision to leave comes as other American food and beverage giants including Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Starbucks have paused or closed operations in Russia in the face of Western sanctions.

Corporations from British energy giants Shell and BP to French carmaker Renault have pulled out of Russia, taking a hit to their bottom lines as they seek to sell their holdings there. Other companies have stayed at least partially, with some facing blowback.

McDonald's said it expects to record a charge against earnings of between \$1.2 billion and \$1.4 billion

over leaving Russia.

Its restaurants in Ukraine are closed, but the company said it is continuing to pay full salaries for its employees there.

McDonald's has more than 39,000 locations across more than 100 countries. Most are owned by franchisees — only about 5% are owned and operated by the company.

McDonald's said exiting Russia will not change its forecast of adding a net 1,300 restaurants this year, which will contribute about 1.5% to companywide sales growth.

Last month, McDonald's reported that it earned \$1.1 billion in the first quarter, down from more than \$1.5 billion a year earlier. Revenue was nearly \$5.7 billion.

Buttigieg sends \$5B to cities for safety as road deaths soar

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With upcoming data showing traffic deaths soaring, the Biden administration is steering \$5 billion in federal aid to cities and localities to address the growing crisis by slowing down cars, carving out bike paths and wider sidewalks and nudging commuters to public transit.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg on Monday announced the availability of money over five years under his department's new Safe Streets & Roads for All program.

The aim will be to provide a direct infusion of federal cash to communities that pledge to promote safety for the multiple users of a roadway, particularly pedestrians and bicyclists.

Federal data being released this week by the Transportation Department is expected to show another big jump in U.S. traffic deaths through 2021, reflecting continued risky driving that began with the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020. Fatalities among pedestrians and cyclists have been rising faster than those within vehicles.

Deaths also are disproportionately higher among nonwhite, lower-income people, who are more likely to take public transit and travel by foot or bike, as well as those in tribal and rural areas, where speeding can be more common.

"We face a national crisis of fatalities and serious injuries on our roadways, and these tragedies are preventable — so as a nation we must work urgently and collaboratively to save lives," Buttigieg said. He said the money "will help communities large and small take action to protect all Americans on our roads."

"We have become far too accustomed to the loss of life and serious injuries happening on our roadways," he said.

Previewing the upcoming data, Steven Cliff, the acting head of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, told an event last week the final figures would show "alarming" increases for the full year of 2021.

Roadway deaths represent about 95% of all U.S. transportation deaths, at more than 38,000 in 2020. In 2021, data released so far has already shown U.S. traffic fatalities rising to 31,720 through the third quarter, the highest nine-month period since 2006. Before 2020, the number of U.S. traffic deaths had fallen for three straight years.

The department's effort is part of a new national strategy, launched in January, to stem record increases in road fatalities with a "safe system" approach that promotes better road design, lower speed limits and tougher car safety regulations. About \$5 million to \$6 million for the grants is included in President Joe Biden's infrastructure law.

Still, much of the federal roadmap relies on cooperation from cities and states, and it could take months if not years to fully implement with discernible results — too late to soothe 2022 midterm voters unsettled by this and other pandemic-related ills, such as rising crime.

The latest U.S. guidance Monday invites cities and localities to sketch out safety plans in their applications for the federal grants, which are to be awarded late this year.

It cites examples of good projects as those that promise to transform a high-crash roadway, such as by adding rumble strips to slow cars or installing speed cameras, which the department says could provide more equitable enforcement than police traffic stops; flashing beacons for pedestrian crosswalks; new

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"safe routes" via sidewalks or other protected pathways to school or public transit in underserved communities; and other "quick build" roadway changes designed with community input.

Buttigieg was traveling to Germany later Monday for the International Transport Forum to discuss the best approaches to achieve a U.N. goal of halving the world's traffic deaths by 2030. Around 1.25 million people are killed worldwide on the road each year. The U.S. has been mostly an outlier in seeing traffic deaths climb during the pandemic even with fewer cars on the road, due in part to higher U.S. rates of speeding and not wearing seatbelts.

Michael Kelley, policy director for roadway safety advocacy group BikeWalkKC in Kansas City, Missouri, says he has been advocating for biking and walking routes because his two young daughters love to explore outside but can't do so safely since their neighborhood lacks sidewalks and sits near a highway.

Kelley, who is Black, said communities can become vibrant and more connected by fostering walkable neighborhoods that allow the elderly who may not readily drive, such as his parents, to "age in place" near a younger generation, like his daughters, who increasingly "don't want or need to drive" a car if there are other safe and affordable transportation options available.

"Everyone deserves to be able to walk, to bike, to take transit, and for that to be the safe and easy choice," Kelley said.

Buttigieg stressed the urgency.

"I'm convinced that we can use this moment, this urgent and troubling moment, as a pivot point," he said. "We are out to fund whatever is going to go most directly toward reducing crashes and saving lives so we can change the trajectory of road safety in this decade."

EU's Russia sanctions effort slows over oil dependency

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union's efforts to impose a new round of sanctions against Russia over the war in Ukraine appeared to be bogged down on Monday, as a small group of countries opposed a ban on imports of Russian oil.

Since Russia invaded on Feb. 24, the bloc has implemented five rounds of sanctions on Moscow. President Vladimir Putin, senior officials, more than 350 lawmakers and pro-Kremlin oligarchs were hit with asset freezes and travel bans. Banks, the transport sector and alleged propaganda outlets were targeted.

What could have taken years in the past has been achieved in less than three months — relative light speed for the 27-nation bloc. But limiting Russia's energy income by weaning their dependency off its oil — not to mention gas supplies — is proving a tougher nut to crack.

The EU's executive branch, the European Commission, proposed on May 4 a sixth package of war sanctions that included a ban on oil imports from Russia. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen conceded at the time that securing the agreement of all "will not be easy."

Hungary is one of a number of landlocked countries that are highly dependent on Russian oil, along with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Bulgaria also has reservations. Hungary gets more than 60% of its oil from Russia, and 85% of its natural gas.

"We will do our best in order to deblock the situation. I cannot ensure that it is going to happen because positions are quite strong," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told reporters as he arrived to chair a meeting of the bloc's foreign ministers in Brussels.

"Some member states face more difficulties because they are more dependent, because they are landlocked," Borrell said, and "they only have oil through pipelines, and coming from Russia."

Muddying the waters is Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's relationship with Putin. Orban is widely considered to be one of the Russian leader's closest European allies. He has only reluctantly supported previous EU sanctions, including a phased-in embargo on Russian coal.

Since taking office in 2010, Orban has deepened Hungary's dependency on Russian energy and says its geography and energy infrastructure make an oil shutdown impossible. His EU partners are at odds over what they believe is driving his reluctance to target oil.

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"The whole union is being held hostage by one member state," Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said. He said that the European Commission's proposal offered members a phaseout of Russian oil until Dec 31, 2024, and that "everybody expected that this would be enough."

But his Irish counterpart, Simon Coveney, acknowledged that "these are difficult, difficult issues for some countries," and he added: "Let's not focus on obstacles and negatives today."

At the same time, Coveney said, "we need to get on and do this. We need to send a very clear signal to the Kremlin and to Moscow that the cost of their continuing war in Ukraine, which is completely unjustifiable, will continue to increase."

For now, the ball is in Hungary's court, as the most vocal member of those opposed. Officials have said that Orban appears to be seeking EU money for energy infrastructure investment. Any compromise is only likely to be found in his talks with von der Leyen, not between ministers.

The oil standoff raises questions about whether the EU has reached the limits of its unity on sanctions. Targeting Russia's gas sector, on which many more countries are dependent, is likely to prove even tougher.

Officials said before Monday's meeting that a political agreement is likely to be found on a fourth tranche of money to help supply weapons to Ukraine. It would bring to 2 billion euros (\$2.1 billion) the total sum available to fund the purchase of arms and other nonlethal assistance.

Uyghur county in China has highest prison rate in the world

By HUIZHONG WU and DAKE KANG Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Nearly one in 25 people in a county in the Uyghur heartland of China has been sentenced to prison on terrorism-related charges, in what is the highest known imprisonment rate in the world, an Associated Press review of leaked data shows.

A list obtained and partially verified by the AP cites the names of more than 10,000 Uyghurs sent to prison in just Konasheher county alone, one of dozens in southern Xinjiang. In recent years, China has waged a brutal crackdown on the Uyghurs, a largely Muslim minority, which it has described as a war on terror.

The list is by far the biggest to emerge to date with the names of imprisoned Uyghurs, reflecting the sheer size of a Chinese government campaign by which an estimated million or more people were swept into internment camps and prisons. It also confirms what families and rights groups have said for years: China is relying on a system of long-term incarceration to keep the Uyghurs in check, wielding the law as a weapon of repression.

Under searing international criticism, Chinese officials announced the closure in 2019 of short-term, extrajudicial internment camps where Uyghurs were thrown in without charges. However, although attention focused on the camps, thousands of Uyghurs still languish for years or even decades in prison on what experts say are trumped-up charges of terrorism.

Uyghur farmer Rozikari Tohti was known as a soft-spoken, family-loving man with three children and not the slightest interest in religion. So his cousin, Mihrigul Musa, was shocked to discover Tohti had been thrown into prison for five years for "religious extremism." She said she knew others more likely to be swept up in Xinjiang's crackdown on religion, such as another cousin who prayed every week, but not Tohti.

"Never did I think he would be arrested," said Musa, who now lives in exile in Norway. "If you saw him, you would feel the same way. He is so earnest."

From the list, Musa found out Tohti's younger brother Abilikim Tohti also was sentenced to seven years on charges of "gathering the public to disturb social order." Tohti's next-door neighbor, a farmer called Nurmemet Dawut, was sentenced to 11 years on the same charges as well as "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."

Konasheher county is typical of rural southern Xinjiang, and more than 267,000 people live there. The prison sentences across the county were for two to 25 years, with an average of nine years, the list shows. While the people on the list were mostly arrested in 2017, according to Uyghurs in exile, their sentences are so long that the vast majority would still be in prison.

Those swept up came from all walks of life, and included men, women, young people and the elderly.

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They had only one thing in common: They were all Uyghurs.

Experts say it clearly shows people were targeted simply for being Uyghur – a conclusion vehemently denied by Chinese authorities. Xinjiang spokesman Elijan Anayat said sentences were carried out in accordance with the law.

“We would never specifically target specific regions, ethnic groups, or religions, much less the Uyghurs,” Anayat said. “We would never wrong the good, nor release the bad.”

The list offers the widest and most granular look yet at who is in prison in Xinjiang. It was obtained by Xinjiang scholar Gene Bunin from an anonymous source who described themselves as a member of China’s Han Chinese majority “opposed to the Chinese government’s policies in Xinjiang.”

The list was passed to The AP by Abduweli Ayup, an exiled Uyghur linguist in Norway. The AP authenticated it through interviews with eight Uyghurs who recognized 194 people on the list, as well as legal notices, recordings of phone calls with Chinese officials and checks of address, birthdays and identity numbers.

The list does not include people with typical criminal charges such as homicide or theft. Rather, it focuses on offenses related to terrorism, religious extremism or vague charges traditionally used against political dissidents, such as “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.” This means the true number of people imprisoned is almost certainly higher.

But even at a conservative estimate, Konasheher county’s imprisonment rate is more than 10 times higher than that of the United States, one of the world’s leading jailers, according to Department of Justice statistics. It’s also more than 30 times higher than for China as a whole, according to state statistics from 2013, the last time such figures were released.

Darren Byler, an expert on Xinjiang’s mass incarceration system, said most arrests were arbitrary and outside the law, with people detained for having relatives abroad or downloading certain cell phone applications. He has documented arrest quotas for local police, in some cases resulting in the men from entire villages being rounded up and whole families uprooted from their homes.

“It is really remarkable,” Byler said. “In no other location have we seen entire populations of people be described as terrorists or seen as terrorists. The state is trying to reframe the narrative and say, you know, all of these people are actually criminals.”

China has struggled for decades to control Xinjiang, where Uyghurs have long resented Beijing’s heavy-handed rule, resulting in violent clashes with the Han-dominated government. With the 9/11 attacks in the United States, Chinese officials began using the specter of terrorism to justify tight controls.

The crackdown kicked into high gear in 2017, after a string of knifings and bombings carried out by a small handful of Uyghur militants. The Chinese government defended the mass detentions as both lawful and necessary to combat terrorism.

In 2019, Xinjiang officials declared the short-term detention camps closed, and said that all of whom they described as “trainees” had “graduated.” Visits by Associated Press journalists to four former camp sites confirmed that they were shuttered or converted into other facilities.

But the prisons remain. Xinjiang went on a prison-building spree in tandem with the crackdown, and even as the camps closed, the prisons expanded. At least a few camp sites were converted into centers for incarceration, including one that was turned into a pre-trial detention center twice the size of Vatican City and estimated to have capacity for 10,000 people or more.

Satellite imagery obtained and analyzed by BuzzFeed suggests that by April 2021, the Chinese government had enough prison space in Xinjiang to cover a third of the island of Manhattan. In the meantime, China declared success in keeping Xinjiang safe.

“In the past five years, Xinjiang has been free from violent terrorist incidents,” said China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi in February. “People of all ethnicities have lived a happy and peaceful life.”

China is using the law “as a fig leaf of legality” in part to try and deflect international criticism about holding Uyghurs, said Jeremy Daum, a criminal law expert at Yale University’s Paul Tsai China Center.

“But following the law doesn’t mean justice or fairness,” said Daum, who reviewed the data and was not involved in its leak. “It just means it’s ‘legal.’”

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Over the last eight years, experts say, Chinese authorities expanded the definition of extremism to include displays of religion such as growing a long beard or wearing a veil. Some charges for prisoners on the list are new and specific to Xinjiang, such as "preparing to carry out terrorism," a charge that was newly defined in 2016. The sheer volume of the convictions was "extraordinary," Daum added.

The plight of Nursimangul Abdureshid's family shows how so-called "students" released from internment camps can simply be sent to prisons by the Chinese government instead.

"It's a total lie, they just try to whitewash their crime," said Abdureshid, who lives in exile in Turkey.

In 2017, a relative told Abdureshid that both her parents and her younger brother had been taken away to study, a euphemism referring to the short-term detention camps. It was only three years later, in 2020, that the Chinese embassy called her with information that all three had been arrested and sentenced to prison for more than a decade.

The leaked list was the first outside confirmation of what had happened to her brother since that call, she said. Her brother, Memetali Abdureshid, 32, had been sentenced to 15 years and 11 months on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" and "preparing to carry out terrorist activities."

Nursimangul Abdureshid saw eight names she recognized on the list, but not those of her parents. She and six other Uyghur exiles who spoke with the AP believe the list is incomplete because they did not see some people they were close to, meaning the imprisonment rate could in fact be even higher.

The secretive nature of the charges against Memetali and others imprisoned is a red flag, experts say. Although China makes legal records easily accessible otherwise, almost 90% of criminal records in Xinjiang are not public.

The handful which have leaked show that people are being charged with "terrorism" for acts such as warning colleagues against watching porn and swearing, or praying in prison. In the most egregious cases, camp detainees were forced to confess their "crimes" in group sham trials and transferred to prisons, with no independent lawyers to defend them.

Another Uyghur from the township of Bulaqsu now living in exile said he knew 100 people on the list, including neighbors and cousins. Included were fathers and sons, both sentenced to jail, said the man, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of retribution from Chinese authorities,

By the time Mahmutohti Amin, 81, a former spice trader who lives in Turkey, arrived in the Kashgar region of China in 2017, his son, Ghappar Tohti, had been arrested. His other son, Polat Tohti, also was arrested, his daughter-in-law told him.

But Amin only found out how long their sentences were when he saw the list. Ghappar got seven years; Polat got 11.

Abduweli Ayup, the Uyghur exile who passed the list to the AP, has closely documented the ongoing repression of his community. But this list in particular floored him: On it were neighbors, a cousin, a high school teacher.

"I had collapsed," Ayup said. "I had told other people's stories and now this is me telling my own story from my childhood."

The widely admired teacher, Adil Tursun, was the only one in the high school in Toquzaq who could teach Uyghur students in Chinese. He was a Communist Party member who had previously won a Model Worker award, and he tutored children during his free time. Every year, the students from his class had the best chemistry test scores in the town.

The names of Tursun and others on the list made no sense to Ayup because they were considered model Uyghurs. Some were even eager to assimilate into the Han Chinese mainstream.

"The names of the crimes, spreading extremist thoughts, separatism...these charges are absurd," he said.

But when Ayup circulated the list among the Uyghur diaspora to ask people to vouch for those they recognized, only eight out of 30 agreed to speak publicly. Ayup was disappointed, yet nonetheless determined to document the lockdown of his people.

"We will win at the end, because we are on the side of justice," he said. "We are on the right side of history."

Kim blasts pandemic response as North Korean outbreak surges

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

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un criticized officials over slow medicine deliveries and mobilized the military to respond to a surge in suspected COVID-19 infections, as his nation struggled to contain a fever that has reportedly killed dozens and sickened nearly a million others in a span of three days.

North Korean health authorities said Monday that eight more people died and an additional 392,920 were newly found to have feverish symptoms. That brings the death toll to 50 and illnesses to more than 1.2 million, respectively. It's a sharp jump from six dead and 350,000 sick reported last Friday, a day after the North said that it found that an unspecified number of people in capital Pyongyang tested positive for the omicron variant.

Kim has acknowledged that the fast-spreading fever, highly likely driven by COVID-19, is causing "great upheaval" in the country, and outside experts say the true scale of the outbreak is likely much bigger than what's described in the state-controlled media.

Some suspect that North Korea has understated its fatalities or illnesses to shield Kim's leadership from criticism. The North likely lacks test kits and other tools to detect virus carriers with no or mild symptoms, which means that several million might already have been infected.

"When people die, North Korean authorities will say they've died of overwork or from natural deaths, not because of COVID-19," said Nam Sung-wook, a professor at Korea University in South Korea. Nam said the North is likely understating the death toll to protect "the dignity of its supreme leader."

While neighboring South Korea and China have offered to send medical supplies and other help, experts say it's too late to inoculate the North's 26 million people, and that the only realistic outside help would be offering limited supplies of vaccines to reduce deaths among high-risk groups, including the elderly and people with preexisting conditions.

It's also unclear whether and how soon Kim would accept outside offers of aid because he has previously rallied for unity at home to guard against the pandemic without resorting to foreign help.

State media didn't specify how many of the fever cases were confirmed as COVID-19. Among the 50 fatalities, North Korea officially identified only one as a COVID-19 case so far.

North Korea is believed to be mostly relying on isolating people with symptoms at shelters. Analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at South Korea's Sejong Institute said the North's limited number of test kits are likely mainly reserved for the ruling elite.

Failing to slow the virus could have dire consequences for North Korea, considering its broken health care system and that its people are believed to be unvaccinated. There's also malnourishment and chronic poverty.

The North imposed what it described as maximum preventive measures that restricted travel between cities and counties, and Kim ordered public health officials, teachers and others to identify people with fevers so they could be quarantined. As of Sunday, more than 564,860 people were in quarantine, North Korea's state media reported.

The explosive growth in fever cases may underscore how fast omicron could travel across an unvaccinated population without access to proper health tools, and fatalities will surely jump in coming weeks considering time lags between infections and deaths, said Jung Jae-hun, a professor of preventive medicine at South Korea's Gachon University.

While it's clear COVID-19 is spreading at an alarming speed, there are questions about the accuracy of North Korea's fever tally. Jung said it's unlikely that North Korean health workers are able to make reliable daily updates, considering the lack of tests and other resources, and are possibly adding multiple days of cases into their single-day counts following delays.

Cho Han Bum, an analyst at Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification, said North Korea's fever totals seemed an "outright lie."

"North Korea says about 390,000 more fell ill but only eight died in the past day, while South Korea (on

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Sunday) reported 25,000 new cases and 48 deaths," he said.

Yang Moo-jin, a professor at Seoul's University of North Korean Studies, said that the real number of COVID-19 infections in North Korea is likely at least three times larger than North Korea's tally of fever patients because of underreporting, the bad health care system and poorly computerized administrative networks.

Kim during a ruling party Politburo meeting on Sunday criticized government and health officials over what he portrayed as a botched pandemic response, saying medicine supplies aren't being distributed to pharmacies in time because of their "irresponsible work attitude" and lack of organization.

The Politburo had issued an emergency order to immediately release and quickly distribute state medicine reserves and for pharmacies to open for 24-hour shifts, but Kim said such steps weren't being properly implemented. Kim ordered the medical units of his military to get involved in stabilizing the supply of medicine in Pyongyang, KCNA said.

North Korea's previous claim of a perfect record in keeping out the virus for 2 1/2 years was widely doubted. But its extremely strict border closure, large-scale quarantines and propaganda that stressed anti-virus controls as a matter of "national existence" may have staved off a huge outbreak until now.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol told the National Assembly on Monday that the South was willing to send vaccines, medicine, equipment and health personnel to the North if it's willing to accept.

South Korean officials say Pyongyang so far has made no request for Seoul's help. The North also shunned millions of vaccine doses offered by the U.N.-backed COVAX distribution program, likely because they carried international monitoring requirements.

Kim still stressed the country's economic goals should be met, which likely means huge groups will continue to gather at agricultural, industrial and construction sites.

Shanghai says lockdown to ease as virus spread mostly ends

BEIJING (AP) — Most of Shanghai has stopped the spread of the coronavirus in the community and fewer than 1 million people remain under strict lockdown, authorities said Monday, as the city moves toward reopening and economic data showed the gloomy impact of China's "zero-COVID" policy.

Vice Mayor Zong Ming said 15 out of Shanghai's 16 districts had eliminated virus transmission among those not already in quarantine.

"The epidemic in our city is under effective control. Prevention measures have achieved incremental success," Zong said at a news briefing.

Supermarkets, malls and restaurants were allowed to reopen Monday with limits on the numbers of people and mandated "no contact" transactions. But most of the city's 25 million people remain under some form of restriction, movement around the city is highly limited and the subway train system remains closed for now.

Even as case numbers fall, city and national authorities have sent mixed messages about the state of Shanghai's outbreak and when life can return to normal in the city, where many residents have been confined to their homes, compounds and neighborhoods for more than 50 days. A prospective date of June 1 has been given for a full reopening.

Zong said that authorities "remain sober" about the possibility of the outbreak rebounding, particularly as reports of new infections continue to come in from centralized isolation centers and older, rundown neighborhoods.

"Citywide, our prevention efforts are still not firmly enough established and it requires all of our continuing hard work and the cooperation of the broad masses of citizens and friends ... to restore the normal running of the city in an orderly fashion," Zong said.

Shanghai's ruthless and frequently chaotic implementation of virus restrictions has sparked protests over the lack of food, medical care, freedom of movement and already highly limited privacy rights.

Despite that, China has rejected all criticism of "zero COVID," including from the World Health Organization. The ruling Communist Party says it is committed to "resolutely fighting any attempts to distort,

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question or dismiss China's anti-COVID policy."

China reported 1,159 cases of infection Monday, the vast majority in Shanghai. Almost all were infections without symptoms.

In Beijing, where a much smaller outbreak has led to mass testing and a lockdown imposed building by building, 54 cases were reported. Authorities have ordered people to work from home, moved schools online and limited restaurants to take-out only in the capital.

China's strict lockdowns have played havoc with employment, supply chains and the economy in general, and data released Monday showed factory and consumer activity was even weaker than expected in April.

Retail sales plunged 11.1%, while manufacturing output sank 2.9% after factories closed and those that kept operating with employees living at their workplace were forced to reduce output due to disruption in supplies of components.

About half of the 9,000 biggest industrial enterprises in Shanghai are back at work after controls that shut down most of the city starting in late March eased, said Fu Linghui, director of statistics for the National Bureau of Statistics.

Private sector economists have China's economic growth forecasts for this year to as low as 2%, well below the ruling party target of 5.5% and last year's 8.1% expansion.

While other countries are opening up in a bid to learn to live with COVID-19, China's borders remain largely closed and even transport within the country tightly restricted.

Flag carrier Air China reported an 84.3% drop in domestic passenger traffic in April against the same month last year, while another top carrier, China Southern Airlines, reported an 81.7% drop.

Despite such news, politics continues to drive the ruling party's response to the pandemic. Looking ahead to a key party congress later this year, party leaders said after a May 5 meeting that containing outbreaks would take priority over the economy.

In a recent report, the Eurasia Group predicted China would only begin emerging from "zero COVID" after the 20th national party congress, at which president and party leader Xi Jinping is expected to receive a third five-year term in office, and won't be completed until the new government lineup is completed next spring.

A relaxation of measures will also depend on improving medical treatment for those with COVID-19 along with the vaccination rate, which are particularly low among the elderly, the report said. Chinese citizens will also have to accept higher rates of infection and death after more than two years of suppressing outbreaks at any cost, it said.

"Despite the rising economic and social pressures ... China's leadership remains committed" to its "zero-COVID" strategy, the report said. Until the new leaders are in place, "the political atmosphere around containment will remain tight."

Parishioners subdue gunman in fatal California church attack

By DAMIAN DOVARGANES CHRISTOPHER WEBER and DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

LAGUNA WOODS, Calif. (AP) — A man opened fire during a lunch reception at a Southern California church, killing one person and wounding five senior citizens before a pastor hit the gunman on the head with a chair and parishioners hog-tied him with electrical cords.

Jerry Chen had just stepped into the kitchen of his church's fellowship hall around 1:30 p.m. Sunday when he heard the gunshots.

Chen, 72, a longtime congregant at Irvine Taiwanese Presbyterian Church in Laguna Woods, peeked around the corner and saw church members screaming, running and ducking under tables.

"I knew someone was shooting," he said. "I was very, very scared. I ran out the kitchen door to call 9-1-1."

Officials said the shooting ended after the gunman killed one man and wounded five senior citizens before worshippers hog-tied his legs with an electrical cord until deputies arrived. Four of the five people wounded suffered critical gunshot injuries.

While a motive for the shooting at the Geneva Presbyterian Church in the city of Laguna Woods was not

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immediately disclosed, investigators don't believe the gunman — an Asian man in his 60s whose name was not immediately released — lives in the community.

Chen, who called 911 from the church's parking lot, said he was in such a state of shock that he was unable to tell the operator his location.

"I had to ask someone else for the address," he said.

Chen said a group of about 40 congregants had gathered in the fellowship hall for a luncheon after a morning service to welcome their former Pastor Billy Chang, who had served the church for 20 years and was a beloved and respected community member. Chang moved back to Taiwan two years ago. This was his first time back stateside, Chen said.

"Everyone had just finished lunch," he said. "They were taking photos with Pastor Chang. I had just finished my lunch and went into the kitchen."

That was when he heard the gunshots and ran out.

Soon afterward, Chen said he heard the details of what happened inside from others who came out. Fellow congregants told Chen that when the gunman stopped to reload, Pastor Chang hit him on the head with a chair while others moved quickly to grab his gun. They then subdued him and tied him up, Chen said.

"It was amazing how brave (Chang) and the others were," he said. "This is just so sad. I never, ever thought something like this would happen in my church, in my community."

Most of the church's members are elderly, highly educated Taiwanese immigrants, Chen said.

"We're mostly retirees and the average age of our church is 80," he said.

Orange County Undersheriff Jeff Hallock praised the parishioners' quick work to detain the gunman.

"That group of churchgoers displayed what we believe is exceptional heroism and bravery in intervening to stop the suspect. They undoubtedly prevented additional injuries and fatalities," Hallock said. "I think it's safe to say that had people not intervened, it could have been much worse."

The shooting came a day after an 18-year-old man shot and killed 10 people at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York.

Laguna Woods was built as a senior living community and later became a city. More than 80% of residents in the city of 18,000 people about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southeast of Los Angeles are at least 65. The incident occurred in an area with a cluster of houses of worship, including Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist churches and a Jewish synagogue.

The investigation was in its early stages, Hallock said. He said the many unanswered questions include whether the assailant attended the church service, if he was known to church members and how many shots were fired.

The majority of those inside the church at the time were believed to be of Taiwanese descent, said Carrie Braun, a sheriff's spokesperson.

Those wounded by gunshots included four Asian men, ages 66, 75, 82 and 92, and an 86-year-old Asian woman, the sheriff's department said. Authorities originally said only four of the five surviving victims had been shot.

Officials did not immediately disclose any information about the alleged shooter.

The afternoon lunch reception was to honor a former pastor of the Taiwanese congregation, according to a statement from the Presbytery of Los Ranchos, a church administrative body.

"Please keep the leadership of the Taiwanese congregation and Geneva in your prayers as they care for the those traumatized by this shooting," the presbytery's Tom Cramer said in a statement on Facebook.

Gov. Gavin Newsom's office said on Twitter that he was closely monitoring the situation.

"No one should have to fear going to their place of worship. Our thoughts are with the victims, community, and all those impacted by this tragic event," the tweet said.

On its website, Geneva Presbyterian Church describes its mission as "to remember, tell, and live the way of Jesus by being just, kind, and humble."

"All are welcome here. Really, we mean that! ... Geneva aspires to be an inclusive congregation worship-

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ping, learning, connecting, giving and serving together.”

Violence in houses of worship includes the deadliest shooting inside a church, which occurred in 2017 in Sutherland Springs, Texas, when a gunman opened fire during a Sunday service at First Baptist Church and killed more than two dozen people.

In 2015, Dylann Roof fired dozens of bullets during the closing prayer of a 2015 Bible study session at Charleston’s Mother Emanuel AME Church in South Carolina. Nine members of the Black congregation were killed in the racist violence and Roof became the first person in the U.S. sentenced to death for a federal hate crime. His appeal remains before the Supreme Court.

Convicted killer turned tech whiz confronts his sordid past

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

REHOVOT, Israel (AP) — When he was 20 years old, Harel Hershtik planned and executed a murder, shooting his victim in the head and burying the body in a crime that a quarter of a century later is still widely remembered for its grisly details.

Today, he is the brains behind an Israeli health-tech startup, poised to make millions of dollars with the backing of prominent public figures and deep-pocket investors.

Neither his conviction for premeditated murder, his lengthy prison sentence nor his parole board-mandated nightly house arrest have obstructed his rise. His partners tout him as a successful case of rehabilitation and second chances.

But with his company set to go public, Hershtik’s past is coming under new scrutiny, raising questions about whether someone who took a person’s life deserves to rehabilitate his own to such an extent. It also tells an astounding tale of a life derailed and improbably set back on track through a combination of intellect, drive and guile.

“When I was young, I would say that I was stupid and arrogant,” said Hershtik, now 46, sitting in his office beside a futuristic-looking computer with colorful cooling mechanisms he built on his own. “You can be a genius and yet still be very stupid and the two don’t contradict each other.”

Today, Hershtik is the vice president of strategy and technology at Scentech Medical, a company he founded in 2018 while behind bars and which says its product can detect certain diseases through a breath test.

In a three-hour interview with The Associated Press, his first with an international news outlet, he repeatedly expressed remorse for his crime.

At 14, Hershtik met Yaakov Sela, a charismatic snake trapper with a coterie of young fans who gravitated toward his warm personality and kooky profession. Hershtik, who said he was physically and emotionally abused over his weight by peers at a kibbutz where he was raised, loved snakes and met Sela at a zootherapy program.

Hershtik learned from Sela about the world of snake handling and the two set up snake exhibits together and partnered to crossbreed the reptiles. But despite their initial connection, the relationship morphed from a mentorship to one of “mutual hate and loathing,” according to court documents.

Sela was known for having numerous girlfriends at once, including Hershtik’s mother. Hershtik told the AP he felt uneasy with the way Sela treated some of those women and had “a problem seeing him talking to women in demeaning ways, especially toward someone that I cared about and loved.”

Tovia Bat-Leah was among Sela’s admirers. She met him at a kibbutz in the late 80s and six months later was pregnant with his child. She called him a brilliant and warmhearted but troubled man who was traumatized by his upbringing by adoptive parents who were Holocaust survivors. She said Sela was always loving but could be unreliable.

“When you were with him, you were the only person who existed on the face of the earth and he was fully focused on you. And when you weren’t there, you didn’t exist,” she said.

In early 1996, Sela discovered that Hershtik had stolen 49,000 shekels (about \$15,000 at the time) from him, and the two agreed that instead of involving the police, Hershtik would pay him back double that

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amount. Court documents say Hershtik concocted a plan to drive Sela to banks around the country, duping him into thinking he was gathering up the money to pay him back.

During the drive, Hershtik pretended he needed to throw up and Sela stopped the car. Once he pulled over, Hershtik's accomplice fired three shots at Sela, using Hershtik's mother's pistol. He then handed Hershtik the gun, according to the documents, and Hershtik shot Sela in the head at close range.

The pair shoved Sela's body into the trunk and buried it in a grove in the Golan Heights, according to the documents. Weeks later, hikers saw a hand poking up from the earth, and Sela's body was found.

The sensational crime gripped the nation. Sela's disappearance, murder and the trial — and the Shakespearean details of deceit, lust and tragedy that emerged from it — repeatedly splashed across newspaper front pages.

In court documents, prosecutors say Hershtik schemed and lied in his attempt to distance himself from the killing. Even his own mother, also convicted in the incident, called him a "pathological liar," according to the court documents. Prosecutors said he lied repeatedly about his whereabouts the day Sela disappeared and claimed that Sela fled the country following a hit-and-run incident.

"I am telling you unequivocally that we didn't use violent means as a solution to problems. I am a person who uses pens and pencils and computers to solve problems," he told an interviewer at the time, according to the court documents, as police were working to crack the case.

Today, Hershtik said he was compelled to lie so that he could protect the others involved in the scheme, which included a friend eventually found to be mentally unstable as well as his mother. His mother was convicted of several crimes, including for having tried to thwart a police complaint by Sela's mother about his disappearance.

After Hershtik's accomplice confessed to police, Hershtik was sentenced to life in prison for premeditated murder and obstructing justice, among other crimes.

In a sense, Hershtik flourished during his prison time. He earned two doctorates, in math and chemistry, and he got married three separate times. He said he established 31 companies, selling six of them.

Aside from the physical limits of life behind bars, Israeli law doesn't bar prisoners from doing business, although Hershtik's success is rare.

"You are limited by reality. You're in jail," Hershtik said. "You're running a company. You can't run it from jail yourself. You have to rely on other people to go talk, do contracts, deals."

To circumvent that hurdle, Hershtik installed CEOs to run the day-to-day activities of his companies. He used whatever infrastructure was available to him in prison, being granted a computer in his cell at one point. With limited access to the internet, Hershtik said he had to get lengthy documents read to him over the phone.

His first company, which he launched in 1998, focused on video compression technology. He enlisted a tech columnist as CEO of the company, which was eventually sold, netting Hershtik an undisclosed amount.

Hershtik met his first wife through regular interpersonal contact while he was in remand. He met his second wife after he put a call out in a widely-read women's magazine while he met the third in an online chat room, sparking a relationship that lasted 14 years. He is now divorced, with no children.

He said he hobnobbed with some of Israel's most famous prisoners while behind bars, including former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and former President Moshe Katsav.

But prison was also a fraught time for Hershtik. He said he spent 11 years in quarantine because of health issues that led to a serious deterioration of his immune system. Contact with other inmates could imperil his condition. He was punished twice for setting up internet access to his cell, in one case building a modem out of two dismantled DVD players. He said he spent weeks in solitary confinement — in a "dungeon" as Hershtik describes it — for his violation.

He also said he was stabbed by two Arab inmates after being caught up in a plot to catapult a severed pig's head with a Quran in its mouth into Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque. Hershtik said he suggested the plot to two Jewish nationalists he met in prison, but said he was being hypothetical.

When the country's domestic security agency Shin Bet caught wind of the plan, it enlisted Hershtik as an informant, he said. When the Arab inmates heard Hershtik assisted the Shin Bet, they stabbed him,

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Hershtik said.

Court documents related to the case say Hershtik "proved himself to be a very problematic witness and source of information," saying he repeatedly changed his story regarding his involvement.

Last year, a parole board determined Hershtik had been rehabilitated and no longer posed a danger to society.

"Throughout the treatment, the inmate presented as a person with especially high intelligence, with no judgment or comprehension disorders," the parole board wrote.

As part of his early release and until 2026, he is under nightly house arrest from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. He must wear a tracking device around his ankle at all times and he is barred from leaving the country.

A free man, Hershtik sat recently with the AP in his office in the central city of Rehovot, Israel. An electric toothbrush and an energy drink perched on his desk next to a long, curved computer screen. He wore a grey shirt with just a hint of wrinkles, but had two spare ironed shirts delivered just in case he had to make himself more presentable. He did not change during the interview.

He owns an Audi and without a driver's license, he is ferried around by two rotating drivers.

His start-up is waiting for regulatory approval to merge with a company called NextGen Biomed, which trades on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange and would make Scentech public. Talks that brought about the merger also took place while Hershtik was in prison.

Hershtik said the company's product is being finalized for detecting COVID-19 through a patient's breath, and it is working to add other diseases such as certain cancers as well as depression. The product is meant to provide on-the-spot results in a non-invasive way.

The company has received a patent for its technology in Israel and said it is preparing to apply for FDA approval soon. Disease diagnosis by breath is a growing field and other companies say they do similar things, but Hershtik said his patented technology allows for unique chemical indicators in the breath to be identified and used to diagnose diseases.

Hershtik said he looks at his potentially life-saving invention as a way to give back to society.

"The remorse that I felt for what I did would become a beacon for my path forward," Hershtik said. "This company was built because I wanted to do something better, to leave the world a better place."

Hershtik said the merger values the company at around \$250 million and that he has raised more than \$25 million in funding over the last two years through private Israeli investors. A large part of the investment is from Hershtik's own money, although he won't say how much.

The company is backed by prominent Israeli names. Yaakov Amidror, who chairs NextGen, is a former chief of the country's National Security Council. Zeev Rotstein, who leads the company's scientific council, used to head one of the country's largest hospitals. And Shmuel Shapira, the company's chief technology officer, is the former director of the Israel Institute for Biological Research, a state-run scientific research body.

"According to the rules of the country, the man is allowed to rehabilitate. He paid his price and he rehabilitated. So there is no reason not to help him rehabilitate," Amidror, who testified to the parole board on Hershtik's behalf, told the AP.

But his past is already haunting him. Hershtik was demoted from CTO earlier this year to his current position, in part because he didn't want his crime to scare away investors once the company goes public. In the About Us section of the company's website, Hershtik is last on the list of team members even though Scentech is his brainchild. His bio does not mention the murder.

Drew Morris, a board member and investor, admits he was "freaked out" when he first heard of Hershtik's story. But today, he believes his partner is trying to "do something good for the world."

"Harel has always said if for some reason his presence is a problem and the company would be better off without him, that he's willing to leave the company," Morris added.

And as the company seeks to take its product to market, investors will need to decide whether Hershtik's rap sheet influences where they put their money.

Ishak Saporta, a senior lecturer at Tel Aviv University's Collier School of Management, said he believed

investors would be drawn to the company's potential for profit rather than deterred by Hershtik's history. "What concerns me here is that he became a millionaire. He paid his debt to society in jail. But does he have a commitment to the victim's family," Saporta said.

Bat-Leah, the mother of Sela's child, remains traumatized. While she was no longer in a romantic relationship with Sela when he was killed, his death was a painful loss that came on the heels of the killing of her brother in 1991 by the notorious serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer.

She believes Hershtik should do something for the family. While Saporta proposed that Hershtik give Sela's survivors company stock, Bat-Leah suggested he help fund her daughter's education or create a reptile museum in Sela's name.

"He served his time but he should also make some kind of reparation," she said. "Whatever that looks like I don't know."

Hershtik sees the good that could come about from the company as the ultimate form of repentance. He said he could have used his smarts to create any sort of company with no benefit to society but chose health-tech instead.

"Trust me, this is not for the money," he said.

Buffalo shooter's prior threat, hospital stay face scrutiny

By CAROLYN THOMPSON and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The white gunman accused of committing a racist massacre at a Buffalo supermarket made threatening comments that brought police to his high school last spring, but he was never charged with a crime and had no further contact with law enforcement after his release from a hospital, officials said.

The revelation raised questions about whether his encounter with police and the mental health system was yet another missed opportunity to put a potential mass shooter under closer law enforcement scrutiny, get him help, or make sure he didn't have access to deadly firearms.

Authorities said Sunday that they were investigating the attack on predominantly Black shoppers and workers at the Tops Friendly Market as a potential federal hate crime or act of domestic terrorism.

Payton Gendron, 18, traveled about 200 miles (320 kilometers) from his home in Conklin, New York, to Buffalo to commit the attack, police said.

Federal authorities were still working to confirm the authenticity of a racist 180-page document, purportedly written by Gendron, that said the assault was intended to terrorize all non-white, non-Christian people and get them to leave the country.

Law enforcement officials revealed Sunday that New York State Police troopers had been called to Gendron's high school last June, for a report that Gendron, then 17, had made threatening statements.

Gendron threatened to carry out a shooting at Susquehanna Valley High School, in Conklin, New York, around the time of graduation, a law enforcement official who spoke on condition of anonymity said. The official was not authorized to speak publicly on the investigation.

Buffalo Police Commissioner Joseph Gramaglia said Gendron had no further contact with law enforcement after a mental health evaluation that put him in a hospital for a day and a half.

"Nobody called in," he said. "Nobody called any complaints," Gramaglia said. The threat was "general" in nature, he said, and not related to race.

New York is one of several states that have enacted "red flag" laws in recent years that were intended to try and prevent mass shootings committed by people who show warning signs that they might be a threat to themselves or others.

Those laws allow law enforcement officers, a person's family, or in some cases, medical professionals or school officials to petition courts to temporarily seize a troubled person's firearms, or prevent them from buying guns.

Federal law bars people from owning a gun if a judge has determined they have a "mental defect" or they have been forced into a mental institution — but an evaluation alone would not trigger the prohibition.

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It is unclear whether officials could have invoked "red flag" legislation after the incident at Susquehanna Valley High School. Police and prosecutors wouldn't provide details on the incident, or say when Gendron had purchased the weapons used in the assault.

The long list of mass shootings in the U.S. involving missed opportunities to intervene includes the 2018 massacre of 17 students at a high school in Parkland, Florida, where law enforcement officials had received numerous complaints about the gunman's threatening statements, and the killings of more than two dozen people at a Texas church in 2017 by a former U.S. Air Force serviceman who was able to buy a gun despite a violent history.

The victims of Saturday's attack in Buffalo included an 86-year-old woman who had just visited her husband in a nursing home, a man buying a cake for his grandson, a church deacon helping people get home with their groceries and a supermarket security guard.

The shooter livestreamed the attack on Twitch, prompting scrutiny of how fast social platforms react to violent videos.

President Joe Biden planned to visit Buffalo Tuesday.

Gendron surrendered to police who confronted him in the supermarket's vestibule. He was arraigned later Saturday on a murder charge. Relatives didn't respond to messages.

A lengthy statement circulating online, attributed to Gendron, outlined a racist ideology rooted in a belief that the United States should belong only to white people.

Portions of the Twitch video circulating online showed the gunman killing multiple shoppers in less than a minute. At one point, he trains his weapon on a white person cowering behind a checkout counter, but says "Sorry!" and doesn't shoot.

Screenshots purporting to be from the broadcast appear to show a racial slur targeting Black people scrawled on his rifle.

Authorities said he shot, in total, 11 Black people and two white people Saturday.

"This individual came here with the express purpose of taking as many Black lives as he possibly could," Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown said at a news conference Sunday.

EXPLAINER: Theory of white replacement fuels racist attacks

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A racist ideology seeping from the Internet's fringes into the mainstream is being investigated as a motivating factor in the supermarket shooting that killed 10 people in Buffalo, New York. Most of the victims were Black.

Ideas from "The Great Replacement Theory" filled a racist screed supposedly posted online by the white 18-year-old man accused of targeting Black people in Saturday's rampage. Authorities were still working to confirm its authenticity.

Certainly, there was no mistaking the racist intent of the shooter.

WHAT IS THE GREAT REPLACEMENT THEORY?

Simply put, it says there's a conspiracy afoot to diminish the influence of white people.

Believers say this goal is being achieved both through immigration of nonwhite people into societies that have largely been dominated by white people, as well as through simple demographics, with white people having lower birth rates than others.

The theory's more racist adherents believe Jews are behind the so-called replacement conspiracy. When white supremacists marched in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017, their chants included "you will not replace us" and "Jews will not replace us."

A more mainstream view in the U.S. suggests Democrats are encouraging immigration from Latin America so more like-minded potential voters replace "traditional" Americans, said Mark Pitcavage, senior research fellow at the Anti-Defamation League Center on Extremism.

WHAT ARE ITS ROOTS?

How long has racism existed? Broadly speaking, its roots are that deep. In the U.S., you can point to

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efforts to intimidate and discourage Black people from voting — from replacing white voters at the polls — that date to the post-Civil War era.

In the modern era, most experts point to two influential books. "The Turner Diaries," a 1978 novel written by William Luther Pierce under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald, is about a violent revolution in the United States with a race war that leads to the extermination of nonwhites.

The FBI called it a "bible of the racist right," said Kurt Braddock, an American University professor and a researcher at the Polarization and Extremism Research & Innovation Lab.

A 2012 book by Frenchman Renaud Camus, about Europe being invaded by Black and brown immigrants from Africa, was called "Le Grand Remplacement" and a name was born.

WHO ARE ITS ADHERENTS?

To some of the more extreme believers, certain white supremacist mass killers — in Norway in 2011, two New Zealand mosques in 2019, a Pittsburgh synagogue in 2018, a Black church in South Carolina — are considered saints, Pitcavage said.

Those "accelerationist white supremacists" believe small societal changes won't achieve much, so the only option is tearing down society, he said.

The Buffalo shooter's alleged diatribe and some of his apparent methods indicate he closely studied the New Zealand shooter, particularly the effort to livestream his rampage. He reportedly inscribed the number 14 on his gun, which Pitcavage said is shorthand for a 14-word white supremacist slogan.

A "manifesto" by the New Zealand shooter was widely spread online. If the message from the Buffalo shooter proves authentic, it seems designed to also spread his philosophy and methods to a large audience.

IS THE THEORY MAKING WIDER INROADS?

While more extreme forms of racism are clearly frowned upon, many experts are concerned about a mainstreaming of some views.

In a poll released last week, The Associated Press and the NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that about 1 in 3 Americans believe an effort is underway to replace U.S.-born Americans with immigrants for electoral gain.

On a regular basis, many adherents to the more extreme versions of The Great Replacement Theory converse through encrypted apps online and tend to be careful. They know they're being watched.

"They are very clever," Braddock said. "They don't make overt calls to arms."

WHO'S TALKING ABOUT REPLACEMENT?

In particular, Tucker Carlson, Fox News' most popular personality, has pushed false but more politically palatable views that are seen as sympathetic by some white people who are concerned about a loss of power.

"I know that the left and all the gatekeepers on Twitter become literally hysterical if you use the term 'replacement,' if you suggest the Democratic Party is trying to replace the current electorate, the voters now casting ballots, with new people, more obedient voters from the Third World," he said on his show last year. "But they become hysterical because that's what's happening, actually, let's just say it. That's true."

A study of five years' worth of Carlson's show by The New York Times found 400 instances where he talked about Democratic politicians and others seeking to force demographic change through immigration.

Fox News pointed to repeated statements that Carlson has made denouncing political violence of all kinds.

The attention paid by many Republican politicians to what they see as a leaky southern border along the United States has been interpreted, at least by some, as a nod to the concern of white people who worry about being "replaced."

House Republican Conference Chair Elise Stefanik's campaign committee was criticized last year for an advertisement that said "radical Democrats" were planning a "permanent election insurrection" by granting amnesty to undocumented immigrants who would create a permanent liberal majority in Washington.

Pitcavage said he's concerned about the message Carlson and some who agree with him are sending. "It actually introduces the Great Replacement Theory to a conservative audience in an easier-to-swallow pill," he said.

Buffalo shooting latest example of targeted racial violence

By DEEPTI HAJELA, AARON MORRISON and BRENDAN FARRINGTON Associated Press

Black people going about their daily lives — then dying in a hail of bullets fired by a white man who targeted them because of their skin color.

Substitute a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, with a church in South Carolina, and Malcolm Graham knows the pain and grief the families of those killed Saturday are feeling. He knows their dismay that racial bigotry has torn apart the fabric of their families.

"America's Achilles' heel continues to be ... racism," said Graham, whose sister, Cynthia Graham-Hurd, was among nine parishioners fatally shot by avowed white supremacist Dylann Roof in 2015 during Bible study in Charleston.

"As a country, we need to acknowledge that it exists," Graham said. "There's a lack of acknowledgment that these problems are persistent, are embedded into systems and cost lives."

For many Black Americans, the Buffalo shooting has stirred up the same feelings they faced after Charleston and other attacks: the fear, the vulnerability, the worry that nothing will be done politically or otherwise to prevent the next act of targeted racial violence.

Law enforcement officials said suspected gunman Payton Gendron, 18, drove 200 miles from his hometown of Conklin, New York, to Buffalo after searching out and specifically targeting a predominantly Black neighborhood.

He shot 11 Black people and two white people at the grocery store, authorities said. Ten people died.

A 180-page document, purportedly written by Gendron, gives plans for the attack and makes references to other racist shootings and to Roof. The document also outlines a racist ideology rooted in a belief that the U.S. should belong only to white people. All others, the document said, were "replacers" who should be eliminated by force or terror. The attack was intended to intimidate all non-white, non-Christian people and get them to leave the country, it said.

The idea that those killed at the Tops Friendly Market lost their lives because of the shooter's racism is "sick," said Steve Carlson, 29, who is Black and grew up knowing Katherine Massey, one of the victims.

"It's not right. You don't pick what ethnicity you're born to," Carlson said. "These people were just shopping, they went to go get food for their families."

At State Tabernacle Church of God in Christ, Deacon Heyward Patterson was mourned during services Sunday. Pastor Russell Bell couldn't wrap his mind around the attack and Patterson's death.

"I don't understand what that is, to hate people just because of their color, to hate people because we're different. God made us all different. That's what makes the world go 'round," he said.

But as abhorrent as the shooting was, it was hardly an isolated incident. The history of the United States is filled with white supremacist violence, starting from even before its official origins.

Black people have borne and continue to bear the brunt of much of it, but other groups have also been targeted in attacks because of their race, including Latinos in the 2019 shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, where 22 people were killed.

Gunmen with biases against religion and sexual orientation have also carried out targeted violence: the shootings at a San Diego synagogue in 2019 and a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, in 2016.

Democratic Florida state Rep. Carlos Guillermo Smith, who is gay and of Peruvian descent, immediately had flashbacks to the Pulse nightclub shooting that left 49 victims dead. The shooter targeted gay patrons in what was a largely Latino crowd.

"It's déjà vu all over again in Orlando," said Smith, who represents an Orlando district. "2016 seems like a long time ago, but in 2022 there's a lot more hatred and bigotry out there."

Experiencing violence of any kind is obviously traumatic, but the impact of targeted violence like this has ripples on a broader level.

"To be targeted for these things that you cannot control, it's not only extremely painful emotionally, but it also impacts the way you perceive the world going forward after that," said Michael Edison Hayden, spokesperson for the Southern Poverty Law Center, which advocates for civil rights.

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Hate crime laws are on the books in recognition of that reality. The effect of events like these is "you've increased the vulnerability of everyone who looks like the target," said Jeannine Bell, a professor at Indiana University's Maurer School of Law. "This is a different type of crime because it impacts not just the victims, but also the community."

While there's always hand-wringing and dismay after incidents like these, that hasn't translated into a commitment to address the bigotry that underlies them, said Cornell Williams Brooks, a professor at the Harvard Kennedy School and former president and CEO of the NAACP.

He's weary of political leaders' promises to do more about white supremacist threats and gun violence. "Count the number of sympathy cards and flowers, prayers and thoughts that have been extended to the victims of mass shootings, to the victims of racialized violence," he said. "Do we really need (politicians) showing up to our places of worship to help bury our folks and do nothing to stop the carnage?"

2022 midterms: What to watch as 5 states hold primaries

By MARC LEVY and GARY D. ROBERTSON Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump's winning streak in U.S. Senate primaries is on the line Tuesday as voters in five states cast their ballots in midterm elections.

Trump made bold endorsements in backing celebrity heart surgeon Mehmet Oz in Pennsylvania and U.S. Rep. Ted Budd in North Carolina. The once little-known Budd is now in a strong position to win the Republican nomination, but Oz is locked in a tight primary against a former hedge fund CEO and a community activist. The primaries follow a resounding win in Ohio's May 3 contest by Trump's Senate candidate, JD Vance.

On the Democratic side, Pennsylvania Senate candidate John Fetterman revealed Sunday that he had suffered a stroke but was on his way to a "full recovery."

Pennsylvania, Oregon and Idaho are holding primaries for governor on Tuesday. In Idaho, Republican Brad Little is fighting back a challenge from his lieutenant governor, a Trump-backed conservative who issued executive orders banning mask mandates during the height of the pandemic when Little was out of state on business.

In Congress, U.S. Rep. Madison Cawthorn is trying to survive a Republican primary in North Carolina after a turbulent first term in office.

What to watch in Tuesday's primaries in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Kentucky, Idaho and Oregon:
PENNSYLVANIA

The race for retiring Republican U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey's seat has been dominated by a huge primary field that has been particularly contested on the GOP side.

But on Sunday, the focus was on the Democrats as Fetterman announced he was recovering from a stroke. The 52-year-old said he went to the hospital on Friday after not feeling well and would remain for a while for observation. He vowed to press forward despite the health setback, saying, "Our campaign isn't slowing down one bit, and we are still on track to win this primary on Tuesday."

Fetterman has led in polls and fundraising in a four-person field that includes U.S. Rep. Conor Lamb and state Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta.

For Republicans, the race looked for much of the campaign like a two-man contest between the Trump-endorsed Oz, best known as the host of daytime TV's "The Dr. Oz Show," and former hedge fund CEO David McCormick.

But several prominent conservative groups have gotten involved in the race's final days, backing lesser-known conservative activist Kathy Barnette as an alternative. A recent Fox News poll shows she is surging, just trailing Oz and McCormick.

In the governor's race, some Republicans are wringing their hands over the prospect that a far-right candidate, state Sen. Doug Mastriano, could emerge as the winner in the crowded field. They fear Mastriano, who has promoted Trump's lies of widespread election fraud in the 2020 election, is unelectable in November and likely to squander an opportunity to replace Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf, who is prevented

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by term limit laws from running again.

On the Democratic side, the state's two-term attorney general, Josh Shapiro, is unchallenged in his gubernatorial bid.

NORTH CAROLINA

Trump is trying to sway races for U.S. Senate and House in a state he won twice, but narrowly.

Trump endorsed Budd for the Senate seat being vacated by retiring Republican Richard Burr, surprising many at last year's state GOP convention. Budd's top competitors in the 11-way primary are former U.S. Rep. Mark Walker, who had actively sought Trump's support, and former Gov. Pat McCrory, who is considered a moderate in the race but is best known nationally for signing a "bathroom bill" targeting transgender people in 2016 that cost the state billions.

On the Democratic side, Cheri Beasley, the former chief justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, has appeared to clear her 11-person field of significant rivals. She would be North Carolina's first Black U.S. senator if she wins in November.

In congressional races, Trump's endorsement of Cawthorn in the 11th District didn't stop establishment figures from opposing the 26-year-old first-term congressman.

Unforced political and personal errors by Cawthorn — a speaker at the "Stop the Steal" rally before the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol — have made him vulnerable in an eight-candidate GOP primary. U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis has endorsed state legislator Chuck Edwards in the race.

In two Democratic-leaning districts, Democrats are holding robust primaries for the nominations to succeed the retiring Rep. David Price in the 4th District and Rep. G.K. Butterfield in the 1st District. Former "American Idol" star Clay Aiken is among the Democratic candidates running for Price's seat.

In the open 13th District, considered a toss-up in November, the Republican field includes Bo Hines, a former college football player endorsed by Trump.

Tuesday's primary may not be the final word for would-be nominees: First-place candidates must get more than 30% of the vote to avoid a July 26 runoff.

KENTUCKY

U.S. Rep. John Yarmuth, the chair of the House Budget Committee and the only Democrat in Kentucky's congressional delegation, is retiring, opening up his seat for the first time in 16 years.

On the Democratic side, state Sen. Morgan McGarvey and state Rep. Attica Scott are playing up their progressive credentials in the Louisville-area 3rd District. Despite their underdog status, several Republicans are also running for the seat, which Yarmuth won in 2006 by ousting a veteran GOP congresswoman.

The Louisville mayor's race is also getting outside interest this year after someone fired on one of the candidates while he was in his campaign office. Democrat Craig Greenberg escaped with a bullet hole in his sweater in the Feb. 14 shooting, and a local social justice activist was charged with attempted murder.

Greenberg is one of eight candidates running in the Democratic primary. A Republican hasn't held the mayor's office in Kentucky's largest city in several decades.

OREGON

In liberal Oregon, the primary for governor is shaping up as a test between the moderate and progressive wings of the Democratic Party at a time of widespread frustration in the state over the COVID-19 pandemic, the homeless crisis, a lack of affordable housing and growing gun violence.

The two leading Democratic candidates are Tina Kotek, a staunch liberal and former speaker of the state House, versus Tobias Read, the state treasurer who has positioned himself as a moderate.

In the Democratic-leaning 5th Congressional District, U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader — a moderate endorsed by President Joe Biden — is trying to fight off a primary challenge from progressive Jamie McLeod-Skinner.

The state's new 6th District has drawn national buzz as one of the most expensive Democratic congressional primaries this year. It has attracted 16 candidates, including Democratic newcomer Carrick Flynn, who is backed by a cryptocurrency kingpin.

In the Democratic-leaning 4th District, eight Democrats are vying for the nomination to replace U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, who is retiring after 35 years in office.

IDAHO

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Little, the Republican governor, is trying to survive a primary challenge from his lieutenant governor, Janice McGeachin, a far-right conservative who has been backed by Trump.

The relationship between Little and McGeachin has been fraught. On two occasions when Little went out of state last year, McGeachin claimed to be in charge and issued executive orders to block COVID-19 mandates. Little, who had never tried to implement any pandemic-related mandates, rescinded both orders when he returned.

In February, McGeachin delivered a taped speech at a white nationalist gathering in Florida. She later said that she was taking an opportunity to speak about Trump's "America First" agenda and that the "media wants us to play a guilt-by-association game."

The establishment and far-right factions of the Republican Party are also vying for control in other races in the state.

In the attorney general's race, five-term incumbent Lawrence Wasden is facing a primary challenge from former U.S. Rep. Raul Labrador, a tea party favorite. In the secretary of state's race, establishment-backed Phil McGrane is going up against state Sen. Mary Souza and far-right state Rep. Dorothy Moon, both of whom have spread the lie that Trump won the 2020 election.

Biden's leadership of Democrats faces test in next primaries

By STEVE PEOPLES, MARC LEVY and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — In his telling, President Joe Biden's political philosophy is rooted in Pennsylvania, where the son of Scranton grew up watching families struggle to make ends meet.

But as Democrats in the president's home state choose a nominee on Tuesday for a critical U.S. Senate seat, the moderate candidate long viewed as an heir to the Biden wing of the party is at risk of being trounced by a progressive once backed by Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

On the opposite coast, U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader of Oregon, the first candidate Biden endorsed this year, faces a spirited challenger from the left. And across the U.S., Democrats are grappling with questions about the party's leadership, messaging and identity.

While much of the attention during the opening phase of the 2022 primary season has focused on former President Donald Trump's grip on the Republican Party, the contests also serve as a referendum on Biden's leadership of the Democratic Party. Few Democrats are openly criticizing the president and most are aggressively pledging support of his agenda. But there's clear unease with the party's direction.

In Oregon's largely rural 5th Congressional District, Jamie McLeod-Skinner said she would "work my heart out" to support Biden's agenda if she defeated his preferred candidate on Tuesday.

"We respect President Biden, but he simply got it wrong in this case," she said in an interview, offering warm words for the president's policies even as she was less complimentary of the party.

"Democrats have been very weak on our messaging and establishing a sense of focus," McLeod-Skinner said. "This is one of the things I'm hoping to help out with."

The White House is downplaying concerns about Biden's leadership and intra-party divisions.

The president's advisers note that Democrats have largely avoided the nasty and expensive personal attacks that have defined Republican primary elections across the country in recent weeks. And they point to Biden's successful endorsement of congressional candidate Shontel Brown, who defeated a vocal Biden critic in Cleveland this month.

The stakes of this year's primaries, meanwhile, are different for each party. While Democrats are debating their ideological and policy future, Republicans are considering some candidates with a history of racist and anti-democratic behavior. In Pennsylvania alone, the Trump-backed candidate for governor worked to overturn the results of the 2020 election. A GOP candidate gaining ground in the Senate primary once linked Islam to pedophilia.

Still, Biden will be tested this week in primary elections across five states: Idaho, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oregon and Pennsylvania.

In Pennsylvania, a Biden loyalist and establishment favorite, Rep. Conor Lamb, has struggled to find his

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footing in a crowded Senate primary that will determine what kind of Democrat will represent the party this fall in one of its best Senate pickup opportunities.

Lamb, a fresh-faced former Marine prosecutor, became a political celebrity in 2018 by winning a special election in a working-class western Pennsylvania district long held by Republicans. Celebrated as the kind of Democrat who can appeal to voters in the middle, he enters primary day looking up in the polls toward Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, a tell-it-like-it-is progressive.

In one closing campaign ad, Fetterman casts himself as, "a different kind of Democrat, candidate, campaign taking on every politician." The 52-year-old suffered a stroke just days ahead of the primary, though his campaign said he was on his way to a "full recovery."

Still, in style — and substance, in some cases — Fetterman is Biden's opposite.

The 6-foot-8 former mayor has tattoos down his arms, a clean-shaven head and a goatee. He curses on social media and wears shorts practically everywhere, even in the winter.

On the campaign trail, Fetterman is more likely to criticize Democratic moderates like Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia than Biden. But in January, Fetterman initially declined an invitation to appear with the president in his Pittsburgh hometown. And he's consistently called on Senate Democrats to to abolish the filibuster to adopt Democratic priorities on gun violence, abortion and voting rights, which is something Biden's White House has largely resisted.

Despite bold campaign-trail promises and a Democratic-controlled Congress, the vast majority of Biden's domestic agenda is stalled.

Fetterman's supporters see his aggressive style and progressive politics as more likely to help Democrats break through the gridlock.

"He's so refreshing because he is so candid," Barbara Orr, 63, said of Fetterman ahead of a recent campaign stop. "If you saw him on TV, he's just bold-faced saying, without couching or mincing his words, what he stands for."

Biden's approval ratings have hovered in the mid-40s for much of the year. Those numbers are in line with, or slightly better than, Trump's for much of his presidency. But in contrast with Trump, Biden is showing some weakness among his party's base.

Public polling suggests that nearly all Democrats approved of Biden when he first took office. For much of this year, however, his approval ratings among Democrats have dipped closer to 80%. While a 20-percentage-point drop doesn't mean his party has abandoned him, Biden's allies concede that core groups in his political coalition — including young people, voters of color and independents — are frustrated.

"You have Democrats out there telling other Democrats that Biden hasn't done anything. And they believe it," said veteran Democratic strategist James Carville. "We need to be more consistent and more united."

Former Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell said that Democrats would be in a better position heading into the fall if there was clearer leadership from Washington Democrats, who have struggled to coalesce behind an agenda or a message in the weeks since Biden's domestic agenda stalled.

"It hasn't been crystal clear up to now, but I think they're starting to understand," Rendell said. "I actually don't think it's quite as bad as everyone says it is. He's been coming back slowly in the polls. But obviously it'd be easier if the president was popular."

Meanwhile, Pennsylvania Republicans have been too focused on their own divisive Senate primary to pay much attention to Democrats so far. But Trump-backed GOP Senate hopeful Mehmet Oz said he's "giddy" about the prospect of a potential head-to-head matchup against Fetterman in the November general election.

"He's basically a tall Bernie Sanders," Oz told The Associated Press. "Everyone understands there's a clear contrast between what a far-left liberal leader would look like and what a conservative leader who's 'America First' will be able to offer."

Biden's leadership of Democrats faces test in next primaries

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No hits, no prob: Bucs win with 0 hits, top Greene, Reds 1-0

By ALAN SAUNDERS Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — In what's quickly become a lost season for the Cincinnati Reds, this really was the ultimate misery.

Prized rookie Hunter Greene and reliever Art Warren combined to allow zero hits in a complete game, but it didn't count as a no-hitter — or even a win.

Instead, the Pittsburgh Pirates eked out a run in the bottom of the eighth inning on three walks and a groundout for a 1-0 victory Sunday.

"It would have been great to have a different result, but it is what it is," Greene said.

Ke'Bryan Hayes' RBI grounder helped the Pirates become the sixth team in big league history since 1901 to win despite not getting any hits. It last happened in 2008 when Jered Weaver and Jose Arredondo of the Angels lost while holding the Dodgers hitless.

By Major League Baseball record-keeping rules, Cincinnati's accomplishment isn't an official no-hitter because its pitchers didn't go at least nine innings.

"Sometimes you win games in weird ways and today we won one in a weird way. And if it's a part of history, that's fine because it's still a win," Pirates manager Derek Shelton said.

And in a year in which most everything has gone wrong for the Reds, this surely had to be the topper as they fell to 9-26, the worst record in the majors.

Greene (1-6) was pulled after one-out walks in the eighth to Rodolfo Castro and Michael Perez. The 22-year-old righty threw 118 pitches, the most by any pitcher in the majors this year.

"He had no-hit stuff and it translated," Shelton said.

Greene fired seven heaters at 100 mph or faster, and mixed in sharp sliders and effective changeups.

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He struck out nine and walked five.

He was totally aware of the possible no-hitter, too.

"To be honest, like in the third or fourth. But that's the last thing I wanted to think about (because) it is really hard to just stay locked in and not think about those things," Greene said.

"I had the scoreboard right in my face and I was trying not to make eye contact with it," he said. "Everybody was giving me my space and knew that I was locked in."

Toward the end, he admitted, he was out of gas.

"But then again, there's the mental part of, you know, 'I'm fine. I'm not tired,'" he said.

Said Reds manager David Bell: "Looking at it now, I think it would have to have gone really easy for him to go back out there for the ninth, but I think there was a chance he could have done it."

Warren relieved and walked Ben Gamel to load the bases. Hayes followed with a grounder to second baseman Alejo Lopez, who bobbed the ball before throwing to shortstop Matt Reynolds for a forceout. Reynolds' relay for a potential inning-ending double play was a fraction late to get the speedy Hayes at first base.

"Maybe in a perfect world that ball's hit a little bit harder to make it a little bit easier for him," Warren said. "I tried to do the best I could and get a ground ball there. It's just one of those things where it didn't go our way."

Cincinnati batters then went down in order in the ninth and that was it at PNC Park — no celebration for the Reds despite the zero in Pittsburgh's hit column.

"I mean, to not even get a hit in a game and to get a win, I'm sure that hasn't happened a lot since baseball's been going on," Hayes said.

There have been two no-hitters in the majors this season. Angels rookie Reid Detmers pitched one last Tuesday against Tampa Bay, and five Mets pitchers combined to hold Philadelphia hitless last week.

Also, Tampa Bay pitchers combined to hold Boston hitless into the 10th inning last month and wound up winning 3-2. That wasn't an official no-hitter, either, because the Rays didn't throw a complete game without giving up a hit.

The second overall pick in the 2017 amateur draft, Greene suffered an injury in 2018 that required Tommy John surgery in 2019. After the COVID-19 pandemic, he didn't return to minor league play until 2021. He made the Reds' roster for the first time coming out of spring training this year.

In his second start of the season, he set an MLB record with 39 pitches over 100 mph, but carried a 7.62 ERA into Sunday's game thanks in part to majors-leading 11 home runs this season. He has also allowed 15 walks in 26 innings.

"I'm not focused on wins or losses this year. That's not my focus," he said. "You've got to embrace all the thoughts and emotions in that moment and just go out there and have fun. Hopefully, I'm going to have a lot more opportunities for that."

Pirates starter José Quintana held the Reds scoreless through seven innings, giving up three hits while striking out five.

"Greene threw really well. That's tough, tough for him. But we kept pushing," Quintana said. "I've never seen that before but it's great to get the win."

Chris Stratton (2-1) pitched around a two-on, one out jam in the eighth. David Bednar worked a clean ninth for his seventh save.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Reds: C Tyler Stephenson was cleared to play after leaving Saturday's game under concussion protocols after taking a foul tip off his mask, but did not start. Cincinnati added C Sandy León to the taxi squad as a precaution. ... 1B Joey Votto (COVID-19 IL) made his second rehab appearance with Triple-A Louisville and went 0 for 3 with two strikeouts. ... LHP Mike Minor (shoulder) made his second rehab appearance with Louisville since re-starting his rehab following an April setback. He pitched 2 1/3 innings and allowed one run while striking out four.

Pirates: SS Kevin Newman (left groin strain) will start a rehab assignment this week, GM Ben Cherington

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said. Newman has been out since April 27.

UP NEXT

Reds: RHP Connor Overton (1-0, 1.59) will start against Cleveland on Tuesday after an off day.

Pirates have not announced a starter for Monday's series opener against the Cubs in Chicago.

Small wins buoy Ukraine; West says Russians losing momentum

By OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI and CIARAN McQUILLAN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Almost three months after Russia shocked the world by invading Ukraine, its military faces a bogged-down war, the prospect of a bigger NATO, and an opponent buoyed Sunday by wins on and off the battlefield.

Top diplomats from NATO met in Berlin with the alliance's chief, who declared that the war "is not going as Moscow had planned."

"Ukraine can win this war," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said, adding that the alliance must continue to offer military support to Kyiv. He spoke by video link to the meeting as he recovers from a COVID-19 infection.

On the diplomatic front, both Finland and Sweden took steps bringing them closer to NATO membership despite Russian objections. Finland announced Sunday that it was seeking to join NATO, saying the invasion had changed Europe's security landscape. Several hours later, Sweden's governing party endorsed the country's own bid for membership, which could lead to an application in days.

If the two nonaligned Nordic nations become part of the alliance, it would represent an affront to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has called NATO's post-Cold War expansion in Eastern Europe as a threat to Russia. NATO says it is a purely defensive alliance.

While Moscow lost ground on the diplomatic front, Russian forces also failed to make territorial gains in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine said it held off Russian offensives in the east, and Western military officials said the campaign Moscow launched there after its forces failed to seize the capital, Kyiv, has slowed to a snail's pace.

Ukraine, meanwhile, celebrated a morale-boosting victory in the Eurovision Song Contest. The folk-rap ensemble Kalush Orchestra won the glitzy pan-European competition with its song "Stefania," which has become an anthem among Ukrainians during the war.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy vowed that his nation would claim the customary winner's honor of hosting the next annual competition.

"Step by step, we are forcing the occupiers to leave the Ukrainian land," Zelenskyy said.

The band's frontman, Oleh Psiuk, said at a news conference Sunday that the musicians were "ready to fight" when they return home. Ukraine's government prohibits men between 18 and 60 from leaving the country, but the all-male band's six members received special permission to go to Italy to represent Ukraine in the contest.

They will return to a country still fighting for survival.

Russian and Ukrainian fighters are engaged in a grinding battle for Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, the Donbas. Ukraine's most experienced and best-equipped soldiers have fought Moscow-backed separatists there for eight years.

Even with its setbacks, Russia continues to inflict death and destruction across Ukraine. Over the weekend, its forces hit a chemical plant and 11 high-rise buildings in Siverodonetsk, in the Donbas, the regional governor said. Gov. Serhii Haidaii said two people were killed in the shelling and warned residents still in the city to stay in underground shelters.

Russian missiles destroyed "military infrastructure facilities" in the Yavoriv district of western Ukraine, near the border with Poland, the governor of the Lviv region said. Lviv is a major gateway for the Western-supplied weapons Ukraine has acquired during the war.

The Ukrainian military said it held off a renewed Russian offensive in the Donetsk area of the Donbas. Russian troops also tried to advance near the eastern city of Izyum, but Ukrainian forces stopped them,

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the governor of Ukraine's Kharkiv region, Oleh Sinegubov, reported.

And Ukraine blew up two railway bridges that had been seized by Russian forces in the eastern region of Luhansk, Ukraine's Special Operations Command said Sunday. It posted a video of exploding bridges on Facebook. The command also said it destroyed Russian communication lines in the area to prevent Russia from bringing in more troops to attack the towns of Lisichansk and Severodonetsk, it said.

The Ukrainian claims could not be independently verified, but Western officials also painted a somber picture for Russia.

Britain's Defense Ministry said in its daily intelligence update that the Russian army had lost up to one-third of the combat strength it committed to Ukraine in late February and was failing to gain any substantial territory.

"Under the current conditions, Russia is unlikely to dramatically accelerate its rate of advance over the next 30 days," the ministry said on Twitter.

The assessments of Russia's war performance came as Russian troops retreated from around Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, which was a key military objective earlier in the war and was bombarded for weeks. The regional governor said there had been no shelling in the city for several days, though Russia continued to strike the wider Kharkiv region.

One Ukrainian battalion that had been fighting in the region reached the border with Russia on Sunday and made a victorious video there addressed to Zelenskyy.

In the video posted on Facebook by Ukraine's Ministry of Defense, a dozen fighters stood around a blue-and-yellow post, Ukraine's colors.

One explained that the unit went "to the dividing line with the Russian Federation, the occupying country. Mr. President, we have reached it. We are here."

Other fighters made victory signs and raised their fists.

Despite the continuing threat of missile attacks, many people were returning home to Kharkiv and other cities around Ukraine, said Anna Malyar, deputy head of the Ministry of Defense, on Sunday. Refugees were returning not just because of optimism that the war might ebb.

"Living somewhere just like that, not working, paying for housing, eating ... they are forced to return for financial reasons," she said in remarks carried by the RBK-Ukraine news agency.

In the southern Donbas, the Azov Sea port of Mariupol is now largely under Russian control, except for several hundred Ukrainian troops who have refused to surrender and remain holed up in the Azovstal steel factory.

Many of their wives called on the global community to secure the release of "the entire garrison," during an online news conference. The women said the troops suffered severe food, water and medicine shortages; untreated injuries were sometimes leading to sepsis.

The Ukrainian prosecutor-general's office said regional prosecutors have launched a criminal investigation into Moscow's alleged use of restricted incendiary bombs at the steelworks. International law allows certain use of incendiary munitions but bars their use to directly target enemy personnel or civilians.

Turkey's presidential spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, said the country had offered to evacuate wounded Ukrainian soldiers and civilians by ship from Azovstal, according to official state broadcaster TRT.

The invasion of Ukraine has other countries along Russia's flank worried they could be next, including Finland, which shares both a 1,340-kilometer (830-mile) land border and the Gulf of Finland with Russia. Putin told Finnish President Sauli Niinisto in a Saturday phone call that joining NATO would be an "error."

In Sweden, after the ruling Social Democratic Party on Sunday backed plans to join NATO, the plan was to be discussed Monday in parliament, with an announcement by the Cabinet to follow.

However, NATO operates by consensus, and the Nordic nations' potential bids were thrown into question over concerns from Turkey. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said he had discussed Turkey's concerns at the NATO meeting, especially Sweden and Finland's alleged support for Kurdish rebel groups and their restrictions on weapons sales to Turkey.

But during a Sunday visit to Sweden, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said Finland and Sweden

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would be "important additions" to NATO and that the U.S. should swiftly ratify their membership. McConnell is leading a delegation of GOP senators to the region. They made a surprise visit to Kyiv on Saturday in a show of support.

EXPLAINER: What do we know about John Fetterman's diagnosis?

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — John Fetterman, Pennsylvania's lieutenant governor and a top Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate, is recovering from a stroke he said was caused by a heart condition called atrial fibrillation.

Fetterman said in a statement Sunday that doctors believe he's on his way to making "a full recovery."

A look at what happened, the diagnosis, the future of Fetterman's campaign and what can cause A-fib.

WHAT HAPPENED?

It was on Friday morning when Fetterman's campaign first canceled an event. The campaign's communications director, Joe Calvello, told scores of people waiting to see Fetterman at Millersville University that he hadn't been feeling well that morning and had to cancel.

The campaign canceled more events Friday and through the weekend, saying nothing about his condition or whereabouts. They revealed Sunday afternoon that he had suffered a stroke and was hospitalized.

In a 16-second video released by the campaign with the statement, Fetterman and his wife, Gisele, appear together, with Fetterman seated and speaking clearly.

"As you can see, we hit a little bump on the campaign trail," she begins.

WILL THIS AFFECT HIS CANDIDACY?

Fetterman, 52, maintains that his candidacy will continue, that he's feeling much better and that he's expected to make a full recovery.

However, it's not clear when he will get out of the hospital in Lancaster or whether he will attend the primary night event that his campaign had scheduled in Pittsburgh on Tuesday.

Fetterman suffered the stroke in the busy sprint in the last days of the primary campaign, when he had a full schedule of travel and public events around the state.

While campaigns can slow down a bit in the weeks after a primary, the campaign did not say whether this will affect Fetterman's schedule or what sort of doctors' visits or medication will be required in the future.

Fetterman said the campaign itself "isn't slowing down one bit."

Nothing else changes. Fetterman remains in the race and on the ballot along with the three other Democratic candidates.

WHAT'S THE DIAGNOSIS?

Fetterman said in the statement that he had a stroke that was caused by a clot from his heart being in "an A-fib rhythm for too long." The doctors quickly and completely removed the clot, reversing the stroke, Fetterman said.

Blood can pool inside a pocket of the heart, allowing clots to form. Clots then can break off, get stuck and cut off blood, often in the brain, which receives substantial blood flow.

Fetterman did not say by what method the doctors removed the clot. His campaign said his exact treatment regimen is still being worked out, but will include rest in the short term and a healthier diet.

Dr. Donald Lloyd-Jones, a cardiologist and chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine at Northwestern University, said clots can be removed with "clot-busting" drugs or, more commonly, by extracting the clot "mechanically" by inserting a catheter through a big artery in the groin.

The longer a clot blocks an artery, the more brain cells can die, so it is critically important to recognize the symptoms of a stroke, said Lloyd-Jones, who is president of the American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association.

People who develop A-fib are almost always put on a blood-thinning medication for the rest of their life to help prevent the stroke-causing blood clots that untreated A-fib can create, Dr. Lloyd-Jones said.

WHAT IS A-FIB?

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A-fib — or atrial fibrillation — occurs when the heart's top chambers, called the atria, get out of sync with the bottom chambers' pumping action. It's a type of irregular heartbeat that's potentially serious but treatable.

In that abnormal rhythm, the upper chambers beat so fast that they can't contract like they normally do. As a result, they don't move blood effectively, so the blood can stagnate in the upper chambers and form a clot, Lloyd-Jones said.

Sometimes patients feel a flutter or a racing heart but many times they're not aware of an episode. Sometimes the heart gets back into rhythm on its own. Other patients get an electric shock to get back into rhythm.

A-fib causes 130,000 deaths and 750,000 hospitalizations a year in the U.S. Between 2% and 3% of adults in the U.S. in Fetterman's age range have had a stroke, and a substantial number of those are caused by atrial fibrillation, Lloyd-Jones said.

HOW DO DOCTORS CHECK FOR IT?

A-fib is most common in older adults, and other risks include high blood pressure, sleep apnea or a family history of arrhythmias. Obesity is also a significant risk factor, as is being taller, Lloyd-Jones said.

Fetterman is 6-foot-8, has been open about his push to lose weight in the past. He weighed in at over 400 pounds before losing nearly 150 pounds in 2018.

Routine screening isn't recommended for people without symptoms. Studies haven't yet proved that early detection from screening would prevent enough strokes to outweigh risks from unnecessary testing or overtreatment.

Pennsylvania Senate hopeful Fetterman recovering from stroke

By MARC LEVY and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Pennsylvania Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, the leading Democrat in the state's high-profile Senate contest, suffered a stroke just days before the primary election but was on his way to a "full recovery," his campaign said on Sunday.

The 52-year-old Fetterman, who confirmed that he had been hospitalized all weekend, insisted the health emergency wasn't slowing his campaign. But the stunning revelation, two days before Pennsylvania's primary, created a cloud of uncertainty over the Democratic front-runner's candidacy in what may be one of the party's best Senate pickup opportunities.

"Feeling good, all things considered," Fetterman said in a text message to The Associated Press.

On Friday morning, before Fetterman was to appear at a scheduled campaign event at Millersville University, Fetterman's wife, Gisele, "noticed that John was not himself, and shortly after he started slurring his speech and he was taken to the hospital," a campaign spokesperson said.

In a 16-second video released by his campaign, a seated Fetterman, speaking clearly, explained that he "just wasn't feeling very well" on Friday and decided to go to the hospital at the urging of his wife. He detailed the situation further in a written statement.

"I had a stroke that was caused by a clot from my heart being in an A-fib rhythm for too long," Fetterman said. He said the doctors were able to remove the clot, "reversing the stroke," and got his heart under control.

"The good news is I'm feeling much better, and the doctors tell me I didn't suffer any cognitive damage," he said in the statement.

Questions about Fetterman's health swirled throughout the weekend after he canceled scheduled public appearances Friday, Saturday and Sunday. His campaign cited a health issue but was not specific until Sunday.

His campaign explained the delay in disclosing it publicly by saying Fetterman's condition was "evolving in real time since Friday. We wanted to put out something once we had a clearer picture of his health."

Fetterman did not say how much longer he would be in the hospital.

"They're keeping me here for now for observation, but I should be out of here sometime soon," he said

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in the statement. "The doctors have assured me that I'll be able to get back on the trail, but first I need to take a minute, get some rest, and recover."

Fetterman's future treatment regimen is still being worked out, but will include a healthier diet, in addition to rest, a campaign spokesperson said.

Democrats see the race to replace Pennsylvania's retiring Republican Sen. Pat Toomey as one of their best opportunities pick up a Senate seat this fall. Voters will decide the general election nominees for both parties on Tuesday.

The GOP primary features celebrity heart surgeon Mehmet Oz, former hedge fund executive David McCormick and conservative commentator Kathy Barnette, among others. Democrats are picking from a four-person field that includes Fetterman, three-term U.S. Rep. Conor Lamb and state Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta.

Thousands of early votes have already been cast.

Fetterman is the strong Democratic favorite. He has led in polls and fundraising from the start, even as the party's establishment rallied around Lamb. Despite such support, Lamb struggled to reach voters or even pierce Fetterman's standing with primary voters.

Lamb tweeted that he was conducting a television interview when he learned of Fetterman's stroke.

"Hayley and I are keeping John and his family in our prayers and wishing him a full and speedy recovery," Lamb wrote.

Kenyatta called Fetterman "an incredible family man." "My prayers are with him and his family as he recovers from this stroke," he tweeted. "I look forward to seeing him back on the campaign trail soon."

And on the Republican side, Oz noted that he has experience treating Fetterman's condition.

"I have cared for atrial fibrillation patients and witnessed the miracles of modern medicine in the treatment of strokes, so I am thankful that you received care so quickly," Oz tweeted. "My whole family is praying for your speedy recovery."

Fetterman's heart condition, atrial fibrillation, occurs when the heart's top chambers, called the atria, get out of sync with the bottom chambers' pumping action. Sometimes patients feel a flutter or a racing heart, but many times they're not aware of an episode.

A-fib is most common in older adults, and other risks include high blood pressure or a family history of arrhythmias. It causes 130,000 deaths and 750,000 hospitalizations a year in the U.S.

Fetterman, who is 6-foot-8, has been open about his push to lose weight in the past. He weighed in at over 400 pounds before losing nearly 150 pounds in 2018.

His imposing stature has been a big part of his political appeal.

The former western Pennsylvania mayor has tattoos down his arms, a clean-shaven head and a goatee. He curses on social media and wears shorts practically everywhere, even in the winter.

He vowed to press forward on Sunday despite the health setback.

"Our campaign isn't slowing down one bit, and we are still on track to win this primary on Tuesday, and flip this Senate seat in November," he said. "Thanks for all the support, and please get out there and vote."

Naomi Judd celebrated at 'River of Time' memorial service

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Naomi Judd was celebrated with words and soaring music at a public memorial service Sunday that ended with her daughter Wynonna announcing that a tour planned for later this year would go on.

"Tonight is a celebration, and at the same time I can't put into words how devastated I am," Wynonna Judd said. "I miss her so much.

"After a lot of thought, I'm going to have to honor her and do this tour. I'm just going to have to," she said to applause and cheers at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium. "Tonight, as we close, the show must go on, as hard as it may be. And we will show up together and you will carry me."

Judd died April 30 at age 76, one day before she and daughter Wynonna were scheduled to be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. The ceremony went on, though until Sunday it was unclear whether Wynonna Judd would continue plans for The Judds tour slated to begin in September.

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In a statement provided to The Associated Press, the family said they lost her to “the disease of mental illness.”

Her daughter Ashley said on “Good Morning America” last week that her mother shot herself.

Brad Paisley and Emmylou Harris were among the performers who took the stage to honor Naomi Judd during “The River of Time” memorial service, which was broadcast live on CMT.

Wynonna Judd returned to the stage later to perform “The Rose” with Brandi Carlile. Wynonna Judd paused her performance at one point so that she could redo a section of the song better, her voice soaring as the crowd cheered.

The ceremony began with Judd’s daughter Ashley delivering a eulogy that traced her mother’s life from its humble beginnings in Kentucky to the heights of superstardom.

“We are here tonight remembering an icon and a legend who left country music better than she found it,” Ashley Judd said tearfully.

“She was every woman. Perhaps this is why everyone felt they knew her,” the actor said. “She was a nurse. She was a single mom who sometimes relied on public assistance. She was traumatized by early childhood sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, and rape, and she was fired by a boss when she refused to go away with him for a weekend.

“Tonight, we remember her in song,” the actor said, introducing her sister Wynonna who sang “River of Time.”

The lyrics — “I’m holding back a flood of tears, just thinking ‘bout those happy years, like all the good times that are no more,” filled the Ryman Auditorium, which both Judd daughters noted was country music’s “Mother Church.”

Carly Pearce performed the Judds’ “Why Not Me,” noting “I’m a Kentucky girl myself,” and saying she had an image in her mind that “Naomi’s flipping her skirt in heaven tonight.”

Buffalo shooting: Sites yank videos faster, but not by much

By HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Social platforms have learned to remove violent videos of extremist shootings more quickly over the past few years. It’s just not clear they’re moving quickly enough.

Police say that when a white gunman killed 10 people and wounded three others — most of them Black — in a “racially motivated violent extremist” shooting in Buffalo Saturday, he livestreamed the attack to the gaming platform Twitch, which is owned by Amazon. It didn’t stay there long; a Twitch spokesperson said it removed the video in less than two minutes.

That’s considerably faster than the 17 minutes Facebook needed to take down a similar video streamed by a self-described white supremacist who killed 51 people in two New Zealand mosques in 2019. But versions of the Buffalo shooting video still quickly spread to other platforms, and they haven’t always disappeared quickly.

In April, Twitter enacted a new policy on “perpetrators of violent attacks” to remove accounts maintained by “individual perpetrators of terrorist, violent extremist, or mass violent attacks,” along with tweets and other material produced by perpetrators of such attacks. On Sunday, though, clips of the video were still circulating on the platform.

One clip purporting to display a first-person view of the gunman moving through a supermarket firing at people was posted to Twitter at 8:12 a.m. Pacific time, and was still viewable more than four hours later.

Twitter said Sunday it was working to remove material related to the shooting that violates its rules. But the company added that when people share media to condemn it or provide context, sharing videos and other material from the shooter may not be a rules violation. In these cases, Twitter said it covers images or videos with a “sensitive material” cover that users have to click through in order to view them.

But later Sunday, Twitter changed course on how it was treating material related to the shooting. In a subsequent emailed statement, the company said it is “removing videos and media related to the incident” and “may remove” tweets disseminating the shooter’s writings. Earlier, the company’s statement said it

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"may" remove material produced by perpetrators.

"We believe the hateful and discriminatory views promoted in content produced by perpetrators are harmful for society and that their dissemination should be limited in order to prevent perpetrators from publicizing their message," Twitter said in a statement.

At a news conference following the attack, New York Gov, Kathy Hochul said social media companies must be more vigilant in monitoring what happens on their platforms and found it inexcusable the livestream wasn't taken down "within a second."

"The CEOs of those companies need to be held accountable and assure all of us that they're taking every step humanly possible to be able to monitor this information," Hochul said Sunday on ABC's "This Week." "How these depraved ideas are fermenting on social media – it's spreading like a virus now."

Hochul said she holds companies responsible for "fomenting" racist views. "People are sharing these ideas. They're sharing videos of other attacks. And they're all copycat. They all want to be the next great white hope that's going to inspire the next attack," she said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

A law enforcement official told The Associated Press that investigators were also looking into a diatribe the gunman posted online, which purports to outline the attacker's racist, anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic beliefs, including a desire to drive all people not of European descent from the U.S.

Police said the suspected gunman, identified as Payton Gendron, of Conklin, New York, shot 11 Black and two white victims in a Buffalo supermarket, echoing a deadly attack in a German synagogue that was also streamed on Twitch in October 2019..

Twitch is popular among video game players and has played a key role in boosting the spread of esports. A company spokesperson said the company has a "zero-tolerance policy" against violence. So far, the company hasn't revealed details around the user page or the livestream, including how many people were watching it. The spokesperson said the company has taken the account offline and is monitoring any others who might rebroadcast the video.

In Europe, a senior European Union official with oversight of digital affairs for the 27-nation bloc said Sunday that the livestreaming on Twitch showed the need for administrators to continue working with online platforms so that any future broadcasts of killings can be quickly shut down.

But Margrethe Vestager, who is an executive vice-president of the European Commission, also said it would be a stiff challenge to stamp out such broadcasts completely.

"It's really difficult to make sure that it's completely waterproof, to make sure that this will never happen and that people will be closed down the second they would start a thing like that. Because there's a lot of livestreaming which, of course, is 100% legitimate," she said in an interview with The Associated Press.

"The platforms have done a lot to get to the root of this. They are not there yet," she added. "But they keep working and we will keep working."

Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, said Sunday that it quickly designated the shooting as a "terrorist attack" on Saturday, which triggered an internal process that identifies the suspect's account, as well as copies of his writings and any copy of or link to video of his attack.

The company said it has removed the video of the shooting from the platform and added that instances of it still being shared are through links to streaming sites. These links, in turn, are blocked and "black-holed" by the company, meaning they can't be uploaded again.

But new links created as people upload copies to outside sites would have to be individually blocked in a game of cat and mouse — unless the company chooses to block an entire streaming site from its platform, which is unlikely.

Jared Holt, a resident fellow at Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, said live-content moderation continues to be a big challenge for companies. He noted Twitch's response time was good and the company was smart to watch their platform for potential re-uploads.

"It would behoove other video hosting platforms to also be aware of this content to the extent that it may have been recorded - may also be republished on their own products," Holt said.

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US set to remove 5 groups from foreign terrorism blacklist

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

BERLIN (AP) — The United States is poised to remove five extremist groups, all believed to be defunct, from its list of foreign terrorist organizations, including several that once posed significant threats, killing hundreds if not thousands of people across Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

Although the groups are inactive, the decision is politically sensitive for the Biden administration and the countries in which the organizations operated, and could draw criticism from victims and their families still dealing with the losses of loved ones.

The organizations are the Basque separatist group ETA, the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo, the radical Jewish group Kahane Kach and two Islamic groups that have been active in Israel, the Palestinian territories and Egypt.

The U.S. State Department notified Congress on Friday of the moves, which come at the same time as an increasingly divisive but unrelated debate in Washington and elsewhere about whether Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard should or can be legally removed from the U.S. list as part of efforts to salvage the languishing Iran nuclear deal.

That designation, which was imposed by the Trump administration, was not mentioned in Friday's notifications.

In separate notices to lawmakers, the State Department said the terrorism designations for the five groups will be formally removed when the determinations are published in the Federal Register, which is expected this coming week.

Copies of the notifications, all of which were signed by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday, were obtained by The Associated Press.

The general reason for the removals is identical in each of the cases: Blinken asserting that they were based on an administrative review of the designations, which by law is required every five years.

"Revoking FTO designations ensures our terrorism sanctions remain current and credible and does not reflect any change in policy towards the past activities of any of these the organizations," the State Department said on Sunday.

The reviews take into account whether designated groups are still active, whether they have committed terrorist acts within the previous five years and whether removal from or retention of the list would be in U.S. national security interests. Under the law that created the list, the secretary of state can remove groups that he or she deems no longer to fit the criteria.

"Based on a review of the Administrative Record assembled in this matter and in consultation with the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Treasury, I determine that the circumstances that were the basis for the designation ... have changed in such a manner to warrant revocation of the designation," Blinken wrote in each notice.

Removing the groups from the list has the immediate effect of rescinding a range of sanctions that the designations had entailed. Those include asset freezes and travel bans as well as a prohibition on any Americans providing the groups or their members with any material support. In the past the material support provision has been broadly defined to encompass money or in-kind assistance, in some cases even medical care.

All but one of the five groups was first designated a foreign terrorist organization in 1997 and have remained on the list for the past 25 years.

U.S. officials familiar with the matter said the decisions were made only after consulting lawmakers several months ago about whether the latest five-year reviews should proceed. Before now, only 15 groups have been removed from the list.

The specific reasons for each the removals are included only in classified sections that accompanied the notifications, which are not classified on their own. These sections are labeled "SECRET/NOFORN," which means their contents can only be shared among U.S. officials with proper clearances and not with foreign governments.

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The groups to be removed are:

— Aum Shinrikyo (AUM), the Japanese “Supreme Truth” cult that carried out the deadly sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995 that killed 13 people and sickened hundreds more. The group has been considered largely defunct since the executions of its top echelons, including leader Shoko Asahara, in 2018. It was designated a foreign terrorist organization in 1997.

— Basque Fatherland and Liberty, or ETA, which ran a separatist campaign of bombings and assassinations in northern Spain and elsewhere for decades that killed more than 800 people and wounded thousands more, until declaring a cease-fire in 2010 and disbanding after the arrests and trials of its last leaders in 2018. It was designated a foreign terrorist organization in 1997.

— Kahane Chai, or Kach. The radical Orthodox Jewish group was founded by ultranationalist Israeli Rabbi Meir Kahane in 1971. He led the group until his assassination in 1990. Members of the group have killed, attacked or otherwise threatened or harassed Arabs, Palestinians and Israeli government officials, but the organization has been dormant since 2005. The group was first designated in 1997.

— The Mujahidin Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem, an umbrella group of several jihadist organizations based in Gaza that has claimed responsibility for numerous rocket and other attacks on Israel since its founding in 2012. The council was first designated in 2014.

— Gama’a al-Islamiyya, or Islamic Group—IG, an Egyptian Sunni Islamist movement that fought to topple Egypt’s government during the 1990s. It conducted hundreds of deadly attacks against the police and security forces as well as tourists. The group was first designated in 1997.

The State Department said on Sunday that Blinken was required by law to revoke the designations if the groups no longer met the legal criteria.

Speaking of the Kahane Chai group, the department said it had not been linked to a terrorist attack since 2005. It also said the Mujahidin Shura Council has not claimed an attack since 2013.

“Neither currently meet the statutory definition of a foreign organization,” the department said.

It added that both groups would remain on the U.S. list of Specially Designated Global Terrorist entities that will keep in place sanctions against their property and assets in American jurisdictions.

Biden urges unity to stem racial hate after Buffalo shooting

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden urged unity Sunday to address the “hate that remains a stain on the soul of America” after a deadly mass shooting at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, while state officials pleaded for federal action to end the “uniquely American phenomenon” of mass shootings.

Addressing an annual law enforcement ceremony at the U.S. Capitol, Biden said he and his wife, Jill, pray for those who were shot “by a lone gunman, armed with weapons of war and hate-filled soul,” and their families.

Authorities say a white 18-year-old male in military gear opened fire on shoppers and workers at the supermarket on Saturday, killing 10 people, including a retired Buffalo police officer, and wounding three others. Most of the victims were Black.

Law enforcement officials said Sunday that the gunman had researched the local demographics while looking for places with a high concentration of Black people.

“We must all work together to address the hate that remains a stain on the soul of America,” Biden said at the 41st annual National Peace Officers’ Memorial Service honoring fallen law enforcement officers. “Our hearts are heavy once again, but the resolve must never, ever waver.”

“No one understands this more than the people sitting in front of me,” he added. The White House said the Bidens would travel to Buffalo on Tuesday to grieve with the community.

Biden, speaking at the ceremony for the second time as president, did not address the calls by New York officials — Gov. Kathy Hochul and Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown — for strong federal action to end what Brown said is the “uniquely American phenomenon” of mass shootings.

The president also did not mention gun control efforts that have stalled in Washington.

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Brown expressed frustration that "thoughts and prayers" and pledges to act are offered after every mass shooting, only to be blocked by "some on one side of the aisle."

"It seems like there are those that believe owning a gun is more precious than the sanctity of human life," the mayor told NBC's "Meet the Press." "So I think people all across this country have to rise up. They have to speak more loudly and more clearly that there must be gun control in this country. This is a uniquely American phenomenon. These mass shootings don't happen in other countries across the world."

Brown said he would like to see "sensible gun control."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said tighter gun measures are "a huge priority" for Democrats and the White House. She bemoaned the 60-vote threshold needed in the 50-50 Senate that has made it difficult to advance such legislation, but she pledged on CNN's "State of the Union" that "we are not going away until the job is done."

Hochul said most of the illegal guns being used on the streets of her cities come from other states. "We need a national response," she told NBC.

"We need other states to step up. We need the federal government on our side," said Hochul, a Buffalo native.

Buffalo shooter targeted Black neighborhood, officials say

By CAROLYN THOMPSON and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The white 18-year-old who fatally shot 10 people at a Buffalo supermarket researched the local demographics and arrived a day in advance to conduct reconnaissance with the intent of killing as many Black people as possible, officials said Sunday.

The racially motivated attack came a year after the gunman was taken to a hospital by State Police after making threats involving his high school, according to authorities.

He wasn't charged with a crime and was out of the hospital within a day and a half, police said, but the revelation raised questions about his access to weapons and whether he could have been under closer supervision by law enforcement.

The Buffalo attack prompted grief and anger in the predominantly Black neighborhood around Tops Friendly Market. A group of people gathered there Sunday afternoon to lead chants of "Black lives matter" and mourn victims that included an 86-year-old woman who had just visited her husband in a nursing home and a supermarket security guard, both of whom were Black.

"Somebody filled his heart so full of hate that he would destroy and devastate our community," the Rev. Denise Walden-Glenn said.

Speaking at the National Peace Officers' Memorial service at the U.S. Capitol, President Joe Biden said, "We must all work together to address the hate that remains a stain on the soul of America." The White House later announced that the president and first lady would travel to Buffalo on Tuesday to "grieve with the community."

The Buffalo attack was the deadliest of multiple shootings across the country in recent days. Officials in Milwaukee imposed a curfew after 21 people were injured in three separate shootings near an entertainment district where thousands gathered Friday for an NBA playoff game. Three other shootings over the weekend in the Midwest city left three people dead.

On Sunday, two shootings — one at a Houston flea market and another at a California church — left three people dead and others wounded.

As the country reeled from the Buffalo attack, new details emerged about the gunman's past and Saturday's rampage, which the shooter livestreamed on Twitch. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Buffalo native, demanded technology companies tell her whether they've done "everything humanly possible" to make sure they're monitoring violent content as soon as it appears.

"If not, then I'm going to hold you responsible," she said.

Twitch said in a statement that it ended the transmission "less than two minutes after the violence started."

New York State Police said troopers were called early last June to the high school then attended by the

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alleged gunman, Payton Gendron, for a report that a 17-year-old student had made threatening statements.

Gendron threatened to carry out a shooting at Susquehanna Valley High School, in Conklin, New York, around the time of graduation, a law enforcement official who spoke on condition of anonymity said. The official was not authorized to speak publicly on the investigation.

Buffalo Police Commissioner Joseph Gramaglia said Gendron had no further contact with law enforcement after his release from the hospital.

"Nobody called in," he said. "Nobody called any complaints," Gramaglia said.

Federal law bars people from owning a gun if a judge has determined they have a "mental defect" or they have been forced into a mental institution — but an evaluation alone would not trigger the prohibition.

Federal authorities were still working to confirm the authenticity of a racist 180-page document, purportedly written by Gendron, that detailed his plans for the attack and reasons for carrying it out.

A preliminary investigation found Gendron had repeatedly visited sites espousing white supremacist ideologies and race-based conspiracy theories and extensively researched the 2019 mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand, and the man who killed dozens at a summer camp in Norway in 2011, the law enforcement official told AP.

Federal agents served multiple search warrants and interviewed Gendron's parents, who were cooperating with investigators, the law enforcement official said.

Portions of the Twitch video circulating online showed the gunman firing volley after volley of shots in less than a minute as he raced through the parking lot and then the store, pausing for just a moment to reload. At one point, he trains his weapon on a white person cowering behind a checkout counter, but says "Sorry!" and doesn't shoot.

Screenshots purporting to be from the broadcast appear to show a racial slur targeting Black people scrawled on his rifle, as well as the number 14 — likely referencing a white supremacist slogan.

Authorities said he shot, in total, 11 Black people and two white people Saturday.

"This individual came here with the express purpose of taking as many Black lives as he possibly could," Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown said at a news conference Sunday.

The lengthy statement attributed to Gendron outlined a racist ideology rooted in a belief that the United States should belong only to white people. All others, the document said, were "replacers" who should be eliminated by force or terror. The attack was intended to intimidate all non-white, non-Christian people and get them to leave the country, it said.

The document said Gendron researched demographics to select his target, and picked a neighborhood in Buffalo because it had a high ratio of Black residents.

Gendron traveled about 200 miles (320 kilometers) from his home in Conklin, New York, to Buffalo to commit the attack, police said.

He conducted reconnaissance on the store and the area on Friday, a day before the shooting, Gramaglia said.

Gendron surrendered to police who confronted him in the supermarket's vestibule and convinced him to drop the rifle he had put to his neck. He was arraigned later Saturday on a murder charge, appearing before a judge in a paper gown.

The Buffalo attack was just the latest act of mass violence in a country unsettled by racial tensions, gun violence and a recent spate of hate crimes. It came a month after a shooting on a Brooklyn subway wounded 10, and just over a year after 10 were killed in a shooting at a Colorado supermarket.

"It's just too much. I'm trying to bear witness but it's just too much. You can't even go to the damn store in peace," Buffalo resident Yvonne Woodard told the AP. "It's just crazy."

World leaders descend on UAE to pay respects to late ruler

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — An array of presidents and prime ministers continued to descend on the United Arab Emirates Sunday from around the world to pay their respects to the federation's late ruler. They also came to praise his successor, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan — a vivid sign of

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Abu Dhabi's influence in Western and Arab capitals.

The first Western leader to jet to the oil-rich emirate was French President Emmanuel Macron. He met with Sheikh Mohammed to pay tribute to Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the long-ailing ruler who died Friday at the age of 73 after years presiding over the country's rapid transformation into a global business hub and regional power center.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson arrived later Sunday to offer condolences, along with other leaders including Israel's president after the two countries opened formal relations in 2020.

A high-profile American delegation led by Vice President Kamala Harris is due to visit the UAE on Monday, a bid to ease tensions and show support as relations between the countries have strained under President Joe Biden. The delegation will include the U.S. secretary of state, secretary of defense and CIA director, among others.

"He was respected by all for the values of peace, openness and dialogue that he embodied," Macron wrote on Twitter of Sheikh Khalifa, expressing "full support" for the ascension of his half-brother Sheikh Mohammed after rulers in the federation unanimously appointed him as president.

As crown prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohammed has served as the nation's de facto leader since Sheikh Khalifa suffered a stroke in 2014. He has turned the small UAE — population 10 million — into one of the most influential Arab states. With Abu Dhabi's petrodollars and substantial military along with Dubai's major firms and glitzy hotels, the UAE has come to wield outsized power across the Middle East and Africa.

Even as the country became entangled in the bloody, yearslong conflict in Yemen and a chaotic proxy war in Libya, it positioned itself as a savvy and reliable partner in Western capitals.

Paris and Abu Dhabi have become increasingly aligned in recent years, sharing a deep mistrust of Islamist movements like the Muslim Brotherhood across the region, including in Turkey and Libya.

France opened a major overseas naval base in Abu Dhabi. French warplanes and personnel are also stationed at a facility outside the Emirati capital. The two governments jointly built a gleaming branch of the Louvre museum in the emirate.

During Macron's visit to Dubai last December, France clinched its biggest overseas order for its Rafale combat jet with the UAE — an \$18 billion deal that came as a planned U.S. sale of advanced F-35 fighter jets to the UAE stalled in part over American concerns about the Emirates' relationship with China.

British Prime Minister Johnson, for his part, said his visit to mourn Sheikh Khalifa showed "the deep ties which unite our countries will continue through our cooperation and friendship."

It marked Johnson's second trip this year to the desert sheikhdom, a leading investor in the United Kingdom and key export market after Britain's exit from the European Union. In March Johnson met with Sheikh Mohammed to persuade him to boost oil production and soothe energy markets after Russia's invasion of Ukraine — ultimately to no avail.

Queen Elizabeth II also congratulated Sheikh Mohammed on his assumption of power and praised her country's "strong and historic bonds" with the UAE, a former British protectorate.

Sheikh Mohammed's assertive foreign policy in the Arab world was on stark display as allied leaders rushed to the capital on Saturday to express sorrow over Sheikh Khalifa's death and congratulate Sheikh Mohammed on his formal ascension to power.

Among the first was Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, the Egyptian general who, with Gulf Arab support, overthrew an elected but divisive Islamist government in 2013.

Emirati-backed Tunisian President Kais Saied, who has amassed nearly absolute power in the country since dismissing the prime minister last year, also flew in to pay tribute, along with Jordan's King Abdullah II and Iraq's president and prime minister.

Sudan's Abdel-Fattah Burhan, the general who led the coup in the strategic east African nation last year, has made frequent visits to key backer Sheikh Mohammed. He posted footage on social media Saturday sprinting up stairs to board his plane to Abu Dhabi to honor the late Emirati president.

The UAE's recent deal to normalize ties with Israel, borne from mutual enmity for Iran, is also indicative of Sheikh Mohammed's quietly assertive foreign policy. Before Israel's largely ceremonial President Isaac

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Herzog took off for Abu Dhabi on Sunday, he offered words of gratitude for the Emirates' leaders.

"The partnership between our countries is an asset for us and for the whole region and it has been built and is still being built by bold and groundbreaking leaders," he said.

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani made his first visit to the UAE on Sunday since 2017, when the Emirates joined a Saudi-led boycott of the tiny energy-rich state over its support for Islamists. The Arab states dropped their embargo and reopened borders last year, although relations remain chilly between Abu Dhabi and Doha.

Meanwhile, Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's own upstart crown prince who has had a close relationship with Sheikh Mohammed, delivered his condolences on the phone.

Finland, Sweden inch closer to seeking NATO membership

By FRANK JORDANS and JARI TANNER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Finland's government declared a "new era" is underway as it inches closer to seeking NATO membership, hours before Sweden's governing party on Sunday backed a plan to join the trans-Atlantic alliance amid Russia's war in Ukraine.

Russia has long bristled about NATO moving closer to its borders, so the developments will be sure to further anger Moscow. President Vladimir Putin has already warned his Finnish counterpart on Saturday that relations would be "negatively affected."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Sunday the process for Finland and Sweden to join could be very quick. He also didn't expect Turkey to hold up the process.

Speaking after top diplomats from the alliance's 30 member states met in Berlin, Stoltenberg also expressed his hope that Ukraine could win the war as Russian military advances appear to be faltering.

In Finland, President Sauli Niinisto and Prime Minister Sanna Marin confirmed earlier statements that their country would seek membership in NATO during a joint news conference at the Presidential Palace in Helsinki. The Nordic country, which was nonaligned before changing its stance on NATO, shares a long border with Russia.

"This is a historic day. A new era begins," Niinisto said.

The Finnish Parliament is expected to endorse the decision in the coming days. A formal membership application will then be submitted to NATO headquarters in Brussels, most likely at some point next week.

Sweden, also nonaligned, moved a step closer to applying for NATO membership after the governing Social Democratic party met Sunday and backed joining the trans-Atlantic alliance.

The plan to join the alliance will be discussed in Sweden's parliament on Monday, and Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson's Cabinet will make an announcement later that day.

The decision by the Social Democrats breaks with the party's long-standing position that Sweden must remain nonaligned and means there's a clear majority for NATO membership in Parliament.

Sweden has not been a member of a military alliance since the Napoleonic Wars. Finland adopted neutrality after being defeated by the Red Army in World War II and losing about 10% of its territory.

"Our 200-year-long standing policy of military nonalignment has served Sweden well," Andersson said during a news conference in Stockholm late Sunday. "But the issue at hand is whether military nonalignment will keep serving us well?"

"We're now facing a fundamentally changed security environment in Europe."

Finland and Sweden abandoned traditional neutrality by joining the European Union in 1995.

Public opinion in both countries was firmly against joining NATO until the Russian invasion on Ukraine on Feb. 24, when support for membership surged almost overnight, first in Finland and later in Sweden.

NATO's secretary-general, meanwhile, sought to highlight Russian military setbacks.

"Russia's war in Ukraine is not going as Moscow had planned," Stoltenberg said by video link to the NATO meeting in Berlin as he recovers from a COVID-19 infection. "They failed to take Kyiv. They are pulling back from around Kharkiv. Their major offensive in Donbas has stalled. Russia is not achieving its strategic objectives."

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"Ukraine can win this war," he said, adding that NATO must continue to step up its military support to the country.

The ex-Soviet republic of Georgia's bid to join NATO is again being discussed despite dire warnings from Moscow about the consequences. Both countries fought a brief war in 2008 over Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia.

Nordic NATO member Norway said it strongly welcomed Finland's decision to seek membership. Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt described Helsinki's move as "a turning point" for the Nordic region's defense and security policies.

Stoltenberg said he was confident the accession process for Finland and Sweden could be expedited. In the meantime, the alliance would increase its presence in the Baltic region to deter Russian threats, he said.

"All allies realize the historic magnitude of the moment," Stoltenberg added.

That sentiment was echoed by German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock.

"Sweden and Finland, if you're ready, we're ready," she said.

But NATO member Turkey has raised concerns about the two countries joining, alleging they support Kurdish militants that Ankara considers terrorists.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, has waged an insurgency against Turkey since 1984 and the conflict has killed tens of thousands of people. Turkey has also been infuriated by U.S. support for PKK-linked Syrian Kurdish militants to fight the Islamic State group.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu told reporters in Berlin that Finland and Sweden had also imposed restrictions on defense sales to Turkey that he called "unacceptable."

"It's not because we are against the expansion of NATO, but because we believe countries who support terror and follow such policies against us should not be NATO allies," Çavuşoğlu said.

Stoltenberg said his understanding is that Turkey wants to have its concerns over Finland and Sweden addressed first.

"Turkey has made it clear that their intention is not to block membership," he said.

Nonetheless, Turkey's raising of its grievances has led to concerns in Washington and Brussels that other NATO members might also use the admission process as a way to wring concessions from allies, possibly complicating and delaying accession.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who spoke with Çavuşoğlu and will see him again on the margins of a special U.N. Security Council meeting later this week in New York, declined to comment on those concerns. But he was optimistic that all NATO members would support bids from Finland and Sweden.

"I'm very confident that we will reach consensus," he said after the meeting in Berlin.

EXPLAINER: 'Neutral' Europe recedes as NATO set to expand

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — With Finland and Sweden inching closer to applying for NATO membership amid Russia's war in Ukraine, the list of "neutral" or nonaligned countries in Europe appears poised to shrink.

Security concerns over the war have changed the calculus for Finland and Sweden, and caused other traditionally "neutral" countries to rethink what that term really means for them.

"This is the key thing about neutrality: It means different things to different people," said historian Samuel Kruizinga of the University of Amsterdam.

While European Union members are committed to coming to each other's defense in case of an external attack, the pledge has largely remained on paper as NATO's might overshadows the bloc's own notions of collective defense.

Here's a look at some countries that have enshrined "neutrality" into their laws or generally considered themselves neutral.

SWITZERLAND

Arguably the most renowned neutral country in Europe, Switzerland has enshrined neutrality into its constitution and Swiss voters decided decades ago to stay out of the EU. But its government has been

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at pains in recent weeks to explain its concept of neutrality after lining up behind EU sanctions against Russia — and Swiss neutrality is analyzed almost daily in local media these days.

There's little chance that Switzerland will stray further from its neutrality: Its government has already asked Germany not to pass along Swiss military equipment to Ukraine.

The populist, right-wing party that holds the largest bloc of seats in parliament has been hesitant about further measures against Russia, and the Swiss are fiercely protective of their role as mediator for rival states and as a hub of humanitarian action and human rights. Neutrality helps hone that reputation.

AUSTRIA

Austria's neutrality is a key component of its modern democracy: As a condition of Allied forces leaving the country and its ability to regain independence in 1955, Austria declared itself militarily neutral.

Since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine, Chancellor Karl Nehammer has struck a fine balance with regard to Austria's position. He has maintained that the country has no plans to change its security status, while at the same time declaring that military neutrality doesn't necessarily mean moral neutrality — and that Austria strongly condemns Russia's actions in Ukraine.

IRELAND

Ireland's neutrality has long been a bit of a gray area. Prime Minister Micheal Martin summed up the country's position earlier this year as: "We're not politically neutral, but we're military neutral."

The war in Ukraine has reopened the debate about what Ireland's neutrality means. Ireland has imposed sanctions on Russia and sent nonlethal aid to Ukraine in response to the invasion.

Ireland has been participating in EU battlegroups — part of the bloc's efforts to harmonize its militaries. Kruizinga, who has contributed to a Cambridge History of the First World War on neutrality, suggested that the more that EU and NATO memberships are similar, the better it is for the bloc "to portray itself as a geopolitical power."

MALTA

Malta's constitution says the small Mediterranean island is officially neutral, hewing to a policy of "non-alignment and refusing to participate in any military alliance." A poll commissioned by the Foreign Ministry published two weeks before Russia's invasion found a vast majority of respondents supported neutrality — and only 6% were against it.

The Times of Malta newspaper on Wednesday reported that Irish President Michael Higgins, during a state visit, stressed the idea of "positive" neutrality and joined Maltese President George Vella in condemning the war in Ukraine.

CYPRUS

Cyprus' relations with the United States have grown considerably over the last decade, but any idea of NATO membership remains off the table — at least for now.

The ethnically split island nation's president said Saturday that "it's much too early" to even contemplate such a move that would invariably meet rival Turkey's strong opposition.

Many Cypriots — particularly those on the political left — continue to blame NATO for the island's de facto partition after Turkish forces invaded in the mid-1970s. Turkey was a NATO member at the time — and the alliance did nothing to prevent the military action.

Stalwart NATO member Britain has two sovereign military bases on Cyprus, which host a sophisticated listening post on the east coast that is co-operated by U.S. personnel.

Cyprus also wants to maintain a veneer of neutrality, and has allowed Russian warships to resupply at Cypriot ports, although that privilege was suspended after war in Ukraine began.

McConnell: Finland, Sweden 'important additions' to NATO

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said Sunday that Finland and Sweden would be "important additions" to NATO as he led a delegation of GOP senators to the region in a show of support against Russia's aggression.

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McConnell also called on President Joe Biden to designate Russia as state sponsor of terrorism over its invasion of Ukraine.

Speaking to reporters from Stockholm, McConnell said that Finland and Sweden, unlike some members of the Western alliance, would likely be in a position to pay their NATO obligations and would offer significant military capabilities.

"They will be important additions to NATO, if they choose to join," he said, adding, "I think the United States ought to be first in line to ratify the treaty for both these countries to join."

McConnell is a longtime NATO supporter, and his trip to the Nordic nations with Republican Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, John Barrasso of Wyoming and John Cornyn of Texas follows their surprise stop Saturday in Ukraine's capital to express solidarity in the fight against the Kremlin.

McConnell was in Sweden while leading diplomats from the 30 NATO member states met in Berlin to discuss providing more support to Ukraine and moves by Finland, Sweden and others to join NATO in the face of threats from Russia.

Several hours after Finland's announcement that it would seek to join NATO, Sweden's governing party also endorsed becoming an alliance member, a move that could lead to the country's application within days.

The office of Finland's president, Sauli Niinisto, said the American lawmakers will meet with the president to discuss Finland's NATO membership, the Ukraine war and other issues. McConnell's office confirmed the visit.

But NATO-member Turkey is "not favorable" toward those two additions, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Friday, complicating the move to bolster the alliance as a deterrent to Russia.

The high-level meetings comes as the Congress is working to approve \$40 billion in military aid to Ukraine, a substantial infusion of support for the region. The measure includes \$6 billion for Ukraine for intelligence, equipment and training for its forces, plus \$4 billion in financing to help Ukraine and NATO allies build up their militaries.

The latest round of assistance would push U.S. support to Ukraine beyond \$50 billion, which has raised concerns from some conservative Republicans in the party's isolationist wing wary of the price of overseas spending. The measure stalled in the Senate over the objection of Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., but McConnell is determined to see that it passes in the coming week.

"We'll get the job done," McConnell told reporters on a conference call.

McConnell said it is in America's interest to support Ukraine as he brushed aside criticism from some fellow Republicans, including former President Donald Trump, about the level of spending. It's a reemergence of the isolationist "America First" approach to foreign policy by a faction of the Republican Party.

McConnell said he told Zelenskyy that there is vast bipartisan support in Congress for helping Ukraine. "This is not a charity we're involved in here," McConnell said. "This is to prevent this group of thugs from beginning a march through Europe."

Asked about a resolution introduced in the Senate designating Russia a state sponsor of terror, McConnell said he supports it. But he also said Biden could declare that on his own, without congressional action.

"I would encourage him to do it," McConnell told reporters.

McConnell could not say whether the latest aid package would be the last before the November elections. The spending on Ukraine has been a simmering campaign issue for some Republican candidates.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who already pushed the aid through the House with bipartisan votes, said on CNN's "State of the Union" about the Senate Republicans: "They couldn't pass the Ukraine bill with the senators going over to Ukraine empty-handed with a promise. We passed the bill."

Zelensky, in his nightly video address Saturday after meeting with the Republicans, said he believed that the senators' trip showed "the strong connection between the Ukrainian and American people. We discussed various areas of support for our country, including defense and finance, as well as strengthening sanctions against Russia."

It was the second high-profile congressional delegation to stop in Ukraine in as many weeks. Pelosi visited on May 1 with a group of House Democrats and promised Zelenskyy that the United States will "be there for you until the fight is done."

First lady Jill Biden visited western Ukraine last weekend for a Mother's Day meeting with Zelenskyy's wife, Olena Zelenska.

K-9 featured in Netflix's 'Rescued by Ruby' euthanized

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — A Rhode Island dog whose inspiring story of going from shelter dog to lifesaving police K-9 became the subject of a recent Netflix movie has been euthanized.

State Police said Sunday K-9 Ruby was put down Friday following a "sudden, acute, and untreatable illness." She was 11 years old.

Col. Darnell Weaver, superintendent of the state police, expressed gratitude for K-9 Ruby's years of service. "K-9 Ruby dedicated her life to serve the citizens of Rhode Island and make a positive impact on every person she ever interacted with," he said in a statement. "She became a symbol of hope for all shelter dogs, showing the world what a shelter dog can do when just given love and the chance to shine."

Ruby served with the Rhode Island State Police for 11 years and was handled by Corporal Daniel O'Neil, Weaver said.

Part Australian shepherd and part border collie, Ruby was one of the first shelter dogs trained to serve with the Rhode Island State Police. She participated in numerous search-and-rescue missions and made many public appearances during her career.

Ruby gained notoriety in 2017 when she located a teenage boy who was severely injured while hiking in the woods. The boy turned out to be the son of the animal shelter volunteer who had fought to keep her from being put down.

"She was a total knucklehead," shelter volunteer and dog trainer Patricia Inman had told The Associated Press of Ruby, who had been returned by five families for being too rambunctious before O'Neil adopted the then-eight-month-old in 2011.

Ruby earned national recognition for the rescue — the American Humane Hero Dog organization named her the nation's "Search and Rescue Dog of the Year" — and her story was made into the 2022 Netflix movie "Rescued by Ruby."

"She had a full, happy, and wonderful life, not only as a trooper, but as part of a loving family," Weaver said. "She worked right until the end and never gave up doing what she loved most — making people smile."

Ruby lived with O'Neil and his family and will be honored privately, police said.

"She was given a chance and she's been doing everything she can to pay it back," O'Neil said earlier this year. "You have this dog that was given up on, and she's changed so many people's lives."

Despite her lauded search-and-rescue career, Ruby's mischievous spirit was irrepressible: Three years ago, she bolted near a state park, turning up safe and sound after a 19-hour search. More recently, she returned from a bathroom break with a live skunk writhing — and spraying — in her jaws.

The antics were part of what made Ruby, well, Ruby. Above all, she was a good dog.

"If you show them love and compassion and you give them a certain type of stability, they'll show their true colors," O'Neil had said.

Chicago alt-weekly survives column clash, going nonprofit

By KATHLEEN FOODY Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The Chicago Reader, the city's famed alt-weekly, is expected to become a nonprofit this month after the sale was nearly derailed over a co-owner's column opposing COVID-19 vaccine requirements for children.

The publication was on track to be sold to the new nonprofit last year until the November printing of defense attorney Leonard Goodman's column headlined "Vaxxing our kids" prompted allegations of misinformation and censorship.

Goodman agreed to step aside in late April, allowing the sale to go through. Still, the standoff among the alt-weekly's managers left staff members in limbo for months, wondering if the Reader would be shut down after surviving multiple previous sales and the coronavirus pandemic.

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In the column, Goodman wrote that “feverish hype by government officials, mainstream media outlets, and Big Pharma” made him question whether his 6-year-old daughter should be vaccinated.

Critics including former and current Reader staff quickly blasted his take, arguing that Goodman relied on sources repeatedly fact-checked by media and infectious-disease experts.

Publisher Tracy Baim said editors asked to hire an independent fact-checker to vet the column. Baim said she and her co-publisher then met with Goodman and discussed options, but “it was very clear he didn’t like any” of their proposals.

Goodman said the Reader should have stood by him once the piece was published, regardless of his argument.

“This is an opinion piece,” he said. “It’s not writing as a scientist.”

Hoping to keep the peace, Baim said she told editors they would leave the column as written until the sale closed. But then two board members accused Baim and Reader staff of censorship and demanded several changes to the sale agreement — stalling the transition.

Sladjana Vuckovic, one of the members who backed Goodman, said she wouldn’t have objected to the Reader publishing another writer’s column favoring vaccination for kids but thought Goodman’s perspective “was of great interest” and didn’t require a rewrite.

The Reader’s staff union led protests outside Goodman’s home last month, bringing renewed attention to their demand that Goodman and his backers “free the Reader.” Many in the city’s arts, music and performing arts communities backed the push, sharing stories of the Reader’s influence on Chicago.

The alt-weekly first published in 1971, with editions assembled in some of its young founders’ apartments. In an issue celebrating the publication’s 50th anniversary, one founder recalled breaking even for the first time three years later.

By the 1980s, ad revenue was in the millions and kept growing to a peak of \$22.6 million in 2002. But the Reader has struggled financially since as advertising dollars migrated online and the publication shuffled between owners.

Goodman and Elzie Higginbottom, a developer, bought the alt-weekly for \$1 in 2018 in an orchestrated bid to keep it alive. Baim, also the founder of the LGBT newspaper the Windy City Times, became the Reader’s publisher.

She felt a drastic change was the only solution. In the summer of 2019, Baim made her pitch to the owners and board: form a new nonprofit to purchase the Reader.

The IRS approved creation of the Reader Institute for Community Journalism in February 2020. And then the COVID-19 pandemic arrived.

Alt-weeklies including the Reader have struggled for several decades alongside local newspapers. But they were uniquely vulnerable to the pandemic that abruptly shut down restaurants, performing arts and other advertisers.

“Any news outlet that was free and dependent entirely on advertising had a very real and in some ways almost impossible challenge,” said Dan Kennedy, a journalism professor at Northeastern University specializing in alternative business models.

Nonprofit local newsrooms remain rare in U.S. media, but there has been a growing push to create them as the pressures of a declining business model force consolidation and increasing ownership by hedge funds and private equity.

The Reader cut its 60,000 printed copies down to twice a month, furloughed staff and tried to make money by selling branded merchandise and publishing a coloring book.

“We lost almost 100 percent of advertising overnight,” Baim said. “We had to basically dance for dollars.”

Baim said she still believed the nonprofit strategy was the Reader’s best chance — if board members and Goodman would allow it to go forward. But she and others balked at the board members’ insistence on more seats on the new nonprofit’s board.

Goodman said he tried to work out an agreement with his co-owner “for many months,” including a proposal to complete the sale and resolve the dispute about the board appointments later on. That idea was rejected, he said.

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"And there was no path forward at that point other than filing a lawsuit, which would have destroyed the Reader" Goodman said.

Goodman said the dispute hasn't swayed his confidence in the sources cited in the column. He called the suggestion that staff felt pressure to run a co-owner's piece "complete nonsense" and said his opposition to requiring vaccines was the reason for the backlash, not his sources.

Baim though said that the staff's pushback was a journalistic response to the sources Goodman used — not a reaction to his opinion.

"I am horrified the relationship deteriorated over one column out of 21 that we tried to do the right thing journalistically with," Baim said.

For the Reader's staff, the final sale expected to close this month brings optimism. But they worry the delay cost the paper financially and will make the process ahead more difficult, said Philip Montoro, the music editor who has been on staff since 1996.

"We don't have owners anymore, there's no backstop, no safety net," Montoro said.

'Doctor Strange 2' keeps hold on top spot in 2nd weekend

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

"Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness" stayed on top of the box office charts during its second weekend in theaters, earning an additional \$61 million from North American theaters, according to studio estimates Sunday.

With \$688 million in global grosses, it's already one of the highest grossing films of the pandemic and the second biggest of 2022. But a 67% fall is also a steep drop — even for reliably frontloaded superhero films. Still, "Spider-Man: No Way Home" slid 68% in weekend two.

Released by the Walt Disney Co., "Doctor Strange 2" benefitted from being the first Marvel movie to follow "Spider-Man: No Way Home," in which Benedict Cumberbatch's sorcerer played a pivotal role.

Directed by Sam Raimi, "Doctor Strange 2" also builds upon the popular Disney+ series "Wandavision" and contains a number of cameos that fans didn't want to be spoiled. The elements all came together to give "Doctor Strange" the 11th-biggest domestic debut of all time. But reviews also weren't quite as strong as those for the latest "Spider-Man" installment, which could impact the film in the long run.

The movie has already exceeded the global earnings of the first "Doctor Strange" movie, as well as 11 other Marvel Cinematic Universe titles — and it's not even playing in China.

"Audiences crave these big blockbusters on the big screen," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "This marketplace has given 'Doctor Strange' a pretty long runway to be successful until 'Top Gun.'"

There was little in the way of new competition. The only major new movie was Universal Pictures and Blumhouse's adaptation of Stephen King's "Firestarter," which was released in both theaters and on the company's streaming service, Peacock+.

Starring Zac Efron and Ryan Kiera Armstrong, "Firestarter" earned just \$3.8 million from 3,412 North American theaters. Reviews for the film didn't drop until the day of release, but critics have been less than impressed with this iteration of King's story about a preteen with pyrokinetic powers. Audiences weren't on board either, giving it a C- CinemaScore. As Dergarabedian noted, however, no film that opens "day and date" in theaters and on streaming is expecting to break any records.

"The notion that a theatrical exclusive debut gives movies their best shot at success is right," Dergarabedian said.

"Firestarter" debuted in fourth place, behind holdover family films "The Bad Guys" and "Sonic the Hedgehog 2," which took the second and third spots. Now in its fourth weekend, Universal's "The Bad Guys" added \$6.9 million, bringing its global grosses to \$165.6 million. "Sonic 2," in its sixth week, earned \$4.6 million, raising its cumulative total to \$175.7 million.

Meanwhile, "Everything Everywhere All At Once" is still going strong even after eight weeks in release. The A24 film picked up an additional \$3.3 million, down only 6% from the previous weekend, bringing its total grosses to \$47 million.

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The faith-based comedy "Family Camp" also opened this weekend from Roadside Attractions. Playing on 854 screens, the PG-rated pic earned \$1.4 million. And Bleecker Street released the well-reviewed indie "Montana Story," starring Haley Lu Richardson as a woman who returns home with her estranged brother to care for their ailing father. "Montana Story" grossed \$20,104 from four theaters.

Things will pick up considerably in the coming weeks: Next weekend, Focus Features debuts "Downton Abbey: A New Era" and A24 has the Alex Garland thriller "Men," before everyone clears the way for Tom Cruise in "Top Gun: Maverick." That flies into theaters Memorial Day weekend.

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

1. "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness," \$61 million
2. "The Bad Guys," \$6.9 million.
3. "Sonic the Hedgehog 2," \$4.6 million.
4. "Firestarter," \$3.8 million.
5. "Everything Everywhere All At Once," \$3.3 million.
6. "Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore," \$2.4 million.
7. "The Lost City," \$1.7 million.
8. "The Northman," \$1.7 million.
9. "Family Camp," \$1.4 million.
10. "The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent," \$1 million.

Buddhist chaplains on the rise in US, offering broad appeal

By GOSIA WOZNIACKA Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Wedged into a recliner in the corner of her assisted living apartment in Portland, Skylar Freimann, who has a terminal heart condition and pulmonary illness, anxiously eyed her newly arrived hospital bed on a recent day and worried over how she would maintain independence as she further loses mobility.

There to guide her along the journey was the Rev. Jo Laurence, a hospice and palliative care chaplain. But rather than invoking God or a Christian prayer, she talked of meditation, chanting and other Eastern spiritual traditions: "The body can weigh us down sometimes," she counseled. "Where is the divine or the sacred in your decline?"

An ordained Sufi minister and practicing Zen Buddhist who brings years of meditation practice and scriptural training to support end-of-life patients, Laurence is part of a burgeoning generation of Buddhist chaplains who are increasingly common in hospitals, hospices and prisons, where the need for their services rose dramatically during the pandemic.

In a profession long dominated in the U.S. by Christian clergy, Buddhists are leading an ever more diverse field that includes Muslim, Hindu, Wiccan and even secular humanist chaplains. Buddhist chaplains say they're uniquely positioned for the times due to their ability to appeal to a broad cultural and religious spectrum, including the growing number of Americans — roughly one-third — who identify as nonreligious.

In response, study and training opportunities have been established or expanded in recent years. They include the Buddhist Ministry Initiative at Harvard Divinity School and the Buddhism track at Union Theological Seminary, an ecumenical Christian liberal seminary in New York City. Colorado's Naropa University, a Buddhist-inspired liberal arts college, recently launched a low-residency hybrid degree chaplaincy program. Nonaccredited certifications such as those offered by the New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care or the Upaya Zen Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, are also popular.

"The programs keep expanding, so it seems clear that there's a growing demand from students. And the students appear to be finding jobs after graduation," said Monica Sanford, assistant dean for Multireligious Ministry at Harvard Divinity School and an ordained Buddhist minister.

In the past, Buddhist chaplains were often hired by the likes of hospitals and police departments specifically to minister to Asian immigrant communities. During World War II, they served Japanese American

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soldiers in the military. Today, however, they are more mainstream.

In a first-of-its-kind report published this month, Sanford and a colleague identified 425 chaplains in the United States, Canada and Mexico representing all major branches of Buddhism, though the researchers say there are likely many more. More than 40% work in health care, the Mapping Buddhist Chaplains in North America report found, while others serve in schools, in prisons or as self-employed counselors.

Two-thirds of respondents reported holding a Master of Divinity, another graduate degree or a chaplaincy certificate. Most of those working as staff chaplains also completed clinical pastoral education internships and residencies in health care and other settings.

Maitripa College, a Tibetan Buddhist college also in Portland, has seen increased interest in its Master of Divinity track since its launch 10 years ago, said Leigh Miller, director of academic and public programs. It appeals to a broad range, from older Buddhists with 20 years of practice to new college graduates who just started meditating, from spiritual seekers to people with multiple religious belongings.

Hospitals and other institutions are eager to hire Buddhist chaplains, Miller said, in part to boost staff diversity and also because they are adept at relating to others using inclusive, neutral language.

"Buddhist chaplains are in the habit of speaking in more universal terms, focusing on compassion, being grounded, feeling at peace," she said. "A lot of Christian chaplains fall back on God language, leading prayers or reading Bible scriptures."

Meanwhile, training in mindfulness and meditation, as well as beliefs regarding the nature of self, reality and the impermanence of suffering, give Buddhists unique tools to confront pain and death.

"The fruit of those hours on the (meditation) cushion really shows up in the ability to be present, to drop one's own personal agenda and to have a kind of awareness of self and other that allows for an interdependent relationship to arise," Miller said.

Buddhist chaplaincy also faces challenges, including how to become more accessible to Buddhists of color. The Mapping Buddhist Chaplains in North America report found that most professional Buddhist chaplains today are white and have a Christian family background, even though nearly two-thirds of the faith's followers in the U.S. are Asian American, according to the Pew Research Center.

Traditional Buddhist communities tend to be small and run by volunteers so they often lack the resources to offer endorsements to chaplains — a necessary step for board certification, which is often required for employment.

And non-Christian chaplains can struggle with feelings of isolation and a need to code-switch in Christian-founded health care institutions where crosses hang on walls, prayers are offered at staff meetings and Jesus and the Bible are regularly invoked.

Providence Health & Services, a Catholic nonprofit based in Washington state that runs hospitals in seven Western states, is one Christian health care system seeking to change that.

Mark Thomas, a chief mission officer in Oregon, said the system employs 10 Buddhist chaplains not despite but precisely because of its Catholic identity. The aim is to ensure patients get good spiritual care however it best suits them.

"Many patients resonate with some aspect or even just a perception of Buddhism," said Thomas, citing practices like meditation and breathing that can help them cope with suffering. "These tools have been enormously valuable."

Laurence, the hospice chaplain at Portland's Providence Home and Community Services, grew up in London and felt called to Buddhism after witnessing poverty, violence and racism as a caregiver in Mississippi.

She said that as more people become unchurched, many patients don't have a language for their spirituality or it's tied up with religious trauma. Laurence supports them in whatever way they need, be it through Christian prayer, the comfort of a cool washcloth on a forehead or a Buddhist-inspired blessing.

"For some people the language of Buddhism is a respite," she said. "It doesn't have the baggage, and it feels so soothing to them."

Freimann, her patient, said she has practiced Eastern spiritual traditions and therefore was delighted to receive Laurence.

"I don't think of God the way traditionally religious people do," Freimann told her during the visit. "What

a joy you're here. ... It would be so much harder to talk with a Christian chaplain."

In early primaries, voters favor polling places over mail

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The great vote-by-mail wave appears to be receding just as quickly as it arrived.

After tens of millions of people in the United States opted for mail ballots during the pandemic election of 2020, voters in early primary states are returning in droves to in-person voting this year.

In Georgia, one of the mostly hotly contested states, about 85,000 voters had requested mail ballots for the May 24 primary, as of Thursday. That is a dramatic decrease from the nearly 1 million who cast mail ballots in the state's 2020 primary at the height of the coronavirus pandemic.

The trend was similar in Ohio, Indiana and West Virginia, which held primaries this month; comparisons were not available for Nebraska, another early primary state.

A step back in mail balloting was expected given easing concerns about COVID-19, but some election officials and voting experts had predicted that far more voters would seek out the convenience of mail voting once they experienced it.

Helping drive the reversal is the rollback of temporary rules expanding mail ballots in 2020, combined with distrust of the process among Republicans and concerns about new voting restrictions among Democrats. And a year and a half of former President Donald Trump and his allies pushing false claims about mail voting to explain his loss to Democrat Joe Biden has also taken a toll on voter confidence.

"It's unfortunate because our election system has been mischaracterized and the integrity of our elections questioned," said Ben Hovland, a Democrat appointed by Trump to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. "Mail ballots are a safe and secure method of voting used by millions of Americans, including myself."

A record 43% of voters in the U.S. cast mail ballots in 2020, compared with 24.5% in 2016, according to the commission's survey of local election officials. The number of voters who used in-person early voting also increased, although the jump was not quite as large as in mail ballots, the survey found.

Before the November 2020 election, 12 states expanded access to mail ballots by loosening certain requirements. Five more either mailed ballots to all eligible voters or allowed local officials to do so, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. This year, eight states will mail ballots to every eligible voter.

In Georgia, state officials had adopted no-excuse mail ballots and three weeks of early, in-person voting before the pandemic. Laws surrounding mail voting changed after the 2020 election, amid Trump's effort to discredit the outcome after his narrow loss in the state.

There is no evidence to support Trump's claims of widespread fraud or a conspiracy to steal the election. Judges, including some appointed by Trump, dismissed numerous lawsuits challenging the results. An exhaustive review by The Associated Press of every potential 2020 voter fraud case in the six states disputed by Trump found nowhere near enough instances to affect the result.

That has not stopped Republican state lawmakers from citing election security concerns as justification for new restrictions to voting, and mail voting in particular. The changes have confused some voters. In Texas, voters were tripped up by new identification requirements in the state's March primary, resulting in an abnormally high rate of mail ballot rejections.

Requesting a mail ballot is significantly harder now in Georgia than in 2020, when voters could go online to request a ballot be sent to them without a printed request. Part of the 2021 voting law pushed by Republicans required voters to print or obtain a paper form, then sign it in ink before sending it in by mail, email or fax.

Voters also must include their driver's license number or some other form of identification after Republicans decided that the process of matching voter signatures was no longer enough security for an absentee ballot application.

"I couldn't even figure it out," said Ursula Gruenewald, who lives in Cobb County, north of Atlanta. "Before, I used to just click a button on a website, and they'd send me my ballot. I don't know what they

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want now.”

Gruenewald said she usually votes by mail but decided last week to seek out a nearby early voting center, recalling she had waited in line for two hours to vote in person in 2016.

Experts said it is too early to say whether voting patterns have shifted permanently. How people vote in primaries does not necessarily reflect how they will vote in a general election, when turnout will be heavier and voters might be more worried about crowded polling places and long lines.

Preliminary data from Ohio, Indiana and West Virginia also shows the number of mail ballots cast this year is a fraction of what the states saw in the 2020 primaries and tracks closely to 2018 levels.

In the Virginia governor’s election last year, the percentage of mail ballots cast was slightly larger than four years earlier but noticeably lower than in 2020, said Charles Stewart III, an elections expert and professor of political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

“Elections are kind of going back to where they were,” he said.

In Georgia, voting groups are concerned that a new earlier deadline to request a mail ballot will trip up voters if they wait too long. They also are closely watching the rate of ballot rejections. About 1,000 mail ballot applications have been rejected so far, or about 1.2% of all applications received. That is a lower rate than the 2018 primary and slightly higher than the 2020 elections.

As of late last week, 195 mail ballots have been rejected, mostly because of missing or incorrect ID information, which are new requirements under state law. Common Cause Georgia deployed “self-help stations” around the state where voters could access a computer, printer and scanner to print out a mail ballot application before Friday’s deadline.

“People are believing political propaganda and not understanding this is creating more hurdles to voting,” said Aunna Dennis, the group’s executive director.

Georgia voters instead are turning to early, in-person voting, which is setting records. About 305,000 ballots have been cast at early voting locations across the state, or three times as many who did so for the same period during the 2018 primary, according to state officials.

Outside an early voting location north of Atlanta, some voters said they simply preferred the convenience of voting early and in person, while others said they worried mail ballots were not as secure.

“Today I walked in, got my ballot, voted, and I’m leaving,” said Bill Baldwin, who was back to voting in person after casting a mail ballot in 2020 due to pandemic concerns. “And I’m not standing in a line to the other end of the building.”

Debbie Hamby, a nurse who lives in Kennesaw, north of Atlanta, said she supports limits on mail ballots and believes voting in-person is more secure. She, too, voted early last week.

“There’s not a question as to who the person is if you have your license and identity,” Hamby said. “You can see the person in the picture is the person who’s voting, and we know that it’s an honest vote.”

Today in History: May 16, Warsaw Ghetto Uprising ends

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, May 16, the 136th day of 2022. There are 229 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On May 16, 1943, the nearly month-long Warsaw Ghetto Uprising came to an end as German forces crushed the Jewish resistance and blew up the Great Synagogue.

On this date:

In 1770, Marie Antoinette, age 14, married the future King Louis XVI of France, who was 15.

In 1866, Congress authorized minting of the first five-cent piece, also known as the “Shield nickel.”

In 1929, the first Academy Awards were presented. “Wings” won “best production,” while Emil Jannings (YAHN’-ings) and Janet Gaynor were named best actor and best actress.

In 1939, the federal government began its first food stamp program in Rochester, New York.

In 1957, federal agent Eliot Ness, who organized “The Untouchables” team that took on gangster Al

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Capone, died in Coudersport, Pennsylvania, at age 54.

In 1960, the first working laser was demonstrated at Hughes Research Laboratories in Malibu, California, by physicist Theodore Maiman.

In 1966, China launched the Cultural Revolution, a radical as well as deadly reform movement aimed at purging the country of "counter-revolutionaries."

In 1975, Japanese climber Junko Tabei became the first woman to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

In 1990, death claimed entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. in Los Angeles at age 64 and "Muppets" creator Jim Henson in New York at age 53.

In 1997, President Bill Clinton publicly apologized for the notorious Tuskegee experiment, in which government scientists deliberately allowed Black men to weaken and die of treatable syphilis.

In 2007, anti-war Democrats in the Senate failed in an attempt to cut off funds for the Iraq war.

In 2016, President Barack Obama called on the nation to support law enforcement officers as he bestowed the Medal of Valor on 13 who risked their lives.

Ten years ago: Gen. Ratko Mladic (RAHT'-koh MLAH'-dich) went on trial at the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal in the Netherlands, accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. (Mladic would be convicted on 10 counts and sentenced to life in prison.)

Five years ago: The White House issued a furious denial after a report that President Donald Trump personally appealed to FBI Director James Comey to abandon the bureau's investigation into National Security Adviser Michael Flynn.

One year ago: Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City flattened three buildings and killed more than 40 people; the attack was the deadliest in the latest round of violence between Israel and Hamas. Hamas launched rockets from civilian areas in Gaza toward civilian areas in Israel; one slammed into a synagogue in the southern city of Ashkelon hours before evening services for the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, but no injuries were reported.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.S. Senator and Connecticut Governor Lowell Weicker is 91. Former Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats is 79. Jazz musician Billy Cobham is 78. Actor Danny Trejo is 78. Actor Bill Smitrovich is 75. Actor Pierce Brosnan is 69. Actor Debra Winger is 67. Olympic gold medal gymnast Olga Korbut is 66. Olympic gold medal marathon runner Joan Benoit Samuelson is 64. Actor Mare Winningham is 63. Rock musician Boyd Tinsley (The Dave Matthews Band) is 58. Rock musician Krist Novoselic (noh-voh-SEL'-ik) is 57. Singer Janet Jackson is 56. Country singer Scott Reeves (Blue County) is 56. Actor Brian (BREE'-un) F. O'Byrne is 55. R&B singer Ralph Tresvant (New Edition) is 54. Actor David Boreanaz is 53. Political commentator Tucker Carlson is 53. Actor Tracey Gold is 53. International Tennis Hall of Famer Gabriela Sabatini is 52. Country singer Rick Trevino is 51. Musician Simon Katz is 51. TV personality Bill Rancic is 51. Actor Khary Payton is 50. Rapper Special Ed is 50. Actor Tori Spelling is 49. Actor Sean Carrigan is 48. Singer-rapper B. Slade (formerly known as Tonex) is 47. Actor Lynn Collins is 45. Actor Melanie Lynskey is 45. Actor Jim Sturgess is 44. Actor Joseph Morgan is 41. DJ Alex Pall (The Chainsmokers) is 37. Actor Megan Fox is 36. Actor Drew Roy is 36. Actor Jacob Zachar is 36. Actor-comedian Jermaine Fowler is 34. Actor Thomas Brodie-Sangster is 32. Actor Marc John Jefferies is 32. Olympic bronze medal figure skater Ashley Wagner is 31. Actor Miles Heizer is 28.