

Groton Daily Independent

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The Groton Community Transit is taking a bus to Madison on Sunday for the high school baseball playoff game. The bus leaves at 11 a.m. For ride information, call 605-397-8661.

Saturday, May 21

10 a.m.: Emmanuel worship at Rosewood Court
SEAS Confession: 3:45-4:15 p.m., SEAS Mass: 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 22

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

Emmanuel: Worship, 9 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

Methodist: Communion Sunday: Conde Worship at 9 a.m., Groton worship at 11 a.m.

St. John's: Bible Study, 8 a.m.; worship, 9 a.m.; Zion worship, 11 a.m.

Monday, May 23

Senior Menu: Meat loaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, fruit, whole wheat bread.

6:30 a.m.: Emmanuel Bible Study

Noon: Senior Citizens potluck meeting at Groton Community Center

8:30 a.m.: St. John's Vacation Bible School

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



Tuesday, May 24

Senior Menu: Hot pork sandwich, coleslaw, baked beans, fruit, ice cream sundae

8:30 a.m.: St. John's Vacation Bible School

9:30 a.m.: Methodist Bible Study

5:30 p.m.: Jr. Teeners host Milbank, DH

Wednesday, May 25

Senior Menu: Stir fry beef with rice, oriental blend vegetables, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m., UMYF with bonfire at parsonage and games and food, 7 p.m.

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.: Swimming Lesson Sign-up and Pass Purchase Pre-sale at the Swimming Pool

8:30 a.m.: St. John's Vacation Bible School

5:30 p.m.: Legion hosts Northville, 1 game.

7 p.m.: Jr. Legion hosts Northville, 1 game

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Groton Track qualifies for state in nine events

The state track meet will be held May 26-28 in Sioux Falls. Some Groton athletes fell out of the top 24 while some Groton improved their times at the region track meet to stay or move up in the state rankings. Here are the events that Groton Area will participate at the state track meet.

The girls 1600m Relay Team of Jerica Locke, Kennedy Hansen, Kella Tracy and Laila Roberts) qualified for state with a time of 4:18.31 set at the region track meet. They are rated eighth in the state.

The girls 3200m Relay Team of Kella Tracy, Faith Traphagen, Taryn Traphagen and Rylee Dunker qualified for state with a time of 10:31.55 set at the region track meet. They are rated 20th in the state.

The girls Sprint Medley Relay Team of Laila Roberts, Kennedy Hansen, Jerica Locke and Faith Traphagen qualified for state with a time of 4:36.02 set at the region track meet. They are rated 22nd in the state.

Aspen Johnson qualified for state in the triple jump. Her distance of 34-1.75 was set on May 6th. She is rated eighth in the state.

The boys 400m Relay Team of Kaden Kurtz, Keegen Tracy, Korbin Kucker and Teylor Diegel qualified for state with a time of 45.86 set on May 12th. They are rated 16th in the state.

The boys 800m Relay Team of Andrew Marzahn, Keegen Tracy, Kaden Kurtz and Teylor Diegel qualified for state with a time of 1:35.44 set at the region track meet. They are rated 19th in the state.

The boys 1600m Relay Team of Keegen Tracy, Kaden Kurtz, Andrew Marzahn and Cole Simon qualified for state with a time of 3:37.95 set at the region track meet. They are rated 16th in the state.

The boys 3200m Relay Team of Cole Simon, Keegen Tracy, Jacob Lewandowski and Lane Tietz qualified for state with a time of 8:53.99 set at the region track meet. They are rated 20th in the state.

Jackson Cogley qualified for state in the high jump with a height of 5-9 set May 12th. He is tied for 23rd in the state with seven other athletes.



High gas prices not expected to slow down South Dakota tourism industry in 2022

Kylie Carlson

South Dakota News Watch

Even though fuel prices have hit an all-time high, state officials and business operators in the South Dakota tourism industry remain optimistic that the summer of 2022 will be another record-setting season for visitors and revenues.

Tourism industry experts say the post-COVID desire to travel, South Dakota's wide variety of tourist attractions and a reputation for great hospitality have overridden visitor concerns over high gas prices, at least so far in 2022.

Gas prices have been on a steady rise in recent months, and are well above what drivers paid for fuel last year.

On May 19, 2022 the national average price of regular unleaded gas was \$4.59 per gallon, according to the American Automobile Association. The South Dakota average was \$4.20 per gallon, AAA said, and all 50 states had an average price over \$4.00 per gallon on that date.

For comparison, the national average price on May 19, 2021, was \$2.90 per gallon of unleaded.

Deb Schuetzle, operator of the Hitching Horse Inn in Pierre, credits South Dakota's welcoming reputation as a big reason the state remains a popular tourist destination even during a time of soaring fuel prices.

"We really thought that maybe our gas prices may affect our tourism season, but thus far, it has not," said Schuetzle, who runs the four-room bed and breakfast inn. South Dakota has a "warmth and charm people just love," she said.

The Hitching Horse Inn has routinely been full this year and has had to turn some people away, Schuetzle said. "It has been really looking up ... and I'm probably ahead of last year. So I'm very, very pleased with that."

Tourism is among the state's largest industries, and many South Dakota towns and residents rely on visitor spending to maintain a thriving economy.

In its 2021 Economic Impact Report, the South Dakota Department of Tourism said 13.5 million people visited the state that year. Those visitors spent an estimated \$4.4 billion in 2021, an increase of 30% over 2020.

The industry generated \$354 million in state and local sales taxes in 2021. Visitor spending represents 5.1% of South Dakota's economy and supports one in every 17 jobs in the state. Tax revenue that tourism provides saves South Dakotan households \$980 per year in taxes, the department said.

"Tourism in South Dakota is a job-creating, revenue-generating industry that plays a vital role in supporting the state's economy year after year. It's not just valuable for the state of South Dakota, these efforts impact communities and families throughout our state," Katlyn Svendsen, spokeswoman for the



The operator of the Hitching Horse Inn in Pierre has had steady bookings so far in 2022 and has had to turn some potential guests away due to lack of vacancy. Photo: Courtesy Hitching

Horse Inn

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South Dakota Department of Tourism, wrote to News Watch in an email.

Key branches of the tourism industry include lodging, retail shopping and food and beverage sales. With fuel prices almost a dollar higher per gallon than in 2021, transportation may play a bigger role in the choices tourists make in 2022 but is not expected to result in a major drop in visits or revenues, Svendsen said.

"We may see shorter trips, less money being spent on food, beverage, souvenirs, etc. [But] we remain confident that our family-friendly, affordable state, featuring world-class outdoor adventure, will continue to draw visitors to South Dakota," Svendsen wrote.

Teri Schmidt, executive director of Experience Sioux Falls, which aims to attract visitors to the Sioux Falls area, said gas prices do not appear to be a major deterrent to visits to the region so far.

"Our visitor guide requests are up, the interest in Sioux Falls, the calls that we're getting ... those are all up. If those are any indication, we should have a really good summer again," said Schmidt. "South Dakota and Sioux Falls offer what people are looking for — the great outdoors, activities, events, culture, sports, our state kind of has it all."

Svendsen added that in the first quarter of 2022, the state was already outpacing 2019 visitors counts by 18%. She added that Arrivalist, a mobile geolocation tracking company, showed that South Dakota had the highest jump in overnight stays so far this year, with an 11% increase compared to 2019.

While the high gas prices are making travel more expensive, many visitors are continuing to make vacation plans.

The high price of petrol did not dissuade Duane Johnson and his wife Trish from taking a long driving vacation this month. The retired couple from Wisconsin stopped to fuel up in Rapid City on May 17 on their way home after visiting their daughter in Salt Lake City.

Gas prices were so volatile that the Johnsons paid \$3.80 a gallon when they left Wisconsin two weeks earlier to make the 2,600-mile round trip journey. In Rapid City, they paid \$4.48 a gallon for mid-grade unleaded gasoline. Unleaded cost them \$4.80 a gallon in Salt Lake City, Johnson said.

"How about that? Almost \$100 to fill up," said Johnson, who felt compelled to point out that he is not movie actor Dwayne Johnson, The Rock.

Johnson said the couple discussed the cost of gas before embarking on their vacation, but decided the desire to visit their daughter overrode their concern over fuel costs.

"The gas prices do affect us, but they haven't stopped us," he said.

The couple considered saving money by driving to Utah in their Toyota, which gets more than 20 miles per gallon, but took their gas-guzzling Chevy Silverado (14 mpg) because they wanted to bring a bed and other goods to their daughter and needed the cargo space.

Johnson said the couple's wanderlust will keep them on the road this summer, with trips planned to Montana and again to Salt Lake City. But if gas goes to \$6 a gallon or higher, Johnson said the pair will likely fly rather than drive, or perhaps cut back on travel altogether.

"What are you going to do?" Johnson said. "If you want to travel, you have to pay to do it."

According to 2022 fuel prices outlook published by Gasbuddy, a site that predicts and publishes fuel prices online, drivers may save a little at the pump throughout the summer months. The predicted rate



A recent fill-up in Rapid City cost Wisconsin tourist Duane Johnson nearly \$100, but the high price of gas has not prevented Johnson and his wife from taking a vacation this year.

Photo: Bart Pfankuch, South Dakota News Watch

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for May averaged \$4.25 per gallon with June falling to \$4.21, July at \$4.18, and \$4.23 in August.

Schmidt also highlighted that travelers within the state are just as important as those who come from far and wide.

"We want those long-distance travelers coming through, but equally as important are people in our region," she said.

"We're a weekend destination, and that is a lot of what helped us pull through COVID."

President Biden placed a ban on imports of Russian crude oil in response to Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine in February. Domestic oil producers are also ramping production back up after the events of 2020 dropped the demand for oil. In a White House briefing on March 31, Biden announced an unprecedented release of federal crude oil reserves at a rate of 1 million barrels per day for the next six months to help smooth out the market until domestic producers can keep up with the demand. However, across the U.S., drivers are still paying more per gallon than ever before.

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at SDNewsWatch.org.



Gas prices in mid-May, including at the Pilot gas station in Rapid City, were more than a dollar per gallon higher in 2022 compared to the year prior. Diesel prices are climbing even faster than prices for gasoline. Photo: Bart Pfankuch, South Dakota News Watch

GAS PRICES ACROSS THE GREAT PLAINS

Here are the average prices for a gallon of regular unleaded gas by state on May 17, 2022.

State.....	Price per gallon
Montana	\$4.30
Wyoming.....	\$4.26
South Dakota	\$4.17
North Dakota.....	\$4.13
Iowa	\$4.12
Nebraska.....	\$4.11
Minnesota	\$4.11

Source: American Automobile Association



ABOUT KYLIE CARLSON

Kylie Carlson is the 2022 recipient of the Jeffrey B. Nelson Investigative Journalism Endowed Internship, and is working

as a reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A native of Britton, S.D., Carlson is a 2022 journalism graduate from South Dakota State University.

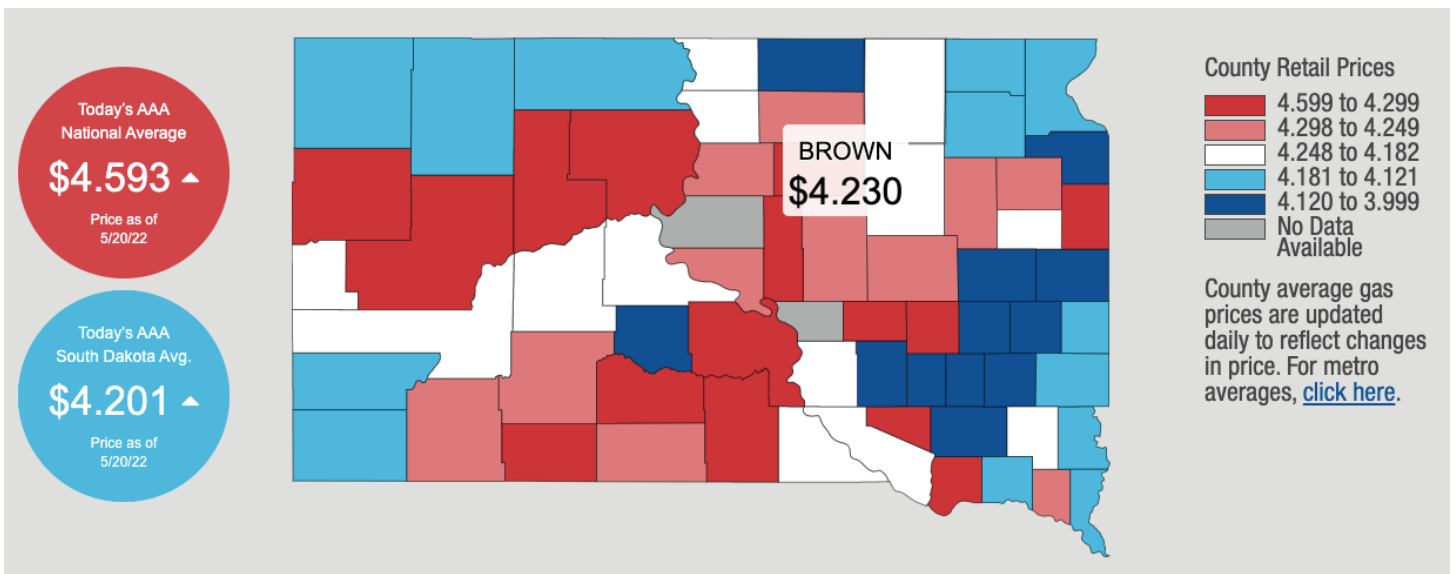
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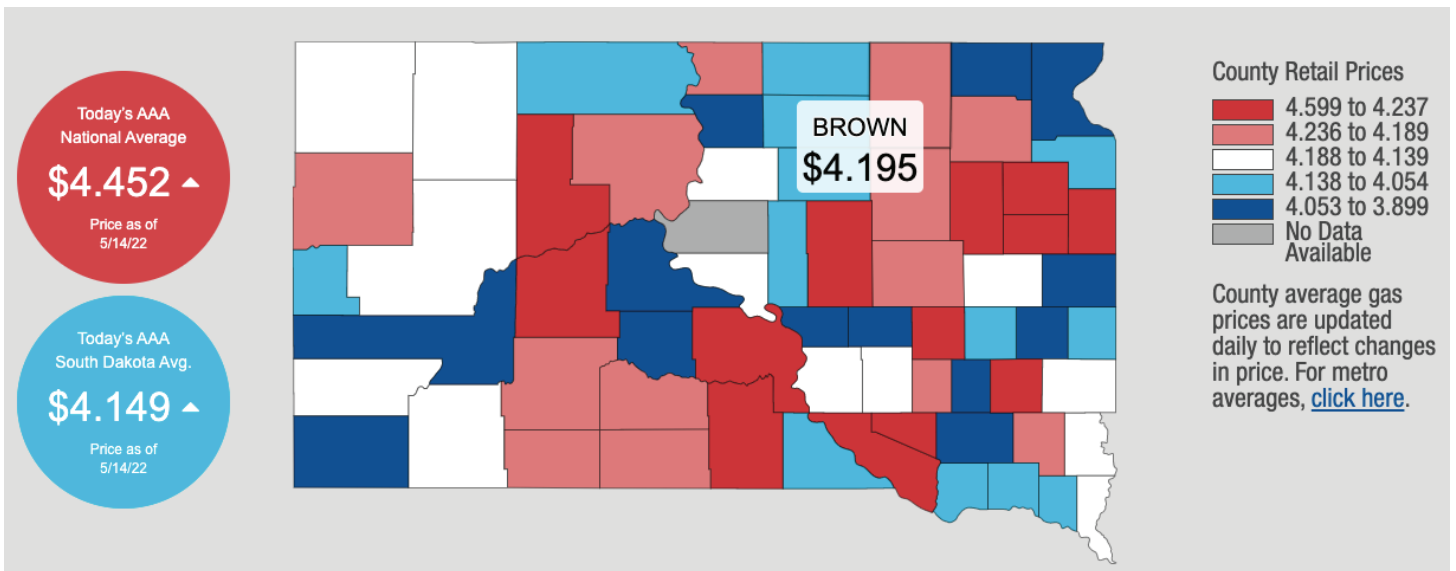
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$4.201	\$4.306	\$4.675	\$5.311
Yesterday Avg.	\$4.195	\$4.303	\$4.676	\$5.317
Week Ago Avg.	\$4.138	\$4.235	\$4.600	\$5.369
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.932	\$4.028	\$4.409	\$4.855
Year Ago Avg.	\$2.903	\$2.987	\$3.315	\$3.090

This Week



Last Week



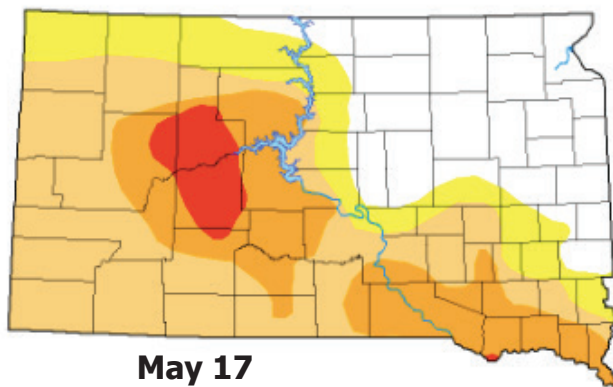
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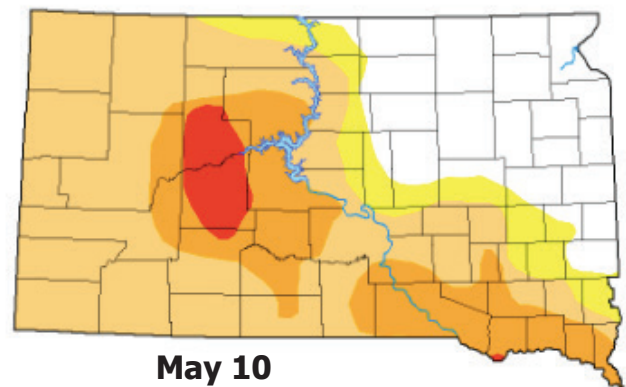
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



May 17



May 10

Northern and eastern parts of the High Plains were wet this week while western and southern parts were dry. Two inches to locally over 4 inches of precipitation fell over parts of North Dakota and eastern Montana, and half an inch or more was widespread over the Dakotas, northern Wyoming, and eastern parts of Nebraska and Kansas. But most of Colorado received no precipitation this week and very little occurred over southern Wyoming and western parts of Nebraska and Kansas. Moderate to exceptional drought expanded in Colorado, extreme to exceptional drought expanded in Kansas, extreme drought expanded in Nebraska, and abnormal dryness expanded in western Montana. To the north, abnormal dryness and moderate to severe drought contracted in North Dakota, eastern Montana, and northern Wyoming. Severe to extreme drought expanded in Meade County, South Dakota, to reflect impacts and moisture conditions that included low or no surface water, very short pasture and range conditions, and general poor vegetation. The widespread D3 degradations through southeast Colorado and into the San Luis Valley were a result of very dry and windy conditions over the last few months. According to USDA statistics, in Colorado, 52% of the pasture and rangeland and 45% of the winter wheat were in poor to very poor condition, and 41% of winter wheat in Kansas was in poor or very poor condition, with the statistics 77% for pasture and rangeland in Montana, 49% for pasture and rangeland in Wyoming, 44% for pasture and rangeland in South Dakota, and 41% for pasture and rangeland in Nebraska. The USDA statistics show 60% of Colorado's topsoil short or very short of moisture, 73% for Montana, 58% for Wyoming, 51% for Kansas, and 37% for Nebraska.

Formula Shortage

PIERRE, S.D. The South Dakota Department of Health (DOH) continues to work with SD WIC nutrition program participants to ensure access to safe formula alternatives as a result of the national formula shortage.

Abbott Laboratories voluntarily issued a recall of powdered formulas including Similac Advance®, Similac Total Comfort®, Similac for Spit-Up®, Similac Sensitive®, Similac Alimentum®, Similac EleCare®, and Similac PM 60/40® that were manufactured in Sturgis, Michigan.

To ensure infants are fed safely, parents and caregivers are encouraged to consider the following:

- Call the HelpLine Center at 211 to locate food distribution sites in your area that may have formula.
- Unless your baby is on a specialized formula for medical needs, consider using a different formula brand, including store brand.
- To increase breast milk supply contact your local Community Health Offices - SD Dept. of Health and work with a breastfeeding expert.
- [Click here](#) to learn about choosing an infant formula that's safe for your baby.
- Do not feed your baby cow's milk, goat's milk, or other non-dairy milk until 1 year old, unless approved by your child's pediatrician. These do not provide adequate nutrition for infants.
- Do not make homemade infant formula or watered-down formula. There are serious health and safety concerns.
- Do not buy formula online that comes from outside the U.S., which could be counterfeit. National efforts are underway to secure safe, imported formula for US retailers.
- Pay close attention to online retailers if purchasing formula. Make sure they are a legitimate, safe source and a verified seller of formula, especially with a possible increase of online scammers.
- Talk to your pediatrician about introducing complementary foods at 6 months or when showing signs of readiness.
- Purchase only the formula you need and do not stockpile. This will help make sure others have access to formula for their infants and allow manufacturers and retailers time to restock shelves.

More information about the Abbott formula recall, temporary alternative formula options, and ways to ensure infants are fed safely are available at – sdwic.org/news.

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Groton DI Team at Globals

Groton Area Destination Imagination Team NARRAN travels to Kansas City, Missouri to attend the Global Finals Tournament May 20-25.

Team members include Rachel Dobbins, Aurora Washenberger and Novalea Warrington and Laura Arth is the Team Manager. Groton Area DI Co-coordinators Julie Milbrandt and Joni Groeblichhoff are traveling with the team. The girls will present their solution to their challenge on Tuesday, May 24 at the Kansas

Locke graduates from Mitchell Technical College

Wyatt Locke, Groton, graduated on May 6 from Mitchell Technical College. His degree is Heating and Cooling Technology. There were 345 students who graduated from the college this spring.

Storybook Land opens in full on May 27, the Friday of Memorial Day weekend

While the park has been open for walk-through and play since April 22, the rides and concessions will open starting at 10 a.m. May 27.

Storybook Land is open daily 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day. These hours are subject to change based on weather and other factors.

While there's no bad time to visit Storybook Land, there are a few special weekends at the park:

FUNBook Friday: Memorial Day weekend at Storybook Land is May 27

Storybook Land Family Fun Weekend is June 11 & 12

Storybook Land Theatre starts June 21 with performances 10 a.m. Tuesdays and 7 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays.

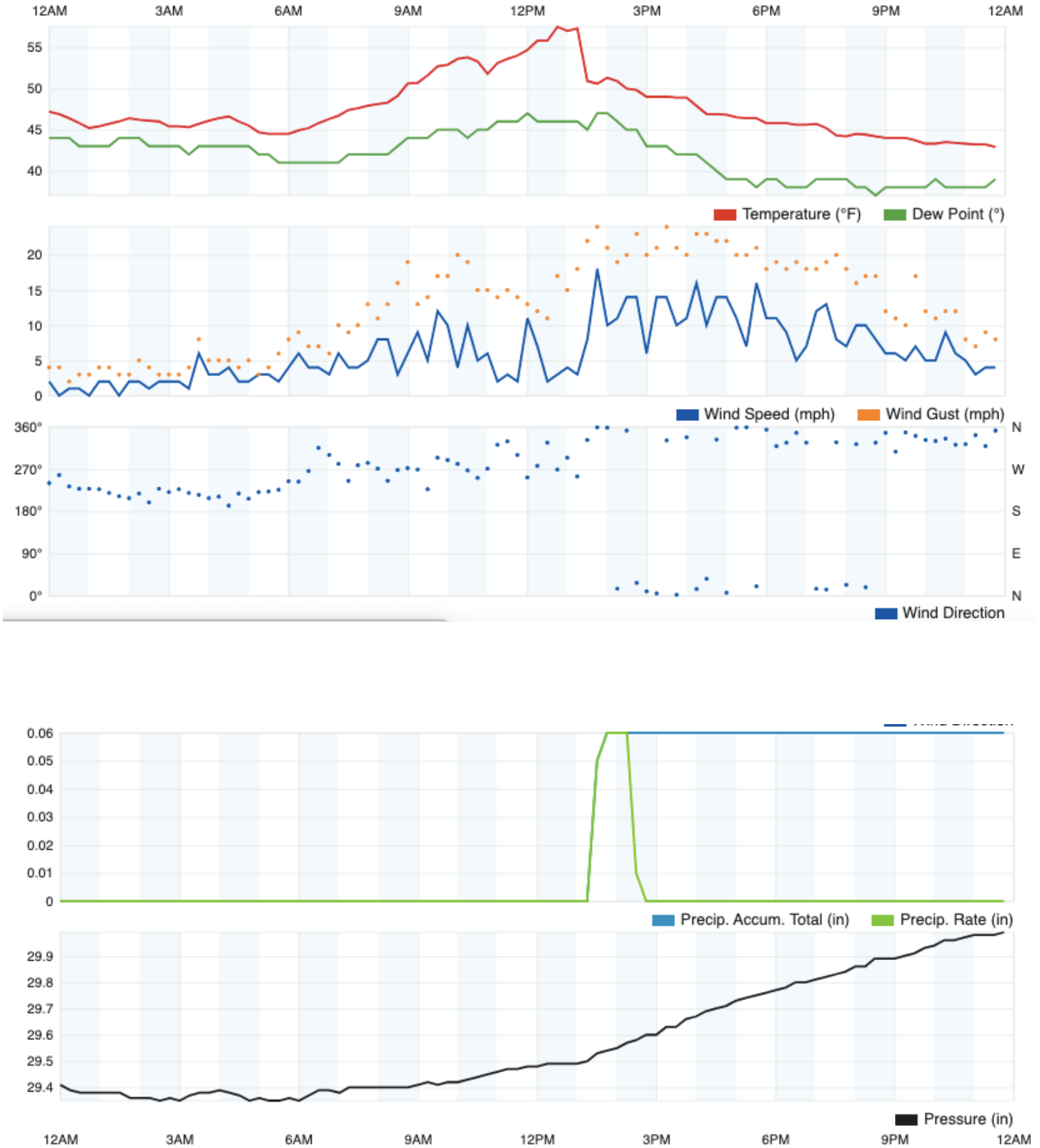
FUNBook Friday: Storybook Land is July 8.

Storybook Land Festival is July 15& 16.

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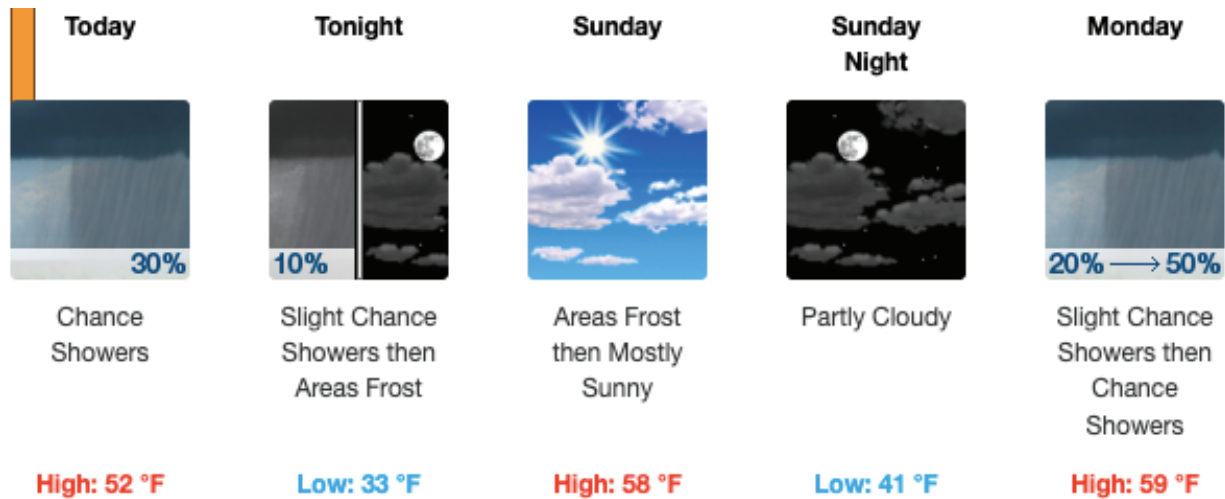
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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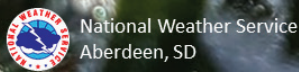


Feel that cold??? Your plants do too!



Lows tonight: 30-33°F

If you take your plants back outside Saturday, remember to bring them inside Saturday night.



Much of the area will see a chance of frost Saturday night as low temperatures dip into the low 30s along and west of the James River Valley. Any plants that were covered/taken indoors Friday night should be treated the same way Saturday night. Low temperatures are expected to be warmer after this.

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Today in Weather History

May 21, 1977: Observers south of Clear Lake saw five tornadoes. One was five miles south of town moving northeast. Another was four miles south and one mile west of Clear Lake. Both destroyed trees and some small buildings. Three other tornadoes were sighted about two miles south of town. These touched down only momentarily with no damage occurring.

Two tornadoes were seen in southern Codrington County. One was seen at Grover, and the other was five miles south of Watertown. No damage was reported.

A tornado was on the ground in the vicinity of Reville. A few barns and some outbuilding were damaged.

May 21, 1992: A severe thunderstorm moved over Northwestern Edmunds County causing high winds and penny size hail. In Bowdle, there was considerable wind damage. Tree limbs more than five inches in diameter were broken off and fell on a car. Other tree branches went through the roof of a home. Two pickup trucks were rolled on their side. Three miles ENE of Bowdle a garage was moved 20 feet off its foundation and was stopped by a large tractor.

1860 - A swarm of tornadoes occurred in the Ohio Valley. Tornadoes struck the cities of Louisville, KY, Cincinnati, OH, Chillicothe, OH, and Marietta, OH, causing a million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1881: Clara Barton and a circle of close friends found the American Red Cross.

1895 - The temperature at Norwalk, OH, dipped to 19 degrees to set a state record for the month of May. (The Weather Channel)

1896 - The mercury soared to 124 degrees at Salton, CA, to establish a U.S. record for May. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1949: A violent tornado crossed the Mississippi River from the St. Louis area into Wood River, then to Roxanna. This tornado damaged or destroyed 300 homes in these two towns, killing five people. Four people died in a destroyed restaurant in Palestine, Illinois; one body was recovered from a tree. A tornado causing estimated F4 damage killed five people and injured 55 in St. Louis and St. Charles counties in Missouri and Madison County in Illinois. This tornado was part of an outbreak that produced four different tornadoes and was responsible for five deaths and 57 injuries.

1980 - The temperature at Williston ND reached 102 degrees to set a record for May, and the next day the mercury hit 106 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Severe thunderstorms, developing along a sharp cold front crossing the central U.S., produced 60 mph winds and golf ball size hail at Sedalia, MO, and drenched Hagerstown, IN, with six inches of rain in one hour. Temperatures soared into the 90s ahead of the cold front. Paducah, KY, hit 94 degrees for the second day in a row. Light snow blanketed Montana, with three inches reported at Butte. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms swept across southern Louisiana during the morning hours spawning six tornadoes, and producing wind gusts to 88 mph at Jennings. Thunderstorms also produced five inches of rain in two hours at Lake Charles, causing local flooding. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms moving southeastward across the Central Plains Region into Oklahoma and Arkansas produced severe weather through the day and night. Thunderstorms spawned just four tornadoes, but there were 243 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Baseball size hail was reported at Augusta, KS, and thunderstorm winds gusted to 98 mph at Johnson, KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather across the southeastern U.S. for the second day in a row. Severe thunderstorms spawned five tornadoes, including one which injured a person at Richmond KY. There were eighty-seven reports of large hail or damaging winds, with hail three inches in diameter reported at Austin TX. Thunderstorms produced up to five inches of rain in Macon County GA, and heavy rains left nearly eight feet of water over roads near Stepstone KY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2001: Golfers participating in a golf tournament at the Majestic Golf Course in Hartland, Michigan received an urgent message on the G.P.S. on their carts. The message, relayed from the clubhouse, was that a tornado was bearing down on the course. Most of the golfers made it to safety in the clubhouse, although some had to take shelter on the course. Only one golfer suffered a minor injury. The F2 tornado damaged 70 cars in the parking lot along with numerous golf carts and a pontoon boat.

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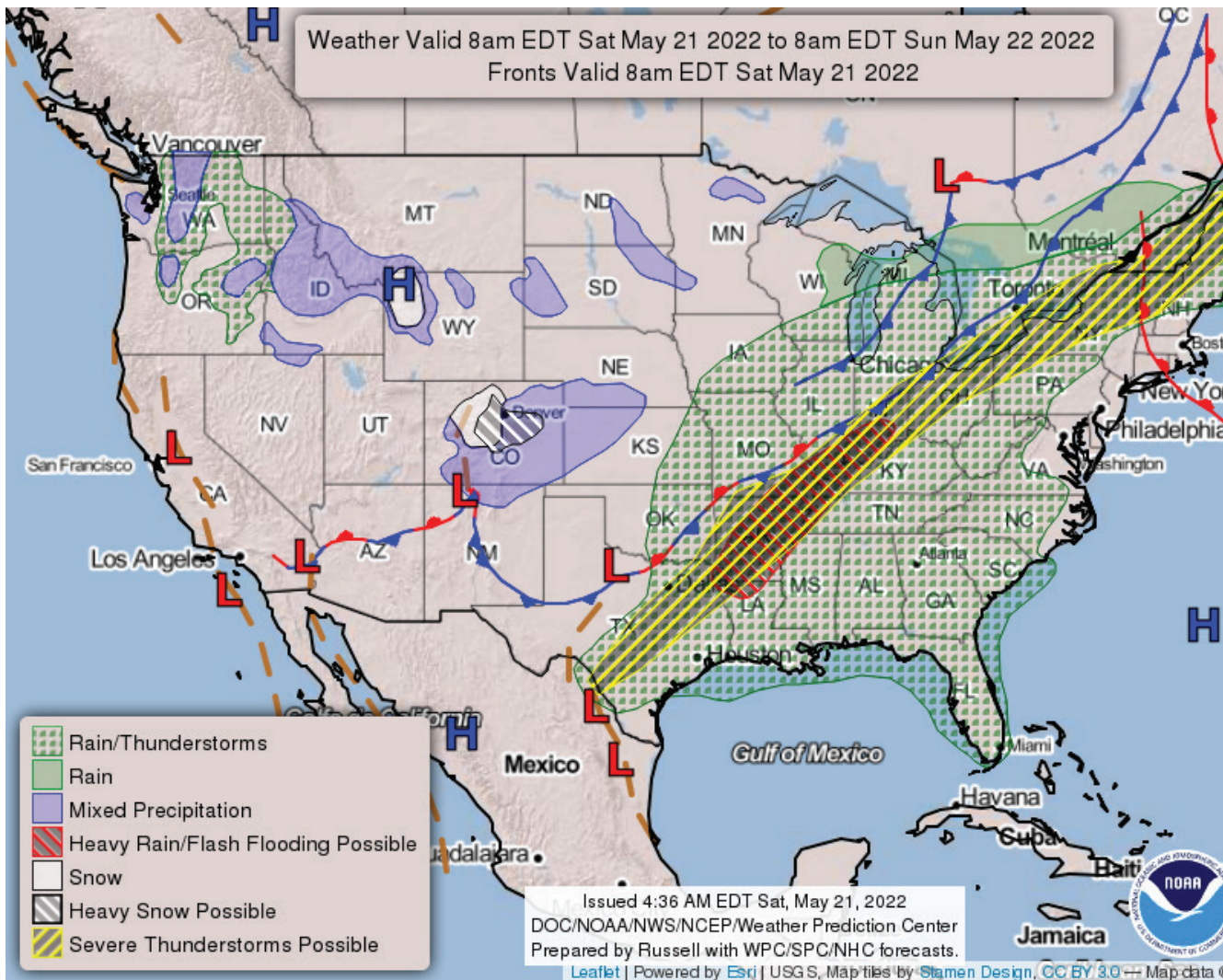
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 58 °F at 12:48 PM
Low Temp: 43 °F at 11:48 PM
Wind: 26 mph at 4:01 PM
Precip: 0.06

Day length: 15 hours, 10 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 94 in 1925
Record Low: 25 in 1895
Average High: 72°F
Average Low: 47°F
Average Precip in May.: 2.31
Precip to date in May.: 2.48
Average Precip to date: 6.28
Precip Year to Date: 8.98
Sunset Tonight: 9:04:30 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:52:36 AM



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HELPING HANDS

Years ago, there was a picture of a mother and father walking down a beautiful pathway holding the hands of their two small children who were walking with them. Underneath were the words, "Their Future is in Your Hands." That is true in a certain sense and to a certain degree.

David realized there was another hand that was far more important than the hand of any parent: "You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing." What did he mean?

God is sufficient to save. When he began to sink in swirling waves, Peter shouted, "Save me, Lord!" And He did. Immediately Jesus saw a person who was in need, and He reached out and saved him. He did it for Peter, and He will do the same for anyone who willingly calls on Him for salvation.

God is sufficient to supply every need that we have. Our God is a good and gracious God who is willing to meet the needs of those who depend on Him. God not only saves us by His grace, but His Word assures us that "God will supply our every need according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus." God does not give grudgingly, but generously, because His grace is endless!

God is sufficient to sustain us. Jude assures us that "He is able to keep us from falling and present us before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy to His Father." Are there any other words that bring more comfort in times of anxiety, adversity, or abandonment?

Prayer: Great is Your faithfulness, O Lord, to save us, supply our every need, and sustain us each day of our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Psalm 145:16

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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 Friday:

Mega Millions

33-40-59-60-69, Mega Ball: 22, Megaplier: 3

(thirty-three, forty, fifty-nine, sixty, sixty-nine; Mega Ball: twenty-two; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$143,000,000

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: 117,000,000

Atty. general: Sioux Falls officer cleared in fatal shooting

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's attorney general said Friday a Sioux Falls officer was justified in the fatal shooting of a man police say threatened them with a knife.

Cody Wade Kelly, 41, was killed after police conducted a welfare check at his apartment on March 31 because he had threatened to harm himself.

When officers arrived Kelly told them he had tampered with the gas lines, so police evacuated the apartment building's tenants.

Police found Kelly in a bathroom at his apartment armed with a knife and with bleeding wounds to his arms. An officer shot Kelly with a nonlethal bullet when Kelly ignored commands to drop the knife. It had no effect as he continued to hold the knife to his own neck. At this point Kelly told officers to shoot him.

Another officer then used a stun gun which caused Kelly to drop the knife.

As officers struggled to subdue him, Kelly was able to grab a knife again and began swinging at officers, stabbing one in the leg and threatening others, according to the Division of Criminal Investigation's report.

An officer drew his gun and shot Kelly multiple times. He remained conscious but was no longer physically resisting.

Officers gave Kelly medical aid and called for an ambulance. Kelly later died at the hospital.

Appeals court: Sex crime conviction stands in Sturgis sting

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — The 8th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled a sex crime conviction doesn't require that there's an actual victim.

The court this week upheld the conviction of a man stemming from a sting operation during the 2017 Sturgis motorcycle rally.

Carlocito Slim argued he was just looking for a massage when he responded to an ad on the Backpage website under the headline "Women Seeking Men." Slim was actually responding to an ad that was a sting setup and unknowingly texted a special agent with South Dakota's Division of Criminal Investigation.

The agent, posing as a pimp, told Slim he could meet a 15-year-old girl. And when Slim showed up at the assigned meeting place with condoms and \$200 he was arrested and later convicted of two federal felonies.

Slim argued there couldn't be a conviction because there was no pimp and no crime victim.

Defense attorney Terry Pechota told the judges his client simply didn't understand the text communications and was only looking for a massage, South Dakota Public Broadcasting reported.

"He doesn't ask about whether or not the girl is 16, or whether they're going to engage in any funny stuff or illegal stuff," Pechota said. "He says, 'Are you available? Do you offer a massage?'"

But Assistant U.S. Attorney Eric Kelderman said Slim knew what was going on and later told investigators he thought he was meeting a girl for sex.

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The appeals panel said case law allows a suspect to be charged if he or she intended to have sex with a minor, even if there was no actual minor.

MN utility commission: CO2 pipelines should be regulated

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Minnesota utility regulators have decided pipelines that carry carbon dioxide are hazardous and therefore subject to state approval.

The decision by the Public Utilities Commission Thursday affects two multibillion-dollar CO2 pipelines proposed to cross Minnesota and carry waste from several ethanol plants in the Midwest.

Commissioners interpreted a 1998 state law on pipelines that carry hazardous materials includes those transporting carbon dioxide. The decision initiates a rulemaking process that could take a year to complete. Actual approval of any CO2 pipeline could take months after that.

The companies seeking to build the pipelines disagree with the commission's decision.

The Midwest Carbon Express, proposed by Summit Carbon Solutions, would run for 150 miles in Minnesota, connecting to seven ethanol plants. The Heartland Greenway, proposed by Navigator CO2 Ventures, would run for 12 miles, linking to one ethanol plant west of Fairmont.

Commissioners left open a possible exemption for Navigator's pipeline since it only goes through one county, the Star Tribune reported.

The law "lists very specific materials" as hazardous for pipeline transport — and CO2 is not one of them, said Christina Brusven, an attorney representing Summit Carbon Solutions. "What I don't want is for the commission to engage in a yearlong rulemaking process only to find out the commission doesn't have the authority to regulate a CO2 pipeline."

CO2 is heavier than air, so if a pipeline ruptures it can displace oxygen and potentially cause breathing difficulties, rapid heartbeat, vomiting, headaches and impaired thinking.

Opposition party more likely to form Australia's government

By ROD MCGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — The opposition Labor Party appeared more likely than Prime Minister Scott Morrison's coalition to form government after Australia's election on Saturday that could result in a rare hung parliament.

Center-left Labor could still form a majority government, based on early vote counting, lawmakers and analysts said. But the coalition's only hope was to form a minority administration in a hung parliament.

"A Labor majority in our own right is, I think it's very clear, the most likely outcome of this election," senior Labor lawmaker Chris Bowen told Seven Network.

Former Defense Minister Chris Pyne, who retired from Morrison's government in the last election, also ruled out the coalition scoring enough seats to form a majority government. "The coalition can't get there in its own right, no," he said.

The government was seeking a fourth three-year term.

Opposition leader Anthony Albanese's party ended the six-week campaign as a favorite to win its first election since 2007. But Morrison defied the opinion polls in 2019 by leading his coalition to a narrow victory.

His coalition holds the narrowest of majorities — 76 seats in the 151-member House of Representatives, where parties need a majority to form a government.

In early counting on Saturday, the coalition was on track to win 38 seats, Labor 71, seven were unaligned lawmakers and 23 were too close to call.

Minor parties and independents appeared to be taking votes from the major parties, which increases the likelihood of a hung parliament and a minority government.

Australia most recent hung parliaments were from 2010-13, and during World War II.

A record proportion of postal votes because of the pandemic, which won't be added to the count until Sunday, adds to the uncertainty in early counting.

As well as campaigning against Labor, Morrison's conservative Liberal Party fought off a new challenge

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from so-called teal independent candidates to key government lawmakers' reelection in party strongholds.

At least four Liberal lawmakers appeared to have lost their seats to teal independents including Liberal Party deputy leader Josh Frydenberg, who had been considered Morrison's most likely successor.

"What we have achieved here is extraordinary," teal candidate and former foreign correspondent Zoe Daniels said in her victory speech. "Safe Liberal seat. Two-term incumbent. Independent," she added.

The teal independents are marketed as a greener shade than the Liberal Party's traditional blue color and want stronger government action on reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions than either the government or Labor are proposing.

The government's Senate leader Simon Birmingham was concerned by big swings toward several teal candidates.

"It is a clear problem that we are losing seats that are heartland seats, that have defined the Liberal Party for generations," Birmingham said.

"If we lose those seats — it is not certain that we will — but there is clearly a big movement against us and there is clearly a big message in it," Birmingham added.

The first polling stations closed on the country's east coast at 6 p.m. (0800 GMT). The west coast is two hours behind.

Due to the pandemic, around half of Australia's 17 million electors have voted early or applied for postal votes, which will likely slow the count.

Voting is compulsory for adult citizens and 92% of registered voters cast ballots at the last election.

Early polling for reasons of travel or work began two weeks ago and the Australian Electoral Commission will continue collecting postal votes for another two weeks.

The government changed regulations on Friday to enable people recently infected with COVID-19 to vote over the phone.

Electoral Commissioner Tom Rogers said more than 7,000 polling stations opened as planned and on time across Australia despite 15% of polling staff falling sick this week with COVID-19 and flu.

Albanese said he had thought Morrison would have called the election last weekend because Australia's prime minister is expected at a Tokyo summit on Tuesday with U.S. President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"If we get a clear outcome today then whoever is prime minister will be on a plane to Tokyo on Monday, which isn't ideal, I've got to say, immediately after a campaign," Albanese said.

Analysts have said that Morrison left the election until the latest date available to him to give himself more time to reduce Labor's lead in opinion polls.

COVID-19, shootings: Is mass death now tolerated in America?

By MICHELLE R. SMITH Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — After mass shootings killed and wounded people grocery shopping, going to church and simply living their lives last weekend, the nation marked a milestone of 1 million deaths from COVID-19. The number, once unthinkable, is now an irreversible reality in the United States — like the persistent reality of gun violence that kills tens of thousands of people a year.

Americans have always tolerated high rates of death among certain segments of society. But the sheer numbers of deaths from preventable causes, and the apparent acceptance that no policy change is on the horizon, raises the question: Has mass death become accepted in America?

"I think the evidence is unmistakable and quite clear. We will tolerate an enormous amount of carnage, suffering and death in the U.S., because we have over the past two years. We have over our history," says Gregg Gonsalves, an epidemiologist and professor at Yale who was a leading member of the AIDS advocacy group ACT UP.

"If I thought the AIDS epidemic was bad, the American response to COVID-19 has sort of ... it's a form of the American grotesque, right?" Gonsalves says. "Really — a million people are dead? And you're going to talk to me about your need to get back to normal, when for the most part most of us have been living

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pretty reasonable lives for the past six months?"

Certain communities have always borne the brunt of higher death rates. There are profound racial and class inequalities in the United States, and our tolerance of death is partly based on who is at risk, says Elizabeth Wrigley-Field, a sociology professor who studies mortality at the University of Minnesota.

"Some people's deaths matter a lot more than others," she laments. "I think that's what we're seeing in this really brutal way with this coincidence of timing."

In Buffalo, the alleged shooter was a racist bent on killing Black people, according to authorities. The family of 86-year-old Ruth Whitfield, one of the 10 people killed, channeled the grief and frustration of millions as they demanded action.

"You expect us to keep doing this over and over and over again — over again, forgive and forget," her son, former Buffalo Fire Commissioner Garnell Whitfield, Jr., said. "While people we elect and trust in offices around this country do their best not to protect us, not to consider us equal."

That sense — that politicians have done little even as the violence repeats itself — is shared by many Americans. It's a feeling encapsulated by the "thoughts and prayers" offered to victims of gun violence by politicians unwilling to change policies, according to Martha Lincoln, an anthropology professor at San Francisco State University.

"I don't think that most Americans feel good about it. I think most Americans would like to see real action from their leaders in the culture about these pervasive issues," says Lincoln, who sees a similar "political vacuum" around COVID-19.

With COVID-19, American society has even come to accept the deaths of children from a preventable cause. Pediatrician Dr. Mark W. Kline wrote in a guest column for The Advocate newspaper that more than 1,500 children have died from COVID-19, and recalled a time in pediatrics when "children were not supposed to die."

"There was no acceptable pediatric body count," he wrote. "At least, not before the first pandemic of the social media age, COVID-19, changed everything."

Gun violence is such a part of life in America now that we organize our lives around its inevitability, says Sonali Rajan, a Columbia University professor who researches school violence. Children do lockdown drills at school. And in about half the states, Rajan says, teachers can carry firearms. She notes that an estimated 100,000 people are shot annually and some 40,000 will die.

She sees similar dynamics in the current response to COVID-19. Americans, she says, "deserve to be able to commute to work without getting sick, or work somewhere without getting sick, or send their kids to school without them getting sick."

It's important, she says, to ask what policies are being put forth by elected officials who have the power to "attend to the health and the well-being of their constituents."

"It's remarkable how that responsibility has been sort of abdicated, is how I would describe it," Rajan says.

The level of concern about deaths often depends on context, says Rajiv Sethi, an economics professor at Barnard College. He points to a rare but dramatic event such as an airplane crash, which does seem to matter to people.

Sethi notes there are more suicides from guns in America than there are homicides, an estimated 24,000 gun suicides compared with 19,000 homicides. But even though there are policy proposals that could help within the bounds of the Second Amendment, he says, the debate on guns is politically entrenched, causing "paralysis."

"It divides us when people think that there's nothing they can do," says Dr. Megan Ranney of Brown University's School of Public Health.

Ranney points to false narratives spread by bad actors, such as denying that the deaths were preventable, or suggesting those who die deserved it. There is an emphasis in the United States on individual responsibility for one's health, Ranney says.

"It's not that we put less value on an individual life, but rather we're coming up against the limits of that approach," she says.

In truth, she says, any individual's death or disability affects the community.

Similar debates happened in the last century about child labor laws, worker protections and reproductive rights, while in the 1980s during the AIDS crisis, there a lack of political will to address it in an environment where anti-gay discrimination was rampant. Wrigley-Field notes activists were able to mobilize a movement that forced people to change the way they thought and forced politicians to change the way they operated.

"I don't think that those things are off the table now. It's just that it's not really clear if they're going to emerge," Wrigley-Field says. "I don't think giving up is a permanent state of affairs. But I do think that's where we're at, right at this moment."

Adoptions another facet of life halted by war in Ukraine

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

LEEDS, Maine (AP) — The ripple effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine have been devastating for families of all kinds — including those who have seen their prospective adoptions put on hold.

Ukraine was once one of the U.S.'s most frequent partners on international adoptions, but the war changed all that: The embattled country has halted all international adoptions as the country copes with the turmoil unleashed on its courts and social services. Many children, including orphans, have also fled or been displaced.

When the war started, there were more than 300 Ukrainian children previously hosted by American families that were seeking to formally adopt them, said Ryan Hanlon, chief executive officer and president of the National Council For Adoption. Representatives for adoption agencies said that means at least 200 families were at some point of the adoption process, which takes between two to three years in ideal circumstances.

But, the National Council For Adoption made clear in a statement, "this is not the appropriate time or context to be considering adoption by U.S. citizens."

That is because adoptions can only proceed with children who are clearly orphaned or for whom parental rights have been terminated, the group said, and establishing identities and family statuses is impossible for many Ukrainian children right now.

Jessica Pflumm, a stay-at-home mom who runs a smoothie business and has two daughters in the suburbs of Kansas City, is one prospective adoptive parent. She hopes to adopt Maks, a younger teen — Pflumm was reluctant to reveal his exact age because of safety concerns — whom they hosted for four weeks in December and January. Maks is now back in Ukraine, where his orphanage's director has moved him to relatively safety in the country's west.

"Every day is hard. We pray a lot and we try to think of what he is experiencing versus what we're experiencing," Pflumm said. "For us, it's hard, but nothing compared to what he's experiencing."

War, natural disasters and other destabilizing events have a long history of upending intercountry adoptions. And Ukraine is a big piece of the international adoption puzzle, Hanlon said.

International adoptions have declined in number in recent years, but they have stayed relatively common from Ukraine. In fiscal year 2020, it surpassed China to become the country with the most adoptions to the U.S., responsible for more than 10% of all intercountry adoptions to the U.S., Hanlon said. Ukraine has one of the highest rates of children living in orphanages in Europe.

There were more than 200 adoptions from Ukraine in 2020 and nearly 300 in 2019, according to statistics from the U.S. Department of State. Russia, meanwhile, banned adoptions of children by American families in 2013 (around 60,000 children from Russia had been adopted by Americans in the two preceding decades).

Many prospective adoptions begin with U.S. families temporarily hosting older Ukrainian children through a network of orphan hosting programs, Hanlon said.

"It's a very different experience if you've already connected with a particular child," Hanlon said. "There's a very visceral connection that these families have with their children, with having them in their homes."

Pflumm said she and her family do have a language barrier with Maks. He speaks only Russian, which they do not know. She said they communicate with him via phone, typing everything into Google Translate.

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A friend from Belarus sometimes interprets, she said.

Pflumm said the family truly bonded with Maks through experiences, above language. When he was in Kansas, he experienced his first Christmas opening gifts, she said. They also connected over sports, and Maks was introduced to baseball, Pflumm said.

These days, Maks hears air raids going on every night and is often unable to sleep, Pflumm said.

"He deserves to have a family, and to have opportunity in front of him," she said. "I feel like these kids are lost in the shuffle."

In rural Maine, Tracy Blake-Bell and her family hosted two brothers, now 14 and 17, for a month in 2020 through a Wyoming-based program called Host Orphans Worldwide. The family then began the formal adoption process — an already complex process further snarled first by the coronavirus pandemic and, now, war.

The brothers, who grew up in orphanages, are now relatively safe in a Polish facility, the Blake-Bells said. But the Blake-Bells, who have two teenage sons and a dog named Jack, want them home.

"My husband and I love these two children as much as we love anyone in the world," Tracy Blake-Bell said.

For most families, the wait is not going to end soon.

The State Department "is working with the Ukrainian government on resolving cases involving families who have final adoption orders but need to obtain other required documents for the child's immigrant visa processing," spokesperson Vanessa Smith said.

However, the Ukraine government maintains, per a March statement, that "under current conditions intercountry adoption is impossible."

The Blake-Bells are among about 15 families waiting on that final step of the process — clearance from Ukrainian court. And they said they're going to stick with it, as long as it takes.

"These boys are eligible," said Nat, Tracy Blake-Bell's husband. "Let them experience something a little bit more than an orphanage."

Poles need EU funds as they help Ukrainians, ambassador says

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Ukraine's ambassador to neighboring Poland says his nation is grateful for the welcome that Poles have given to millions of Ukrainian refugees, but he hopes the European Union will soon release billions of euros to Poland so that the assistance does not come "at the cost of the Polish people."

Ambassador Andrii Deshchytsia said that while there have been no real social tensions in the three months since Ukrainians began crossing into Poland seeking safety, he worries they could appear in the future given the large extent of Polish help.

The government has extended free medical care, education and other social services to the Ukrainians, while more than 80% of them are being housed in private Polish homes. Deshchytsia noted that Russian disinformation efforts online have included spreading the message that Ukrainians are getting better treatment than Poles themselves, and that while these efforts have not found fertile ground yet, he is concerned that problems could arise.

"I'm worried because I don't know where the limits of this hospitality, of the hospitality of Polish people, are," he said in an interview with The Associated Press on Friday. "It's a warm and healthy welcome. But how long they can keep them? And it's understandable for me, and it's also understandable for my compatriots. They understand that there are some limits."

Wider concerns are also at play. Poland is a major gateway for humanitarian aid and weapons from the West going into Ukraine, and it is working to help Ukraine transport grain and other food to world markets overland and through Baltic Sea ports.

The solution, as Deshchytsia sees it, is for the EU to release billions of euros of a pandemic recovery package. That would also have the benefit of preventing a large wave of Ukrainians getting frustrated in Poland and heading elsewhere in the EU, he argued.

While most of the 27 members of the bloc have gotten their funds aimed at helping countries recover

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from the economic effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, 36 billion euros earmarked for Poland have been blocked in a dispute over changes to the courts viewed as an erosion of democratic standards.

The main point of contention is a disciplinary chamber at the Supreme Court which has been a way for Poland's ruling conservative authorities to suspend judges whose rulings they don't like. The EU Commission wants the chamber abolished and suspended judges reinstated — something Poland has failed to do. The parliament next week is due to debate proposals to solve the crisis over the chamber.

Deshchytsia said that he wants both sides to seek a compromise, and that he is urging both the EU and Poland to make this happen.

"Poland has proven how effectively they can manage this wave of migrants, how effectively they can manage to use the money of their own budget, and how effectively they can provide assistance to the migrants," he said. "It will help both Ukrainians and Poles living in Poland. And we will get out of the possible tensions."

Deshchytsia estimates that there are now between 3 and 4 million Ukrainians in Poland, of whom some 1.5 million had already been working, studying and living in Poland before Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, and the rest have arrived since then. In a country with a population of 38 million people, this means that Ukrainians now make up somewhere around 10% of the population.

How many will stay remains unclear, and will be determined by how long the war goes on.

Poland's Border Guard agency has registered some 3.5 million crossings from Ukraine to Poland since the war began, and more than 1.4 million the other way. Of those who arrive in Poland, some have headed to other countries, but a large percentage have chosen to remain in Poland, where many have friends or family and share cultural and linguistic links with Poles. Many also want to remain close to Ukraine, hoping to return.

The ambassador said he is often asked by Ukrainians if it's OK to return now that Russian forces have been pushed back from the area around Kyiv and some other parts of the country. He has no good answer.

"It's very difficult to say, should you go back to your home or not, because the situation is not stable yet. So I might encourage you to go to Lviv, which is far from the front line. But in one day Lviv could be bombed as it was two or three days ago, and the rocket might come to your house or your car," he said.

Poland and Ukraine have seen their ties strained in the past due to remaining tensions over ethnic blood-letting in the 20th century. The ambassador says this has "changed dramatically" as the Russian threat has united Poles and Ukrainians.

In one sign of Polish support, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and President Andrzej Duda will intensify their lobbying for the EU to grant Ukraine the status of EU candidate at a June 23–24 summit.

Since the war began, the ambassador says he is often stopped by people on the street who thank him for the Ukrainian resistance to Russia. He says they tell him: "You are fighting for your and our freedom ... we will be supporting you as long as needed."

US, SKorea open to expanded military drills to deter North

By AAMER MADHANI and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — U.S. President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said after meeting Saturday that they will consider expanded joint military exercises to deter the nuclear threat from North Korea at a time when there's little hope of real diplomacy on the matter.

The announcement reflects a shift in direction by both leaders from their predecessors: Former U.S. President Donald Trump had considered scrapping the exercises and expressed affection for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. And the last South Korean president, Moon Jae-in, remained committed to dialogue with Kim to the end of his term despite being repeatedly rebuffed by the North.

Biden said cooperation between the U.S. and South Korea shows "our readiness to take on all threats together."

North Korea, which has defended its nuclear weapons and missile development as a necessary deterrence against what it describes as U.S. threats, could well respond angrily to Saturday's announcement. It

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has long described joint military exercises as rehearsals for an invasion, although the allies have portrayed the drills as defensive.

Biden and Yoon affirmed in remarks at a joint news conference that their shared goal is the complete denuclearization of North Korea. The U.S. and South Korea said in a joint statement that they were committed to a "rules-based international order" following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The statement likely sets the stage for how the U.S. and its allies will address any challenges with North Korea.

Yet Biden also reiterated his offer of vaccines to North Korea as the coronavirus spreads at a dangerously fast speed through that country, including an offer to route them through China if that was more acceptable to North Korea. Asked if he would be willing to meet with Kim Jong Un, Biden said that would depend on whether the North Korean leader was "sincere" and "serious."

"Yes, we've offered vaccines, not only to North Korea but China as well," Biden said. "We're prepared to do that immediately. We've gotten no response."

The division of the Korean Peninsula after World War II has led to two radically different countries. In South Korea, Biden is touring factories for computer chips and next-generation autos in a democracy and engaging in talks for greater cooperation. But in the North, there is a deadly coronavirus outbreak in a largely unvaccinated autocracy that can best command the world's attention by flexing its nuclear capabilities.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One as Biden flew to South Korea, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said the U.S. has coordinated with Seoul and Tokyo on how they'll respond should the North conduct a nuclear test or missile strike while Biden is in the region or soon after. Sullivan also spoke with his Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi earlier in the week and urged Beijing to use its influence to persuade the North to cease the tests.

As part of a five-day visit in Asia, Biden spent Saturday developing his relationship with Yoon, who assumed office little more than a week ago.

The U.S. president on Saturday laid a wreath at Seoul National Cemetery, wearing white gloves and a somber expression as he also burned incense and then signed a guest book. Biden then greeted Yoon at the People's House for a nearly two-hour meeting followed by the news conference. The leaders capped the day with a dinner at the National Museum of Korea.

Yoon welcomed Biden with a toast, noting that the alliance "was forged in blood on the battlefield of the Korean War." He said this partnership would go beyond security in Korea to include cutting edge technology and a global strategic partnership, then drew a laugh from Biden by quoting Irish poet William Butler Yeats.

Biden reciprocated with a toast for the alliance to "flourish for all the decades ahead." Both men ended their toasts with the military motto, "We go together."

During the talks, both leaders emphasized economic security and growing trade relations as two Korean industrial stalwarts — Samsung and Hyundai — are opening major plants in the U.S.

Yoon, a political neophyte with no foreign policy experience, came into the talks with Biden less than two weeks after taking office looking to demonstrate his competency on the world stage. The U.S. president on Saturday also spoke by telephone with Moon Jae-in, South Korea's immediate past president. Biden thanked him for his close partnership, the White House said.

Biden faces growing disapproval within the U.S. over inflation near a 40-year high, but his administration sees one clear economic win in the contest with China for influence in the Pacific. Bloomberg Economics Analysis estimates that the U.S. economy will grow faster this year than China for the first time since 1976, a forecast that Biden highlighted at the news conference.

The U.S. has struggled to knit together a coalition of countries in Asia that can counterbalance China's growing strength, abandoning the trade deal known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership after a political backlash at home.

Biden sidestepped a question about resurrecting the agreement, but spoke about the potential for closer ties in the region beyond traditional allies like South Korea and Japan.

"Things have changed," he said. "There is a sense among the democracies in the Pacific that there's a need to cooperate much more closely. Not just militarily, but in terms of economically and politically."

Biden did not explicitly talk in his remarks about the need to counter China, but Beijing on Saturday of-

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ferred its own counter-messaging.

"We hope that the U.S. will match its words with deeds and work with countries in the region to promote solidarity and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, instead of plotting division and confrontation," Chinese envoy for Korean affairs Liu Xiaoming, said on Twitter.

At the start of the administration, many White House officials thought Kim's nuclear ambitions would prove to be perhaps the administration's most vexing challenge and that the North Korean leader would aim to test Biden's mettle early in his time in office.

Through the first 14 months of Biden's administration, Pyongyang held off on missile tests even as it ignored efforts by the administration to reach out through back channels in hopes of restarting talks that could lead to the North's denuclearization in return for sanctions relief.

But the quiet didn't last. North Korea has tested missiles 16 separate times this year, including in March, when its first flight of an intercontinental ballistic missile since 2017 demonstrated a potential range including the entire U.S. mainland.

The Biden administration is calling on China to restrain North Korea from engaging in any missile or nuclear tests. Speaking on Air Force One, Sullivan said Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping could hold a phone call in the coming weeks.

While Biden has made clear that he sees China as the United States' greatest economic and national security competitor, he says it is crucial to keep the lines of communication open so the two powers can cooperate on issues of mutual concern. North Korea is perhaps highest on that list.

White House officials said Biden won't visit the Demilitarized Zone dividing the Korean Peninsula during the trip. Instead, Biden will visit the Air Operations Center's Combat Operations Floor on Osan Air Base, south of Seoul, on Sunday.

Biden signs \$40B for Ukraine assistance during Asia trip

By AAMER MADHANI and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — President Biden on Saturday signed legislation to support Ukraine with another \$40 billion in U.S. assistance as the Russian invasion approaches its fourth month.

The legislation, which was passed by Congress with bipartisan support, deepens the U.S. commitment to Ukraine at a time of uncertainty about the war's future. Ukraine has successfully defended Kyiv, and Russia has refocused its offensive on the country's east, but American officials warn of the potential for a prolonged conflict.

The funding is intended to support Ukraine through September, and it dwarfs an earlier emergency measure that provided \$13.6 billion.

The new legislation will provide \$20 billion in military assistance, ensuring a steady stream of advanced weapons that have been used to blunt Russia's advances. There's also \$8 billion in general economic support, \$5 billion to address global food shortages that could result from the collapse of Ukrainian agriculture and more than \$1 billion to help refugees.

Biden signed the measure under unusual circumstances. Because he's in the middle of a trip to Asia, a U.S. official brought a copy of the bill on a commercial flight to Seoul for the president to sign, according to a White House official.

The logistics reflect a sense of urgency around continuing U.S. support for Ukraine, but also the overlapping international challenges facing Biden. Even as he tries to reorient American foreign policy to confront China, he's continuing to direct resources to the largest conflict in Europe since World War II.

Biden also signed an unrelated measure, one intended to increase access to baby formula at a time when supplies remain scarce in the United States. The legislation will allow government benefits from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children — better known as WIC — to be used to buy more types of infant formula.

EXPLAINER: Who were Mariupol's last defenders?

The Associated Press undefined

The Ukrainian forces who made a determined last stand in a Mariupol steel mill against Russian troops were a mixture of seasoned soldiers, border guards, a controversial national guard regiment and volunteers who took up arms in the weeks before Russia's invasion.

As Russia announced it had completed its takeover of Mariupol with the surrender of the fighters who served as the final obstacle, Ukraine's government did not confirm the city's fall. Earlier in the week, Ukrainian officials said its combatants in the Azovstal steel plant had completed their mission and were being evacuated, describing them as heroes who had fulfilled a grueling task.

Here's a look at these Ukrainian forces, who were taken prisoner by the Russians as they left the plant, and what they accomplished:

WHO WERE THE DEFENDERS OF MARIUPOL?

Russia's Defense Ministry said a total of 2,439 Ukrainian fighters from the steelworks had surrendered since Monday, including over 500 on Friday, according to Russian state news agency RIA Novosti.

The fighters who held out at Azovstal, for much of the nearly three-month siege of Mariupol with Ukrainian civilians who sought safety in the plant's underground bunkers and tunnels, came from a variety of different military and law enforcement units, according to Ukrainian officials.

There was the Azov Regiment, which is part of Ukraine's National Guard; the 36th Special Marine Brigade of Ukraine's Naval Forces and the 12th brigade of the National Guard. Border guards, police officers, and territorial defense squads formed shortly before the war supplemented their ranks.

The bulk of these forces were deployed to defend Mariupol, home to a strategically located port, at the start of the Russian invasion. Marines from the 36th brigade held the port and another large plant in Mariupol for more than a month, until they ran out of supplies and ammunition.

They moved to the Azovstal steel mill to join the Azov Regiment, a national guard unit with roots in the far right, and some of them were captured by the Russians.

WHY DOES RUSSIA LABEL THEM 'NATIONALISTS'?

In announcing Azovstal's seizure, the Russian Defense Ministry's chief spokesman referred to the Azov Regiment's fighters as Nazis and said their commander was taken away in an armored vehicle because of local residents' alleged hatred of him "for numerous atrocities."

No evidence has surfaced of the regiment mistreating Ukrainian civilians, hundreds of whom sheltered underground with the fighters. The regiment released several videos taken inside Azovstal that showed their members interacting with the civilians and giving children sweets.

Russian officials and state media repeatedly made negative assertions about the Azov Regiment.

The National Guard unit grew out of a group called the Azov Battalion, formed in 2014 as one of many volunteer brigades that rose to bolster Ukraine's underfunded and questionably led military in the fight against Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

That conflict broke out after massive protests drove Ukraine's Kremlin-leaning president from office.

The Azov Battalion drew its initial fighters from far-right circles and elicited criticism for some of its tactics. Its current members rejected accusations of nationalism and radicalism. Sviatoslav Palamar, the regiment's deputy commander, said in a recent interview from the steel mill that he preferred the term "patriotism."

WHAT DID THE DEFENDERS ACCOMPLISH?

As Mariupol became a symbol of the suffering and resistance of Ukrainians after Russia invaded their country, Ukrainian officials repeatedly stressed the role the fighters at Azovstal played in defending the city and stymying Russian progress elsewhere.

"The Ukrainian troops in Mariupol have already performed a feat, drawing the elite forces of the Russian army onto themselves and significantly slowing down the advance of the Russians in the southeast," Mariupol Mayor Vadym Boychenko said.

After the plant's defenders were instructed to end their fight, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the move was proper and humane because "Ukraine needs Ukrainian heroes to be alive. It's our principle."

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The ruined seaside city and the outgunned and outmanned Ukrainian fighters whose persistence frustrated Russia's objective to capture Mariupol quickly are now irrevocably etched into Ukrainian history, regardless of the outcome of the war.

The defense of Mariupol "will go down in history as Thermopylae of the 21st century," Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukraine's president, said as the fighters started leaving the plant. "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.

Palestinian teen shot in Israeli raid in occupied West Bank

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli troops shot and killed a teenage Palestinian boy as fighting erupted when soldiers entered a volatile town in the occupied West Bank early Saturday, the Palestinian health ministry and local media said.

The shooting, which Israel said came during a gunbattle with local militants, came at a time of intensified Israeli military activity in the northern West Bank town of Jenin in recent months.

The ministry identified the dead teen as Amjad al-Fayyed, 17. It said an 18-year-old Palestinian was in critical condition after being wounded by Israeli gunfire.

Local media reported that clashes erupted outside Jenin's refugee camp when Israeli forces stormed the area.

In a statement, the army said that soldiers opened fire after gunmen shot at them from a passing vehicle. It said the suspects also threw explosives toward the soldiers.

Israel has stepped up its military activity in Jenin in recent weeks in response to a series of deadly attacks inside Israel. Several attackers were from the Jenin area, which is known as a stronghold of Palestinian militants.

On May 11, a veteran Palestinian journalist for the Al Jazeera satellite channel was killed while covering an Israeli military operation in the Jenin refugee camp. Shireen Abu Akleh's family, the broadcaster, the Palestinian Authority and witnesses accused Israel of shooting the correspondent for the Qatari channel. Israel says there was a fierce gunbattle at the time, and it's not clear if she was killed by Israeli or Palestinian gunfire.

Israel has called for a joint forensics investigation. The Palestinians have refused, saying Israel cannot be trusted. They are carrying out their own investigation and say they will share their results with other countries, but not Israel.

Israeli military officials on Thursday said the military has identified a soldier's rifle that may have killed Abu Akleh, but said it cannot be certain unless the Palestinians turn over the bullet for analysis.

North Korea reports more fevers as Kim claims virus progress

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea said Saturday it found nearly 220,000 more people with feverish symptoms, even as leader Kim Jong Un claimed progress in slowing a largely undiagnosed spread of COVID-19 across his unvaccinated populace and hinted at easing virus restrictions to nurse a decaying economy.

The outbreak has caused concern about serious tragedies in the poor, isolated country with one of the world's worst health care systems and a high tolerance for civilian suffering. Experts say North Korea is almost certainly downplaying the true scale of the viral spread, including a strangely small death toll, to soften the political blow on Kim as he navigates the toughest moment in his decade of rule.

Around 219,030 North Koreans with fevers were identified in the 24 hours through 6 p.m. Friday, the fifth

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straight daily increase of around 200,000, according to the North's Korean Central News Agency, which attributed the information to the government's anti-virus headquarters.

North Korea said more than 2.4 million people have fallen ill and 66 people have died since an unidentified fever began quickly spreading in late April, although the country has only been able to identify a handful of those cases as COVID-19 due to a lack of testing supplies. After maintaining a dubious claim for 2 1/2 years that it had perfectly blocked the virus from entering its territory, the North admitted to omicron infections last week.

Amid a paucity of public health tools, the North has mobilized more than a million health workers to find people with fevers and isolate them at quarantine facilities. Kim also imposed strict restrictions on travel between cities and towns and mobilized thousands of troops to help with the transport of medicine to pharmacies in the country's capital, Pyongyang, which has been the center of the outbreak.

During a ruling party Politburo meeting on Saturday, Kim insisted the country was starting to bring the outbreak under control and called for tightened vigilance to maintain the "affirmative trend" in the anti-virus campaign, KCNA said. But Kim also seemed to hint at relaxing his pandemic response to ease his economic woes, instructing officials to actively modify the country's preventive measures based on the changing virus situation and to come up with various plans to revitalize the national economy.

KCNA said Politburo members debated ways for "more effectively engineering and executing" the government's anti-virus policy in accordance with how the spread of the virus was being "stably controlled and abated," but the report did not specify what was discussed.

While imposing supposedly "maximum" preventive measures, Kim has also stressed that his economic goals still should be met, and state media have described large groups of workers continuing to gather at farms, mining facilities, power stations and construction sites.

Experts say Kim can't afford to bring the country to a standstill that would unleash further shock on a fragile economy, strained by decades of mismanagement, crippling U.S.-led sanctions over his nuclear weapons ambitions and pandemic border closures. State media have portrayed an urgent push for agricultural campaigns aimed at protecting crops amid an ongoing drought, a worrisome development in a country that has long suffered from food insecurity, and for completing large-scale housing and other construction projects Kim sees as crucial to his rule.

The North's Rodong Sinmun newspaper said farm workers in South Hwanghae province were striving to achieve "miraculous results" in rice-planting to repay Kim, describing how their leader has donated his personal medical supplies to help with anti-virus efforts, which the newspaper said allowed workers to "rise like a phoenix."

The virus hasn't stopped Kim from holding and attending important public events for his leadership. State media showed him weeping during Saturday's state funeral for top North Korean military official Hyon Chol Hae, who is believed to have been involved in grooming Kim as a future leader during the rule of his father, Kim Jong Il.

North Korea's optimistic description of its pandemic response starkly contrasts with outside concerns about dire consequences, including deaths that may reach tens of thousands. The worries have grown as the country apparently tries to manage the crisis in isolation while ignoring help from South Korea and the United States. South Korea's government has said it couldn't confirm reports that North Korea had flown aircraft to bring back emergency supplies from ally China this week.

The North in recent years has shunned millions of vaccine doses offered by the U.N.-backed COVAX distribution program, possibly because of international monitoring requirements attached to those shots. The WHO and UNICEF have said North Korea so far has been unresponsive to their requests for virus data or proposals for help, and some experts say the North may be willing to accept a certain level of fatalities to gain immunity through infection.

It's possible at least some of North Korea's fever caseload are from non-COVID-19 illnesses such as water-borne diseases, which according to South Korean intelligence officials have become a growing problem for the North in recent years amid shortages in medical supplies.

But experts say the explosive pace of spread and North Korea's lack of a testing regime to detect large numbers of virus carriers in early stages of infection suggest the country's COVID-19 crisis is likely worse than what its fever numbers represent. They say the country's fatalities would be significantly larger than the official tally and that deaths will further surge in coming weeks considering the intervals between infections and deaths.

North Korea's admission of a COVID-19 outbreak came amid a streak of weapons tests, including the country's first demonstration of an intercontinental ballistic missile since 2017 in March, as Kim pushes a brinkmanship aimed at pressuring the United States to accept the idea of the North as a nuclear power and negotiating economic and security concessions from a position of strength.

The economic challenges and COVID-19 crisis are unlikely to slow his pressure campaign. U.S. and South Korean officials have said there's a possibility the North conducts another ballistic missile test or nuclear explosive test during or around President Joe Biden's visits to South Korea and Japan this week.

Nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang have stalled for more than three years over disagreements over how to relax crippling U.S.-led sanctions in exchange for disarmament steps by the North.

Curry, Warriors rally past Mavs for 2-0 lead in West finals

By JANIE McCAULEY AP Sports Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Luka Doncic had been dominating for most of the night, yelling in celebration and flexing his arms in Stephen Curry's house.

Then Curry and the Golden State Warriors delivered one of those signature third-quarter flurries that have defined so many of their postseason runs — with this one sparked by Kevon Looney.

Just like that, the Warriors are two wins from getting back to another NBA Finals.

"Night night," Curry declared as a 3-pointer went through the net in the waning moments.

Curry scored 32 points with six 3-pointers and eight more rebounds, Looney had a career-high 21 points and 12 rebounds, and the Warriors rallied past the Dallas Mavericks 126-117 on Friday for a 2-0 lead in the Western Conference finals.

"I feel honored just to be a part of the ride," Looney said.

Doncic scored 42 points and the Mavericks led most of the way before Golden State grabbed its first lead of the night on Otto Porter Jr.'s 3-pointer 18 seconds into the fourth. Curry could see a momentum shift at that moment.

"We have that attitude and spirit that we're never out of it," Curry said.

Doncic had 18 points in the first quarter, two shy of his 20-point Game 1 total. His 3-pointer with 13 seconds before halftime — the Mavs' 15th of the first half — made it 72-58 at the break and gave him 24 points.

Doncic even got a Twitter shoutout from Oakland's own MC Hammer: "Ok young Luka ... We see you."

But Golden State answered with a 25-13 third quarter to pull to 85-83 going into fourth — coming out of halftime with a performance reminiscent of those thrilling third quarters of past. The Warriors trailed by 19 at one point.

"We know how good they are as a third-quarter team," Dallas forward Reggie Bullock said. "It's just something that slipped away from us as the game continued to go on."

Doncic shot 12 for 23 and shined in a game of brilliant shotmaking — the Warriors finished 56.1% from the floor. In the first half alone, Dallas edged Golden State 52.3% to 51.2%, including a remarkable 55.6% to 53.3% from 3-point range.

"Against someone that good you're just trying to limit the easy stuff," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said.

Looney then had 11 points on 5-for-6 shooting in the third and Golden State outscored Dallas 68-45 after halftime.

"It's the Warriors. They have a great team. They're a championship team. We've got to adjust our defense," Doncic said. "... We were up 19, so it's a tough situation. But we can't look back. What happened,

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happened. So we've got to move on."

The series shifts to Dallas for Game 3 on Sunday. Golden State is two wins from a return to the NBA Finals for the first time since making five straight trips from 2015-19.

"We're on the road against one of the best teams in the league. It happens. They held serve," Mavs coach Jason Kidd said. "We've seen this in Phoenix so now we have to go back and just focus on Game 3."

Jordan Poole scored 23 points off the bench, Andrew Wiggins had 16 and Klay Thompson — held scoreless in the first half of the series opener — added 15 points for a second straight game. Golden State scored 62 points in the paint.

Jalen Brunson scored eight of the first 14 Dallas points on the way to 31. The Mavericks didn't have to see as much of Draymond Green, who picked up his fifth foul with 6:01 left in the third, then returned with 6:33 left before fouling out with 2:25 to go.

The teams tangled with 8:03 left in the second quarter in front of the Dallas bench. Warriors reserve Damion Lee closed out as Davis Bertans hit a 3-pointer from the corner and Bertans tripped Lee and sent him in a flip hard to the floor. Lee had to be held back by official Eric Lewis.

The players were issued double technicals.

In Game 1 two days earlier, Doncic faced smothering defense from Wiggins and shot just 6 for 18 and 3 of 10 from deep. Kidd expected a far better outing in Game 2.

Golden State continued to push the pace and committed 16 turnovers after 15 in the opener. At halftime, Kerr asked his team to settle down.

"I told them that if we developed some poise in the second half, that the game would come to us," he said. "But I thought we were so scattered in the first half. Maybe emotionally more so than anything. Dallas came out and just punched us."

RELIABLE LOONEY

Moved back into the starting lineup for the clinching Game 6 of the semifinals against Memphis, Looney shot 10 for 14 after making all five of his field goals in Game 1. He was one of five players to appear in all 82 regular-season games.

"He's been the rock in the inside for us," Porter said. "... When he's down there he's doing all the dirty work, cleaning up the rebounds."

Looney notched his second career postseason double-double.

"Tonight was my night to make a big difference and I just stepped up," Looney said.

TIP-INS

Mavericks: Dallas led by as many as 16 in the opening quarter. ... The Mavs were outrebounded again at 43-30 after a 51-35 disadvantage in Game 1. They committed one fewer turnovers with 12 after Doncic had seven in the series opener.

Warriors: G Gary Payton II — who broke his left elbow on a hard foul when Memphis star Dillon Brooks clobbered him May 3 on a fast break for a Flagrant 2, ejection and one-game suspension — is doing light individual work on court that includes shooting with his non-dominant right hand and will be re-evaluated in a week. ... F Andre Iguodala missed his ninth straight game with a disc injury in his neck is continuing his rehab with physical therapy and training in the weight room with some light on-court work. The Warriors said they will provide an update when he's cleared to practice. ... Golden State improved to 8-0 at home this postseason and is 18-5 in Game 2s dating to the 2015 title run. ... Green was voted to the NBA All-Defensive Second Team.

Former Ohio prisons chief top contender to run US prisons

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The former director of the Ohio state prison system has emerged as a leading contender to run the crisis-plagued federal Bureau of Prisons, three people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

Gary Mohr, who has also worked in the private prison industry, is at the top of the list of candidates to

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replace Bureau of Prisons Director Michael Carvajal, who submitted his resignation in January but said he would stay on until a successor was named, the people said Friday.

A final decision has not been made and it's unclear when an official announcement would be put forward, according to the people, who were not authorized to speak publicly and did so on condition of anonymity.

Mohr would become the 11th person to lead the Bureau of Prisons since its founding more than 90 years ago, and only the second director with no prior experience at the agency, the Justice Department's largest.

The leadership change came in the wake of AP reporting that has uncovered widespread problems at the agency, including sexual abuse by correctional officers and critically low staffing levels that have hampered responses to emergencies.

A message seeking comment from Mohr was left with a criminal justice consulting firm where he's worked since last October as a senior fellow.

Mohr has spent nearly 50 years working in corrections, starting as a teacher in the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, the agency he led from 2011 to 2018. After his retirement, he served as president of the American Correctional Association, a nonprofit trade association and accrediting body.

Mohr has also been a prison warden and, between stints in the Ohio system, was a consultant and managing director for CoreCivic, formerly known as Corrections Corporation of America, an owner and operator of private prisons and detention facilities.

As head of Ohio's prison system, Mohr oversaw more than 12,000 employees and close to 50,000 inmates at 28 facilities. The Bureau of Prisons is budgeted for around 37,500 employees, operates 122 facilities and has about 157,000 inmates.

In Ohio, Mohr made reducing the state's prison population a priority and spearheaded efforts to reduce the number of first-time, nonviolent offenders behind bars. He managed to trim it by about 1,000 inmates in his tenure but, upon his retirement, said he was "extraordinarily disheartened" he couldn't do more.

Mohr also oversaw 15 executions and dealt with various crises, including the 2013 prison suicide of notorious Cleveland women abductor Ariel Castro; the brief 2014 escape of school shooter T.J. Lane; and the 2017 killing of an inmate in a transport van by another prisoner.

The union representing Ohio's state prison guards frequently clashed with Mohr, criticizing him and the agency for not doing enough to protect correctional officers and reduce violence.

Carvajal, 54, was appointed director of the federal Bureau of Prisons in February 2020 by then-Attorney General William Barr, just before the COVID-19 pandemic began raging in federal prisons nationwide, leaving tens of thousands of inmates infected with the virus and resulting in 295 deaths.

An agency insider who started as a correctional officer and worked his way up the ranks, Carvajal's tumultuous tenure as director included a failed response to the pandemic, widespread criminal activity among employees, critically low staffing levels that have hampered responses to emergencies, inmate deaths and dozens of escapes.

Carvajal also oversaw an unprecedented run of federal executions in the waning months of the Trump presidency that were so poorly managed they became virus superspreader events.

The AP's reporting exposing those problems compelled Congress to investigate and prompted increased calls from lawmakers for Carvajal to resign or be fired by Attorney General Merrick Garland.

The chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said Carvajal "failed to address the mounting crises in our nation's federal prison system, including failing to fully implement the landmark First Step Act," a bipartisan criminal justice measure passed during the Trump administration that was meant to improve prison programs and reduce sentencing disparities.

Garland tasked Deputy Attorney Lisa Monaco with leading the search for Carvajal's replacement. Officials went far and wide to try to find candidates outside of the typical profile of prior directors, even posting an advertisement on LinkedIn.

While many officials from inside the Bureau of Prisons applied for the post, the Biden administration was looking for someone who was focused on reforming an agency that has had cultural issues for decades.

Monaco personally conducted interviews and met with several of the candidates.

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Biden administration officials had discussions about whether to remove Carvajal in spring 2021, after the AP reported that widespread correctional officer vacancies were forcing prisons to expand the use of cooks, teachers, nurses and other workers to guard inmates.

The Bureau of Prisons is the only Justice Department agency whose director isn't subject to Senate confirmation. Currently, the attorney general can just appoint someone to the position.

A bill introduced in Congress days after Carvajal's resignation would require Senate confirmation for future bureau directors — putting them under the same level of scrutiny as leaders of the FBI and other federal agencies — but, so far, the measure hasn't come up for a vote.

New maps create challenge for women seeking reelection

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Democrats took control of the U.S. House of Representatives in 2018 thanks to a record showing by Democratic female candidates. Two years later, a record number of GOP women won seats, bringing the number of women in the chamber to a historic high.

But for some female incumbents running for reelection this year, holding their seats comes with a new challenge: redrawn congressional districts that will be tougher to win.

It's too early to know how many female representatives were hurt by the once-a-decade process known as redistricting — in which boundaries are redrawn based on census data to ensure similarly sized districts — because multiple states haven't finalized their maps. But in states with new district boundaries, the Center for American Women in Politics at Rutgers University found more than a dozen women so far who are running in significantly tougher territory. That's more than double the number who are in districts that will be significantly easier to win after redistricting, the analysis found as of this month.

The new maps mean some female representatives are seeking reelection against longer-serving incumbent men — or against each other, such as in Georgia's Tuesday primary, where two Democratic female incumbents are facing off. Ultimately, the new maps will be a factor in whether women maintain or grow their numbers in the next Congress to more accurately reflect the makeup of the country, a goal members of both parties have concentrated on. Currently, female representatives make up about 28% of the 435 House members, with Democratic women holding roughly three times the number of seats as GOP women.

Many of those women are already vulnerable because they were recently elected and don't have the advantages of longtime incumbency, such as fundraising and name recognition, said Kelly Dittmar, director of research for the center. They also often won in swing districts, areas more likely to switch from one party to the other.

"2022 is an important year to understand how these recently elected women are going to fare," Dittmar said.

In Illinois, which lost a seat in redistricting because of its shrinking population, the state's two first-term female representatives — one Democrat, one Republican — were among the 18-member delegation's biggest losers in the state's remapping.

Democratic mapmakers drew new boundaries that put Democratic Rep. Marie Newman and Republican Rep. Mary Miller into districts already represented by male incumbents. Both women chose instead to run in neighboring districts, against other men. (House members aren't required to live in the district they represent, though most do.)

Newman is a progressive who in 2020 unseated Rep. Dan Lipinski, one of the last anti-abortion Democrats in Congress. Last fall, Illinois legislators largely dismantled the Chicago-area district she represented as they created a new predominantly Hispanic district to reflect population gains. A large section of Newman's district was drawn into a neighboring district represented by two-term Democratic Rep. Sean Casten.

Newman's home, and the area immediately around it where she performed her best in 2020, were drawn into the heavily Hispanic district represented by Democratic Rep. Jesus "Chuy" Garcia. That, Newman said, "I took personal."

She thinks it was payback. "A lot of corporations, a lot of establishment people, they seem to still be

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mad at me," she told the audience at a fundraiser this month.

In an interview, Newman said she believes Democratic legislators responsible for the new map felt she was expendable because she was the most recently elected incumbent. She said it is "critically important" to have more women in Congress, especially at a time when abortion rights are under threat. The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 landmark ruling that legalized abortion nationwide.

"You can't have an unqualified person in there. But if there's a qualified woman, I think you really have to look at that and say, 'We need more of a women's voice in Congress, period,'" said Newman, who recently released a campaign ad in which she discusses having an abortion at age 19. "I am very confident if there were another 50 to 100 women in Congress and in the Senate, we would not be in this situation ... (*Roe*) would have been codified and unoverturnable."

Of course, not all women support codifying, or putting into federal law, the right to abortion. Among the fiercest opponents in the House is Miller, who said she was inspired by then-President Donald Trump to run for her southern Illinois seat in 2020.

Miller was drawn into the same congressional district as fellow conservative Rep. Mike Bost, for whom Trump campaigned in 2018. Rather than run against him, Miller opted to run in a nearby district against five-term Republican Rep. Rodney Davis, who supported a bipartisan commission to investigate the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. Trump has endorsed Miller.

Another female Republican, first-term Rep. Yvette Herrell of New Mexico, also was the victim of a partisan remap as Democrats who control the Legislature redrew her district in the southern part of the state to be significantly more Democratic.

It is not clear yet whether women were negatively affected by redistricting at a greater rate than male incumbents, many of whom also face more difficult elections, Dittmar said.

In some cases, women are being challenged by other incumbents whose districts were drawn to their detriment. That's the case in Michigan, where Democratic Rep. Andy Levin chose to run against Rep. Haley Stevens in her safe Democratic district rather than in the area he currently represents, which an independent commission drew to be more contested.

And in Georgia, at least one female incumbent will lose her bid for another term after Tuesday's primary. Reps. Lucy McBath and Carolyn Bourdeaux both flipped longtime GOP-held districts in the Atlanta area in recent election cycles. But after Republicans who control the state Legislature redrew McBath's district to favor Republicans, the two-term incumbent chose to take on the first-term Bourdeaux in a more Democrat-friendly district.

Some women are benefiting from the shakeup. In Oklahoma, GOP Rep. Stephanie Bice's district in the Oklahoma City area — previously held by Democratic Rep. Kendra Horn — was redrawn to be significantly more Republican.

For the candidates facing a tougher reelection, it is often familiar ground.

"I just have to prove myself again," Newman said.

Herschel Walker's ties to veterans program face scrutiny

By BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Herschel Walker, the football legend and leading Republican Senate candidate in Georgia, often boasts of his work helping service members and veterans struggling with mental health.

In interviews and campaign appearances, the former Dallas Cowboy and Heisman Trophy winner takes credit for founding, co-founding and sometimes operating a program called Patriot Support. The program, he says, has taken him to military bases all over the world.

"About fifteen years ago, I started a program called Patriot Support," Walker said in an interview with conservative commentator Hugh Hewitt last October. "People need to know I started a military program, a military program that treats (thousands) of soldiers a year," he told Savannah TV station WTGS in February.

But corporate documents, court records and Senate disclosures reviewed by The Associated Press tell

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a more complicated story. Together they present a portrait of a celebrity spokesman who overstated his role in a for-profit program that is alleged to have preyed upon veterans and service members while defrauding the government.

The revelation marks the latest example of a far more complex reality that lies beneath the carefully curated autobiography Walker has pitched to voters.

Walker's campaign would not make him available for an interview.

"So let me get this straight — you are demonizing Herschel for being the face of an organization for 14 years that has helped tens of thousands of soldiers suffering from mental illness," Walker spokeswoman Mallory Blount said in an emailed statement that also criticized the media.

Even before entering the race, Walker drew attention for his past mental health struggles, including allegations that he threatened his ex-wife's life. He's dramatically inflated his record as a businessman, as the AP previously reported. And his claim that he graduated at the top of his class from the University of Georgia, where he led the Bulldogs to a 1980 championship, was also untrue. He didn't graduate, as the Atlanta Journal-Constitution first reported.

Political candidates often gild their story and, so far, in the race for the Republican Senate nomination with the backing of former President Donald Trump, Walker's troubled background, falsehoods and contradictions have not carried a price. But if he wins Tuesday's primary, in which he holds a dominating lead, Democrats are likely to highlight unflattering parts of his story in what is shaping up as one of the fiercest fall contests, with control of the U.S. Senate in the balance.

"Walker has a troubled record, much of which Republicans have already been sounding the alarm on," said J.B. Poersch, the president of Senate Majority PAC, a campaign arm for Senate Democrats that pays for millions of dollars in attack ads. "A lot of the discussion on his record will carry over into the general election because voters deserve to know the truth."

Well before his candidacy, Walker received plaudits for his work with Patriot Support. His visits to bases were touted in military press releases. And in 2014, as a celebrity contestant on a Food Network game show, Walker won a \$50,000 prize to donate to his charity of choice, Patriot Support.

But Patriot Support is not a charity. It's a for-profit program specifically marketed to veterans that is offered by Universal Health Services, one of the largest hospital chains in the U.S. Walker wasn't the program's founder, either. It was created 11 years before Universal Health Services says it hired Walker as a spokesman, which paid him a salary of \$331,000 last year.

And the \$50,000 prize he earned from the Food Network didn't go to Patriot Support, but was instead donated to a Paralympic Veterans program in Patriot Support's name.

Court documents, meanwhile, offer a far more troubling picture of its care for veterans and service members.

A sprawling civil case brought against Universal Health Services by the the Department of Justice and nearly two dozen states alleges that Patriot Support was part of a broader effort by the company to defraud the government.

Prosecutors allege Universal Health Services and its affiliates aggressively pushed those with government-sponsored insurance into inpatient mental health care to drive revenue. That's because, unlike typical private insurers, government plans do not limit the duration of hospital stays for psychiatric care so long as specific criteria are met, making such patients more profitable, the government alleged.

To achieve this end, the company pushed staff at its mental health facilities to misdiagnose patients and falsify documents in order to hospitalize those who did not require it, according to court records. In other cases, they failed to discharge those who no longer needed hospitalization, according to the DOJ.

A lengthy 2016 investigation by the website BuzzFeed included interviews with former patients, including a veteran, who said they went to Universal Health Services seeking a consultation or counseling only to find themselves held in inpatient care, sometimes against their will.

Veterans and service members were a specific focus, according to court documents.

The company hired "military liaisons" to visit bases and develop relationships with military medical staff, treatment facility commanders and clinicians, court documents state.

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"To maximize the flow of military patients, UHS engaged in an aggressive campaign ... to market its 'Patriot Support program,'" a company whistleblower who ran the admissions program at a Utah hospital stated in a 2014 court document.

As a celebrity spokesman, Walker was part of the public relations blitz.

The company reached a \$122 million settlement in 2020 with the Department of Justice and the coalition of states.

Jane Crawford, a spokeswoman for Universal Health Services, denied the whistleblower's account of an aggressive marketing campaign to draw service members into the company's Patriot Support program. She also said some of the alleged conduct occurred before Universal Health Services purchased a group of hospitals operated by Ascend Health in 2012. Ascend Health ran a similar veterans' program called Freedom Care, which Walker was also a spokesman for.

Universal Health Services also denies the government's broader allegations and said it agreed to the settlement to "avoid the continuing costs and uncertainty of continued litigation."

Though Walker touts his role with Patriot Support on the campaign trail, there's no suggestion he was directly involved in any wrongdoing at the hospitals. The company declined to renew his contract this year and a detailed biography of Walker was removed from the Patriot Support website.

"Herschel Walker served as national spokesperson for our Anti-Stigma campaign from 2010 to 2021," Crawford, the company spokeswoman, said in a statement. "As a mental health advocate, Mr. Walker shared his personal journey to raise awareness and encourage others to seek help. He is no longer contracted with Universal Health Services."

Despite the steady stream of revelations about Walker, including his role with Patriot Support, some Republican strategists doubt they will hurt his chances in a general election contest with Sen. Raphael Warnock, who is Georgia's first Black senator.

Whit Ayres, a longtime Republican strategist who started his firm in Georgia, said Walker is "like a God" in the state.

"There are still kids who will wear Herschel Walker's football jerseys some 40 years after he played for the University of Georgia. So negative information will be heard with a heavy dose of skepticism," said Ayres. "That doesn't mean that some allegations won't penetrate somewhat, but they won't do anywhere near as much damage as to a normal candidate."

Biden risks troubled Americas summit in Los Angeles

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — While President Joe Biden travels in Asia, his administration is scrambling to salvage next month's summit focused on Latin America.

The Summit of the Americas, which the United States is hosting for the first time since the inaugural event in 1994, has risked collapsing over concerns about the guest list. Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has threatened to boycott if Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua aren't included. Unlike Washington, which considers the three autocratic governments as pariahs, Mexico's leftist leader maintains regular ties with them.

A hollow summit would undermine efforts by the U.S. to reassert its influence in Latin America when China is making inroads and concerns grow that democracy is backsliding in the region.

Now Biden is considering inviting a Cuban representative to attend the summit as an observer, according to a U.S. official who declined to be identified while speaking about sensitive deliberations. It's unclear if Cuba would accept the invitation — which would be extended to someone in the foreign ministry, not the foreign minister himself — and whether that would assuage López Obrador's concerns.

López Obrador reiterated Friday that he "wants everyone to be invited," but indicated that he was hopeful about reaching a resolution, adding that "we have a lot of confidence in President Biden and he respects us."

Even if López Obrador attends, there could still be a notable absence in Los Angeles: Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, who leads Latin America's most populous country, hasn't said whether he'll attend.

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The uncertainty is a sign of chaotic planning for the summit, which is scheduled to take place in a little more than two weeks in Los Angeles. Normally, gatherings for heads of state are organized long in advance, with clear agendas and guest lists.

"There's no excuse that they didn't have enough time," said Ryan Berg, a senior fellow in the Americas Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "This is our chance to set a regional agenda. It's a great opportunity. And I'm afraid we're not going to take it."

The National Security Council did not respond to a request for comment. Ned Price, speaking for the U.S. State Department, said the first wave of invitations was sent out Thursday, but there could be additions. He declined to say who had gotten invitations.

He said speculation about who was attending was "understandable," noting that Biden will be the first U.S. president to attend the summit since 2015, when President Barack Obama went to Panama.

President Donald Trump skipped the next summit in Peru in 2018, sending Vice President Mike Pence in his place.

"Our agenda is to focus on working together when it comes to the core challenges that face our hemisphere," Price said, including migration, climate change and the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

Cuba's participation is often a controversial issue for the summit, which has been held every few years and includes countries from Canada to Chile. The island nation was not invited to the first gathering in Miami, but Obama made headlines by shaking hands with Cuban President Raul Castro in Panama.

Questions about Biden's approach to Latin America are piling up when his attention has been elsewhere. He's taken a lead in responding to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, helping to forge an international coalition to punish Moscow with sanctions and arm Kyiv with new weapons.

Biden is also trying to refocus U.S. foreign policy on Asia, where he views the rising power of China as the country's foremost long-term challenge. He's currently on his first trip to the continent as president, visiting South Korea and Japan.

Berg argued that neglecting Latin America could undermine Biden's goals, since China has been trying to make inroads in the region.

"It's always been difficult for Latin America to get its due," he said. "But we're pretty close to being in a geopolitical situation where Latin America moves from a strategic asset for us to a strategic liability."

Instead of putting the finishing touches on the schedule for the Summit of the Americas, administration officials have been racing to ensure it doesn't devolve into an embarrassment.

Chris Dodd, a former U.S. senator from Connecticut chosen by Biden as a special adviser for the summit, spent two hours on Zoom with López Obrador this week.

There's also been a steady drip of announcements adjusting U.S. policies toward the region.

For example, the U.S. is moving to ease some economic sanctions on Venezuela.

In addition, administration officials said they would loosen restrictions on U.S. travel to Cuba and allow Cuban immigrants to send more money back to people on the island.

The discussion about Cuba's potential participation in Los Angeles reflects a difficult diplomatic and political balancing act.

Biden faces pressure to invite Cuba from his counterparts in the region. In addition to López Obrador, Bolivia's President Luis Arce has threatened to skip the summit.

But Biden risks domestic backlash if Cuba is included, and not just from Republicans. Sen. Robert Menendez, a Cuban American Democrat from New Jersey who heads the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is an outspoken critic of the Cuban government.

'Armageddon Time,' portrait of white privilege, stirs Cannes

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — When the Cannes Film Festival audience stood to applaud James Gray's richly observed autobiographical drama "Armageddon Time," about the director's own 1980s childhood in Queens,

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Gray's voice quivered as he addressed the crowd.

"It's my story, in a way," said Gray. "And you guys shared it with me."

"It took every last bit of control not to burst out into tears," Gray said, still recovering the next day in Cannes. "It's been a really strange journey making the film and my father died two months ago of COVID. The whole process has been fraught and filled with emotion."

"Armageddon Time," starring Anthony Hopkins, Anne Hathaway and Jeremy Strong, has stirred Cannes like no other American film at the festival this year. Gray's movie, which Focus Features will distribute in the U.S. later this year, has been received as a tender triumph for the New York filmmaker of "The Immigrant" and "Ad Astra" not just for his detailed excavation of his childhood but for how the film reexamines his own white privilege growing up — how race and money can tip the scales in the formative years of young people.

Paul Graff (Banks Repeta) is a sixth-grader modeled after the 53-year-old Gray in a middle-class Jewish family. At school, Paul's friend Johnny (Jaylin Webb) is a Black kid with fewer advantages, who's treated differently than Paul. When Paul's family elects to send him to a private school, the gap only grows. Connections to today's inequities aren't hard to decipher. At the private school, Jessica Chastain makes a cameo as Maryanne Trump, sister to Donald and an assistant U.S. attorney.

For Gray, "Armageddon Time" is period film about now, and a coming home after two far-flung films in the Amazon-set "The Lost City of Z" and the space adventure "Ad Astra."

AP: When did "Armageddon Time" start formulating in your head?

GRAY: I was at an art exhibit in Los Angeles five years ago. Painted on the wall it said: "History and myth begin in the microcosm of the personal." I had made this film before this where I went into space. It was a very difficult movie to make and a very difficult movie to complete. The end result was not fully mine. That was a very sad experience for me. I wanted to try to rediscover my love for the medium and why I wanted it do it in the first place. I said, "Screw it, I'll make the most personal film I can."

AP: You've called 1980 one of the most pivotal years in American history. Is that because of the election of Reagan?

GRAY: People don't remember that he campaigned in Philadelphia, Mississippi, which is where Goodman, Schwerner and Cheney were killed by the Klan. And he started talking about states rights. He knew exactly what he was doing. I understand he didn't come out and say the N-word. He didn't come out and be Trump completely. But that was his purpose. I feel like that was planting the seeds for a kind of corporatist, me-first, top-down, frankly rooted in racism idea of American capitalism that hasn't left us fully since. When you propose a system which is all about money, it has the basis of oppression built into it. It didn't start with slavery. It started with the indigenous people who were basically vaporized. We're very good at genocide.

AP: These aren't the normal inward-looking themes of memoir films.

GRAY: All of this is about what the actual economic structure of the country is. I felt that that would have power in a context that's very small, which is a kid's transfer from a public school to a private school and how we all do our part to (expletive) things up. In other words, "I'm going to make this ethical compromise now. I'm going to contribute to ethical compromise just a little bit."

AP: Were you thinking any of this when you were living through it as a kid?

GRAY: When I was a kid I never thought about the levels of capitalism, how if someone is up there, that means somebody's gotta be down there. I knew 48 kids in a class, something's wrong. But here's the thing: Why is it not a source of utter rage in our country that public education in our country is financed by local property taxes? They should be burning down state legislatures because of that. The system makes itself very happy by basically saying: Let's make a superhero movie but put a trans person in it. That's fine. That's excellent, whatever. But that doesn't solve the problem. You have to look at the system itself and understand that it is based on the brutal oppression of one group to survive.

AP: Your film received an enthusiastic reception here in Cannes. Have you thought about how it will be received stateside?

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GRAY: I'm sure there will be people who hate the movie. But as an American, I feel a particular sense of loss that we as filmmakers are not as willing to confront the ideas of class. One of the most amazing things about what Francis Ford Coppola did in that movie is how it presents such a vivid picture of the rot of capitalism. Look at "Jaws." That mayor will keep the beaches open no matter what.

AP: Were the Trumps actually involved in your private school experience?

GRAY: They sure were. If I had my high school yearbook, I would show you the board of trustees which had Frederick Christ Trump in the picture. He would walk the halls of the school. His daughter (Maryanne) gave a speech to the school which I had my brother recount the best he could and then I recalled the best I could and we compared notes. They were very similar.

AP: You're a filmmaker considered a classicist devoted to a personal kind of filmmaking for the big screen. Do you ever feel like one of a dwindling breed?

GRAY: It's my obligation to continue trying to do the work that I'm doing. Not out of ego or any feeling of "I'm the best" or anything but because the type of cinema that I like, I'd like to think there's at least somebody out there that likes it, too. And who is speaking for them? The question is: Are you going to pursue with passion what it is you dream about, what you hope for? Or are you going to give in? I'd love to be richer or more powerful or whatever. But if it's not to be, I'm OK with that. I'd rather just pursue my dreams.

In biggest victory yet, Russia claims to capture Mariupol

By ELENA BECATOROS, OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI and CIARAN McQUILLAN Associated Press
POKROVSK, Ukraine (AP) — In what would be its biggest victory yet in the war with Ukraine, Russia claimed to have captured Mariupol after a nearly three-month siege that reduced much of the strategic port city to a smoking ruin, with over 20,000 civilians feared dead.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to President Vladimir Putin the "complete liberation" of the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol — the last stronghold of Ukrainian resistance — and the city as a whole, spokesman Igor Konashenkov said Friday.

There was no immediate confirmation from Ukraine.

Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti quoted the ministry as saying a total of 2,439 Ukrainian fighters who had been holed up at the steelworks had surrendered since Monday, including over 500 on Friday.

As they surrendered, the troops were taken prisoner by the Russians, and at least some were taken to a former penal colony. Others were said to be hospitalized.

The defense of the steel mill had been led by Ukraine's Azov Regiment, whose far-right origins have been seized on by the Kremlin as part of an effort to cast its invasion as a battle against Nazi influence in Ukraine. Russia said the Azov commander was taken away from the plant in an armored vehicle.

Russian authorities have threatened to investigate some of the steel mill's defenders for war crimes and put them on trial, branding them "Nazis" and criminals. That has stirred international fears about their fate.

The steelworks, which sprawled across 11 square kilometers (4 square miles), had been the site of fierce fighting for weeks. The dwindling group of outgunned fighters had held out, drawing Russian airstrikes, artillery and tank fire, before their government ordered them to abandon the plant's defense and save themselves.

The complete takeover of Mariupol gives Putin a badly needed victory in the war he began on Feb. 24 — a conflict that was supposed to have been a lightning conquest for the Kremlin but instead has seen the failure to take the capital of Kyiv, a pullback of forces to refocus on eastern Ukraine, and the sinking of the flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet.

Military analysts said Mariupol's capture at this point is of mostly symbolic importance, since the city was already effectively under Moscow's control and most of the Russian forces that were tied down by the fighting there had already left.

In other developments Friday, the West moved to pour billions more in aid into Ukraine, and fighting raged in the Donbas, the industrial heartland in eastern Ukraine that Putin is bent on capturing.

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Russian forces shelled a vital highway and kept up attacks on a key city in the Luhansk region, hitting a school among other sites, Ukrainian authorities said. Luhansk is part of the Donbas.

The Kremlin had sought control of Mariupol to complete a land corridor between Russia and the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014, and free up troops to join the larger battle for the Donbas. The city's loss also deprives Ukraine of a vital seaport.

Mariupol endured some of the worst suffering of the war and became a worldwide symbol of defiance. An estimated 100,000 people remained out a prewar population of 450,000, many trapped without food, water, heat or electricity. Relentless bombardment left rows upon rows of shattered or hollowed-out buildings.

A maternity hospital was hit with a lethal Russian airstrike on March 9, producing searing images of pregnant women being evacuated from the place. A week later, about 300 people were reported killed in a bombing of a theater where civilians were taking shelter, although the real death toll could be closer to 600.

Satellite images in April showed what appeared to be mass graves just outside Mariupol, where local officials accused Russia of concealing the slaughter by burying up to 9,000 civilians.

Earlier this month, hundreds of civilians were evacuated from the plant during humanitarian cease-fires and spoke of the terror of ceaseless bombardment, the dank conditions underground and the fear that they wouldn't make it out alive.

As the end drew near at Azovstal, wives of fighters who held out at the steelworks told of what they feared would be their last contact with their husbands.

Olga Boiko, wife of a marine, wiped away tears as she said that her husband had written her on Thursday: "Hello. We surrender, I don't know when I will get in touch with you and if I will at all. Love you. Kiss you. Bye."

Natalia Zaritskaya, wife of another fighter at Azovstal, said that based on the messages she had seen over the past two days, "Now they are on the path from hell to hell. Every inch of this path is deadly."

She said that two days ago, her husband reported that of the 32 soldiers with whom he had served, only eight survived, most of them seriously wounded.

While Russia described the troops leaving the steel plant as a mass surrender, the Ukrainians called it a mission fulfilled. They said the fighters had tied down Moscow's forces and hindered their bid to seize the east.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, described the defense of Mariupol as "the Thermopylae of the 21st century" — a reference to 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.

In other developments Friday:

— Zelenskyy said Russia should be made to pay for every home, school, hospital and business it destroys. He called on Ukraine's partners to seize Russian funds and property under their jurisdiction and use them to create a fund to compensate those who suffered.

Russia "would feel the true weight of every missile, every bomb, every shell that it has fired at us," he said in his nightly video address.

— The Group of Seven major economies and global financial institutions agreed to provide more money to bolster Ukraine's finances, bringing the total to \$19.8 billion. In the U.S., President Joe Biden was expected to sign a \$40 billion package of military and economic aid to Ukraine and its allies.

— Russia will cut off natural gas to Finland on Saturday, the Finnish state energy company said, just days after Finland applied to join NATO. Finland had refused Moscow's demand that it pay for gas in rubles. The cutoff is not expected to have any major immediate effect. Natural gas accounted for just 6% of Finland's total energy consumption in 2020, Finnish broadcaster YLE said.

— A captured Russian soldier accused of killing a civilian awaited his fate in Ukraine's first war crimes trial. Sgt. Vadim Shishimarin, 21, could get life in prison.

— Russian lawmakers proposed a bill to lift the age limit of 40 for Russians volunteering for military service. Currently, all Russian men 18 to 27 must undergo a year of service, though many get college deferments and other exemptions.

Rare northern Michigan tornado kills 1, injures more than 40

By JOHN FLESHER and ED WHITE Associated Press

GAYLORD, Mich. (AP) — A rare northern Michigan tornado tore through a small community on Friday, killing at least one person and injuring more than 40 others as it flipped vehicles, tore roofs from buildings and downed trees and power lines.

The twister hit Gaylord, a city of about 4,200 people roughly 230 miles (370 kilometers) northwest of Detroit, at around 3:45 p.m.

Mike Klepadlo, who owns the car repair shop Alter-Start North, said he and his workers took cover in a bathroom.

"I'm lucky I'm alive. It blew the back off the building," he said. "Twenty feet (6 meters) of the back wall is gone. The whole roof is missing. At least half the building is still here. It's bad."

Emma Goddard, 15, said she was working at the Tropical Smoothie Cafe when she got a phone alert about the tornado. Thinking the weather outside looked "stormy, but not scary," she dismissed it and returned to what she was doing. Her mother then called and she assured her mom she was OK.

Two minutes later, she was pouring a customer's smoothie when her coworker's mom rushed in yelling for them to get to the back of the building, Goddard told The Associated Press by text message. They took shelter in the walk-in cooler, where they could hear windows shattering.

"I was crammed shoulder-to-shoulder with my seven co-workers, two of my co-workers' parents and a lady from Door Dash coming to pick up her smoothies."

When they left the cooler about 15 minutes later and stepped outside, they saw "some of our cars in pieces and insulation all over the ground," Goddard said. Three neighboring businesses were destroyed, she said.

Brian Lawson, a spokesman for Munson Healthcare, said Otsego Memorial Hospital was treating 23 people injured by the tornado and that one person was killed. He didn't know the conditions of the injured or the name of the person who died.

The Michigan State Patrol confirmed that one person was killed, saying in a tweet that more than 40 others were hurt and being treated at area hospitals. The patrol planned to hold a briefing Saturday morning.

"I've never seen anything like this in my life," Mayor Todd Sharrard said. "I'm numb."

Video posted online showed a dark funnel cloud materialize out of a cloud as nervous drivers looked on or slowly drove away, uncertain of its path.

Other video showed extensive damage along the city's Main Street. One building appeared to be largely collapsed and a Goodwill store was badly damaged. A collapsed utility pole lay on the side of the road, and debris, including what appeared to be electrical wires and parts of a Marathon gas station, was scattered all along the street.

The Red Cross set up a shelter at a church.

Brandie Slough, 42, said she and a teen daughter sought safety in a restroom at a Culver's. Windows of the fast food restaurant were blown out when they emerged, and her pickup truck had been flipped on its roof in the parking lot.

"We shook our heads in disbelief but are thankful to be safe. At that point, who cares about the truck," Slough said.

Eddie Thrasher, 55, said he was sitting in his car outside an auto parts store when the tornado seemed to appear above him.

"There are roofs ripped off businesses, a row of industrial-type warehouses," Thrasher said. "RVs were flipped upside down and destroyed. There were a lot of emergency vehicles heading from the east side of town."

He said he ran into the store to ride it out.

"My adrenaline was going like crazy," Thrasher said. "In less than five minutes it was over."

Extreme winds are uncommon in this part of Michigan because the Great Lakes suck energy out of storms, especially early in spring when the lakes are very cold, said Jim Keysor, a Gaylord-based meteorologist

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with the National Weather Service.

"Many kids and young adults would have never experienced any direct severe weather if they had lived in Gaylord their entire lives," he said.

The last time Gaylord had a severe wind storm was in 1998, when straight-line winds reached 100 mph, Keysor said. He said the conditions that spawned Friday's twister included a cold front moving in from Wisconsin and hitting hot and humid air over Gaylord, with the added ingredient of turning winds in the lower part of the atmosphere.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer declared a state of emergency for Otsego County, making further state resources available to the county.

Gaylord, known as the "Alpine Village," is set to celebrate its 100th birthday this year, with a centennial celebration that will include a parade and open house at City Hall later this summer.

The community also holds the annual Alpenfest in July, an Alpine-inspired celebration honoring the city's heritage and a partnership with a sister city in Switzerland.

Russia claims to have taken full control of Mariupol

By ELENA BECATOROS, OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI and CIARAN McQUILLAN Associated Press
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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Monday the evacuation of his forces from the miles of tunnels and bunkers beneath Azovstal was done to save the lives of the fighters.

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Russia "would feel the true weight of every missile, every bomb, every shell that it has fired at us," he said in his nightly video address.

— The Group of Seven major economies and global financial institutions agreed to provide more money to bolster Ukraine's finances, bringing the total to \$19.8 billion. In the U.S., President Joe Biden was expected to sign a \$40 billion package of military and economic aid to Ukraine and its allies.

— Russia will cut off natural gas to Finland on Saturday, the Finnish state energy company said, just days after Finland applied to join NATO. Finland had refused Moscow's demand that it pay for gas in rubles. The cutoff is not expected to have any major immediate effect. Natural gas accounted for just 6% of Finland's total energy consumption in 2020, Finnish broadcaster YLE said.

— A captured Russian soldier accused of killing a civilian awaited his fate in Ukraine's first war crimes trial. Sgt. Vadim Shishimarin, 21, could get life in prison.

— Russian lawmakers proposed a bill to lift the age limit of 40 for Russians volunteering for military service. Currently, all Russian men 18 to 27 must undergo a year of service, though many get college deferments and other exemptions.

Heavy fighting was reported Friday in the Donbas, a mostly Russian-speaking expanse of coal mines and factories.

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Serhiy Haidai, the governor of Luhansk, said Russian forces shelled the Lysychansk-Bakhmut highway from multiple directions, taking aim at the only road for evacuating people and delivering humanitarian supplies. "The Russians are trying to cut us off from it, to encircle the Luhansk region," he said via email.

Moscow's troops have also been trying for weeks to seize Severodonetsk, a key city in the Donbas, and at least 12 people were killed there on Friday, Haidai said. A school that was sheltering more than 200 people, many of them children, was hit, and more than 60 houses were destroyed across the region, he added.

But he said the Russians took losses in the attack on Severodonetsk and were forced to retreat. His account could not be independently verified.

Another city, Rubizhne, has been "completely destroyed," Haidai said. "Its fate can be compared to that of Mariupol."

Judge: COVID asylum restrictions must continue on border

By KEVIN MCGILL and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Pandemic-related restrictions on migrants seeking asylum on the southern border must continue, a judge ruled Friday in an order blocking the Biden administration's plan to lift them early next week.

The ruling was just the latest instance of a court derailing the president's proposed immigration policies along the U.S. border with Mexico.

The Justice Department said the administration will appeal, but the ruling virtually ensures that restrictions will not end as planned on Monday. A delay would be a blow to advocates who say rights to seek asylum are being trampled, and a relief to some Democrats who fear that a widely anticipated increase in illegal crossings would put them on the defensive in an already difficult midterm election year.

In Tijuana, Mexico, Yesivet Evangelina Aguilar, 34, cupped her face in her hands and sobbed when she learned of the decision from an Associated Press reporter. "I feel like there is no hope left," said Aguilar, who fled the Mexican state of Guerrero nearly a year ago after her brother was killed. "It feels so bad."

Aguilar was blocked by U.S. authorities from applying for asylum when she and her 10-year-old daughter went to the Tijuana-San Diego port of entry nine months ago. On Friday, she was lying in a tent at a Tijuana shelter where scores of migrants are camped. Some have been there for months or years. Aguilar's life in waiting has been not only tedious but dangerous. On Thursday night, a fellow migrant was shot in the neck by a stray bullet from a shootout outside the shelter.

Migrants have been expelled more than 1.9 million times since March 2020 under Title 42, a public health provision that denies them a chance to request asylum under U.S. law and international treaty on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

U.S. District Judge Robert Summerhays in Lafayette, Louisiana, ordered that the restrictions stay in place while a lawsuit led by Arizona and Louisiana — and now joined by 22 other states — plays out in court.

Summerhays sided with the states in ruling that President Joe Biden's administration failed to follow administrative procedures requiring public notice and time to gather public comment on the plan to end the restrictions. And he said the states made the case that they would suffer harm if the restrictions end.

The judge cited what he said were the government's own predictions that ending the restrictions would likely increase border crossings threefold, to as many as 18,000 daily. That, he added, would result in more migrants being processed in congregate settings where contagious disease can be spread. "The record also includes evidence supporting the Plaintiff States' position that such an increase in border crossings will increase their costs for healthcare reimbursements and education services. These costs are not recoverable," Summerhays wrote.

The White House said it disagreed with the ruling but would comply while it is appealed. "The authority to set public health policy nationally should rest with the Centers for Disease Control, not with a single district court," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

The case goes next to the New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which has ruled against key Biden administration policies in the past. The court is dominated by Republican nominees, including

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six nominated by former President Donald Trump, who also appointed Summerhays.

Title 42 largely affects people from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, many of whom have been waiting in Mexican border towns after being denied the right to seek asylum by the U.S. government. Mexico has agreed to accept migrants from those three Central American countries who were turned back by the U.S. and last month also started taking in limited numbers of Cubans and Nicaraguans.

About 15 migrants crossed the Río Grande to Eagle Pass, Texas, in waist-deep water minutes after the ruling Friday. They included Nicaraguans who were unaware of Title 42 and who were pleased that people from their country were generally spared from the policy.

"Thank God we have that advantage," said Maynor Zuniga, 25, who was all smiles while waiting under an international bridge to Piedras Negras, Mexico, for Border Patrol agents to arrive.

Title 42 is the second major Trump-era policy to deter asylum at the Mexican border that was jettisoned by Biden, only to be revived by a Trump-appointed judge.

An American Civil Liberties Union attorney derided the decision.

"Title 42 may only be used for public health purposes, but the States that brought this lawsuit appear to care only about COVID restrictions when they involve asylum seekers and are using the case as a transparent attempt to manage the border," said Lee Gelernt. "That hypocrisy should not be rewarded."

Rep. Raul Ruiz, a Democrat from California and chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, said the ruling was "outrageous, ridiculous, and erodes our asylum system."

Republican members of Congress hailed the ruling.

"The Courts are once again getting it right," said North Dakota Republican Sen. Kevin Cramer.

Even some in Biden's party supported keeping the pandemic restriction in place.

"Today's decision does not change the fact that there is a crisis at the border and there must be a detailed plan that can be implemented before Title 42 is lifted," said Sen. Mark Kelley, an Arizona Democrat who is facing a tough reelection challenge.

Last month, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on whether to allow the administration to force asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court. That case, challenging a policy known as "Remain in Mexico," originated in Amarillo, Texas. It was reinstated in December on the judge's order and remains in effect while the litigation plays out.

Final-hour rally yanks Wall Street from maw of bear market

By DAMIAN J. TROISE and STAN CHOE AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street rumbled to the edge of a bear market Friday after another drop for stocks briefly sent the S&P 500 more than 20% below its peak set early this year.

The S&P 500 index, which sits at the heart of most workers' 401(k) accounts, was down as much as 2.3% for the day before a furious comeback in the final hour of trading sent it to a tiny gain of less than 0.1%. It finished 18.7% below its record, set on Jan. 3. The tumultuous trading capped a seventh straight losing week, its longest such streak since the dot-com bubble was deflating in 2001.

Rising interest rates, high inflation, the war in Ukraine, and a slowdown in China's economy are all punishing stocks and raising fears about a possible U.S. recession. Compounding worries is how the superhero that's flown to Wall Street's rescue in the most recent downturns, the Federal Reserve, looks less likely to help as it's stuck battling the worst inflation in decades.

The S&P 500 finished the day up 0.57 points at 3,901.36. The Dow Jones Industrial Average swung from an early loss of 617 points to close 8.77 higher, or less than 0.1%, at 31,261.90. The Nasdaq composite trimmed a big loss to finish 33.88 points lower, or 0.3%, at 11,354.62.

Because the S&P 500 did not finish the day more than 20% below its record, the company in charge of the index says a bear market has not officially begun. Of course, the 20% threshold is an arbitrary number.

"Whether or not the S&P 500 closes in a bear market does not matter too much," said Brian Jacobsen, senior investment strategist at Allspring Global Investments. "A lot of pain has already been experienced."

Many big tech stocks, seen as some of the most vulnerable to rising interest rates, have already fallen

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much more than 20% this year. That includes a 37.2% tumble for Tesla and a 69.1% nosedive for Netflix.

It's a sharp turnaround from the powerful run Wall Street enjoyed after emerging from its last bear market in early 2020, at the start of the pandemic. Through it, the S&P 500 more than doubled, as a new generation of investors met seemingly every wobble with the rallying cry to "Buy the dip!"

"I think plenty of investors were scratching their heads and wondering why the market was rallying despite the pandemic," Jacobsen said. "Now that the pandemic has hopefully mostly passed, I think a lot of investors are kicking themselves for not having gotten out on signs that the economy was probably slowing and the Fed was making its policy pivot."

With inflation at its highest level in four decades, the Fed has aggressively turned away from keeping interest rates super-low in order to support markets and the economy. Instead it's raising rates and making other moves in hopes of slowing the economy enough to tamp down inflation. The worry is if it goes too far or too quickly.

"Certainly the market volatility has all been driven by investor concerns that Fed will tighten policy too much and put the U.S. into a recession," said Michael Arone, chief investment strategist at State Street Global Advisors.

Bond yields fell as recession worries pushed investors into Treasuries and other things seen as safer. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note, which helps set mortgage rates, fell to 2.78% from 2.85% late Thursday. Goldman Sachs economists recently put the probability of a U.S. recession in the next two years at 35%.

Inflation has been painfully high for months. But the market's worries swung higher after Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent prices spiraling further at grocery stores and gasoline pumps, because the region is a major source of energy and grains. The world's second-largest economy, meanwhile, has taken a hit as Chinese officials locked down key cities in hopes of halting COVID-19 cases. That's all compounded with some disappointing data on the U.S. economy, though the job market remains hot.

Adding pressure onto stocks have been signs that corporate profits are slowing and may finally be getting hurt by inflation. That means the pain has widened beyond tech and high-growth stocks to encompass more of Wall Street.

Retail giants Target and Walmart both had warnings this week about inflation cutting into finances. Discount retailer Ross Stores sank 22.5% on Friday after cutting its profit forecast and citing rising inflation as a factor.

"The latest earnings from retail companies finally signaled that U.S. consumers and businesses are being negatively impacted by inflation," Arone said.

Although its source is different, the gloom on Wall Street is mirroring a sense of exasperation across the country. A poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Research released Friday found that only about 2 in 10 adults say the U.S. is heading in the right direction or the economy is good, both down from about 3 in 10 a month earlier.

Much of Wall Street's bull market since early 2020 was the result of buying by regular investors, many of whom started trading for the first time during the pandemic. Alongside many cryptocurrencies, they helped drive darlings like Tesla's stock higher. They even got GameStop to surge suddenly to such a high level that it sent shudders through professional Wall Street.

But these traders, called "retail investors" by Wall Street to differentiate them from big institutional investors, have been pulling back as stocks have tumbled. Individual investors have turned from a net buyer of stocks to a net seller over the last six months, according to a recent report from Goldman Sachs.

Pa. Senate GOP primary too close to call, recount likely

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Pennsylvania's Republican primary for an open U.S. Senate seat is too close to call and is likely headed for a statewide recount to decide the winner of the contest between heart surgeon-turned-TV celebrity Dr. Mehmet Oz and former hedge fund CEO David McCormick.

A recount would mean that the outcome of the race might not be known until June 8, the deadline for

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counties to report their results to the state.

Oz, who was endorsed by former President Donald Trump, led McCormick by 1,079 votes, or 0.08 percentage points, out of 1,340,248 ballots counted as of 5 p.m. Friday. The race is close enough to trigger Pennsylvania's automatic recount law, with the separation between the candidates inside the law's 0.5% margin. The Associated Press will not declare a winner in the race until the likely recount is complete.

Both campaigns have hired Washington-based lawyers to lead their recount efforts, and both have hired Philadelphia-based campaign strategists who helped lead the operation to observe vote-counting on Election Day for Donald Trump's presidential campaign in 2020.

The two campaigns combined already had hundreds of lawyers and volunteers fanned out around the presidential battleground state as election workers and election boards toiled through the remaining ballots.

McCormick's lead recount lawyer is Chuck Cooper, a veteran Washington lawyer and a go-to attorney for prominent conservative figures. He represented then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions in special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe and former national security adviser John Bolton in a dispute over the publication of his book. He recently successfully argued a campaign finance case on behalf of Texas Sen. Ted Cruz before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Oz's lead recount lawyer is Megan Newton, who was general counsel for Jeb Bush's unsuccessful 2016 presidential campaign and the National Republican Senatorial Committee, and has represented Trump's campaign and Mitt Romney's 2012 presidential campaign.

The winner will face Democratic Lt. Gov. John Fetterman in November's midterm elections in what Democrats see as their best opportunity to pick up a seat in the closely divided Senate.

Fetterman won the Democratic nomination while in the hospital recovering from a stroke four days before the election. The incumbent, Republican Sen. Pat Toomey, is retiring after serving two terms.

Trump's clout is again on the line, as he looked for a third straight win in Republican Senate primaries after "Hillbilly Elegy" author JD Vance prevailed in Ohio earlier this month and U.S. Rep. Ted Budd easily scored a victory in North Carolina on Tuesday.

County election boards began meeting Friday to sort out problematic or provisional ballots, even as election workers processed the last of the mail-in ballots and election-day ballot tallies from precincts.

A federal appeals court threw a wrench into the counting Friday when it ruled in an unrelated case that mail-in ballots without a legally required date on the return envelope can be counted. McCormick's campaign saw it as a positive development, since McCormick has led Oz in mail-in ballots.

"When every single vote cast in this U.S. Senate election is finally counted, Dave McCormick will win," his campaign said.

Oz's campaign did not comment Friday evening.

The state's 67 counties have until Tuesday's deadline in state law to certify their results to the state. Then the state's top election official has until next Thursday to issue a recount order, which is mandatory — unless the losing candidate asks in writing that it not be carried out.

McCormick's campaign said it has no plans to decline a recount. Oz's campaign declined to comment.

Counties have until three weeks after the election — June 7 — to finish the recount and another day to report results to the state.

The initial result could change: A recount of a statewide judicial race last November ended up padding the winner's margin by more than 5,500 votes in a race where more than 2 million ballots were cast.

Before that, there could be a flurry of lawsuits contesting the decisions of certain counties on whether to count ballots that may be difficult to read or bear some kind of irregularity.

As of yet, neither campaign has gone to court, and both candidates have expressed confidence in victory.

The big field of Republican candidates and their super PACs reported spending more than \$70 million during the primary campaign.

Oz and McCormick dominated the seven-person GOP field, blanketing the state's TV screens with political ads for months and spending millions of their own money, before conservative activist Kathy Barnette surged in the campaign's final days.

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The fiery, hard-line pro-Trump alternative blistered both Oz and McCormick as “globalists,” pro-Trump pretenders, carpetbaggers and too wealthy to help regular people. She finished a distant third.

Oz, who is best known as the host of daytime TV’s “The Dr. Oz Show,” had to overcome misgivings among hardline Trump backers about his conservative credentials. Rivals also charged that his dual citizenship with Turkey would compromise his loyalties to the United States. If elected, Oz would be the nation’s first Muslim senator.

McCormick was virtually unknown four months ago and emphasized his credentials as a hometown success story.

He not only had to overcome Trump’s endorsement of Oz, but Trump also attacked McCormick viciously and repeatedly in the final two weeks of the race, calling him a Wall Street liberal, a sellout to China and the candidate of “special interests and globalists and the Washington establishment.”

McCormick got help from a super PAC supporting him that spent \$20 million, giving him a massive cash advantage, much of it from Wall Street figures that paid for TV ads to attack Oz.

Both men reported assets of more than \$100 million and moved from out of state to run — Oz from a mansion in Cliffside Park, New Jersey, above the Hudson River overlooking Manhattan, and McCormick from Connecticut’s ritzy Gold Coast.

Pressure mounts over Oregon primary ballot fiasco

By GILLIAN FLACCUS and SARA CLINE Associated Press

OREGON CITY, Ore. (AP) — A Democratic state lawmaker in Oregon is calling for an investigation into a ballot-printing fiasco that will delay results from Tuesday’s primary by weeks, with a key U.S. House race hanging in the balance in a state that prides itself on voter access and election transparency.

Tens of thousands of ballots in the state’s third-largest county were printed with blurred barcodes, making them unreadable by vote-counting machines — a mistake that wasn’t caught until ballots were already being returned in the vote-by-mail state. Elections workers must now hand-transfer the votes from those ballots to new ones that can be read in a painstaking process that also raises the possibility of duplication errors.

As the scope of the crisis became apparent, local, state and federal lawmakers Friday all escalated their criticism of Clackamas County Elections Clerk Sherry Hall, who defended her actions at a news conference Friday and said she had learned from the mistakes.

State Rep. Janelle Bynum, who represents voters in the county, called the situation “unreasonable, and untenable” and U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, who represents some Clackamas voters in Congress, called Hall’s slow reaction “unconscionable.” Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan demanded a written plan from Hall detailing how she would get the election results tabulated by June 13, the state deadline to certify results.

“Despite having time to prepare for an election day disaster, Ms. Hall has repeatedly failed to adapt and accept enough help to remedy the current crisis,” Bynum said.

The debacle has angered many in Oregon, where all ballots have been cast only by mail for 23 years and lawmakers have consistently pushed to expand voter access through automatic voter registration and expanded deadlines. It’s also thrown into question a key U.S. House race in a district that includes a large portion of Clackamas County, which stretches nearly 2,000 square miles (5,180 square kilometers), from Portland’s liberal southern suburbs to rural conservative communities on the flanks of Mount Hood.

In the Democratic primary for Oregon’s 5th Congressional District, seven-term Rep. Kurt Schrader, a moderate, was trailing in the vote behind progressive challenger Jamie McLeod-Skinner. The outcome could have an outsized impact in November, with the possibility that voters could flip the seat for the GOP.

Hall at a news conference Friday said she made mistakes. When pressed on why she didn’t do more to address the problem when it was discovered in early May, Hall said, “I just didn’t.”

“I didn’t respond to this with the urgency that I should have and I realize that, but I still know that we will have the counting done on time,” she said. “This was something we’ve never seen before and so some

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of it, I guess it's just the reaction and the learning."

State Republicans were also paying close attention to the ballot mess.

Republican state Sen. Bill Kenner, whose district includes much of Clackamas County, called the ballot issues "alarming and concerning" and said he hoped the crisis would prompt fixes to the system.

"I would really love to see us after we get through this crisis, take some deep breaths and get some experts in there that we have confidence with, and then start looking where our chinks in our armor are and what do we need to fix it," he told The Associated Press on Friday.

Hall used Moonlight BPO in Bend — a printer not used for ballots by any other county — and said she has used them for 10 years without any problems.

Moonlight, which was founded as a small family business in 1985, had been a certified printer for the election system the county uses, the Hart InterCivic tabulation system, but Hall said the company stopped certifying any printers for ballot-printing in 2020. Clackamas County continued to use Moonlight, but Hall said "I don't intend to use them ever again."

Aaron Berg, a representative of Moonlight, said Moonlight has not been able to figure what happened to the ballots.

"We follow the exact same protocol and process every year and nothing changed this year," he told AP. "We've got to figure out what the heck is going on. And we're not saying it's anyone's fault."

Berg said a team from Moonlight travelled to Clackamas County in early May and met with Hall and another of her staff to review the process. "That's the last we've heard of it until it hit the news, much to our surprise," Berg said.

As many as 60,000 ballots are unreadable by vote-counting machines because of blurry barcodes and up to 200 county employees were being redeployed starting Thursday from their normal duties to hand-transfer the voter's intent to a fresh ballot that could be scanned. By Friday just 27,342 ballots of more than 90,000 that were returned had been tallied.

Hall said the problem came to light May 3, when workers put the first ballots returned through the vote-counting machine. About 70 or 80 ballots from each batch of 125 were spit out as unreadable because their barcodes were more faint and slightly blurred. It was too late to print and mail new ballots, she said.

Hall and her staff did not "proof" the printed ballots before they were mailed out to check for any issues, as is considered best practice, but had talked about doing so, she said. That still wouldn't have caught the problem if the toner ran low toward the end of a printing batch, affecting the barcodes, as may have happened in this case, she said.

As Election Day approached and ballots stacked up, Hall said she allowed elections workers to take the weekend off because just three people signed up to work Saturday or Sunday. Most election workers are "between the ages of 70 and 85" and they need rest, she said.

Fagan said her office offered Hall help twice after the problem came to light, but Hall said her county had enough resources.

State elections officials say they have little authority over the nonpartisan local county elections officials, who operate independently and are beholden to voters. Hall is up for reelection in November after holding the job since 2003.

It's not the first time Hall has come under fire in her elections role. In 2012, a temporary election worker was sentenced to 90 days in jail after admitting she tampered with two ballots. In 2014, Hall was criticized for using the phrase "Democrat Party" — a pejorative used by Republicans to demean Democrats — on a primary ballot instead of Democratic Party.

A county audit conducted last year identified several problems with elections procedures but Hall only implemented two of the four fixes suggested in the audit, Tootie Smith, the county chairwoman, said.

Longtime New Yorker writer, editor Roger Angell dies

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Roger Angell, the celebrated baseball writer and reigning man of letters who dur-

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ing an unfaltering 70-plus years helped define The New Yorker's urbane wit and style through his essays, humor pieces and editing, has died. He was 101.

Angell died Friday of heart failure, according to The New Yorker.

"No one lives forever, but you'd be forgiven for thinking that Roger had a good shot at it," New Yorker Editor David Remnick wrote Friday. "Like the rest of us, he suffered pain and loss and doubt, but he usually kept the blues at bay, always looking forward; he kept writing, reading, memorizing new poems, forming new relationships."

Heir to and upholder of The New Yorker's earliest days, Angell was the son of founding fiction editor Katharine White and stepson of longtime staff writer E.B. White. He was first published in the magazine in his 20s, during World War II, and was still contributing in his 90s, an improbably trim and youthful man who enjoyed tennis and vodka martinis and regarded his life as "sheltered by privilege and engrossing work, and shot through with good luck."

Angell well lived up to the standards of his famous family. He was a past winner of the BBWAA Career Excellence Award, formerly the J. G. Taylor Spink Award, for meritorious contributions to baseball writing, an honor previously given to Red Smith, Ring Lardner and Damon Runyon among others. He was the first winner of the prize who was not a member of the organization that votes for it, the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

His editing alone was a lifetime achievement. Starting in the 1950s, when he inherited his mother's job (and office), writers he worked with included John Updike, Ann Beattie, Donald Barthelme and Bobbie Ann Mason, some of whom endured numerous rejections before entering the special club of New Yorker authors. Angell himself acknowledged, unhappily, that even his work didn't always make the cut.

"Unlike his colleagues, he is intensely competitive," Brendan Gill wrote of Angell in "Here at the New Yorker," a 1975 memoir. "Any challenge, mental or physical, exhilarates him."

Angell's New Yorker writings were compiled in several baseball books and in such publications as "The Stone Arbor and Other Stories" and "A Day in the Life of Roger Angell," a collection of his humor pieces. He also edited "Nothing But You: Love Stories From The New Yorker" and for years wrote an annual Christmas poem for the magazine. At age 93, he completed one of his most highly praised essays, the deeply personal "This Old Man," winner of a National Magazine Award.

"I've endured a few knocks but missed worse," he wrote. "The pains and insults are bearable. My conversation may be full of holes and pauses, but I've learned to dispatch a private Apache scout ahead into the next sentence, the one coming up, to see if there are any vacant names or verbs in the landscape up there. If he sends back a warning, I'll pause meaningfully, duh, until something else comes to mind."

Angell was married three times, most recently to Margaret Moorman. He had three children.

Angell was born in New York in 1920 to Katharine and Ernest Angell, an attorney who became head of the American Civil Liberties Union. The New Yorker was founded five years later, with Katharine Angell as fiction editor and a young wit named Andy White (as E.B. White was known to his friends) contributing humor pieces.

His parents were gifted and strong, apparently too strong. "What a marriage that must have been," Roger Angell wrote in "Let Me Finish," a book of essays published in 2006, "stuffed with sex and brilliance and psychic murder, and imparting a lasting unease." By 1929, his mother had married the gentler White and Angell would remember weekend visits to the apartment of his mother and her new husband, a place "full of laughing, chain-smoking young writers and artists from The New Yorker."

In high school, he was so absorbed in literature and the literary life that for Christmas one year he asked for a book of A.E. Housman's poems, a top hat and a bottle of sherry. Stationed in Hawaii during World War II, Angell edited an Air Force magazine, and by 1944 had his first byline in The New Yorker. He was identified as Cpl. Roger Angell, author of the brief story "Three Ladies in the Morning," and his first words to appear in the magazine were "The midtown hotel restaurant was almost empty at 11:30 in the morning,"

There were no signs, at least open ones, of family rivalry. White encouraged his stepson to write for the magazine and even recommended him to The New Yorker's founder, Harold Ross, explaining that Angell

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"lacks practical experience but he has the goods." Angell, meanwhile, wrote lovingly of his stepfather. In a 2005 New Yorker essay, he noted that they were close for almost 60 years and recalled that "the sense of home and informal attachment" he got from White's writings was "even more powerful than it was for his other readers."

Not everyone was charmed by Angell or by the White-Angell family connection at The New Yorker. Former staff writer Renata Adler alleged that Angell "established an overt, superficially jocular state of war with the rest of the magazine." Grumbling about nepotism was not uncommon, and Tom Wolfe mocked his "cachet" at a magazine where his mother and stepfather were charter members. "It all locks, assured, into place," Wolfe wrote.

Unlike White, known for the children's classics "Charlotte's Web" and "Stuart Little," Angell never wrote a major novel. But he did enjoy a loyal following through his humor writing and his baseball essays, which placed him in the pantheon with both professional sports journalists and with Updike, James Thurber and other moonlighting literary writers. Like Updike, he didn't alter his prose style for baseball, but demonstrated how well the game was suited for a life of the mind.

"Baseball is not life itself, although the resemblance keeps coming up," Angell wrote in "La Vida," a 1987 essay. "It's probably a good idea to keep the two sorted out, but old fans, if they're anything like me, can't help noticing how cunningly our game replicates a larger schedule, with its beguiling April optimism; the cheerful roughhouse of June; the grinding, serious, unending (surely) business of midsummer; the September settling of accounts ... and then the abrupt running-down of autumn, when we wish for — almost demand — a prolonged and glittering final adventure just before the curtain."

Angell began covering baseball in the early 1960s, when The New Yorker was seeking to expand its readership. Over the following decades, he wrote definitive profiles of players ranging from Hall of Famer Bob Gibson to the fallen Pittsburgh Pirates star Steve Blass and had his say on everything from the verbosity of manager Casey Stengel ("a walking pantheon of evocations") to the wonders of Derek Jeter ("imperturbably brilliant"). He was born the year before the New York Yankees won their first World Series and his baseball memories spanned from the prime of Babe Ruth to such 21st century stars as Jeter, Mike Trout and Albert Pujols.

Even as drugs and labor-management battles shared and even stole headlines, he thought the real story remained on the playing field. Angell never had official credentials as a sportswriter: He was just a fan, a grateful onlooker, a former high school pitcher who once aspired to the big leagues.

"At some point in my upper 30s or early 40s, I was seeing a psychiatrist and I came in with a dream," Angell told The Associated Press in a 1988 interview. "I dreamed that there were some bushes and shrubbery, and there was a gravestone with my name and my birthday on it and the year I was in.

"I took this dream to my shrink with some trepidation and he asked how I felt and I said I felt sort of sad. He asked me what the gravestone reminded me of and I said it reminds me of those stones out in center field in Yankee Stadium.

"Then I realized it meant the end of my baseball dreams."

Live updates | Zelenskyy: Russia should pay for destruction

By The Associated Press undefined

KYIV, Ukraine -- President Volodymyr Zelenskyy devoted his nightly video address to Ukraine's demand that Russia be held financially responsible for the damage its forces are inflicting on Ukraine.

Just on Friday, he noted, the Russian army fired a missile at the northeastern Kharkiv region, destroying a cultural center in Lozova, and also hit the cities of Odesa in the south, Poltava in the east and Zhytomyr in the west.

In the eastern Donbas, where the Russian attack has been fiercest, he said Russian troops turned the towns of Rubizhne and Volnovakha into ruins, just as they did with Mariupol, and were trying to do the same with Severodonetsk.

Zelenskyy said Russia should be made to pay for every home, school, hospital and business it destroys.

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He said a legal mechanism should be created through which everyone who suffered from Russia's actions would be able to receive compensation.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR:

- West rushes more aid as Mariupol teeters and fighting rages
- AP PHOTOS: Shattered lives and recovery in Ukraine war
- Russia to cut Finland's natural gas in latest energy clash
- In Ukraine, surviving when your home is blasted
- 'I can't see the light': War fuels surging prices in Europe
- Follow AP's coverage of the war in Ukraine at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

POKROVSK, Ukraine — Russia claimed to have captured Mariupol on Friday in what would be its biggest victory yet in its war with Ukraine, after a nearly three-month siege that reduced much of the strategic port city to a smoking ruin, with over 20,000 civilians feared dead.

There was no immediate confirmation from Ukraine.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to President Vladimir Putin the "complete liberation" of the Azovstal steelworks in Mariupol — the last stronghold of Ukrainian resistance — and the city as a whole, spokesman Igor Konashenkov said.

Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti quoted the ministry as saying a total of 2,439 Ukrainian fighters who had been holed up at the steelworks had surrendered since Monday, including over 500 on Friday.

A Russian state TV correspondent said on Telegram that among those surrendering Friday was Denys Prokopenko, commander of the Azov regiment.

KYIV, Ukraine -- President Volodymyr Zelenskyy devoted his nightly video address to Ukraine's demand that Russia be held financially responsible for the damage its forces are inflicting on Ukraine.

Just on Friday, he noted, the Russian army fired a missile at the northeastern Kharkiv region, destroying a cultural center in Lozova, and also hit the cities of Odesa in the south, Poltava in the east and Zhytomyr in the west.

In the eastern Donbas, where the Russian attack has been fiercest, he said the Russian troops turned the towns of Rubizhne and Volnovakha into ruins, just as they did with Mariupol, and were trying to do the same with Severodonetsk.

Zelenskyy said Russia should be made to pay for every home, school, hospital and business it destroys.

He said Ukraine was urging its partners to seize Russian funds and property under their jurisdiction and use them to create a fund to be used to compensate those who suffered from Russian aggression.

"That would be fair," Zelenskyy said. "And Russia would feel the true weight of every missile, every bomb, every shell that it has fired at us."

LVIV, Ukraine – President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has revealed a weeks-long mystery about the siege of the Azovstal in the strategic port city of Mariupol: How were supplies delivered to the steel mill's defenders?

Ukrainian pilots risked Russian anti-aircraft fire to fly medicine, food and water to the steel mill on helicopters, suffering a large amount of casualties, Zelenskyy said in an interview published Friday on the third anniversary of his inauguration as president. He said the effort also included retrieval of bodies and picking up the wounded.

To save what he called "heroes" holed up in the massive, ruined remains of the steel mill, "a very large number of people, our pilots, were killed" flying in on the operation.

"They are absolutely heroic people, who knew that it would be difficult, knew that to fly would be almost impossible," Zelenskyy said.

He said the airlift couldn't be reported earlier because no safe air corridor to the plant had been estab-

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lished, and that powerful anti-aircraft weapons were in place.

"A great many weeks, pilots flew helicopters, knowing that there was a 90 percent chance they wouldn't return."

BERLIN — The Germany news agency dpa reports that the country will ship the first 15 Gepard anti-aircraft weapons to Ukraine in July.

Dpa reported Friday that the delivery, which includes training and almost 60,000 rounds of ammunition, was agreed following talks between Germany's defense minister and her Ukrainian counterpart.

Gepard — German for "cheetah" — is considered highly effective against low-flying aircraft and lightly armored ground targets.

It was decommissioned by the German military in 2012 but some 50 mothballed units are being restored by manufacturer KMW for use by Ukraine.

LVIV, Ukraine — A Russian missile struck a Ukrainian cultural center in the Kharkiv region on Friday, injuring seven people, including an 11-year-old child, in an attack that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called "absolute evil."

Zelenskyy's social media channel on Friday released video showing a large explosion hitting the newly renovated Palace of Culture in Lozova. The building was partly destroyed and the roof caught fire, Ukraine's emergency services reported.

"The occupiers identified culture, education and humanity as their enemies," Zelenskyy wrote. "What is in the minds of people who choose such targets? Absolute evil, absolute stupidity."

Lozova's Palace of Culture is the site of classes, festivals, plays and concerts. It opened in 1977 and includes an auditorium, a lecture hall, three dance halls, a gym and multiple rooms for classes and club meetings.

The Kharkiv region is close to the border with Russia, which invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. Ukrainian troops have been pushing back some Russian forces from the area.

LVIV, Ukraine — Russian forces on Friday continued attacking the cities of Lysychansk and Severodonetsk in Ukraine's eastern region of Luhansk to try to cut the area off from the rest of Ukraine, the region's governor said.

Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai told The Associated Press Russian forces were focused on the Lysychansk-Bakhmut highway, which he said is the only road for evacuating people and delivering humanitarian supplies.

"The road is extremely important because it's the only connection to other regions of the country," he said via email. "The Russians are trying to cut us off from it, to encircle the Luhansk region."

Russian forces are constantly shelling the road from multiple directions, but Ukrainian armored transports are still able to get through, Haidai added.

One of Friday's attacks was on a school in Severodonetsk sheltering more than 200 people, many of them children. Three adults were killed, Haidai said on Telegram.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Friday, "the liberation of the Luhansk People's Republic is nearing completion."

LVIV, Ukraine — Russian forces have been trying for weeks to seize Severodonetsk, a key site in the Donbas that's outside the territory separatists have held for several years.

Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai said Friday Russian forces now control 90% of the region.

Twelve people were killed in the latest attack in Severodonetsk and more than 60 houses were destroyed, Haidai said on Telegram. He called the attack on Severodonetsk unsuccessful, adding "the Russians suffered personnel losses and retreated." His remarks couldn't be independently verified.

Haidai said on Telegram on Thursday that Russian forces "just want to destroy the city."

He told The Associated Press that another city the Russians have been targeting, Rubizhne, has been "completely destroyed."

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Haidai said damaged buildings have been looted, and Russian forces have forcibly deported residents, cut off all communications, and removed all modern equipment from the hospitals and schools and taken it to Russia.

KYIV, Ukraine — The Vatican foreign minister paid tribute to the dead at a mass grave in the Ukrainian city of Bucha, praying that “horrors like this may be always avoided.”

Archbishop Richard Gallagher wrapped up a three-day visit to Ukraine on Friday by visiting what he called “three of the most martyred cities,” Vorzel, Bucha and Irpin, where Russian soldiers are accused of atrocities against Ukrainian civilians.

Gallagher later told reporters at a news conference with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba that he wanted to bring Pope Francis’ solidarity to the Ukrainian people and promote dialogue and negotiation to find a peaceful resolution what he called “this senseless conflict” sparked by “Russia’s aggression against Ukraine.”

The Vatican has been toeing a delicate diplomatic line with Ukraine, condemning the death and destruction but seeking to maintain a channel of dialogue open with Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church.

BERLIN — Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder plans to leave the board of directors of Russian state energy company Rosneft as a backlash over his ties with Russia and its energy sector mounts.

Schroeder, 78, is the chairman of Rosneft’s board. Rosneft said Friday that Schroeder announced “the impossibility of extending his powers on the board of directors of the company.”

The announcement came a day after German lawmakers agreed to strip Schroeder of his taxpayer-funded office and staff.

Schroeder, 78, led Germany from 1998 to 2005. He has become increasingly isolated in recent months due to his work for state-controlled Russian energy companies.

MILAN — The Council of Europe secretary-general said the human rights organization is supporting Ukrainian prosecutors as they investigate “gross human rights violations” committed during the Russian invasion.

Marija Pejcinovic Buric told a news conference in Turin, Italy that during a visit to Kiev last week he witnessed “the severity and scale of the devastation inflicted on Ukraine.” He said that included the “rape, torture, the killing of civilians and combatants.”

She said that confirms the Council of Europe’s decision to expel Russia after the invasion. The organization based in Strasbourg, France was founded after World War II to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe, comprised of 46 member states.

The secretary-general said the Council of Europe was uniquely positioned to support Ukraine and an independent judiciary.

MILAN — Italy’s foreign minister said Friday that Italy has submitted a peace plan for Ukraine to U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio said during a Council of Europe meeting in Turin, Italy, that the plan submitted Thursday calls for local cease-fires to evacuate civilians along humanitarian corridors, and creating the conditions for a general cease-fire leading “to a long-lasting peace.”

In Brussels, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said he was aware of the plan, adding the European Union is “putting all our efforts into trying to bring this conflict to an end.”

Borrell said it’s up to Ukraine to decide the terms of any negotiations. He said that he hopes that “when the time comes for negotiations to take place, Ukraine will be able to negotiate from a position of strength.”

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Russia will cut off natural gas to Finland after the Nordic country that applied for NATO membership this week refused Russian President Vladimir Putin’s demand to pay in rubles, the Finnish state-owned energy company said Friday.

Finland is the latest country to lose the energy supply, which is used to generate electricity and power

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industry, after rejecting Russia's decree.

Poland and Bulgaria were cut off late last month by Russia but, along with Finland, they were relatively minor customers who had prepared to move away from Russian natural gas.

Putin has declared that "unfriendly foreign buyers" open two accounts in state-owned Gazprombank, one to pay in euros and dollars as specified in contracts and another in rubles.

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin says his country has faced a barrage of cyberattacks from the West amid the invasion of Ukraine but has successfully fended them off.

Speaking Friday to members of Russia's Security Council, Putin noted that "the challenges in this area have become even more pressing, serious and extensive."

He charged that "an outright aggression has been unleashed against Russia, a war has been waged in the information space."

Putin added that "the cyber-aggression against us, the same as the attack on Russia by sanctions in general, has failed."

He ordered officials to "perfect and enhance the mechanisms of ensuring information security at critically important industrial facilities which have a direct bearing on our country's defensive capability, and the stable development of the economic and social spheres."

WARSAW, Poland – Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki on Friday hailed the prospect of Finland and Sweden joining NATO.

Morawiecki spoke alongside visiting Portugal's Prime Minister Antonio Costa with whom he had discussed the war in neighboring Ukraine.

Concerned for their security, Finland and Sweden applied this week to join the military alliance, against Russia's threats aimed at discouraging the move.

Finland shares a long land border with Russia and Sweden neighbors Russia through the Baltic Sea basin. "We believe these are sovereign decisions by the countries and we will be very happy if Finland and Sweden join NATO swiftly," Morawiecki said.

BERLIN — Germany and Qatar have signed an agreement to deepen their cooperation on energy, as Berlin seeks to diversify its natural gas supplies and ultimately stop using Russian gas.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said at a news conference alongside Qatar's emir that the agreement signed Friday "opens many opportunities for successful cooperation." He said that Qatar also "has enormous potential for renewable energies and for the production of hydrogen."

Germany plans to build two liquefied natural gas terminals to bring in gas from suppliers such as Qatar. Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani said that "whatever we can provide for energy security in Europe even during this period, we will make sure that we can provide." He didn't give any figures.

Russia's defense minister says 1,908 Ukrainian fighters who had been holed up at the Azovstal steelworks, the last pocket of Ukrainian resistance in the port city of Mariupol, have surrendered so far.

"Nationalists blocked off at the plant started to surrender. As of now, 1,908 people have laid down arms," Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu was quoted by the Russian media as saying Friday.

On Thursday, the Russian military put the total of surrendered fighters at 1,730. It remains unclear how many fighters are still holed up in the giant steel plant's maze of underground tunnels and bunkers.

Denys Prokopenko, commander of the Azov Regiment, said Friday that the defenders of Mariupol — a group of Ukrainian fighters from various military and law enforcement units — have received an order to "cease the defense of the city." The intention is to "save lives and health of the servicemen of the garrison," he said.

Speaking in a video statement released on Telegram, Prokopenko also said that "the seriously wounded received the necessary assistance and they were able to be evacuated with further exchange and delivery

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to the territory controlled by Ukraine.”

It was not clear from the video whether Prokopenko was still at the plant. His right arm was bandaged above the elbow.

GENEVA — The international Red Cross says it has been visiting prisoners of war on “all sides” since the start of the war between Russia and Ukraine almost three months ago.

The International Committee of the Red Cross didn’t specify what “all sides” meant, but it is believed to mean Russian and Ukrainian government forces, as well as pro-Russian separatists who have been waging an armed struggle in eastern Ukraine against the Kyiv government since 2014. It could also include foreign fighters who might have been captured.

A Red Cross statement Friday said the POW visits had enabled it to pass on information to hundreds of families about their loved ones.

The ICRC did not specify how many families had been informed about their relatives, or where the visits took place. It said only that the visits had taken place “in recent months.”

The statement came a day after the humanitarian agency broke its silence about prisoners of war in the nearly three-month-long conflict, announcing it has registered “hundreds” of Ukrainian prisoners of war this week from the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol. It remains unclear how many fighters are still holed up in the giant steel plant’s maze of underground tunnels and bunkers.

“Many more families need answers; the ICRC must have full access to POWs and civilian internees, wherever they are held, in order to provide those answers,” the Geneva-based organization said.

Some humanitarian law experts have questioned why the ICRC took so long to announce its POW visits, a key part of its mandate.

The ICRC often operates confidentially in its role to help protect civilians, prisoners of war and other noncombatants in conflicts, and ensure the respect of the rules of war.

KOENIGSWINTER, Germany — Germany’s finance minister says the Group of Seven leading economies and global financial institutions are providing \$19.8 billion in aid to bolster Ukraine’s public finances.

Finance Minister Christian Lindner told reporters Friday that \$9.5 billion of the total was mobilized at meetings of the G-7 finance ministers in Koenigswinter, Germany, this week.

He said the goal is to ensure that Ukraine’s financial situation does not affect its ability to defend itself against Russia’s invasion.

“We agreed on concrete actions to deepen multilateral economic cooperation and underlined our commitment to our united response to Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and to our unwavering support to Ukraine,” a G-7 statement said.

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Finnish state-owned energy company Gasum says natural gas imports from Russia will be halted on Saturday, after the Finns refused to pay for it in rubles.

Russia demanded payment in rubles after sanctions were imposed against Moscow over the invasion of Ukraine in February.

Gasum’s CEO Mika Wiljanen called it “highly regrettable” that the gas supplies will now be stopped. But there “will be no disruptions in the gas supply network,” he said in a statement.

The group was informed by Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom in April that future payments in the supply contract must be made in Russian currency instead of euros.

In Finland, natural gas accounted for 6% of the total energy consumption in 2020, Finnish broadcaster YLE said. Almost all gas is imported from Russia and last year the share of Russian natural gas imports was 92%.

Poland and Bulgaria, which also have refused to pay Gazprom in rubles, have had their gas cut off.

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey’s president says he is engaged in “telephone diplomacy” with foreign coun-

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terparts over the bids by Sweden and Finland to join NATO.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reiterated Friday that his country is determined not to approve membership of the alliance for countries accused by Turkey of supporting what it calls "terror organizations."

Erdogan has placed an obstacle to Sweden and Finland joining the alliance. He accuses Stockholm - and to a lesser extent Helsinki -- of supporting the Kurdish Workers' Party, or PKK, and other groups that Turkey views as terrorists and a threat to its national security.

Turkey, which has the second largest army in NATO, also accuses the two Nordic countries of imposing restrictions on exports of defense industry equipment to Turkey and of failing to extradite suspects wanted by Turkey.

Erdogan told reporters that he spoke to Netherland's Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Friday and would hold further discussions with British and Finnish leaders on Saturday.

Sweden and Finland formally applied to join the military alliance this week. All 30 NATO members need to approve the entry of new members.

WARSAW, Poland — Poland and Portugal are trying to figure out ways of bringing Ukraine into the European Union even if some countries in the bloc balk at granting it speedy access.

Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki announced the effort after talks Friday in Warsaw with visiting Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa.

Morawiecki said that "if some EU nations protest vehemently, together with Portugal we want to work out an appropriate package that would be attractive for Ukraine and will show that Ukraine's place is in the EU."

Germany, for example, has spoken out against a swift EU membership path for Ukraine, which currently fighting a ferocious war against Russia's invasion. All 27 EU members need to approve an enlargement to include Ukraine.

Costa said EU leaders should not stick to inflexible regulations but be "pragmatic and respond to the current events." He urged a decision at an EU summit scheduled for June.

KOENIGSWINTER, Germany — Germany's finance minister says the Group of Seven leading economies are set to agree on more than \$18 billion in aid for Ukrainian defense efforts.

Finance Minister Christian Lindner said in an interview with Bloomberg Television on Friday that Ukrainians resisting Russia's invasion "are not only defending themselves, they are defending our values."

A representative from the U.S. Treasury Department declined to confirm the amount set to be allocated at a meeting of G-7 finance ministers in Germany, and a spokesman from the German finance ministry declined to comment to The Associated Press.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and other leaders have spoken this week about the need for allies to put together enough additional aid to help Ukraine "get through" the Russian invasion.

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked the United States for the \$40 billion aid package, which got final congressional approval on Thursday.

"This is a demonstration of strong leadership and a necessary contribution to our common defense of freedom," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address to the nation.

He also thanked the European Union for its support.

"And for our partners this is not just an expense or a gift. This is their contribution to security," Zelenskyy said. "For defending Ukraine also defends them from new wars and crises that Russia could provoke if it is successful in the war against Ukraine. Therefore, we must together ensure that Russia's aggression against our state has no success, not militarily, economically or any other."

Zelenskyy said Ukraine's monthly budget deficit is \$5 billion "and so to survive in the war for freedom, we need quick and sufficient financial support."

The U.S. has announced a shipment of \$100 million in military equipment to Ukraine, separate from what will be coming from the \$40 billion approved by Congress. The latest package includes 18 more howitzers

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as well as anti-artillery radar systems, both of which the U.S. has provided to Ukraine already since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24.

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russian troops were intensifying their attacks in the Donbas.

“It is hell there and that’s not an exaggeration,” he said in his nightly video address to the nation. “The brutal and completely senseless bombardment of Severodonetsk. Twelve dead and dozens wounded there in just one day.”

Zelenskyy said Russian strikes on the northeastern Chernihiv region included a terrible strike on the village of Desna, where he said many were killed and rescuers were still going through the rubble.

“The bombing and shelling of our other cities, the air and missile strikes by the Russian army, are not simply military operations in a time of war... It is a conscious and criminal attempt to kill as many Ukrainians as possible,” Zelenskyy said. “To destroy more homes, public sites, businesses. This is what will be qualified as genocide of the Ukrainian people and for which the occupiers will definitely be brought to justice.”

African scientists baffled by monkeypox cases in Europe, US

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — Scientists who have monitored numerous outbreaks of monkeypox in Africa say they are baffled by the disease’s recent spread in Europe and North America.

Cases of the smallpox-related disease have previously been seen only among people with links to central and West Africa. But in the past week, Britain, Spain, Portugal, Italy, U.S., Sweden and Canada all reported infections, mostly in young men who hadn’t previously traveled to Africa.

There are about 80 confirmed cases worldwide and 50 more suspected ones, the World Health Organization said. France, Germany, Belgium and Australia reported their first cases Friday.

“I’m stunned by this. Every day I wake up and there are more countries infected,” said Oyewale Tomori, a virologist who formerly headed the Nigerian Academy of Science and who sits on several WHO advisory boards.

“This is not the kind of spread we’ve seen in West Africa, so there may be something new happening in the West,” he said.

To date, no one has died in the outbreak. Monkeypox typically causes fever, chills, rash and lesions on the face or genitals. WHO estimates the disease is fatal for up to one in 10 people, but smallpox vaccines are protective and some antiviral drugs are being developed.

British health officials are exploring whether the disease is being sexually transmitted. Health officials have asked doctors and nurses to be on alert for potential cases, but said the risk to the general population is low. The European Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommended all suspected cases be isolated and that high-risk contacts be offered smallpox vaccine.

Nigeria reports about 3,000 monkeypox cases a year, WHO said. Outbreaks are usually in rural areas, when people have close contact with infected rats and squirrels, Tomori said. He said many cases are likely missed.

Dr. Ifedayo Adetifa, head of the country’s Center for Disease Control, said none of the Nigerian contacts of the British patients have developed symptoms and that investigations were ongoing.

WHO’s Europe director, Dr. Hans Kluge, described the outbreak as “atypical,” saying the disease’s appearance in so many countries across the continent suggested that “transmission has been ongoing for some time.” He said most of the European cases are mild.

On Friday, Britain’s Health Security Agency reported 11 new monkeypox cases, saying “a notable proportion” of the infections in the U.K. and Europe have been in young men with no history of travel to Africa and who were gay, bisexual or had sex with men.

Authorities in Spain and Portugal also said their cases were in young men who mostly had sex with other men and said those cases were picked up when the men turned up with lesions at sexual health clinics.

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Experts have stressed they do not know if the disease is being spread through sex or other close contact related to sex.

Nigeria hasn't seen sexual transmission, Tomori said, but he noted that viruses that hadn't initially been known to transmit via sex, like Ebola, were later proven to do so after bigger epidemics showed different patterns of spread.

The same could be true of monkeypox, Tomori said.

In Germany, Health Minister Karl Lauterbach said the government was confident the outbreak could be contained. He said the virus was being sequenced to see if there were any genetic changes that might have made it more infectious.

Rolf Gustafson, an infectious diseases professor, told Swedish broadcaster SVT that it was "very difficult" to imagine the situation might worsen.

"We will certainly find some further cases in Sweden, but I do not think there will be an epidemic in any way," Gustafson said. "There is nothing to suggest that at present."

Scientists said that while it's possible the outbreak's first patient caught the disease while in Africa, what's happening now is exceptional.

"We've never seen anything like what's happening in Europe," said Christian Happi, director of the African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases. "We haven't seen anything to say that the transmission patterns of monkeypox have been changing in Africa. So if something different is happening in Europe, then Europe needs to investigate that."

Happi also pointed out that the suspension of smallpox vaccination campaigns after the disease was eradicated in 1980 might inadvertently be helping monkeypox spread. Smallpox vaccines also protect against monkeypox, but mass immunization was stopped decades ago.

"Aside from people in west and Central Africa who may have some immunity to monkeypox from past exposure, not having any smallpox vaccination means nobody has any kind of immunity to monkeypox," Happi said.

Shabir Mahdi, a professor of vaccinology at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, said a detailed investigation of the outbreak in Europe, including determining who the first patients were, was now critical.

"We need to really understand how this first started and why the virus is now gaining traction," he said. "In Africa, there have been very controlled and infrequent outbreaks of monkeypox. If that's now changing, we really need to understand why."

The AP Interview: New Pakistani FM seeks better ties with US

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Pakistan's new foreign minister says the United States and his country must move beyond past tensions over Afghanistan and are entering a new engagement after years of strained relations under former Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the 33-year-old son of assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, spoke in an interview with The Associated Press in New York, where he was attending meetings this week on the global food crisis at U.N. headquarters. He has also held talks with top diplomats, including a one-hour discussion with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Bhutto Zardari called the meeting with Blinken "very encouraging and very positive and productive."

"We believe that Pakistan must continue to engage with the United States at all levels," he said. "This meeting was indeed an important first step."

Bhutto Zardari co-chairs one of the two largest parties in Pakistan's disparate governing coalition, which spans the political spectrum from the left to the radically religious. The coalition removed Khan in a no-confidence vote on April 10. Shahbaz Sharif, the leader of the other major party, replaced Khan as prime minister.

U.S.-Pakistani ties deteriorated under Khan, who as prime minister tapped into anti-American sentiment

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in Pakistan that has spread ever since the 9/11 terrorist attacks by al-Qaida, and the U.S. war on terror. The 2011 American raid that killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden in Pakistan angered many hard-liners in the country.

Khan accused the Biden administration of colluding with the opposition to oust him, a claim the administration denies.

Afghanistan also raised mistrust between the two countries. Washington felt Islamabad did too little to help ensure peace as the U.S. and NATO withdrew their troops from Afghanistan; Pakistan insists it did all it could to broker peace and blamed the abrupt U.S. pullout. During the final weeks of the American withdrawal, the Taliban overran Kabul in mid-August and seized power.

Bhutto Zardari said the Pakistan-U.S. relationship in the past had been "too colored by the events in Afghanistan, of the geopolitical considerations, and it's time for us to move beyond that to engage in a far broader, deeper and more meaningful relationship."

Under Khan, Pakistan pushed hard for the world to engage with Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers, and Bhutto Zardari said his country continues to do so.

"Regardless of what we feel about the regime in Afghanistan," the world can't abandon the Afghan people and must immediately address the country's humanitarian crisis and crumbling economy, he said. A total collapse of the Afghan economy would be a disaster for Afghans, Pakistan and the international community, he said, expressing concern that many Afghans would flee the country.

Pakistan is also insisting the Taliban live up to their international commitments that the country not be used for terrorism, that girls and women be able to pursue education, and that they form an inclusive government, he said.

The Taliban, however, have taken a more hard-line turn in recent weeks, imposing new restrictions on women. At the same time, tensions have grown between the Taliban and Pakistan over militants based in Afghanistan carrying out attacks in Pakistan.

Bhutto Zardari said the more the humanitarian crisis is alleviated and the economy is saved from collapse, "the more likely we are to succeed in our pursuit for women's rights and the more likely we are to succeed in our efforts against terrorism."

He said his focus in talks with Blinken was on increasing trade, particularly in agriculture, information technology and energy. He said he is looking forward to working with the U.S. on an initiative to empower women, including women entrepreneurs.

On economic, defense and military coordination, "if we continue to engage, then we can move forward in a more positive direction," Bhutto Zardari said.

Asked about Khan's anti-U.S. rhetoric, Bhutto Zardari dismissed the ex-premier's accusation of American collusion, calling it a "fanciful conspiracy theory based on a big lie" to explain his removal.

"I am particularly anti the politics of hate, division and polarization," the foreign minister said. "If we consistently pursue the politics of 'you're with us or against us,' whether that's on an international level or a domestic level, I don't believe it serves the interests of the people of Pakistan."

He said he believes Pakistanis understand their country needs to engage with the U.S. and all countries, in order to become democratic and progress economically.

President Joe Biden has strengthened ties with Pakistan's arch-rival India, but Bhutto Zardari said Pakistan is not "jealous" of their relationship. "We believe the world is big enough for both Pakistan and India," he said.

Biden will meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the leaders of Australia and Japan at a summit in Tokyo on May 24 of the so-called Quad, an Indo-Pacific alliance which China sees as an attempt to contain its economic growth and influence.

Pakistan has a very close economic and military relationship with neighboring China, where Bhutto Zardari is heading to on Saturday. He told the AP he didn't think the growing relationship with the U.S. would hurt its ties to Beijing.

Pakistan has abstained on U.N. General Assembly resolutions condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine and withdrawal of its troops. Bhutto Zardari said Pakistan used to rely a lot on Ukrainian wheat and fertil-

izer and has been affected by rising food prices and calls for diplomacy to end the war.

The lives of the Bhutto Zardari family have in many ways reflected their country's turbulence. Bhutto Zardari took over his mother's Pakistan People's Party after she was killed in a suicide bombing in December 2007.

The daughter of Pakistan's first democratically elected prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who led Pakistan in the 1970s and was overthrown and executed by the military, Benazir Bhutto was Pakistan's first woman premier and twice served as head of government.

At the time of her assassination, she was rallying in a third bid for premiership. Bhutto Zardari's life in politics was also shaped by his father, Asif Ali Zardari, who served as Pakistan's president from 2008 to 2013.

In the interview with the AP, Bhutto Zardari recalled the legacy of his mother and grandfather. He called them "towering figures on the world stage," and said he feels "the burden of history."

"What motivates and drives me is the pursuit of their unfulfilled mission," he said. "I hope that we live up to the expectations of the people of Pakistan" who have longed for true democracy and struggled for their economic, political and human rights.

"These are the ideals that we hold dear and we work towards every day," Bhutto Zardari said.

Ginni Thomas' emails deepen her involvement in 2020 election

By MARK SHERMAN and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Virginia "Ginni" Thomas, wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas and a conservative political activist, urged Republican lawmakers in Arizona after the 2020 presidential election to choose their own slate of electors, arguing that results giving Joe Biden a victory in the state were marred by fraud.

The revelations first published by The Washington Post on Friday show that Thomas was more involved than previously known in efforts, based on unsubstantiated claims of fraud, to overturn Biden's victory and keep then-President Donald Trump in office.

In the days after The Associated Press and other news organizations called the presidential election for Biden, Thomas emailed two lawmakers in Arizona to urge them to choose "a clean slate of Electors" and "stand strong in the face of political and media pressure." The AP obtained the emails under the state's open records law.

Thomas also had written to then-White House chief of staff Mark Meadows in the weeks following the election encouraging him to work to overturn Biden's victory and keep Trump in office, according to text messages first reported by the Post and CBS News.

Thomas was a staunch Trump supporter who acknowledged she attended the Jan. 6 "Stop the Steal" rally on the Ellipse but left before Trump spoke and his supporters later stormed the Capitol.

She has been critical of the ongoing congressional investigation into the Jan. 6 violence, including signing onto a letter to House Republicans calling for the expulsion of Reps. Liz Cheney of Wyoming and Adam Kinzinger of Illinois from the GOP conference for joining the Jan. 6 congressional committee.

Justice Thomas, meanwhile, has taken part in the court's consideration of lawsuits challenging the election results. The court turned away every challenge without a hearing, though Thomas was among three conservative justices who said cases from Pennsylvania should be heard. In February 2021, Thomas called the cases an "ideal opportunity" to address an important question whether state lawmakers or state courts get the last word about the manner in which federal elections are carried out.

In January, Thomas was the lone member of the court who supported a bid by Trump to withhold documents from the Jan. 6 committee. The documents were held by the National Archives and Records Administration and included presidential diaries, visitor logs, speech drafts and handwritten notes dealing with Jan. 6 from Meadows' files.

Thomas did not immediately respond to a request for comment, made to the court Friday.

Democratic lawmakers have called on Thomas to step aside from election-related cases, but he has given no indication he intends to do so.

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The latest disclosure comes at a time when Chief Justice John Roberts has ordered an internal investigation into the leaking of a draft opinion overturning *Roe v. Wade*, in one of the court's most prominent cases in decades, and opinion polls have shown a loss of public confidence in the institution.

Thomas was referencing the leaked opinion at a conference in Dallas last week when he talked about the damage to the court. "I wonder how long we're going to have these institutions at the rate we're undermining them."

Ginni Thomas has said she and the justice keep their work separate. "Like so many married couples, we share many of the same ideals, principles, and aspirations for America. But we have our own separate careers, and our own ideas and opinions too. Clarence doesn't discuss his work with me, and I don't involve him in my work," Thomas told the Washington Free Beacon in an interview published in March.

Thomas sent emails to Arizona House Speaker Rusty Bowers and Rep. Shawna Bolick, who this year is running for Arizona secretary of state. That would make her the top elections administrator in Arizona.

She wrote them again on Dec. 13, the day before electors met in state capitols around the country to formally cast their votes for president.

"As state lawmakers, you have the Constitutional power and authority to protect the integrity of our elections — and we need you to exercise that power now!" the email said. "Never before in our nation's history have our elections been so threatened by fraud and unconstitutional procedures."

Bowers dismissed the idea of replacing Arizona's electors shortly after the election. The following year, Bolick introduced a bill that would have allowed the Legislature to overturn any presidential election results for any reason, and replace the electors.

Bolick has said her legislation would have made the process more bipartisan by requiring a two-thirds vote, but the text of the proposal calls for a simple majority. In any event, Bowers essentially killed the legislation before it ever came to a vote.

Veteran Miami DEA agents charged in bribery conspiracy

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

A current U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent and a former supervisor in the agency were charged Friday with leaking confidential law enforcement information to defense lawyers in Miami in exchange for \$70,000 in cash.

A five-count indictment unsealed in New York charges the agent, John Costanzo Jr., with accepting bribes to provide sensitive information about pending investigations to Manny Recio, a former Miami supervisor who retired from DEA more than two years ago to work as a private investigator for area defense attorneys. Federal prosecutors allege Recio sought the information to help recruit new clients.

Using a burner phone that Recio purchased for Costanzo, the two men allegedly coordinated unlawful searches of criminal databases, helped DEA targets mislead federal investigators and concealed payments made with the knowledge of the suspects' defense attorneys.

Proceeds for the scheme were allegedly used by Costanzo to repair his Porsche, purchase airline tickets and make a \$50,000 down payment on a condominium.

"Make it look good. This is thirty grand right here," Recio told Costanzo in a 2019 recorded phone call in which the two discussed a draft submission to prosecutors on behalf of one target, according to court documents.

An attorney for Recio did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Costanzo's attorney, Marc L. Mukasey, said in an email that "the theory of this case is misguided and he will be vindicated."

The charges are the latest black eye for the DEA, which has been beset by repeated misconduct scandals that have landed a growing list of former agents behind bars. Just last week, another former DEA agent in Arkansas was sentenced to more than 11 years in prison for taking thousands of dollars in bribes from a drug trafficker.

The case has also sent a chill through South Florida's close-knit, fiercely competitive narco-defense circles because of Recio's strong ties to federal law enforcement and the high-paid, private-sector lawyers.

"The conduct alleged in the indictment violates the core duty of law enforcement officers to protect and

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serve the public, rather than to use their access to sensitive information to enrich themselves," Manhattan U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said in a statement.

In interviews with FBI agents in 2019, Costanzo and Recio both denied ever exchanging anything of value as part of the alleged scheme. Such actions would have been a flagrant violation of the DEA's standards of conduct.

The charges stemmed from a long-running federal investigation by the FBI and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, which more than two years ago took the unusual step of wiretapping Recio as part of an inquiry into the flow of information between the DEA and Miami lawyers representing narcotraffickers and money launderers from Colombia.

The FBI wiretapped Recio for at least three months while he worked in his post-retirement job as a private investigator for defense lawyers.

As part of the shady dealings, he at one point wrote a \$2,500 check to a company co-owned by an unnamed member of Costanzo's family, according to court documents. The payment appears to have been used by Costanzo to repair a Porsche he owned, according to an email exchange about the vehicle between the DEA agent and an unnamed defense attorney from the tony Miami suburb of Coral Gables with whom Recio was working with as a private investigator.

In 2019, the same family member received \$50,000 from a company owned by a local Florida police detective who also isn't named. The funds were used by Costanzo for a down payment on a condominium, according to the indictment.

In addition to running database checks, Costanzo allegedly assisted Recio in his work with another Miami-area attorney representing a charged defendant. When prosecutors learned that the defendant had deleted information from his cell phone, Costanzo allegedly suggested that he mislead investigators by falsely claiming that he had deleted the information because he didn't want the government to see naked photos of his wife.

Recio's defense attorney, Phil Reizenstein, previously told AP that Recio's work on cases had been "impeccable."

"I have no concerns that he did anything that was close to being illegal," Reizenstein said at the time. "He has held himself to the highest standards and the same law-abiding ideals in his private work."

Recio finished his more than two decades with the DEA as an assistant special agent in charge of the agency's Miami field division, specializing in cases involving illicit finances. Immediately after retiring, he launched a Miami-based business called Global Legal Consulting, which according to its website provides private investigations, anti-money laundering solutions and other legal services.

Recio once supervised highly-sensitive money laundering investigations involving Jose Irizarry, a former standout DEA agent in the Miami office who was sentenced in December to more than 12 years in federal prison for conspiring to launder money with a Colombian cartel and using his badge to build a lavish lifestyle of expensive cars, parties on yachts and Tiffany jewelry. Before being locked away, Irizarry blamed the DEA for fostering a culture of corruption and gift taking that he said desensitized him to the implications of violating the law.

The DEA said in a statement that its agents "are responsible for protecting the safety and health of the communities we serve and upholding the rule of law. Conduct that is inconsistent with that responsibility will not be tolerated."

Trump pays \$110K fine, must submit paperwork to end contempt

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump has paid the \$110,000 in fines he racked up after being held in contempt of court for being slow to respond to a civil subpoena issued by New York's attorney general.

Trump paid the fine Thursday but must still submit additional paperwork in order to have the contempt order lifted, the office of Attorney General Letitia James said Friday.

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A message seeking comment was left Friday with Trump's lawyer.

A Manhattan judge declared Trump in contempt of court on April 25 and fined him \$10,000 per day for not complying with a subpoena in James' long-running investigation into his business practices.

Judge Arthur Engoron agreed May 11 to lift the contempt order if, by Friday, Trump paid the fines and submitted affidavits detailing efforts to search for the subpoenaed records and explaining his and his company's document retention policies.

Engoron also required a company hired by Trump to aid in the search, HaystackID, finish going through 17 boxes kept in off-site storage, and for that company to report its findings and turn over any relevant documents. That process was completed Thursday, James' office said.

Engoron told Trump to pay the money directly to James' office and for the attorney general to hold the money in an escrow account while Trump's legal team appeals the judge's original contempt finding.

Engoron stopped the fine from accruing May 6, when Trump's lawyers submitted 66 pages of court documents detailing the efforts by him and his lawyers to locate the subpoenaed records. He warned that he could reinstate it, retroactive to May 7, if his conditions weren't met.

James, a Democrat, has said her three-year investigation uncovered evidence that Trump's company, the Trump Organization, misstated the value of assets like skyscrapers and golf courses on financial statements for over a decade.

Trump, a Republican, denies the allegations. He has called James' investigation "racist" and a politically motivated "witch hunt." James is Black. Trump's lawyers have accused her of selective prosecution. Trump is also suing James in federal court, seeking to shut down her probe.

Last week, a lawyer for James' office said Friday that evidence found in the probe could support legal action against the former president, his company, or both.

The lawyer, Andrew Amer, said at a hearing in Trump's lawsuit against James that "there's clearly been a substantial amount of evidence amassed that could support the filing of an enforcement proceeding," although a final determination on filing such an action has not been made.

Elon Musk visits Brazil's Bolsonaro to discuss Amazon plans

By DIANE JEANTET Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Tesla and SpaceX chief executive officer Elon Musk met with Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro on Friday to discuss connectivity and other projects in the Amazon rainforest.

The meeting, held in a luxurious resort in Sao Paulo state, was organized by Communications Minister Fábio Faria, who has said he is seeking partnerships with the world's richest man to bring or improve internet in schools and health facilities in rural areas using technology developed by SpaceX and Starlink, and also to preserve the rainforest.

"Super excited to be in Brazil for launch of Starlink for 19,000 unconnected schools in rural areas & environmental monitoring of Amazon," Musk tweeted Friday morning.

Illegal activities in the vast Amazon rainforest are monitored by several institutions, such as the national space agency, federal police and environmental regulator Ibama.

But deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has surged under Bolsonaro, reaching its highest annual rate in more than a decade, according to official data from the national space agency. Bolsonaro's critics say he is largely to blame, having emboldened loggers and land grabbers with his fervent support for development of the region.

During the event, Bolsonaro said the region was "really important" to Brazil.

"We count on Elon Musk so that the Amazon is known by everyone in Brazil and in the world, to show the exuberance of this region, how we are preserving it, and how much harm those who spread lies about this region are doing to us," he said.

Bolsonaro and Musk appeared in a video transmitted live on the president's Facebook account, standing together on a stage and answering questions from a group of students.

"A lot can be done to improve quality of life through technology," Musk told the crowd.

Although none of the students asked about Musk's prospective purchase of Twitter, Bolsonaro said that

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it represented a "breath of hope."

"Freedom is the cement for the future," he said, calling the billionaire a "legend of freedom."

Musk has offered to buy Twitter for \$44 billion, but said this week the deal can't go forward until the company provides information about how many accounts on the platform are spam or bots.

Like Musk, Bolsonaro has sought to position himself as a champion of free speech and opposed the deplatforming of individuals including his ally, former U.S. President Donald Trump.

The meeting with Bolsonaro occurs just five months before the far-right leader will seek a second term in a hotly anticipated election.

Biden's approval dips to lowest of presidency: AP-NORC poll

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

President Joe Biden's approval rating dipped to the lowest point of his presidency in May, a new poll shows, with deepening pessimism emerging among members of his own Democratic Party.

Only 39% of U.S. adults approve of Biden's performance as president, according to the poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Research, dipping from already negative ratings a month earlier.

Overall, only about 2 in 10 adults say the U.S. is heading in the right direction or the economy is good, both down from about 3 in 10 a month earlier. Those drops were concentrated among Democrats, with just 33% within the president's party saying the country is headed in the right direction, down from 49% in April.

Of particular concern for Biden ahead of the midterm elections, his approval among Democrats stands at 73%, a substantial drop since earlier in his presidency. In AP-NORC polls conducted in 2021, Biden's approval rating among Democrats never dropped below 82%.

The findings reflect a widespread sense of exasperation in a country facing a cascade of challenges ranging from inflation, gun violence, and a sudden shortage of baby formula to a persistent pandemic.

"I don't know how much worse it can get," said Milan Ramsey, a 29-year-old high school counselor and Democrat in Santa Monica, California, who with her husband had to move into her parents' house to raise their infant son.

Ramsey thinks the economic dysfunction that's led to her being unable to afford the place where she grew up isn't Biden's fault. But she's alarmed he hasn't implemented ambitious plans for fighting climate change or fixing health care.

"He hasn't delivered on any of the promises. I feel like the stimulus checks came out and that was the last win of his administration," Ramsey said of Biden. "I think he's tired — and I don't blame him, I'd be tired too at his age with the career he's had."

Republicans have not been warm to Biden for a while. Less than 1 in 10 approve of the president or his handling of the economy, but that's no different from last month.

Gerry Toranzo, a nurse and a Republican in Chicago, blames Biden for being forced to pinch pennies by taking steps like driving slower to conserve gas after prices have skyrocketed during his administration.

"His policies are destroying the economy," Toranzo, 46, said of Biden, blaming him for stopping the Keystone XL fuel pipeline to Canada and hamstringing domestic energy production. "It's a vicious cycle of price increases."

Overall, two-thirds of Americans disapprove of Biden's handling of the economy. That rating is largely unchanged over the last few months, though elevated slightly since the first two months of the year.

But there are signs that the dissatisfaction with Biden on the economy has deepened. Just 18% of Americans say Biden's policies have done more to help than hurt the economy, down slightly from 24% in March. Fifty-one percent say they've done more to hurt than help, while 30% say they haven't made much difference either way.

The percentage of Democrats who say Biden's policies have done more to help dipped from 45% to 37%, though just 18% say they've done more to hurt; 44% say they've made no difference.

Some Democrats blame other forces for inflation.

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Manuel Morales, an internet service technician in Moline, Illinois, thinks the pandemic and war in Ukraine have had a far bigger impact than Biden's decisions. But the 58-year-old Democrat is now questioning the benefits of Biden's biggest legislative achievement, the American Rescue Plan, and its stimulus checks.

"It helped a lot of people, but," Morales said, "people did not want to go back to work."

Morales faults Biden on another area of persistent vulnerability to the president — immigration.

Only 38% back Biden on immigration, and Morales is disappointed at the scenes of migrants continuing to cross the southern border. Though he himself is a Mexican immigrant, Morales thinks the U.S. needs to more stringently control its border to have a hope of legalizing deserving migrants who are in the country illegally.

Also, Morales said, there have to be limits. "It's impossible to bring the whole of Central America and Mexico into this country," he said.

Another area where Morales faults Biden, albeit mildly, is the war with Ukraine. "We are spending a lot of money going to the Ukraine and all that is going to the deficit," Morales said.

Overall, 45% of Americans approve of Biden's handling of the U.S. relationship with Russia, while 54% disapprove. That's held steady each month since the war in Ukraine began. Seventy-three percent of Democrats and 15% of Republicans approve.

The new poll shows just 21% of Americans say they have "a great deal of confidence" in Biden's ability to handle the situation in Ukraine; 39% say they have some confidence and 39% say they have hardly any.

Charles Penn, a retired factory worker in Huntington, Indiana, is satisfied with Biden's performance on Ukraine.

"I think he's done alright," Penn, 68, said of the president.

But overall Penn, an independent who leans Republican, is disappointed with Biden, and blames him for rising prices that have squeezed him in his retirement.

"The Democrats in the long run have screwed up things by pushing for higher wages, like going from \$7 an hour to \$15 an hour," Penn said, citing the push for a sharp increase in the federal minimum wage that Biden has embraced. "The other side of it is that if you had Republicans, they'd cut my Social Security."

Still, Penn thinks Biden should pay the political price.

"He's captain of the ship, so he's responsible," Penn said of the president.

Religious backers of abortion rights say God's on their side

By CLAIRE GALOFARO AP National Writer

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — It was lunch hour at the abortion clinic, so the nurse in the recovery room got her Bible out of her bag in the closet and began to read.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding," her favorite proverb says, and she returns to it again and again. "He will make your paths straight."

She believes God led her here, to a job at the West Alabama Women's Center, tending to patients who've just had abortions. "I trust in God," said Ramona, who asked that her last name not be used because of the volatility of America's abortion debate.

Out in the parking lot, protesters bellowed at patients arriving for appointments, doing battle against what they regard as a grave sin.

The loudest voices in the abortion debate are often characterized along a starkly religious divide, the faithful versus not. But the reality is much more nuanced, both at this abortion clinic and in the nation that surrounds it. The clinic's staff of 11 — most of them Black, deeply faithful Christian women — have no trouble at all reconciling their work with their religion.

And as the U.S. Supreme Court appears poised to dismantle the constitutional right to an abortion, they draw on their faith that they will somehow continue.

God is on our side, they tell each other. God will keep this clinic open.

Robin Marty, who moved from Minneapolis to Tuscaloosa a couple years ago to help run this clinic, was surprised to hear nurses pray for guidance as the future of abortion grows uncertain.

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"That is one of the things that has caused a whiplash for me — I had this stereotype in my head of a Southern religious person," said Marty. "I just assumed that there was no compatibility between people who are religious and people who support the ability to get an abortion."

Marty realized she was wrong . It's a common error.

"We need to have a real conversation about what we describe as Christianity," said Kendra Cotton, a member of the Black Southern Women's Collective, a network of Black women organizers, many of them from faith-based groups.

The white evangelical worldview that abortion is murder has consumed the conversation, flattening the understanding of how religion and views on abortion truly intersect, she said.

Before Roe v. Wade, faith leaders in many places led efforts to help pregnant women access underground abortions, because they considered it a calling to show compassion and mercy to the most vulnerable.

Now, Black Protestants have some of the most liberal views on access to abortion: Nearly 70% believe abortion should be legal in most or all cases, according to the Public Religion Research Institute. White evangelicals are the other extreme, with only 24% believing abortion should be allowed in most or all cases.

For faithful women of color, there's often a very different balancing act of values when confronting the question of whether women should be able to end unwanted pregnancies, Cotton said.

"We know that Christianity supports freedom, and inherent in freedom is bodily autonomy. Inherent in Christianity is free will. When people talk about the body being a temple of God, you have purview over your body, there is nothing more sacred," Cotton said.

The idea of the state restricting what a person can do with their own body is in direct conflict with that, she said, and it is reminiscent of being under someone else's control -- of slavery.

"You don't get to tell me what to do," Cotton said.

In Tuscaloosa, the West Alabama Women's Center sits on the edge of a nondescript medical plaza, a half-mile from the University of Alabama campus. Though many of the center's clientele are college students, others come from all over the state and some surrounding ones -- it is the only abortion clinic for two hours in every direction. Many of their clients are Black, many already have children and more than 75% survive below the poverty line.

Every patient comes into Ramona's recovery room after their abortion. She keeps the lights low. Working here, to her, feels like a righteous calling. She believes the Christian way is to love people where they are, and that means walking kindly with them as they make the best decision for themselves.

Sometimes they cry, and tell her they didn't want to be there. She's heard stories of rape and domestic violence, but most talk about fear of having more mouths they can't afford to feed. She always says, "I understand."

"I mean that, I do understand, I've gone through that myself," she said.

Ramona, 39, is a single mother of four children, and had her first child at 16. She sometimes imagines what her life might have been had she started her family later. She had to drop out of college. There were times, when her children were young, when she couldn't pay the gas bill, and she boiled water so they could have warm baths.

"Women go through so much, it's hard," she said. "So you should have that choice, whether or not you're ready to be a mother. No one else should choose for you."

Her daughter used to say "Mom, I want to be just like you," and she would stop her. "No ma'am," she'd say to her. "I want you to be better." Her daughter is now 22 and studying to be a doctor.

She clawed herself out of poverty and built a life she loves. Her co-worker at the front desk calls her Miss Wonderful -- she's at peace with God, she said, so every day is a great one.

For a time, she tried to be friendly with one of the regulars who protested outside, trying to convince patients that abortion is murder and they shouldn't go in. She'd visit on her breaks or as she was leaving for the day. They discussed Scripture, forgiveness, sin.

She'd say, "I can see where you're coming from. Can you see where I'm coming from? I'm not going to love you any less because of what you believe in or what you think."

Then one day she was walking by and he shouted at her: When you die, you know where you'll be go-

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ing, and it isn't heaven. She doesn't talk to him anymore.

Alesia Horton, the clinic's director, eyed the protesters from the window.

"I don't know what Bible they're reading, 'cause it's not the one that I read," she said. She and Ramona have been friends since childhood and share a Christian faith.

If people heard the stories she had inside this clinic, she can't imagine trying to mandate that people be forced into motherhood. She had a patient once who had cancer, wanted the child but couldn't continue chemotherapy while she was pregnant. She had to choose between her own life and the child she wanted.

Just two weeks before, Horton wept when she met a 13-year-old who'd been raped, and she can't shake the look on the child's face, staring blankly in the exam room.

"It's going to be OK. Don't think you did anything wrong because you didn't," Horton told her.

She often hears patients cry that they're going to go to hell.

"I've had patients against abortion until it happened to their child, or it happened to them," she said. "The first thing they say, 'I don't believe in this.' And I say, 'Let's get past that. Now that you're pregnant, what are you doing to do? Are you still not going to believe in this? Now you're on the other side. Where you were judging, now it's you.'"

They pray that the Supreme Court won't overturn Roe v. Wade, because they know their poorest patients will bear the burden of abortion bans. Wealthy women will always find a way. They can travel to states where abortion is legal and all the headaches that entails: time off work, babysitters, a tank full of gas, hotel rooms.

If Roe falls, abortion would be barred in Alabama in almost every instance. A 2019 state law, put on hold by the courts for now, outlaws the procedure in all but emergency cases. This clinic is going to try to stay open for those left behind. It is expanding into a full-service gynecological office that people can turn to if they self-administer an abortion and require medical attention, without fear that someone will report them to the police.

In the meantime, the ideological gulf between the believers inside and outside remains wide.

Some of the protesters outside stand quietly, holding signs and hoping their silent presence rattles patients enough to head back to their cars and go home. Some shout at patients as they walk through the parking lot into the clinic, trying to hand them leaflets or direct them to the anti-abortion crisis pregnancy center next door. Some say they want abortion barred completely, with no exceptions even for rape or life-threatening complications, because they believe abortion is murder no matter the circumstances. Most would not give their names; the pregnancy center declined an interview.

The protesters are sometimes aggressive: They have screamed into the clinic's back doors, recorded biohazard bins being carted away, called police if a patient lashes out when they tell them they're going to hell.

The clinic locks the doors for security reasons during the lunch hour between morning and afternoon appointments. On a recent day, as Ramona read her Bible in the back room, a 23-year-old woman arrived and couldn't get inside.

A group of protesters beckoned the woman, who did not want to be named. She was confused — perhaps these people worked for the clinic. "We can help you," they told her.

"I just walked over there and had a million things thrown in my face," the woman said. "I'm a baby killer, I'm a murderer."

She ran away weeping. The clinic staff heard and sought her out.

"I'm so sorry," Horton said.

She glared at the protesters from the window.

"God isn't theirs," she said, "God is all of ours."

Biden: SKorean chip plant a model for deeper ties to Asia

By AAMER MADHANI and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

PYEONGTAEK, South Korea (AP) — President Joe Biden opened his trip to Asia on Friday by touring a South

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Korean computer chip factory that will be the model for a plant in Texas, holding it out as an illustration of how deeper ties with the Indo Pacific can fuel technological innovation and foster vibrant democracies.

"So much of the future of the world is going to be written here, in the Indo Pacific, over the next several decades," Biden said. "This is the moment, in my view, to invest in one another to deepen our business ties, to bring our people even closer together."

Biden's message was pitched toward the promise of a better global tomorrow, yet also aimed at U.S. voters amid political challenges at home — such as inflation driven higher by the chip shortage — as he tries to show his administration is delivering on the economy.

The Democrat's first visit to Asia as president came as polling released Friday by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found Biden's U.S. approval rating at 39%, the lowest of his presidency. The survey also found deepening pessimism about the economy and the state of the United States — especially among Democrats.

About 2 in 10 U.S. adults said the country is headed in the right direction or described the economy as good, down from about 3 in 10 in April. Among Democrats, just 33% said the country is on the right track, down from 49% last month.

Samsung, the South Korea chip plant's owner, last November announced plans to open a \$17 billion semiconductor factory in Texas. A semiconductor shortage last year hurt the availability of autos, kitchen appliances and other goods, causing higher inflation worldwide and crippling Biden's public approval among U.S. voters. The president noted that the Texas plant would add 3,000 high-tech jobs and the construction would include union labor.

"These little chips," Biden said in remarks after he toured the plant, "are the key to propelling us into the next era of humanity's technological development."

The president is seeking to promote greater business collaboration among democracies with overlapping values, seeing it as way to maintain the benefits of a globalized economy in a way that benefits American workers and leads to greater foreign investment in the U.S. He is to appear Sunday in Seoul with the chairman of Hyundai Motor Group to highlight the company's decision to invest in a new electric vehicle and battery manufacturing facility in Savannah, Georgia.

Throughout his five-day visit to South Korea and Japan, Biden is making his case for how a U.S. that can work with its closest allies will be stronger at home and abroad. In his remarks Friday, Biden did not mention China, which has emerged as a prime competitor with the U.S., and he stressed the value of alliances that currently exclude that country.

Greeting Biden at the plant was South Korea's new president, Yoon Suk Yeol, and Samsung Electronics Vice Chairman Lee Jae-yong. Yoon is a political newcomer who became president, his first elected office, just this month. He campaigned on taking a tougher stance against North Korea and strengthening the 70-year alliance with the U.S.

Before Biden spoke, Yoon said that he hoped the U.S.-South Korea partnership evolves into an "economic and security alliance based on cooperation in advanced technology and supply chains."

The chip plant showed a bit of the unique nature of the manufacturing as visitors were required to don white laboratory coats and blue booties to help keep the facility clean. Biden and Yoon, who did not wear protective clothing, saw a demonstration of the machinery.

At one point during his tour, Biden received an in-depth explanation of a KLA inspection system on the Samsung plant floor. The California-based company is a major supplier to Samsung's semiconductor operations. After a worker named Peter explained the ins and outs of the machinery, Biden advised him, "Don't forget to vote," when he returns home to the United States.

In closing, Biden slipped and thanked "Moon," who was South Korea's immediate past president, Moon Jae-in, who held the office for several years before Yoon's recent election. Biden quickly corrected the slip-up.

"President Moon, Yoon, thank you for everything you've done so far," Biden said.

Part of the computer chip shortage is the result of strong demand as much of the world is emerging

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from the coronavirus pandemic. But virus outbreaks and other challenges also have caused the closure of some semiconductor plants. U.S. government officials have estimated that chip production will not be at the levels they would like until early next year.

Global computer chip sales totaled \$151.7 billion during the first three months of this year, a 23% jump from the same period in 2021, according to the Semiconductor Industry Association.

More than 75% of global chip production comes from Asia. That's a possible vulnerability the U.S. hopes to protect against through more domestic production. There's \$52 billion worth of government investment in the sector in a bill being negotiated in Congress.

The risk of Chinese aggression against Taiwan could possibly cut off the flow of high-end computer chips that are needed in the U.S. for military gear as well as consumer goods. Similarly, the hermetic North Korea has been test-firing ballistic missiles amid a coronavirus outbreak, a possible risk to South Korea's manufacturing sector should the brinkmanship escalate.

In terms of chip production, China leads the global pack with a 24% share, followed by Taiwan (21%), South Korea (19%) and Japan (13%). Only 10% of chips are made in the U.S., according to the Semiconductor Industry Association.

Samsung announced the plant in Taylor, Texas, in November 2021. It hopes to begin operation in the second half of 2024. The South Korean electronics giant chose the site based on factors including government incentives and the "readiness and stability" of local infrastructure.

The White House said in a fact sheet that semiconductor companies have announced nearly \$80 billion in U.S. investments through 2025. That sum includes \$20 billion for Intel's plant outside Columbus, Ohio, up to \$30 billion by Texas Instruments, a \$1 billion expansion by Wolfspeed in New York and investments by Global Foundries and SK Group.

Disinformation board's ex-leader faced wave of online abuse

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nina Jankowicz, like so many millennials, was excited to share a social media post announcing her new job on Twitter late last month when she was named executive director for a new disinformation board established by the Department of Homeland Security.

But instead of well-wishes, Jankowicz's tweet set off a torrent of sexist profanities across social media and menacing emails filled with rape or death threats that continue to follow her even after she resigned from that new job on Wednesday morning following the disastrous rollout of the program. Republicans also raised questions about her fitness to serve in the role, given some of her past comments about former President Donald Trump and his allies.

It's a familiar scenario, not only for those who criticize Trump, but also for many other women.

In part, it's also due to a confluence of social media, a hyperpolarized world and the crush of online harassment, stalking and abuse that has driven dozens of women around the globe from powerful positions. The speed and unchecked virulence of the attacks show another way that social media can serve as an accelerant to sowing discord.

"This type of silencing and terrorizing are global, sadly, and unsurprising," said Danielle Citron, a law professor at the University of Virginia who studies online privacy and hate crimes. "It is a playbook. And it's downright scary."

In 2018, after winning an election that made her the first female, Black legislator in Vermont, Kiah Morris said she was quitting the job because of racist threats, including from one Twitter user who threatened to stalk her at rallies.

Former Ohio health director Amy Acton, one of several female health officials across the U.S. who was subjected to threats online after recommending COVID-19 masking and stay-at-home orders, resigned weeks after protesters showed up at her house armed with sexist, antisemitic signs.

Heidi Allen, a member of British Parliament, stepped down in 2019, saying she was "exhausted" by "vile" online hatred she received, which included one man who posted aerial images of her home with specific

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threats. He was eventually jailed for his posts.

A United Nations report released earlier this year that looked at Finland confirmed what many of those women already suspected: Female politicians, regardless of political affiliation, are subjected to 10 times more abusive messages on Twitter, including hate speech that sometimes suggested the women kill themselves. The online abuse, the U.N. concluded in its report, prevents democracies from being equally representative.

For her part, Jankowicz said Wednesday she won't be "silenced" by the online harassment and it was not the final provocation that led to her resignation.

But it had a similar effect.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas decided Tuesday to pause the work of the Disinformation Governance Board after such a negative reception and growing concerns that it was becoming a distraction for the department's other work on disinformation, according to two department officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. The board's pause led Jankowicz to quit Wednesday morning.

To be sure, the board's bungled launch and the agency's ensuing struggle to directly answer questions about its purpose, funding or work made the new initiative contentious from the start. Critics and Republican lawmakers raised questions about how the board might infringe on Americans' free speech and privacy rights.

Others expressed concerns around Jankowicz's statements during the 2020 election warning of possible Russian involvement around the provenance of a laptop said to belong to Hunter Biden, the president's eldest son. A TikTok video she posted to the tune of a song from "Mary Poppins" calling the story disinformation was widely criticized by conservative media, Republicans and others.

Conservative pundits, Twitter users and TV show hosts delivered a relentless campaign full of sexist attacks and misleading statements against Jankowicz. A Fox News personality questioned whether Jankowicz should have agreed to lead the board while pregnant. One far-right extremist called her "mentally ill" and a "nasty ... Jew," on his podcast; Jankowicz is not Jewish. Last week several conservative news sites circulated a misleading claim that Jankowicz was seeking powers to edit Twitter users' posts directly.

"I was trying to do important work to protect Americans from a real threat," Jankowicz said. But, instead, she was spending time reporting a steady wave of threats about herself.

"It was horrible. It was constant (direct messages), emails, threats on Twitter, threats on other places that I wasn't looking at. That's obviously really scary and really unpleasant."

Broadcast TV's reduced role made clear in fall presentations

By DAVID BAUDER and LYNN ELBER Associated Press Writers

They never even made it onto the stage.

There were constant reminders of the diminished influence of broadcast television networks this past week, when entertainment companies Paramount, Disney, Warner Bros. Discovery, NBC Universal and Fox hawked their upcoming wares to advertisers in flashy New York presentations.

None was more glaring than the fact that Craig Erwich and Kelly Kahl, chiefs of the ABC and CBS entertainment divisions, watched from the sidelines. Erwich was replaced by a boss with broader responsibilities, and NBC doesn't even have an entertainment president; instead, there's an executive who oversees several networks and streaming.

Broadcasters once owned the week, revealing their fall schedules to much fanfare. They're now almost afterthoughts in bloated presentations where the action is now in streaming, and in the coming shakeout over how advertising will invade that format.

Yet with their plans, ABC, CBS and NBC — Fox didn't even bother to release a fall schedule — show they clearly know their new place in the entertainment world.

"How do you not recognize reality?" said Garth Ancier, former entertainment president at NBC and Fox. "All of the networks are basically recognizing reality with their schedules. They're not saying, 'we're going

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to build the audience back.”

Twenty years ago, the networks were coming off a season where three scripted programs — “Friends,” “CSI: Crime Scene Investigation” and “ER” — all averaged more than 22 million viewers per episode. This season, “NCIS” and “FBI” are, barely, the only such shows to exceed 10 million, the Nielsen company said.

In April, a broadcast television network was being watched less than 25% of the time that an American household had a TV on, Nielsen said. The rest of the time was spent on cable networks, streaming, gaming, DVR use or videos.

With premium cable in its salad days and streaming still a dream, the network programmers in 2002 spent freely and took chances. ABC, CBS and NBC introduced 19 new scripted programs, eight of them comedies, on their fall schedules that year.

This year, they plan just seven new scripted shows for the fall. NBC’s star vehicle for George Lopez and his daughter, “Lopez vs. Lopez,” is the only comedy.

“We have officially turned the page now. Everyone sees that we are not going back to the network era,” said Aaron Barnhart, a veteran critic and author of the book “Primetimer Guide to Streaming TV.” “In some ways, it’s just the culmination of a culture shift that happened when everybody first start hooking up to cable TV.”

Even Ancier, a creature of network TV who also worked for the Walt Disney Studios and the WB, is now advising developers of an app to help people keep track of their favorite shows on streaming services.

Network TV is primarily becoming the home of franchises and reboots, unscripted and live events and sports.

NBC has its three Dick Wolf-produced “Chicago” dramas filling its Wednesday nights and CBS does the same for its “FBI” shows on Tuesday, also produced by Wolf. NBC’s trio of “Law & Order” shows (yes, Wolf again) will fill Thursday nights, CBS has its “NCIS” franchise, Fox has two “911” shows and ABC is trying to create its own franchise with a spinoff of “The Rookie” in the fall.

“They have built-in audience bases, and require much less time and money to promote, and tend to get strong viewer sampling,” said veteran TV analyst Steve Sternberg.

Even CBS’ funnyman Stephen Colbert couldn’t resist poking fun at his network’s formula at the Paramount program, saying it specializes in “sexy people solving the murders of sexy corpses.”

NBC succumbed to the tried-and-true idea of resurrecting old shows with the drama “Quantum Leap” and, in midseason, the comedy “Night Court.”

“That isn’t a fall schedule,” said ABC’s Jimmy Kimmel, whose mocking monologues are a ritual at the yearly schedule presentations. “Those are the tapes you find in your dead uncle’s VCR.”

At ABC, “we’ve really leaned into live events” like “American Idol,” Erwich said in an interview. The network is also introducing a celebrity version of “Jeopardy!,” recognizing the syndicated game show routinely draws more viewers than any prime-time show. For the first time this fall, CBS is scheduling an all-unscripted evening of programs.

Both ABC and NBC will have more unscripted than scripted hours on its prime-time schedule this fall. In total, 34 of 66 prime-time hours on the three top networks will be scripted. That compares to 42 and a half 20 years ago, not including nine hours of scheduled movies.

The broadcasters are looking to save money; CBS’ cancellation of two comedies from go-to producer Chuck Lorre this spring is another illustration of belt-tightening, Barnhart said.

CBS’ Kahl noted that 17 of the top 30 shows on its corporate sibling, the Paramount+ streaming service, are CBS shows.

“When it works right, it’s kind of a virtuous circle,” he said. “We can get younger people exposed to our shows who might not watch it on the network, who might see it on Paramount+ and then come back to us.”

The viewership numbers, the lack of attention and sapping of creativity may not bode well for the broadcast networks. But they’re in better shape, and have a clearer pathway to the future, than many cable networks, Barnhart said.

“Before, they served the mass audience,” he said. “The 25% who still watch broadcast TV, it’s hard for

us to think of the network audience as a niche, but it sort of is.”

Naomi Osaka at French Open news conference: ‘I think I’m OK’

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

PARIS (AP) — Naomi Osaka cracked jokes at Roland Garros on Friday — and, yes, laughed at those jokes. She smiled after some reporters’ questions. She paused to contemplate, as is her wont, before offering answers.

All of which seemed to confirm this assessment that she offered during an 18-minute pre-tournament French Open news conference, one year after she declared she would avoid talking to the press and then withdrew before the second round: “For the most part, I think I’m OK.”

Osaka used those words at the conclusion of a lengthy and thoughtful reply about what it was like to come back to a place where her last trip was so much more about her well-being and off-court mindset than her tennis. Which is saying something when the subject is a player who already owns four Grand Slam titles and has been ranked No. 1.

“I’m not going to lie. When I first came here, I was very worried. I was just kind of worried if there would be people that -- of course, I also didn’t like how I handled the situation — but I was worried that there were people that I offended some way, and I would just kind of bump into them,” Osaka said Friday, her eyes darting around the room, her words separated by the occasional pause. “But I think everyone has been really positive, for the most part. I’m not really so sure. I was also very worried about this press conference, because I knew I’d get a lot of questions about this.”

Continuing, Osaka said: “For me, where I am right now, I wouldn’t want to say — it hasn’t left my mind. Of course, I’m still thinking about it.”

Before the 2021 French Open, Osaka vowed to not “do any press during Roland Garros,” framing the matter as a mental health issue, saying it can create self-doubt to have to answer questions after a loss. She stuck to that stance, skipping the tournament’s media day — which is what Friday’s setting was — and her mandatory news conference after winning in the first round, which drew a \$15,000 fine. Osaka also was threatened by all four Grand Slam tournaments of possible additional punishment, including disqualification or suspension.

She responded by pulling out of Roland Garros, explaining that she experiences “huge waves of anxiety” before speaking to the media and revealing she has “suffered long bouts of depression,” helping make such comments more common among athletes, not to mention society at large.

Osaka also sat out Wimbledon and, later in the season, took another mental health break after losing at the U.S. Open.

She returned to the Grand Slam stage in January at the Australian Open, where was the reigning champion.

Osaka lost in the third round there to Amanda Anisimova, a 20-year-old American who just so happens to be Osaka’s first opponent in Paris.

Her ranking has fallen to No. 38, mostly because of a lack of action, and her preparation for the French Open was hardly ideal: Osaka withdrew from the clay-court tournament in Rome this month because of a lingering injury to her left Achilles heel.

“For me, there is no way I’m not going to play this tournament, so of course, you kind of have to manage things. But at the same time, I’m going to pop a few painkillers. ... I have actually played a lot of Grand Slams with something,” she said. “So I think maybe there is a possibility I could play really good when I have an injury, because I feel like I don’t have anything to lose.”

Bill de Blasio, ex-NYC mayor, to run for redrawn House seat

NEW YORK (AP) — Former New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said Friday that he will run for Congress in a redrawn district that includes his Brooklyn home.

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De Blasio, whose second mayoral term ended last year, announced on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" that he will seek the Democratic nomination for the 10th Congressional District, which will include part of Manhattan and a swath of western Brooklyn.

Democratic U.S. Rep. Jerry Nadler represents New York's 10th District now but will no longer live in the district under maps that have been redrawn under the supervision of a New York judge. Nadler has said he believed the new maps are unconstitutional — but if the proposed districts do become final on Friday, he intends to run in the 12th District, currently represented by Rep. Carolyn Maloney.

The primary has been pushed back from June to August 23.

De Blasio, 61, toyed with running for governor this year but decided not to challenge incumbent Democrat Kathy Hochul. He also had a short-lived run for president in 2019.

Biden in Asia: New friends, old tensions, storms at home

By JOSH BOAK, AAMER MADHANI and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — President Joe Biden hopes to use his visit to Asia to confirm his belief that long-standing friendships can afford to become even friendlier — and pay dividends. He opened the trip in South Korea on Friday and will end in Japan next week at a time when world events are resetting the foundations of the global order.

The coronavirus pandemic disrupted supply chains and exposed the fragilities of a trade system focused primarily on low prices for consumers and high profits for corporations. Then Russia's invasion of Ukraine ushered in a return to Cold War-era intrigues.

The U.S. and other wealthy democracies — including Japan and South Korea — banded together to help Ukraine and punish Russia, but not all countries were ready to side with the alliance. China, India and others have aimed to stay cordial with Russia without crossing the sanctions.

The uncertainty leaves Biden determined to show that America's ultimate power rests with its ability to make friends and influence people rather than the raw capacity of its military and economy. A look at some of the key issues and themes on the table for Biden's visit:

EASING TENSIONS WITH NEW LEADERS

Relations between Japan and South Korea have been at their worst in decades because of disputes over wartime history and trade. These are rifts that the countries' two new leaders appear willing to heal, with Biden as a possible interlocutor who could help bring them closer together.

South Korea's Yoon Suk Yeol assumed the presidency a week ago on the expectation of better ties with Japan. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who took office in October, told Yoon after his March election that "sound relations" are crucial for regional and international peace and stability.

As Kishida sees it, the rules-based order is threatened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Japan fears the war could embolden China to seize territories in the Pacific, a big reason why better relations with South Korea are desired. Still, Kishida skipped Yoon's May 10 inauguration, sending his foreign minister instead. Because the U.S. has relations with both countries, one likely bridge toward improving ties is focusing on their shared interests.

NORTH KOREAN PRESSURE COOKER

Biden's visit comes as the allies face a growing threat from North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile program. The country's authoritarian leader Kim Jong Un is trying to force the United States to accept the idea of the North as a nuclear power and he's out to negotiate security and economic concessions from a position of strength.

Kim has conducted 16 rounds of missile tests so far this year, including the country's first flight of an intercontinental ballistic missile in nearly five years in March. He's attempting to exploit a favorable environment to push forward his weapons program as the U.N. Security Council remains divided over Russia's war on Ukraine.

The challenges posed by a decaying economy and an escalating COVID-19 outbreak across an unvaccinated population of 26 million are unlikely to slow his pressure campaign. White House national security

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adviser Jake Sullivan says U.S. intelligence shows there's a "genuine possibility" that North Korea will conduct another ballistic missile test or nuclear test around Biden's visit.

Nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang have stalled for more than three years over disagreements about relaxing crippling U.S.-led sanctions in exchange for disarmament steps by the North.

STORMS AT HOME

Even half a world away from home, Biden can't escape the turbulence rippling through the U.S.

The stock market is tanking over fears about the economy. The baby formula shortage is frustrating families, even amid efforts to bring in imports and boost domestic supplies. The pain of the Buffalo, New York, mass shooting and the racist motives underlying the attack are still fresh. Add to that rising gasoline prices and the persistent challenge of inflation at a nearly 40-year high.

The president may want to train the public's attention on his efforts abroad, but he'll likely face tough questions about what's happening at home.

A poll Friday from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds approval of Biden at just 39%, the lowest point of his presidency, and deepening pessimism about the U.S. economy and direction of the United States — especially among Democrats.

About 2 in 10 U.S. adults say the United States is headed in the right direction or describe the economy good, down from about 3 in 10 in April. Among Democrats, just 33% say the country is on the right track, down from 49% last month.

THE QUAD

The Quad partnership, meeting Tuesday in Tokyo, is composed of the U.S., Australia, India and Japan with the expressed goal of a "free and open" Indo-Pacific region. A joint statement after their 2021 meeting didn't mention China, yet many of the stances adopted by the Quad are interpreted as a check on China's ambitions to be the dominant power in Asia.

This time, the drama might be more internal and reflect the complex nature of democracy itself. That's because Australia is holding elections Saturday. If the incumbent party wins, Prime Minister Scott Morrison would already be set to attend Tuesday's meeting in Tokyo. If his party loses, Morrison would have to quickly resign so that opposition leader Anthony Albanese could be sworn in before the Tokyo meeting. Then there's the possibility that neither party captures a majority or the results are uncertain. If that happens, Albanese might be able to attend as an observer.

THE CHINA CONUNDRUM

China is carefully watching Biden's visit. The U.S. and its allies rely on China as a trade partner, yet rivalry persists as the shared economic interests have often revealed conflicting values systems. U.S. officials increasingly frame the relationship with China as one of competition.

Shortly before Russia invaded Ukraine in February, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin met at the Beijing Winter Olympics and told the world that theirs is a friendship of "no limits." Since the invasion, China has been critical of the sanctions imposed on Russia while appearing hesitant to cross the bans imposed by the U.S. and its allies.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian alluded to China as "a third party" who should not be disadvantaged by agreements between the U.S. and Japan.

"The development of bilateral relations between the U.S. and Japan should not target a third party or harm the interests of third parties," Zhao said at a Thursday briefing.

A NEW ACRONYM: IPEF

Former U.S. President Donald Trump torched years of trade negotiations by pulling the U.S. out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership in 2017. While Biden has portrayed himself as the anti-Trump, he's shown no enthusiasm for returning to the deal as written.

This leaves the U.S. coming to Asia to promote an alternative trade pact: the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. Or, IPEF.

The framework is about regional cooperation on trade, technology, supply chains, clean energy, worker standards, taxes and anti-corruption programs. None of that is necessarily controversial. But a possible hurdle is the administration signaling that the framework won't involve the usual financial sweeteners of

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lower tariffs and easier access to American customers, a possible nod to a U.S. voter backlash against past trade deals.

Quad members Australia, India and Japan are likely members of the framework. South Korea and some Southeast Asian countries are also seen candidates. But the framework is still in its early stages.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Friday that any regional cooperation framework should feature "peace and development, enhance mutual trust and cooperation between regional countries, should not target any third parties or undermine their interests, and should not be selective or exclusive."

MORE CHIPS, PLEASE

It's the engine of the digital age: Almost everything needs a computer chip. But the world simply lacks a reliable supply in the wake of the pandemic. U.S. government officials expect the shortages to ease toward the end of this year, but it might not be until 2023 that enough semiconductors are on the market to meet industry needs.

No one denies the need for more cooperation, but there's an open debate about how to increase production to withstand disease, war, extreme weather and other calamities. Biden wants to see more chips made in the U.S. South Korea and Taiwan want to increase the resiliency of their own production as a fix to this crisis, according to a briefing by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. And Japan's prime minister is making chips a cornerstone of his "new capitalism" policy, looking to make chips for robotic technology, artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

Today in History: May 21, Amelia Earhart crosses Atlantic

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, May 21, the 141st day of 2022. There are 224 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 21, 1881, Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross.

On this date:

In 1471, King Henry VI of England died in the Tower of London at age 49.

In 1542, Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto died while searching for gold along the Mississippi River.

In 1924, in a case that drew much notoriety, 14-year-old Bobby Franks was murdered in a "thrill killing" carried out by University of Chicago students Nathan Leopold Jr. and Richard Loeb (Bobby's cousin).

In 1927, Charles A. Lindbergh landed his Spirit of St. Louis monoplane near Paris, completing the first solo airplane flight across the Atlantic Ocean in 33 1/2 hours.

In 1932, Amelia Earhart became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean as she landed in Northern Ireland, about 15 hours after leaving Newfoundland.

In 1941, a German U-boat sank the American merchant steamship SS Robin Moor in the South Atlantic after the ship's passengers and crew were allowed to board lifeboats.

In 1955, Chuck Berry recorded his first single, "Maybellene," for Chess Records in Chicago.

In 1972, Michelangelo's Pieta, on display at the Vatican, was damaged by a hammer-wielding man who shouted he was Jesus Christ.

In 1979, former San Francisco City Supervisor Dan White was convicted of voluntary manslaughter in the slayings of Mayor George Moscone (mahs-KOH'-nee) and openly gay Supervisor Harvey Milk; outrage over the verdict sparked rioting. (White was sentenced to seven years and eight months in prison; he ended up serving five years and took his own life in 1985.)

In 1991, former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated during national elections by a suicide bomber.

In 2000, death claimed actor Sir John Gielgud at age 96 and author Dame Barbara Cartland at age 98.

In 2020, President Donald Trump visited a Ford Motor Co. plant outside Detroit that had been repurposed to manufacture ventilators; he did not publicly wear a face mask but said he had worn one while out of public view. A Michigan judge sided with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in a challenge by Republican lawmakers

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to her authority to order sweeping restrictions during the coronavirus outbreak.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama and other world leaders meeting in Chicago locked in place an Afghanistan exit path that would keep their troops fighting there for two more years. Former Rutgers University student Dharun Ravi (dah-ROON' RAH'-vee), who used a webcam to spy on his gay roommate, Tyler Clementi, who then committed suicide, was sentenced to 30 days in jail (he served 20). A Yemeni man detonated a bomb during a rehearsal for a military parade, killing 96 fellow soldiers; al-Qaida's branch in Yemen claimed responsibility.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump, visiting Riyadh, implored Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries to extinguish "Islamic extremism" emanating from the region. North Korea fired a solid-fuel ballistic missile, saying the test was hailed as perfect by leader Kim Jong Un. The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus received its final standing ovation as it performed its last show at the Nassau County Coliseum in Uniondale, New York, ending a 146-year run.

One year ago: Thousands of Palestinians rallied after a cease-fire took effect in the latest Gaza war; the 11 days of fighting left more than 250 people dead, the vast majority Palestinians, and brought widespread destruction to the Gaza Strip. President Joe Biden said there had been no shift in his commitment to Israel's security, but that a two-state solution that includes a state for Palestinians remained "the only answer" to that conflict. Authorities said the two Bureau of Prisons workers who were supposed to be guarding Jeffrey Epstein the night he killed himself in a New York jail had admitted that they falsified records, but that they would be spared prison time under a deal with federal prosecutors; the workers were accused of sleeping and browsing the internet instead of monitoring Epstein.

Today's Birthdays: R&B singer Ron Isley (The Isley Brothers) is 81. Musician Bill Champlin is 75. Singer Leo Sayer is 74. Actor Carol Potter is 74. Former Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., is 71. Actor Mr. T is 70. Music producer Stan Lynch is 67. Actor Judge Reinhold is 65. Actor-director Nick Cassavetes is 63. Actor Lisa Edelstein is 56. Actor Fairuza Balk is 48. Rock singer-musician Mikel Jollett (Airborne Toxic Event) is 48. Rapper Havoc (Mobb Deep) is 48. Rock musician Tony LoGerfo (Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real) is 39. Actor Sunkrish Bala is 38. Actor David Ajala is 36. Actor Ashlie Brillault is 35. Country singer Cody Johnson is 35. Actor Scott Leavenworth is 32. Actor Sarah Ramos is 31.