

Groton Daily Independent

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“Creating memories is a priceless gift. Memories will last a lifetime; things only a short period of time.”

ALYICE EDRICH

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.

Thursday, May 19

Senior Menu: Herbed roast pork, baked potato with sour cream, tomato spoon salad, cinnamon apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

Faculty In-Service

10 a.m.: Girls Golf at Sisseton

10 a.m.: Region 1A Track Meet at Clark

Methodist: Newsletter items due, UMW at 1:30 p.m.

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

Friday, May 20

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



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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Only one track meet left for the Tigers to improve

Groton did not have a track meet since Friday's posting in the Performance Listings of the SDHSAA. As a result, you will see most of the places dropping a few notches. The last time the Groton Area track teams will have a chance to improve in its position is Thursday at the Regional Track meet in Clark. After that point, only the top 24 will advance to state.

Here is a look at the changes for Groton Area as of Tuesday's posting. The bold faced ones are those in the top 24.

Andrew Marzahn's dropped two spots to 28th place in the 100m dash with his time of 11.54.

Andrew Marzahn dropped one spot to 24th in the 200m dash with his time of 23.74.

Andrew Marzahn dropped eight places to 44th place in the 400m dash with an unchanged time of 54.14.

The boys 400m Relay Team dropped one spot to 16th place with its time of 45.86.

The boys 800m Relay Team dropped three spots to 19th place with its time of 1:35.70.

The boys 1600m Relay Team dropped one spot to 22nd with its time of 3:43.21.

The boys 3200m Relay Team keeps its 21st spot with its time of 8:58.10.

The boys Sprint Medley Relay Team dropped five spots to 32nd with its time of 3:58.61.

Jackson Cogley dropped four spots to 21st place in the high jump with his height of 5-9.

Jackson Cogley's triple jump distance of 38-5.75 keeps him in 39th place.

The girls 400m Relay team drops one spot to 31st with its time of 54.64.

The girls 800m Relay Team drops two spots to 26th with its time of 1:54.40.

The girls 1600m Relay team drops one spot to 17th place with its time of 4:24.42.

The girls 3200m Relay Team dropped two spots to 21st place with its time of 10:36.27.

The Groton Area girls Sprint Medley Relay team dropped five spots to 23rd place with its time of 4:38.83.

Aspen Johnson's distance of 34-1.75 in the triple jump keeps her in eighth place.

Aspen Johnson dropped two spots in the long jump to 34th place in the long jump.

- Paul Kosel

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Weber Landscaping Greenhouse
204 N State St., Groton

Opening for the season on Friday, May 6th!



**New products!
New Planters!**





We have tons of hanging baskets, vegetables, annuals, garden seeds, gift cards and much, much more!



Livingston garden seeds!!!!

Hours: M-F 10-6, Sat 10-4, Sun 12-4
Look for the green flags! Questions? Call 605-380-6587

THE PANTRY



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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Groton Area 5th Grade D.A.R.E. Graduation



Janel Lone's fifth grade side is pictured above. In front, left to right, are Neely Althoff, Kameron Casscells, Zachary Flihs, Grayson Flores, Wyatt Hagen, Tevan Hanson, Madison Herrick and Asher Johnson; in the second row, left to right, are Porter Jones, Connor Kroll, Ian Kutter, Jose Fernando Nava, Logan Olson, Peyton Schuring and Jordan Schwan; in back, left to right, are Janel Lone, Raquel Tracy, Mathias Walters-Weidner, Aurora Washenberger, Alexis Williamson, James Wilson and Groton D.A.R.E. instructor Police Chief Stacy Mayou.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Shelby Hendrickson's side is pictured above. In front, left to right, are Kolton Antonsen, Savannah Beauchamp, Skylor Bedford, Aspen Beto, Donovan Block, Kaedynce Bonn and Grant Cleveland; in the middle row, left to right, are Samuel Crank, May Dallaire, Arianna Dinger, Abby Fjeldheim, Tenley Frost, Luke Gauer and Anthony Gilmore; in back, left to right, are Shelby Hendrickson, Adeline Kotzer, Korbin McKane, Wesley Morehouse, Lincoln Shilhanek, Brooklyn Spanier, Novalea Warrington, Bentley Zerr and Groton D.A.R.E. instructor Police Chief Stacy Mayou. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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D.A.R.E. Essay Winners

D.A.R.E. essay winners are pictured above. From Lone's side, they are Alexis Williamson, third place; Madison Herrick, second place; and Tevan Hanson, first place. From Hendrickson's side, they are Novalea Warrington, first place; Aspen Beto, second place; and Brooklyn Spanier, third place. (Photos by Paul Kosel)



Tom Barstad, Aberdeen K9 Police Officer, was the guest speaker at the Groton Area D.A.R.E. Graduation ceremony held Tuesday. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Groton City April Financial Report

April 2022

Dacotah Bank Checking Acct	\$ 3,886,480.19
General Cash	\$ 300.00
SD FIT Acct	\$ 1,554,881.31
Dacotah Bank Water CD	\$ 85,379.54
Cemetery Perp Care CD	\$ 32,876.69
Total	\$ 5,559,917.73

Invested In		
Cash	\$ 300.00	0.01%
Dacotah Bank	\$ 4,004,736.42	72.03%
SD Fit	\$ 1,554,881.31	27.97%
Total	\$ 5,559,917.73	100.00%

	Beginning Cash Balance	Revenue	Expenses	Transfers	Ending Cash Balance
General	\$ 1,061,875.81	\$ 162,238.63	\$ 79,117.50		\$ 1,144,996.94
Bed, Board, Booze Tax	\$ 127,021.71	\$ 3,304.31			\$ 130,326.02
Baseball Uniforms	\$ 1,710.20				\$ 1,710.20
Airport	\$ 24,542.82				\$ 24,542.82
**Debt Service	\$ (56,285.25)	\$ 864.32			\$ (55,420.93)
Cemetery Perpetual Care	\$ 34,756.69				\$ 34,756.69
Water Tower	\$ 180,000.00				\$ 180,000.00
Water	\$ 499,477.01	\$ 33,818.33	\$ 14,519.30		\$ 518,776.04
Electric	\$ 2,803,363.78	\$ 149,751.17	\$ 102,186.12		\$ 2,850,928.83
Wastewater	\$ 486,528.91	\$ 17,030.27	\$ 1,801.59		\$ 501,757.59
Solid Waste	\$ 41,619.82	\$ 10,245.50	\$ 8,327.44		\$ 43,537.88
Family Crisis	\$ 10,833.92	\$ 240.00	\$ 40.77		\$ 11,033.15
Sales Tax	\$ 11,822.98	\$ 9,699.03	\$ 10,791.30		\$ 10,730.71
Employment	\$ (4,297.40)		\$ 445.80		\$ (3,851.60)
Utility Prepayments	\$ 74,637.26	\$ (60.98)			\$ 74,576.28
Utility Deposits	\$ 89,343.01	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 150.00		\$ 90,993.01
Other	\$ 524.10				\$ 524.10
Totals	\$ 5,387,475.37	\$ 388,930.58	\$ 217,379.82	\$ -	\$ 5,559,917.73

**Debt to be Paid		
**2015 Refinance	\$ 1,972,637.49	by 12/1/2035
**West Sewer	\$ 34,223.03	by 10/15/2022
**RR Sewer Crossing	\$ 16,681.61	by 7/15/22
Total Debt	\$ 2,023,542.13	

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

Hamilton presents plans for Veteran's Circle updates

Doug Hamilton came before the Groton City Council Tuesday evening to talk baseball and cemetery. He pointed out that the senior Legion Baseball Team is totally funded and operated by the Groton American Legion Post #39. The only connection with the city is for paying the coach. Hamilton said if anyone has any issues with the senior Legion baseball team, they need to talk with him or the coach. "There is too much hearsay out there. Any questions, talk to me or the coach." Seth Erickson is the head coach.

Hamilton then provided an update to the work that will be done with the Veteran's Circle at the Groton Union Cemetery. The plan is to complete the circle and allow for 16 to 18 additional burial places. In addition, two more stones will be added with a total capacity of 300 names. The project will cost around \$25,000 (\$10,000 per stone). Hamilton said that the Legion Post #39 (actually, he said the whole community as everyone is great in supporting the Legion fundraisers) is footing the bill.

There was more discussion on installing electricity at the Groton Municipal Airport. Councilman Kevin Nehls asked how this is benefitting the city residents. "That's a lot of money for a few people," Nehls said. The cost of installing the power is \$14,000. The council tabled pending more information and possible grant opportunities.

The City of Bristol has requested assistance from the City of Groton for mosquito control. Webster had previously done the spraying in Bristol. The council tabled the decision to make sure insurance issues and cost of chemical and gas are considered into the cost.

A special event alcoholic beverage license was approved for May 22, June 5, 1 and 26, and July 10, 17 and 23-31. Beer will not be allowed if there is little league baseball or softball games present.

After an executive session, the council decided that the special extra pay for the deputy finance office will continue until the end of June. It will be revisited at the June 21 council meeting.

- Paul Kosel



The tile work is being done this week at the Groton Swimming pool and is expected to be completed this week. The plan is for the finish coat to be installed (hopefully next week, weather permitting), which will take 3-4 days. Once that work is done, the pool can be filled. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Fish Consumption Advisories for South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Departments of Game, Fish and Parks, Health, Agriculture, and Natural Resource partner to test almost 150 lakes across the state for metals, pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB). As a result, fish consumption advisories have been issued for elevated mercury levels on waters listed below.

New lakes added to this list are:

Kiesz Lake - McPherson County - Walleye over 16"

Dry #2 - Clark County - Walleye 22" & larger

The purpose of these advisories is not to discourage you from eating fish. It is intended as a guide to help you select sizes and species of fish low in mercury.

MERCURY FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORIES		
LAKE	COUNTY	SPECIES
Elm Lake	Brown County	Walleye (>25 inches)
Newell Lake	Butte County	Walleye (>18 inches) Northern Pike (>18 inches)
Reid Lake	Clark County	Walleye (>23 inches)
Dry Lake #2	Clark County	Walleye (>22 inches)
Swan Lake	Clark County	Walleye (>21 inches)
Long Lake	Codington County	Walleye (>17 inches)
Pudwell Dam	Corson County	Walleye (>18 inches) Crappie (>12 inches)
Bitter Lake	Day County	Walleye (all sizes) Northern Pike (>30 inches)
Hazeldon	Day County	Walleye (>21 inches)
Lake Minnewasta	Day County	Walleye (>18 inches)
Lardy Lake	Day County	Walleye (>25 inches)
Lynn Lake	Day County	Walleye (>18 inches)
Middle Lynn Lake	Day County	Walleye (>18 inches)
Opitz Lake	Day County	Northern Pike (>26 inches)
Lake Isabel	Dewey County	Northern Pike (>25 inches) Largemouth Bass (>17 inches)
Little Moreau Lake	Dewey County	Northern Pike (>26 inches)
Twin Lakes	Kingsbury, Brookings Counties	Walleye (>18 inches) Northern Pike (>19 inches)
North & South Buffalo Lake	Marshall County	Walleye (>21 inches)
Kiesz Dam	McPherson County	Walleye (>16 inches)
North Island Lake	Minnehaha, McCook Counties	Walleye (>18 inches) Smallmouth Bass (>18 inches)

Scott Lake	Minnehaha County	Walleye (>25 Inches)
Twin Lakes	Minnehaha County	Walleye (all sizes)
New Wall Lake	Pennington County	Crappie (>13 inches) Largemouth Bass (>16 inches)
Coal Springs Reservoir	Perkins County	Northern Pike (>25 inches)
Lake Hurley	Potter County	Largemouth Bass (>18 inches)
Lake Roosevelt	Tripp County	Largemouth Bass (>18 inches) Northern Pike (>24 inches)

GFP Asks Public to Leave Animals Alone

PIERRE, S.D. - South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) is reminding people that it is important to leave wild animals alone.

"Sometimes people think baby animals have been lost or abandoned, when actually they haven't," says David Parker, director of The Outdoor Campus in Sioux Falls. "Mothers often leave their young for several hours before coming back for them."

Each year GFP receives numerous phone calls from people who find baby animals, and while people think they are being helpful, picking up the creatures can actually be harmful.

"Tell your kids, your neighbor kids and your friends - If you care, leave them there," reminds Parker.

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Four locals graduate from Lake Area

WATERTOWN, SD...The 55th Annual Lake Area Technical College graduation ceremony was held Friday, May 13, 2022, with seven hundred sixty-three graduates.

The following students were presented their diplomas by Bryon Noem, First Gentleman of South Dakota, and Mike Cartney, President of Lake Area Tech.

The following students have graduated:

Name	Hometown	Major
Treyton G Diegel	Groton SD	Agriculture
Casey L Johnson	Groton SD	Community Health Worker
Cole G Johnson	Bristol SD	Custom Paint & Fabrication
Alicia K Gauer	Groton SD	Practical Nursing

DANR Announces More Than \$98 Million for South Dakota Environmental Projects

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) announced the Board of Water and Natural Resources has approved \$98,703,620 in grants and loans for drinking water, wastewater, and solid waste projects in South Dakota.

The \$98,703,620 total includes \$73,634,334 in grants and \$25,069,286 in low-interest loans to be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

"I am pleased to announce this financial assistance is available," said DANR Secretary Hunter Roberts. "This funding will result in upgraded drinking water and wastewater infrastructure and support solid waste cleanup projects which will benefit the system users and the environment."

The grants and loans were awarded from DANR's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program, Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program, Solid Waste Management Program, and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to the following:

Box Elder received a \$1,540,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$2,460,000 ARPA grant to upgrade its wastewater collection system to accommodate recent growth. The project includes replacing undersized sewer mains and adding lines. These improvements will address needs on the west side of town for areas of new development. The loan terms are 2.125 percent for 30 years.

Canistota received a \$584,267 ARPA grant to make sanitary and storm sewer infrastructure improvements. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in June 2021.

Canistota also received a \$256,966 ARPA grant to replace water main lines. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in June 2021.

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Castlewood received a \$354,627 ARPA grant to make improvements to its distribution system and rehabilitate the water tower. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in March 2021.

Chancellor received a \$210,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$1,190,000 ARPA grant to install a new PVC sanitary sewer main, replace sewer services within the right-of-way, and install 13 sanitary sewer manholes. Storm water improvements include installation of storm sewer and culverts, including extending the storm sewer trunk line. The loan terms are 2.125 percent interest for 30 years.

Chancellor also received a \$195,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$1,105,000 ARPA grant to install new PVC water main, curb stops, fire hydrants, valves, and fittings; replace water services within the right-of-way; and loop the system to improve hydraulics. The loan terms are 1.875 percent interest for 30 years.

Crooks received a \$161,763 ARPA grant to for a new lift station and sanitary sewer expansion. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in June 2021.

Custer received a \$125,100 ARPA grant to upgrade its wastewater treatment facility. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in March 2021.

Dell Rapids received a funding package at the April board meeting to make sanitary and storm water improvements on 3rd Street and for non-point source improvements. This funding was adjusted at the May meeting based on available local ARPA funds. The new funding package is a \$2,645,080 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$2,887,379 ARPA grant. The loan terms are 1.375 percent for 30 years.

Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources received a \$400,000 Solid Waste Management Program grant amendment for waste tire and solid waste cleanup projects. The grant will allow ongoing collection and disposal of waste tires and other solid waste cleanups which the department has provided for over 20 years.

Groton received a \$664,547 ARPA grant for water main improvements. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in March 2021.

Hudson received a \$656,180 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$721,820 ARPA grant to replace wastewater collection line and sewer services in the right of way. These improvements will replace aging vitrified clay pipe, eliminate sags, reduce infiltration, and improve system reliability. This package and other funds will support the project costs. The loan terms are 2.125 percent for 30 years.

Hudson also received a \$831,649 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$967,656 ARPA grant to replace hydro-pneumatic water tanks with a ground water storage tank and booster system. The project includes replacement of aging water distribution lines to address breaks and water loss and the addition of water main loops to improve flow throughout the community. The loan terms are 1.625 percent for 30 years.

Joint Well Field, Inc. received a \$1,656,900 ARPA grant for water treatment plant improvements. Joint Well Field, Inc. is a jointly owned and operated water source and treatment facility that serves both Brookings-Deuel Rural Water System and Kingbrook Rural Water System. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in March 2021.

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Kingbrook Rural Water System received a \$108,000 ARPA grant for improvements to the Carthage water tower. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in March 2021.

Lake Norden received a \$652,463 ARPA grant to construct a new water tower storage. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in March 2021.

Lake Poinsett Sanitary District received a \$1,809,749 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$2,790,251 ARPA grant to make improvements to its existing wastewater system including upgrades to existing lift stations and improvements to the collection system. The terms of the loan are 2.125 percent for 30 years.

Lennox received a \$1,172,251 ARPA grant to Funds for wastewater improvements along Boynton Avenue. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in June 2021.

Lennox also received a \$480,400 ARPA grant for drinking water improvements along Boynton Avenue. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in June 2021.

North Sioux City received a \$5,351,110 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$1,511,890 ARPA grant to provide wastewater infrastructure in an undeveloped parcel of land south of the current city limits and west of I-29. The project involves installing approximately 2,800 feet of collection lines, a 1,200-foot trunk sewer, a submersible lift station and 2 miles of force main. The loan terms are 2 percent for 20 years. These funds and local ARPA funds will cover the project costs.

North Sioux City also received a \$5,627,193 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$1,723,807 ARPA grant to make improvements to the Streeter Drive Water Treatment Plant. This will involve updating the chemical feed, electrical, and other systems. Other improvements will increase aeration, detention, filtration, and backwashing capacity. Terms of the loan are 2.125 percent for 30 years.

Northville received a \$179,758 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$1,044,562 ARPA grant to replace water meters, loop lines, and improve above-ground water storage. Improvements include building a glass lined, above-ground water storage tank and pumphouse. This project will address issues with water storage, pressure, quality, and water loss. The loan terms are 2.125 percent for 30 years.

Salem received a \$370,293 ARPA grant for storm sewer improvements. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in June 2021.

Sioux Falls received a \$41,900,000 ARPA grant for water reclamation facility expansion. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in 2019, 2020, and 2021.

South Shore received a \$449,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$1,186,000 ARPA grant to construct a new water storage tank and transmission line to connect the tank to the distribution system and make improvements to an existing well. The loan terms are 1.875 percent for 30 years.

Tea received a \$946,288 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$670,626 ARPA grant to provide municipal wastewater service to existing industrial and commercial properties in the Hagedorn Industrial Park. The loan terms are 2.125 percent for 30 years.

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In addition, Tea received a \$1,009,280 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$593,634 ARPA grant to extend municipal water service to existing industrial and commercial properties in the Hagedorn Industrial Park. The loan terms are 2.125 percent for 30 years.

Tea also received a \$3,694,231 ARPA grant to connect its wastewater treatment system to the City of Sioux Falls. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in March 2021.

Watertown received a \$750,000 ARPA grant to replace its primary clarifier at its wastewater treatment facility. Funding for this project was previously awarded by the board in March 2021.

White received a \$1,832,810 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$734,290 APRA grant to replace or repair vitrified clay pipe and service lines with open cut and CIPP relining methods. This project will address cracked, broken, and deformed VCP and joint offsets. The loan terms are 2.125 percent for 30 years.

White also received a \$1,786,189 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$715,611 ARPA grant to construct several improvements to its water distribution system. The city will replace aging water distribution mains, refurbish its water tower, and replace cast iron pipes. The loan terms are 1.625 percent for 30 years.

The American Rescue Plan Act provides grants for eligible water, wastewater, storm water, and nonpoint source projects. The state of South Dakota is making a historic investment in infrastructure by dedicating \$600 million of American Rescue Plan Act funding for local water and wastewater infrastructure grants.

The Solid Waste Management Program provides grants and loans for solid waste disposal, recycling, and waste tire projects. The Legislature annually appropriates dedicated funding for the Solid Waste Management Program through the Governor's Omnibus Water Funding Bill.

The State of South Dakota and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fund the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program, which provides low-interest loans for public drinking water system projects. The program is funded through a combination of federal appropriations, loan repayments, and bonds.

The State of South Dakota and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fund the Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program, which provides low-interest loans for wastewater, storm water, water conservation, and nonpoint source projects. The program is funded through a combination of federal appropriations, loan repayments, and bonds.

The board approved the funding at Tuesday's meeting in Pierre.

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COVID-19 Update by Marie Miller

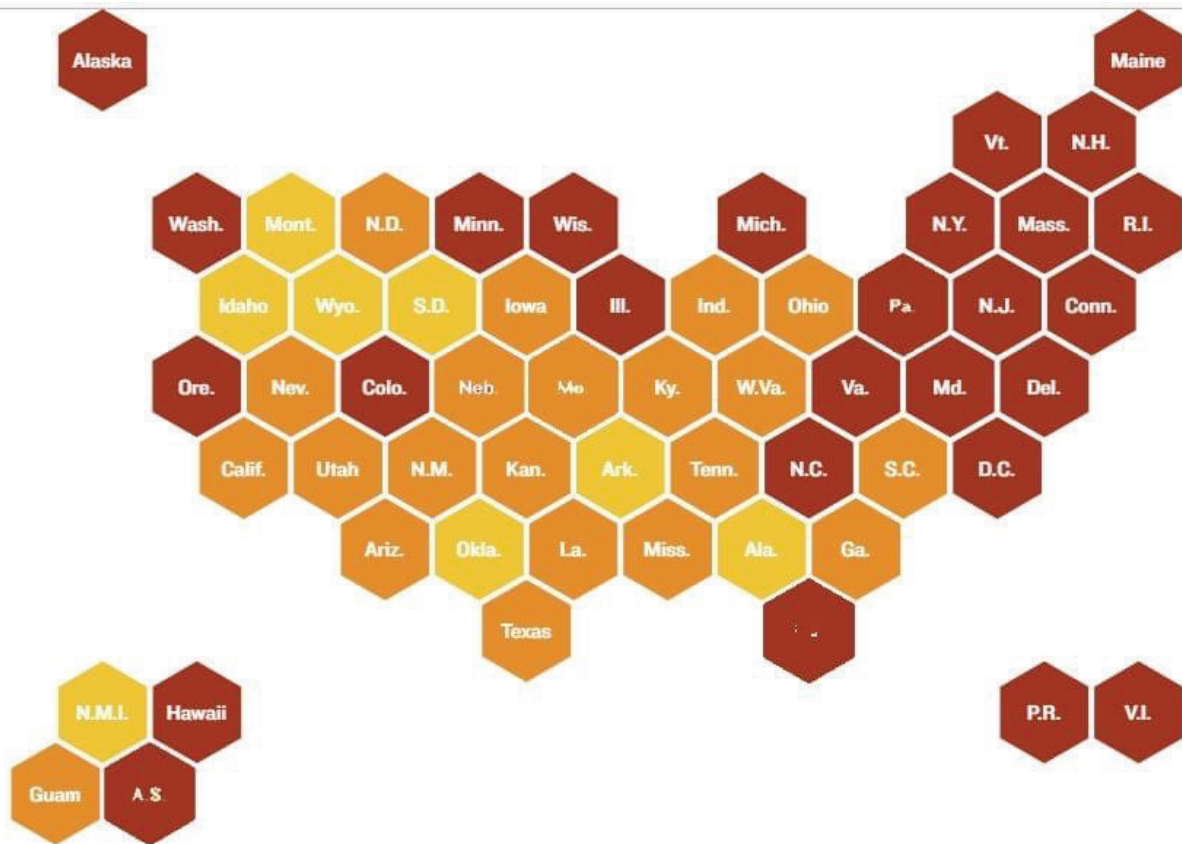
Well, friends, the news is bad. Worse, actually. The only movement in the right direction comes from a place with such a small population, the Northern Mariana Islands, that its movement isn't statistically very meaningful (although good for them); they went from orange to yellow.

The rest is all pretty rough--and there's plenty to tell. Here goes:

Slipping into red from orange are Colorado, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida. And to orange from yellow: Utah, Arizona, North Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Texas, Missouri, Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Georgia. Nothing to celebrate here at all.

Of the 56 states and territories we're tracking, only 4 show declining case numbers, and 3 of those are tiny population places where a couple of cases one way or the other makes a large percentage. So 52 of them are increasing, all but 3 by double-digit percentages and 16 of them more than doubling in the last two weeks. No one's getting ready to move down; looking to move up are West Virginia and Kentucky who are doubling in two weeks and both nudging up against red and Idaho and Alabama who are also doubling in two weeks and nudging up against orange. This is pretty terrible.

I'd say something like, "Maybe things will look up soon," but they won't. I will not insult your intelligence by pretending this will improve anytime soon. I don't know how long this one's going to last, but it will be a while.





Wage Memorial Library Board meets

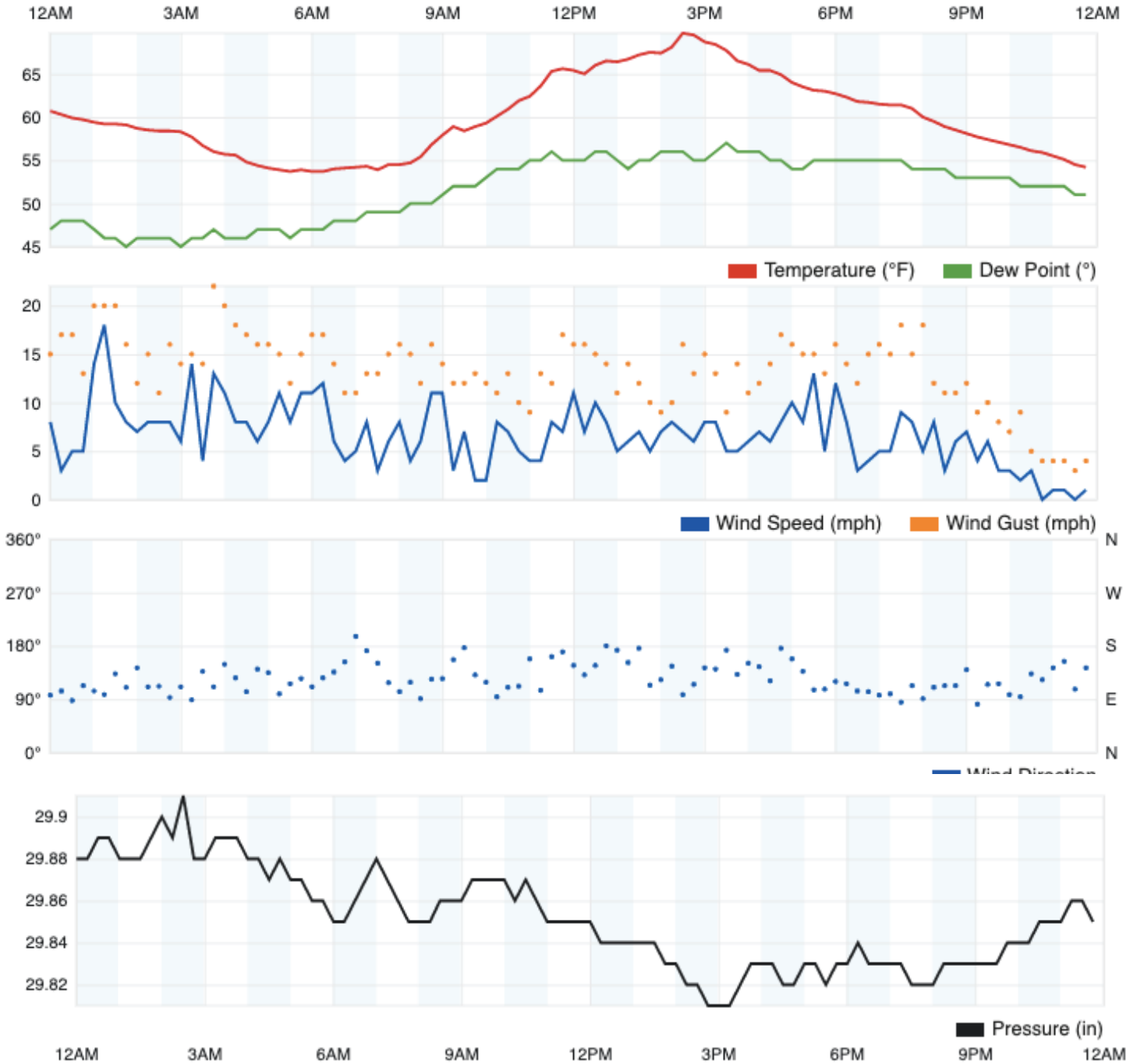
The Wage Memorial Library Board met Tuesday evening at the library. They were meeting to plan for special events through the summer. Pictured are Kim Weber, board president; Ashley Dunham, Kellie Locke, Jessica Adler and Becca Johnson. Anyone interested in being on the board or have any ideas for the library should contact Kim Weber or Kellie Locke.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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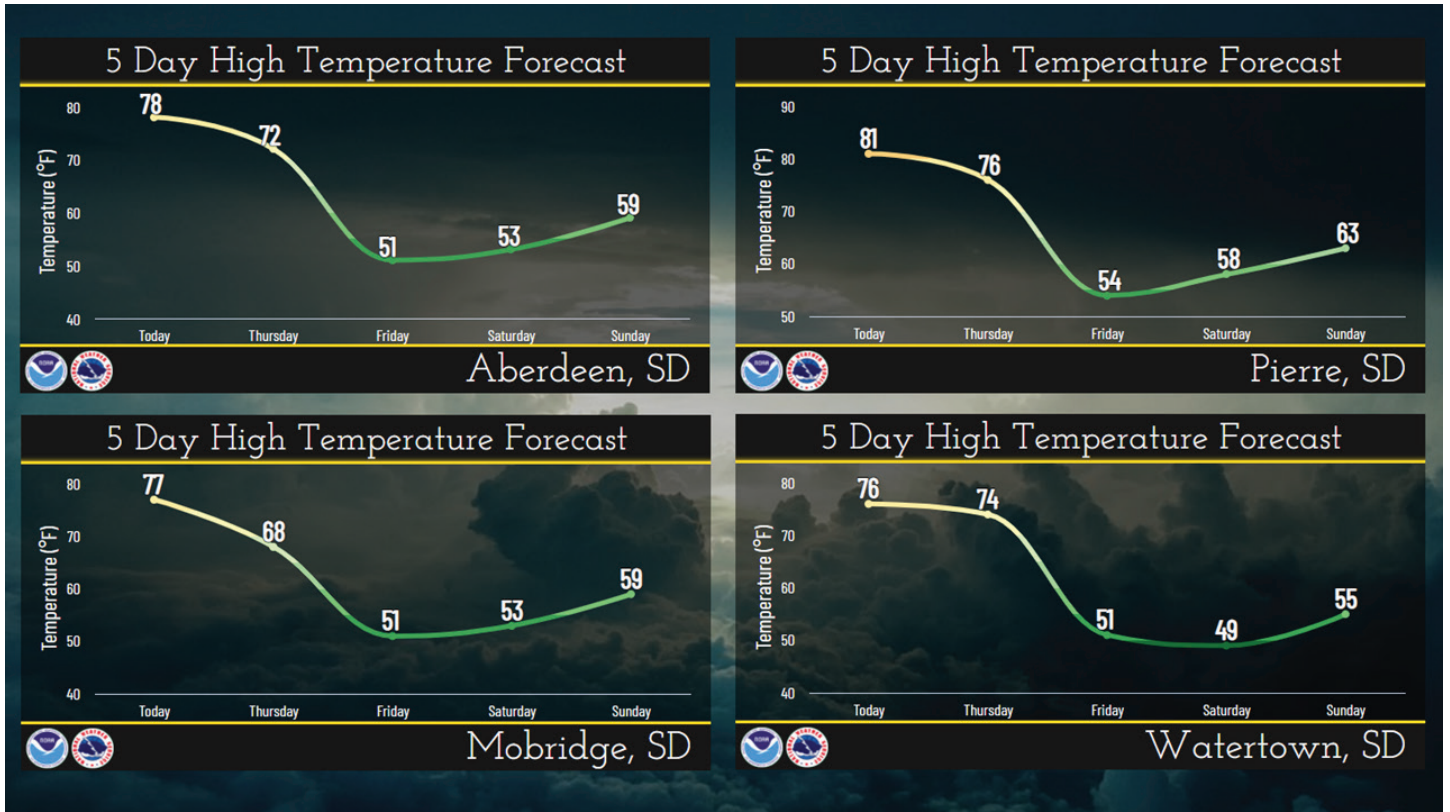
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
Patchy Fog then Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Partly Cloudy	Chance Showers and Breezy	Chance Showers	Mostly Cloudy and Breezy
High: 77 °F	Low: 49 °F	High: 71 °F	Low: 44 °F	High: 55 °F



Wednesday is the warmest we will get for the rest of the week. Thursday has a chance of strong/severe storms in eastern SD and west central MN. Some areas could see frost Sunday morning so keep an eye on the forecast for a possible warning.

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Today in Weather History

May 18, 1918: An estimated F2 tornado moved NNE from 5 miles NNW of Ferney, across the eastern edge of Groton. Homes were unroofed, and barns were destroyed. Nine farms lost buildings. One man was injured in a barn, another in a car that was thrown from the road. Estimated damage was set at \$60,000. Tornadoes were also seen in Lincoln and Sanborn Counties in South Dakota.

Also, an estimated F2 tornado moved northeast through the townships of Akron and Artichoke in Big Stone County, Minnesota. About 300 farms had tornado damage. The funnel dissipated on Artichoke Lake.

May 18, 1960: Pierre received 1.96 inches of rain in less than 30 minutes which caused flash flooding. About 30 basements were flooded with extensive cave-in damage at one home. Flash flooding from 2 to 3 inches of rain occurred near Presho, washing out county roads, three bridges, and a grain storage bin. Gettysburg also received 2.5 inches of rain.

May 18, 1996: A brief F0 tornado touchdown and cut a narrow path from 2 miles east of Willow Lake with no damage reported.

A 100 mph wind gust blew down 38 large trees on Highway 81 from the junction of Lake Norden corner on Highway 28 to the intersection of the Hayti corner. Also, four double posted and five single posted signs were broken off, and one single posted steel sign was bent over.

1825 - A tornado (said to have crossed all of the state of Ohio) smashed into the log cabin settlement of Burlington, northeast of Columbus. (David Ludlum)

1883: The massive tornado outbreak on record in Illinois affected the northern and central parts of the state. At least 14 strong to violent tornadoes touched down killing 52 people. The largest death toll from a single tornado was 12, with 50 injuries, from an estimated F4 tornado which moved from near Jacksonville to 5 miles west of Petersburg. This tornado destroyed the town of Litterberry. Another tornado, with an estimated F4 intensity, killed 11 people and injured 50 along its path from the south edge of Springfield northeast to near Kenney. This particular tornado reportedly drove 10 inches by 12-inch oak timbers 10 feet into the ground. Another estimated F4 tornado in far northern Illinois touched down near Capron and tracked for 17 miles before lifting in far southern Wisconsin. Lastly, an estimated F4 tornado tracked 20 miles through Kenosha and Racine Counties in Wisconsin. Eight people were killed, and 85 were injured.

1960 - Salt Lake City UT received an inch of snow. It marked their latest measurable snowfall of record. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - Mount Saint Helens (in Washington State) erupted spewing ash and smoke sixty-three thousand feet into the air. Heavy ash covered the ground to the immediate northwest, and small particles were carried to the Atlantic coast. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Thunderstorms in Kansas, developing along a cold front, spawned tornadoes at Emporia and Toledo, produced wind gusts to 65 mph at Fort Scott, and produced golf ball size hail in the Kansas City area. Unseasonably hot weather prevailed ahead of the cold front. Pomona NJ reported a record high of 93 degrees, and Altus, OK, hit 100 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Low pressure anchored over eastern Virginia kept showers and thunderstorms over the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. Flash flooding was reported in Pennsylvania. Up to five inches of rain drenched Franklin County PA in 24 hours. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from the Central Gulf Coast States to the Lower Missouri Valley during the day and evening. Thunderstorms spawned sixteen tornadoes, and there were 74 reports of large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the central U.S. spawning a sixteen tornadoes, including a dozen in Nebraska. Thunderstorms also produced hail four inches in diameter at Perryton TX, wind gusts to 84 mph at Ellis KS, and high winds which caused nearly two million dollars damage at Sutherland NE. Thunderstorms deluged Sioux City IA with up to eight inches of rain, resulting in a record flood crest on Perry Creek and at least 4.5 million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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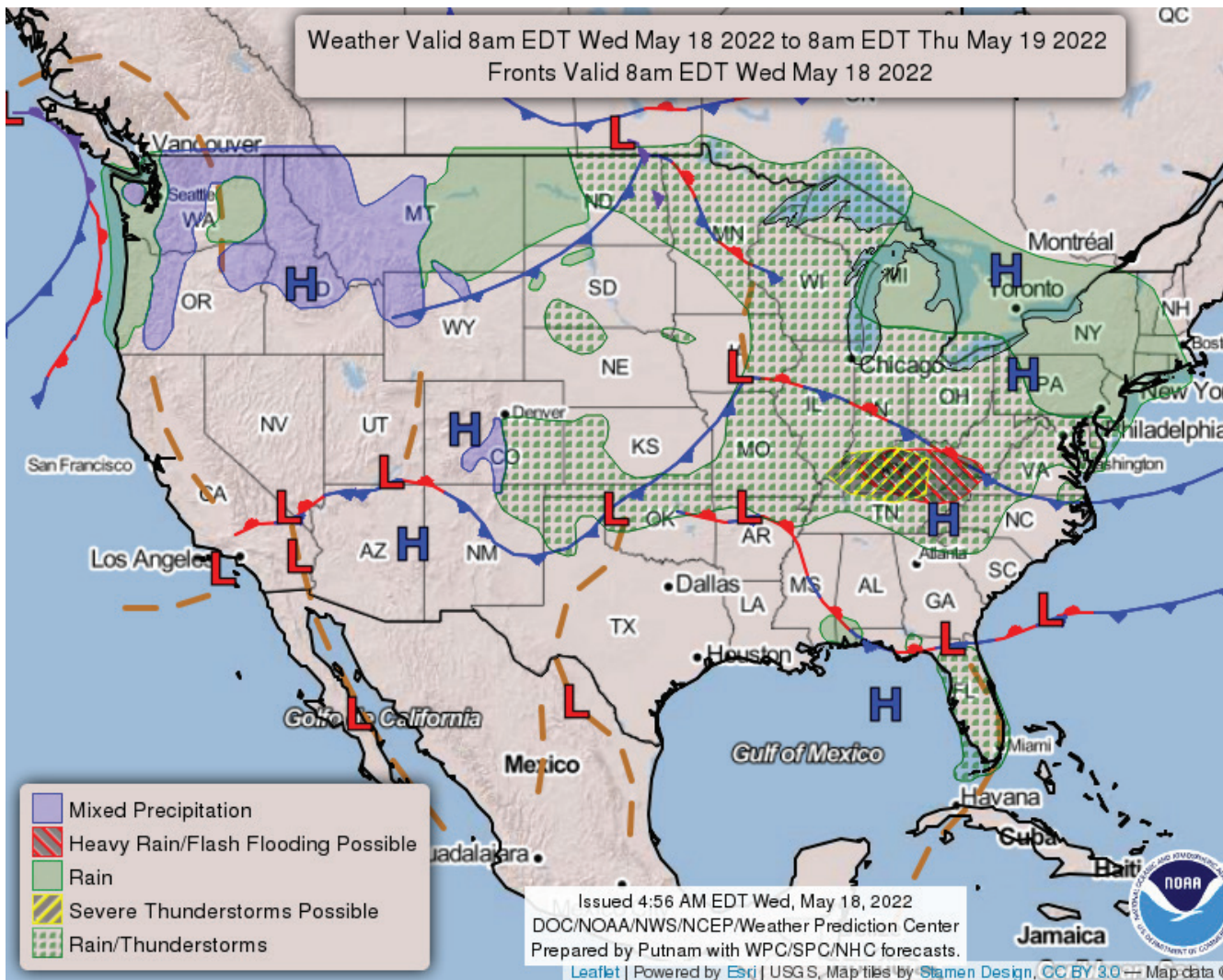
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 70 °F at 2:38 PM
Low Temp: 54 °F at 5:25 AM
Wind: 22 mph at 1:17 AM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 04 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 100 in 1934
Record Low: 26 in 1915
Average High: 71°F
Average Low: 45°F
Average Precip in May.: 2.00
Precip to date in May.: 2.40
Average Precip to date: 5.97
Precip Year to Date: 8.90
Sunset Tonight: 9:01:10 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:55:29 AM



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An Everlasting Kingdom

World events, at times, are overwhelming. The moral and spiritual decay, the expansion of religions that would eliminate Christianity, the rise of secularism and "political correctness" have dimmed the voice of believers. The increased number of martyrs has raised the question: "Will Christianity survive?"

Absolutely! The Psalmist long ago assured us that: "Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and Your dominion endures through all generations!"

Nearly two thousand years ago some tried to do away with Jesus. They nailed Him to a cross. Sealed Him in a tomb. Surrounded that tomb with guards and proudly said, "This is the end of Him." They thought that they had rid the world of His presence. But they were fooled. He came back from the dead and became the Living Christ! He was victorious over sin and death and became our Savior.

Robert Ingersoll, the atheist, held up a Bible and declared, "In fifteen years this book will be in a morgue." Fifteen years later it was he who would be in a morgue.

Islam swept across the Middle East in the 7th century determined to destroy Christianity. A Christian church in Damascus was turned into a mosque. Today, the words, "Thy Kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting Kingdom and Thy dominion endures throughout all generations" are inscribed over the entrance.

One day there will be no kingdoms but God's Kingdom. It is not about endurance, but rather who will be its citizens!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give us courage to speak Your truth and to do all that we can to expand Your Kingdom! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and Your dominion endures through all generations. Psalm 145:13a

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2022 Community Events

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

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

07-21-24-41-65, Mega Ball: 24, Megaplier: 4

(seven, twenty-one, twenty-four, forty-one, sixty-five; Mega Ball: twenty-four; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$131,000,000

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: 101,000,000

Draft report finds Noem's daughter got special treatment

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers on Wednesday will consider a legislative report that finds Gov. Kristi Noem's daughter received preferential treatment while she was applying for a real estate appraiser license in 2020.

The Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee last year probed into the certification process for Noem's daughter, Kassidy Peters after The Associated Press reported the Republican governor had called a meeting that included Peters and key decision-makers in the agency evaluating her license application just days after the agency had moved to deny her the license.

Peters received another opportunity to demonstrate she could meet federal standards and received her license four months later. The draft report that will be considered by lawmakers Wednesday states that the extra opportunity deviated from established protocol.

"This was outside the requirements," the report states. "Kassidy Peters should have waited the required six months and reapplied for this level."

Shortly after Peters received her license in 2020, the agency's director, Sherry Bren, was pressured to retire. She eventually received a \$200,000 settlement to withdraw an age discrimination complaint.

Noem's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the draft report. She has repeatedly denied wrongdoing.

The draft report is silent on whether Noem's actions were appropriate during the episode. The House earlier this year also rejected a Republican-sponsored resolution criticizing the governor's actions.

However, a separate government body, the Government Accountability Board, is currently considering a complaint against Noem.

UN floats plan to boost renewables as climate worries mount

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The United Nations chief on Wednesday launched a five-point plan to jump-start broader use of renewable energies, hoping to revive world attention on climate change as the U.N.'s weather agency reported that greenhouse gas concentrations, ocean heat, sea-level rise, and ocean acidification reached record highs last year.

"We must end fossil fuel pollution and accelerate the renewable energy transition before we incinerate our only home," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. "Time is running out."

His latest stark warning about possible environmental disaster comes after the World Meteorological Organization issued its State of the Climate Report for 2021, which said the last seven years were the seven hottest on record. The impacts of extreme weather have led to deaths and disease, migration, and economic losses in the hundreds of billions of dollars — and the fallout is continuing this year, WMO said.

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"Today's State of the Climate report is a dismal litany of humanity's failure to tackle climate disruption," Guterres said. "The global energy system is broken and bringing us ever closer to climate catastrophe."

In his plan, which leans into the next U.N. climate conference taking place in Egypt in November, Guterres called for fostering technology transfer and lifting of intellectual property protections in renewable technologies, like battery storage.

Such ambitions – as with his call for transfers of technologies aimed to fight COVID-19 – can cause innovators and their financial backers to bristle: They want to reap the benefits of their knowledge, investments and discoveries — not just give them away.

Secondly, Guterres wants to broaden access to supply chains and raw materials that go into renewable technologies, which are now concentrated in a few powerful countries.

The U.N. chief also wants governments to reform in ways that can promote renewable energies, such as by fast-tracking solar and wind projects.

Fourth, he called for a shift away from government subsidies for fossil fuels that now total a half-trillion dollars per year. That's no easy task: Such subsidies can ease the pinch in many consumers' pockets – but ultimately help inject cash into corporate coffers too.

"While people suffer from high prices at the pump, the oil and gas industry is raking in billions from a distorted market," Guterres said. "This scandal must stop."

Finally, Guterres says private and public investments in renewable energy must triple to at least \$4 trillion dollars a year. He noted that government subsidies for fossil fuels are today more than three times higher than those for renewables.

Those U.N. initiatives are built upon a central idea: That human-generated emissions of greenhouse gas in the industrial era have locked in excess heat in the atmosphere, on the Earth's surface, and in the oceans and seas. The knock-on effect has contributed to more frequent and severe natural disasters like drought, hurricanes, flooding and forest fires.

Climate scientist Zeke Hausfather of the tech company Stripe and Berkeley Earth, a nonprofit focused on environmental data science, says a good way to head toward net-zero emissions is "to make clean energy cheap."

"While rich countries can afford to spend extra on clean energy, poor and middle income countries may be less willing to accept tradeoffs between reducing emissions and lifting millions out of abject poverty," he said. "If clean energy sources are cheaper than fossil fuels, they become win-win and will be adopted more rapidly."

The WMO report breaks little new ground in terms of data, but compiles earlier studies into a broader picture of the global climate.

Its secretary-general, Petteri Taalas, pointed to a downward blip in emissions in 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic dampened human activity. But he said that doesn't change the "big picture" because carbon dioxide – a leading greenhouse gas – has a long lifetime and lingers on, and emissions have been growing since then anyway.

"We have seen this steady growth of carbon dioxide concentration, which is related to the fact that we are still using too much fossil fuel," Taalas said in an interview. "Deforestation in regions like Amazon, Africa and southern Asia still continue."

Last year's U.N. climate conference in Glasgow, Scotland, failed to muster carbon-cutting pledges from the "BRICS" countries — Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa — which threaten a key goal of the 2015 Paris accord to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, he said.

"We are rather heading towards 2.5- to 3-degree warming instead of 1.5," Taalas said.

Climate experts lauded the U.N. ambitions and lamented the WMO findings, and said some countries are headed in the wrong direction.

"If climate change is death by one thousand cuts, in 2021 we took our thousandth," said Rob Jackson, professor of Earth System Science at Stanford University, who also chairs the Global Carbon Project that tracks carbon emissions.

"Dirty coal use roared back through economic stimulation incentives for COVID in China and India. We

built more new coal plant capacity worldwide than we took offline," he added. "How is this possible in 2021?"

Jonathan Overpeck, a professor of environmental education at the University of Michigan, noted that fossil fuels have a role in the Russian government's war in Ukraine. Russia is a key global producer of oil and gas, including through a pipeline that transits Ukraine to supply homes and businesses in Europe.

"The secretary-general has it right in pointing the blame at fossil fuels. Fossil fuels are creating an ever-worsening climate crisis and all that comes with it," Overpeck said. "The solution for climate change, the deadly air pollution and true national security is to leave fossil fuels behind in favor of clean renewable energy."

"It's getting scary," he added. "The climate crisis and the European war are a call to action, and to rid the planet of fossil fuels as fast as we can."

NATO chief hails 'historic moment' as Finland, Sweden apply

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday that the military alliance stands ready to seize a historic moment and move quickly on allowing Finland and Sweden to join its ranks, after the two countries submitted their membership requests.

The official applications, handed over by Finland and Sweden's ambassadors to NATO, set a security clock ticking. Russia, whose war on Ukraine spurred them to join the military organization, has warned that it wouldn't welcome such a move, and could respond.

"I warmly welcome the requests by Finland and Sweden to join NATO. You are our closest partners," Stoltenberg said. "All allies agree on the importance of NATO enlargement. We all agree that we must stand together, and we all agree that this is an historic moment which we must seize."

"This is a good day at a critical moment for our security," a beaming Stoltenberg said, as he stood alongside the two envoys, with NATO, Finnish and Swedish flags at their backs.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has demanded that the alliance stop expanding toward Russia's borders, and several NATO allies, led by the United States and Britain, have signaled that they stand ready to provide security support to Finland and Sweden should he try to provoke or destabilize them during the time it takes to become full members.

The countries will only benefit from NATO's Article 5 security guarantee — the part of the alliance's founding treaty that pledges that any attack on one member would be considered an attack of them all — once the membership ratification process is concluded, probably in a few months.

The move is one of the biggest geopolitical ramifications of the war and will rewrite Europe's security map. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson welcomed it in a tweet and said that "Putin's appalling ambitions have transformed the geopolitical contours of our continent."

For now though, the application must be weighed by the 30 member countries. That process is expected to take about two weeks, although Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has expressed reservations about Finland and Sweden joining.

If his objections are overcome, and accession talks go as well as expected, the two could become members soon. The process usually takes eight to 12 months, but NATO wants to move quickly given the threat from Russia hanging over the Nordic countries' heads.

Canada, for example, says that it expects to ratify their accession protocol in just a few days — while in the Baltic region, Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas tweeted: "I encourage a rapid accession process. We in Estonia will do our part fast."

Stoltenberg said that NATO allies "are determined to work through all issues and reach rapid conclusions."

The fact that the Nordic partners applied together means they won't be losing time by having to ratify each other's membership application.

"That Sweden and Finland go hand in hand is a strength. Now the process of joining the talks continues," Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde told the Swedish news agency TT.

It shouldn't take long to win approval in the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Their prime

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ministers issued a joint statement on Wednesday saying that they “fully endorse and warmly welcome the historic decisions” taken in Helsinki and Stockholm.

Public opinion in Finland and Sweden has shifted massively in favor of membership since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Finland and Sweden cooperate closely with NATO. They have functioning democracies, well-funded armed forces and contribute to the alliance’s military operations and air policing. Any obstacles they face will merely be of a technical, or possibly political nature.

NATO’s membership process is not formalized, and the steps can vary. But first their requests to join will be examined in a sitting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) of the 30 member countries, probably at ambassadorial level.

The NAC will decide whether to move toward membership and what steps must be taken to achieve it. This mostly depends on how well aligned the candidate countries are with NATO political, military and legal standards, and whether they contribute to security in the North Atlantic area. This should pose no substantial problem for Finland and Sweden.

Moving forward, during accession talks that could be concluded in just one day once the terms of those negotiations are set, the two will be asked to commit to uphold Article 5 and to meet spending obligations concerning the NATO in-house budget, which runs to around \$2.5 billion dollars, split proportionally among what would be 32 member countries.

Finland and Sweden would also be made aware of their role in NATO defense planning, and of any other legal or security obligations they might have, like the vetting of personnel and handling of classified information.

Interrogation, uncertainty for soldiers abandoning Mariupol

By OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI and CIARAN McQUILLAN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia said Wednesday that nearly 1,000 Ukrainian troops at a giant steelworks in Mariupol have surrendered, abandoning their dogged defense of a site that became a symbol of their country’s resistance, as the battle in the strategic port city appeared all but over.

Ukraine ordered the fighters to save their lives — and said their mission to tie up Russian forces is now complete — but has not called the column of soldiers walking out of the plant a surrender. The fighters face an uncertain fate, with Ukraine saying they hope for a prisoner swap but Russia vowing to try at least some of them for war crimes.

It’s not clear how many fighters remain inside the stronghold, Ukraine’s last in a city now largely reduced to rubble. Both sides are trying to shape the narrative and extract propaganda victories from what has been one of the most important battles of the war.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Wednesday that 959 Ukrainian troops have now abandoned the Avozstal plant since they started coming out Monday. At one point, officials put the number of fighters holed up in the mill’s sprawling network of tunnels and bunkers at 2,000.

The figures, if confirmed, suggest that Moscow might be within touching distance of being able to claim that all of Mariupol has fallen. That would be a boost for Russian President Vladimir Putin in a war where many of his plans have gone awry.

But already another setback loomed: Sweden and Finland both officially applied to join the NATO military alliance on Wednesday, a move driven by security concerns over the Russian invasion. Putin launched the invasion on Feb. 24 in what he said was an effort to check NATO’s expansion but has seen that strategy backfire.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said he welcomed the applications, which now have to be weighed by 30 member countries.

Beyond its symbolic value, gaining full control of Mariupol would also allow Russia to deploy forces elsewhere in the Donbas, the eastern industrial heartland that the Kremlin is now bent on capturing. It would also give Russia an unbroken land bridge to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014,

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while depriving Ukraine of a vital port.

For months, the soldiers have they defended the plant against the odds, but on Tuesday Ukraine's defense minister said he had issued a new order to the fighters to "save their lives."

"Ukraine needs them. This is the main thing," Oleksiy Reznikov said.

What will now happen to the fighters isn't clear. At least some have been taken to a former penal colony in territory controlled by Russian-backed separatists. Ukraine says it hopes they can be exchanged for Russian prisoners of war and that negotiations are delicate and time-consuming.

But in Moscow, there are mounting calls for Ukrainian troops to be put on trial. Russia's main federal investigative body said it intends to interrogate the troops to "identify the nationalists" and determine whether they were involved in crimes against civilians. Also, Russia's top prosecutor asked the country's Supreme Court to designate Ukraine's Azov Regiment a terrorist organization. The regiment has roots in the far right.

The Russian parliament planned to take up a resolution Wednesday to prevent the exchange of Azov Regiment fighters, Russian news agencies said.

Ukraine's deputy defense minister, Hanna Maliar, said negotiations for the fighters' release were ongoing, as were plans to pull out others still inside the mill. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said "the most influential international mediators are involved" in the evacuation.

Mariupol was targeted by Russia from the outset of the invasion. The city was largely flattened in steady bombardments, and Ukraine says over 20,000 civilians have been killed. But the fighters in the steel plant held out, as the rest of the city fell to Russian occupation.

Britain's Defense Ministry said in its daily intelligence report Wednesday that Ukraine's defense of Mariupol "inflicted costly personnel losses amongst Russian forces."

More than 260 Ukrainian fighters — some of them seriously wounded and taken out on stretchers — left the ruins of the Azovstal plant on Monday and turned themselves over to troops on the Russian side who patted them down and took them away on buses.

Others were taken way on Tuesday. Seven buses carrying an unknown number of Ukrainian soldiers were seen arriving at a former penal colony in the town of Olenivka, about 88 kilometers (55 miles) north of Mariupol.

It was impossible to confirm the total number of fighters brought to Olenivka or their legal status. While both Mariupol and Olenivka are officially part of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, Olenivka has been controlled by Russia-backed separatists since 2014 and forms part of the unrecognized "Donetsk People's Republic." Prior to the rebel takeover, penal colony No. 120 had been a high-security facility designed to hold prisoners sentenced for serious crimes.

Footage shot by The Associated Press showed that the convoy was escorted by military vehicles bearing the pro-Kremlin "Z" sign, as Soviet flags fluttered from poles along the road. About two dozen Ukrainian fighters were seen in one of the buses.

If its capture is completed, Mariupol would be the biggest city to be taken by Moscow's forces. During the siege, Russian forces launched lethal airstrikes on a maternity hospital and a theater where civilians had taken shelter. Close to 600 people may have been killed at the theater.

Ukraine's human rights ombudsman said the Russian military was also holding more than 3,000 civilians from Mariupol at another former penal colony near Olenivka. Ombudsman Lyudmyla Denisova said most civilians are held for a month, but those considered "particularly unreliable," including former soldiers and police, are held for two months. The detainees include about 30 volunteers who delivered humanitarian supplies to Mariupol while it was under siege, she said.

Will Turkey upend NATO expansion? US officials seek clarity

By MATTHEW LEE and SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan taking an increasingly tough line against the NATO membership bids of Finland and Sweden despite far less strident statements from some

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of his top aides, U.S. officials are trying to determine how serious the often mercurial leader is and what it might take to get him to back down.

Amid the contradictory signals from Ankara over the applications before they were submitted on Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet his Turkish counterpart in New York in a new effort to clarify Ankara's position after previous attempts appear to have only clouded the situation.

Underscoring the sensitivity of the delicate diplomacy required to deal with a potentially recalcitrant ally, the Biden administration seems to have taken to ignoring Erdogan saying he cannot allow the two nations to join NATO due to their alleged support for groups Turkey sees as security threats. Instead, the administration is focusing on remarks made in closed-door meetings by lower-ranking Turkish officials.

"It is not for us to speak for the Turkish government," State Department spokesman Ned Price said repeatedly on Tuesday in response to multiple questions about what the U.S. understands Turkey's position to be and whether Turkey had demanded anything from the United States in return for agreeing to Finland's and Sweden's memberships.

At stake for the United States and its NATO partners is an opportunity to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine by strengthening and expanding the alliance — the very opposite of what President Vladimir Putin hoped to achieve in starting the war.

But Erdogan's suggestions that he could derail Sweden's and Finland's membership hopes also highlight a potential weakness that Putin has tried to exploit in the past — the unwieldy nature of the consensus-run alliance where a single member can block actions supported by the other 29.

Initially seen in Washington and other NATO capitals as an easily resolved minor distraction to the process of enlarging the alliance in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Erdogan's verbal volleys toward Finland and Sweden are attracting more concern as the two Nordic nations submitted formal applications Wednesday with the hope of joining as quickly as possible.

Even if they are overcome, objections from Turkey, which is the only one of NATO's 30 members to have raised reservations about the expansion so far, could delay Finland's and Sweden's accession to the alliance for months, particularly if other nations follow suit in seeking concessions for their votes.

Erdogan, who has grown increasingly authoritarian over the years, is known to be an unpredictable leader and there have been occasions when his words have been at clear odds with what Turkish diplomats or other senior officials in his government have said.

"I don't exclude a possible disconnect between Turkish diplomats and Erdogan. In the past there have been examples of such disconnect," said Barcin Yinan, a journalist and commentator on Turkish foreign policy. She said there was a "disconnect" between Erdogan and the Foreign Ministry last year, when the Turkish leader threatened to expel 10 Western diplomats, including the U.S. ambassador, whom he accused of meddling in Turkey's judiciary.

For instance, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters in Berlin on Sunday after discussions with Turkish officials that "Turkey has made it clear that their intention is not to block membership." Meanwhile, Blinken and other foreign ministers, including Germany's top diplomat, Annalena Baerbock, expressed absolute confidence that all NATO members, including Turkey, would welcome the two newcomers.

Yet on Monday, Erdogan surprised many by doubling down on his criticism of Finland and Sweden, accusing them of supporting Kurdish militants and others whom Turkey considers to be terrorists and of imposing restrictions on military sales to Turkey.

"Neither country has an open, clear stance against terrorist organizations," Erdogan said. "We cannot say 'yes' to those who impose sanctions on Turkey, on joining NATO, which is a security organization."

Asked about the disparity, Price, the State Department spokesman, would say only that Blinken, after meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavuoglu and others over the weekend, "came away with the same sense of confidence that there was strong consensus for admitting Finland and Sweden into the alliance if they choose to join, and we're confident we'll be able to preserve that consensus."

Gonul Tol, director of the Turkey program at the Middle East Institute, said that while Erdogan often talks a tough line, he tends to come around in the end and do the "rational" thing.

"Erdogan is unpredictable. But at the same time, he's a very pragmatic actor," she said. Tol said Erdogan

likes to negotiate and pushes for "maximalist demands" during the negotiations. "He ends up settling for much less than that," she said.

She noted that Erdogan's grievances with Western countries over the Kurds are not new and that strains between Turkey and the United States over military supplies are long-standing.

Having been dropped from the F-35 advanced fighter jet development program after buying a Russian air defense system, Turkey has been pressing the U.S. to sell it new F-16 fighters or at the very least refurbish its existing fleet. Discussions on both issues are taking place in Washington this week and some officials believe that while they are unrelated to the NATO enlargement question, resolutions to either could help persuade Erdogan to drop his objections.

Tol agreed and said: "This is happening at a time when he's trying to mend ties with Washington, when Turkey is involved in negotiations to convince Congress to sell F-16s to Turkey. This is a time when Erdogan is trying to burnish his image as a valuable ally. And this is a time when the invasion of Ukraine has given him an opportunity to reach out to Western capitals. So against that background it would be a very dramatic step if Turkey in fact vetoes the application of Finland and Sweden."

North Korea boasts recovery as WHO worries over missing data

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea on Wednesday added hundreds of thousands of infections to its growing pandemic caseload but also said that a million people have already recovered from suspected COVID-19 just a week after disclosing an outbreak, a public health crisis it appears to be trying to manage in isolation as global experts express deep concern about dire consequences.

The country's anti-virus headquarters announced 232,880 new cases of fever and another six deaths in state media Wednesday. Those figures raise its totals to 62 deaths and more than 1.7 million fever cases since late April. It said more than a million people recovered but at least 691,170 remain in quarantine.

Outside experts believe most of the fevers are from COVID-19 but North Korea lacks tests to confirm so many. The outbreak is almost certainly larger than the fever tally, since some virus carriers may not develop fevers or other symptoms.

It's also unclear how more than a million people recovered so quickly when limited medicine, medical equipment and health facilities exist to treat the country's impoverished, unvaccinated population of 26 million.

Some experts say the North could be simply releasing people from quarantine after their fevers subside.

Globally, COVID-19 has killed about 6.3 million people with the true toll believed to be much higher. Countries with outbreaks of a similar size to North Korea's official fever tally have confirmed thousands of deaths each.

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Tuesday that North Korea has not responded to its request for more data about its outbreak.

Before acknowledging COVID-19 infections for the first time last week, North Korea had held to a widely doubted claim of keeping out the virus. It also shunned millions of vaccine shots offered by the U.N.-backed COVAX distribution program, likely because of international monitoring requirements attached to them.

North Korea and Eritrea are the only sovereign U.N.-member countries not to have rolled out vaccines, but Tedros said neither country has responded to WHO's offers of vaccines, medicines, tests and technical support.

"WHO is deeply concerned at the risk of further spread in (North Korea)," Tedros said, also noting the country has worrying numbers of people with underlying conditions that make them more likely to get severe COVID-19.

WHO emergencies chief Dr. Michael Ryan said unchecked transmission of the virus could lead to new variants but that WHO was powerless to act unless countries accepted its help.

The North has so far ignored rival South Korea's offer to provide vaccines, medicine and health personnel, but experts say the North may be more willing to accept help from its main ally China. South Korea's

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government said it couldn't confirm media reports that North Korea flew multiple planes to bring back emergency supplies from China on Tuesday.

North Korean officials during a ruling party Politburo meeting Tuesday continued to express confidence that the country could overcome the crisis on its own, with the Politburo members discussing ways for "continuously maintaining the good chance in the overall epidemic prevention front," the official Korean Central News Agency said Wednesday.

There's suspicion that North Korea is underreporting deaths to soften the blow for Kim, who already was navigating the toughest moment of his decade in power. The pandemic has further damaged an economy already broken by mismanagement and U.S.-led sanctions over Kim's nuclear weapons and missiles development.

At the Politburo meeting, Kim criticized officials over their early pandemic response, which he said underscored "immaturity in the state capacity for coping with the crisis" and he blamed the country's vulnerability on their "non-positive attitude, slackness and non-activity," KCNA said.

He urged officials to strengthen virus controls at workplaces and redouble efforts to improve the supply of daily necessities and stabilize living conditions, the report said.

North Korea has also deployed nearly 3,000 military medical officers to help deliver medicine to pharmacies and deployed public health officials, teachers and students studying health care to identify people with fevers so they could be quarantined. The country has been relying on finding people with symptoms and isolating them at shelters since it lacks vaccines, high-tech medicine and equipment, and intensive care units that lowered hospitalizations and deaths in other nations.

While raising alarm over the outbreak, Kim has also stressed that his economic goals should be met. State media reports show large groups of workers are continuing to gather at farms, mining facilities, power stations and construction sites, being driven to ensure their works are "propelled as scheduled."

North Korea's COVID-19 outbreak came amid a provocative run in weapons demonstrations, including its first test of an intercontinental ballistic missile in nearly five years, in a brinkmanship aimed at forcing the United States to accept the idea of the North as a nuclear power and negotiate economic and security concessions from a position of strength.

U.S. and South Korean officials also believe North Korea could conduct its seventh nuclear test explosion this month.

The North Korean nuclear threat is expected to top agenda when U.S. President Joe Biden meets South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol during a visit to Seoul this week. Kim Tae-hyo, Yoon's deputy national security adviser, told reporters Wednesday that North Korea probably won't conduct a nuclear test this week but that its preparations for another ICBM test appeared imminent.

Kim Jong Un during Tuesday's Politburo meeting affirmed he would "arouse the whole party like (an) active volcano once again under the state emergency situation" to prove its leadership before history and time and "defend the wellbeing of the country and the people without fail and demonstrate to the whole world the strength and the spirit of heroic Korea once again," KCNA said. The report did not make a direct reference to a major weapons test.

Recent commercial satellite images of the nuclear testing ground in Punggye-ri indicate refurbishment work and preparations at a yet unused tunnel on the southern part of the site, which is presumably nearing completion to host a nuclear test, according to an analysis released Tuesday by Beyond Parallel, a website run by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

In Ukraine, limbs lost and lives devastated in an instant

By EMILIO MORENATTI and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — There is a cost to war — to the countries that wage it, to the soldiers who fight it, to the civilians who endure it. For nations, territory is gained and lost, and sometimes regained and lost again. But some losses are permanent. Lives lost can never be regained. Nor can limbs.

And so it is in Ukraine.

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The stories of the people who undergo amputations during conflict are as varied as their wounds, as are their journeys of reconciliation with their injuries. For some, losing a part of their body can be akin to a death of sorts; coming to terms with it, a type of rebirth.

For soldiers wounded while defending their country, their sense of purpose and belief in the cause they were fighting for can sometimes help them cope psychologically with amputation. For some civilians, maimed while going about their lives in a war that already terrified them, the struggle can be much harder.

For the men, women and children who have lost limbs in the war in Ukraine, now in its third month, that journey is just beginning.

OLENA

The explosion that took Olena Viter's left leg also took her son, 14-year-old Ivan, a budding musician. Her husband Volodymyr buried him, along with another boy killed in the same blast, under a guelder rose bush in their garden. Amid the fighting, they couldn't get to the cemetery.

"How am I going to live without Ivan? He will remain in my heart forever, like the fragment that hit him," she said. When she's alone, Olena cries.

Bombs rained down on Olena's village of Rozvazhiv, in the Kyiv region, on March 14. Ivan and four others died; Olena was one of about 20 who were wounded.

At first, "I was thinking, 'Why did God leave me alive?'" said Olena, 45, her soft voice breaking. Hearing Ivan was dead, she begged a neighbor to get his rifle and shoot her.

But Volodymyr pleaded with her, saying he couldn't live without her.

Now, she endures the devastation of the loss of her child, and the physical pain of the loss of her leg, cut below the knee.

"Every day I get used to some new type of pain. I am thinking what kind of new pain will I see in the future," she said.

She has yet to accept either of her losses.

"I am still not accepting myself as I am now," Olena said. "I really liked to dance. I was doing sports. I don't know, I need to learn." She can't yet imagine what it will be like to walk again.

Perhaps, Olena said, her life was spared because she was meant to do something, to help others, perhaps as a volunteer or by donations to a music school in Ivan's memory.

"At the moment, I don't know what I would want to do. I should keep searching. ... I must learn how to live. How? I do not know yet."

YANA AND NATASHA

Devastation struck out of a clear blue sky for Yana Stepanenko. On April 8, the 11-year-old went to the eastern city of Kramatorsk with her mother, Natasha, and twin brother Yarik to board an evacuation train.

Yarik stayed in the station to guard their luggage while Yana and her mother went outside to buy tea.

A missile hit, and the world went black, and silent. Natasha fell. She couldn't stand. She looked over and saw her little girl, her leggings dangling where her feet should be. Blood was everywhere.

"Mom, I'm dying," Yana cried.

The injuries to mother and daughter were devastating. Yana lost two legs, one just above the ankle, the other higher up her shin. Natasha lost her left leg below the knee.

Yarik was uninjured and has been reunited with his mother and sister. The children's father died of cancer several years ago, and their stepfather is fighting at the front. So now the little boy cares for his mother and sister, running around the hospital corridors, fetching wheelchairs and bringing food.

Natasha still struggles to comprehend what happened.

"Sometimes it seems like it happened not to us," she said, crying softly.

She worries most about her daughter. "I cannot help her as a mother, I cannot pick her up, or help her move," she said. "I can only support her with my words from my bed."

Yana, like children everywhere, is eager to be up and about.

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Yana misses her home and her friends and is looking forward to getting prosthetics. "I really do want to run," she said.

SASHA

Alexander Horokhivskiy, known as Sasha, is in pain. And he is angry. He winces as he rubs the stump of his left thigh where his leg was amputated on April 4, nearly two weeks after he was injured.

Sasha was shot in the calf by his own side. A territorial defense member mistook him for a spy because he was snapping photos of bombed buildings near his home in Bobrovytsya, a city in the Chernihiv region, after emerging from a bomb shelter.

He was questioned for about 90 minutes at a police station before being taken to an overwhelmed hospital. Days later, he was moved to a hospital in the capital, Kyiv, where doctors decided they had to take his leg to save his life.

The 38-year-old, an avid table tennis player, only found out about the amputation when he awakened from surgery.

"How did they dare do all that without my consent?" he railed. Between the drugs and the pain, he doesn't remember much. "I swore a lot."

His journey has been painful, both physically and psychologically. He worries whether he'll be able to play sports again, or travel. And the injustice of it all weighs on him.

"I try to understand how it could happen. Especially during the first week, I couldn't think about anything else." It would be different if he was wounded while fighting. "But to be injured in such a way was very hard."

Still, he's spoken with a psychologist, and he's come a long way from those initial dark days. "It does not make sense to return to this moment," he said. "Because you can't change anything."

NASTIA

There had been no electricity or running water for two or three days in the Chernihiv basement where Nastia Kuzik, her parents, her brother, and another 120 people had taken shelter. Tired of the dark, she decided to go to her brother's house nearby — just for a while.

Walking back toward the bomb shelter, the 21-year-old heard the noise: "tsch, tsch, tsch." She ran. She was just a few steps from the entrance when the explosion flung her to the ground.

She drifted in and out of consciousness. Every time she opened her eyes, her brother was there, telling her everything would be OK. But nothing would ever be the same.

Doctors worked hard to save her leg, but it just wasn't possible. Her lower right leg was amputated below the knee. Her other leg was badly broken.

Now, gradually, as she goes through painful physical therapy, reality is sinking in.

"I am accepting it," she said. Nastia's usually bright, cheerful disposition falters. A tear runs down her cheek. "I had never thought it would ever happen to me. But since it did, what can I do?"

She's working hard to be optimistic. A German speaker, she has tutored children in the language, and she's always wanted to study in Germany. In early May, she was evacuated to a specialized rehabilitation facility in Leipzig.

This was not the way wanted her dream to come true, but she said she's going to make the most of it.

ANTON

Lidiya Gladun had lost contact with 22-year-old Anton, a military medic deployed on the front lines in eastern Ukraine, for about three weeks. Then someone sent her a Facebook post by a nurse in a hospital in Kharkiv. They had an Anton Gladun in their hospital. Did anybody know him?

Lidiya contacted the nurse, who was sparing with information on Anton's condition. When he was well enough to do so, Anton phoned his mother. He asked her to bring some clothes to the hospital. "He was mentioning flip-flops, and then he said he didn't need flip-flops anymore."

He believes it was a cluster bomb that struck his unit as it retreated on March 27. Anton lost both legs

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and his left arm, and his right arm was injured.

For days, Anton had been in a coma. When he regained consciousness, he said, "I was smiling, like everything was OK, basically. I was thinking that the most important thing was that I was alive."

But he was haunted by nightmares and horrific hallucinations. A volunteer psychologist visited him, and with his help the hallucinations subsided. He no longer has nightmares. He doesn't really dream at all.

He's eager to get his prosthetics and start walking. He figures his military career is probably over, but he wants to study information technology.

What helps, he said, "is my understanding that if I would be sad, would cry because of what happened, then it would only be worse."

EXPLAINER: What's behind difficult Taiwan-China relations?

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — U.S. authorities say the gunman behind an attack on a church in southern California in which one person was killed and five injured was motivated by a hatred for Taiwan.

Although born in Taiwan, David Chou nurtured a resentment toward the Taiwanese and reportedly had ties to a China-backed organization dedicated to furthering Beijing's goal of annexing the self-governing island, by force if necessary.

That has revived questions about the complex and sometimes antagonistic relationship between the two sides, which separated amid civil war in 1949 and have followed very different paths since then — the one toward liberal democracy, the other toward increasingly repressive authoritarian rule under the Chinese Communist Party, which claims Taiwan, despite never having governed the island.

The following is a look at that background and the current state of affairs between the sides.

WHAT IS THE HISTORY BETWEEN CHINA AND TAIWAN?

Taiwan had only been a Chinese province for 10 years before it was ceded to Japan as a colony in 1895, and was later handed over to Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China at the end of World War II. Taiwan separated again from China in 1949 when Chiang relocated his government to the island as Mao Zedong's Communists swept to power on the mainland.

While they have established strong economic ties, efforts at political reconciliation have stumbled in recent years as Taiwan asserts its own identity and China ups its demands that the island accept its terms for unification between the sides.

WHAT ABOUT DIVISIONS WITHIN TAIWAN?

Native Taiwanese and mainland migrants were divided initially by language, culture and politics, with the mainlanders continuing to identify closely with China and holding to Chiang's dream of eventually returning home as victors. Under nearly four decades of martial law, political power resided mainly with the mainlanders while Taiwanese dominated the private sector.

While there was some intermarriage, frictions, confrontations and bullying between them were not unusual. Some mainland youth formed gangs with links to organized crime, the government and military, partly as a means of defending their interests. Among younger islanders, such divisions have largely receded along with the flourishing of the separate Taiwanese identity.

Now 68, Chou appears to have been fairly typical of the "second generation mainlander" cohort who never fully integrated into Taiwanese society or came to see the island as anything other than a province of the China they continued to identify with.

Chou appeared to have left Taiwan before the process of democratization and the Taiwanese identity took hold, so his participation in the pro-reunification group, by "Taiwanese standards is fairly fringe," said James Lin, a historian of Taiwanese history at the University of Washington.

Taiwan's politics "are different from the fringe diasporic politics," Lin said.

WHAT ARE THE GOVERNMENTS' POLICIES?

China says Taiwan is a part of its territory with no right to independent recognition as a state or representation on the world stage. Since Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen took office in 2016, Beijing has refused all contacts with her government.

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China sends military aircraft into Taiwan's air defense identification on a regular basis in what it calls an advertisement of its threat to use force. It has adopted increasingly menacing language, warning that Tsai, her ruling pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party and others will pay a dire price for refusing its demands and that Taiwan will be attacked if it declares formal independence.

Tsai says Taiwan has no need to make such a declaration since it is already de-facto independent, and has refused to meet China's basic demand that she recognize Taiwan as part of the Chinese nation. She has built up Taiwan's traditionally strong ties with the U.S., Japan and other allies as she has sought to boost the armed forces' ability to resist a potential Chinese invasion.

HOW DO THEIR PUBLICS VIEW THE SITUATION?

China allows no independent polling on the question, but public sentiment tends to run strongly in favor of its arguments on the need for, and inevitability of, unification between the sides. That is solidly in line with the Communist Party's relentless propaganda on the issue and the strongly nationalist tone it has adopted since jettisoning orthodox Marxism.

In contrast, support for unification has fallen to single digit percentages in Taiwanese public opinion polls, with the vast majority favoring a continuation of the status quo of de-facto independence. Most now identify exclusively as Taiwanese, with the government and many social organizations supporting that view. The Presbyterian church, whose parishioners were attacked in the California church, has been closely associated with the pro-democracy movement and promotion of Taiwan's independent identity. It's still unclear whether the gunman targeted the church because of its Presbyterian affiliation.

Concerns have also risen about Chinese influence on Taiwan's media and the impact of propaganda campaigns pressed by the Communist Party's United Front Work Department, which works in overseas Chinese communities and below-the-radar in Taiwan to promote China's political agenda. At a news conference in Taipei on Wednesday, Presbyterian Pastor Chen Shin-liang said the government should seize the incident to "face up to the hate speech spread by some United Front groups in Taiwan."

ARE CONFRONTATIONS FREQUENT?

Tensions are higher now than they have been in years, but outside of China's military threats they have been largely relegated to rhetorical and diplomatic sparring.

Overseas, Chinese and Taiwanese communities overlap in some situations, but Beijing's demand for political loyalty creates deep fissures. Taiwanese and Chinese maintain their own student groups on campus, with China maintaining strict control over its nationals. That situation is reflected in the business community and politically aligned groups such as the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification, with which Chou reportedly had links. Since the shooting, photos have appeared of Chou speaking at one of the group's events in his home of Las Vegas.

Europe's push to cut Russian gas faces a race against winter

By The Associated Press undefined

While Europeans bask in the warmth of spring, governments are in a race against winter.

Europe is trying to cut use of Russian natural gas because of the war in Ukraine, but still find enough fuel to keep the lights on and homes warm before it gets cold again.

That has sent officials and utilities racing to fill underground storage with scarce supplies of natural gas from other producers — competition that further raises already high prices as utility bills and business costs soar. Italy has announced new supplies from Algeria, while Germany has outlined an energy partnership with Qatar, a major supplier of liquefied gas that arrives by ship.

While those deals offer a long-term boost, they likely will have little impact on the crucial winter supplies that will be decided in the next several months. For now, the scramble in Europe is a zero-sum game: There's little or no spare gas available to snatch up, and any supply that a country manages to get comes at the expense of someone else in Europe or Asia.

The limited number of export terminals for liquefied natural gas in Qatar, the U.S. and other LNG-exporting countries are booked solid, and new ones will take years and billions to build. On top of that, a

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plan for the 27-nation European Union to buy gas jointly looks good on paper but faces practical hurdles.

"There's no additional supply," said James Huckstepp, manager for Europe, Middle East and Africa gas analytics at S&P Global Commodity Insights. "The increase in LNG that we've received is mostly thanks to demand destruction and switching in Asia. And there's limits to that."

Asian users have been moving to oil or coal, and Chinese demand has dropped amid COVID-19 lockdowns.

Europe's scramble for energy has focused on bringing in LNG, with supplies increasing to a record 10.6 billion cubic meters in April. But there's a long way to go — Russia sent 155 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Europe annually before the war. Europe wants to slash that by around 100 billion cubic meters by year's end and still stay warm this winter.

The EU's executive commission has proposed conservation, renewable development and other measures to reach that goal, with Germany and other countries heavily dependent on Russian gas opposing calls for an immediate gas cutoff. S&P Global Insight expects that Europe won't eliminate most Russian gas until 2027.

To aid that effort, Italian Premier Mario Draghi signed an agreement last month between Italy's energy company Eni and Algeria's Sonatrach to boost gas through a pipeline under the Mediterranean Sea. Eni said the deal would increase volumes this year and reach up to 9 billion cubic meters a year in 2023-24.

Huckstepp said the deal was unlikely to result in the full amount "without cutting exports elsewhere, or spot sales elsewhere."

Gas contracts signed by individual countries don't indicate whether new volumes are new production or would be subtracted from gas another nation expects to receive, said Matteo Villa, an analyst at ISPI think tank in Milan.

"And you don't know, is the new gas because Algeria is producing more or because they are taking it from Spain?" Villa said. "If they don't manage to increase production, then they will have to steal it from Spain."

Italy also has reached deals with Azerbaijan, Angola and Congo, but Villa has doubts: "They will arrive when they get here."

Germany's energy partnership with Qatar, meanwhile, hasn't led to signed contracts or specified deliveries yet and appears aimed at longer-term supplies rather than those for this winter.

The key to future supply is new investment, such as export facilities planned on the U.S. Gulf Coast. But those won't begin coming online until 2024 at the earliest.

Complicating the race against winter are several minor but worrying interruptions. Ukraine's pipeline operator halted supplies through a pipeline leading to Europe last week, saying it had lost control of a compressor station in Russian-held territory.

Soon afterward, Russian state-owned supplier Gazprom said it would no longer send gas through a pipeline across Poland after Moscow sanctioned some European energy companies. The amounts of gas lost are small but raise the possibility of escalating disruption ahead of the cold months.

"Storage levels are currently sufficient to last through most of 2022, even if Russian flows were to stop instantly, barring any unexpected weather events — but the outlook for winter 2022 supply is now a lot more pessimistic," said Kaushal Ramesh, senior analyst at Rystad Energy.

Europe's collective gas storage level is 37%, an improvement of 5% over the same time last year. Mild weather allowed the continent to scrape through last winter.

Not all countries are in the same place on reserves. Poland has filled 84% of its storage. And none too soon. Gazprom cut off gas to Poland and Bulgaria after they refused demands to make payments in rubles.

Germany's storage is at just 38%. EU law provides for sharing in a crisis but that would depend on the availability of pipelines running in the right direction, which isn't always the case.

Ramesh said the recent disruptions could speed up plans for a buyer's alliance at the EU level, which could use the bloc's size to leverage reliable supply and stable prices from suppliers.

The "common platform" for gas purchases has held a first meeting with representatives of the EU's 27 member states. The panel is expected to coordinate outreach to foreign suppliers and "allow moving, when appropriate, towards joint purchases." That framework raises several questions, including how the

jointly purchased gas would be distributed.

Draghi, Italy's leader and a former European Central Bank president, also floated the idea of creating cartels of buyers that would use their purchasing power to set price caps for natural gas.

The tight market "is going to mean high prices for the end users in Europe for a while longer, and we're only really just starting to see the start of that," Huckstepp said.

High gas prices are fueling inflation and gradually hit utility bills.

"It's definitely going to be an interesting winter next winter," he added.

Analysis: Condolence calls from elite show UAE ruler's power

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Coming from around the globe, airplanes carrying world leaders have landed in the capital of the United Arab Emirates to offer condolences for the death of the country's president — and acknowledge the influence of the man now fully in charge.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan rarely speaks publicly. The new president shies away from the United Nations' annual summit in New York. And his thoughts on the world around him come filtered through a tight-knit coterie and leaders who interact with him rather than from his pronouncements.

But MbZ as he's known has become a major influence in the wider Middle East, whether through his longtime relationship with the U.S. military, his opposition to Islamists or his autocratic country's new ties with Israel.

Following the death of his half-brother, President Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Sheikh Mohammed's new reign comes with the opportunity to cement the rapid advance from villages to skyscrapers made by the UAE since its founding just over 50 years ago.

But it also comes as tough decisions loom for a nation mired in a deadlocked, bloody war in Yemen, facing choices on whether to embrace an America increasingly suspicious of its ties to China and Russia and concerned about an Iran whose nuclear program now races toward weapons-grade levels.

Even before becoming president, Sheikh Mohammed was believed to have been the country's de facto leader since a 2014 stroke saw Sheikh Khalifa disappear from public view. His mystique and his younger age compared to other regional leaders — today he's 61 — set him apart.

He's also a symbol in this young country that is home to Dubai, where his silhouette in aviator glasses remains a popular car window sticker.

"MbZ is a leader not just in the UAE, but more broadly in the Middle East, where he is seen as a particularly dynamic member of the generation succeeding the geriatric cases who have dominated the region for decades," a 2009 U.S. diplomatic cable published by WikiLeaks said.

Trained at England's Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst and a fluent English speaker, Sheikh Mohammed's style also found favor with allied militaries. Today, some 3,500 U.S. troops remain stationed in the UAE. Dubai's Jebel Ali port is the busiest port of call for the U.S. Navy outside of America.

Abu Dhabi's Al-Dhafra Air Base hosts American drones and fighter jets that bombed the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria. American Patriot missile batteries there defended the capital this year against attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels.

As part of the relationship with America, the UAE deployed forces to fight in Afghanistan. MbZ also fully backed the U.S. after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks by al-Qaida. Two of the 19 hijackers had come from the Emirates.

That also marked the hardening of Sheikh Mohammed's opinions toward pan-Arab Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. Brotherhood members taught in Emirati schools in the 1980s, formative years for a young Sheikh Mohammed.

"I am an Arab, I am a Muslim and I pray. And in the 1970s and early 1980s I was one of them," Sheikh Mohammed told U.S. officials in 2007, according to another diplomatic cable. "I believe these guys have an agenda."

After the 2011 Arab Spring, Sheikh Mohammed led a crackdown on members of Islah, a Brotherhood-

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associated group in the Emirates. Groups like the Brotherhood challenge the hereditary rule of the UAE's seven sheikhdoms. Political parties and labor unions remain illegal in the country, which has been accused of employing spyware to monitor activists and dissidents.

Former President Barack Obama in his recent autobiography described Sheikh Mohammed as "young, sophisticated ... and perhaps the savviest leader in the Gulf."

But MbZ was critical of Washington's support of the 2011 protests that toppled Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak and briefly installed a Brotherhood member as president.

Obama quoted Sheikh Mohammed as saying that the U.S. position "shows that the United States is not a partner we can rely on in the long term." The UAE backed Egyptian Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Sissi's 2013 coup that brought him into the presidency.

That suspicion has grown. Sheikh Mohammed reportedly described himself as surprised by the U.S. secretly negotiating with Iran on what later became Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

The UAE's diplomatic recognition of Israel, while boosting trade, serves as a hedge against an Iran suspected of attacking shipping in waters just off its shore in 2019. Yet Emirati officials have opened discussions with Iran as well. The country's foreign minister even offered condolences Monday for Sheikh Khalifa's passing, the same day as a U.S. delegation led by Vice President Kamala Harris.

Dubai and the wider Emirates remain open to Russians despite Moscow's war on Ukraine. Ties to China grow ever closer, despite Beijing allegedly running a secret prison in the country and concerns over a possible military dimension to its operation at an Abu Dhabi port.

But while described as a tactician, some of Sheikh Mohammed's larger bets haven't paid off. He found himself entangled in special counsel Robert Mueller's report on former U.S. President Donald Trump and Russia.

An indictment appears to link Sheikh Mohammed to Trump's 2017 inaugural committee chair, who faces charges alleging he secretly conspired to influence U.S. policy to benefit the Emirates. Meanwhile, a yearslong boycott of Qatar as part of a political dispute ended just before President Joe Biden took office.

Then there's the war in Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, where Iran-backed rebels still hold its capital. The UAE and Saudi Arabia face international criticism over civilian casualties in the war. The war killed dozens of Emirati soldiers and wounded more.

Though the Emiratis largely pulled out of the conflict, the attacks on Abu Dhabi at the start of this year show the country remains a target.

For Sheikh Mohammed, the responsibility for all this now falls solely on him.

"Every decision has risks, undoubtedly," he once said.

Takeaways: Election denier wins, bad behavior dooms Cawthorn

By JILL COLVIN and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Donald Trump's support was enough to elevate his Senate candidate to victory in North Carolina on Tuesday, while his pick in Pennsylvania remained in a tough fight in that state's Senate primary.

In a key congressional race, a Republican congressman's bad behavior finally caught up with him.

And in the Pennsylvania governor's race, a Trump-backed candidate who has spread lies about the 2020 vote count won the GOP nomination, putting an election denier within striking distance of running a presidential battleground state in 2024. But in Idaho, with incumbency on his side, the sitting governor weathered a primary challenge from his far-right lieutenant governor.

Takeaways from Tuesday's primaries in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Kentucky, Idaho and Oregon:

TRUMP WINS SOME, LOSES SOME

The former president entered the primary season on a high after JD Vance, his endorsed candidate in Ohio's hypercompetitive GOP Senate contest, shot from third to first. But Trump's tally Tuesday night included wins, losses and a marquee race too close to call.

Trump had shocked party faithful in North Carolina when he endorsed U.S. Rep. Ted Budd, a little-known

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congressman, last June for the Senate seat being vacated by retiring Republican Richard Burr. But after a rocky start, Budd easily captured his party's nomination, passing a crowded field of GOP rivals that included the state's former governor, Pat McCrory.

And in Pennsylvania's GOP race for governor, Trump's endorsed candidate, the far-right Doug Mastriano, easily won the nomination — though he was already well ahead in the polls when Trump weighed in just days before the primary.

His nod was widely seen as an effort to hedge his bets and guarantee a victory in the state in case his endorsed candidate for Senate, celebrity heart surgeon Mehmet Oz, loses his race. Oz and former hedge fund CEO David McCormick were virtually tied early Wednesday, with more votes left to be counted.

In North Carolina, meanwhile, Rep. Madison Cawthorn lost his reelection bid Tuesday even after Trump urged voters to "give Madison a second chance!" Trump also whiffed when Idaho Lt. Gov. Janice McGeachin, his pick, failed to defeat Gov. Brad Little in that state's primary. Trump is facing down another possible defeat in next week's high-stakes governor's primary in Georgia, where his candidate is trailing in both polls and fundraising.

ELECTION DENIALIST WINS KEY REPUBLICAN PRIMARY

Trump has made election denial a key loyalty test in the Republican Party, and that may have kneecapped his party in Pennsylvania with the victory of Mastriano, a vocal election denier.

Mastriano backed baseless reviews of the election results in Pennsylvania, where Democrat Joe Biden won by nearly 100,000 votes. He organized buses to ferry Trump supporters to Washington for the "Stop the Steal" rally that preceded the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection. And he says that if he's elected, he'll ferret out fraud partly by making every single voter in the state reregister.

Mastriano was the front-runner even before Trump's endorsement late last week helped cement his victory. All the major statewide Republican hopefuls in one way or another cast doubt on the election results, but Mastriano was by far the loudest and that's what won him Trump's nod.

With Trump prioritizing fealty to his election lies over all else, many Pennsylvania Republicans fear the former president has undermined their chances in the crucial state. That led them to try to coalesce around a last-minute alternative to Mastriano, but the effort failed.

Mastriano will face Democrat Josh Shapiro, the state's attorney general, in the November general election. Shapiro, who was uncontested, has appeared eager to take on Mastriano, running a television ad calling Mastriano "one of Donald Trump's biggest supporters," a move that seemed designed to boost the state senator with GOP voters.

Mastriano has said he wouldn't have certified Biden's victory in Pennsylvania if he'd been governor then. That raises questions about the 2024 presidential election and whether Mastriano, if elected, would follow the will of the voters if a candidate he opposes were to win the state.

GOP VOTERS HAVE HAD ENOUGH

Even in Trump's Republican Party, there are limits.

Rep. Cawthorn, the youngest member of Congress, was ousted from office on Tuesday by state Sen. Chuck Edwards after a rocky first term filled with salacious headlines and scandals. The young congressman, who uses a wheelchair after a car accident, became a media sensation when he first won a House seat at age 25, but he may have gotten singed under the spotlight.

Cawthorn last month was cited for carrying a handgun through an airport security checkpoint — his second such citation. In March, he was cited for driving with a revoked license after being stopped for speeding twice. He angered local Republicans by choosing to run in a different district after new congressional maps were drawn this year, then coming back to his original district when litigation shifted the lines again. And, most notoriously, Cawthorn insinuated that Washington Republicans had invited him to at least one cocaine-fueled orgy.

Trump sought to give Cawthorn a boost on Monday, urging voters to keep him in office.

But voters decided not to. Edwards, who was endorsed by Republican Sen. Thom Tillis, inched past Cawthorn in the primary. Still, the big picture wasn't that close — with eight candidates in the contest,

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Cawthorn won just 3 in 10 voters in the district. That's a warning for other Republicans who may feel that Trump's ability to hold his base's loyalty through repeated scandals makes them bulletproof, too.

POWER OF INCUMBENCY IN IDAHO

In Idaho, Trump-inspired populism ran smack into the wall of incumbency.

Gov. Little easily beat back a Republican primary challenge from Lt. Gov. McGeachin, despite her endorsement from the former president. He touted steps he'd taken to please conservatives by capitalizing on the benefits of office — signing tax cuts and a law banning abortion after about six weeks.

McGeachin was deeply controversial. When Little traveled out of state, McGeachin proclaimed herself the effective governor and issued executive orders banning mask and vaccine mandates, which he nullified upon returning to the state. She spoke at a conference sponsored by white nationalists and ran with several far-right allies for other statewide offices.

But, in contrast to what happened in Pennsylvania, Republican voters in Idaho balked. It's a good omen for the next Trump target — Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, who's also been using his incumbency to shore up his conservative bona fides against a challenger backed by the former president in next week's primary.

Midterm updates | Idaho Gov. Little defeats Trump-backed foe

By The Associated Press undefined

BOISE, Idaho — Idaho Gov. Brad Little has survived a Republican primary challenge from his lieutenant governor, who was endorsed by former President Donald Trump.

In Idaho, the governor and lieutenant governor in Idaho run on separate tickets, so the two were not aligned when they won their races in 2018. Little had a long string of endorsements, including from the Idaho Fraternal Order of Police.

Little and Lt. Gov. Janice McGeachin had feuded frequently over coronavirus precautions and the role of government. Last year, McGeachin twice attempted a power grab when Little was out of state on business. She has also promoted Trump's lies that the 2020 election was stolen from him through mass voter fraud.

Republicans are almost guaranteed of winning in the general election as Democrats haven't held the governor's office since 1995 or statewide office since 2007.

Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Kentucky, Idaho and Oregon held primary elections Tuesday. Former President Donald Trump put his endorsement record on the line in two key Republican primaries for open U.S. Senate seats in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Voters in three states — Pennsylvania, Idaho and Oregon — picked their nominees for governor.

HERE'S WHAT ELSE YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- Election 2022: Key races unfold in Pennsylvania, North Carolina
- Mastriano, Fetterman win in Pennsylvania races
- Rep. Madison Cawthorn concedes in North Carolina primary
- Oregon Democrat at risk as 5 states hold US House primaries
- Idaho governor faces Trump-backed challenger in GOP primary

Follow all AP stories on the midterm elections at <https://apnews.com/hub/2022-midterm-elections>.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Heart surgeon-turned-TV celebrity Mehmet Oz and former hedge fund CEO David McCormick are in a too-early-to-call race in Pennsylvania for the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate.

Both men emerged at their election-night watch parties to say they will have to wait for vote-counting Wednesday to determine a winner. Some counties have yet to tabulate mail-in ballots in the presidential battleground state.

The race against Democratic nominee John Fetterman is expected to be among the nation's most competitive in the fall general election.

Oz has been helped by an endorsement from former President Donald Trump, while a super PAC backing

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McCormick weighed in heavily, spending almost \$20 million on the race, much of it to attack Oz.

Both men spent millions of their own money on the campaign and battled accusations of being carpet-baggers — Oz moved from New Jersey to run and McCormick from Connecticut.

Oz, best known as the host of daytime TV's "The Dr. Oz Show," has battled misgivings among conservative groups about his positions on guns, abortion and other core conservative issues.

McCormick has tried to overcome attacks by Trump that he is part of a corrosive Washington establishment.

BOISE, Idaho — Republican incumbent Mike Crapo has won the GOP primary for U.S. Senate in Idaho.

Crapo is seeking a fifth term and will be heavily favored in November in the conservative state.

The last time Democrats won a U.S. Senate election in Idaho was 1974.

Crapo was an attorney before he entered politics and previously served in the U.S. House and the Idaho Legislature. He is currently the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee.

SALEM, Ore. — Former Oregon state House Speaker Tina Kotek has won the state's Democratic gubernatorial primary, beating state Treasurer Tobias Read in a victory for the party's progressive wing.

Current Gov. Kate Brown, a progressive Democrat, cannot run for the position again because of term limits.

The Portland-based Kotek has collected endorsements from a third of Oregon lawmakers, nationally elected leaders, unions and organizations.

Kotek's biggest challenger was Read, who was a state representative in Oregon for 10 years before being elected as treasurer. The Democrat hoped to capitalize on voter unrest in Oregon over the handling of the pandemic, the homeless crisis, a lack of affordable housing and increasing gun violence.

The state hasn't had a GOP governor in 35 years. But political experts say Republicans have an opening in November amid widespread discontent in the state and a possible split in votes among the majority party as unaffiliated candidate Betsy Johnson makes a gubernatorial run in the fall.

SALEM, Ore. — Incumbent Ron Wyden has won Oregon's Democratic U.S. Senate primary.

The 73-year-old Wyden, who is seeking his fifth full term in the Senate, will be a heavy favorite in the liberal state in November.

Wyden chairs the powerful Senate Finance Committee. He was previously a longtime U.S. House member from Oregon.

RALEIGH, N.C. — First-term U.S. Rep. Madison Cawthorn has conceded to North Carolina state Sen. Chuck Edwards in the Republican congressional primary.

Luke Ball, a spokesperson for Cawthorn's campaign, told The Associated Press late Tuesday that Cawthorn had conceded. The AP hasn't called the race. A fast-food franchise owner, Edwards would advance to the November election against Democrat Jasmine Beach-Ferrara.

Cawthorn vaulted to national prominence after winning the seat in 2020 at age 25. A firebrand and vocal supporter of former President Donald Trump, he had made unforced political and personal errors that led top Republican leaders in North Carolina to turn against him. U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis said Cawthorn was an embarrassment to his constituents.

Cawthorn faced negative publicity for speeding and gun violations, as well as for calling Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy a "thug." And his initial decision to run for reelection elsewhere — only to switch back to the 11th District — didn't sit well with many locals.

RALEIGH, N.C. — LGBTQ activist and local elected official Jasmine Beach-Ferrara has won the Democratic nomination for a congressional seat in far western North Carolina.

Beach-Ferrara got the most votes among six candidates in the 11th Congressional District Democratic primary. She raised the most campaign money among all of the competitors.

She'll face the Republican nominee in November in a district that leans to the right. Seven Republicans

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were seeking to defeat first-term GOP Rep. Madison Cawthorn in their primary.

Beach-Ferrara is a minister, Buncombe County commissioner and executive director of the Campaign for Southern Equality in Asheville. Her group helped pushed for same-sex marriage in North Carolina a decade ago.

Beach-Ferrara got in the race 14 months ago, criticizing at the time Cawthorn for his speech at the "Stop the Steal" rally just before the Jan. 6, 2021 riot at the U.S. Capitol.

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Doug Mastriano has won the Republican nomination for Pennsylvania governor, overcoming an eleventh-hour push by the state's GOP political establishment to consolidate support around an alternative in the crowded primary.

Mastriano, who was endorsed by former President Donald Trump and has promoted his lies about the 2020 election, will face Democratic state Attorney General Josh Shapiro in the November general election. The incumbent, Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf, is term-limited.

Some state GOP leaders have warned that Mastriano is too extreme to defeat Shapiro in the presidential battleground state. Mastriano, a state senator and retired U.S. Army colonel, built a devoted online following by leading opposition to state-ordered shutdowns during the pandemic and taking a prominent role in the unsuccessful effort to overturn Trump's 2020 reelection defeat.

Mastriano's primary campaign spent almost nothing on television — ads attacking him were much more visible. Instead, he connected with far-right GOP voters through appearances on conservative broadcasters and by a tireless ground campaign that has left the state dotted with his yard signs.

Mastriano, 58, represents a Senate district based in conservative Franklin County on Pennsylvania's southern border with Maryland. In the campaign, he emphasized his military background and Christian beliefs and shunned traditional media while criticizing the party establishment. He overcame a number of better-funded rivals with stronger establishment connections, including former U.S. Rep. Lou Barletta, former U.S. Attorney Bill McSwain, businessman Dave White and others.

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Kentucky state Sen. Morgan McGarvey has won the Democratic nomination for the U.S. House seat being vacated by Democratic Rep. John Yarmuth.

McGarvey defeated Rep. Attica Scott on Tuesday in the primary for the 3rd Congressional District in Louisville.

McGarvey, the top-ranking Democrat in the Kentucky Senate, held a big fundraising advantage and an endorsement from Yarmuth, who touted his progressive credentials. McGarvey, an attorney, was also endorsed by several state lawmakers and labor unions.

Yarmuth, the influential chair of the House Budget Committee, announced last fall that he wouldn't run for another term in the seat he's held since 2007. Yarmuth played a role in passing high-profile national measures, including pandemic-relief legislation and the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

Louisville — the state's largest city — remains a Democratic stronghold while most of Kentucky is solidly Republican. Yarmuth is the only Kentucky Democrat to represent the state in Congress.

RALEIGH, N.C. — State Sen. Valerie Foushee has won the Democratic primary for a central North Carolina U.S. House district held almost continually for 35 years by retiring Rep. David Price.

Foushee, from Chapel Hill, got the most votes in the eight-candidate race and enough to avoid a runoff in the 4th Congressional District. Her rivals included former "American Idol" runner-up Clay Aiken and Durham County commissioner Nida Allam.

The 4th District is anchored by liberal electorates in Durham and Orange counties, so the Democratic primary winner should have a strong advantage for the general election.

Foushee, a former local school board member before joining the General Assembly, benefited in the primary from super PACs — including one associated with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee — supporting her candidacy.

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Price announced last October that he would not seek reelection this fall.

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Pennsylvania Lt. Gov. John Fetterman has won the state's Democratic primary for U.S. Senate just days after suffering a stroke.

The 52-year-old Fetterman defeated U.S. Rep. Conor Lamb and state Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta on Tuesday to advance to November's general election. He will face the winner of a hotly contested Republican primary that includes Dr. Mehmet Oz, ex-hedge fund CEO David McCormick and conservative activist Kathy Barnette.

Fetterman suffered a stroke Friday, injecting uncertainty into the Democratic primary race that for weeks had been shaping up as a runaway. He said he is on his way to a "full recovery" but will remain in the hospital for a while.

Fetterman, a former mayor of Braddock, is a progressive who has vowed to be a reliable vote for organized labor and liberal causes in Washington. Democrats see the seat being vacated by retiring Republican U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey as among their best pickup opportunities in the country.

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Pennsylvania Democrats have made their choice for governor official, handing the nomination to second-term state Attorney General Josh Shapiro.

Shapiro was unopposed for the Democratic nomination. The incumbent, Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf, is term-limited.

Shapiro, 48, from the Philadelphia suburb of Abington, spent the primary campaign season raising money and working to boost his pick for lieutenant governor ahead of what is expected to be a grueling fall campaign.

He is a former state lawmaker and county commissioner whose record as attorney general includes the production of a 2018 report into child sexual abuse among the state's Catholic churches.

Shapiro's advertising in recent weeks has included spots introducing him to voters, but he also has targeted state Sen. Doug Mastriano as the Republican gubernatorial candidate emerged from the large primary field as a front-runner.

RALEIGH, N.C. — U.S. Rep. Ted Budd has won a crowded Republican primary for retiring GOP Sen. Richard Burr's seat in North Carolina.

Budd's win is also a victory for former President Donald Trump, who elevated the little-known congressman with a surprise endorsement nearly a year ago. A super PAC affiliated with the conservative Club for Growth spent millions on ads supporting Budd and attacking his chief rival, former Gov. Pat McCrory, as too liberal.

McCrory was considered a moderate in the 14-candidate primary but is best known nationally for signing a "bathroom bill" targeting transgender people in 2016 that cost the state billions. Former U.S. Rep. Mark Walker also competed in the race.

Budd avoided a runoff by garnering more than 30% of the vote in the primary. He now advances to the November general election, where he'll take on Democrat Cheri Beasley, a former state Supreme Court chief justice. Beasley would be North Carolina's first Black senator if elected in the Republican-leaning state.

RALEIGH, N.C. — Cheri Beasley has won the North Carolina Democratic primary in the race to succeed retiring Republican Sen. Richard Burr.

The former state Supreme Court chief justice defeated 10 other Democrats on Tuesday. Beasley would be North Carolina's first Black U.S. senator if she wins in November.

Beasley became the Democratic front-runner as two key rivals bowed out last fall.

Beasley was elected to the state Court of Appeals in 2008. She was later appointed to the Supreme Court, won an election and was named chief justice by Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper in 2019. In 2020, she lost a statewide election to remain chief justice by just 400 votes.

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Charles Booker has won the Democratic primary election for the U.S. Senate in his bid to stop a decadeslong winning streak by Kentucky Republicans.

Booker defeated three opponents in the Democratic primary. He will challenge Republican U.S. Sen. Rand Paul in the November election.

The fall campaign will feature sharply contrasting agendas. Paul promotes limited government while Booker supports sweeping health care and anti-poverty programs.

The Bluegrass State hasn't elected a Democrat to the Senate since Wendell Ford in 1992.

Booker is back with his "hood to the holler" campaign agenda after narrowly losing the Democratic Senate primary two years ago.

He promotes social programs such as Medicare for All and a basic universal income. Booker says such proposals would uplift people across the Bluegrass State, including poor urban neighborhoods and struggling Appalachian towns.

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Republican U.S. Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky has won his party's nomination in his quest for a third term.

The libertarian-leaning Paul coasted to victory over five little-known challengers in the GOP Senate primary in Kentucky. Paul is a former presidential candidate who has gained a national voice in supporting limited government and a restrained foreign policy.

Kentucky hasn't elected a Democrat to the U.S. Senate since Wendell Ford in 1992.

S. Korea Blue House opens to public for 1st time in 74 years

By JUNG YOON KIM Associated Press

SEOUL (AP) — For many South Koreans, the former presidential palace in Seoul was a little-visited, heavily secured mountainside landmark. That's now changed as thousands have been allowed a look inside for the first time in 74 years.

As one of his first acts, the new South Korean leader has moved the presidential offices from the Blue House, named after its distinctive blue roof tiles, and opened its gates to the public, allowing a maximum of 39,000 people a day to visit.

The normally serious compound has been transformed into something like a fair, with excited crowds looking around and standing in long queues.

"I feel grateful that the Blue House has opened to the public," 61-year-old office worker Lee Sang Woon said recently during a tour with his family. "I am really happy to be here."

The Blue House has gone through multiple transformations over the years. Once the site of a royal garden, the Japanese built the official residence for their governors-general there during Tokyo's colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula. After Korea was liberated from Japan in 1945, the U.S. military commander occupied the place until it became South Korea's official presidential office and residence upon the country's foundation in 1948.

The Blue House opening is part of new South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's pledge to abandon the palace and establish his offices at the Defense Ministry compound in the Yongsan district, about 5 kilometers (3 miles) away.

Yoon said he chose the Defense Ministry compound because it's already equipped with security-related command facilities. He said he aims to build something similar to the White House in Washington that would let citizens have a closer look at the building over a fence. Yoon said the new offices will allow for better communication with the public.

His relocation plans, however, have faced complaints that they were rushed and unrealistic. Critics say a hasty movement of top government offices could undermine national security by concentrating too much power in one place, cost too much and violate the property rights of people living in the area.

His predecessor, Moon Jae-in, also expressed worries that Yoon made his decision before hearing enough

public opinion.

When Moon took office in 2017, he also pledged to move out in a bid to distance himself from his disgraced, jailed predecessor, Park Geun-hye, who grew up there as the daughter of a dictator. Moon eventually abandoned his plan, and Park was pardoned late last year.

Yoon, however, started his first day earlier this month as president in Yongsan, and the ex-presidential office was opened to the public that same day.

Choi Jun Chae, 60, who runs a mill at a traditional market near the Blue House, was sorry to see the presidential office leave his neighborhood but also hopeful that the relocation would boost local businesses by bringing in more tourists.

"Under the (former President) Lee Myung-bak administration, there were lots of protests ... so it was really hard to commute to this area. Cars couldn't move, so I had to walk," Choi said.

Thousands of people have gathered near the Blue House in the past for mass rallies and marches. Nearby residents said they suffered from noise and traffic congestion.

"I hope that protests decrease and more people visit the area," Yoo Sung-jong, head of a popular bakery in the neighborhood, said. "But (the president) was here for a long time, so it is a bit sad too."

While some people in the new presidential neighborhood expect an improvement because of the new offices, there are also worries.

"As for traffic issues, I can already see more people visiting here. It will be very crowded and complicated at first, but I think it will gradually get better," said Kim Jung-taek, a gallery owner near the new presidential offices.

Buffalo shooting leaves neighborhood without a grocery store

By PIA SARKAR and NOREEN NASIR Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Tops Friendly Market was more than a place to buy groceries. As the only supermarket for miles, it became a sort of community hub on Buffalo's East Side — where you chatted with neighbors and caught up on people's lives.

"It's where we go to buy bread and stay for 15, 20 minutes because ... you're going to find four or five people you know and have a couple conversations before you leave," said Buffalo City Councilman Ulysees O. Wingo, who represents the struggling Black neighborhood, where he grew up. "You just feel good because this is your store."

Now residents are grieving the deaths of 10 Black people at the hands of an 18-year-old white man who drove three hours to carry out a racist, livestreamed shooting rampage in the crowded supermarket on Saturday.

They're also grappling with being targeted in a place that has been so vital to the community. Before Tops opened on the East Side in 2003, residents had to travel to other communities to buy nutritious food or settle for snacks and higher-priced staples like milk and eggs from corner stores and gas stations.

The fact that there are no other options lays bare the racial and economic divide that existed in Buffalo long before the shooting, residents say.

"It's unconscionable to think that Tops is the only supermarket in that neighborhood, in my neighborhood," said retired Buffalo educator Theresa Harris-Tigg, who knew two of those killed.

While Tops is temporarily closed during the investigation, the community is working to make sure residents don't go without.

A makeshift food bank was set up not far from the supermarket. The Buffalo Community Fridge received enough monetary donations that it will distribute some funds to other local organizations. Tops also arranged for a bus to shuttle East Side residents to and from another of its Buffalo locations.

After decades of neglect and decline, only a handful of stores are along Jefferson Avenue, the East Side's once-thriving main drag, among them a Family Dollar, a deli, a liquor store and a couple of convenience stores, as well as a library and Black-run businesses like Golden Cup Coffee, Zawadi Books and The Challenger News.

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Jillian Hanesworth, 29, who was born and raised there, said construction of an expressway contributed to cutting off the neighborhood, with drivers passing underground without ever having to see it. At a recent rally, Hanesworth said she asked the crowd how many needed GPS to get there, and many of the white people raised their hands.

"A lot of people who talk about Buffalo don't live here," said Hanesworth, the city's poet laureate and director of leadership development at Open Buffalo, a nonprofit focused on social justice and community development.

Like many residents, she pauses to think when asked where the next-closest major grocery is located: None is within walking distance, and it takes three different buses to get to the Price Rite.

Before Tops opened on the East Side, residents, lawmakers and other advocates pushed for years for a grocery store in what had become a "food desert" after groceries and other stores closed in the neighborhood's Central Park Plaza, Wingo said.

Yvette Mack, 62, remembers when the streets weren't so empty. But when she was around 15 or 16, she noticed places going out of business.

"Everything started fading away as I got older," she said.

Eventually she moved downtown but came back to the East Side in 2020, happy that a supermarket had returned. Mack says she shopped at Tops daily, sometimes three or four times, to buy pop, meat and to play her numbers. She was there Saturday before the shooting.

Now, she's not sure she can go back once the store reopens, but hopes community conversations lead to more businesses on the East Side. Harris-Tigg, the retired educator, also hopes the shooting brings the city together to talk about disparities.

"It's time to do more. It's time for white folk to talk to white folk and really have honest conversations," she said.

Pastor James Giles, coordinator of the anti-violence group Buffalo Peacemakers, thinks that is happening. He juggled calls offering help from area churches and businesses, the Buffalo Bills, competing grocery stores and even the utility company after the shooting.

"I want us to be the City of Good Neighbors. And I do hope that we aspire to live up to that nickname," Giles said. "But I feel like we can't get there until and unless we tell the truth about the white supremacy and racism that is already present in our town."

Watchdog: US troop pullout was key factor in Afghan collapse

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A government watchdog says decisions by Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden to pull all U.S. troops out of Afghanistan were the key factors in the collapse of that nation's military.

The new report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR, mirrors assertions made by senior Pentagon and military leaders in the aftermath of the U.S. troop withdrawal that ended last August in the chaotic evacuation of Americans and other civilians from the embattled country. Military leaders have made it clear that their recommendation was to leave about 2,500 U.S. troops in the country, but that plan was not approved.

In February 2020, the Trump administration signed an agreement with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, in which the U.S. promised to fully withdraw its troops by May 2021. The Taliban committed to several conditions, including stopping attacks on American and coalition forces. The stated objective was to promote a peace negotiation between the Taliban and the Afghan government, but that diplomatic effort never gained traction before Biden took office in January 2022.

Just a few months later, Biden announced he would complete the U.S. military withdrawal. The announcement fueled the Taliban's campaign to retake the country, aided by the Afghans' widespread distrust of their government and entrenched corruption that led to low pay, lack of food and poor living conditions among the Afghan troops.

"Many Afghans thought the U.S.-Taliban agreement was an act of bad faith and a signal that the U.S.

was handing over Afghanistan to the enemy as it rushed to exit the country," the interim report said. "Its immediate effect was a dramatic loss in (Afghan troops') morale."

U.S. officials have said they were surprised by the quick collapse of the military and the government, prompting sharp congressional criticism of the intelligence community for failing to foresee it.

At a congressional hearing last week, senators questioned whether there is a need to reform how intelligence agencies assess a foreign military's will to fight. Lawmakers pointed to two key examples: U.S. intelligence believed that the Kabul government would hold on for months against the Taliban, and more recently believed that Ukraine's forces would quickly fall to Russia's invasion. Both were wrong.

Military and defense leaders have said that the Afghanistan collapse was built on years of missteps, as the U.S. struggled to find a successful way to train and equip Afghan forces.

In a blunt assessment of the war, Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Congress last fall that the result was years in the making.

"Outcomes in a war like this, an outcome that is a strategic failure — the enemy is in charge in Kabul, there's no way else to describe that — that is a cumulative effect of 20 years," Milley said, adding that lessons need to be learned, including whether the U.S. military made the Afghans overly dependent on American technology in a mistaken effort to make the Afghan army look like the American army.

Indeed, in the end, the new report said that the Afghans were still heavily dependent on U.S. air support for strikes and emergency evacuations, and also on U.S. contractors to maintain and repair aircraft and other systems.

But all agree that the Doha agreement was a lynchpin in the collapse.

"The signing of the Doha agreement had a really pernicious effect on the government of Afghanistan and on its military — psychological more than anything else, but we set a date-certain for when we were going to leave and when they could expect all assistance to end," Gen. Frank McKenzie told Congress last year.

McKenzie, who was then the top U.S. general in the Middle East and has since retired, argued to keep 2,500 U.S. troops there, as did Milley.

The Doha agreement, said the SIGAR report, led the Afghan population and its military to feel abandoned. And the Trump administration's decision to limit U.S. airstrikes against the Taliban stopped any progress the Afghans were making, and left them unable and eventually unwilling to hold territory, it said.

According to the report, a former U.S. commander in Afghanistan said the U.S. built the Afghan army to rely on contractor support. "Without it, it can't function. Game over," the commander told SIGAR. "When the contractors pulled out, it was like we pulled all the sticks out of the Jenga pile and expected it to stay up."

More broadly, the SIGAR report said that both the U.S. and Afghan governments "lacked the political will to dedicate the time and resources necessary to reconstruct an entire security sector in a war-torn and impoverished country."

Neither side, it said, "appeared to have the political commitment to doing what it would take to address the challenges." As a result, it said, the Afghan military couldn't operate independently and never really became a cohesive force.

Fall of Mariupol appears at hand; fighters leave steel plant

By OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI and CIARAN McQUILLAN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Mariupol appeared on the verge of falling to the Russians on Tuesday as Ukraine moved to abandon the steel plant where hundreds of its fighters had held out for months under relentless bombardment in the last bastion of resistance in the devastated city.

The capture of Mariupol would make it the biggest city to be taken by Moscow's forces and would give the Kremlin a badly needed victory, though the landscape has largely been reduced to rubble.

More than 260 Ukrainian fighters — some of them seriously wounded and taken out on stretchers — left the ruins of the Azovstal plant on Monday and turned themselves over to the Russian side in a deal negotiated by the warring parties. An additional seven buses carrying an unknown number of Ukrainian soldiers from the plant were seen arriving at a former penal colony Tuesday in the town of Olenivka, approximately 88 kilometers (55 miles) north of Mariupol.

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While Russia called it a surrender, the Ukrainians avoided that word and instead said the plant's garrison had successfully completed its mission to tie down Russian forces and was under new orders.

"To save their lives. Ukraine needs them. This is the main thing," Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said.

The Ukrainians expressed hope that the fighters would be exchanged for Russian prisoners of war. But Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the lower house of the Russian parliament, said without evidence that there were "war criminals" among the defenders and that they should not be exchanged but tried.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the country's military and intelligence officers are still working to extract its remaining troops from the sprawling steel mill. Officials have not said how many remain inside.

"The most influential international mediators are involved," he said.

The operation to abandon the steel plant and its labyrinth of tunnels and bunkers signaled the beginning of the end of a nearly three-month siege that turned Mariupol into a worldwide symbol of both defiance and suffering.

The Russian bombardment killed over 20,000 civilians, according to Ukraine, and left the remaining inhabitants — perhaps one-quarter of the southern port city's prewar population of 430,000 — with little food, water, heat or medicine.

During the siege, Russian forces launched lethal airstrikes on a maternity hospital and a theater where civilians had taken shelter. Close to 600 people may have been killed at the theater.

Gaining full control of Mariupol would give Russia an unbroken land bridge to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014, and deprive Ukraine of a vital port. It could also free up Russian forces to fight elsewhere in the Donbas, the eastern industrial heartland that the Kremlin is bent on capturing.

And it would give Russia a victory after repeated setbacks on the battlefield and the diplomatic front, beginning with the abortive attempt to storm Kyiv, the capital.

The Russian victory, though, is mostly a symbolic boost for Russian President Vladimir Putin than a military win, said retired French Vice Adm. Michel Olhagaray, a former head of France's center for higher military studies. He said: "factually, Mariupol had already fallen."

"Now Putin can claim a 'victory' in the Donbas," Olhagaray said.

But because the Azovstal defenders' "incredible resistance" tied down Russian troops, Ukraine can also claim that it came out on top.

"Both sides will be able take pride or boast about a victory — victories of different kinds," he said.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak likened the Ukrainian defenders to the vastly outnumbered Spartans who held out against Persian forces in ancient Greece. "83 days of Mariupol defense will go down in history as the Thermopylae of the XXI century," he tweeted.

The soldiers who left the plant were searched by Russian troops, loaded onto buses accompanied by Russian military vehicles, and taken to two towns controlled by Moscow-backed separatists. More than 50 of the fighters were seriously wounded, according to both sides.

It was impossible to confirm the total number of fighters brought to Olenivka or their legal status. While both Mariupol and Olenivka are officially part of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, Olenivka has been controlled by Russia-backed separatists since 2014 and forms part of the unrecognized "Donetsk People's Republic." Prior to the rebel takeover, penal colony No. 120 had been a high-security facility designed to hold prisoners sentenced for serious crimes.

Footage shot by The Associated Press shows the convoy was escorted by military vehicles bearing the pro-Kremlin "Z" sign, as Soviet flags fluttered from poles along the road. About two dozen Ukrainian fighters were seen in one of the buses.

Ukraine's human rights ombudsman said the Russian military was holding more than 3,000 civilians from Mariupol at another former penal colony near Olenivka. Ombudsman Lyudmyla Denisova said most civilians are held for a month, but those considered "particularly unreliable," including former soldiers and police, are held for two months. The detainees include about 30 volunteers who delivered humanitarian supplies to Mariupol while it was under siege, she said.

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Russia's main federal investigative body said it intends to interrogate the troops to "identify the nationalists" and determine whether they were involved in crimes against civilians. Also, Russia's top prosecutor asked the country's Supreme Court to designate Ukraine's Azov Regiment, whose members have been holding out at Azovstal, a terrorist organization. The regiment has links to the far right.

Russian state news agencies said the Russian parliament would take up a resolution Wednesday to prevent the exchange of Azov Regiment fighters.

A negotiated withdrawal could save lives on the Russian side, too, sparing its troops from what almost certainly would be a bloody battle to finish off the defenders inside the plant, which sprawls over 11 square kilometers (4 square miles).

The withdrawal could also work to Moscow's advantage by taking the world's attention off the suffering in Mariupol.

Russian and Ukrainian officials said peace talks were on hold.

Elsewhere across the Donbas, eight civilians were killed Tuesday in Russian attacks on 45 settlements in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces said. Donetsk regional Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said a Russian airstrike ignited a fire at a building materials plant. In the Luhansk region, Russian soldiers fired rockets on an evacuation bus carrying 36 civilians, but no one was hurt, Gov. Serhii Haidai said.

Zelenskyy said Russian forces also fired missiles at the western Lviv region and the Sumy and Chernihiv regions in the northeast. He said the border regions of Ukraine saw Russian "sabotage activity."

He said the assaults were "a test of our strength" and "kind of an attempt to compensate the Russian army for a series of failures in the east and south of our country."

Ukrainian guerrilla fighters also killed several high-ranking Russian officers in the southern city of Melitopol, the regional administration said on Telegram. Russian forces have occupied the city since early in the war.

The report could not immediately be confirmed. Throughout the war, Ukraine has claimed to have killed many Russian generals and other officers. A few of the deaths have been confirmed by Russia.

Russian officials in Belgorod and Kursk — two regions bordering Ukraine — accused Kyiv of shelling villages and civilian infrastructure along the frontier, the latest in a series of similar accusations over the recent weeks.

In other developments, the chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Court prosecutor, Karim Khan, said he sent a team of 42 investigators, forensic experts and support personnel to Ukraine to look into suspected war crimes. Ukraine has accused Russian forces of torturing and killing civilians.

Prosecutor: Church gunman had 'diabolical plan' to massacre

By AMY TAXIN and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP) — The man charged with opening fire on a Taiwanese church congregation of mainly elderly people in Southern California wanted to "execute in cold blood as many people in that room as possible," a prosecutor said Tuesday in announcing murder, attempted murder and other charges for the shooting that killed one person and wounded five.

Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer described David Wenwei Chou, 68, as a monster whose rampage was thwarted by the heroic actions of a doctor who charged at him, a pastor who hit Chou with a chair and several parishioners who tied him up until police arrived.

"This monster crafted a diabolical plan to lock the church doors with his victims inside in order to lead what he thought were innocent lambs to slaughter," Spitzer said. "But what he didn't realize was the parishioners at the church that day weren't lambs — they were lions and they fought back against the evil that tried to infiltrate their house of worship."

Spitzer said Chou was motivated by hatred for Taiwan, where he was born after his family was forced from mainland China when Communists prevailed in a civil war that ended in 1949. He apparently chose the church at random and didn't know anyone there, authorities said.

He drove from his home in Las Vegas on Saturday and arrived at the church the next day. Chou spent

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about an hour mingling with dozens of members of the congregation at a luncheon, which Spitzer said was Chou's way of gaining their trust so they wouldn't notice as he began carrying out his plot — chaining closed doors, super gluing locks and placing incendiary devices in several locations.

Chou's method amounted to "lying in wait," Spitzer said, a legal designation that can enhance penalties if he is convicted.

"This case is about the person concealing themselves in plain view," he said.

If Chou is convicted and the jury finds the enhancements to be true, he would face a sentence of either life in prison without possibility of parole or the death penalty, Spitzer said.

Chou's arraignment was continued to June 10 and he did not enter a plea during his first court appearance on Tuesday. He will continue to be held without bail. His public defender, Tania Vallejo, did not immediately return an email requesting comment.

Authorities have said Chou — a U.S. citizen who worked for years as a security guard — was motivated by hatred of Taiwanese people documented in handwritten notes that authorities found. Spitzer said he is considering hate crime charges but needs more time to investigate.

"While there's very strong evidence right now that this was motivated by hate, we want to make sure we have put together all the evidence that confirms that theory in the case," he said. Federal authorities are conducting their own hate crime investigation.

Tensions between China and Taiwan are at the highest in decades, with Beijing stepping up its military harassment by flying fighter jets toward the self-governing island. China has not ruled out force to reunify with Taiwan.

Chou had ties to a Las Vegas organization opposed to Taiwan's independence from China, according to Taiwanese media.

Baltimore Orellana, a former neighbor in Las Vegas, said Chou had been a friendly landlord but his life unraveled after his wife left him last year and returned to Taiwan. Spitzer said the suspect's wife is terminally ill.

Chou moved into a four-bedroom house in February. His roommate, Jordin Davis, said he was a kind and quiet man who often shared his food. Chou identified himself as a Christian and made a cross in black tape on the roof of his car but never talked about religion, Davis said.

The two had few conversations beyond small talk or chatting about Davis' dog, Zeus. Chou would "come home, go to sleep, take a shower, go to work and just repeat that routine all over again," Davis said.

Chou only spoke about Taiwan once, during a conversation less than two weeks ago, Davis said. Chou said he felt the Taiwanese government was corrupt and disliked how people on the island were sympathetic to the leadership.

"He made himself seem like he was basically a political refugee," Davis said.

Authorities searched the home on Monday, Davis said, and took a laptop. Officials have said they are investigating electronic records as part of the investigation.

Chou is accused firing at parishioners during a Sunday luncheon for members of Irvine Taiwanese Presbyterian Church, which worships at Geneva Presbyterian Church in the community of Laguna Woods.

He had two 9 mm handguns — legally purchased years ago in Las Vegas — and three bags, containing four Molotov-cocktail-type incendiary devices and extra ammunition, according to authorities. He opened fire and in the ensuing chaos Dr. John Cheng, 52, tackled him, allowing other parishioners to subdue him and tie him up with an extension cord, the authorities said.

Cheng died and five people were wounded, including an 86-year-old woman and four men ranging from 66 to 92, the sheriff's department said. Some already have been released from the hospital and others were in stable condition, according to the church's former pastor, Billy Chang.

The luncheon came after a morning service to welcome Chang, who had served the church for 20 years. Chang moved back to Taiwan two years ago and this was his first time back.

Chou entered the church sanctuary during services, giving his name to the receptionist as "Da-Wei Chou," and sat in the back reading one of the church-provided Chinese-language newspapers, according

to a church statement issued Tuesday.

He was wearing a black shirt with a word written on it in white that some believed said "Security," the statement said.

The service was followed by an adult Sunday school session that Chou apparently did not attend, but he showed up later at the lunch, the church said.

Near the end of the lunch, some parishioners took pictures with Chang and started leaving. They saw Chou beginning to lock the doors with iron chains but he allowed them to exit, the church statement said.

"When they asked him about his actions, he refused to answer. They assumed he was a security guard," the statement said.

One man forgot some things inside the church and wanted to return, but Chou didn't let him into the hall and another church member who was inside said he saw Chou nailing two exit doors shut, the statement said.

In a statement Tuesday recounting the shooting, Chang said he first thought Chou was using a toy gun as a prank when Chou opened fire. When Chang realized it was actual gunfire, he picked up a chair and threw it at Chou, who fell on the floor. Chang rushed at Chou and three other congregation members held Chou down and tied him up.

"It wasn't until then I noticed that Dr. Cheng was lying facedown to my front right with three bloody bullet wounds on the back, not moving," Chang said.

Authorities have said that Cheng had charged at Chou and disrupted the gunfire. Sheriff Don Barnes on Monday called Cheng's heroism "a meeting of good versus evil" that probably saved the lives "of upwards of dozens of people."

Cheng, who practiced sports medicine, had recently lost his father and took his mother to the luncheon. He was well known in the community and liked by his patients.

Dusty demise for NASA Mars lander in July; power dwindling

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A NASA spacecraft on Mars is headed for a dusty demise.

The Insight lander is losing power because of all the dust on its solar panels. NASA said Tuesday it will keep using the spacecraft's seismometer to register marsquakes until the power peters out, likely in July. Then flight controllers will monitor InSight until the end of this year, before calling everything off.

"There really hasn't been too much doom and gloom on the team. We're really still focused on operating the spacecraft," said Jet Propulsion Laboratory's Bruce Banerdt, the principal scientist.

Since landing on Mars in 2018, InSight has detected more than 1,300 marsquakes; the biggest one, a magnitude 5, occurred two weeks ago.

It will be NASA's second Mars lander lost to dust: A global dust storm took out Opportunity in 2018. In InSight's case, it's been a gradual gathering of dust, especially over the past year.

NASA's two other functioning spacecraft on the Martian surface — rovers Curiosity and Perseverance — are still going strong thanks to nuclear power. The space agency may rethink solar power in the future for Mars, said planetary science director Lori Glaze, or at least experiment with new panel-clearing tech or aim for the less-stormy seasons.

InSight currently is generating one-tenth of the power from the sun that it did upon arrival. Deputy project manager Kathya Zamora Garcia said the lander initially had enough power to run an electric oven for one hour and 40 minutes; now it's down to 10 minutes max.

The InSight team anticipated this much dust buildup, but hoped a gust wind of wind or dust devil might clean off the solar panels. That has yet to happen, despite several thousand whirlwinds coming close.

"None of them have quite hit us dead-on yet enough to blow the dust off the panels," Banerdt told reporters.

Another science instrument, dubbed the mole, was supposed to burrow 16 feet (5 meters) underground to measure the internal temperature of Mars. But the German digger never got deeper than a couple feet

(a half-meter) because of the unexpected composition of the red dirt, and it finally was declared dead at the beginning of last year.

N. Korea's Kim faces 'huge dilemma' on aid as virus surges

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

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — During more than a decade as North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Un has made "self-reliance" his governing lynchpin, shunning international help and striving instead for domestic strategies to fix his battered economy.

But as an illness suspected to be COVID-19 sickens hundreds of thousands of his people, Kim stands at a critical crossroad: Either swallow his pride and receive foreign help to fight the disease, or go it alone, enduring potential huge fatalities that may undermine his leadership.

"Kim Jong Un is in a dilemma, a really huge dilemma," said Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University's Institute for Far Eastern Studies in Seoul. "If he accepts U.S. or Western assistance, that can shake the self-reliance stance that he has steadfastly maintained and public confidence in him could be weakened."

Doing nothing, however, could be calamitous.

Since acknowledging a COVID-19 outbreak last week, North Korea has said "an explosively spreading fever" has killed 56 people and sickened about 1.5 million others. Outside observers suspect most of those cases were caused by the coronavirus.

Whatever North Korea's state-controlled media say about those who are sick, the outbreak is likely several times worse. North Korea lacks sufficient COVID-19 tests, and experts say it is significantly understating deaths to avoid possible public unrest that could hurt Kim politically.

Some observers say the stated death toll is low for a country where most of the 26 million people are unvaccinated and medicine is in short supply.

The North's apparent underreporting of deaths is meant to defend Kim's authority as he faces "the first and biggest crisis" of his decade of rule, Nam Sung-wook, a professor at Korea University, said.

The North Korean outbreak may be linked to a massive military parade in Pyongyang in late April that Kim organized to feature new weapons and loyal troops. The parade drew tens of thousands of soldiers and residents from around the country. After the event, Kim spent several days taking dozens of commemorative group photos with parade participants, all of whom were without masks. Most of the photos involved dozens or hundreds of people.

North Korea may be able to publicly hide the real number of deaths, but the country's strengthened restrictions on movement and quarantine rules could hurt its agricultural cultivation. Its economy is already battered by more than two years of pandemic-caused border shutdowns and other curbs.

North Korea is also worried about a shortage of medical supplies and food and daily necessities that have dried up in markets during the border closures, Yang Moo-jin, a professor at Seoul's University of North Korean Studies, said.

"They are experiencing another 'arduous march,'" Yang said, referring to the state's euphemism for a devastating famine in the 1990s that killed hundreds of thousands of people.

Kim has previously rebuffed millions of doses of vaccines offered by the U.N.-backed COVAX distribution program. After the North admitted to an outbreak, South Korean and China offered to send vaccines, medicine and other medical supplies to North Korea. The United States said it supports international aid efforts, though it has no current plans to share its vaccine supplies with the North.

Receiving outside help would put the North, which is always intensely proud, despite its poverty, in a difficult position. Kim had repeatedly touted his country as "impregnable" to the pandemic during the past two years. On Saturday, however, he said his country faces "a great upheaval" and that officials must study how China, his country's only major ally, and other nations have handled the pandemic.

Nam, the professor, said Kim will likely eventually want to receive Chinese aid shipments, but not from South Korea, the United States or COVAX.

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"Overcoming 'the great upheaval' with help from what North Korea calls American imperialists and from South Korea won't be tolerated because that goes against the dignity of its supreme leader," he said.

And North Korea will only accept Chinese aid if it's made in an informal, unpublicized manner, because it's "a matter of national pride," analyst Seo Yu-Seok at the Seoul-based Institute of North Korean Studies said. He said China will likely agree to this because it views aid shipments as a way to bolster ties with a partner as it confronts the West.

But Cho Han Bum, an analyst at Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification, said North Korea may look to South Korea for support because it questions the effectiveness of Chinese vaccines. He said South Korean shipments over the Korean land border would also be faster.

Experts are divided over what support North Korea most needs. Some call for sending 60 million to 70 million vaccine doses to inoculate its people multiple times. Others say it's too late to send such a large volume, and that North Korea needs fever reducers, test kits, masks and other daily necessities more.

Because preventing a virus spread across the country's unvaccinated population is already unrealistic, the aim should be providing a limited supply of vaccines to reduce deaths among high-risk groups, including the elderly and people with existing medical conditions, said Jung Jae-hun, a professor of preventive medicine at South Korea's Gachon University.

"Combating COVID-19 requires a comprehensive national ability, including the capacity for testing, treatment and inoculating people with vaccines," Jung said. "The problem can't be solved if the outside world helps with only one or two of those elements."

New Mexico fires prompt forest closures; governor seeks aid

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — New Mexico's governor said Tuesday that given the ferocity and swift movements of a record-setting wildfire burning in the northeastern part of the state, the damage will be significant with estimates of burned homes and other structures likely to range between 1,000 and 1,500.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham stressed that was only a rough estimate but likely not an exaggeration, saying it's clear to state and federal officials that there are many victims who have lost their homes and have had their businesses affected.

"And their families are suffering," the governor said during a news conference with Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Deanne Criswell and top state officials. "And that's my takeaway, the number of families that we have to help."

The fire has charred more than 468 square miles (1212 square kilometers) over the last 42 days to earn the distinction of being the largest fire in the arid state's recorded history. It's also the largest fire currently burning in the U.S.

Evacuation orders remain in place for some villages. Crews have been working on multiple fronts around the fire's massive perimeter to herd the flames around homes by building more dozer lines, clearing brush, raking pine needles and setting up sprinkler systems.

A fraction of an inch of precipitation fell over parts of the fire Monday, but a meteorologist assigned to the blaze said those places along the perimeter that needed it most missed out on the moisture.

Fire managers said during a briefing Tuesday evening that they were concerned about potentially erratic winds that could result from thunderstorms that will cross the area.

Lujan Grisham warned that many residents, depending on whether they live, should be ready for potential evacuations all summer given the likelihood for higher fire danger due to strong winds, warmer temperatures brought on by climate change and forecasts for little to no precipitation.

Officials with three of New Mexico's five national forests announced that closure orders will take effect Thursday, prohibiting public access because of active wildfires and extreme fire danger. All of the Santa Fe National Forest will be off limits along with the Cibola National Forest that borders Albuquerque and the Carson National Forest in far northern New Mexico.

Another fire burning in the Gila National Forest in southern New Mexico had grown more than 57 square

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miles (148 square kilometers) in one day, causing concern among state officials. Forest roads and trails in the area were closed.

Near the community of Los Alamos, crews made progress on keeping another fire within its containment lines. That blaze was behaving differently given that it was moving through the burn scar of a 2011 wildfire.

Federal officials acknowledged during Tuesday's briefing that recovery for northern New Mexico will be a long process and that the initial aid provided through emergency programs was not meant to make people whole but rather provide reimbursements for lodging, medical expenses and emergency home repairs. More than 2,000 people already have registered with FEMA.

Lujan Grisham recognized the emotions that many people are feeling after losing homes and property that have been in their families for generations — and in some cases for centuries. She said the goal of state and federal officials is to save all lives and as many properties as possible.

"We have lives to put back together," she said, adding that she was hopeful Congress would approve pending legislation that would allow additional damages to be paid to New Mexico residents and business owners.

Officials with the U.S. Forest Service announced Tuesday that a special team will begin assessing the cooler areas of the fire to determine what needs to be done to protect against post-fire events like erosion and flooding.

The team will use ground and aerial surveys, satellite imagery and computer models to evaluate conditions and recommend emergency treatments.

Similar work is underway in southern New Mexico and in northern Arizona where early-season wildfires burned homes in forested communities.

Nationwide, more than 2,140 square miles (5,542 square kilometers) have burned so far this year — the most at this point since 2018, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

US sues casino mogul Steve Wynn over relationship with China

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department sued longtime Las Vegas casino mogul Steve Wynn on Tuesday to compel him to register as a foreign agent because of lobbying work it says he performed at the behest of the Chinese government during the Trump administration.

The department said it had advised Wynn repeatedly over the last four years to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, or FARA, and is suing now because Wynn refused to do so.

Though the Justice Department has ramped up efforts to criminally prosecute people who don't register as foreign agents, officials described this case as the first lawsuit of its kind in more than three decades.

"Where a foreign government uses an American as its agent to influence policy decisions in the United States, FARA gives the American people a right to know," Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen, the head of the department's National Security Division, said in a statement.

A spokesperson for the department declined to comment on why the department had pursued a lawsuit rather than criminal charges.

Wynn's lawyers said Tuesday that they would contest the suit.

"Steve Wynn has never acted as an agent of the Chinese government and had no obligation to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act," said a statement from attorneys Reid Weingarten and Brian Heberlig. "We respectfully disagree with the Department of Justice's legal interpretation of FARA and look forward to proving our case in court."

The complaint alleges that Wynn, who stepped down from his company, Wynn Resorts, in 2018 after multiple women accused him of sexual misconduct, lobbied then-President Donald Trump and members of his administration for several months in 2017 to remove from the United States a Chinese national who had been charged with corruption in China and was seeking political asylum in America. The efforts to have the man removed from the U.S. were ultimately unsuccessful.

The lawsuit says the lobbying effort was done on behalf of senior Chinese government officials, includ-

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ing Sun Lijun, the then-vice minister of the Ministry of Public Security who sought Wynn's help in trying to get the Chinese national's new visa application denied, according to the complaint.

The lobbying effort also included conversations over dinner with Trump and by phone, and multiple visits to the White House for apparently unscheduled meetings with the issue was discussed.

The complaint says Wynn was motivated to protect his business interests in China. At the time, his company owned and operated casinos in the Chinese territory of Macau. The government in Macau had restricted the number of gaming tables and machines that could be operated at Wynn's casino, the Justice Department says, and he was scheduled to renegotiate licenses to operate casinos in 2019.

FARA, enacted in 1938 to unmask Nazi propaganda in the United States, requires people to disclose to the Justice Department when they advocate, lobby or perform public relations work in the U.S. on behalf of a foreign government or political entity.

The complaint alleges that Wynn was drawn into the lobbying effort by Elliott Broidy, a prominent fundraiser for Trump and the Republican Party who pleaded guilty in 2020 in an illicit lobbying campaign aimed at getting the Trump administration to drop an investigation into the multibillion-dollar looting of a Malaysian state investment fund and for his role in a covert lobbying effort that sought to arrange for the return of a Chinese dissident living in the U.S.

Broidy was later pardoned by Trump at the end of his administration.

The dissident was not referred to by name by prosecutors, but it matches the description of Guo Wen-gui. Guo left China in 2014 during an anti-corruption crackdown led by President Xi Jinping that ensnared people close to Guo, including a top intelligence official. Chinese authorities have accused Guo of rape, kidnapping, bribery and other offenses and have sought the return of the self-exiled tycoon.

State Dept pushing to see Griner; NBA Commissioner weighs in

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

The State Department said Tuesday that it still pushing to have regular contact with WNBA star Brittney Griner of the Phoenix Mercury, who has been detained in Russia for nearly three months.

A consular official was able to meet with Griner last week, when her pre-trial detention in Russia was extended for one month. Griner has been detained — wrongfully, U.S. officials have said — since February, after vape cartridges containing oil derived from cannabis were allegedly found in her luggage at an airport in Moscow.

The NBA also weighed in on the matter Tuesday, with Commissioner Adam Silver saying in a televised interview that he is working "side by side" with WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert to try and bring Griner home.

"That consular official came away with the impression that Brittney Griner is doing as well as might be expected under conditions that can only be described as exceedingly difficult," State Department spokesman Ned Price said in Washington. "But sporadic contact is not satisfactory. It also may not be consistent with the Vienna Convention to which Russia has subscribed."

The 31-year-old Griner — a two-time Olympic gold medalist for the U.S. — faces drug smuggling charges that carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. The Biden administration says Griner is being wrongfully detained. The WNBA and U.S. officials have worked toward her release, without visible progress.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken talked with Griner's wife in recent days, Price said.

"He conveyed once again the priority we attach to seeking the release of all Americans around the world, including Brittney Griner in the case of Russia, Paul Whelan in the case of Russia, those Americans who we consider to be wrongfully detained," Price said. "That has been a priority of Secretary Blinken since the earliest days of his tenure."

Whelan is a corporate security executive from Michigan who has been held in Russia. He was arrested in December 2018 while visiting for a friend's wedding and was later sentenced to 16 years in prison on espionage-related charges that his family says are bogus.

Silver, speaking to ESPN in a televised interview from Chicago prior to the NBA draft lottery on Tuesday

night, said his league was following the advice of experts when it did not take an aggressive approach during the early stages of Griner's detention.

"We've been in touch with the White House, the State Department, hostage negotiators, every level of government and also through the private sector as well," Silver said. "Our No. 1 priority is her health and safety and making sure that she gets out of Russia."

INDY DAY 1: Sato, Honda strong on opening day of practice

By JENNA FRYER AP Auto Racing Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Two-time Indianapolis 500 winner Takuma Sato shot to the top of the speed chart late Tuesday on the first day of preparations for "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing."

Sato went 228.939 mph (368.44 kph) around Indianapolis Motor Speedway to bump six-time IndyCar champion Scott Dixon as fastest on opening day. Dixon's lap of 227.768 mph had topped the scoring pylon for several hours until Sato's big run in a Dale Coyne Racing entry.

Jimmie Johnson was third fastest followed by teammate Marcus Ericsson. Chip Ganassi Racing drivers were second, third, fourth and sixth fastest (reigning IndyCar champion Alex Palou).

It was a strong day for Honda, which has been beaten by Chevrolet in four of five races so far this IndyCar season. Honda scored its first win of the season Saturday with Colton Herta on the road course at Indy.

Ten Honda drivers cracked the top 12 on Tuesday. The fastest Chevy driver was Rinus VeeKay of Ed Carpenter Racing in fourth. VeeKay was the fastest driver without a tow at 221.552 mph.

FIRST DAY SURPRISES

There are seven rookies in the 33-driver field and several impressed Tuesday.

David Malukas, the 20-year-old teammate to Sato at Coyne, was seventh fastest. Devlin DeFrancesco was 11th as the Andretti Autosport driver attempts to prove to his competitors he's settled down since a rocky race at Texas Motor Speedway in March. DeFrancesco was part of three incidents and penalized by IndyCar for his role in a three-car crash.

Not rookies but still strong in their first true competition of the season were 2013 winner Tony Kanaan in ninth, 2020 pole winner Marco Andretti in 10th and JR Hildebrand, who nearly won the race as a rookie in 2011, was 14th. None has raced an IndyCar event yet this season.

OFF THE TRACK

Indianapolis native Conor Daly settled into his home at the speedway by bringing an inflatable hot tub to the driver motorhome lot. Daly had been providing content from the hot tub since he set it up ahead of last weekend's road course race and was looking forward to two weeks of entertaining.

When Daly returned to his motorhome Tuesday, he discovered the hot tub had been tampered with and deemed it "no longer usable. At least for a long time."

"I would like to announce that my hot tub has been bamboozled," Daly posted on Twitter.

He'd removed the lid and discovered someone had filled the tub with Orbeez, which are superabsorbent polymers that resemble jellybeans and grow to 100 times their original size when submerged in water. The motorhome lot is notorious for pranks during the month at IMS and Daly was on the hunt for the perpetrator.

Nielsen list illustrates power of franchises for networks

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — With the broadcast television season winding down and most scripted series about to go into hibernation for the summer, it's instructive to look at the power of network franchises.

Of the Nielsen company's 20 most popular scripted series on the air last week, 12 were parts of franchises — the three "Chicago" dramas on NBC, the three "FBI" shows on CBS, for example. That's without counting the CBS comedy "Young Sheldon," even though it began life as a spinoff to "The Big Bang Theory."

At a time viewers are inundated with choices, particularly on the streaming services, broadcast networks have taken the power of these ideas to heart, knowing that their viewers will be attracted to familiar con-

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cepts and storylines.

That's primed to continue, since ABC announced on Tuesday they will be trying to create a new franchise out of their drama "The Rookie," with a spinoff due in the fall.

CBS won the week in prime time television, averaging 4.2 million viewers. NBC had 3.2 million viewers, ABC had 2.8 million, Fox had 2 million, Univision had 1.4 million, Ion Television had 950,000 and Telemundo had 830,000.

Behind NBA playoff games, TNT led the cable networks with a 3.36 million viewer average. Fox News Channel had 2.2 million, ESPN had 2.06 million, MSNBC had 956,000 and HGTV had 927,000.

ABC's "World News Tonight" won the evening news ratings race with an average of 7.5 million viewers. NBC's "Nightly News" averaged 6.2 million viewers and the "CBS Evening News" had 4.5 million.

For the week of May 9-15, the top 20 prime-time shows, their networks and viewerships:

1. "60 Minutes," CBS, 7.44 million.
2. "FBI," CBS, 7.16 million.
3. "Young Sheldon," CBS, 6.93 million.
4. "The Equalizer," CBS, 6.84 million.
5. "Chicago Fire," NBC, 6.61 million.
6. "Chicago Med," NBC, 6.31 million.
7. NBA Playoffs: Dallas at Phoenix (Sunday), Turner, 6.29 million.
8. NBA Playoffs: Memphis at Golden State (Friday), ESPN, 6.28 million.
9. "FBI: International," CBS, 5.82 million.
10. "American Idol," ABC, 5.57 million.
11. "Chicago PD," NBC, 5.534 million.
12. NBA Playoffs: Boston at Milwaukee (Friday), ESPN, 5.529 million.
13. "The Neighborhood," CBS, 5.48 million.
14. "Survivor," CBS, 5.35 million.
15. "NCIS: Los Angeles," CBS, 5.33 million.
16. "911," Fox, 5.3 million.
17. "FBI: Most Wanted," CBS, 5.28 million.
18. NBA Playoffs: Memphis at Golden State (Monday), Turner, 5.28 million.
19. "Bob Hearts Abishola," CBS, 5.14 million.
20. NBA Playoffs: Boston at Milwaukee (Monday), Turner, 5.03 million.

Officials: Georgia execution won't be carried out Tuesday

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

JACKSON, Ga. (AP) — A Georgia man who killed an 8-year-old girl and raped her 10-year-old friend 46 years ago will not be executed as scheduled Tuesday night, state officials said as a temporary stay put in place by a judge remained in effect.

A judge on Monday issued the order pausing the state's plans to administer a lethal injection a day later to Virgil Delano Presnell Jr. The state on Tuesday appealed that order to the Georgia Supreme Court, which still hadn't ruled as the 7 p.m. execution time approached.

Department of Corrections spokeswoman Joan Heath said just before 6:30 p.m. that the attorney general's office had advised prison officials that the execution would not be carried out Tuesday.

The execution warrant is valid for a seven-day window that began at noon Tuesday and runs through noon on May 24. In the event the state Supreme Court reverses the lower court's order, the execution could be rescheduled within that window without state officials having to seek a new warrant.

Presnell, 68, abducted and attacked the two girls as they walked home from an elementary school in the Atlanta suburb of Cobb County in May 1976. He was convicted in August 1976 on charges including malice murder, kidnapping and rape and was sentenced to death. His death sentence was overturned in 1992 but was reinstated in March 1999.

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A lawyer for Presnell has argued that he is "profoundly brain damaged," likely as a result of his mother's heavy drinking during pregnancy, and didn't understand the harm he was causing the girls. He is deeply sorry for the pain he caused and wishes he could "take it all back," attorney Monet Brewerton-Palmer wrote in a clemency application submitted to the State Board of Pardons and Paroles.

The five-member board, which is the only authority in Georgia that can commute a death sentence, on Monday declined to grant Presnell clemency.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Shermela Williams on Monday issued an order temporarily blocking the state from proceeding with the execution while a legal challenge is pending. A lawsuit filed on behalf of Presnell's lawyers argues that by setting Presnell's execution date, the state violated an agreement that effectively put executions on hold during the coronavirus pandemic and established conditions under which they could resume.

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of the Federal Defender Program, which represents Presnell. It says that under an agreement between Attorney General Chris Carr's office and lawyers who represent people on death row, the state would halt almost all executions until six months after three conditions had been met: the expiration of the state's COVID-19 judicial emergency, the resumption of normal visitation at state prisons and the availability of a COVID vaccine "to all members of the public."

While the judicial emergency ended in June, prisons are still using a modified visitation policy and children under 5 still can't get vaccinated, Presnell's lawyers argue.

The attorney general's office gave Presnell attorney Monet Brewerton-Palmer two days' notice that it intended to seek an execution warrant for him, the lawsuit says. The warrant was issued April 27, leaving Brewerton-Palmer just three weeks to prepare for a clemency hearing that was held Monday.

The clemency hearing lasted only an hour and Brewerton-Palmer did not call any witnesses or experts to testify or submit the dozens of witnesses she would otherwise have provided, Mike Caplan, a lawyer representing the Federal Defender Program said in court Monday. Her clemency case was "completely gutted" because she didn't have time to adequately prepare, Caplan said.

Presnell abducted the two girls as they walked home along a wooded trail from school. He drove them to a secluded wooded area, had them undress and raped the older girl, according to evidence at trial outlined in a Georgia Supreme Court ruling. The younger girl tried to run, but Presnell caught her and drowned her in a creek, the ruling says.

He locked the 10-year-old girl in the trunk of his car and then left her in a wooded area when he got a flat tire, saying he'd return. She ran to a nearby gas station and described Presnell and his car to police.

Officers found him changing his tire at his apartment complex. He denied everything at first but later led police to the 8-year-old girl's body and confessed, the ruling says.

Presnell would have been the first person executed by Georgia this year and the seventh nationwide.

Global pollution kills 9 million people a year, study finds

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

A new study blames pollution of all types for 9 million deaths a year globally, with the death toll attributed to dirty air from cars, trucks and industry rising 55% since 2000.

That increase is offset by fewer pollution deaths from primitive indoor stoves and water contaminated with human and animal waste, so overall pollution deaths in 2019 are about the same as 2015.

The United States is the only fully industrialized country in the top 10 nations for total pollution deaths, ranking 7th with 142,883 deaths blamed on pollution in 2019, sandwiched between Bangladesh and Ethiopia, according to a new study in the journal *The Lancet Planetary Health*. Tuesday's pre-pandemic study is based on calculations derived from the Global Burden of Disease database and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation in Seattle. India and China lead the world in pollution deaths with nearly 2.4 million and almost 2.2 million deaths a year, but the two nations also have the world's largest populations.

When deaths are put on a per population rate, the United States ranks 31st from the bottom at 43.6 pollution deaths per 100,000. Chad and the Central African Republic rank the highest with rates about

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300 pollution deaths per 100,000, more than half of them due to tainted water, while Brunei, Qatar and Iceland have the lowest pollution death rates ranging from 15 to 23. The global average is 117 pollution deaths per 100,000 people.

Pollution kills about the same number of people a year around the world as cigarette smoking and second-hand smoke combined, the study said.

"9 million deaths is a lot of deaths," said Philip Landrigan, director of the Global Public Health Program and Global Pollution Observatory at Boston College.

"The bad news is that it's not decreasing," Landrigan said. "We're making gains in the easy stuff and we're seeing the more difficult stuff, which is the ambient (outdoor industrial) air pollution and the chemical pollution, still going up."

It doesn't have to be this way, researchers said.

"They are preventable deaths. Each and every one of them is a death that is unnecessary," said Dr. Lynn Goldman, dean of the George Washington University School of Public Health, who wasn't part of the study. She said the calculations made sense and if anything, was so conservative about what it attributed to pollution, that the real death toll is likely higher.

The certificates for these deaths don't say pollution. They list heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, other lung issues and diabetes that are "tightly correlated" with pollution by numerous epidemiological studies, Landrigan said. To then put these together with actual deaths, researchers look at the number of deaths by cause, exposure to pollution weighted for various factors, and then complicated exposure response calculations derived by large epidemiological studies based on thousands of people over decades of study, he said. It's the same way scientists can say cigarettes cause cancer and heart disease deaths.

"That cannon of information constitutes causality," Landrigan said. "That's how we do it."

Five outside experts in public health and air pollution, including Goldman, told The Associated Press the study follows mainstream scientific thought. Dr. Renee Salas, an emergency room doctor and Harvard professor who wasn't part of the study, said "the American Heart Association determined over a decade ago that exposure to (tiny pollution particles) like that generated from the burning of fossil fuels is causal for heart disease and death."

"While people focus on decreasing their blood pressure and cholesterol, few recognize that the removal of air pollution is an important prescription to improve their heart health," Salas said.

Three-quarters of the overall pollution deaths came from air pollution and the overwhelming part of that is "a combination of pollution from stationary sources like coal-fired power plants and steel mills on one hand and mobile sources like cars, trucks and buses. And it's just a big global problem," said Landrigan, a public health physician. "And it's getting worse around the world as countries develop and cities grow."

In New Delhi, India, air pollution peaks in the winter months and last year the city saw just two days when the air wasn't considered polluted. It was the first time in four years that the city experienced a clean air day during the winter months.

That air pollution remains the leading cause of death in South Asia reconfirms what is already known, but the increase in these deaths means that toxic emissions from vehicles and energy generation is increasing, said Anumita Roychowdhury, a director at the advocacy group Centre for Science and Environment in New Delhi.

"This data is a reminder of what is going wrong but also that it is an opportunity to fix it," Roychowdhury said.

Pollution deaths are soaring in the poorest areas, experts said.

"This problem is worst in areas of the world where population is most dense (e.g. Asia) and where financial and government resources to address the pollution problem are limited and stretched thin to address a host of challenges including health care availability and diet as well as pollution," said Dan Greenbaum, president of the Health Effects Institute, who wasn't part of the study.

In 2000, industrial air pollution killed about 2.9 million people a year globally. By 2015 it was up to 4.2 million and in 2019 it was 4.5 million, the study said. Toss in household air pollution, mostly from inefficient primitive stoves, and air pollution killed 6.7 million people in 2019, the study found.

Lead pollution — some from lead additive which has been banned from gasoline in every country in the world and also from old paint, recycling batteries and other manufacturing — kills 900,000 people a year, while water pollution is responsible for 1.4 million deaths a year. Occupational health pollution adds another 870,000 deaths, the study said.

In the United States, about 20,000 people a year die from lead pollution-induced hypertension, heart disease and kidney disease, mostly as occupational hazards, Landrigan said. Lead and asbestos are America's big chemical occupational hazards, and they kill about 65,000 people a year from pollution, he said. The study said the number of air pollution deaths in the United States in 2019 was 60,229, far more than deaths on American roads, which hit a 16-year peak of nearly 43,000 last year.

Modern types of pollution are rising in most countries, especially developing ones, but fell from 2000 to 2019 in the United States, the European Union and Ethiopia. Ethiopia's numbers can't quite be explained and may be a reporting issue, said study co-author Richard Fuller, founder of the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution and president of Pure Earth, a non-profit that works on pollution clean-up programs in about a dozen countries.

The study authors came up with eight recommendations to reduce pollution deaths, highlighting the need for better monitoring, better reporting and stronger government systems regulating industry and cars.

"We absolutely know how to solve each one of those problems," Fuller said. "What's missing is political will."

Judge suspends Michigan's dormant 1931 abortion ban

By ED WHITE Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — A judge on Tuesday suspended Michigan's dormant, decades-old ban on abortion, which means the procedure would not be illegal in the state even if the U.S. Supreme Court overturns its historic Roe v. Wade decision.

The Michigan law, which makes it a crime to assist in an abortion, has been on the books since 1931. But it has had no practical effect since 1973 when the Supreme Court legalized abortion nationwide.

The court, however, could throw out that landmark ruling before July, leaving abortion issues for each state to decide.

Court of Claims Judge Elizabeth Gleicher granted a preliminary injunction sought by Planned Parenthood of Michigan, saying the abortion ban likely violates the Michigan Constitution.

"After 50 years of legal abortion in Michigan, there can be no doubt but that the right of personal autonomy and bodily integrity enjoyed by our citizens includes the right of a woman, in consultation with her physician, to terminate a pregnancy," the judge said.

"From a constitutional standpoint, the right to obtain a safe medical treatment is indistinguishable from the right of a patient to refuse treatment," Gleicher said.

Gleicher said other Michigan laws regulating abortion will remain in full effect. The injunction will stay in place while the judge makes a final decision in the months ahead or a higher court intervenes.

"No matter what happens at the Supreme Court, abortion access remains protected in Michigan while our full case proceeds to block this antiquated law once and for all," said Dr. Sarah Wallett of Planned Parenthood, which offers abortion services.

The attorney general's office typically defends against challenges to Michigan laws. But Attorney General Dana Nessel, a Democrat, said she would not defend or enforce the abortion ban. She, too, believes it is unconstitutional and welcomed the injunction.

John Bursch, an attorney representing Right to Life of Michigan and the Michigan Catholic Conference, was sharply critical, saying Gleicher had written an "extraordinary, unprecedented decision." The groups weren't formal parties in the case but were allowed to file opposing briefs.

"This is the kind of mess that you end up (with) in the court system when the state's chief executive and its attorney general refuse to uphold and defend the law that has been in place since 1931," Bursch said. "They may not like it. But no one has the ability to unilaterally ignore, change, encourage the invalidation of Michigan law. They should be working through the democratic process just like anyone else."

It's possible that the Republican-controlled Legislature could file an appeal. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, meanwhile, called the ruling a victory.

"It will help ensure that Michigan remains a place where women have freedom and control over their own bodies," the Democrat said.

In May, Politico published a leaked draft of a U.S. Supreme Court opinion, which showed the court could be poised to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

The lawsuit by Planned Parenthood is one of two legal challenges in Michigan. Whitmer, who supports abortion rights, has asked the Michigan Supreme Court to bypass lower courts and declare the 91-year-old law unconstitutional. That effort is pending.

Both lawsuits preceded the leak of the draft opinion. But they're examples of the scramble across the country as states prepare for the fall of *Roe*.

Gleicher, who also serves as chief judge on the Michigan Court of Appeals, informed the parties in April that she makes annual contributions to Planned Parenthood and, as a lawyer, represented the organization in a 1997 abortion case. She said she didn't feel it should disqualify her.

"She should have recused herself," Bursch said.

Nearly 43,000 people died on US roads last year, agency says

By TOM KRISHER and HOPE YEN Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Nearly 43,000 people were killed on U.S. roads last year, the highest number in 16 years as Americans returned to the roads after the coronavirus pandemic forced many to stay at home.

The 10.5% jump over 2020 numbers was the largest percentage increase since the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration began its fatality data collection system in 1975. Exacerbating the problem was a persistence of risky driving behaviors during the pandemic, such as speeding and less frequent use of seat belts, as people began to venture out more in 2021 for out-of-state and other road trips, analysts said.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said America faces a crisis on its roads. The safety administration urged state and local governments, drivers and safety advocates to join in an effort to reverse the rising death trend.

"Our nation has taken a dangerous and deadly step backwards in traffic safety and impaired driving," said MADD National President Alex Otte, who urged strong public-private efforts akin to the seat belt and air bag public safety campaigns of the 1990s to stem reckless driving. "More families and more communities are feeling the crushing magnitude of this crisis on our roads."

Preliminary figures released Tuesday by the agency show that 42,915 people died in traffic crashes last year, up from 38,824 in 2020. Final figures will be released in the fall.

Forty-four states as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico had increases in traffic deaths in 2021 compared to the previous year, led by Texas, California and Florida. Posting declines were Wyoming, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Maryland and Maine. Rhode Island's figures were unchanged.

Americans drove about 325 billion more miles last year, 11.2% higher than in 2020, which contributed to the increase.

Nearly 118 people died in U.S. traffic crashes every day last year, according to the agency's figures. The Governors Highway Safety Association, a group of state traffic safety officials, blamed the increase on dangerous behavior such as speeding, driving while impaired by alcohol and drugs, and distracted driving, as well as "roads designed for speed instead of safety."

The combination, the group said, "has wiped out a decade and a half of progress in reducing traffic crashes, injuries and deaths."

Deaths last year increased in almost all types of crashes, NHTSA reported. Crashes occurring during out of state travel jumped 15%, compared to 2020, many of them on rural interstate roads or access roads off city highways. Fatalities in urban areas and deaths in multi-vehicle crashes each rose 16%. Pedestrian deaths were up 13%.

By age, fatalities among drivers 65 and older rose 14%, reversing a declining trend seen among them in

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2020. Deaths also surged among middle-aged drivers, led by those 35-to-44, which rose 15%. Kids under age 16 saw traffic fatalities increase 6%.

By vehicle, fatalities involving at least one big truck were up 13%, while motorcycle deaths were up 9% and deaths of bicyclists rose 5%. Fatalities involving speeding drivers and deaths in alcohol-related crashes each were up 5%.

Government estimates show the rate of road deaths declined slightly from 2020. Last year there were 1.33 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, compared with 1.34 in 2020. The fatality rate rose in the first quarter of last year, but declined the rest of the year, NHTSA said.

Traffic deaths began to spike in 2020. NHTSA has blamed reckless driving behavior for increases during the pandemic, citing behavioral research showing that speeding and traveling without a seat belt have been higher. Before 2020, the number of fatalities had fallen for three straight years.

Deputy NHTSA Administrator Steven Cliff, the Biden administration's nominee to run the agency, said the roadway crisis is urgent and preventable. "We will redouble our safety efforts, and we need everyone — state and local governments, safety advocates, automakers and drivers, to join us," Cliff said in a statement. "All of our lives depend on it."

Buttigieg pointed to a national strategy unveiled earlier this year aimed at reversing the trend. He said earlier that over the next two years his department will provide federal guidance as well as billions in grants under President Joe Biden's new infrastructure law to spur states and localities to lower speed limits and embrace safer road design such as dedicated bike and bus lanes, better lighting and crosswalks. The strategy also urges the use of speed cameras, which the department says could provide more equitable enforcement than police traffic stops.

In Tuesday's statement, the department said it opened up its first round of applications for the program, which will spend up to \$6 billion over five years on local efforts to cut crashes and deaths.

The Transportation Department is moving in the right direction to stem the increase in deaths, but it will take years for many of the steps to work, said Michael Brooks, acting executive director of the nonprofit Center for Auto Safety.

NHTSA, for instance, has regulations pending to require electronic automatic emergency braking and pedestrian detection systems on all new light vehicles, and to require automatic emergency braking on heavy trucks, he said. Automatic emergency braking can slow or stop a vehicle if there's an object in its path.

The agency also is requiring automakers to install systems that alert rear-seat passengers if their safety belts aren't buckled.

"Responding to this is difficult," Brooks said. "It takes a lot of work on a lot of different strategies to address these issues. They've got a lot of work on their hands."

In Buffalo, Biden mourns victims, says 'evil will not win'

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

BUFFALO (AP) — President Joe Biden mourned with Buffalo's grieving families on Tuesday, then exhorted the nation to reject what he angrily labeled the poison of white supremacy. He said the nation must "reject the lie" of the racist "replacement theory" espoused by the shooter who killed 10 Black people in Buffalo.

Speaking to victims' families, local officials and first responders, Biden declared that America's diversity is its strength, and warned that the nation must not be distorted by a "hateful minority." He promised to "expose" those who promote hateful ideology.

"The American experiment in democracy is in danger like it hasn't been in my lifetime," Biden said. "It's in danger this hour. Hate and fear being given too much oxygen by those who pretend to love America but who don't understand America."

He pledged, "In America, evil will not win, I promise you. Hate will not prevail, white supremacy will not have the last word."

Back at the White House Tuesday evening, Biden laid the blame for the Buffalo incident and others not

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just on "wackos" who commit hate crimes, but also those who "fill their brains with false ideas."

As long as he is president, he said, "I'm going to fight like hell and we're going to expose everybody."

Biden's emotional remarks came after he and first lady Jill Biden paid their respects at a makeshift memorial of blossoms, candles and messages of condolence outside the Tops supermarket, where on Saturday a young man armed with an assault rifle targeted Black people in the deadliest racist attack in the U.S. since Biden took office.

"Jill and I have come to stand with you, and to the families, we have come to grieve with you," Biden said.

He added: "Now's the time for people of all races, from every background, to speak up as a majority ... and reject white supremacy."

Replacement theory is a racist ideology, which has moved from white nationalist circles to mainstream, that alleges white people and their influence are being intentionally "replaced" by people of color through immigration and higher birth rates.

In Buffalo, the president was confronting anew the forces of hatred he frequently says called him back to seek the White House.

"It's important for him to show up for the families and the community and express his condolences," said Derrick Johnson, the president of the NAACP. "But we're more concerned with preventing this from happening in the future."

It's unclear how Biden can do that. Proposals for new gun restrictions have repeatedly been blocked by Republicans, and racist rhetoric espoused on the fringes of the nation's politics has only grown louder.

Asked about gun legislation, Biden said at the airport, "It's going to be very difficult. ... I'm not going to give up trying."

Wayne Jones, whose mother Celestine Chaney was killed in the attack, said he appreciated Biden taking time to meet with the families, but he was not optimistic anything will be accomplished in Washington without an end to partisan division.

Money is a big problem, too, he said. "A lot of money is being made from gun purchases -- who needs an AR-15?"

Biden's condemnation of white supremacy is a message he has delivered several times since he became the first president to specifically address it in an inaugural speech. However, such beliefs remain an entrenched threat at a time when his administration has been focused on addressing the pandemic, inflation and the war in Ukraine.

In his remarks Tuesday, Biden paid tribute to each of the 10 people who lost their lives, describing them as beacons of their community and deeply committed to family.

Three more people were wounded. Nearly all the victims were Black, including all of those who died.

The shooter's writings echoed those of the white supremacists who marched with torches in 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia, a scene that Biden said inspired his decision to run against President Donald Trump in 2020 and that drove him to join what he calls the "battle for the soul of America."

In Buffalo, Payton Gendron, 18, was arrested at the supermarket and charged with murder. He has pleaded not guilty. His lawyers declined to comment Tuesday.

Before the shooting, Gendron is reported to have posted online a screed overflowing with racism and antisemitism. The writer of the document described himself as a supporter of Dylann Roof, who killed nine Black parishioners at a church in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015, and Brenton Tarrant, who targeted mosques in New Zealand in 2019.

Investigators are looking at Gendron's connection to what's known as the "great replacement" theory."

"I condemn those who spread the lie for power, political gain and for profit," Biden said, stopping short of naming those he believes responsible for perpetuating it.

The replacement claims are often interwoven with antisemitism, with Jews identified as the culprits. During the 2017 "Unite the Right" march in Charlottesville, white supremacists chanted "Jews will not replace us."

In the years since Charlottesville, replacement theory has moved from the online fringe to mainstream right-wing politics. A third of U.S. adults believe there is "a group of people in this country who are trying to replace native-born Americans with immigrants who agree with their political views," according to a poll

conducted in December by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Tucker Carlson, the Fox News host, is one prominent TV person who accuses Democrats of orchestrating mass migration to consolidate their power.

"The country is being stolen from American citizens," he said in August of last year. He repeated that theme a month later, saying that "this policy is called the great replacement, the replacement of legacy Americans with more obedient people from faraway countries."

Carlson's show routinely receives the highest ratings in cable news, and he responded to the furor Monday night by accusing liberals of trying to silence their opponents.

"So because a mentally ill teenager murdered strangers, you cannot be allowed to express your political beliefs out loud," he said.

His commentary reflects how this conspiratorial view of immigration has spread through the Republican Party ahead of this year's midterm elections, which will determine control of Congress.

Facebook advertisements posted last year by the campaign committee of Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., said Democrats want a "PERMANENT ELECTION INSURRECTION" by granting amnesty to illegal immigrants. The plan would "overthrow our current electorate and create a permanent liberal majority in Washington."

Alex DeGrasse, a senior adviser to Stefanik's campaign, said Monday she "has never advocated for any racist position or made a racist statement." He criticized "sickening and false reporting" about her advertisements.

Stefanik is the third-ranking leader of the House Republican caucus, replacing Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., who angered the party with her denunciations of Trump after the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

Cheney, in a tweet on Monday, said the caucus' leadership "has enabled white nationalism, white supremacy, and anti-Semitism. History has taught us that what begins with words ends in far worse."

Zelenskyy opens Cannes Film Festival, links war and cinema

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — The 75th Cannes Film Festival kicked off Tuesday with an eye turned to Russia's war in Ukraine and a live satellite video address from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who called on a new generation of filmmakers to confront dictators as Charlie Chaplin satirized Adolf Hitler.

After tributes and musical numbers, Zelenskyy was streamed live for the formally attired audience who had gathered for the premiere of Michel Hazanavicius' zombie comedy "Final Cut."

Zelenskyy, dressed in his signature olive green shirt, drew a thunderous standing ovation and spoke at length about the connection between cinema and reality. He referenced films like Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now" and Charlie Chaplin's "The Great Dictator" as not unlike Ukraine's present circumstances.

Zelenskyy quoted Chaplin's final speech in "The Great Dictator," which was released in 1940, in the early days of World War II: "The hate of men will pass, and dictators die, and the power they took from the people will return to the people."

"We need a new Chaplin who will demonstrate that the cinema of our time is not silent," implored Zelenskyy.

The Ukrainian president pushed filmmakers not to "stay silent" while hundreds continue to die in Ukraine, the largest war in Europe since WWII, and show that cinema "is always on the side of freedom."

The war is to be a regular presence in Cannes, where the festival has barred Russians with ties to the government from attending this year. Set to screen are several films from prominent Ukrainian filmmakers, including Sergei Loznitsa's documentary "The Natural History of Destruction." Footage shot by Lithuanian filmmaker Mantas Kvedaravičius before he was killed in Mariupol in April will also be shown by his fiancée, Hanna Bilobrova.

Even "Final Cut," the latest film from "The Artist" filmmaker Hazanavicius, was renamed from its original title, "Z," after Ukrainian protesters noted that the letter Z to some symbolizes support for Russia's war in Ukraine.

Formally attired stars including Eva Longoria, Julianne Moore, Bérénice Bejo and "No Time to Die" star

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Lashana Lynch were among those who streamed down Cannes' famous red carpet Tuesday. More star-studded premieres — "Top Gun: Maverick!" "Elvis!" — await over the next 12 days, during which 21 films will vie for the festival's prestigious top award, the Palme d'Or.

But Tuesday's opening and the carefully choreographed red-carpet parade leading up the steps to the Grand Théâtre Lumière again restored one of the movies' grandest pageants after two years of pandemic that have challenged the exalted stature Cannes annually showers on cinema.

"Dear friends, let's come out of this dark together," said opening ceremony host Virginie Efira.

After last year requiring regular COVID-19 testing and masks in theaters — and no kisses on the red carpet — Cannes has largely done away with pandemic protocols. Masks are recommended inside but are rarely worn.

Cannes presented an honorary Palme d'Or to Forest Whitaker, who received a standing ovation. Whitaker, who won best actor at Cannes 34 years ago for his performance as Charlie Parker in Clint Eastwood's "Bird," said that while ascending the steps to the Palais des Festivals on Tuesday, he could still hear chants of "Clint! Clint!" ringing in his ears. Eastwood is one of few others who have been awarded an honorary Palme.

On Tuesday, Cannes also unveiled the jury that will award the Palme d'Or. French actor Vincent Lindon is leading a jury that includes Deepika Padukone, Rebecca Hall, Asghar Farhadi, Trinca, Ladj Ly, Noomi Rapace, Jeff Nichols and Joachim Trier.

Questions of gender equality have long surrounded the Cannes Film Festival, where no more than five female filmmakers have ever been a part of the Palme competition lineup and only two women directors have won it. On Monday, Fremaux defended the festival, arguing that it selects films purely on the basis of quality. Hall, who last year made her directorial debut with the film "Passing," was asked about her opinion on Cannes' record.

"I believe that it is a work in progress. I mean for the whole film industry, not just the Cannes Film Festival," replied Hall. "The way of dealing with these things needs to be addressed on a grassroots level as well. It's not just the festivals or public-facing situations. It's about all the minutiae of what goes into the industry at large."

Farhadi, the Oscar-winning Iranian director, also spoke for the first time about an ongoing plagiarism suit regarding his previous film, "A Hero," which won the Grand Prix in Cannes last year. A former film student of Farhadi's, Azadeh Masihzadeh, has accused him of stealing the idea of the film from a 2018 documentary she made in a workshop taught by Farhadi.

Speaking at length, Farhadi said "A Hero" was not based on the documentary.

"It was based on a current event so this documentary and this film are based on an event that happened two years prior to the workshop," said Farhadi. "When an event takes place and is covered by the press, then it becomes public knowledge and you can do what you like about the event. You can write a story or make a film about the event. You can look up the information on this event. 'A Hero' is just one interpretation of this event."

At the tradition-upholding Cannes, the world's largest and most glitzy temple to film, cinema, controversy and glamour swirl together in a 12-day spectacle of red carpet premieres and rampant movie deal-making up and down the Croisette. Theatrical release is a requirement of any film vying for the Palme, which has prevented streaming services from playing a big role at Cannes.

But this year, one new festival partner — TikTok — has raised some eyebrows. The festival is hosting TikTok creators from around the world and holding a separate contest for best (very short) videos created during the festival. Thierry Fremaux, artistic director of Cannes, granted TikTok wasn't the future of cinema.

"The cinema remains the final art," said Fremaux.

Buffalo suspect: Lonely, isolated -- with a troubling sign

By BERNARD CONDON and MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

CONKLIN, N.Y. (AP) — In the waning days of Payton Gendron's COVID-altered senior year at Susquehanna

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Valley High School, he logged on to a virtual learning program in economics class that asked: "What do you plan to do when you retire?"

"Murder-suicide," Gendron typed.

Despite his protests that it was all a joke, the bespectacled 17-year-old who had long been viewed by classmates as a loner with good grades was questioned by state police over the possible threat and then taken into custody and to a hospital for a psychiatric evaluation under a state mental health law.

But a day and a half later, he was released. And two weeks after that, he was allowed to participate in graduation festivities, including riding in the senior parade, where he was photographed atop a convertible driven by his father and festooned with yellow-and-blue balloons and signs reading, "Congratulations" and "Payton Gendron."

That account of Gendron's brush with the law last spring, according to authorities and other people familiar with what happened, emphasized the same point school officials made in a message to parents at the time: An investigation found no specific, credible threat against the school or any individual from that sign of trouble.

Now, the episode is seen as a missed opportunity to uncover a sinister side of Gendron that he kept hidden from those around him. He became radicalized online, bought a Bushmaster rifle, traveled three hours to Buffalo and went on what authorities say was a racist, livestreamed shooting rampage Saturday in a supermarket that killed 10 Black people.

Gendron, now 18, was arraigned on a state murder charge over the weekend and a court-appointed public defender entered a not guilty plea on his behalf. He remained jailed under suicide watch as federal prosecutors contemplate hate-crime charges.

Even as the FBI swarmed the home where Gendron lived with his parents and two younger brothers, neighbors and classmates in this mostly white community of 5,000 near the New York-Pennsylvania line say they saw no sign of the kind of racist rhetoric seen in a 180-page online diatribe, purportedly written by Gendron.

In it, he describes in minute detail how he researched ZIP codes with the highest concentrations of Black people, surveilled the Tops supermarket in Buffalo, and carried out the assault to terrorize all nonwhite, non-Christian people into leaving the country.

Classmates described Gendron as a quiet, studious boy who got high marks but seemed out of place in recent years, turning to online streaming games, a fascination with guns and ways to grab attention from his peers.

When school partially opened again in 2020 after COVID-19-related shutdowns, Gendron showed up covered head to toe in a hazmat suit. Classmate Matthew Casado said he didn't think the stunt — he called it "a harmless joke" — went down well with other students.

"Most people didn't associate with him," he said. "They didn't want to be known as friends with a kid who was socially awkward and nerdy."

Gendron excelled in sciences, once earning top marks in a state chemistry competition. But he was known for keeping to himself and not talking much. And when he did talk, it was about isolation, rejection and desperation.

"He talked about how he didn't like school because he didn't have friends. He would say he was lonely," said Casado, who graduated with Gendron last year.

At one point last winter, Gendron's mother called Casado's mother with a request: Please have Matthew call Payton because he had no friends and needed to talk.

The two boys ended up going to flea markets together, watching YouTube videos and shooting guns on nearby state land over the next few months. Casado said that he had never heard his friend talk of anything violent.

"I didn't think he would hurt a fly," he said.

Some neighbors had a similar view, seeing the family as happy and prosperous, with both Paul Gendron and his wife, Pamela, holding stable jobs as civil engineers with the New York state Department of Transportation, earning nearly \$200,000 combined, according to online records.

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Dozens of their Facebook posts over the years show the parents and their three boys — often dressed in matching outfits — enjoying amusement park vacations, going on boat trips and camping trips, shooting laser tag guns and opening presents on Christmas morning.

Carl Lobdell, a family friend who first met Gendron on a camping vacation a dozen years ago, said he was shocked that Payton was identified as the suspect in the mass shooting. "When I heard about the shooting ... I just cried," he said.

One of Gendron's lawyers, Daniel DuBois, said Tuesday he had no comment. The family did not respond to a request for comment over the weekend. No one answered the door Monday at the family home, surrounded by a neat, spacious lawn. Near the front door was a tiny right hand pressed in concrete with a heart symbol and the words, "PAYTON 2008."

One parent of a Susquehanna Valley High student said she was furious that the student who was investigated for making the threat last year — whom she later discovered was Gendron — was still allowed to participate in all graduation activities. The woman asked not to be identified because she feared harassment.

According to a recording of a conference call of federal and local law enforcement officials Monday that was obtained by The Associated Press, Buffalo Police Commissioner Joseph Gramaglia said Gendron's comments he made in school in June 2021 were "generalized statements" and not targeted at anyone in particular or at a specific location, which is why no criminal charges were filed. He said the state police "did everything within the confines of the law."

Gendron enrolled at Broome County Community College and later dropped out. The school wouldn't say why. And according to online writings attributed to him, he began planning his assault on the Buffalo supermarket beginning at least in November, saying he was inculcated into his racist views online.

"I was never diagnosed with a mental disability or disorder, and I believe to be perfectly sane," according to one passage.

A new, 589-page document of online diary postings emerged Monday that authorities have attributed to Gendron. In it, he describes his preparations for the Buffalo supermarket shooting in detail, writing at one point that he considered attacking a predominantly Black elementary school instead. He also recounted how he chased down a neighborhood cat, stabbed and decapitated it with a hatchet, took a picture and then buried it in the backyard.

Some of its passages also aligned with the account AP's sources gave of his high school threat investigation.

"Another bad experience was when I had to go to a hospital's ER because I said the words 'murder/suicide' to an online paper in economics class," said one entry. "I got out of it because I stuck with the story that I was getting out of class and I just stupidly wrote that down. That is the reason I believe I am still able to purchase guns."

"It was not a joke, I wrote that down because that's what I was planning to do."

Powell: Fed to keep hiking rates until it controls inflation

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chair Jerome Powell on Tuesday underscored the Federal Reserve's determination to keep raising interest rates until there is clear evidence inflation is steadily falling — a high-stakes effort that carries the risk of causing an eventual recession.

The Fed's increases in its benchmark short-term rate typically lead, in turn, to higher borrowing costs for consumers and businesses, including for mortgages, auto loans and credit cards.

"What we need to see is inflation coming down in a clear and convincing way," Powell said in remarks to a Wall Street Journal conference. "And we're going to keep pushing until we see that."

The Fed chair, who was confirmed last week by the Senate to a second four-year term, suggested that the Fed would consider raising rates even faster if price increases fail to moderate.

"What we need to see," Powell said, "is clear and convincing evidence that inflation pressures are abating and inflation is coming down. And if we don't see that, then we'll have to consider moving more aggres-

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sively. If we do see that, then we can consider moving to a slower pace.”

And he said the Fed “wouldn’t hesitate” to push its benchmark rate to a point that would slow the economy if needed. While it is unclear what level that might be, Fed officials peg it at about 2.5% to 3%, roughly triple its current setting.

Powell’s remarks Tuesday followed other statements he has made that have indicated the Fed is implementing a series of rate hikes that could amount to the fastest tightening of credit in more than 30 years.

At a meeting earlier this month, the Fed raised its key rate by a half-point — double the usual increase — for the first time since 2000, to a range of 0.75% to 1%. And at a news conference after the meeting, Powell suggested that Fed officials would continue to raise its rate by a half-point, at both its June and July meetings.

The Fed chair appeared unconcerned Tuesday about the stock market’s sharp decline over the past six weeks. Those declines partly reflect concern on Wall Street that the Fed’s efforts to rein in inflation, which has reached 40-year highs, could weaken the economy so much as to trigger a recession. Stock prices also often fall as interest rates rise, increasing the return from bonds.

When asked if the Fed’s rate hikes could disrupt financial markets, without necessarily bringing down inflation, Powell responded, “I don’t see that happening.”

The interest rate, or yield, on the two-year Treasury note has risen steadily since the start of the year, which Powell pointed to as a sign that Wall Street expects the Fed to keep tightening credit. Such expectations should help slow borrowing and spending, and cool the economy.

“It’s been good to see financial markets reacting in advance” of upcoming rate hikes, Powell said. “That’s what we need.”

The S&P 500, a broad market index, has tumbled about 15% from its January peak. That’s just short of the 20% decline that marks a bear market. Yet many economists say Powell is unlikely to let market disruptions change the Fed’s path, given that inflation has soared to such high levels and is causing hardships for millions of households.

“The markets are orderly, they’re functioning,” Powell said. “There are some volatile days and volatile markets, but so far, I see us as getting through this fairly well.”

The Fed chair also suggested, more explicitly than before, that the central bank’s efforts to bring down inflation may result in some people losing their jobs, pushing up the unemployment rate.

Powell said the Fed’s goal was to cool off consumer and business spending and bring it more into line with the restrained supply of goods and workers. That, in turn, should tame inflation.

The Fed hopes to accomplish that, Powell said, while keeping the job market strong. But that doesn’t mean the unemployment rate would necessarily stay at 3.6%, where it is now, he said.

“You’d still have quite a strong labor market if unemployment were to move up a few ticks,” he said.

Helen Mirren, Harrison Ford to star in ‘Yellowstone’ prequel

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Helen Mirren and Harrison Ford will bring their combined star power to the newest addition to the “Yellowstone” TV franchise.

The pair will headline a Paramount+ series with the working title “1932,” which joins “1883” as part of what the streaming service called the “origin story” of its “Yellowstone” drama series.

Mirren and Ford are among the growing ranks of film actors who have added small-screen projects to their resume as streaming services vie for subscribers with prestige projects and big names.

The latest chapter in the Dutton family saga will be set in an early 20th century and a Mountain West beset by drought and the Great Depression, among other ills, Paramount+ said. It will debut in December.

Writer-producer Sheridan Taylor is the creative force behind the hit franchise, which began with the contemporary drama “Yellowstone,” led by Kevin Costner. The “1883” prequel stars Faith Hill and Tim McGraw.

Mirren is among today’s most highly regarded actors, a four-time Oscar nominee who won for her portrayal of Britain’s Queen Elizabeth II in 2006’s “The Queen.”

Ford’s extensive blockbuster movie credits include the “Star Wars” and “Raiders of the Lost Ark” fran-

chises. He was an Oscar nominee for the 1985 film "Witness."

Buffalo shooter's previous threat raises red-flag questions

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST, MICHAEL TARM and JAMES ANDERSON Associated Press

Less than a year before he was accused of opening fire and killing 10 people in a racist attack at a Buffalo, New York, grocery store, 18-year-old Payton Gendron was investigated for making a threatening statement at his high school.

New York has a "red flag" law designed to keep firearms away from people who could harm themselves or others, but Gendron was still able to legally buy an AR-15-style rifle.

The "general" threat at Susquehanna Valley High School last June, when he was 17, resulted in state police being called and a mental health evaluation at a hospital. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul told Buffalo radio station WKSE-FM that Gendron had talked about murder and suicide when a teacher asked about his plans after school ended, and it was quickly reported but the threat wasn't considered specific enough to do more. No request was made to remove any firearms from the suspect, New York state police said Monday. Gendron has pleaded not guilty and his attorney has declined to comment.

The revelations are raising new questions about why the law wasn't invoked and how the effectiveness of "red flag laws" passed in 19 states and the District of Columbia can differ based on how they're implemented.

WHAT ARE RED FLAG LAWS?

Typically, red-flag laws, also known as extreme risk protection orders, are intended to temporarily remove guns from people with potentially violent behavior, usually up to a year. In many cases, family members or law enforcement must petition the court for an order, though New York is a rare state in which educators can also start the process.

Removing weapons for that long, however, requires a hearing in which prosecutors must convince a judge that the person poses a risk. Most states also block the person from buying more guns during that period.

Red-flag laws are often adopted after tragedies. Florida did so after the 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland that killed 17 students. Law enforcement officials had received numerous complaints about the 19-year-old gunman's threatening statements.

"This is actually one of the very few policies we have available where it actually builds on this vanishingly small point of common ground between public health people who want to stop gun violence and gun owners and the gun industry," said Jeffrey Swanson, a professor in psychiatry at Duke University who researches gun violence.

But, Swanson added: "The issue is it's so easy for people to get guns anyway. ... It's not a one-thing problem, and there's not one solution to it either."

WHAT DOES NEW YORK'S FLAG LAW SAY?

The 2019 law allows family members, prosecutors, police and school officials to ask courts to order the seizure of guns from someone who poses a danger to themselves or others. The subject of the court action is also prohibited from buying guns while the order is in effect.

An explanation of the law on a state government website says the law made New York the first state to give teachers and school administrators the ability "to prevent school shootings by pursuing court intervention."

The online description, crafted before the Buffalo shooting, expresses optimism about the law's impact, saying it would both safeguard gun rights "while ensuring that tragedies, like the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, are not repeated."

The question is why one wasn't used in Gendron's case.

WHAT'S THE PROCESS OF REQUESTING AN ORDER?

Someone seeking an order files a simple, two-page application with the primary county court. It's considered a civil case, with no criminal charge or penalties involved.

A judge decides whether to issue a temporary order on the same day the application is filed, according

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to a New York courts website. If it is issued, police take the guns.

A hearing, involving witnesses and evidence, is set within 10 days. If the judge decides to issue a permanent order, it would remain in effect for a year. The petitioner can ask for an extension.

HAS THERE BEEN PUSHBACK TO THE LEGISLATION?

Some opponents of the red-flag legislation in New York feared it could lead to false accusations by family members or others with a grudge against a gun owner.

Legislators in New York and elsewhere were aware of the potential legal pitfalls and drafted laws in such a way to avoid constitutional challenges, said Eric Ruben, a fellow at the Brennan Center for Justice who also teaches law at SMU Dedman School of Law in Dallas.

Among the safeguards in New York, he said, is a relatively high standard of proof — clear and convincing evidence — required to secure a final, yearlong order, he said. The law also includes penalties for false applications.

DO RED-FLAG LAWS SAVE LIVES?

The law, Ruben said, “poses significant obstacles” for someone under a red-flag order wanting to buy firearms because they are entered in the background check system as long as the order is in effect. “It wouldn’t stop someone from illegal purchases, however.”

Experts in red-flag laws contend that the laws have undoubtedly saved lives, be it in cases involving planned mass shootings, suicides or potentially deadly domestic violence cases.

“Certainly, red-flag laws are more than anything else aimed at trying to stop mass shootings,” said Dave Kopel, research director at the Colorado-based libertarian think tank Independence Institute, which supports gun rights. “But they can be and should be used for more than just that. A handful of killings or suicides is horrific enough.”

Swanson worked on a study that estimated Connecticut prevented one suicide for every 10 to 20 people subjected to gun seizures. A 2019 California study found it was used in mass-shooting threats 21 times. Maryland authorities granted more than 300 petitions in the three months after its law went into effect, including at least four threats of school violence.

That research shows the laws have worked, said Allison Anderman, senior counsel for the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, though absolute proof can be tough.

“It’s very hard to prove a law is effective based on things not happening,” she said. “We still have a problem where we have more guns than people in this country, and this patchwork system of laws and our overall weak laws.”

Tiger Woods says he’s all about majors, a Mickelson rebuke

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — Tiger Woods is all about majors and legacy, a point he drove home Tuesday in a sharp rebuke of Phil Mickelson and his support of a Saudi-funded golf venture that led to Lefty not defending his title at the PGA Championship.

Even as Woods resumes a remarkable return from a car crash 15 months ago that nearly led to his right leg being amputated, the PGA Championship cannot escape the absence of Mickelson and speculation about who might sign up for Greg Norman’s new Saudi-backed golf series.

Woods said he has not tried to reach out to Mickelson since his self-imposed hiatus from golf three months ago, mainly because of their difference of opinion on how golf should be run.

“I understand different viewpoints, but I believe in legacies. I believe in major championships. I believe in big events, comparisons to historical figures of the past,” Woods said.

“There’s plenty of money out here,” he said. “The tour is growing. But it’s just like any other sport — it’s like tennis — you have to go out there and earn it. You’ve got to go out there and play for it. We have opportunity to go ahead and do it. It’s just not guaranteed up front.”

That was a reference to some of the Public Investment Fund money out of Saudi Arabia being offered to players to join Norman and his LIV Golf Investments. According to various reports out of Britain, some top players were being offered more than the \$120 million Woods has made in career PGA Tour earnings.

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Mickelson showed his hand in two interviews published in February. He accused the PGA Tour of "obnoxious greed" while playing in Saudi Arabia, and more incendiary comments followed when Alan Shipnuck published an excerpt of his unauthorized biography on Mickelson.

Mickelson said the Saudis were "scary mother-(expletives) to get involved with," and then dismissed its human rights atrocities — such as the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi — by saying it was worth it to gain leverage to make changes on the PGA Tour.

He also said he didn't care if the Saudi league failed, as long as the tour made changes he wanted.

Mickelson decided last Friday he would not play at Southern Hills, missing out on a chance to be celebrated for his historic win last year at Kiawah Island when at age 50 he became golf's oldest major champion.

He is the first PGA champion not to defend since Woods was recovering from knee surgery in 2008 and skipped Oakland Hills.

"It's always disappointing when the defending champion is not here," Woods said. "Phil has said some things that I think a lot of us who are committed to the tour and committed to the legacy of the tour have pushed back against, and he's taken some personal time, and we all understand that. But I think that some of his views on how the tour could be run, should be run, been a lot of disagreement there."

"He's just taking his time and we all wish him the best when he comes back."

Woods, meanwhile, is back and more optimistic than he was a month ago at the Masters. He said those who are close to him were thrilled to see him walk all 72 holes at Augusta National, his first time walking while competing since the Feb. 23, 2021, accident in Los Angeles that shattered bones in his right leg and ankle.

All he could think about the day after was a bad putting week that led to a 78-78 weekend.

"I did not see it that way Monday," he said. "I was a little ticked I didn't putt well, and felt like I was hitting it good enough and I wish I had the stamina."

He said the Monday after the Masters was a tough day of recovery, and then he went right back to work trying to gain strength and endurance.

"It's better than the last time I played a tournament, which is good," Woods said.

He is the defending PGA champion at Southern Hills, having won by two shots in 2007 for his 13th of what is now 15 majors. And he barely recognized the course after a restoration project that brought back a few meandering creeks and returned the edges of the putting surfaces so they funnel shots away from the green.

The bigger challenge is the players he is trying to beat, which make up the strongest field of the majors. Woods is 46, and Mickelson showed a year ago that age is only a number. However, Mickelson had been playing a full schedule all along. Woods, with his injuries, would appear to be limited to the four majors this year at most.

One help is the nature of the walk. Augusta National is among the toughest in golf. Southern Hills features a sharp drop from the first and 10th tees and tough climb at the end of each nine. Otherwise, it's a relatively gentle stroll.

"Figured the first mountain you climbed was Everest. That's the steepest golf course you're going to play and that was the first one you climbed, and climbed it," Woods said. "It's going to get flatter and better."

He still struggles on certain days. He said it's never as easy as it might look.

"But I feel like I'm doing better," he said. "I'm having more days which are better, more positive."

Republican Senate candidates promote 'replacement' theory

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Politics Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Several mainstream Republican Senate candidates are drawing on the "great replacement" conspiracy theory once confined to the far-right fringes of U.S. politics to court voters this campaign season, promoting the baseless notion that there is a plot to diminish the influence of white people in America.

In some cases, the comments have gone largely overlooked given the hard-line immigration rhetoric that

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has become commonplace among conservatives during the Trump era. But a weekend mass shooting in Buffalo, New York, that may have been inspired by the racist theory is drawing new attention to the GOP's growing embrace of white nationalist creed.

Three weeks ago in Arizona, Republican Senate candidate Blake Masters accused Democrats of trying to flood the nation with millions of immigrants "to change the demographics of our country." A few days later in Missouri, Senate hopeful Eric Schmitt, the state attorney general, said Democrats were "fundamentally trying to change this country through illegal immigration." And in Ohio, Republican Senate nominee JD Vance accused Democrats of trying to "transform the electorate."

Warning of an immigrant "invasion," Vance told Fox News Channel that Democrats "have decided that they can't win reelection in 2022 unless they bring a large number of new voters to replace the voters that are already here."

Some of the Republican campaigns denied that their statements amounted to replacement theory, but among the experts, there is little question.

Five experts on hate speech who reviewed the Republican candidates' comments confirmed that they promote the baseless racist theory, even though the Republicans don't mention race directly.

"Comments like these demonstrate two essential features of great replacement conspiracy theory. They predict racial doomsday, saying that it is all part of an orchestrated master plan. It's only the language that has been softened," said American University professor Brian Hughes, associate director of the Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab. "The basic story they tell is the same one we see in white supremacist chats across the internet: An enemy is orchestrating doom for white Americans by plotting to fill the country with nonwhites."

Indeed, a mainstream interpretation of replacement theory in the U.S. baselessly suggests Democrats are encouraging immigration from Latin America so more like-minded potential voters replace "traditional" Americans, says Mark Pitcavage, senior research fellow at the Anti-Defamation League Center on Extremism.

Such a message has become a central component of the modern-day conservative movement's appeal to voters. Former President Donald Trump repeatedly warned of an immigrant invasion on the southern border, and he was slow to condemn white supremacy throughout his presidency.

Shortly after taking office, Trump shared a social media post from someone with the username WhiteGenocideTM.

Replacement theory is being investigated as a motivating factor in the Buffalo supermarket shooting, which killed 10 Black people and left three other people injured.

President Joe Biden condemned replacement theory directly — and those who spread it, although he did not name names — after meeting with victims' families Tuesday in Buffalo.

"Hate, that through the media, and politics, the internet, has radicalized angry, alienated, lost and isolated individuals into falsely believing that they will be replaced — that's the word, 'replaced' — by the others, by people who don't look like them," Biden charged.

"I call on all Americans to reject the lie," the Democratic president continued. "And I condemn those who spread the lie for power, political gain and for profit."

Rep. Liz Cheney, who was ousted from House Republican leadership for her outspoken criticism of Trump, blamed her own party on Monday for enabling "white nationalism, white supremacy and anti-Semitism."

"History has taught us that what begins with words ends in far worse," Cheney tweeted. GOP "leaders must renounce and reject these views and those who hold them."

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell was asked three times Tuesday, in different ways, about replacement theory -- if leaders have to speak out about it or believe it themselves -- and declined to fully respond.

"Well, certainly the episode of this horrible episode in Buffalo is a result of a completely deranged young man who ought to suffer severe as possible penalty under the law," he said.

Asked about Biden's call to reject the lie, McConnell shifted responsibility more broadly: "Racism of any sort is abhorrent in America and ought to be stood up to everybody, both Republicans, Democrats, all Americans."

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

Fox News' most popular personality, Tucker Carlson, has been one of the theory's biggest proponents. A study of five years' worth of Carlson's show by The New York Times found 400 instances in which he talked about Democratic politicians and others seeking to force demographic change through immigration.

But so far, at least, less attention has been focused on Republican candidates preparing to face voters in the coming weeks and months who have, in some cases, promoted the theory again and again.

In interviews with conservative national television and radio over the last year, Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson has called replacement theory "the Democrat grand plan."

"I've got to believe they want to change the makeup of the electorate," he told a Minneapolis-area conservative radio host last month.

Johnson condemned the "horrific" Buffalo attack on social media, while campaign spokesperson Alexa Henning called it a "lie" that he supports replacement theory.

"The senator has spoken extensively on the inhumanity of the Biden administration's open border policies, not some racist 'theory,'" she said.

In Missouri, at least two Republicans vying for the Republican Senate nomination have made similar statements more recently.

While touring the U.S.-Mexico border last month, former Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens said that immigrants crossing over illegally were "flooding into all of the 50 states, and that includes Missouri."

"What's also very clear is that Joe Biden's policies are an assault on the entire idea of America," Greitens said. "He's wiping out the distinction between citizens and non-citizens, and he's doing it on purpose."

A week later, Schmitt, Greitens' Republican rival, claimed that tens of millions of immigrants were crossing into the U.S. illegally because of Biden's policies. He said Democrats were intentionally encouraging illegal immigration for their own benefit.

"They are fundamentally trying to change this country through their illegal immigration policy," Schmitt told conservative commentator Glenn Beck.

On Tuesday, Schmitt criticized reporting that he had promoted replacement theory as "woke 'journalism.'"

"I'll never stop fighting for border security or calling out the Democrats' radical agenda. We've got a country to save," he tweeted.

Greitens ignored questions about replacement theory but called the mass shooting in Buffalo "truly horrific" in a written statement.

In Arizona, Masters has warned throughout his campaign of a Democratic plot to transform the U.S. electorate.

"Obviously, the Democrats, they hope to just change the demographics of our country," Masters told the Patriot Edition podcast late last month. "They hope to import an entirely new electorate. Then they call you a racist and a bigot."

In Ohio, Vance has already secured a place on the November ballot. He won Trump's endorsement after embracing many of the former president's hardline views, including those related to immigration.

Vance told Breitbart News last month that Democrats are trying to give 15 million immigrants in the country illegally the right to vote. "They are trying to transform the electorate of this country," he said.

He made similar comments days later at a town hall in Portsmouth, Ohio.

Shortly after Biden was inaugurated, congressional Democrats proposed legislation that would include an eight-year pathway to citizenship for the estimated 11 million people living in the country illegally, but the proposal has stalled and has little chance of clearing Congress.

"Now of course," Vance said, "you're accused of being a racist to even point this out. We get to decide, the people get to decide how we do or do not transform the country."

The Vance campaign declined to comment.

Ruined Mariupol now forever etched in Ukraine's history

By The Associated Press undefined

First chaos and anarchy, then despair.

The ruined seaside city of Mariupol, whose capture has become a key Russian objective, is now irrevocably etched into Ukrainian history, regardless of the outcome of the war.

In the end, a small group of outgunned and outmanned nationalist fighters held out for months, drawing Russian airstrikes, artillery and tank fire down upon the massive Azovstal steel plant, where they made their last stand.

"The 83 days of the defense of Mariupol will go down in history as Thermopylae of the 21st century," said Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukraine's president. "The Azovstal defenders thwarted the enemy's plans to seize eastern Ukraine, drew away enormous numbers of enemy forces, and changed the course of the war."

Thermopylae is widely considered one of history's most glorious defeats, in which 300 Spartans held off a much larger Persian force in 480 B.C. before finally succumbing. They were killed to a man, including their king.

Mariupol's martyrdom first came into focus with the March 9 Russian airstrike on a maternity hospital, then with another airstrike a week later on a theater that was serving as the city's largest bomb shelter, with the word "CHILDREN" written in Russian on the pavement outside to deter an attack. Nearly 600 people were killed, inside and outside the theater, by some estimates.

Suddenly, no place felt safe, and its residents fled by the thousands.

But those at Azovstal, the steel mill in the port on the Sea of Azov, hunkered down in the labyrinth of tunnels and underground rooms. On some days, it was targeted by dozens of explosions. Little by little, the Azovstal civilians took advantage of humanitarian cease-fires to flee.

Finally, on Monday, more than 260 fighters — some of them seriously wounded and taken out on stretchers — emerged and turned themselves over to the Russian side. The two governments are negotiating their fate.

Other fighters — their precise numbers unknown — remain inside the ruins that sprawl over 11 square kilometers (4 square miles) in the otherwise now Russian-held city of shattered buildings and apartment blocks.

What Russia described as a mass surrender, the Ukrainians say was a mission fulfilled.

The capture of the strategic port city would allow Moscow to link the Crimean Peninsula, which it annexed in 2014, with the separatist regions of the Donbas that it now controls, and on to the Russian border. Seizing Mariupol also gives President Vladimir Putin an elusive military victory — won at the cost of the city itself, which lies in ruins as it has since the siege began in the beginning of March.

Said one Mariupol resident, who fled her home in April with little hope of return: "It is very difficult when you see that your city, which has been built before your eyes and restored becoming more and more beautiful, is dying."

EXPLAINER: What we know about shuttered baby formula plant

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — At the center of the nationwide baby formula shortage is a single factory: Abbott Nutrition's plant that has been closed for more than three months because of contamination problems.

On Monday, U.S. officials announced a deal with Abbott that paves the way to restart production at the Sturgis, Michigan, facility, the largest in the U.S. and source of leading brands like Similac.

But it's not yet clear how soon the site will be up and running. And even bigger questions remain unanswered, including what caused the contamination and whether U.S. regulators could have alleviated the current formula shortage by stepping in sooner. The plant shutdown exacerbated ongoing supply chain problems among U.S. formula makers.

WHAT CAUSED THE SHUTDOWN?

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In mid-February, Abbott announced it was recalling various lots of three powdered infant formulas from the plant, after federal officials began investigating rare bacterial infections in four babies who were fed formula. Two of the infants died. But it's not certain the bacteria came from the plant; strains found at the plant didn't match the two available samples from the babies.

The company halted production while Food and Drug Administration inspectors conducted a six-week investigation of the plant.

A preliminary report released in March found traces of a bacteria — *Cronobacter*— on several surfaces throughout the plant, though not in areas used to make the powder. Plant records showed Abbott had detected the bacteria eight times in its products or facility since 2019.

Inspectors also flagged other problems, including standing water on the floor and employees who didn't properly sanitize their hands.

WHAT IS CRONOBACTER?

The bacteria occurs naturally in soil, water and other parts of the environment. Infections with *Cronobacter* are rare but can be fatal in babies. Almost all previous outbreaks in the U.S. have been linked to powdered baby formulas, which don't undergo the same high temperatures used to kill germs in many other foods.

Sometimes the bacteria can get into powdered formula after its opened at home if a dirty scoop is used or it is mixed with water that's contaminated with the germ, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Cronobacter typically causes fever in infants and can sometimes lead to dangerous blood infections or swelling of the brain.

The four reported illnesses were in Minnesota, Ohio and Texas between September and January.

WHAT ROLE DID ABBOTT'S FORMULA PLAY IN THE ILLNESSES?

It's still not yet clear. The FDA hasn't released a final ruling on the problems at the plant and whether they are linked to the infections.

"There are many factors involved in this ongoing investigation and we're just not in a position to make any definitive statement," FDA Commissioner Robert Califf said Monday.

Food safety experts say the case underscores the challenges of tracing foodborne illnesses.

Because there were only two samples collected from the four cases, "Right from the get-go we were limited in our ability," to link the baby formula to the illnesses, said the FDA's food director Susan Mayne. "We simply don't have the evidence to demonstrate that causality."

Abbott says the lack of a strain match indicates "there is no evidence to link our formulas to these infant illnesses."

SHOULD THE FDA HAVE STEPPED IN SOONER?

The FDA is facing intense scrutiny about what steps it took — and didn't — in the months before the recall.

FDA inspectors visited the factory in late September for a routine inspection, around the time that the first bacterial infection was reported in Minnesota. Although inspectors uncovered several violations—including standing water and unsanitary conditions — they didn't find any bacteria and let the plant stay open. It's unclear if inspectors were even aware of the first reported illness.

After three more cases were reported, the FDA returned to the plant in January and detected the bacteria.

The FDA mainly focuses on assuring the safety of the food supply, with extra regulations and standards on foods for babies and children. But former FDA officials say the agency is supposed to consider potential shortages that result from shutting down plants.

In previous cases, the FDA has worked with companies to shift production to other facilities or find alternative supplies.

The FDA is doing that now under a new policy that eases imports of baby formula from foreign manufacturers. But both the agency and the White House are facing questions on why that step wasn't taken sooner.

"We always believe we can do better in terms of the time frame," Califf said.

Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., reported last month that a whistleblower had contacted the FDA in October

with allegations about unsafe conditions and practices at the plant, including falsifying plant records and failing to properly test formula for contamination. She said the FDA did not interview the whistleblower until late December. Califf is scheduled to answer questions from DeLauro and other lawmakers on Thursday.

WHEN WILL THE PLANT RESTART PRODUCTION?

Both the FDA and Abbott say they are working as quickly as possible to restart manufacturing at the plant. But FDA officials say the onus is on Abbott to demonstrate its Michigan plant meets rigorous safety standards.

Former FDA officials say fixing the type of problems uncovered at Abbott's plant takes time, and infant formula facilities receive more scrutiny than other food types. Companies need to exhaustively clean the facility and equipment, retrain staff, repeatedly test and document that there is no contamination.

Even after the facility opens, Abbott says it will take eight-to-ten weeks before new products start shipping to stores. The company continues to produce baby formula at its other plants in the U.S. and overseas.

AP Interview: Scottish leader stresses independence, NATO

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and ANNA JOHNSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon said in an interview Tuesday that Europe's crisis over Russia's war in Ukraine only makes Scotland's drive for independence more important, and maintained Scotland should play its "full part" ensuring stability and security in Europe as an eventual member of NATO.

Sturgeon spoke to The Associated Press on her first trip to the United States since the pandemic lockdown. Her visit is focused on Scotland's strong progress toward renewable energy and on meetings with congressional lawmakers and others.

But Sturgeon also spoke on her visit of momentum in her government's move to a new Scottish vote on independence from the United Kingdom. She told the AP she still plans a Scotland-wide referendum on that by the end of next year, citing her government's "very firm mandate" on that point from voters.

Sturgeon also made headlines back home with her response Monday during a panel by the Brookings Institution think tank, when asked what the U.S. could do to help Europe's move to cleaner energy:

"Don't reelect Trump," she answered.

Sturgeon on Monday called her comment "lighthearted." But she followed it then with a grave warning of populist national "strongmen" as a danger to security and environmental policy. Then-President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the global Paris accord aimed at slowing climate change. The Biden administration rejoined the pact but has had mixed success in its hopes of jump-starting national and international transitions away from fossil fuels.

"Keeping my fingers crossed on that one," she told the AP Tuesday, asked about her reference to Trump's re-election.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has triggered a reshaping of the security, energy and economic alliances of Europe, and united European democracies more strongly than previously. Finland and Sweden have announced their intention to join the U.S.-European NATO security bloc in light of Russia's war.

A Scotland that's independent from the United Kingdom would point to still more decisions ahead for NATO members, including the United Kingdom, on admitting additional nations.

Scottish voters rejected a 2014 independence referendum by 55%-45%. But Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Brexit break from the European Union has angered some in Scotland, and Scottish officials believe a younger Scottish electorate now may look more favorably toward independence.

Johnson's government dramatically escalated a fight with the European Union on Tuesday by saying it will pass a law to scrap parts of the trade treaty signed by the two sides less than two years ago.

Sturgeon, a strong critic of Brexit, told the AP that Johnson's threat of unilateral action was "reckless and irresponsible."

Sturgeon also rejected arguments from some opponents of Scottish independence that splitting from the United Kingdom would weaken the UK and the overall Western security alliance at a time of crisis on the continent, given Russia's war in Ukraine.

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"With all the challenges," Sturgeon said, "it's more important that Scotland plays its full part...in finding the solutions to the challenges the world faces."

"And independence better equips us to do that," Sturgeon said.

Sturgeon said she believed there was "overwhelming support" in Scotland to join NATO as a full member in its own right, if it gains independence.

"Scotland's geographic position, in a key part of the North Atlantic, means that would be essential for our security," Sturgeon said of NATO membership.

"The principal way that Scotland would contribute for the wider security of the region" would be as a possible future NATO member, she added.

Potential obstacles and complications to any Scottish break from membership in the United Kingdom, as well as any Scottish admission to NATO, are many.

That includes the United Kingdom's longstanding basing of its nuclear arsenal in Scotland. Sturgeon's political party opposes nuclear weapons.

Sturgeon on Tuesday promised "very responsible negotiations" with the United Kingdom on safely moving its Trident nuclear weapons elsewhere.

"Nobody would want to be irresponsible in the timescales that we set for that," she said.

Sturgeon's Scottish National Party rose to power partly on a 1970s slogan of "It's Scotland's oil," rallying Scottish desires for more benefit and more say over Scotland's share of the United Kingdom's North Sea oil and gas production.

Sturgeon's government, which hosted last year's U.N. global climate change conference in Glasgow, emphasizes Scotland's determination to be a global leader in moving away rapidly from climate-wrecking oil and gas production.

But Sturgeon made no guarantees an independent Scotland would wind down its share of oil and gas production any more quickly than Scottish leaders now plan.

Experts and advocates agree the Scots stand out globally on climate for their fast switch domestically away from fossil fuel for electricity and for their work in new energy technology, including hydrogen power.

In 2020, nearly all of the electricity that Scots burned came from climate-friendly renewables, not counting net energy exports.

Using the money-generating oil and gas sector now to plan for, invest in and ease oil-producing countries' move to clean energy was crucial, she said.

"We need to accelerate that journey away from fossil fuels, but nobody should pretend that it's easy," Sturgeon said.

"What independence wouldn't do is somehow magic away the challenges that we face," she said.

Abortion resistance braces for demands of a post-Roe future

By CLAIRE GALOFARO AP National Writer

The day's first caller begged for help to cross state lines and end her pregnancy. "Please," the woman from Texas said in her voicemail. "Anything would be greatly appreciated."

Three states away, in southern Illinois, Alison Dreith heard the plea and ground a toothpick between her teeth. She'd started chewing them last year as a stress reliever the day Texas all but banned abortions. Now the stick darted across her mouth, left to right, right to left. She felt shaky.

"It's starting," said Dreith. "What we've been worrying about for years."

When desperate people can't obtain abortions near home -- when they need plane tickets, bus fare, babysitters -- they reach out to groups like Dreith's, the Midwest Access Coalition. The demand has become staggering. Now, for the first time, she would have to tell a caller "No."

The U.S. Supreme Court this summer is expected to gut Roe v. Wade, the 1973 ruling that made abortion a constitutional right. But already, state after state has tightened restrictions, pushing pregnant people further from home, for some hundreds of miles away.

Dreith and her collective are scrambling to pave avenues for them. There are almost 100 grassroots

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groups organizing as a safety valve for the vast swaths of the South and Midwest where abortion may soon be barred.

On this morning, Dreith's phone buzzed with messages from her fellow abortion activists across the country, bemoaning the now-constant headlines bearing bad news about abortion rights. They've spent years battling abortion restrictions, getting arrested as they bellowed against bans, escorting pregnant people into clinics through throngs of protesters screaming "baby killer." Now, helpless to prevent the coming crisis, the goal has become purely practical: assist abortion seekers one by one, either legally by helping them travel, or illegally if that's what it eventually comes down to.

They ask: Which of us would be willing to go to jail? Some conservative states are trying to criminalize helping people cross state lines, and that's exactly what Dreith does all day.

Dreith runs this resistance from the sofa on her rural pygmy goat farm, an unlikely gateway to abortion access. Nearby, a billboard greets people driving across the border into her state: "Welcome to Illinois, where you can get a safe, legal abortion." The state is a "blue island," a likely destination for thousands seeking to end unwanted pregnancies.

It's already started. In September, Texas passed a ban on abortion after six weeks; courts let it stand. Patients fanned out into surrounding states, clogging up clinics and ballooning waiting lists -- weeks turned to months. In Alabama, Dreith's friend Robin Marty said she was going to have to direct patients to Illinois, an eight-hour drive.

The Midwest Access Coalition's hotline is swamped and it's about to get much busier: If Roe is overturned, abortion is expected to be banned in more than half of American states.

Dreith, 41, rubbed her forehead and slumped back into her sofa.

The coalition, funded by donations and grants, will have to make hard choices. There will be too many people and not enough money. They stopped funding partners traveling with adult patients. They're considering capping the amount of money per client, and the number of clients per month.

Texas is outside the coalition's coverage area, but it had offered to help when the state's support groups, called abortion funds, were thrust into crisis. But now it is routing Texas callers back to other groups, which are also stressed.

Listening to the Texas woman's voice message, the coming tsunami suddenly seemed very real. On their encrypted text chain, Dreith and her colleagues discussed this depressing prospect: In a post-Roe America, no matter how hard they try, some will be left behind.

Dreith sighed deeply and typed her reply.

"I'm so sorry," she began. "We are unable to support Texans right now."

When the draft Supreme Court opinion on Roe was leaked, "The Handbook for a Post-Roe America" sold out overnight. "Everybody wants something to do," said Robin Marty, who wrote the 247-page manual. "I think people want to feel like there's something within their control."

It's inconceivable, Marty said, that measures she described in her book might be necessary in a matter of weeks. "If I try to think about what this would look like, I can't, because it's a disaster."

Her West Alabama Women's Center sits on the edge of ordinary plaza of squat brick buildings, alongside an ophthalmologist's office and an insurance agency. It is indistinguishable as an abortion clinic, except for the handful of protesters who gather daily in the parking lot to deter patients from going inside.

The clinic is near the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, so it draws in a lot of college students. But because it's the only clinic for two hours in any direction, people come from all over the region.

Marty, 45, is the clinic's operations director. She estimates that 75% of its patients are below the poverty line. Many have multiple children and work multiple jobs. Some struggle to make it to this clinic just across town; they cannot travel states away, even if there was an infinite supply of money, which there isn't.

So when this clinic can no longer perform abortions, people will manage their own at home, she said, and that carries a constellation of risks, both physical and legal.

The dangers of a post-Roe world are not the same as the pre-Roe one, when desperate women would

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throw themselves downstairs, prod themselves with knitting needles or meet dubious doctors in back alleys. There are now medications that trigger a miscarriage and end a pregnancy safely at home, which anti-abortion lawmakers are also attempting to criminalize. Abortion pills are now provided by doctors, but can also be bought online and shipped in the mail.

Medication abortions are safe in early pregnancy and account already for more than half of terminations in the United States. But some are incomplete and require medical intervention.

"People will be afraid to get help. People will be afraid to go to the doctor, to go to the hospital, to go to the clinic, to get help out of fear of being arrested. And they may instead bleed to death," said Dr. Leah Torres, the clinic's physician.

Even if they do seek medical help, she worries that physicians will be afraid or unwilling to help them: This clinic has already seen four patients who arrived bleeding and said they'd been turned away by hospitals.

The anti-abortion movement has long held that it doesn't intend to criminalize pregnant people. But last month, a woman was arrested in Texas after seeking care at a hospital, where staff suspected she'd self-administered an abortion, and called the sheriff. The charges against her were later dropped, but not until her name and mug shot whipped around the world.

Marty posted online about the arrest, pleading with people to not only support organizations like Dreith's that help people travel, but also red state clinics like hers that will try to survive for those who can't.

"Because if our doors do close," she wrote, "the only options left truly will be death or jail."

Marty had been a journalist. But she saw abortion access collapsing, felt constrained by the journalistic mandate of impartiality, and so she left the business to work on the front lines.

She recruited Torres, an outspoken activist for abortion access in red states, to move to Alabama to turn a Southern abortion clinic into a full-service gynecological office, offering Pap smears and family planning, that might allow them to remain open even if abortion is banned. That way they will be here to treat people managing their own miscarriages, intentional or not, and no one will call the police.

In one examination room, a mother sat with her shaking 16-year-old daughter. The high schooler's mother said they can't afford a baby. She has four kids and one grandchild to take care of already.

She wants her daughter's life to be better than hers. She was 15 when she had her first child and she dropped out of school.

"I want her to have a bright future," the 34-year-old mother said. "I want her to graduate, go to school, become something in life, maybe a nurse or a doctor. I just wish the best for my kid."

The woman, who is Black, had taken a day off her job at a roofing company without pay to drive her daughter here.

These are the families that frighten Marty the most. A 2013 study analyzed 413 cases from 1973 to 2005 where women were prosecuted for pregnancy outcomes: 71% were poor and more than half were women of color.

It was difficult for this mother to contemplate what they would have done if this clinic, an hour from home, no longer existed. Her daughter, in a swirl of childhood ignorance and fear, was four months along by the time she arrived here -- and abortion with pills is authorized only up to 10 weeks. Her mother stared off, doing a silent calculation of days and money and miles.

"How far is Illinois from here?" she wondered.

Five hundred miles away, Alison Dreith took a break to visit with her friend, Pamela Merritt, who had come to visit the goats born just days before on Dreith's Illinois farm. Merritt brought them onesies.

"I'm your grandma," she cooed as she cuddled one named Albert. "You're going to call me gamma."

After years in the trenches fighting what Dreith calls the "abortion wars" together, they've become like family. Merritt officiated at Dreith's wedding. They've already planned that when they get old and Merritt can no longer live alone, she'll move in with Dreith and her husband.

Their careers have converged with the volatile rhythms of the abortion divide. Dreith, fresh out of college, started her internship with Planned Parenthood the day after Dr. George Tiller, an abortion provider

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in Kansas, was murdered in 2009 by an anti-abortion extremist.

Merritt, too, went to her job at a clinic that Monday.

"I got up in the morning and walked through a parking lot, down a sidewalk and into an abortion provider and it was the most profound and emotional walk I've ever taken," she said. That day changed them both: Each resolved that a movement some died for was vital enough to become her life's work.

Both Dreith and Merritt were some of the most outspoken activists in Missouri, a state with among the nation's strictest abortion laws. Dreith led NARAL Pro-Choice Missouri and was on television so much she couldn't go to the grocery store without someone stopping her to talk about abortion.

At Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court confirmation hearing in 2018, she screamed that people shouldn't have to travel to get an abortion. She was dragged away.

Merritt, meanwhile, started an unabashedly loud and liberal advocacy organization, Reproaction.

Merritt introduced Dreith to Robin Marty. In time, they realized those friendships were a foundation for the network they must build.

"It's a lot like when people go to war. And I have been to war with Robin and Alison," said Merritt, now the executive director of Medical Students for Choice. "I fought tooth and nail. I left it all on the court, as we used to say in tennis. And we lost."

It took a toll on them. Dreith lost 40 pounds and wasn't trying. Merritt started breaking out in hives; her sister had to remind her to eat.

"I needed a little bit of recovery," said Dreith, so she left Missouri and bought a farm across the state line in Illinois, where there are no streetlights and they know their mailman by name.

She finds solace in the quiet, the goats prancing around the barnyard, and the knowledge that abortion will remain legal here and her representatives wouldn't prefer to see her in handcuffs. She convinced Merritt to move to Illinois, too. Merritt adopted one of her goats and visits often.

"Did you bring me any books for my library?" Dreith asked, and they walked to the Little Free Library she erected along the country road. She keeps boxes of emergency contraception amid the books and pickle jars, and someone recently took one. She was delighted that word of her stash might spread.

That is her mission now: finding inventive ways to reach people who don't want to be pregnant.

She picks clients up at the airport to drive them to the Hope Clinic for Women in Granite City, Illinois, a half hour from her farm.

The Hope Clinic sees up to 7,000 patients a year, said Dr. Erin King, the clinic's executive director. Workers routinely field phone calls from their colleagues in other states: New laws took effect, and they have people in their waiting rooms. "How can you help us?" they ask. Now they're preparing to absorb patients from half the country.

Twenty minutes away, a Planned Parenthood opened a first-of-its-kind support desk called the Regional Logistics Center, in suburban Fairview Heights. It functions as a sort of travel agency for abortion seekers.

Merritt has heard people say that there is no abortion resistance, because they don't see this. It's not a march or a rally. It is this group of friends and colleagues organizing, usually quietly, from their living rooms and cars and cubicles.

On the day Dreith had to turn away the Texas caller, she booked a hotel room for a 22-year-old from Tennessee who was traveling 250 miles to the Hope Clinic. A restaurant server who makes \$2.13 an hour called from Kentucky to beg for help with a babysitter, hotel and food.

She started this job with the Midwest Access Coalition in November, and she said it feels good to keep her head down and do the pragmatic tasks of booking flights and telling pregnant people to feel no shame.

"That fills me up a little bit more than constantly being on the defensive, and I need to be filled up a little bit more right now because I was on the defensive for a really long time," she said.

The clients are often among the most vulnerable, those who've never flown on a plane before, who have no phone, no car, no credit card to book hotel rooms. She doesn't ask questions about what brought them to this point, she said, but many offer explanations anyway: homelessness, domestic violence, fetal abnormalities during pregnancies that were very much wanted.

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"Your heart just breaks for people," Dreith said. And so she tries to make their travels as painless as possible.

One woman from Arkansas said she'd never eaten White Castle and she'd heard it was delicious, so Dreith booked her a hotel next to the restaurant. The woman said it tasted as good as she'd always imagined.

A week earlier, Dreith took a road trip to a tattoo parlor in Richmond, Indiana, for a fundraiser with activists from Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio -- all places where abortion is likely to be banned or restricted.

The day's choices of special tattoos included a coat-hanger, the famous symbol of the dangerous back-alley abortions women endured before Roe v. Wade. "Never again," it said.

There was one that featured a flower curling around two pills -- one a circle, one a hexagon, together representing the cocktail of medications taken to induce an abortion. There was a tattoo of a staircase hidden behind an arch, a traditional design meant to signal its wearer knows how to find secret things.

But this network doesn't want to keep their work a secret.

They tucked a business card for the Midwest Access Coalition onto a shelf at the tattoo parlor. They contemplated designs for magnets with their contact information to fasten to every metal thing they come across. Dreith considered stickers to put in bathroom stalls -- in cities, in suburbs, in rural areas -- because all kinds of people in all kinds of places get pregnant and don't want to be, she said.

"I understand that some part of secrecy for some people needs to happen. Not everyone can go to jail," Dreith said. "But we're looking for the most vulnerable, and not just the people who can be clever enough to find us."

This group gets together occasionally, the last time for a campout on Dreith's goat farm last year, where they swam in the creek, slept on the lawn and contemplated a post-Roe world. It seems to them that the coming reality is just now beginning to dawn of much of a public that hasn't been in this fight as long or as actively as they have been.

"We're not the ones who are panicking," said Meg Sasse Stern, who until recently ran the Kentucky Health Justice Network. "It's because we're already deeply traumatized from living this up until now. We're beyond panic."

"Now it's more like, what's the plan?" said Keli Foster, who escorts pregnant people past protesters into an Indiana abortion clinic.

They fretted over how to help their people.

"Send them to us, just send everybody to us," Dreith said, because her safe haven in Illinois will be all they have left in the region.

Isolated on the farm, Dreith felt like she was living in a bubble, unable to process that in a matter of weeks the Supreme Court might ravage her life's work. She'd felt guilty for not being more outraged.

But reality was starting to wash over her. When the draft Supreme Court opinion was leaked, Dreith cried for five days straight. She left the house for a drive, and found herself sitting at her father's grave, listening to George Harrison's album "All Things Must Pass." She doesn't know how long she sat there, maybe for the whole album, until she stopped crying and felt a deep resolve to finish her mission.

She knows the risks. Conservative politicians are now specifically targeting people like her. Lawmakers in some states, including nearby Missouri, are attempting to make it illegal to "aid and abet" abortions out of state, even driving people across a bridge into Illinois.

At the tattoo parlor, Dreith and her colleagues said they have to plan for this reality.

"Just to be completely honest, some of us are going to have to be willing to go down," Keli Foster said. The rest sighed and nodded.

Dreith chose the tattoo design of the abortion pills, and had the artist put it on her arm, next to a tattoo of a bundle of herbs that have been used to induce abortion for millennia. People have always tried to end unwanted pregnancies, and they always will, she said. After all these years, she sees it as her responsibility to help them do that as safely as possible, regardless of the law.

So she talked with her husband, her lawyer and her friends.

"There will be a price," Dreith said.

She told them she is willing to pay it.

Congress dives into UFOs, but no signs of extraterrestrials

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress held its first hearing in half a century Tuesday on unidentified flying objects. And no, there is still no government confirmation of extraterrestrial life.

Testifying before a House Intelligence subcommittee, Pentagon officials did not disclose additional information from their ongoing investigation of hundreds of unexplained sightings in the sky. But they said they had picked a director for a new task force to coordinate data collection efforts on what the government has officially labeled “unidentified aerial phenomena.”

Ronald Moultrie, the undersecretary of defense for intelligence, said the Pentagon was also trying to destigmatize the issue and encourage pilots and other military personnel to report anything unusual they see.

“We want to know what’s out there as much as you want to know what’s out there,” Moultrie told lawmakers, adding that he was a fan of science fiction himself. “We get the questions not just from you. We get it from family and we get them night and day.”

Lawmakers from both parties say UFOs are a national security concern. Sightings of what appear to be aircraft flying without discernible means of propulsion have been reported near military bases and coastlines, raising the prospect that witnesses have spotted undiscovered or secret Chinese or Russian technology.

But the sightings are usually fleeting. Some appear for no more than an instant on camera — and then sometimes end up distorted by the camera lens. The U.S. government is believed to hold additional technical information on the sightings that it has not disclosed publicly.

An interim report released by intelligence officials last year counted 144 sightings of aircraft or other devices apparently flying at mysterious speeds or trajectories. In all but one of the sightings investigated, there was too little information for investigators to even broadly characterize the nature of the incident.

A top Pentagon official on Tuesday briefly demonstrated the challenge. Scott Bray, deputy director of naval intelligence, stood next to a television to show a short video taken from an F-18 military plane. The video shows a blue sky with passing clouds. In a single frame — which it took several minutes for staff in the room to queue up — there is an image of one balloon-like shape.

“As you can see, finding UAP is harder than you may think,” Bray said, using the acronym for “unidentified aerial phenomena.”

Rep. André Carson, an Indiana Democrat who chaired the hearing, called on investigators to show they “are willing to follow the facts where they lead.”

Rep. Rick Crawford, an Arkansas Republican, noted that the investigations were not “about finding alien spacecraft but about delivering dominant intelligence.”

“The inability to understand objects in our sensitive operating areas is tantamount to intelligence failure that we certainly want to avoid,” he said.

AP Exclusive: Black Lives Matter has \$42 million in assets

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The foundation started by organizers of the Black Lives Matter movement is still worth tens of millions of dollars, after spending more than \$37 million on grants, real estate, consultants, and other expenses, according to tax documents filed with the IRS.

In a new, 63-page Form 990 shared exclusively with The Associated Press, the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation Inc. reports that it invested \$32 million in stocks from the \$90 million it received as donations amid racial justice protests in 2020. That investment is expected to become an endowment to ensure the foundation’s work continues in the future, organizers say.

It ended its last fiscal year — from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021 — with nearly \$42 million in net assets. The foundation had an operating budget of about \$4 million, according to a board member.

The tax filing shows that nearly \$6 million was spent on a Los Angeles-area compound. The Studio City

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property, which includes a home with six bedrooms and bathrooms, a swimming pool, a soundstage and office space, was intended as a campus for a Black artists fellowship and is currently used for that purpose, the board member said.

This is the BLM foundation's first public accounting of its finances since incorporating in 2017. As a fledgling nonprofit, it had been under the fiscal sponsorship of a well-established charity, and wasn't required to publicly disclose its financials until it became an independent, 501(c)(3) nonprofit in December 2020.

The tax filing suggests the organization is still finding its footing: It currently has no executive director or in-house staff. Nonprofit experts tell the AP that the BLM foundation seems to be operating like a scrappy organization with far fewer resources, although some say Black-led charities face unfair scrutiny in an overwhelmingly white and wealthy philanthropic landscape.

Still, its governance structure makes it difficult to disprove allegations of impropriety, financial mismanagement and deviation from mission that have dogged the BLM foundation for years, one expert said.

"It comes across as an early startup nonprofit, without substantial governance structure in place, that got a huge windfall," said Brian Mittendorf, a professor of accounting at Ohio State University who focuses on nonprofit organizations and their financial statements.

"People are going to be quick to assume that mismatch reflects intent," he added. "Whether there's anything improper here, that is another question. But whether they set themselves up for being criticized, I think that certainly is the case because they didn't plug a bunch of those gaps."

The BLM movement first emerged in 2013, after the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the neighborhood watch volunteer who killed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in Florida. But it was the 2014 death of Michael Brown at the hands of police in Ferguson, Missouri, that made the slogan "Black lives matter" a rallying cry for progressives and a favorite target of derision for conservatives.

BLM co-founders Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza and Ayo Tometi had pledged to build a decentralized organization governed by the consensus of BLM chapters. But just three years into existence, Cullors was the only movement founder involved in the organization.

And in 2020, a tidal wave of contributions in the aftermath of protests over George Floyd's murder by Minneapolis police meant the BLM organization needed much more infrastructure.

When Cullors revealed the windfall of donations last year, local chapter organizers and families of police brutality victims reacted angrily. Until then, the foundation had not been transparent with the most devoted BLM organizers, many of whom accused Cullors of shutting them out of decisions about how financial resources would be allocated.

YahNé Ndgo, an activist and former organizer with the BLM chapter in Philadelphia, said Cullors reneged on a promise to hand over control of the foundation's resources to grassroots organizers.

"When resources came in, when opportunities came in, (the foundation) alone would be the ones to decide who was going to take advantage of them, without having to take any consideration of the other organizers whose work was giving them the access to these resources and opportunities in the first place," said Ndgo, who organized a group of chapters that confronted the foundation over issues of transparency and accountability.

In 2020, the foundation did spin off its network of chapters as a sister collective called BLM Grassroots. It has a fiscal sponsor managing money granted by the foundation. Melina Abdullah, cofounder of BLM's first chapter in Los Angeles, also directs the grassroots collective and said its organizers continue to have direct impact in communities across the country.

"We'll never stop doing that," Abdullah said. "That's the work we were born out of."

In a recent interview with the AP, Cullors acknowledged the foundation was ill-prepared to handle the moment. The tax filing lists Cullors as an uncompensated founder and executive director. She resigned last year. The foundation also paid nearly \$140,000 in severance to a former managing director who had been at odds with local BLM chapter organizers, prior to Cullors's tenure as director.

The filing shows Cullors reimbursed the organization \$73,523 for a charter flight for foundation-related travel, which the organization says she took in 2021 out of concern for COVID-19 and security threats. She

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also paid the foundation \$390 over her uses of the Studio City property for two private events.

During the last fiscal year, Cullors was the foundation board's sole voting director and held no board meetings, according to the filing. Although that is permissible under Delaware law, where the foundation is incorporated, that governance structure gives the appearance that Cullors alone decided who to hire and how to spend donations. That was never the truth, current board members said.

For all the questions raised about its oversight, the BLM foundation's tax filing shows its stewards haven't squandered donations. Instead, it granted tens of millions of dollars to BLM chapters, Black-led grassroots organizations and families of police brutality victims, whose names rallied the larger movement.

"This 990 reveals that (the BLM foundation) is the largest Black abolitionist nonprofit organization that has ever existed in the nation's history. What we're doing has never been done before," said Shalomyah Bowers, who serves as the foundation's board secretary.

"We needed to get dollars out to grassroots organizations doing the work of abolition, doing the work that would shift the moral tide of this world towards one that does not have or believe in police, prisons, jails or violence," he said.

Earlier this month, the foundation announced Bowers as one of three members of its board of directors. He serves with board chair Cicley Gay, a communications professional with more than 20 years of experience in nonprofit and philanthropic organizations, and D'Zhane Parker, a member of BLM's Los Angeles chapter whose work focuses on the impact of mass incarceration on families.

"We are decolonizing philanthropy," Gay said. "We, as a board, are charged with disrupting traditional standards of what grant making in philanthropy looks like. It means investing in Black communities, trusting them with their dollars."

The foundation will launch a "transparency and accountability center" on its website to make its financial documents available for public inspection, Bowers said.

FOUNDATION RELIES ON CONSULTANTS

To get here, the foundation has relied on a small grouping of consultants, some of whom have close ties to founders and other BLM organizers. For example, the tax filing shows the foundation paid nearly \$970,000 to Trap Heals LLC, a company founded by Damon Turner, who fathered a child with Cullors. The company was hired to produce live events and provide other creative services, Bowers said.

The foundation paid more than \$840,000 to Cullors Protection LLC, a security firm run by Paul Cullors, Patrisse's brother, according to the tax filing. Because the BLM movement is known for vehemently protesting law enforcement organizations, the foundation felt its protection could not be entrusted to former police professionals who typically run security firms, said Bowers, adding the foundation sought bids for other security contractors.

Bowers, who has previously served as deputy executive director, is founder and president of a firm that received the lion's share of money spent on consultants in the last fiscal year. Bowers Consulting provided much of the foundation's operational support, including staffing, fundraising and other key services and was paid more than \$2.1 million, according to the tax filing.

The foundation's reliance on consultants is not unusual for newer nonprofits, said Mittendorf, the Ohio State accounting professor. But having clear policies around business transactions could reduce any appearance of impropriety, he said.

"It's a best practice not to engage in business transactions with people who have influence inside the organization or with companies affiliated with people who have influence inside the organization," Mittendorf said. "Make sure you have conflict of interest policies and other controls in place, so that those transactions are all being done to benefit the organization and not to benefit the individuals."

The tax filing indicates the foundation has a conflict-of-interest policy. And Bowers said the last BLM board approved the contract with his firm when he was not a board member.

"Our firm stepped in when Black Lives Matter had no structure and no staff," he said. "We filled the gap, when nothing else existed. But let me be crystal clear, there was no conflict of interest."

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Controversy surrounding the organization's finances has elicited probes by at least two state attorneys general. Board members said they are cooperating with civil investigations in Indiana and Ohio, and they have turned over relevant documents to those authorities.

Isabelle Leighton, interim executive director of the Donors of Color Network, an organization that promotes racial equity in philanthropy, said discrimination in the nonprofit sector leaves little room for Black-led progressive movement organizations to publicly make mistakes. Such organizations are typically receiving much less financial and operational support than wealthy, white-led nonprofits, but receive much more criticism, she said.

"It's tapping into a deep narrative that people of color do not deserve to have the same resources that those who have already made it get," Leighton said. "It's intended for people to start to doubt and create their own new echo chamber of criticizing who deserves to receive resources."

BLM GRANTS \$26 MILLION TO CHAPTERS AND FAMILIES

The foundation's tax filing rebuts claims that the BLM foundation ignored the larger movement. Nearly \$26 million, or 70% of its expenses, were grants to organizations and families in the last fiscal year.

Twelve BLM chapters, including those in Boulder, Colorado; Boston; Washington, D.C.; Detroit; Los Angeles; Gary, Indiana; and Philadelphia, received pledges for grants of up to \$500,000. The family foundations created in honor of Floyd and others killed by police and vigilantes — Trayvon Martin and Oscar Grant — each received contributions of \$200,000.

Jacari Harris, executive director of the George Floyd Memorial Foundation, said in a statement the organization was "incredibly grateful" for the grant, "the largest one-time contribution we have received to date within the U.S." Harris said the funds will help provide college scholarships, mental health support to the Black community and educate "about the dangers of police brutality around the world."

The Michael O.D. Brown: We Love Our Sons & Daughters Foundation, run by Michael Brown Jr.'s mother, Lezley McSpadden, was approved for a larger multi-year grant of \$1.4 million. A representative of the Brown foundation told the AP that an initial \$500,000 had been received in 2021.

McSpadden is happy to have the BLM foundation's support, the representative said.

Among its larger grants are \$2.3 million to the Living Through Giving Foundation, a nonprofit charity platform that encourages giving at the local level; and \$1.5 million to Team Blackbird, LLC, a rapid response communications and movement strategy project that increases the visibility of movement organizations.

The tax filing does not reveal the foundation's largest donors.

"Transparency and accountability is so important to us, but so is trust," said Gay, the BLM foundation chair. "Presenting (donor) names after the fact, at this point, would likely be a betrayal of that trust."

FDA clears COVID booster shot for healthy kids ages 5 to 11

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

U.S. regulators on Tuesday authorized a COVID-19 booster shot for healthy 5- to 11-year-olds, hoping an extra vaccine dose will enhance their protection as infections once again creep upward.

Everyone 12 and older already was supposed to get one booster dose for the best protection against the newest coronavirus variants -- and some people, including those 50 and older, can choose a second booster.

The Food and Drug Administration's authorization now opens a third shot of Pfizer's vaccine to elementary-age kids, too — at least five months after their last dose.

There is one more hurdle: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention must decide whether to formally recommend the booster for this age group. The CDC's scientific advisers are scheduled to meet on Thursday.

Pfizer and its partner BioNTech make the only COVID-19 vaccine available for children of any age in the U.S. Those ages 5 to 11 receive one-third of the dose given to everyone 12 and older.

Whether elementary-age children need a booster has been overshadowed by parents' outcry to vac-

cinate even younger tots, those under 5 -- the only group not yet eligible in the U.S. Both Pfizer and rival Moderna have been studying their shots in the youngest children, and the FDA is expected to evaluate data from one or both companies sometime next month.

For the 5- to 11-year-olds, it's not clear how much demand there will be for boosters. Only about 30% of that age group have had the initial two Pfizer doses since vaccinations opened to them in November.

But Pfizer's vaccine "is effective in helping to prevent the most severe consequences of COVID-19 in individuals 5 years of age and older," said FDA vaccine chief Dr. Peter Marks "A booster dose can help provide continued protection against COVID-19 in this and older age groups."

In a small study, Pfizer found a booster revved up those kids' levels of virus-fighting antibodies -- including those able to fight the super-contagious omicron variant -- the same kind of jump adults get from an extra shot.

While the coronavirus is more dangerous to adults than to children, youngsters can get severely ill -- and more than 350 children ages 5 to 11 have died, according to CDC's count.

Adding to public confusion, the CDC estimates 3 out of every 4 U.S. children of all ages have been infected with the coronavirus since the pandemic's start -- many of them during the winter omicron wave. Still, health authorities urge vaccination even in people who've previously had COVID-19, to strengthen their protection.

With subtypes of omicron now spreading, the U.S. is averaging about 91,000 cases reported a day, compared to about 57,000 just two weeks ago. That's a small fraction of the infections seen during the brutal winter surge -- but experts also say it's a vast undercount as testing has dropped and at-home tests often aren't reported.

Vaccination may not always prevent milder infections, especially as omicron and its siblings are better than some prior variants at slipping past those defenses. But health authorities agree the vaccinations continue to offer strong protection against the worst outcomes of COVID-19, including hospitalization and death.

War Crimes Watch: Targeting schools, Russia bombs the future

By JASON DEAREN, JULIET LINDERMAN and OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — As she lay buried under the rubble, her legs broken and eyes blinded by blood and thick clouds of dust, all Inna Levchenko could hear was screams. It was 12:15 p.m. on March 3, and moments earlier a blast had pulverized the school where she'd taught for 30 years.

Amid relentless bombing, she'd opened School 21 in Chernihiv as a shelter to frightened families. They painted the word "children" in big, bold letters on the windows, hoping that Russian forces would see it and spare them. The bombs fell anyway.

Though she didn't know it yet, 70 children she'd ordered to shelter in the basement would survive the blast. But at least nine people, including one of her students — a 13-year-old boy — would not.

"Why schools? I cannot comprehend their motivation," she said. "It is painful to realize how many friends of mine died ... and how many children who remained alone without parents, got traumatized. They will remember it all their life and will pass their stories to the next generation."

This story is part of an ongoing investigation from The Associated Press and the PBS series "Frontline" that includes the War Crimes Watch Ukraine interactive experience and an upcoming documentary.

The Ukrainian government says Russia has shelled more than 1,000 schools, destroying 95. On May 7, a bomb flattened a school in the eastern village of Bilohorivka, which, like School No. 21 in Chernihiv, was being used a shelter. As many as 60 people were feared dead.

Intentionally attacking schools and other civilian infrastructure is a war crime. Experts say wide-scale wreckage can be used as evidence of Russian intent, and to refute claims that schools were simply collateral damage.

But the destruction of hundreds of schools is about more than toppling buildings and maiming bodies,

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according to experts, to teachers and to others who have survived conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, in Syria and beyond. It hinders a nation's ability to rebound after the fighting stops, injuring entire generations and dashing a country's hope for the future.

In the nearly three months since Russia invaded Ukraine, The Associated Press and the PBS series "Frontline" have independently verified 57 schools that were destroyed or damaged in a manner that indicates a possible war crime. The accounting likely represents just a fraction of potential war crimes committed during the conflict and the list is updated daily.

In Chernihiv alone, the city council said only seven of the city's 35 schools were unscathed. Three were reduced to rubble.

The International Criminal Court, prosecutors from across the globe and Ukraine's prosecutor general are investigating more than 8,000 reports of potential war crimes in Ukraine involving 500 suspects. Many are accused of aiming deliberately at civilian structures like hospitals, shelters and residential neighborhoods.

Targeting schools — spaces designed as havens for children to grow, learn and make friends — is particularly harmful, transforming the architecture of childhood into something violent and dangerous: a place that inspires fear.

A geography teacher, Elena Kudrik, lay dead on the floor of School 50 in the eastern Ukrainian town of Gorlovka. Amid the wreckage surrounding her were books and papers, smeared in blood. In the corner, another lifeless body — Elena Ivanova, the assistant headmaster— slumped over in an office chair, a gaping wound torn into her side.

"It's a tragedy for us ... It's a tragedy for the children," said school director Sergey But, standing outside the brick building shortly after the attack. Shards of broken glass and rubble were sprayed across the concrete, where smiling children once flew kites and posed for photos with friends.

A few kilometers away, at the Sonechko pre-school in the city of Okhtyrka, a cluster bomb destroyed a kindergarten, killing a child. Outside the entrance, two more bodies lay in pools of blood.

Valentina Grusha teaches in Kyiv province, where she has worked for 35 years, most recently as a district administrator and foreign literature instructor. Russian troops invaded her village of Ivankiv just as school officials had begun preparations for war. On Feb. 24, Russian forces driving toward Kyiv fatally shot a child and his father there, she said.

"There was no more schooling," she said. "We called all the leaders and stopped instruction because the war started. And then there were 36 days of occupation."

They also shelled and destroyed schools in many nearby villages, she said. Kindergarten buildings were shattered by shrapnel and machine-gun fire.

Despite the widespread damage and destruction to educational infrastructure, war crimes experts say proving an attacking military's intent to target individual schools is difficult. Russian officials deny targeting civilian structures, and local media reports in Russian-held Gorlovka alleged Ukrainian forces trying to recapture the area were to blame for the blast that killed the two teachers there.

But the effects of the destruction are indisputable.

"When I start talking to the directors of destroyed and robbed institutions, they are very worried, crying, telling with pain and regret," Grusha said. "It's part of their lives. And now the school is a ruin that stands in the center of the village and reminds of those terrible air raids and bombings."

UNICEF communications director Toby Fricker, who is currently in Ukraine, agreed. "School is often the heart of the community in many places, and that is so central to everyday life."

Teachers and students who have lived through other conflicts say the destruction of schools in their countries damaged an entire generation.

Syrian teacher Abdulkafi Alhamdo still thinks about the children's drawings soaked in blood, littered across the floor of a schoolhouse in Aleppo. It had been attacked during the Civil War there in 2014. The teachers and children had been preparing for an art exhibit featuring student work depicting life during wartime.

The blast killed 19 people, including at least 10 children, the AP reported at the time. But it's the survivors who linger in Alhamdo's memory.

"I understood in (their) eyes that they wouldn't go to school anymore," he said. "It doesn't only affect

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the kids who were running away, with shock and trauma. It affects all kids who heard about the massacre. How can they go back to school? You are not only targeting a school, you're targeting a generation."

Jasminko Halilovic was only 6 years old when Sarajevo, in present-day Bosnia-Herzegovina, was besieged. Now, 30 years after the Bosnian war ended, he and his peers are the ones still picking up the pieces.

Halilovic went to school in a cellar, as many Ukrainian children have done. Desperately chasing safety, the teachers and students moved from basement to basement, leaning chalkboards on chairs instead of hanging them walls.

Halilovic, now 34, founded the War Childhood Museum, which catalogs the stories and objects of children in conflict around the world. He was working in Ukraine with children displaced by Russia's 2014 invasion of the Donbas region when the current war began. He had to evacuate his staff and leave the country.

"Once the fighting ends, the new fight will start. To rebuild cities. To rebuild schools and infrastructure, and to rebuild society. And to heal. And to heal is the most difficult," he said.

Alhamdo said he saw firsthand how the trauma of war influenced the development of children growing up in Aleppo. Instilling fear, anger and a sense of hopelessness is part of the enemy strategy, he said. Some became withdrawn, he said, and others violent.

"When they see their school destroyed, do you know how many dreams have been destroyed? Do you think anybody would believe in peace and love and beauty when the place that taught them about these things has been destroyed?" he said.

Alhamdo stayed in Aleppo and taught children in basements, apartments, anywhere he could, for years. Continuing to teach in spite of war, he said, is an act of defiance.

"I'm not fighting on the front lines," he said. "I'm fighting with my kids."

After the attack on School 50 in Gorlovka, shattered glass from blown-out windows littered the classrooms and hallways and the street outside. The floors were covered in dust and debris: cracked ceiling beams, slabs of drywall, a television that crashed down from the wall. A cell phone sat on the desk next to where one of the teachers was killed.

In Ukraine, some schools still standing have become makeshift shelters for people whose homes were destroyed by shelling and mortar fire.

What often complicates war crimes prosecutions for attacks on civilian buildings is that large facilities like schools are sometimes repurposed for military use during war. If a civilian building is being used militarily, it is a legitimate wartime target, said David Bosco, a professor of international relations at Indiana University whose research focuses on war crimes and the International Criminal Court.

The key for prosecutors, then, will be to show that there was a pattern by the Russians of targeting schools and other civilian buildings nationwide as a concerted military strategy, Bosco said.

"The more you can show a pattern, then the stronger the case becomes that this was really a policy of not discriminating between military and civilian facilities," Bosco said. "(Schools are) a place where children are supposed to feel safe, a second home. Obviously shattering that and in essence attacking the next generation. That's very real. It has a huge impact."

As the war grinds on, more than half of Ukraine's children have been displaced.

In Kharkiv, which has undergone relentless shelling, children's drawings are taped to the walls of an underground subway station that has become not only a family shelter but also a makeshift school. Primary school-age children gather around a table for history and art lessons.

"It helps to support them mentally," said teacher Valeriy Leiko. In part thanks to the lessons, he said, "They feel that someone loves them."

Millions of kids are continuing to go to school online. The international aid group Save the Children said it is working with the government to establish remote learning programs for students at 50 schools. UNICEF is also trying to help with online instruction.

"Educating every child is essential to preventing grave violations of their rights," the group said in a statement to the AP.

On April 2, Grusha's community outside Kyiv began a slow reemergence. They are still raking and sweeping debris from schools and kindergartens that were damaged but not destroyed, she said, and taking

stock of what's left. They started distance learning classes, and planned to relocate children whose schools were destroyed to others close by.

Even with war still raging, there is a return to normal life including schooling, she said.

But Levchenko, who was in Kyiv in early May to undergo surgery for her injuries, said the emotional damage done to so many children who have experienced and witnessed such immense suffering may never be fully repaired.

"It will take so much time for people and kids to recover from what they have lived," she said. The kids, she said, are "staying underground without sun, shivering from siren sounds and anxiety."

"It has a tremendously negative impact. Kids will remember this all their life."

'Like every other day': 10 lives lost on a trip to the store

By CAROLYN THOMPSON and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — They were caregivers and protectors and helpers, running an errand or doing a favor or finishing out a shift, when their paths crossed with a young man driven by racism and hatred and baseless conspiracy theories.

In a flash, the ordinariness of their day was broken at Tops Friendly Market in Buffalo, where in and around the supermarket's aisles, a symbol of the mundane was transformed into a scene of mass murder.

Carts lay abandoned. Bodies littered the tile floor. Police radios crackled with calls for help.

Investigators will try, for days to come, to piece together the massacre that killed 10 people, all Black and apparently hunted for the color of their skin.

Those who loved them are left with their memories of the lost, who suffered death amid the simple task of buying groceries.

"These people were just shopping," said Steve Carlson, 29, mourning his 72-year-old neighbor Katherine Massey, who checked in often, giving him gifts on his birthday and at Christmas, and pressing money into his hand when he helped with yardwork. "They went to go get food to feed their families."

One came from volunteering at a food bank. Another had been tending to her husband at his nursing home. Most were in their 50s and beyond, and were destined for more, even if just the dinner they planned to make.

Shonnell Harris, a manager at the store, was stocking shelves when she heard the first of what she figured must have been more than 70 shots. She ran for the back door, stumbling a few times along the way. She wondered where her daughter, a grocery clerk, was, and went around to the front of the store.

She saw someone being shot, she said, and a man who looked like he was dressed for the Army.

"Like a nightmare," Harris told The Buffalo News, shaken but grateful to have found her daughter safe.

The grisly scene was broadcast online by the gunman, a video notable not just for the cold-bloodedness of the killings, but how fast they unfolded. In the deafening rat-a-tat of gunfire, 10 voices were silenced, their stories left for others to recite.

Of a woman whose niece swore she was "the apple of God's eye." Of a longtime policeman who became a guard at the store and whose son knew he died a hero. Of an ace baker who'd give you the shirt off her back.

Garnell Whitfield Jr., whose 86-year-old mother Ruth Whitfield was killed in the attack, said she had come to Tops after her daily ritual of visiting her husband of 68 years in his nursing home. In so many ways, for so many years, Whitfield Jr. said his mother had devoted her life to those she loved.

"That day was like every other day for my mom," he said Monday as he pondered how to break the news to his father.

Heyward Patterson, a 67-year-old deacon at State Tabernacle Church of God in Christ, was similarly doing the things he'd long been known for. He had just come from helping at his church's soup kitchen and now was at Tops, volunteering in the community jitney service that shuttles people without a ride to and from the store.

Pastor Russell Bell of the Tabernacle Church said he believed Patterson had been loading someone's

groceries into his trunk when the shots took him down.

"Anywhere he was, he was encouraging people to be the best that they could be," Bell said.

As customers arrived at Tops ahead of the shooting, their purpose was clear.

Roberta Drury, 32, was in search of something for dinner. Andre Mackneil, 53, came to pick up a cake for his son's third birthday. Celestine Chaney, 65, needed some shortcake to go with the strawberries she sliced.

For some in the store, it was likely a trip of necessity, to fill an emptied fridge or get a missing ingredient. For Chaney, though, it was more than some stubborn chore. Stores were her passion.

Her 48-year-old son, Wayne Jones, said he'd typically take his mother shopping each week, stopping at grocery store after grocery store in search of the best deals, with the occasional stop for a hot dog or McDonald's.

"We'd hit four or five stores looking for a deal," he laughed even as his face was wet with tears.

On Saturday, it was Chaney's older sister, JoAnn Daniels, 74, who accompanied her shopping, and the two sisters made a meandering trip through Tops' aisles. Chaney knew she needed shortcakes, but flitting around the store, she decided she wanted to make shrimp salad, too, giggling with her sister as they filled the cart. She surveyed the roast beef and complained about the price of rolls before taking interest in chicken legs.

"You done?" she finally asked her sister, who said she was.

Pops suddenly ricocheted. The sisters thought they were firecrackers, but others started running. They went to follow, but Chaney was knocked down. Daniels said she reached to help, but her sister said she was fine.

"I'm coming," Daniels said her sister assured. She thought Chaney was behind her.

It would be hours before she learned the truth, when her nephew saw the video of the shooting: Her baby sister, who had survived breast cancer and three surgeries for aneurysms, died on a trip to the grocery store.

Pope's recipe to heal his painful knee? A shot of tequila

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Doctors have prescribed a wheelchair, cane and physical therapy to help heal Pope Francis' bad knee. He has other ideas.

According to a viral video of the pope at the end of a recent audience, Francis quipped that what he really needs for the pain is a shot of tequila.

Francis was riding in the popemobile in St. Peter's Square when he stopped near a group of Mexican seminarians from the Legion of Christ who asked him in his native Spanish how his knee was doing. After he replied that it was "capricious," they told Francis that they admired his ability to smile despite the pain, and that he was an example for future priests like themselves.

"Do you know what I need for my knee?" Francis asked them from the popemobile. "Some tequila." The seminarians laughed and promised to deliver a bottle to the Santa Marta hotel where Francis lives.

The 85-year-old Argentine pope has been suffering from strained ligaments in his right knee for months, and on doctors' orders, recently has been using a wheelchair and a cane to get around so he can let it heal.

The limits on his mobility have spurred a predictable round of media speculation about his health and a future conclave, but a close collaborator recently said the pope is "better than ever" and is undergoing two hours of physiotherapy a day.

"He's in very good health and the same lucid reflection as always," La Plata, Argentina Bishop Victor Manuel Fernandez tweeted May 14 after seeing the pope. "(There's) a problem in one of his knees, but every day he has more than two hours of rehabilitation, which is producing results. For everything else, he's better than ever."

Francis recently pulled out of a planned two-day trip to Lebanon next month, citing the knee problem, but the Vatican has confirmed he will travel to Congo and South Sudan, as well as Canada, in July.

Today in History: May 18, Mount St. Helens erupts

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, May 18, the 138th day of 2022. There are 227 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 18, 1980, the Mount St. Helens volcano in Washington state exploded, leaving 57 people dead or missing.

On this date:

In 1652, Rhode Island became the first American colony to pass a law abolishing African slavery; however, the law was apparently never enforced.

In 1863, the Siege of Vicksburg began during the Civil War, ending July 4 with a Union victory.

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, endorsed "separate but equal" racial segregation, a concept renounced 58 years later by *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.

In 1910, Halley's Comet passed by earth, brushing it with its tail.

In 1927, in America's deadliest school attack, part of a schoolhouse in Bath Township, Michigan, was blown up with explosives planted by local farmer Andrew Kehoe, who then set off a bomb in his truck; the attacks killed 38 children and six adults, including Kehoe, who'd earlier killed his wife. (Authorities said Kehoe, who suffered financial difficulties, was seeking revenge for losing a township clerk election.)

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a measure creating the Tennessee Valley Authority.

In 1934, Congress approved, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed, the so-called "Lindbergh Act," providing for the death penalty in cases of interstate kidnapping.

In 1973, Harvard law professor Archibald Cox was appointed Watergate special prosecutor by U.S. Attorney General Elliot Richardson.

In 1981, the *New York Native*, a gay newspaper, carried a story concerning rumors of "an exotic new disease" among homosexuals; it was the first published report about what came to be known as AIDS.

In 1998, the U.S. government filed an antitrust case against Microsoft, saying the powerful software company had a "choke hold" on competitors that was denying consumers important choices about how they bought and used computers. (The Justice Department and Microsoft reached a settlement in 2001.)

In 2015, President Barack Obama ended long-running federal transfers of some combat-style gear to local law enforcement in an attempt to ease tensions between police and minority communities, saying equipment made for the battlefield should not be a tool of American criminal justice.

In 2020, President Donald Trump said he'd been taking a malaria drug, hydroxychloroquine, and a zinc supplement to protect against the coronavirus despite warnings from his own government that the drug should be administered only in a hospital or research setting. Moderna announced that an experimental vaccine against the coronavirus showed encouraging results in early testing.

Ten years ago: Social network Facebook made its trading debut with one of the most highly anticipated IPOs in Wall Street history; however, by day's end, Facebook stock closed up only 23 cents from its initial pricing of \$38. In his first meeting with President Barack Obama, French President Francois Hollande (frahn-SWAH' oh-LAWND') declared he would withdraw all French combat troops from Afghanistan by year's end.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump denounced the appointment of a special counsel to investigate his campaign's potential ties with Russia, repeatedly calling it an unprecedented "witch hunt" that "hurts our country terribly." Roger Ailes, who created and ruled Fox News Channel for two decades before being ousted for alleged sexual harassment, died in Palm Beach, Florida, at age 77.

One year ago: Palestinians across Israel and the occupied territories went on strike in a rare collective protest of Israel's policies; the action came as Israeli missiles toppled a six-story building in Gaza and militants in the Hamas-ruled territory fired dozens of rockets that killed two people. The New York attorney general's office said it was conducting a criminal investigation into former President Donald Trump's busi-

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ness empire, expanding what had previously been a civil probe. Actor and writer Charles Grodin, whose films included "Midnight Run" and "The Heartbreak Kid," died in Connecticut of bone marrow cancer at 86.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Priscilla Pointer is 98. Baseball Hall of Famer Brooks Robinson is 84. Actor Candice Azzara is 81. Bluegrass singer-musician Rodney Dillard (The Dillards) is 80. Baseball Hall of Famer Reggie Jackson is 76. Former Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., is 74. Country singer Joe Bonsall (The Oak Ridge Boys) is 74. Rock musician Rick Wakeman (Yes) is 73. Rock singer Mark Mothersbaugh (Devo) is 72. Actor James Stephens is 71. Country singer George Strait is 70. Actor Chow Yun-Fat is 67. International Tennis Hall of Famer Yannick Noah is 62. Rock singer-musician Page Hamilton is 62. Contemporary Christian musician Barry Graul (MercyMe) is 61. Contemporary Christian singer Michael Tait is 56. Singer-actor Martika is 53. Comedian-writer Tina Fey is 52. Rock singer Jack Johnson is 47. Country singer David Nail is 43. Actor Matt Long is 42. Actor Allen Leech is 41. Christian singer Francesca Battistelli is 37. Actor Spencer Breslin is 30. Actor Violet Beane is 26. Actor Hala Finley is 13.