

Groton Daily Independent

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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

Thursday, May 26

Senior Menu: Turkey and dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, carrot bar, whole wheat bread.

State Track Meet in Sioux Falls

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



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

10 a.m.: Region 1A Girls Golf Meet at Madison

5:30 p.m.: Legion at Lake Norden, 1 game.

7 p.m.: Jr. Legion at Lake Norden, 1 game

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

Friday, May 27

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken, boiled potatoes, green beans, cake with strawberries, whole wheat bread.

State Track Meet in Sioux Falls

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

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Allyssa Raelynn Locke

With Highest Honor

Daughter of Matt and Tammy Locke of Groton.

Sisters and brother: Jerica, Sydney, Mason.

Hobbies: Play basketball, piano, watch movies, and read books.

School/community activities: basketball, soccer, volleyball, FCCLA, FCA, national honors society, and youth coach.

Favorite high school memory: going to state with my friends in Rapid.

Future plans: attend SDSU major in exercise science, then continue on to graduate school to earn a doctorate in physical therapy.

Awards: Richard 'Dick' Voss Memorial Scholarship, Susan Deann Weismantel Scholarship, Girls State representative, Jackrabbit Now – Girls State Officers Scholarship, SDSU Jackrabbit Journey Scholarship, Cortland & Lois Kuehnert Valedictorian Scholarship, South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship, 2021 Payback Challenge Honorable Mention recipient, Northern Electric & Dakota News Now "Scholar of the Week", President's Award for Educational Excellence, Groton Community Fund Scholarship, SDSU Yellow & Blue Scholarship, Lion's Scholarship, Dacotah Grown Scholarship from Dacotah Bank, Principal's 4 year Honor Roll, Touchstone Energy Cooperative & Dakota News Now Scholar of the week Scholarship, National Honor Society Member, Dr. T.J. Johnson Memorial Scholarship, Hopps Dow Scholarship, Roby Luecke Memorial Scholarship, Regents' Scholar, Doug Doeden Memorial Scholarship, FCCLA Service award.



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Madeline Chéré Fliehs

With Highest Honor

Daughter of Jeff and Bridget Fliehs of Groton.

Brother and sisters: Elizabeth -15, Zachary-12, Sophia-10.

Hobbies: playing sports, watching sports, boating, wake surfing, fishing, hunting, shopping, baking, hanging with friends, traveling, organizing, trying new things, relaxing, and listening to music.

School/community activities: volleyball, soccer, club lacrosse, club volleyball, vice president of senior class, vice president of St. John's Lutheran Church Youth Group, FCCLA, national honors society, lifeguard, dance team, FCA.

Favorite high school memory: making it to state volleyball my sophomore year and getting the chance to start and play. It was an amazing atmosphere and feeling as I realized we were the 1st team in our school history to make it.

Future plans: attend South Dakota State University to study human biology with a dental emphasis, then to attend medical/dental school.

Awards: SDSU Yellow & Blue Scholarship, South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship; Cortland & Lois Kuehnert Trade, Technical, Science, Math, or computer technology Scholarship; 2022 Bob Peterson Memorial Telecommunications Scholarship, National Honor Society Member, Regents' Scholar, Kenny Beck Memorial Scholarship, President's Award for Educational Excellence, FCCLA Service award, Principal's 4 year Honor Roll, Groton Class of 1969 Scholarship, SDSU Jacks Journey, Principal Student Service Award



JAMES VALLEY
TELECOMMUNICATIONS



jamesvalley.com

Trista Jean Keith With Highest Honor

Daughter of Tricia and Bary Keith of Groton.

Brothers: Brandon Keith-22, Brady-24.

Hobbies: Spending time with friends and family, watching movies, longboarding, and going to the lake in the summertime.

School/Community activities: soccer, volleyball, track, FCCLA, member of St. John's Lutheran youth Group.

Favorite high school memory: My favorite high school memory is when a group of my friends went to formal my freshman year. We had so much fun dancing and singing all night.

Future plans: attend South Dakota State University for a degree in pharmacy.

Awards: National Honor Society Member, Kay and David Donovan Memorial scholarship, Regents' Scholar, Nomination for PEO Scholarship, South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship, Groton Chamber of Commerce Scholarship, Irvin & Janice Fliehs Family Scholarship, SDSU Yellow & Blue scholarship, Principal's 4 year Honor Roll, Principal Student Service Award, President's Award for Educational Excellence, Wilfred N. & Lucille A Heinz Memorial Scholarship, Vicki Strom Memorial Scholarship



Everyday Pieces For
Your Inspired Home
1506 W Aspen Ave, Groton
Congratulations Graduate!

Travis Michael Townsend

With Highest Honor

Son of Dean and Kellie Townsend of Andover.

Sister: Cassandra Townsend.

Hobbies: robotics

School/community activities: 4-H, robotics, and FFA.

Future plans: Attend SDSU for mechanical engineering.

Awards: President's Award for Educational Excellence, Gwendolyn O'Connor Broman Memorial Scholarship, South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship, National Honor Society Member, Groton STEM Scholarship, Groton Faith Forever Scholarship, BDM rural water system Scholarship, Principal's 4 year Honor Roll, Groton FFA Scholarship, Eastern Star Scholarship, Groton Class of 1969 Scholarship, SDSU Yellow & Blue Scholarship, Lion's Scholarship, Cortland & Lois Kuehnert Financial Need Scholarship



Doug Abeln Seed Company

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Seth Wayne Johnson

With Honor

Son of Greg and Mary Johnson of Bristol.

Brothers and sister: Cole-20, Angie-39, and Scott-37.

Hobbies: snowboarding, traveling, hanging out with friends.

School/community activities: 4.0 honor roll, football, student of the month, Richard Duera Scholarship, member of Bergen Lutheran Church, church youth group, volunteering for church and Bristol community.

Favorite high school memory: football.

Future plans: attend SDSU for Ag Systems Technology.

Awards: Richard Duerre Scholarship, SDSU Yellow & Blue Scholarship, Anthony O. Brokaw Scholarship, Principal's 4 year Honor Roll, South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship, Brenda Harms Memorial Scholarship, Jerald W. Peterson Scholarship, Cortland & Lois Kuehnert Top Student Scholarship, Lake Region Cooperative Scholarship from Day County, President's Award for Educational Excellence



M&L Real Estate

Merry Lone, Broker: 605/590-0000

425 4th Ave. E., Bristol, SD 57219

Charlotte Andres, Broker Assoc.: 229-9888

Your future is bright! Best Wishes Seth!

Jordan Carl James Bjerke

With Honor

Son of Jerry and Kathy Bjerke of Groton.

Sister and Brother: Cameron Johnson-36, Breanne Bjerke-35, Becca Haisch-29, Tori Bjerke-25, Jessica Bjerke-22, and Maddie Bjerke-18.

Hobbies: sports, hunting, fishing, spending time at the lake, spending time with friends, family, and my dog Kirby.

School/community activities: football, SEAS catholic legion baseball, 2 years of basketball, 1 year of FFA.

Favorite high school memory: winning NEC championship senior year of football.

Future plans:

Attend Lake Area for building trades Technology.

Awards: Hopps Dow Scholarship, President's Award for Educational Excellence, Principal's 4 year Honor Roll, Build Dakota Scholarship, Brenda Harms Memorial Scholarship, Don Bartz Scholarship



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Best of Luck! Congrats!

Alyssa Opal Thaler

With Honor

Daughter of Jeff and Nancy Thaler of Groton.

Brother: Conner Thaler-21.

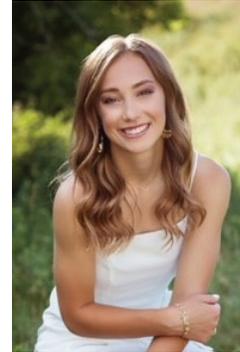
Hobbies: playing sports and music, hunting, hanging out with family and friends, cheering on the Groton Tigers!

School/community activities: National honors society member, student body president, class president, FCCLA, FBLA, FCA, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Youth Group, band, basketball, volleyball, show choir tech, softball and coaching softball and baseball.

Favorite high school memory: being involved in so many amazing groups and meeting lots of new people.

Future plans: attending the University of North Dakota majoring in business and economics with a minor in Pre-law.

Awards: Groton Area FCA 3:16 Scholarship, Principal Student Service Award, Knights of Columbus scholarship, President's Award for Educational Excellence, Eastern Star Scholarship, University of North Dakota Academic Achievement scholarship, Girls State representatives, National Honor Society Member, Regents' Scholar, PAC Community Service Scholarship, Groton Community Fund Scholarship, Shawn Weismittel-Kramer memorial Scholarship



Greg Johnson Construction, Inc.

Greg Johnson, Owner

Business: 605/492-3143 ~ Cell: 605/216-3143

Best wishes as you begin a new adventure!

Kansas Michelle Kroll

With Honor

Daughter of Craig and Lisa Kroll of Andover.

Hobbies: being outside, working on the farm, spending time with friends and family, and showing cattle.

School/ Community activities: FFA and Day County 4 H.

Favorite high school memory: becoming the Groton FFA president this year.

Future plans: SDSU for animal science.

Awards: President's Award for Educational Excellence, Waldorf Scholarship Amount, Girls State representative, Farm Credit Services of America Scholarship, Dale D. Wolter Memorial Scholarship, Tom and Barbra Paepke Ag Scholarship, National Honor Society Member, Robert Schuring Memorial Scholarship, South Dakota Freedom Scholarship, South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship, Groton FFA Scholarship, Richard 'Dick' Voss memorial Scholarship, SDSU Jacks Journey Scholarship, SDSU Yellow & Blue Scholarship, Ruden Family Ag Scholarship



**Everyday Pieces For
Your Inspired Home**
1506 W Aspen Ave, Groton
Congratulations Graduate!

Pierce Gerald Kettering With Honor

Son of Scott Kettering and Kara and Kevin Pharis of Groton.

Sisters and Brothers: Portia-21, Kale-20, Elise-9, and Henry-8.

Hobbies: working, lifting weights, learning.

School/community activities: football, wrestling, spring baseball, and FFA.

Favorite high school memory: graduating.

Future plans: attend NDSU for Ag. business.

Awards: Regents' Scholar, Lion's Scholarship, President's Award for Educational Excellence, NDSU Provost Scholarship



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Best of Luck! Congrats!

Madisen Kaye Bjerke

With Honor

Daughter of Jerry and Kathy Bjerke of Groton.

Brothers and sisters: Cameron Johnson-36, Breanne Bjerke- 35, Tori Bjerke-25, Jessica Bjerke-21, Jordan Bjerke-18.

Hobbies: I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, traveling, being at the lake, watching Netflix, and spending time with kids.

School/community activities: volleyball, cheer, dance team, track, FCCLA, FCA, year-book, student council.

Favorite high school memory: cheering at the Boys State Basketball Tournament my senior year.

Future plans: Attend NSU and major in Elementary and Special Education.

Awards: WolfPack scholarship, NSU Dual Credit scholarship, South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship, Principal's 4 year Honor Roll, President's Award for Educational Excellence, FCCLA Service award, Groton Area Teaching Scholarship, Millicent Atkins scholarship, Hatterschiedt scholarship, National Honor Society Member, Regents' Scholar



Greg Johnson Construction, Inc.

Greg Johnson, Owner

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Best wishes for a successful future!

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Julianna Grace Kosel

With Honor

Daughter of Paul and Tina of Groton.

Sister: Jeslyn-16.

Hobbies: working out, reading, being with friends, watching Netflix and podcasts.

School/community activities: show choir, dance team, skating, and FCCLA, All State Choir, Byron Bible Camp Counsellor.

Favorite high school memory: going to the finals for show choir for the first time in Aberdeen Center Stage and the Florida show choir trip.

Future plans: go to Paul Mitchell the school in Rapid City for cosmetology.

Awards: Samuli – Rix Scholarship, Paul Mitchell the School Cuts, Colors, and Creatives Scholarship, President's Award for Educational Excellence



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We are so proud of you! Have a great future!

Hannah Jo Gustafson With Honor

Daughter of John and Beth Gustafson of Groton.

Brother and Sister: Taylor Gustafson and Alexis Gustafson.

Hobbies: camping, hanging out with friends and family, golfing, playing with my dog Buddy, and going snowmobiling.

School/community activities: FCCLA member and yearbook member.

Favorite high school memories: water my plants in the greenhouse.

Future plans: I plan on attending Lake Area Technical college to attain a Paramedic diploma.

Awards: President's Award for Educational Excellence, Dennis K. & Shirley R. Larson Family Scholarship



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Kennedy Lynn Anderson With Honor

Daughter of John and Stacey Anderson of Claremont.

Sister: Kaitlyn Anderson.

Hobbies: hanging out with friends, working on the farm.

School/community activities: FFA. 4H.

Favorite high school memory: National FFA convention.

Future plans: Major in Agriculture Business at South Dakota State University.

Awards: Jack & Helen Walter Scholarship, Columbia American Legion Auxiliary Scholarship, FCCLA Service award, Groton FFA Scholarship, Ruden Family Ag Scholarship, Barry Schuring Memorial Scholarship, SDSU Yellow & Blue Scholarship, SDSU Jackrabbit Journey Scholarship



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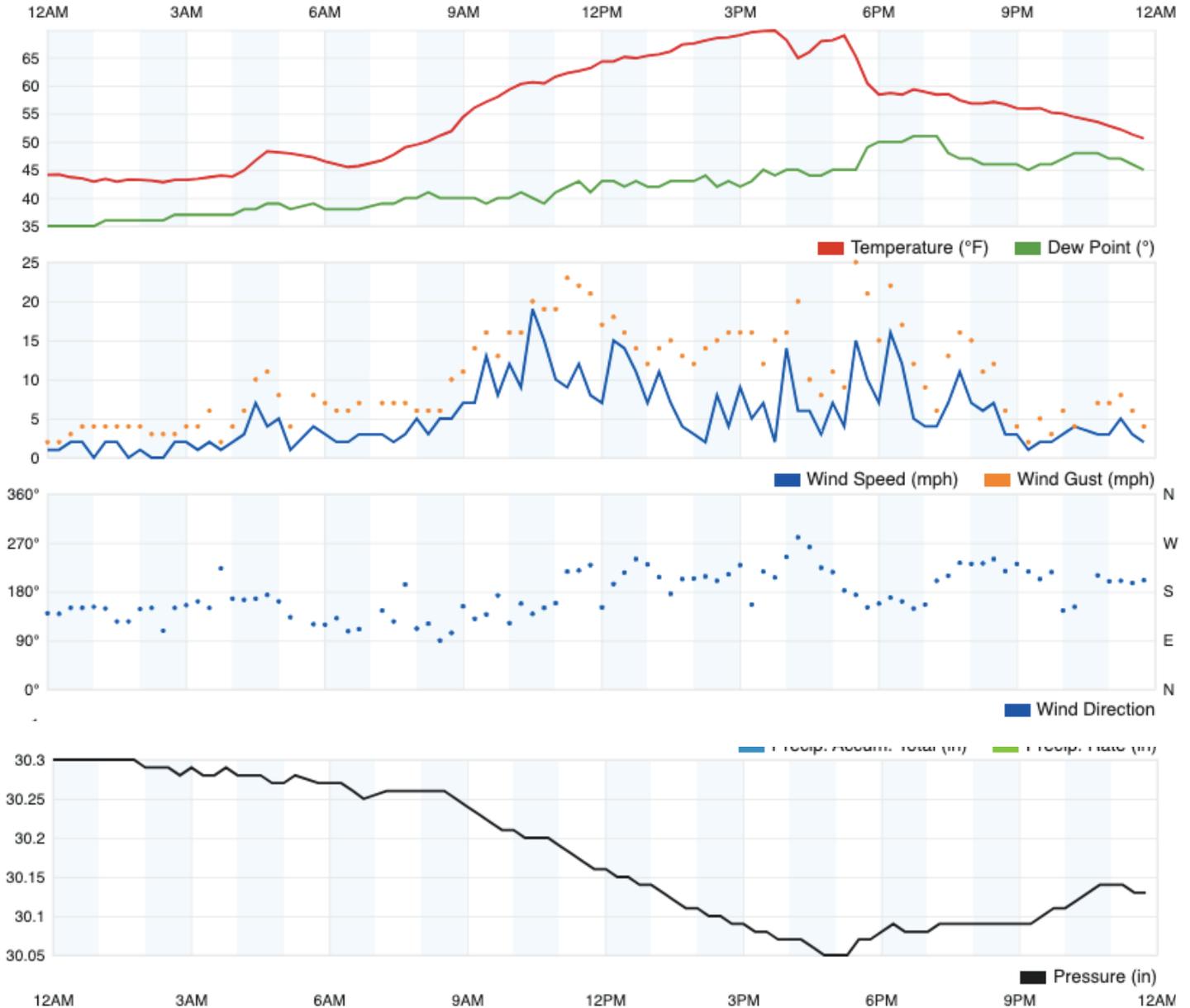
sipcabinets@nvc.net

Congratulations! Best of Luck!

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Partly Sunny

High: 67 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 48 °F

Wednesday



Slight Chance
Showers then
Partly Sunny

High: 61 °F

Wednesday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 41 °F

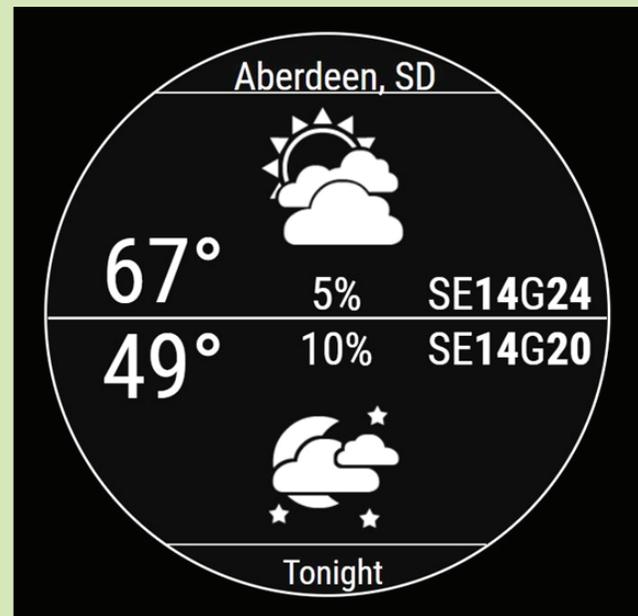
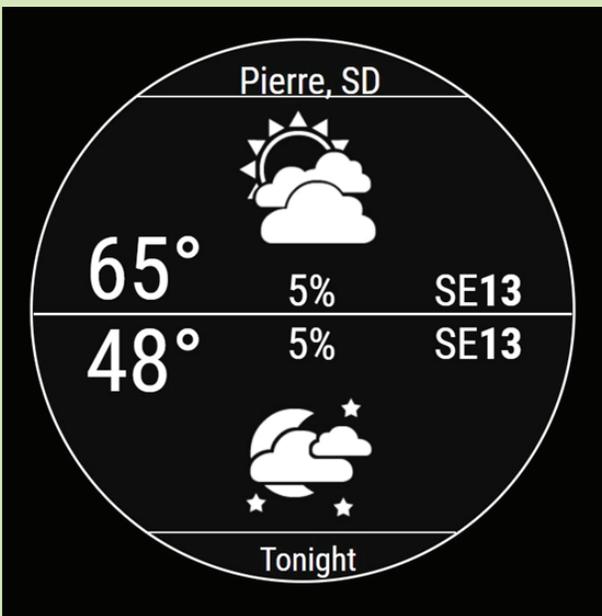
Thursday



Sunny

High: 74 °F

A Mix Of Sun And Clouds...Near Normal Temperatures



Today should include some sunshine and temperatures warming up close to normal for this time of year.

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Today in Weather History

May 24, 1960: A tornado touched down about 7 miles northwest of Roscoe and destroyed a small shed near a country schoolhouse. Funnel clouds were also observed in Hosmer area, near Eureka, and 30 miles west of Aberdeen. An unofficial report of 4 inches of rain fell at Hosmer.

May 24, 2008: A supercell thunderstorm produced seven tornadoes in Dewey County. Since these tornadoes remained in the open country, all were rated EF0.

1894 - Six inches of snow blanketed Kentucky. Just four days earlier as much as ten inches of snow had fallen across Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. Six days earlier a violent storm had wrecked nine ships on Lake Michigan. (David Ludlum)

1896: An estimated F4 tornado passed ten miles north of Des Moines, Iowa during the late evening. As many as seven members of one family, the at the north edge of Valeria, Iowa, died as they ran to the storm cellar. Five others died in a nearby home. A steel railroad rail was reportedly driven 15 feet into the ground. The death toll was at least 21.

1930 - A tornado touched down near the town of Pratt, KS, and traveled at the incredibly slow speed of just 5 mph. (The Weather Channel)

1940 - Hail fell near Ada OK to a depth of six to eight inches, and rainfall runoff left drifts of hail up to five feet high. (The Weather Channel)

1973: An F4 tornado tore through the small town of Union City, Oklahoma, killing two and injuring four others. This tornado was the first storm to be studied in detail by the National Severe Storms Laboratory Doppler Radar Unit at Norman, OK and an armada of researchers in the field. Research of the radar data from the storm would lead to the discovery of a "TVS," or Tornado Vortex Signature. The presence of a TVS on Doppler radar data is a very strong indication of tornadic potential in a severe thunderstorm.

1987 - Severe thunderstorms in southwest Texas spawned a couple of tornadoes near Silverton, and produced golf ball size hail east of the town of Happy. Thunderstorms also produced large hail and damaging winds in Louisiana and Texas. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the southeastern U.S. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 88 mph at Columbia, NC. Baseball size hail was reported near Tifton GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather across the Upper Midwest through the day and night. Thunderstorms spawned 30 tornadoes, and there were 158 reports of large hail and damaging winds. A strong (F-3) tornado caused five million dollars damage at Corning, IA, and a powerful (F-4) tornado caused five million dollars damage at Traer, IA. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 88 mph killed one person and injured five others at Stephenville, WI. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Severe thunderstorms spawned two dozen tornadoes from Montana to Oklahoma. Four tornadoes carved a 109-mile path across central Kansas. The third of the four tornadoes blew 88 cars off an 125-car train off the track, stacking them three to four cars high in some cases, and the fourth tornado caused 3.9 million dollars damage. The third tornado injured six persons who were trying to escape in vehicles. A woman was "sucked out" of a truck and said that at one time she was "airborne, trying to run but my feet wouldn't touch the ground". She also saw a live deer "flying through the air". (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2002: The last measurable snow of the season fell in Marquette, Michigan. This snowfall brought the city's seasonal snowfall to 319.8 inches, by far the city's snowiest winter ever.

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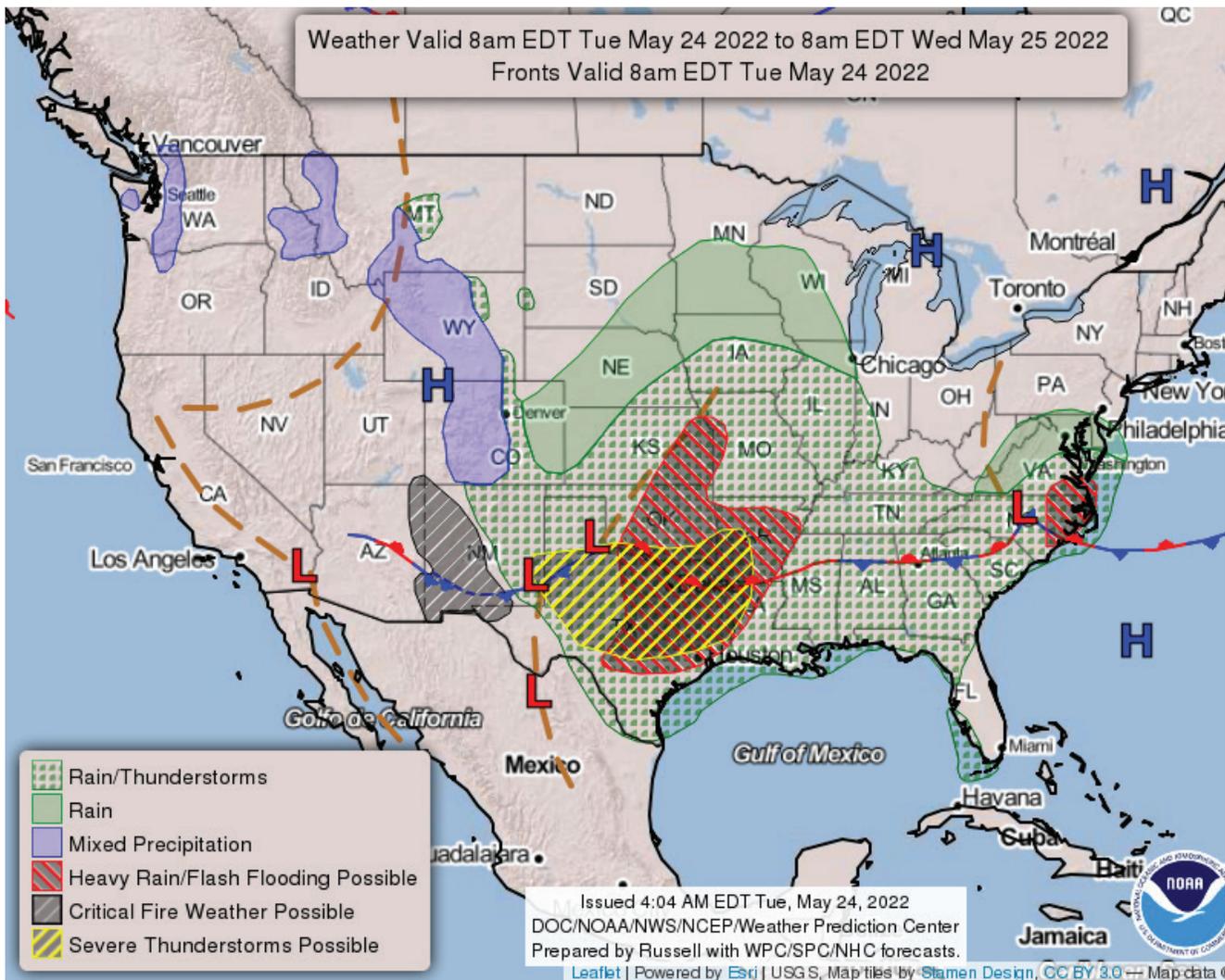
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 70 °F at 3:42 PM
Low Temp: 43 °F at 2:20 AM
Wind: 28 mph at 5:33 PM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 16 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 99 in 1926
Record Low: 25 in 1897
Average High: 73°F
Average Low: 48°F
Average Precip in May.: 2.61
Precip to date in May.: 2.48
Average Precip to date: 6.58
Precip Year to Date: 8.98
Sunset Tonight: 9:07:41 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:50:01 AM



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GOD OUR SUPPLIER

How do we know we can count on God to supply our needs? Can we be assured that he will hear and help us when we ask for His assistance? Yes/If. However, we must take into account the little word if. If we meet two important conditions that He has established.

Psalm 145:19 is interpreted correctly in the Living Psalms to read: "He fulfills the desires of those who reverence and trust Him; He hears their cries for help and rescues them."

Reverence leads to respect and respect to honor. If we honor God and if our requests are in agreement with His nature and character, what we ask for will be consistent with what He intends for us to have. When we ask for lavish and unnecessary things that will not honor Him, we only deceive ourselves. Extravagance always makes a mockery of prayer and displays an irreverence to Him.

Years ago, while in college, I had a post office box that could only be opened with the right combination of letters and numbers. When I turned the small dial in the right sequence, the door would open, and I could get my mail.

So, it is with prayer. When we use the "right combination" of reverence and trust, and our requests coincide with His plan and purpose for our lives, the "combination" will "work," and He will grant our requests.

Remember: when "my will" is consistent with "His will," prayers will be answered, God will be honored, lives changed, and His purpose accomplished on earth.

Prayer: Lord, help us revere, respect and honor You in all that we do. Then will our requests be consistent with Your nature. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: He fulfills the desires of those who reverence and trust Him; He hears their cries for help and rescues them. Psalm 145:19

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2022 Community Events

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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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News from the Associated Press

Vylla Home Opens in Three More States

ALISO VIEJO, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--May 24, 2022--

Vylla Home, the nationwide real estate brokerage of The Carrington Companies, recently added a few more states to its license roster to make homeownership simple for even more buyers and sellers across the United States. Vylla Home's service area now includes Louisiana, South Dakota and West Virginia; and there are plans to expand to Ohio and additional states in the latter half of 2022.

"The future for Vylla Home is looking bright as we continue to grow and expand – not only the states in which we are licensed, but also in our agent count," said Chad Ruggles, SVP of Vylla Home. "Just one year ago, Vylla Home was licensed in 31 states, and has now expanded to 36. We've also grown our 'Vyllage' by more than 225 agents during the past year, and there currently are more than 1,150 agents with Vylla Home. We continue to focus on providing extraordinary experiences for our clients and agents across the nation."

Vylla Home recently reinstated its Louisiana license with the help of Vylla Home's "2021 Expansion Broker of the Year" John Pendleton, whose home base is in Little Rock, Ark. Since Pendleton joined the team, he has helped Vylla Home grow into the states of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Louisiana – and also assisted in recruiting the new team in Washington state.

The newest state is South Dakota, where Vylla Home has added Broker Associate Audra Nelson Bailey, a South Dakota native who was referred to the company by Ruggles. Bailey, who is coming aboard with experience in the iconic Black Hills of South Dakota, says she will work diligently to expand her footprint of agents across the state.

Vylla Home also is introducing new AVP and Broker Harry Yazbek, who not only manages the Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., areas, but also helped Vylla Home expand into West Virginia upon his arrival. Yazbek says he has a passion for supporting REALTORS® and helping them grow into top producers.

"We are motivated and focused to keep reaching new homebuyers and sellers across the nation," said Ruggles. "These new states not only help us serve more new clients, but also help us assist current and future clients from all the Carrington and Vylla companies."

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 143,000,000

Powerball

01-33-37-39-42, Powerball: 26, Power Play: 2

(one, thirty-three, thirty-seven, thirty-nine, forty-two; Powerball: twenty-six; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$135,000,000

Four out-state agencies to promote tourism in South Dakota

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Four ad agencies, all from outside South Dakota, have been selected to collaborate on promoting the state's tourism industry.

Karsh Hagan, Love Communications, Lou Hammond Group and Two by Four were picked after only one South Dakota agency bid for the partnership.

The four out of state companies were selected because of what the Department of Tourism sees as new and fresh ideas to give South Dakota tourism a broader appeal, said state tourism spokeswoman Katlyn Svendsen.

"When it came down to it, these folks inspired us, and they really encouraged us to think differently about our state and how consumers are looking at it, and that's what's important to us because we're advertising to millions of people across the country and internationally," Svendsen said.

Robert Sharp with Rapid City-based marketing group Sharp & Associates, told KOTA-TV that it's baffling that the state can't find marketing talent in its own borders to promote what South Dakota has to offer.

Svendsen says the new campaigns in recent years have been able to better spread the word.

"Where we have gone in the last few years, we've taken our brand nationally, we've been able to place our first national TV spot in the last few years, and we've really continued to elevate our brand and be on the rise," she said.

The companies have signed three-year contracts with the state and are tasked with working with the department to develop comprehensive marketing strategies.

'War Pony' brings Pine Ridge Reservation to Cannes

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation has often been depicted in film but rarely from the inside. The Cannes Film Festival entry "War Pony," though, sought to capture daily life on the reservation by relying on the perspectives of its Native American residents.

The film was directed by the actor Riley Keough and her friend, Gina Gammell. They both reside in Los Angeles. But while shooting Andrea Arnold's 2016 film "American Honey" across the U.S. heartland, Keough shared a scene with Franklin Sioux Bob and Bill Reddy, two young Lakota men from Pine Ridge without any previous acting experience whom Arnold had enlisted as extras.

"We just got stuck in a motel room together for four hours," Keough, the "Zola" and "The Girlfriend Experience" actor, recalled in an interview in Cannes. "Our scene was moved so we were just sitting there drinking beer."

"She was the star there so I was like, 'OK, cool.' Just on set drinking," says Sioux Bob, smiling. "I got paid \$2,000 for, like, two hours of my time, so I'm not mad at it."

But what began an unlikely friendship — and eventually collaboration — would stretch over the next seven years. Keough and Gammell would visit Pine Ridge and, later, Sioux Bob and Reddy would travel out to Los Angeles. Hanging out and making Snapchat videos eventually morphed into a screenplay written by Sioux Bob and Reddy.

From such modest beginnings and a lot of just sitting around drinking, "War Pony" emerged as not just an accomplished portrait of life on Pine Ridge but an enthusiastically received Cannes premiere in the festival's Un Certain Regard section.

"It's so wild," Keough says, laughing and shaking her head in disbelief. "Every time I look at Frank and Gina, I'm like, 'What?' We know how we started and how far we've come."

"War Pony" follows a pair of protagonists. One is Bill (Jojo Bapteste Whiting), a laconic 23-year-old who manages to get by hustling small jobs and who lands a gig with a nearby wealthy white rancher who profits and plunders from the reservation in various ways. The other is Matho (LaDainian Crazy Thunder), a 12-year-old with a drug-dealing father. A series of loose-jointed, interconnected episodes follow that are both comic (a potentially lucrative poodle plays a co-starring role) and tragic.

The stories came straight from Reddy, Sioux Bob and others who drew from their own memories and experiences on the reservation. It was shot on the streets many of the actors live on.

"It wasn't too hard to keep it authentic," says Sioux Bob. "We're all first-time actors. It's Pine Ridge. This is your life. All this outlandish stuff you see in the movie, that was Tuesday."

"War Pony," which is seeking distribution in Cannes, features a cast mostly populated by Oglala Lakota and Sicangu Lakota citizens of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Rosebud Sioux Tribe. A key figure was producer Willi White, a tribal citizen of the Oglala Sioux Tribe who has striven to bring more authentic depictions of Indigenous people to movie screens.

"Pine Ridge is really unique," says Sioux Bob. "It's really beautiful but it's so chaotic. That's what I wanted

everyone to see. This isn't just my reservation. All reservations are in rural areas like this and there are probably groups of kids doing the same things. And I wanted it to be showcased. That's the reality."

In coming to Cannes, many among the cast and filmmakers were making their first overseas trip. The young Crazy Thunder hadn't heard of Cannes before. But the experience of making "War Pony" — grittily realistic, ultimately triumphant — and seeing his home honestly reflected on screen has inspired him.

"You want to go out and find more resources and reach for a different opportunity, reach for higher," says Crazy Thunder.

That films are ultimately authored by one person, the "auteur," is common belief at the Cannes Film Festival. But the community effort of "War Pony" challenges that notion.

"A lot of people made this film," says Keough.

200 bodies found in Mariupol as war rages in Ukraine's east

By ELENA BECATOROS, OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI and RICARDO MAZALAN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Workers digging through rubble found 200 bodies in Mariupol, Ukrainian authorities said Tuesday, another grim discovery in the ruined port city that has seen some of the worst suffering of the 3-month-old war.

The bodies found in the basement of a collapsed apartment building were in a state of decomposition and a stench permeated the neighborhood, said Petro Andryushchenko, an adviser to the city's mayor.

Mariupol, which the Russians recently claimed full control over, has endured some of the worst suffering of the war and became a worldwide symbol of defiance for the diehard defense put up for months by fighters at a steelworks.

The announcement of the discovery of the bodies came shortly after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia of waging "total war," seeking to inflict as much death and destruction as possible on his country.

"Indeed, there has not been such a war on the European continent for 77 years," Zelenskyy told Ukrainians Monday night, on the eve of the three-month anniversary of the start of the war.

He pointed to a missile attack that killed 87 people last week in the town of Desna, 55 kilometers (35 miles) north of Kyiv, one of the deadliest single strikes in the war.

"And it was only four missiles," he said, noting the many hundreds of such strikes since the beginning of the war on Feb. 24.

The conflict began with expectations that Russia might overtake the country in a blitz lasting only days or a few weeks. But stiff Ukrainian resistance, bolstered by Western weapons, has bogged down Moscow's troops, forcing them to pursue more a limited objective.

The Kremlin is now focused on the eastern industrial heartland of the Donbas, where Russian forces have intensified efforts to encircle and capture Sievierodonetsk and neighboring cities, British military authorities said Tuesday. That's the only part of the Donbas' Luhansk region that remains under Ukrainian government control.

Russian forces have achieved "some localized successes" despite strong Ukrainian resistance along dug-in positions, the U.K. Defense Ministry said, but the fall of Sievierodonetsk and the area around it may cause logistical problems for the Russians.

"If the Donbas front line moves further west, this will extend Russian lines of communication and likely see its forces face further logistic resupply difficulties," the ministry said.

In its effort to secure a victory in the Donbas, Moscow has withdrawn some forces from around Ukraine's second-largest city of Kharkiv.

There, residents lined up for rations of tea, sugar, pasta and cereal, holding out plastic bags to receive cups of flour and other supplies.

Meanwhile, a Russian-installed official in Ukraine's Kherson region said the pro-Kremlin administration will ask Moscow to set up a military base there.

"It is vitally important and will become a security guarantee for the region and its residents," said Kirill

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Stremousov, deputy head of the administration.

Ukrainian officials have speculated Russia plans to stage a referendum in the region to declare its independence, similar to ones held years ago in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of the Donbas. Moscow recognized the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics two days before invading Ukraine, using that as a pretext to send troops to its ex-Soviet neighbor.

Instead, Stremousov said the region would ask the Kremlin to make it part of Russia. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said it is up to the people of Kherson to decide how and where they want to live.

Meeting in Tokyo with fellow leaders in the Indo-Pacific security coalition known as the Quad, President Joe Biden said Tuesday that Russia's war in Ukraine had brought a "dark hour in our shared history."

Global defense leaders on Monday agreed to send more advanced weapons to Ukraine, including a Harpoon launcher and missiles to protect its coast, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters.

Biden: Leaders navigating 'dark hour' after Ukraine invasion

By JOSH BOAK and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — President Joe Biden told fellow Indo-Pacific leaders assembled for a four-country summit Tuesday that they were navigating "a dark hour in our shared history" due to Russia's brutal war on Ukraine and he urged the group to make a greater effort to stop Vladimir Putin's aggression.

"This is more than just a European issue. It's a global issue," Biden said as the "Quad" summit with Japan, Australia and India got under way.

While the president did not directly call out any countries, his message appeared to be pointed, at least in part, at Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with whom differences persist over how to respond to the Russian invasion.

Unlike other Quad countries and nearly every other U.S. ally, India has not imposed sanctions or even condemned Russia, its biggest supplier of military hardware.

With Modi sitting nearby, Biden made the case that the world has a shared responsibility to do something to assist Ukrainian resistance against Russia's aggression.

"We're navigating a dark hour in our shared history," he said. "The Russian brutal and unprovoked war against Ukraine has triggered a humanitarian catastrophe and innocent civilians have been killed in the streets and millions of refugees are internally displaced as well as in exile."

"The world has to deal with it and we are," he added.

Later, in comments to reporters after a one-on-one meeting with Modi, Biden said they discussed Russia's invasion of Ukraine "and the effect it has on the entire global world order." Biden added that the U.S. and India will continue to consult "on how to mitigate these negative effects."

But in a reflection of India's relationship with Moscow, the Quad leaders' post-summit joint statement made no mention of Russia.

In his comments, Modi made no mention of the war in Ukraine, instead ticking off several trade and investment programs that he discussed with the president.

The White House has been effusive in its praise of several Pacific countries, including Japan, Singapore and South Korea, for stepping up to hit Russia with tough sanctions and export bans while offering humanitarian and military assistance to Kyiv.

For several of the bigger Asian powers, the invasion has been seen as a crucial moment for the world to demonstrate by a strong response to Russia that China should not try to seize contested territory through military action.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, taking note of Russia's aggression in Ukraine, told the other leaders: "We cannot let the same thing happen in the Indo-Pacific region."

The White House has been disappointed with the relative silence of India, the world's biggest democracy.

Biden has asked Modi not to accelerate the buying of Russian oil as the U.S. and other allies look to squeeze Moscow's energy income. The Indian prime minister made no public commitment to get off from Russian oil, and Biden has publicly referred to India as "somewhat shaky" in its response to the invasion.

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Facing Western pressure, India has condemned civilian deaths in Ukraine and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities. Yet it also has compounded fallout from a war that has caused a global food shortage by banning wheat exports at a time when starvation is a growing risk in parts of the world. The Indian prime minister did not address Russia's war against Ukraine in his public remarks at the summit.

Biden has been making his case to Modi for weeks.

The two spoke about the Russian invasion during a virtual Quad leaders' meeting in March, and last month they had a short video conversation when Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met with their Indian counterparts in Washington.

"So it won't be a new conversation," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said ahead of the summit. "It will be a continuation of the conversation they've already had about how we see the picture in Ukraine and the impacts of Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine on a wider set of concerns in the world."

While Biden and Modi may avoid public confrontation over how to respond to Russia's aggression, the issue remains a major one as the U.S. and allies are looking to tighten the pressure on Putin., said Michael Green, senior vice president for Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

"It appears pretty clear the Biden administration is not looking for trouble with India and that most of these difficult conversations will be in private," said Green, who was a senior National Security Council aide during the George W. Bush administration.

The summit came on the final day of Biden's five-day visit to Japan and South Korea, Biden's first trip to Asia as president.

It also marked new Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's first moment on the global stage. The new premier flew to Tokyo on Monday right after being sworn into office. The center-left Labor Party defeated Prime Minister Scott Morrison over the weekend, ending the conservative leader's nine-year rule.

Biden, Modi and Kishida welcomed Albanese to the club and expressed awe at his determination to join the informal security coalition so quickly after assuming office.

"I don't know how you're doing it," Biden, who looked a bit worn from his own travel, told Albanese. The U.S. president joked that it would be OK if the new prime minister happened to fall sleep during the meeting.

Biden was to meet separately with Albanese later Tuesday. The four-way partnership has become increasingly relevant as Biden has moved to adjust U.S. foreign policy to put greater focus on the region and to counter China's rise as an economic and security power. He held bilateral talks with summit host Kishida on Monday.

Albanese told his fellow Quad leaders he was dedicated to the group's mission to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.

"We have had a change of government in Australia, but Australia's commitment to the Quad has not changed and will not change," Albanese said.

Looming over the Quad leaders' talks was Biden's blunt statement on Monday that the U.S. would intervene militarily if China were to invade Taiwan, saying the burden to protect Taiwan is "even stronger" after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The White House insists that Biden's unusually forceful comments about Taiwan did not amount to a shift in U.S. policy toward the self-ruled island that China claims as its own.

Asked by the reporters at the summit on Tuesday if his comments on Taiwan a day earlier were meant to mark a policy change, Biden simply replied, "No."

Some modest initiatives were announced by the Quad leaders, including a new effort to provide pediatric COVID-19 vaccines to countries most in need and a program to help nations improve security and environmental awareness of their territorial waters.

The Quad last year pledged to donate 1.2 billion vaccine doses globally. So far, the group has provided about 257 million doses, according to the Biden administration.

More turn to UK food banks as food and fuel bills soar

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

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LONDON (AP) — For many struggling families, older people and the homeless, Michelle Dornelly's food hub in east London has been a lifeline. Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit Britain, she has been collecting surplus groceries from supermarkets and distributing them to people who can't afford to buy food.

While the virus threat has faded, the need for food banks in Britain has soared. Skyrocketing energy and food bills are pushing millions deeper into financial hardship, and food banks and community groups like Dornelly's across the United Kingdom say they don't have enough to feed the growing numbers of desperate people knocking at their doors.

"We are struggling as it is, but right now we're in a bubbling pot. You're getting people panicking," she said, dishing up turkey curry and onion bhajis to serve people recently. "We used to be able to run to 4 p.m., but now by 2:30, all the food's gone."

Dornelly offers groceries and free hot meals every week to several dozen regulars in Hackney, an inner London borough with high rates of inequality: almost half of all children there are in poverty. Since the winter, at least 30 to 40 new people have been referred to her, she says.

The cost of food and fuel in the U.K. has risen sharply, with inflation reaching 9% in April — the highest in 40 years. The same month, millions of families saw their annual energy bills jump by 54%, amounting to an extra 700 pounds (\$863) a year on average for each household. Another energy price hike is expected in October, as Russia's war in Ukraine and rebounding demand after the pandemic push oil and natural gas prices higher.

Food businesses have had to pass on higher costs to shoppers, who already have less in their pockets because pay is failing to keep up with price increases. Those on low incomes and dependent on state welfare have been hit hardest. In October, Britain's government stopped paying an extra 20-pound (\$25) per week benefit payment that was introduced during the pandemic.

Other parts of the world are struggling, too, as inflation bites. Europe has seen surging consumer prices, causing sticker shock at the grocery store. In the U.S., food banks say rising food and gas prices and overall inflation are intensifying demand for their support, while their labor and distribution costs are climbing and donations are slowing.

"I suppose it's the way life is going. But it shouldn't be going so drastically," said Dave Anderson, one of Dornelly's regulars.

The 62-year-old hasn't been able to work or take care of himself since he had heart surgery and was left with no electricity or gas at home until volunteers found him. The 118 pounds (\$145) of benefits he gets every two weeks don't go far.

"Me, I've not even looked at my bills because I think I'd want to sit there and cry," Dornelly said. "I don't understand why the politicians are allowing this to happen."

Things are expected to worsen in coming months. The Bank of England predicts inflation could hit 10% by the fall, and its governor, Andrew Bailey, has warned of a "very real income shock" caused by energy prices and an "apocalyptic" rise in food prices due to the war in Ukraine.

A recent report from the International Monetary Fund said the U.K. is expected to be the slowest-growing economy out of the Group of Seven leading democracies in 2023 as the war sets back the global economic recovery from the pandemic.

"All of our organizations are reaching out to us saying, 'We need more food,' more families are approaching us. The people we're seeing have got even less to make ends meet," said Rachel Ledwith, head of community engagement at the Felix Project, a charity that redistributes surplus groceries from the food industry to about 1,000 charities and schools across London.

It delivered enough parcels to make 30 million meals last year, and its kitchen produces thousands of meals — like broccoli soup made from the stems — every day. But that's nowhere near enough.

"I think we're seeing between 25% to 50% increase in demand — so if an organization was supporting 50 people, they're now seeing closer to 75," Ledwith said. "It's a real pressure — there's still a huge amount of need out there in London. We still have a wait list of several hundred organizations that have asked for food that we haven't yet got the ability to take on."

The picture is similar across Britain.

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The Trussell Trust, which runs more than half of all U.K. food banks, said last winter was its busiest outside of 2020 — the height of the pandemic. The charity said its food banks provided more than 2.1 million food parcels in the U.K. in the past year, 14% more than the same period in 2019. Of those, 830,000 were for children.

The Food Foundation, another charity, said a recent survey showed that around one in seven adults said they or someone they live with have skipped meals, eaten smaller portions or gone hungry all day because they couldn't afford food.

"The situation is rapidly turning from an economic crisis to a health crisis," said Anne Taylor, the charity's director. "The government needs to realize the boat is sinking for many families, and it needs to be fixed. Bailing out with emergency food parcels is not going to work."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government has been heavily criticized for not doing enough. Despite the cost-of-living crisis dominating political debates and recent local elections, the government didn't feature any new support measures in its annual legislative agenda.

Dornelly fears the crisis will really start to bite when children can't access free meals during the summer break and later when it gets cold.

"What happens in the summer holidays, when you've got five screaming children at home? You couldn't afford to feed them anyway, so what are you going to do when the gas and electric runs out and you have no food?" she said. "That's when I think we're going to see the spike."

Davos climate focus: Can 'going green' mean oil and gas?

By PETER PRENGAMAN Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — As government officials, corporate leaders and other elites at the World Economic Forum grapple with how to confront climate change and its devastating effects, a central question is emerging: to what extent can oil and gas companies be part of a transition to lower-carbon fuels?

In different times the question could have been academic, but today it's both practical and urgent, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine has forced many countries that depended on Russian oil and gas to make swift changes to energy supplies.

The debate comes as examples of acutely felt impacts of climate change multiply, including recent heat waves in Southeast Asia to flooding in parts of South America. Meanwhile, the world's top climate scientists have repeatedly warned that increased investment in fossil fuels are hurting chances to keep warming to limit warming to 1.5 C (2.7 F), and thus avoid even more devastating effects.

U.S. climate envoy John Kerry will join climate-related panels at the summit, while NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg give an address later. Attendees will discuss several other high-priority issues, like the Russia-Ukraine war, the threat of rising hunger worldwide, inequality and persistent health crises. But whether these discussions will yield substantial results remains to be seen.

On Tuesday, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen warned the 27-nation bloc should avoid becoming dependent on untrustworthy countries, like it did with fossil fuels from Russia, as it moves toward a greener economy.

She said the "economies of the future" will no longer rely on oil and coal but the green and digital transitions will rely on other materials like lithium, silicon metal or rare earth permanent magnets which are required for batteries, chips, electric vehicles or wind turbines.

Von der Leyen added that the war in Ukraine has strengthened Europe's determination to get rid of Russian fossil fuels rapidly. EU countries have approved an embargo on coal imports from Russia but members countries have yet to find a deal on sanctions on Russia's oil and gas.

On Monday, the first day of the forum held in the Swiss ski village of Davos, the head of the International Energy Agency said the urgent energy needs of the moment should not turn into an excuse to make long-term investments in fossil fuel exploration and extraction.

"We are not living in a dream world," said Fatih Birol, speaking on a panel on energy outlook. "The immediate response should include more oil and gas to the market. But the response should not depend

on fossil fuels for long.”

Instead, Birol argued the emphasis needed to be a fast shift to renewable energies, an increase in nuclear where possible, stopping leaks of methane, one of the most powerful greenhouse gases, and lowering personal consumption, like turning down the thermostat a few degrees.

“Some people may use the invasion of Ukraine as an excuse for fossil fuel investments. That will forever close the door to reach our climate targets” to reduce emissions that are heating up the planet, he said.

Vicki Hollub, CEO of Occidental Petroleum a major oil company, countered that oil and gas industries had a central role to play in the transition to renewable energy.

Instead of talk about moving away from fossil fuels, Hollub said the focus should be on making fossil fuels cleaner by reducing emissions. She said Occidental had invested heavily in wind and solar energy and planned to build the largest direct air capture facility in the world in the Permian Basin. Direct air capture is a process that pulls carbon dioxide out of the air and buries it deep in the ground.

“The U.S. can provide ample resources to the rest of the world. However, it’s becoming more and more difficult to do that because of the fact that we are getting a lot of headwinds,” she said. “One is the belief that we can end the use of oil and gas sooner rather than later.”

Joe Manchin, a U.S. senator from West Virginia who has opposed a major bill on climate change proposed by President Joe Biden, said fossil fuels were key to ensure energy security, and America had the resources to help ensure such security for the world.

“We can’t do it by abandoning the fossil fuel industry,” said Manchin, a Democrat, adding that no transition could take place until alternatives were fully in place.

Many energy experts argue that viable alternatives are already in place. For example, the cost of wind and solar have come down considerably in recent decades while efficiencies of both have dramatically increased. At the same time, other more nascent technologies have promise but need massive investment to develop.

A partnership between the U.S. government, World Economic Forum and several industries is working to bridge that gap. The First Movers Coalition, launched last year during the United Nations climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, includes several major companies that have committed to buying low-carbon fuels across their supply chains.

Antonia Gawel, head of the World Economic Forum’s climate strategy, said the idea was to send large market signals to major industries through purchasing contracts. At the same time, for the companies, that include behemoths like Amazon and Apple, it made long-term business sense.

“They see that actually not tackling climate change poses a competitive disadvantage and therefore they are committed to actually driving these types of innovations and solutions,” she said.

Review suggests Israeli fire killed reporter, no final word

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JENIN, West Bank (AP) — Who killed Shireen Abu Akleh?

Almost two weeks after the death of the veteran Palestinian-American reporter for Al Jazeera, a reconstruction by The Associated Press lends support to assertions from both Palestinian authorities and Abu Akleh’s colleagues that the bullet that cut her down came from an Israeli gun.

Any conclusive answer is likely to prove elusive because of the severe distrust between the two sides, each of which is in sole possession of potentially crucial evidence.

Multiple videos and photos taken on the morning of May 11 show an Israeli convoy parked just up a narrow road from Abu Akleh, with a clear line of sight. They show the reporters and other bystanders in real time taking cover from bullets fired from the direction of the convoy.

The only confirmed presence of Palestinian militants was on the other side of the convoy, some 300 meters (yards) away, mostly separated from Abu Akleh by buildings and walls. Israel says at least one militant was between the convoy and the journalists, but it has not provided any evidence or indicated the shooter’s location. Palestinian witnesses say there were no militants in the area and no gunfire until

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the barrage that struck Abu Akleh and wounded another reporter.

Those witnesses say they have no doubt that it was Israeli soldiers who killed Abu Akleh, now celebrated as a martyr to both journalism and the Palestinian cause. The Israeli military says she was killed in a complex shootout between soldiers and militants, and that only a full investigation — including forensic analysis of the bullet — could prove who fired the fatal shot.

The Palestinians have refused to hand over the bullet or cooperate with Israel in any way on the investigation, but say they will share the results of their own probe with any other party.

Abu Akleh's death has further heightened Mideast tensions amid a wave of violence and raised new concerns over the safety of reporters covering Israel's nearly 55-year military occupation of the West Bank, which the Palestinians want as the main part of their future state.

AP reporters visited the location where Abu Akleh was killed on the edge of the Jenin refugee camp in the northern West Bank, as well as the scene of a nearby battle with Israeli forces captured on a video shared by Israel.

Interviews with five Palestinian eyewitnesses corroborate an analysis by the Dutch-based Bellingcat research group indicating Israeli forces were closer to Abu Akleh and had a better line of sight. The group, which specializes in geolocating events in war zones by analyzing photos and video shared online, pinpointed the location of the convoy just up a narrow road from where Abu Akleh was killed.

THE ROAD AND THE CONVOY

Reporters who were with Abu Akleh say that when they arrived at the scene it was quiet, with no clashes or militants in the immediate area. Ali Samoudi, an Al Jazeera producer from Jenin, said he called people inside the camp to get an idea of what was happening.

Then they proceeded to a long, narrow road sloping up from an open area to a cluster of concrete buildings where an Israeli army convoy was parked some 200 meters away. Each reporter was wearing a helmet and a blue vest labeled "PRESS" in large lettering.

"We stepped out into the open so they could see us," Samoudi told the AP. "They didn't indicate that we should leave, so we went slowly, walking forward about 20 meters."

Shatha Hanaysheh, a local photographer, said they remained there for 5 to 10 minutes, talking and even laughing in full view of the soldiers. A video that appears to capture the first shots supports her account.

Samoudi said the soldiers fired a warning shot, causing him to duck and run backwards. The second shot hit him in the back. Abu Akleh was shot in the head and appears to have died instantly, Hanaysheh sheltered on the other side of a tree next to a wall. Tree bark on the side facing the army appears to have been chipped away by gunfire or shrapnel.

"We saw that the gunfire came from the army," Hanaysheh said. "When Ali and Shireen and I ran for cover, we ran away from them."

Sharif Azer, a local resident who was on his way to work, heard the gunfire and ran over to help. He can be seen in another widely shared video climbing over the wall where Hanaysheh was taking cover and helping her to escape.

Several gunshots can be heard after Abu Akleh was killed, as people take cover on either side of the road. When Azer moves away from the tree, shots ring out and he backs up, indicating they are coming from the army's position. He says he could see the soldiers pointing their guns.

"They fired on us more than once. Every time someone approached, they fired at them," he said.

A POSSIBLE SCENARIO

The Israeli military's initial inquiry into the shooting said there were two possibilities.

In the first, it said Palestinian militants on the other side of the convoy, to the south, were recklessly firing hundreds of rounds, one of which could have struck Abu Akleh, who was some 300 meters away. Bullets fired from an M16 can travel well over 1,000 meters.

But the military hasn't provided any visual evidence, aside from footage of Palestinian militants firing

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from another location that did not have a line of sight toward Abu Akleh.

The AP did not uncover any evidence to support this first scenario.

The second scenario, at this point, appears more plausible.

Lt. Col. Amnon Shefler, an army spokesman, says there was at least one Palestinian gunman on the road between the troops and the journalists, "in the vicinity" of Abu Akleh. That militant allegedly fired multiple times at one of the army vehicles, and a soldier inside it returned fire with a rifle equipped with a telescopic scope.

The army's probe has zeroed in on that rifle, Shefler said, though it still believes a stray Palestinian bullet could have killed her.

The army says it cannot provide an answer without comparing the bullet to the weapon. "Without the possibility of examining the bullet, the doubt remains," Maj. Gen. Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi, the army's chief prosecutor, said in a speech Monday.

She said that because the killing occurred in an active combat zone, there would be no decision on whether to open a criminal investigation until the initial probe is complete.

Videos posted on social media that day contain sounds of heavy gunfire in other parts of Jenin, including near a house surrounded by Israeli military vehicles conducting an arrest raid about 1.5 kilometers (a mile) away from where Abu Akleh was shot.

All of the witnesses who spoke to the AP insisted there were no militants in the area between the reporters and the army. The area is mostly open, but a gunman could have potentially sheltered unseen in the brush-filled cemetery on the road's eastern side or an open-air brick factory next to where the journalists were located.

No militants can be seen in any of the videos showing the journalists' location. The Palestinian Health Ministry says there were no other Palestinians killed or wounded that day in Jenin. Local media also have no record of any other Palestinian casualties.

Walid Omary, who oversees Al Jazeera's coverage of the Palestinian territories, said he had seen no evidence of any militants between the reporters and the army.

"If there was a Palestinian militant there, why not shoot the militant? They have snipers," he said. "It's clear to us now that they targeted Shireen."

SEPARATE INVESTIGATIONS

Almost immediately after the shooting, Israel called for a joint investigation with the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the occupied West Bank, and asked it to hand over the bullet that killed Abu Akleh for ballistic analysis. Israel invited Palestinian and American representatives to participate in the investigation.

The PA refused, saying Israel cannot be trusted to investigate itself. Within hours of the shooting, both the PA and Al Jazeera accused Israel of deliberately targeting Abu Akleh, but provided no specific evidence for the claim, which Israel strongly denies.

A spokesman for President Mahmoud Abbas said the Palestinians are conducting a "pure, professional investigation" and will share the results with international bodies. He declined to provide details of the probe or address questions about trying to match the bullet to the weapon.

"We are sure that Israel is responsible for the killing, and we have evidence, proof, and witnesses confirming that," Nabil Abu Rdeneh told the AP. "We have no confidence in Israeli investigations because their goal is to falsify the facts."

Israeli investigations into shootings of Palestinians often drag on for months or years before being quietly shelved, and rights groups say soldiers are rarely held accountable.

Israeli authorities initially suggested the Palestinian fighters in the video they shared might have killed Abu Akleh. They backtracked after B'Tselem, an Israeli rights group, circulated another video showing it was virtually impossible for them to have shot her, since the two locations were hundreds of meters apart and separated by buildings and walls. B'Tselem is still conducting its own investigation.

Palestinian investigators are in possession of the bullet that killed Abu Akleh, which was recovered from

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her head. Samoudi says the bullet that struck him shattered, leaving some fragments inside his back. It's unclear if any other fragments have been recovered.

Lior Nadivi, a former crime scene investigator and firearms examiner for the Israeli police, said the bullet that killed Abu Akleh would potentially contain a trove of evidence.

A deformation might indicate it ricocheted. Markings would show the type of weapon, and a microscopic signature could potentially be used to match the bullet to a specific firearm. He said there was "no way" to tamper with a bullet without leaving obvious marks on it.

But Nadivi said it was also important to have a full picture of what happened.

"You need to position all the people who fired in the general direction of this journalist and then try to analyze what happened to each bullet," he said. "There is a lot of information that you need, and right now we've got nothing."

In the end, it could prove impossible to know exactly what happened; neither side is likely to accept conclusions reached by the other. The United States, Israel's closest ally, says it is "working to bridge cooperation between the parties," but there's no indication of any progress.

Last week, 57 House Democrats called for an FBI investigation. Both Israel and the PA would have to request U.S. assistance, and neither appears to have done so. Israel has invited the U.S. to participate in an observer role.

In theory, each side could submit evidence to a third party for analysis. But neither side has expressed interest in that kind of investigation, and each could accuse the other of tampering with evidence if it didn't like the result.

Samoudi visited the scene of the killing in a wheelchair on Thursday, as supporters set up a makeshift memorial. Hanaysheh came as well, but kept her distance from the tree where she was nearly killed, saying she was still too traumatized to approach it.

She hasn't given up the work though.

Two days after Abu Akleh was killed, Israeli forces returned to Jenin to carry out another raid. Israel says it is targeting militants after a series of attacks in recent weeks, many carried out by assailants from in and around Jenin.

Hanaysheh said even more journalists than usual came out to cover it — and that she was among them.

"Any journalist anywhere knows that they can be killed, but if we don't do this work then no one else will," she said. "We know the occupation doesn't want what happens here to get out."

New Australian leader Albanese makes whirlwind world debut

By MARI YAMAGUCHI and ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Hours after being sworn in as Australia's new prime minister, Anthony Albanese found himself fresh off a jet and thrown into the glare of a global spotlight Tuesday. He was rewarded with a warm welcome, as well as a bit of a gentle ribbing, from U.S. President Joe Biden and other leaders at an international summit in Japan.

"You were sworn in and got on a plane, and if you fall asleep while you're here, it's OK," Biden joked as the leaders met at the Quad, an Indo-Pacific security and economic coalition meant as a counterweight to China's growing influence in the region. Biden marveled at Albanese's stamina. "I don't know how you're doing it. But it is really quite extraordinary, just getting off the campaign trail as well."

The weekend election win for Albanese, from the center-left Labor Party, was a vivid change in Australian politics, ending nine years of conservative rule, the last several under former leader Scott Morrison.

Albanese has described himself as Australia's first-ever political candidate with a "non-Anglo Celtic name." He and Malaysian-born Penny Wong, Australia's first foreign minister who was born overseas, were sworn into office Monday just before they flew to Tokyo for the meeting with Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Albanese's election came after a hard-fought campaign during which he got COVID-19. Because his predecessor set the election date a week later than expected, Albanese had little time to prepare for the

Tokyo summit.

For his efforts, however, he received friendly greetings from other leaders.

Kishida, in his opening remarks, took note of Albanese's tight schedule, offering his "heartfelt appreciation for coming all the way to Japan right after the elections." Modi said Albanese's presence in Tokyo within 24 hours of his swearing-in "demonstrates the strength of our friendship within the Quad and your commitment to it."

At the summit, Albanese stressed Australia's unwavering commitment to the regional forum and stressed his country's efforts to deal with climate change and look for greater engagement with Southeast Asian countries. He did not mention aggressive security moves by China, which many countries in Asia view with worry.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang wrote to congratulate Albanese on his election victory, in what Australian media described as a thawing of relations after years of tension over Australian laws designed to outlaw covert foreign interference in politics, which many see as aimed at China.

"It is an honor that this is my first act as prime minister to attend this important Quad leaders' meeting here in Japan," Albanese said in his opening remarks at Tuesday's summit at the Japanese prime minister's office. "We have had a change of government in Australia. But Australia's commitment to the Quad has not changed and will not change."

After what has been a smooth diplomatic debut, he will face a spate of domestic demands when he returns home Wednesday and attempts to fulfill his campaign promises. On the list are tackling climate change, affordable child care and strengthening Medicare.

South Asia's intense heat wave a 'sign of things to come'

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL AP Science Writer

NEW DELHI (AP) — The devastating heat wave that has baked India and Pakistan in recent months was made more likely by climate change and is a glimpse of the region's future, international scientists said in a study released Monday.

The World Weather Attribution group analyzed historical weather data that suggested early, long heat waves that impact a massive geographical area are rare, once-a-century events. But the current level of global warming, caused by human-caused climate change, has made those heat waves 30 times more likely.

If global heating increases to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) more than pre-industrial levels, then heat waves like this could occur twice in a century and up to once every five years, said Arpita Mondal, a climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Technology in Mumbai, who was part of the study.

"This is a sign of things to come," Mondal said.

The results are conservative: An analysis published last week by the United Kingdom's Meteorological Office said the heat wave was probably made 100 times more likely by climate change, with such scorching temperatures likely to reoccur every three years.

The World Weather Attribution analysis is different as it is trying to calculate how specific aspects of the heat wave, such as the length and the region impacted, were made more likely by global warming. "The real result is probably somewhere between ours and the (U.K.) Met Office result for how much climate change increased this event," said Friederike Otto, a climate scientist at the Imperial College of London, who was also a part of the study.

What is certain, though, is the devastation the heat wave has wreaked. Indian cities and Pakistan consistently saw temperatures above 45C (113F) in the past weeks. In Pakistan, scorching temperatures over 50C (122F) were recorded in some places like Jacobabad and Dadu. Parts of the Indian capital New Delhi saw temperatures reaching 49C (120F) this month.

India sweltered through the hottest March in the country since records began in 1901 and April was the warmest on record in Pakistan and parts of India. The effects have been cascading and widespread: A glacier burst in Pakistan, sending floods downstream; the early heat scorched wheat crops in India,

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forcing it to ban exports to nations reeling from food shortages due to Russia's war in Ukraine; it also resulted in an early spike in electricity demand in India that depleted coal reserves, resulting in acute power shortages affecting millions.

Then there is the impact on human health. At least 90 people have died in the two nations, but the region's insufficient death registration means that this is likely an undercount. South Asia is the most affected by heat stress, according to an analysis by The Associated Press of a dataset published Columbia University's climate school. India alone is home to more than a third of the world's population that lives in areas where extreme heat is rising.

Experts agree the heat wave underscores the need for the world to not just combat climate change by cutting down greenhouse gas emissions, but to also adapt to its harmful impacts as quickly as possible. Children and the elderly are most at risk from heat stress, but its impact is also inordinately bigger for the poor who may not have access to cooling or water and often live in crowded slums that are hotter than leafier, wealthier neighborhoods.

Rahman Ali, 42, a ragpicker in an eastern suburb of the Indian capital New Delhi earns less than \$3 a day by collecting waste from people's homes and sorting it to salvage whatever can be sold. It's back-breaking work and his tin-roofed home in the crowded slum offers little respite from the heat.

"What can we do? If I don't work...we won't eat," said the father of two.

Some Indian cities have tried to find solutions. The western city of Ahmedabad was the first in South Asia to design a heat wave plan for its population of over 8.4 million, all the way back in 2013. The plan includes an early warning system that tells health workers and residents to prepare for heat waves, empowers administrations to keep parks open so that people can shade and provides information to schools so they're able to tweak their schedules.

The city has also been trying to "cool" roofs by experimenting with various materials absorb heat differently. Their aim is to build roofs that'll reflect the sun and bring down indoor temperatures by using white, reflective paint or cheaper materials like dried grass, said Dr. Dileep Mavalankar, who heads the Indian Institute of Public Health in western Indian city Gandhinagar and helped design the 2013 plan.

Most Indian cities are less prepared and India's federal government is now working with 130 cities in 23 heat wave-prone states for them to develop similar plans. Earlier this month, the federal government also asked states to sensitize health workers on managing heat-related illnesses and ensure that ice packs, oral rehydration salts, and cooling appliances in hospitals were available.

But Mavalankar, who wasn't part of the study, pointed to the lack of government warnings in newspapers or TV for most Indian cities and said that local administrations had just not "woken up to the heat."

After 3 months, Russia still bogged down in Ukraine war

By The Associated Press undefined

When Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, it had hoped to overtake the country in a blitz lasting only days or a few weeks. Many Western analysts thought so, too.

As the conflict marked its third month Tuesday, however, Moscow appears to be bogged down in what increasingly looks like a war of attrition, with no end in sight and few successes on the battlefield.

There was no quick victory for Russian President Vladimir Putin's powerful forces, no rout that would allow the Kremlin to control most of Ukraine and establish a puppet government.

Instead, Russian troops got bogged down on the outskirts of Kyiv and other big cities amid stiff Ukrainian defenses. Convoys of Russian armor seemed stalled on long stretches of highway. Troops ran out of supplies and gasoline, becoming easy targets from the land and the air.

A little over a month into the invasion, Russia effectively acknowledged the failure of its blitz and pulled troops back from areas near Kyiv, declaring a shift of focus to the eastern industrial region of the Donbas, where Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces since 2014.

To be sure, Russia has seized significant chunks of territory around the Crimean Peninsula that Moscow annexed eight years ago. It also has managed to cut Ukraine off completely from the Sea of Azov, finally

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securing full control over the key port of Mariupol after a siege that prevented some of its troops from fighting elsewhere while they battled diehard Ukrainian forces holed up in massive steelworks.

But the offensive in the east seems to have bogged down as well, as Western arms flow into Ukraine to bolster its outgunned army.

Each day, Russian artillery and warplanes relentlessly pound Ukrainian positions in the Donbas, trying to break through defenses built up during the separatist conflict.

They have made only incremental gains, clearly reflecting both Russia's insufficient troop numbers and the Ukrainian resistance. In one recent episode, Russians lost hundreds of personnel and dozens of combat vehicles in the Luhansk region while trying to cross a river to build a bridgehead.

"The Russians are still well behind where we believe they wanted to be when they started this revitalized effort in the eastern part of the country," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said Friday, describing the Donbas fighting as very dynamic, with small towns and villages changing hands every day.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, Russian forces have methodically targeted Western weapons shipments, ammunition and fuel depots, and critical infrastructure with cruise missiles and air raids in the hope of weakening Kyiv's military capability and economic potential.

The Kremlin appears to still harbor a more ambitious goal of cutting off Ukraine from the Black Sea coast all the way to the Romanian border, a move that would also allow Moscow to build a land corridor to Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria, where Russian troops are stationed.

But Moscow seems to know that this objective is not currently achievable with the limited forces it has.

"I think they're just increasingly realizing that they can't necessarily do all of it, certainly not at one go," said Justin Crump, a former British tank commander who heads Sibylline, a strategic advisory firm.

Moscow's losses have forced it to rely increasingly on hastily patched-together units in Donbas that could only make small gains, he said.

"It's a constant downshifting of gear toward smaller objectives that Russia can actually achieve," Crump said. "And I think on the biggest scale, they've actually downsized their strategy better to match their ability on the ground."

Many in Ukraine and the West thought Putin would pour resources into Donbas to score a decisive triumph by Victory Day on May 9, when Moscow celebrates its defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II. Russia has falsely called the war a campaign to "denazify" Ukraine — a country with a democratically elected Jewish president who wants closer ties with the West.

Rather than a massive campaign in the east, however, the Kremlin opted for a series of tactical mini-offensives there, aimed at steadily gaining ground to try to encircle Ukrainian forces.

"The Russian leadership is urging the military command to show at least some gains, and it has nothing else to do but to keep sending more troops into the carnage," said Mykola Sunhurovskyi, a military expert at the Kyiv-based Razumkov Center think-tank.

Many in the West expected Putin to declare a broad mobilization to fill up the Russian ranks. British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace warned that Putin might time an announcement to Victory Day.

But it never happened, and Russia has continued to rely on a limited force that was clearly insufficient against Ukrainian defenses.

A massive mobilization would likely foment broad discontent in Russia, fuel antiwar sentiment and carry massive political risks. Authorities opted for more limited options, with lawmakers drafting a bill to waive the current age limit of 40 for those willing to sign up for the military.

The lack of resources was underlined last week by an abrupt Russian withdrawal from areas near Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city that has been bombarded since the start of the war. Some of those forces apparently were redeployed to the Donbas, but it wasn't enough to tip the scales on the battlefield.

"They really had to thin out the troops they had around Kharkiv, simply because they're trying to hold to too much of a line with too few troops," said Phillips O'Brien, professor of strategic studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

The Donbas fighting has increasingly morphed into artillery duels, and "it might go on for quite a long time without much movement in the lines," he said.

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"So it will be a more of a positional battle at that point, O'Brien added, with success going to whoever "can take the pounding."

Ukraine, meanwhile, continues to get a steady flow of Western weapons, including U.S. howitzers and drones, tanks from Poland and other heavy gear that is immediately sent into combat.

"Ukraine's plan is simple and obvious — wear down the Russian forces in the nearest months as much as possible, win time for receiving Western weapons and training how to use them, and then launch a counteroffensive in the southeast," said Sunhurovskiy, the Kyiv-based military expert.

He said Ukraine hopes to receive even more powerful Western weapons, such as U.S. HIMARS multiple rocket launchers, anti-ship missiles and more potent air defense weapons.

The eastern deadlock has angered hard-liners in Russia, who warned that Moscow can't win if it doesn't conduct a massive mobilization and concentrate all of its resources in a decisive attack.

Igor Strelkov, a former security officer who led the separatists in Donbas in 2014, denounced what he described as the Kremlin's indecision, saying it could pave the way for defeat.

"For Russia, the strategic deadlock is deepening," he said.

Ukrainian authorities, meanwhile, are increasingly emboldened by the slow pace of the Russian offensive and growing Western support.

While Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reaffirmed last week that pushing the Russians back to their pre-invasion positions would represent a victory, some of his aides declared even more ambitious goals.

Adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said Ukraine isn't interested in a cease-fire "until Russia is ready to fully liberate occupied territories," a bold statement that appears to reflect hopes for reclaiming the Donbas and Crimea.

Russia, meanwhile, apparently aims to bleed Ukraine by methodically striking fuel supplies and infrastructure while making grinding military gains in the east. The Kremlin may also hope that Western interest in the conflict will eventually fade amid the economic challenges and other problems.

"Their final hope is that we will lose interest completely in the conflict in Ukraine by the summer," Crump said. "They're calculating the Western audiences will lose interest in the same way as Afghanistan last year. Russia thinks that time is working in its favor."

Greene seat, 2 Democratic primaries among top US House races

By BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — One of the last anti-abortion Democrats in Congress is in a primary runoff in Texas to hold on to his seat.

In suburban Atlanta, two Democratic congresswomen are vying for the same House seat after Georgia's Republican-dominated Legislature tinkered with their maps.

And in northwest Georgia, far-right Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a conspiracy-peddling provocateur, has a huge fundraising advantage as she faces a handful of GOP primary challengers in her Republican-leaning district.

Primary elections that will be held Tuesday in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Minnesota and Texas will offer a glimpse of what the next Congress could look like, with some marquee matchups testing whether voters want to elect agents of change or a return to normal.

Here are a handful of races to follow:

THE LAST ANTI-ABORTION HOUSE DEMOCRAT

Moderate Texas Democrat Henry Cuellar has become a perennial target for progressives. But so far the anti-abortion congressman has prevailed in a series of close races in the largely Hispanic district that stretches from the Rio Grande to San Antonio.

For the second cycle in a row, 28-year-old immigration attorney and abortion rights supporter Jessica Cisneros is looking to end Cuellar's almost 20-year stint in office. In the March primary, she forced Cuellar into a runoff after coming within 1,000 votes.

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Heading into the Tuesday competition, she may have a new edge after a recently leaked U.S. Supreme Court opinion draft showed the justices poised to overturn the historic 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that grants a constitutional right to abortion.

"We are watching the fall of Roe and the erosion of our fundamental rights," Cisneros said earlier this month. "The last thing we want is to hold on to a slim Democratic majority, and then have someone like Henry Cuellar who's going keep siding with Republicans."

The FBI earlier this year raided Cuellar's home in the border city of Laredo as part of an investigation related to the former Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. Cuellar's attorney says he has been exonerated and is not the target of the investigation. But the issue is enough of a liability that Cuellar's allies have sent out direct mail ads with a mock newspaper headline proclaiming him "cleared."

Cuellar is backed by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and others in House Democratic leadership. But he's also been hit with a \$1 million wave of negative advertising, while little has been spent attacking Cisneros.

MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE

Marjorie Taylor Greene once speculated that Jewish-controlled space lasers sparked California wildfires. She also baselessly argued that two Muslim congresswomen weren't "really official" because they didn't take their oath of office on a Bible. And she once yelled through a congressional office mail slot, challenging New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to "get rid of your diaper" and "talk to the American citizens."

And that was all before voters in northwest Georgia decided to elect the fringe conservative and conspiracy theory monger to Congress in 2020.

Since then, Greene's rhetoric and provocations have only continued, culminating in Democrats taking the rare step of stripping her of her committee assignments. The opposition has only helped turn her into a conservative star and fundraising juggernaut, and GOP leadership have shown reluctance to challenge her.

Now in her first reelection campaign for a solidly red district in northwest Georgia, Greene is facing a handful of challengers, including health care consultant Jennifer Strahan, who pitched herself as a "nonsense conservative" alternative to Greene.

If Republicans win back the House majority in November, as history suggests they may, Greene could notch yet another victory: GOP leader Kevin McCarthy, who is in line to become House speaker, has said she won't just get her committee assignments back; she'll likely receive a promotion.

MINNESOTA 'DUMPSTER FIRE'

When Republican Rep. Jim Hagedorn died of kidney cancer in February, his widow, former Minnesota GOP chair Jennifer Carnahan, said her husband's wish was for her to succeed him and represent southern Minnesota in Congress.

The race hasn't shaped up that way.

Even before announcing her bid, Carnahan's friendship with a GOP donor who was federally indicted for sex-trafficking minors sparked a firestorm. Then a recording surfaced last year in which she said, "Jim's gonna be dead in two years. So be it." Last week, she was sued by her deceased husband's family as they attempted to recoup money they loaned him for cancer treatment, which they say she was supposed to pay back to them.

The drama, which local GOP officials have likened to a "dumpster fire," has allowed two other candidates to surge ahead.

Brad Finstad, a former state lawmaker and USDA official, has secured much of the party establishment's support. Americans for Prosperity — an organization established by billionaire industrialists, the Koch Brothers — and the Republican group American Dream Federal Action have collectively spent \$1.4 million on ads supporting him.

State Rep. Jeremy Munson, meanwhile, is running as an outsider who is "100% Pro-Life. 100% Pro-Gun. 100% Conservative." Munson, who proposed legislation to let Minnesota counties secede and join border states, has the backing of the hard-right House Freedom Caucus.

Former Hormel CEO Jeff Ettinger is seeking the Democratic nomination for the solid Republican district.
MEMBER ON MEMBER PRIMARY

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After the 2020 census, Georgia's Republican-dominated Legislature redrew the boundaries of Democratic Rep. Lucy McBath's suburban Atlanta district, transforming it into a GOP stronghold. They also redrew another Atlanta-area swing seat, making Democratic Rep. Carolyn Bourdeaux's district solidly Democratic.

So McBath, a nationally renowned gun-safety advocate first elected in 2018, went district shopping — and decided to challenge Bourdeaux, a college professor in her first term. Now, with millions of dollars in spending by outside groups supporting her, McBath has a huge advantage heading into Tuesday's primary.

McBath has run on her compelling personal story. She's a Black woman whose son was killed by a white man during a dispute over stereo volume in 2012. Since then, she's called herself a "mother on a mission" and has pledged to pass gun safety legislation through Congress, though there is scant hope of that because of lockstep Republican opposition.

While the two share many of the same policy goals, Bourdeaux takes umbrage with McBath's district swap, subtly hinting that her colleague-turned-rival is a carpetbagger.

She has also sharply criticized spending by cryptocurrency billionaire Sam Bankman-Fried, who has poured millions of dollars into primary races across the U.S. this year, including \$2 million spent backing McBath. The motive, Bourdeaux argues, is to buy support from Congress at a time when the industry faces the prospect of federal regulation for the first time. McBath has ignored calls to renounce the financial help.

China's bet on homegrown mRNA vaccines holds back nation

By HUIZHONG WU and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — China is trying to navigate its biggest coronavirus outbreak without a tool it could have adopted many months ago, the kind of vaccines that have proven to offer the best protection against the worst outcomes from COVID-19.

As early as the spring of 2020 a Chinese pharmaceutical company, Fosun Pharma, reached an agreement to distribute — and eventually manufacture — the mRNA vaccine made by Pfizer and BioNTech. It still has not been cleared in mainland China, despite being authorized for use by separate authorities in Hong Kong and Macao.

Now health experts say that delay — a result of putting politics and national pride above public health — could lead to avoidable coronavirus deaths and deeper economic losses because whole cities would be locked down to insulate the country's unprotected population.

"The biggest issue is about the delay of the reopening," said Xi Chen, a health economist at Yale University's School of Public Health. "The consequences will be huge, the supply chain disruption, the disruption to all kinds of service sectors."

Studies have consistently shown that vaccination with mRNA vaccines made by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna offer the best protection against hospitalization and death from COVID-19. Chinese vaccines made with older technology proved fairly effective against the original strain of the virus, but much less so against more recent variants.

As this evidence became clearer, even countries that initially used Chinese vaccines and some other less effective Western-made vaccines have turned to mRNA vaccines for booster shots and new vaccinations.

Not China. Regulators have not publicly said why they have not acted — the mRNA vaccines are authorized in much of the world and have proven safe and effective in hundreds of millions of people. But a Chinese health official and another person directly involved in the negotiations told The Associated Press that authorities have held back because they want to master the technology in China and not depend on foreign suppliers. Both spoke on condition of anonymity, given the sensitive nature of the issue.

For more than a year, the approach seemed defensible. The country was able to keep the virus at bay better than any other large nation with its strict "zero COVID" approach that isolates infected people and locks down communities when infections pop up.

But now, the highly transmissible omicron variant is testing that strategy, requiring ever wider and longer lockdowns that are taking a greater economic and human toll. While other countries are able to operate close to normal because their people are protected by vaccination or previous infection, China is left with

only its lockdown strategy to avoid huge numbers of hospitalizations and deaths.

China may be changing its mind. The Communist Party-owned Global Times newspaper reported last month that Fosun Pharma is still working with health authorities on its approval and Shanghai authorities recently issued new policies that could allow the import of COVID-19 vaccines. Fosun, based in Shanghai, did not respond to questions about the announcement.

China's National Health Commission directed questions to the country's drug regulator, the National Medical Products Administration. That agency did not respond to a faxed request for comment.

In the meantime, hopes for a Chinese-developed mRNA vaccine center on Abogen Biosciences, a startup founded in 2019 by Bo Ying, an American-trained scientist who once worked for Moderna.

The company has partnered with more established companies in the country such as Walvax, a private company founded in 2001, and the Academy of Military Medical Sciences, the military's medical research facility. Abogen has raised more than \$1.7 billion since 2020.

The company's vaccine candidate succeeded in eliciting an immune response in a small, preliminary test in humans designed to evaluate safety, according to a study published in the journal *Lancet Microbe*.

The results were "promising," said Dr. Vineeta Bal, who studies immune systems at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research in Pune, India, although she said that a direct comparison of the immune response the shot triggered with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines would have helped scientists better evaluate its performance.

But large studies that are needed to show whether the shot works to prevent infections or symptoms have not been completed. Abogen did not respond to requests for an interview.

Even if the studies can be completed and the vaccine proves effective, manufacturing the millions of doses required will be a challenge, experts say. Abogen built a manufacturing facility in December 2020 with a projected capacity of up to 120 million doses a year.

Manufacturing that vaccine and ensuring quality at scale will be a difficult hurdle to clear because mRNA is still a new technology, said Scott Wheelwright, chief operating officer at BioInno Bioscience, a Chinese biopharmaceutical contract manufacturer who has held conversations with Abogen.

In the meantime, Chen, the Yale health policy expert, said the Chinese government should better protect its elderly population by both approving the Pfizer vaccine and encouraging booster shots.

Using a Chinese phrase that means "giving up completely," Chen said the change from "zero COVID" does not have to be all or nothing. "It doesn't have to be tang ping or sticking to zero COVID," Chen said. "I don't think there are only two solutions, and we can stick to a middle ground."

Search for Supreme Court leaker falls to former Army colonel

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Gail Curley began her job as Marshal of the U.S. Supreme Court less than a year ago, she would have expected to work mostly behind the scenes: overseeing the court's police force and the operations of the marble-columned building where the justices work.

Her most public role was supposed to be in the courtroom, where the Marshal bangs a gavel and announces the entrance of the court's nine justices. Her brief script includes "Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" — meaning "hear ye" — and concludes, "God save the United States and this Honorable Court."

Earlier this month, however, Curley was handed a bombshell of an assignment, overseeing an unprecedented breach of Supreme Court secrecy, the leak of a draft opinion and apparent votes in a major abortion case. Leaks to Politico suggest that the court seems ready to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that women have a constitutional right to abortion. That has sparked protests and round-the-clock security at justices' homes, demonstrations at the court and concerns about violence following the court's ultimate decision.

People who know Curley described the former Army colonel and military lawyer as possessing the right temperament for a highly charged leak investigation: smart, private, apolitical and and unlikely to be intimidated.

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"I'm confident that if the truth can be found out here, she'll find it out and present it in an unbiased manner," said retired Army Brig. Gen. Patrick Huston, her direct supervisor at the Pentagon in her last military job before the Supreme Court. Huston said he was incredibly impressed by Curley and that she had a tremendous reputation as a leader, but even as her boss of two years he didn't know if she had a spouse or children.

Through a court spokeswoman, Curley declined an interview request. She is the court's 11th Marshal and the second woman to hold the post. She is also in some ways constrained in her investigation by her position, which was created just after the Civil War, in 1867. Experts say leaking the draft opinion likely wasn't a crime, and Curley's investigative tools are limited. She could theoretically hire an outside law firm to assist, and in other judicial records cases the FBI has been called in. But it isn't clear if she or others have the power to issue subpoenas to get material from journalists or the fewer than 100 people in the court — including justices — with access to a draft opinion.

The investigation doesn't appear to have any real precedent. In 1973 the outcome in the Roe case leaked several hours ahead of its announcement. The chief justice at the time was furious and threatened lie detector tests, but the leaker quickly came forward and explained it had been an accident.

Even if the circumstances are different, overseeing an investigation isn't new to Curley. In her military career she routinely oversaw a dozen or more criminal and administrative investigations and supervised large numbers of attorneys and paralegals, Huston said. She was an authority on international law and laws surrounding armed conflict, but the investigations she oversaw throughout her career could range broadly, from criminal matters involving service members to contract issues. Huston described her as "not the sort of person who would ever be intimidated by anything."

Curley began her military career at West Point, where just under 10% of her 1991 graduating class was women. Lisa Freidel, a member of the same 25-member company as Curley, remembered her as kind and studious but also a "pretty serious person."

"She didn't like the tomfoolery of some of the boys, some of the guys, in our company. They were young men. They do stupid stuff. She did not like that," Freidel remembered, adding Curley "wanted to be surrounded with intellectuals, people that were smart to challenge her."

Curley, was dubbed "Swirlin' Curl" in West Point's yearbook, which listed her hometown as Baltimore. She was also something of an introvert, Freidel said, adding that she never met Curley's parents, just an aunt and uncle, and couldn't remember her talking about siblings.

In school, Curley was interested in American politics and government, an interest that coincided with one West Point requirement: being knowledgeable about current affairs. The New York Times was delivered every morning and cadets were supposed to be able to talk about four articles in the paper every day, Freidel remembered.

"You had to make sure your shoes were shined, your belt buckles were all shined and everything before formation and try to memorize the paper," she said.

Still, Curley found time for extracurricular activities. A domestic affairs club she was a member of took a trip her senior year to Washington that included a meeting with Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. "See you in the White House someday!" her yearbook entry reads.

After graduating, she joined the Army's Signal Corps, which is responsible for setting up communication systems in the field.

"I've been very fortunate in my career," Curley said of that time according to a 2017 news article. "As a young Army signal officer I was able to lead a large platoon in Europe during my first assignment ... that was at a time when women were not allowed to serve as platoon leaders in certain jobs."

She eventually went on to earn a law degree from the University of Illinois College of Law and become an Army lawyer. Her career took her around the United States but also to Afghanistan for a year. Later, she spent three years in Germany as the chief legal adviser to the commander of U.S. Army Europe, first Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, who is now retired, and then Lt. Gen. Christopher Cavoli. Cavoli, now a four-star general, was nominated earlier this month to serve as the Supreme Allied Commander for NATO.

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In Germany, Curley was the senior Army attorney overseeing some 300 legal officials throughout Europe. She also provided "legal review and advice on the millions of things we were doing," Hodges said in an interview.

"I don't know if I've ever met anybody more with more integrity," Hodges said, adding that Curley also had a sense of humor and "a real dose of humility."

The three-star general said because he liked and respected her so much, he would sometimes tease her. She had no problem holding her own, he said.

"She had the confidence of knowing that her IQ was about 40 points higher than mine," he said. "And so she could afford to be self-confident."

Trump's bid to reshape GOP faces biggest hurdles in Georgia

By STEVE PEOPLES and JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Donald Trump hopes to avoid a stinging defeat in the Georgia governor's race on Tuesday as Republican primary voters decide the fate of the former president's hand-picked candidate to lead one of the most competitive political battlegrounds in the U.S.

In all, five states are voting, including Alabama, Arkansas, Texas and Minnesota. But none has been more consumed by Trump and his lie that the 2020 election was stolen than Georgia.

After incumbent GOP Gov. Brian Kemp refused to accept Trump's baseless claims of widespread voter fraud in Georgia, he sought retribution by personally recruiting former Republican Sen. David Perdue to mount a primary challenge. But that may prove to be a bad bet as Kemp has emerged as a powerful fundraiser who has tapped into the benefits of incumbency. In the final days of the campaign, he unveiled a \$5.5 billion, 8,100-job Hyundai Motor plant near Savannah.

On the eve of the election, Perdue's allies were bracing for a lopsided defeat, the only question being whether Kemp would win the 50% majority he needs to avoid a runoff election next month.

"We're not going to have a runoff," said Matha Zoller, a longtime Republican activist and northeast Georgia talk show host with ties to both Trump and Perdue. "It's going to be embarrassing."

The results could raise questions about where power resides within the GOP. While Trump remains deeply popular among the party's most loyal voters, the opening stage of the midterm primary season has shown they don't always side with his picks. Other prominent Republicans, meanwhile, are growing increasingly assertive.

In a clear illustration of the divide among top Republicans, Trump's own vice president, Mike Pence, rallied with Kemp in the Atlanta suburbs on Monday evening.

"Elections are about the future," he told the crowd, adding that "when you vote for Brian Kemp tomorrow, you will say yes to a future of freedom here in Georgia. You will say yes to our most cherished values at the heart of everything we hold dear."

Perdue, for his part, ended the day saying Stacey Abrams, who is Black and running unopposed for the Democratic nomination for governor, was "demeaning her own race."

Republicans have stepped up their criticism of Abrams since she told a Democratic dinner on Saturday that "I am tired of hearing about being the the best state in the country to do business when we are the worst state in the country to live." Abrams has said her comments were meant to address Georgia's dismal rankings for mental health access and maternal mortality.

But in an interview Monday with conservative radio host John Fredericks and former Trump adviser Peter Navarro, Perdue went further. He likened the comment to remarks Abrams made in 2018 arguing "people shouldn't have to go into agriculture or hospitality to make a living in Georgia." He asserted that she was referring to Black farmers.

"When she told Black farmers, you don't need to be on the farm, and when she told Black workers in hospitality and all this ... she is demeaning her own race when it comes to that," Perdue said.

Meanwhile, Republicans and Democrats elsewhere are grappling with ideological and strategic divisions that will determine what kind of candidates to nominate and which issues to prioritize for the November

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general election.

Democrats were especially focused on a runoff election in south Texas, where longtime incumbent Rep. Henry Cuellar is facing a fierce challenge from progressive Jessica Cisneros in a race where abortion is a prominent issue. Cuellar is last anti-abortion Democrat serving in the House.

Republicans will also decide a series of lower-profile primaries.

In Arkansas, former Trump aide Sarah Huckabee Sanders is expected to claim the Republican governor's nomination. And in Alabama, conservative firebrand Rep. Mo Brooks is running to represent the GOP in the race to replace retiring Sen. Richard Shelby. Brooks, a leading figure at the Jan. 6 "Stop the Steal" rally that preceded the Capitol attack, initially won Trump's endorsement, although Trump rescinded it after watching Brooks struggle in the polls.

No state has more consequential elections this week than Georgia, a longtime Republican stronghold that has shifted Democratic in recent elections. Biden defeated Trump in Georgia by less than 12,000 votes total in 2020, and Democrats narrowly won both Senate seats two months later.

This year, Trump's obsession with his 2020 loss have loomed over Republican primary elections for governor, Senate and secretary of state.

Trump-backed former NFL star Herschel Walker is poised to win Georgia's GOP Senate nomination after fending off conservative opponents who raised questions about his history of domestic violence. Walker would face Democratic incumbent, Sen. Raphael Warnock, this fall.

Leading Trump ally Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene is also expected to win her primary election in the state's 14th congressional district, despite a first term marred by conspiracy theories and controversy.

On the Democratic side in Georgia, two congressional incumbents, Reps. Lucy McBath and Carolyn Bourdeaux, were running against each other in suburban Atlanta, forced into a rare incumbent-on-incumbent primary after Republicans re-drew the congressional map.

Meanwhile, the Georgia Republican primary for governor — and the GOP's secretary of state contest—will have a direct impact on Georgia's election system for the 2024 presidential contest.

In a show of anti-Trump defiance, the Republican governors of Arizona, Nebraska and Maryland have lined up behind Kemp, who refused to support Trump's baseless claims that the 2020 election in Georgia and other swing states was stolen.

Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan suggested a Kemp victory would send a clear message to Trump.

"When Brian Kemp prevails on Tuesday, he will prove that voters want their leaders to focus on the everyday issues in their lives like high gas prices and rising crime, not indulging the petty grievances of another politician," Hogan told The Associated Press.

In the GOP primary for secretary of state, Trump has railed against GOP incumbent Brad Raffensperger, who refused support the former president's direct calls to overturn the 2020 election. Raffensperger faces three primary challengers, including Trump-backed Rep. Jody Hice. The winner will serve as Georgia's chief election officer in the 2024 presidential election.

Tuesday marks the first election held under new voting laws adopted by the Republican-backed state legislature in response to Trump's unfounded grievances. The law made it harder to vote by mail, which was popular among Democrats in 2020 amid the pandemic; introduced new voter identification requirements that critics warned might disenfranchise Black voters; and expanded early voting in rural areas that typically vote Republican.

The new law also bans the practice of handing out food or water within 150 feet of a polling place, a practice common in urban areas where there are typically long voter lines.

Early voting totals in Georgia suggest enormous voter enthusiasm — especially on the Republican side.

Through the end of Friday, 857,401 voters cast early ballots, including 795,567 who voted early in-person, according to the secretary of state. That includes 483,149 votes cast by Republicans and 368,949 votes by Democrats.

That figures shattered early voting turnout in the 2020 presidential election, when a total of 254,883 Georgians voted early.

Democrats downplayed the voting disparity, noting that the state's highest-profile contests were play-

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ing out on the Republican side.

"While Democrats are uniting behind our candidates, Republicans are in chaos as they run on an extreme agenda and try to outdo each other as the most MAGA candidate," said Democratic National Committee Chair Jaime Harrison.

Kemp, Perdue duel could end with Georgia's GOP primary

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia's Republican gubernatorial primary Tuesday could spell an end to the faceoff between Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp and former U.S. Sen. David Perdue, while Stacey Abrams will be crowned the Democratic Party's nominee after running unopposed.

More than 850,000 Georgians cast ballots during weeks of early in-person voting. New election rules passed by the Republican-controlled legislature last year made mail-in absentee ballots and ballot drop boxes — forms of voting that were popular during the 2020 elections amid the coronavirus pandemic — a less attractive option, and they nosedived this year.

With three other candidates in the Republican race, it's possible that neither Kemp nor Perdue will win a majority, requiring a June 21 runoff. Such a scenario could leave the winner with empty pockets. However, polling has shown Kemp extending his lead in recent weeks, raising the possibility that the nomination could be settled Tuesday.

Abrams will be waiting for the winner in a November contest that is likely to be one of the nation's most expensive and high-profile. She narrowly lost the governorship to Kemp in 2018.

Perdue was personally courted by former President Donald Trump to enter the race as retribution for Kemp not going along with Trump's effort to overturn his 2020 loss in Georgia to Democrat Joe Biden. Perdue embraced Trump's election lies, opening two debates between the candidates with the claim that the 2020 balloting was "rigged and stolen." Election officials found no evidence of fraud after multiple reviews.

Trump conducted an in-person rally for Perdue, sent more than \$3 million to two political action committees to pay for ads attacking Kemp on election issues, and kept up a steady stream of rhetorical fire against the incumbent. But Trump has not returned to Georgia since March, and Perdue's ads have been missing from Georgia television stations for much of the crucial early-voting period.

Kemp used the power of his incumbency to push a raft of bills through the legislature, signing measures that cut taxes, allowed people to carry concealed handguns without permits and let the state athletic association ban transgender girls from high school sports.

The governor also used bountiful state coffers to give pay raises and burnished his economic development record by announcing two large electric vehicle factories.

Republicans rallied to Kemp's side: He was endorsed by powerful GOP figures including former Vice President Mike Pence and Georgia House Speaker David Ralston.

Perdue scrambled for contributions, hitting Kemp on crime and for luring the Rivian Automotive plant to an area east of Atlanta over the objections of many residents.

Abrams has been running for months, seeking to burnish her image among Georgia voters with more than \$7 million in advertising, despite the lack of primary opposition.

The centerpiece of her platform remains a call to expand Medicaid to all adults, but Abrams is also highlighting her support for abortion rights and opposition to a law allowing the permitless carry of concealed handguns in public. The Democratic star has shown the ability to raise millions. Meanwhile, Republicans have raised the specter of her becoming governor to try to unify a party fractured by Trump's attempts to unseat Kemp.

AP-NORC poll: Economy grows as priority on Russia response

By NOMAAN MERCHANT and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans are becoming less supportive of punishing Russia for launching its

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invasion of Ukraine if it comes at the expense of the U.S. economy, a sign of rising anxiety over inflation and other challenges, according to a new poll.

While broad support for U.S. sanctions has not faltered, the balance of opinion on prioritizing sanctions over the economy has shifted, according to the poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Now 45% of U.S. adults say the nation's bigger priority should be sanctioning Russia as effectively as possible, while slightly more — 51% — say it should be limiting damage to the U.S. economy.

In April, those figures were exactly reversed. In March, shortly after Russia attacked Ukraine, a clear majority — 55% — said the bigger priority should be sanctioning Russia as effectively as possible.

The shifts in opinion reflect how rising prices are biting into American households — surging costs for gas, groceries, and other commodities have strained budgets for millions of people — and perhaps limiting their willingness to support Ukraine financially. That may be a troubling sign for President Joe Biden, who on Saturday approved an additional \$40 billion in funding to help Ukraine including both weapons and financial assistance. The poll shows low faith in him to handle the situation, and an overall approval rating that hit the lowest point of his presidency.

"We're killing ourselves," said Jeanette Ellis-Carter, a retired accountant who lives with her husband in Cincinnati, Ohio. "We can help other people, but in helping other people, we have to know how to help ourselves. And we're not doing that."

Ellis-Carter, 70, noted that annual inflation topping 8% would erase any cost-of-living adjustment for retirees, especially with the rising costs of health care and food. She continues to do accounting work but has lost small-business clients who no longer can afford to hire her.

The poll shows wide majorities of U.S. adults continue to favor imposing sanctions on Russia, banning oil imported from Russia and providing weapons to Ukraine. And most U.S. adults continue to say the U.S. should have a role in the war between Russia and Ukraine: 32% say the U.S. should have a major role in the conflict, while 49% say it should have a minor role.

But there's muted support for sending funds directly to Ukraine. Forty-four percent of Americans say they favor sending funds, while 32% are opposed and 23% are neither in favor nor opposed.

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.

"Sometimes we get involved in things that we really shouldn't, and it's going to make things worse," said Angelica Christensen, a 33-year-old from Ithaca, New York. "We need to focus right now on building up our economy."

The U.S. and European allies have imposed several rounds of sanctions on Russia, cutting off major banks from global transactions and going directly after Russian President Vladimir Putin, top leaders, and their families. The U.S. also banned the importation of Russian oil.

While Russian oil makes up a small part of America's total energy imports, the ban comes as gas prices have surged in recent months, hitting \$4.71 per gallon, or \$1.61 higher than a year ago. Supply chain problems and increased economic demand as COVID-19 restrictions ease have contributed to rising prices. Biden and many Democrats have accused gas companies of price gouging, while Republicans say the White House should support increased domestic oil and natural gas drilling.

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 conflict began. Seventy-three percent of Democrats and 15% of Republicans approve.

Shantha Bunyan, a 43-year-old from Loveland, Colorado, said she still supports Biden and believes he's performed better than former President Donald Trump. She's heard jokes that the most expensive place to visit in town is the local gas station. But Bunyan, who spent years traveling abroad before the pandemic began and lived for a month in Moscow, said she believes the U.S. has to continue to sacrifice to support Ukraine's resistance.

"We seem to think that everything that goes on in the world isn't going to affect us and that we live in some sort of a bubble," she said. "It seems to me that anything that happens in the rest of the world

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is going to affect us. Unless we do something proactive, our economy is going to be affected anyway.” But Jackie Perry, a 62-year-old from Centre, Alabama, said while she sympathized with Ukrainians and believes Russia was unjustified in launching its invasion, the White House needed to focus more on the economy. She has had to cut back on driving because gas is too expensive.

“They don’t have to worry about the price of gas,” she said about the Biden administration. “If they were more interested in the people that they’re supposed to be serving, our gas wouldn’t be that high.”

Greene’s divisive politics face test in Republican primary

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

With millions raised to defend her seat in Congress and five fellow Republicans running to take it, GOP Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene faced her first reelection vote Tuesday in a GOP primary race that tests how her conservative Georgia constituents judge her turbulent freshman term.

Greene, 47, became a celebrity of the Republican Party’s far-right fringe with her election two years ago as she embraced former President Donald Trump’s false claim that the 2020 election was stolen, engaged in conspiracy theories about the coronavirus and launched partisan attacks that critics said promoted racism and violence.

Greene remained on the primary ballot Tuesday in Georgia’s 14th Congressional District after a failed effort to disqualify her by opposing voters. They argued Greene engaged in insurrection by encouraging the Jan. 6, 2021, riot that disrupted Congress’ certification of Joe Biden’s presidential victory. Georgia’s secretary of state and an administrative law judge dismissed the claims.

Still, fellow Republicans refused to give Greene a free ride to reelection. Though her first term won loyal followers, it left others in the GOP embarrassed.

Leading the slate of Republicans running to oust Greene in the primary was Jennifer Strahan, founder of a suburban Atlanta health care advisory firm who pitched herself to voters as a “no-nonsense conservative.”

“This is not the time for unserious politicians who just want to hear themselves talk,” Strahan said in one campaign ad, without mentioning Greene by name. In another she stated bluntly: “Our current U.S. representative isn’t doing her job.”

Greene was stripped of her committee assignments last year by House Democrats who accused her of spreading violent and hateful conspiracies. In recent months, Greene got banned from Twitter for spreading coronavirus misinformation and spoke at an event organized by a white nationalist where the crowd chanted “Putin!” after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Green has been largely unrepentant. In a campaign ad posted recently to her Facebook page, she calls Biden and Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi “communist Democrats” who “hate America, hate God and hate our way of life.”

Greene proved popular enough that she raised more than \$9 million for her reelection bid, placing her among the year’s top fundraisers in Congress, according to the Federal Election Commission. Greene spent more than \$6.6 million before the primary.

Strahan’s \$391,000 in fundraising trailed far behind Greene but dwarfed that of other Republican contenders — retired physician Charles Lutin, engineer James Haygood, Marine Corps veteran Seth Synstelien and logistics executive Eric Cunningham.

Spanning a stretch of northwest Georgia from metro Atlanta to the state line at Chattanooga, Tennessee, Greene’s district was drawn to favor Republicans even after state lawmakers slightly shifted its boundaries during redistricting last year.

Even with the odds against them, three Democrats competed for a shot at challenging Greene in November. Army veteran Marcus Flowers led the Democratic field with more than \$8.1 million raised. He faced small business owner Hollie McCormack and Wendy Davis, a former Rome city commissioner, in the district’s Democratic primary.

Burn-proof edition of ‘The Handmaid’s Tale’ up for auction

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By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Margaret Atwood has imagined apocalyptic disaster, Dystopian government and an author faking her own death. But until recently she had spared herself the nightmare of trying to burn one of her own books.

With a flamethrower, no less.

She failed, and that was the point.

On Monday night, timed for PEN America's annual gala, Atwood and Penguin Random House announced that a one-off, unburnable edition of "The Handmaid's Tale" would be auctioned through Sotheby's New York. They launched the initiative with a brief video that shows Atwood attempting in vain to incinerate her classic novel about a totalitarian patriarchy, the Republic of Gilead. Proceeds will be donated to PEN, which advocates for free expression around the world.

"In the category of things you never expected, this is one of them," she said in a telephone interview.

"To see her classic novel about the dangers of oppression reborn in this innovative, unburnable edition is a timely reminder of what's at stake in the battle against censorship," Markus Dohle, CEO of Penguin Random House, said in a statement.

The fireproof narrative is a joint project among PEN, Atwood, Penguin Random House and two companies based in Toronto, where Atwood is a longtime resident: the Rethink creative agency and The Gas Company Inc., a graphic arts and bookbinding specialty studio.

Rethink's Robbie Percy said that he and fellow creative director Caroline Friesen came up with the idea. Late last year, they had heard about a Texas legislator who listed hundreds of works for potential banning from school libraries: Percy and Friesen wondered if it were possible to make a book protected from the most harrowing censorship. They soon agreed on "The Handmaid's Tale," which came out in the 1980s and has had renewed attention over the past few years, beginning with the political rise and unexpected presidency of Donald Trump and continuing with the current surge of book bannings.

"We thought an unburnable copy of 'Handmaid's Tale' could serve as a symbol," he said.

Percy and Friesen spoke with Atwood's publishers in Canada and the U.S. — both divisions of Penguin Random House — and got in touch with the author. They then contacted Gaslight, which has worked on numerous commissioned texts, including some for PEN.

The Gas Company's principal owner, Doug Laxdal, told the AP that instead of paper, he and his colleagues used Cinefoil, a specially treated aluminum product. The 384-page text, which can be read like an ordinary novel, took more than two months to complete. The Gas Company needed days just to print out the manuscript; the Cinefoil sheets were so thin that some would fall through cracks in the printer and become damaged beyond repair. The manuscript was then sewed together by hand, using nickel copper wire.

"The only way you could destroy that book is with a shredder," Laxdal says. "Otherwise, it will last for a very long time."

Atwood told the AP that she was immediately interested in the special edition, and in making the video. She was a teenager in the 1950s, when Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451" was published, and holds vivid memories of the novel's futuristic setting, in which books are reduced to ashes.

"The Handmaid's Tale" has never been burned, as far as Atwood knows, but has often been subjected to bans or attempted bans. Atwood remembers a 2006 effort in one Texas high school district, when the superintendent called her book "sexually explicit and offensive to Christians," that ended when students successfully fought back. In 2021, "The Handmaid's Tale" was pulled by schools in Texas and Kansas.

The novel has sold millions of copies and its impact is not just through words, but images, amplified by the award-winning Hulu adaptation starring Elisabeth Moss. Advocates worldwide for women's rights have dressed in the puritanical caped robes Atwood devised for her story. Most recently, some women in handmaid outfits marched to protest the Supreme Court's expected overturning this year of *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that legalized abortion nationwide.

"It's an unforgettable visual metaphor," Atwood said. "That's why people in the middle ages put coats of arms on their armor, and had recognizable flags. That way you can visualize them and know who's

standing for what.”

US births rose last year but still less than before pandemic

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. births bumped up last year, but the number of babies born was still lower than before the coronavirus pandemic.

The small 1% increase was a bit of a rebound from 2020, the first year of the pandemic, which witnessed the largest one-year drop in the U.S. births in nearly 50 years.

But there were still about 86,000 fewer births last year than in 2019, according to a government report released Tuesday.

“We’re still not returning to pre-pandemic levels,” said Dr. Denise Jamieson, chair of gynecology and obstetrics at Emory University School of Medicine.

U.S. births had been declining for more than a decade before COVID-19 hit, and “I would expect that we would continue to see small, modest decreases,” she said.

Officials think last year’s uptick reflects births from pregnancies that had been put off during the uncertain early days of the pandemic. Deliveries were way down in January 2021, but improved as the year went on, said Brady Hamilton of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Much of the increase was seen in older moms.

“These are births that were postponed,” said Hamilton, lead author of the new report.

The report is based on a review of nearly all birth certificates issued last year.

Some of the key findings:

- Nearly 3.7 million births were reported last year, up from the roughly 3.6 million recorded in 2020.
- Birth rates dropped again for teens and for women younger than 25, but rose 3% for women in their early 30s, 5% for women in their late 30s, and 3% for women in their early 40s.
- Birth rates rose 1% for Hispanic women and 3% for white women. But they fell 1% for Asian women, 3% for Black women, and 4% Native American and Alaska Native women. That may reflect the pandemic’s harsher impact on the health and lives of some racial groups, experts said.
- The U.S. was once among only a few developed countries with a fertility rate that ensured each generation had enough children to replace itself — about 2.1 kids per woman. But it’s been sliding, and in 2020 dropped to about 1.6, the lowest rate on record. It rose slightly last year, to nearly 1.7.
- The percentage of infants born small and premature — at less than 37 weeks — rose 4%, to about 10.5%. It was the highest it’s been since 2007.

The premature birth rate had declined slightly in 2020, and health officials aren’t sure why the increase occurred. But older moms are more likely to have preterm births, as are women infected with COVID-19, said the CDC’s Joyce Martin, a study co-author.

MLB suspends Yanks’ Donaldson for 1 game for ‘Jackie’ remark

NEW YORK (AP) — Major League Baseball suspended Josh Donaldson for one game Monday after the New York Yankees slugger made multiple references to Jackie Robinson while talking to White Sox star Tim Anderson during the weekend.

Donaldson also was fined an undisclosed amount for his actions Saturday at Yankee Stadium. The punishment was announced by Michael Hill, the senior vice president of on-field operations for MLB.

Donaldson has appealed the penalty, meaning he can continue to play until there is a final decision. Shortly before the suspension was announced, the Yankees said Donaldson had been put on the COVID-19 injured list.

“MLB has completed the process of speaking to the individuals involved in this incident. There is no dispute over what was said on the field. Regardless of Mr. Donaldson’s intent, the comment he directed toward Mr. Anderson was disrespectful and in poor judgment, particularly when viewed in the context of

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their prior interactions," Hill said in a statement.

"In addition, Mr. Donaldson's remark was a contributing factor in a bench-clearing incident between the teams, and warrants discipline," he said.

White Sox pitching coach Ethan Katz didn't think the penalty was enough.

"Just one game. We all saw his malice at third a week ago, then this comment with the ridiculous excuse that followed. What's the point or message behind a 1 game suspension? This is incredibly disappointing and plain frustrating," Katz posted on Twitter.

The White Sox had a day off Monday. They are not scheduled to play the Yankees again this season.

Yankees star Aaron Judge said Donaldson made "a mistake."

"You know, joke or not ... I just don't think it's the right thing to do there, especially given the history, especially the series in Chicago, kind of a little bit of beef between JD and Anderson is one of the best shortstops in the game and a big part of MLB and what's going on here and how we can grow the game," Judge said.

"JD, for that one-game suspension, yeah I don't know. JD made a mistake and owned up to it and now we got to move on," he said.

Judge, who leads the majors with 17 home runs after hitting two more Monday night in a 6-4 loss to Baltimore, said Donaldson spoke to the team after the incident.

"JD is a pro. So he talked to all of us and filled us in on what he was referring to about, I guess, a 2019 interview that TA did. But still I just don't think it was the right move at all."

Yankees manager Aaron Boone said he disagreed with MLB's decision.

"I think they were thoughtful and did their due diligence on it and made what was a tough call. I don't agree with it. I don't think it warranted a suspension, but I certainly respect their process," he said.

Donaldson said he twice called Anderson by "Jackie" — as in Robinson, who famously broke MLB's color barrier in 1947 — during the Yankees' 7-5 win on Saturday. The benches and bullpens emptied as tensions escalated.

Anderson, one of baseball's leading Black voices and an All-Star shortstop, said it was a "disrespectful comment." White Sox manager Tony La Russa said it was racist, and Anderson agreed.

"Basically, it was trying to call me Jackie Robinson. Like, 'What's up, Jackie?'" Anderson said after Saturday's game.

Donaldson, who is white, said he had used the "Jackie" reference in the past with Anderson, who had said he viewed himself as a potential modern-day Robinson in a 2019 interview with Sports Illustrated.

"My meaning of that is not any term trying to be racist by any fact of the matter," Donaldson said Saturday.

Anderson and Donaldson, the 2015 AL MVP, did not speak with the media on Sunday, when the White Sox swept a doubleheader at Yankee Stadium. Through a Yankees spokesman, Donaldson said he hadn't talked with Anderson since the incident.

Anderson started the second game and was booed by fans, with some chanting "Jackie" at him. He hit a three-run homer in the eighth inning of a 5-0 win and then put his finger to his lips in a hushing gesture as he rounded the bases.

Boone said he talked to Donaldson after Saturday's game and believed his player's explanation for why he made the "Jackie" remark — but he also said he thought Donaldson shouldn't have used the term.

"I think with what's going on between the two players and between the two teams over the last week or two, I certainly understand how that would be sensitive and understand the reaction," Boone said. "I also understand Josh has been very forthcoming with the history of it and the context of it. So I don't believe there was any malicious intent in that regard."

"But this is just my opinion — (that's) somewhere he should not be going," he said.

Donaldson had clashed with the White Sox on multiple occasions before this weekend.

The benches also emptied on May 13 after Anderson shoved Donaldson following a hard tag in Chicago.

White Sox ace Lucas Giolito used an expletive in calling Donaldson a "pest" last year after Donaldson appeared to yell "Not sticky anymore!" after a first-inning homer for Minnesota — a reference to MLB

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cracking down on pitchers using sticky substances on baseballs.

The 36-year-old Donaldson is batting .238 with five home runs and 15 RBIs in 37 games during his first season with the Yankees.

Boone said Donaldson told the team he was experiencing symptoms, prompting the team to put him on the COVID-19 injured list. He had not been tested, Boone said.

Donaldson became the third Yankees player to go on the COVID-19 IL in the last two days. Before Sunday's doubleheader, Joey Gallo and Kyle Higashioka were placed on the list.

Asian shares mostly lower as inflation worries cloud outlook

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares were mostly lower on Tuesday as worries over inflation tempered optimism over President Joe Biden's remark that he was considering reducing U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports.

Benchmarks fell in Tokyo, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong but rose slightly in Sydney. Oil prices and U.S. futures were lower.

Biden, who announced a new economic and trade initiative with the region while on a visit to Japan, confirmed to reporters that he planned to discuss the issue of punitive tariffs imposed on China during former President Donald Trump's administration with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen once he returns to Washington.

"I'm talking with the secretary when I get home. We are considering it," Biden said.

The comments raised optimism over the potential for an easing of tensions between the world's two biggest economies, but not all were convinced.

"Talks of reducing tariffs on China's exports have surfaced before and the lack of any concrete follow-through remains an element of disappointment for markets," said Yeap Jun Rong, market strategist at IG in Singapore.

Investors are keeping an eye on the impact of the war in Ukraine on commodity prices and the possible blow to global economic growth from pandemic lockdowns in China.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 declined 0.5% to 26,863.33. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 added 0.1% to 7,155.90. South Korea's Kospi sank 0.9% to 2,625.78. Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 1.4% to 20,180.92, while the Shanghai Composite declined 0.4% to 3,133.72.

"Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a wave of COVID-19 infections and lockdowns in mainland China, relentless inflation, and tightening financial conditions have disrupted production and stifled demand, causing the global economy to stall," said Sara Johnson, an executive director at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Wall Street had an upbeat start to the week after seven weeks of declines that have nearly ended the bull market that began in March 2020. The S&P 500 rose 1.9% to 3,973.75, with technology and financial sector stocks doing much of the heavy lifting for the benchmark index. The Dow Industrial Average rose 2% to 31,880.24 and the Nasdaq climbed 1.6% to 11,535.27.

Smaller company stocks staged a rally. The Russell 2000 gained 1.1% to 1,792.76.

Recent heavy selling has primed traders to snap up big tech stocks and shares in other companies that had been high flyers before the market's punishing skid, said Quincy Krosby, chief equity strategist for LPL Financial.

"What we're seeing today is traders and investors coming in and taking advantage of the lower (price) levels," she said. "This is the tug-of-war in the market between those saying the market has become attractively valued, versus those who are saying 'not really,' because it's not factoring in much slower growth."

Lingering concerns about inflation have been weighing on the market and have kept major indexes in a slump. The benchmark S&P 500 is coming off its longest weekly losing streak since the dot-com bubble was deflating in 2001. It came close to falling 20% from its peak earlier this year, which would put the index at the heart of most workers' 401(k) accounts into a bear market.

A series of disappointing earnings reports from key retailers last week also raised concerns that consumers are tempering spending on a wide range of goods as they get squeezed by rising inflation.

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Investors fear the central bank could go too far in raising rates or move too quickly. That could slow business activity and potentially bring on a recession. On Wednesday, investors will get a more detailed glimpse into the Fed's decision-making process with the release of minutes from the latest policy setting meeting.

Wall Street will also get a few economic updates this week from the Commerce Department. On Thursday it will release a report on first-quarter gross domestic product and on Friday it will release data on personal income and spending for April.

In energy trading, U.S. benchmark crude lost 73 cents to \$109.56 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It added 1 cent to \$110.29 per barrel on Monday. Brent crude, the international standard for pricing, fell 87 cents to \$112.55 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar edged up to 127.98 Japanese yen from 127.78 yen. The euro cost \$1.0673, down from \$1.0688.

EXPLAINER: What's the 4-nation Quad, where did it come from?

By AAMER MADHANI and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Leaders of the U.S., Japan, Australia and India gathered in Tokyo on Tuesday for a summit of the "Quad." What is the group, where did it come from and why do diplomats keep coming up with strange names for various partnerships?

WHAT IS THE QUAD?

Formally the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, the Quad began as a loose partnership after the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, when the four countries joined together to provide humanitarian and disaster assistance to the affected region. It was formalized by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007, but then fell dormant for nearly a decade, particularly amid Australian concerns that its participation in the group would irritate China.

The group was resurrected in 2017, reflecting changing attitudes in the region toward China's growing influence. Both the Trump and Biden administrations saw the Quad as key to a pivot toward placing more focus on the Indo-Pacific region, particularly as a counterweight to China's assertive actions. The Quad leaders held their first formal summit in 2021 and met again virtually in March.

IS IT AN "ASIAN NATO"?

China has complained that the group represents an attempt at forming an "Asian NATO," though unlike the European alliance there is no mutual-defense pact in effect. Quad members say the group is meant to deepen economic, diplomatic and military ties among the four countries. And while they don't often explicitly say it, those partnerships are meant to be a bulwark against Chinese aggression. In a March 2021 declaration laying out the "Spirit of the Quad," the leaders said, "We bring diverse perspectives and are united in a shared vision for the free and open Indo-Pacific. We strive for a region that is free, open, inclusive, healthy, anchored by democratic values, and unconstrained by coercion."

WHO ARE THE NEW FACES?

Tuesday's meeting marks the first in-person gathering of the group for Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who took office last October, as well as for Australia's new prime minister, Anthony Albanese. He was sworn-in on Monday, just two days after Australia's parliamentary election and one day before the summit.

WHAT ABOUT INDIA?

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is attending as he faces increasing global scrutiny over his government's crackdown on minorities and some authoritarian tendencies. In addition, while the other members of the Quad have been united in standing up against Russia's invasion of Ukraine, especially with sanctions, India increased its purchases of Russian energy supplies after the invasion. Moreover, the invasion has led to food shortages that are causing price spikes, yet India banned wheat exports following a heat wave that could make this global challenge much tougher to resolve.

WHO ELSE IS INVOLVED?

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South Korea has expressed interest in joining the Quad, though U.S. officials have said they are not contemplating adjusting the group's membership. The group has held "Quad-plus" meetings that have included South Korea, New Zealand and Vietnam, which could form the basis for future expansion or partnership in the region.

WHY THE ODD NAME?

Diplomats can't help themselves. Once they start up different pairings or partnerships, they can't resist assigning shorthand names like the Quad or baffling acronyms like AUKUS (the new Australia- U.K.-U.S. alliance.) Another acronym that got attention this week while President Joe Biden was in Asia: IPEF, short for the U.S.-proposed new trade pact called the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework.

After 3 months of war, life in Russia has profoundly changed

By The Associated Press undefined

When Vladimir Putin announced the invasion of Ukraine, war seemed far away from Russian territory. Yet within days the conflict came home — not with cruise missiles and mortars but in the form of unprecedented and unexpectedly extensive volleys of sanctions by Western governments and economic punishment by corporations.

Three months after the Feb. 24 invasion, many ordinary Russians are reeling from those blows to their livelihoods and emotions. Moscow's vast shopping malls have turned into eerie expanses of shuttered storefronts once occupied by Western retailers.

McDonald's — whose opening in Russia in 1990 was a cultural phenomenon, a shiny modern convenience coming to a dreary country ground down by limited choices — pulled out of Russia entirely in response to its invasion of Ukraine. IKEA, the epitome of affordable modern comforts, suspended operations. Tens of thousands of once-secure jobs are now suddenly in question in a very short time.

Major industrial players including oil giants BP and Shell and automaker Renault walked away, despite their huge investments in Russia. Shell has estimated it will lose about \$5 billion by trying to unload its Russian assets.

While the multinationals were leaving, thousands of Russians who had the economic means to do so were also fleeing, frightened by harsh new government moves connected to the war that they saw as a plunge into full totalitarianism. Some young men may have also fled in fear that the Kremlin would impose a mandatory draft to feed its war machine.

But fleeing had become much harder than it once was — the European Union's 27 nations, along with the United States and Canada had banned flights to and from Russia. The Estonian capital of Tallinn, once an easy long-weekend destination 90 minutes by air from Moscow, suddenly took at least 12 hours to reach on a route through Istanbul.

Even vicarious travel via the Internet and social media has narrowed for Russians. Russia in March banned Facebook and Instagram — although that can be circumvented by using VPNs — and shut access to foreign media websites, including the BBC, the U.S. government-funded Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and the German broadcaster Deutsche Welle.

After Russian authorities passed a law calling for up to 15 years' imprisonment for stories that include "fake news" about the war, many significant independent news media shut down or suspended operations. Those included the Ekho Moskvyy radio station and Novaya Gazeta, the newspaper whose editor Dmitry Muratov shared the most recent Nobel Peace Prize.

The psychological cost of the repressions, restrictions and shrinking opportunities could be high on ordinary Russians, although difficult to measure. Although some public opinion polls in Russia suggest support for the Ukraine war is strong, the results are likely skewed by respondents who stay silent, wary of expressing their genuine views.

Andrei Kolesnikov of the Carnegie Moscow Center wrote in a commentary that Russian society right now is gripped by an "aggressive submission" and that the degradation of social ties could accelerate.

"The discussion gets broader and broader. You can call your compatriot — a fellow citizen, but one who

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happens to have a different opinion — a “traitor” and consider them an inferior kind of person. You can, like the most senior state officials, speculate freely and quite calmly on the prospects of nuclear war. (That’s) something that was certainly never permitted in Soviet times during Pax Atomica, when the two sides understood that the ensuing damage was completely unthinkable,” he wrote.

“Now that understanding is waning, and that is yet another sign of the anthropological disaster Russia is facing,” he said.

The economic consequences have yet to fully play out.

In the early days of the war, the Russian ruble lost half its value. But government efforts to shore it up have actually raised its value to higher than its level before the invasion.

But in terms of economic activity, “that’s a completely different story,” said Chris Weafer, a veteran Russia economy analyst at Macro-Advisory.

“We see deterioration in the economy now across a broad range of sectors. Companies are warning that they’re running out of inventories of spare parts. A lot of companies put their workers on part time work and others are warning to them they have to shut down entirely. So there’s a real fear that unemployment will rise during the summer months, that there will be a big drop in consumption and retail sales and investment,” he told The Associated Press.

The comparatively strong ruble, however heartening it may seem, also poses problems for the national budget, Weafer said.

“They receive their revenue effectively in its foreign currency from the exporters and their payments are in rubles. So the stronger the ruble, then it means the less money that they actually have to spend,” he said. “(That) also makes Russian exporters less competitive, because they’re more expensive on the world stage.”

If the war drags on, more companies could exit Russia. Weafer suggested that those companies who have only suspended operations might resume them if a cease-fire and peace deal for Ukraine are reached, but he said the window for this could be closing.

“If you walk around shopping malls in Moscow, you can see that many of the fashion stores, Western business groups, have simply pulled down the shutters. Their shelves are still full, the lights are still on. They’re simply just not open. So they haven’t pulled out yet. They’re waiting to see what happens next,” he explained.

Those companies will soon be pressed to resolve the limbo that their Russian businesses are in, Weafer said.

“We are now getting to the stage where companies are starting to run out of time, or maybe run out of patience,” he said.

Southern Baptists face push for public list of sex abusers

By DEEPA BHARATH, HOLLY MEYER and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

A blistering report on the Southern Baptist Convention’s mishandling of sex abuse allegations is raising the prospect that the denomination, for the first time, will create a publicly accessible database of pastors and other church personnel known to be abusers.

The creation of an “Offender Information System” was one of the key recommendations in a report released Sunday by Guidepost Solutions, an independent firm contracted by the SBC’s Executive Committee after delegates to last year’s national meeting pressed for an investigation by outsiders.

The proposed database is expected to be one of several recommendations presented to thousands of delegates attending this year’s national meeting, scheduled for June 14-15 in Anaheim, California.

“Those recommendations will be open to questions, debate and comments on the meeting floor,” said SBC President Ed Litton.

He expressed hope that the shocking findings in the Guidepost report will bring “lasting change” to the SBC, America’s largest Protestant denomination. It has been losing membership steadily in recent years, while being wracked by internal divisions over race and gender roles.

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The Guidepost report said survivors of abuse by SBC clergy repeatedly shared allegations with the Executive Committee, "only to be met, time and time again, with resistance, stonewalling, and even outright hostility from some within the EC."

"Our investigation revealed that, for many years, a few senior EC leaders, along with outside counsel, largely controlled the EC's response to these reports of abuse ... and were singularly focused on avoiding liability," the report said.

The motion for an independent investigation was put forward at last year's national meeting by the Rev. Grant Gaines, senior pastor of Belle Aire Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Reading the Guidepost report, Gaines said he was struck by repeated examples of a callous disregard for survivors, as well as leaders prioritizing protection of the SBC from liability over abuse prevention.

"We're at a fork in the road," Gaines said. "I think this report provided the information that we needed for there to be a groundswell of support to take the right actions."

Specifically, Gaines said he supports the proposal to create a system that alerts communities to known offenders.

"I think that's one of the first things we should do," he said.

Lawyer and writer Christa Brown, who says she was sexually abused as a teen by the youth minister at her SBC church, has been pressing the SBC since 2006 to create a publicly accessible database of known abusers. She was heartened that Guidepost was recommending such a system, but said questions remain about its implementation.

"What is absolutely critical is that the local church cannot function as the default or presumed starting place for a survivor to try to obtain an investigation of clergy sex abuse," she said via email. "If the local church is deemed to be a requisite first stop for survivors to pursue action, then many survivors' voices will be choked in their throats before sound is ever uttered."

Among the Guidepost report's findings was that the Executive Committee kept a secret list of hundreds of SBC-affiliated clergy and other personnel identified as sex abusers. Brown said the committee, at a special meeting Tuesday, should agree to release this list.

"I urge you to make public the entirety of your list of pastors & ministers accused of sexual abuse, in whatever form it's been kept for lo these many years," Brown tweeted. "Post. It. Now."

The final decisions about recommendations to submit to the Anaheim delegates will be made by the SBC's Sexual Abuse Task Force, comprising seven members and two advisors. Its work over the past year has been an emotional journey, said Pastor Bruce Frank, who led the group.

"We saw patterns and things that were deeply concerning," he said. "Our main job was to empower Guidepost to do their job, and they have done a truly remarkable job in the last nine months to look at events that occurred over 20 years."

In the next week or so, the task force will bring forth formal motions in "precise language," which will be made public and presented to the delegates in Anaheim for a vote, said Frank, lead pastor of Biltmore Baptist Church in Arden, North Carolina.

Frank said the crux of the task force's recommendations based on Guidepost's report can be summarized in two words – prevention and care.

"Our main goal should be preventing sexual abuse," he said. "And if abuse does occur, how do we care for survivors in a much better pastoral way? How can we better communicate to make sure (abusers) don't go from one church to another?"

His hope is that this report serves as "a catalyst for change."

"Any person who is fair-minded will look at what's in that report and demand that things be better," Frank said. "SBC is a big family with 48,000 churches. There might be some disagreement on how to make things better. But I'm confident that we'll work through the difficulties."

In addition to sex abuse, the agenda for the meeting in Anaheim includes election of a new SBC president to succeed Litton.

One of the leading contenders is Bart Barber, a pastor from Farmersville, Texas, who expressed dismay

at the mean-spirited behaviors attributed to some SBC officials in the Guidepost report.

If elected, Barber said in a broadcast interview Monday, "I'm praying that God will give me the wisdom to know what to do.... We're sailing into uncharted waters."

"The work's not done," he added. "We've gotten the report, but I think everybody in the survivor community that I've heard from has said reports are one thing, but we'll see if this family of churches has the courage and resolve to take action."

The sex abuse scandal was thrust into the spotlight in 2019 by a landmark report from the Houston Chronicle and San Antonio Express-News documenting hundreds of cases in Southern Baptist churches, including several in which alleged perpetrators remained in ministry.

Facebook, Instagram to reveal more on how ads target users

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facebook parent Meta said it will start publicly providing more details about how advertisers target people with political ads just months ahead of the U.S. midterm elections.

The announcement follows years of criticism that the social media platforms withhold too much information about how campaigns, special interest groups and politicians use the platform to target small pockets of people with polarizing, divisive or misleading messages.

Meta, which also owns Instagram, said it will start releasing details in July about the demographics and interests of audiences who are targeted with ads that run on its two primary social networks. The company will also share how much advertisers spent in an effort to target people in certain states.

"By making advertiser targeting criteria available for analysis and reporting on ads run about social issues, elections and politics, we hope to help people better understand the practices used to reach potential voters on our technologies," Jeff King wrote in a statement posted to Meta's website.

The new details could shed more light on how politicians spread misleading or controversial political messages among certain groups of people. Advocacy groups and Democrats, for example, have argued for years that misleading political ads are overwhelming the Facebook feeds of Spanish-speaking populations.

The information will be showcased in the Facebook ad library, a public database that already shows how much companies, politicians or campaigns, spend on each ad they run across Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp. Currently, anyone can see how much a page has spent running an ad and a breakdown of the ages, gender and states or countries an ad is shown in.

The information will be available across 242 countries when a social issue, political or election ad is run, Meta said in a statement.

Meta collected \$86 billion in revenue during 2020, the last major U.S. election year, thanks in part to its granular ad targeting system. Facebook's ad system is so customizable that advertisers can target a single user out of billions on the platform, if they wanted.

Meta said in its announcement Monday that it will provide researchers with new details that show the interest categories advertisers selected when they tried to target people on the platform.

Surgeon: Johnny Depp's severed finger story has flaws

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (AP) — A hand surgeon testified Monday that Johnny Depp could not have lost the tip of his middle finger the way he told jurors it happened in his civil lawsuit against ex-wife Amber Heard.

The finger injury, which occurred in a March 2015 fight in Australia between Depp and Heard, has been one of several key points of dispute in the lawsuit. Depp says he was injured when Heard threw a vodka bottle at him. Heard has said she never saw specifically how it happened, but that it occurred on a night when an enraged Depp sexually assaulted her with a liquor bottle.

Depp is suing Heard for libel in Fairfax County Circuit Court over a December 2018 op-ed she wrote in The Washington Post describing herself as "a public figure representing domestic abuse." His lawyers say he was defamed by the article even though it never mentioned his name.

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Depp has denied he ever struck Heard, and says she was the abuser in the relationship. Heard has testified about more than a dozen separate instances of physical abuse she says she suffered at Depp's hands.

In testimony Monday, surgeon Richard Moore testified about the severed finger as jurors saw gruesome photos of the injury. He said that Depp described that his palm was down on a bar when it was struck by the bottle.

Moore, who did not treat Depp, testified that Depp's description is unlikely, in large part because his fingernail remained intact. Moore said the fingernail was exposed, as Depp described the placement of his hand, and would have been damaged. Moore also said there would have been other cuts on the rest of his hand from the glass that shattered on impact.

While Depp told the jury that Heard severed the finger by throwing a vodka bottle, at the time of the accident he told people and sent text messages saying he'd done it to himself. At one point he said the finger had been pinched between solid accordion doors.

Depp now says he lied to protect Heard. Moore testified that getting the finger pinched in accordion doors would be consistent with the injury.

The trial is now in its sixth week. Monday's testimony was relatively mundane in a trial that has provided an ugly glimpse into the couple's toxic relationship. There had been an expectation that Heard's lawyers were going to call Depp to the stand Monday, but that did not occur. Heard's lawyer, Elaine Bredehoft, said at the end of the day Monday that they are still discussing whether to call him.

Jurors had already heard from both Depp and Heard extensively — each was on the stand for four days, undergoing grueling cross-examinations.

Also Monday, a psychiatrist testified that Depp's behavior fits the pattern of a person whose drug and alcohol abuse contributes to domestic violence.

Depp lawyer Wayne Dennison questioned the ethics and credibility of the psychiatrist's opinions, given that he never conducted an examination of Depp.

Later Monday, Dennison extensively questioned another Heard witness, entertainment expert Kathryn Arnold, about her assertion that Heard lost out on a potential \$40 million to \$50 million when another Depp lawyer called Heard's claims of abuse a "hoax." Heard has filed a counterclaim against Depp based on those statements.

Arnold said she measured Heard's career against "comparable" stars like Gal Gadot, Jason Momoa and Zendaya to show where Heard's career would have gone if Depp attorney Adam Waldman had not defamed her.

Dennison, in his questioning, scoffed at the notion that Heard was in the same league as those stars. He was also dismissive of Heard's role as Mera in the "Aquaman" superhero film franchise, saying that the to-be-released "Aquaman" sequel is more like a "buddy comedy" than a film that will feature Heard as a romantic lead.

Heard "was on the precipice of a great career," Arnold insisted.

The trial has drawn increasing public attention over its length. People camped out overnight and squabbled over places in line as they sought to get one of the 100 seats in the courtroom allocated to the public. During a morning break, one woman professed her love for Depp and asked when he was going to acknowledge that he was the father of the baby she was holding in her arms.

She was removed from the courtroom.

World Food Program chief presses billionaires 'to step up'

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — The head of the U.N.'s World Food Program is telling billionaires it's "time to step up" as the global threat of food insecurity rises with Russia's war in Ukraine, saying he's seen encouraging signs from some of the world's richest people, like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos.

Agency Executive Director David Beasley built upon a social media back-and-forth he had with Musk last year, when the Tesla CEO challenged policy advocates to show how a \$6 billion donation sought by

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the U.N. agency could solve world hunger.

Since then, "Musk put \$6 billion into a foundation. But everybody thought it came to us, but we ain't gotten any of it yet. So I'm hopeful," Beasley told The Associated Press at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where some of the world's biggest elites and billionaires have gathered.

"I don't know what it's going to take," he said of Musk. "We're trying every angle, you know: Elon, we need your help, brother."

Musk and Bezos didn't immediately respond to emails or other messages seeking comment.

Beasley's challenge came as a new study projected that nearly 1.9 billion people could face food insecurity by November. Eurasia Group and DevryBV Sustainable Strategies presented the report at the Global Citizen NOW Summit in New York Monday, saying that as many as 243 million people could fall into food insecurity due to what U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres has called "hurricane of hunger" heightened by the war in Ukraine.

"The projections are bleak right now," Global Citizen CEO Hugh Evans told The Associated Press. "This doesn't have to happen. A lot of institutions are failing people."

Evans said he hopes that launching the Global Citizen Impact Fund, which will only require payment on pledges based on results, will convince ultra high net worth individuals to donate more since they will already have proof of the effectiveness of their gifts. In the short-term, though, Erna Solberg, former prime minister of Norway and a Global Citizen board member, said at the summit that "Agenda Item #1" is to get the grain already harvested in Ukraine out of the country through its ports.

Musk, the world's richest man, donated about 5 million shares of Tesla stock worth roughly \$5.7 billion at the time to an unidentified charity in November, according to a regulatory filing.

It came after Musk tweeted in late October that he would sell \$6 billion in Tesla stock and give the money to the World Food Program if the organization would describe how the money would solve world hunger. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission filing did not name any recipients for Musk's donation.

Beasley told AP on Monday that his message wasn't just to those two high-profile tech mavens, but other billionaires, too.

"The world is in real serious trouble. This is not rhetoric and B.S. Step up now, because the world needs you," he said.

Ukraine and Russia together export a third of the world's wheat and barley and half of its sunflower oil, while Russia is a top supplier of fertilizer that has surged in price. The Kremlin's forces are accused of blocking Ukrainian ports, and the interruption of those affordable food staples is threatening food shortages and political unrest in countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

The threat to the global food supply has been a pressing concern for officials, with U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres saying last week that he was in "intense contacts" with Russia and other key countries and is "hopeful" of an agreement to allow the export of grain stored in Ukrainian ports and ensure Russian food and fertilizer have unrestricted access to global markets.

If Ukraine's supplies remain off the market, the world could face a food availability problem in the next 10 to 12 months, and "that is going to be hell on earth," Beasley said.

If Roe falls, some fear repercussions for reproductive care

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and LINDSEY TANNER Associated Press

If the Supreme Court follows through on overturning Roe v. Wade, abortion likely will be banned or greatly restricted in about half the U.S. states. But experts and advocates fear repercussions could reach even further, affecting care for women who miscarry, couples seeking fertility treatments and access to some forms of contraception.

Many conservatives insist they are only interested in curtailing abortion, and legislation passed so far often has exceptions for other reproductive care. But rumblings from some in the GOP have experts concerned, and laws banning abortion could also have unintended side effects.

"The rhetoric has been really increasing over the last several years," said Mara Gandal-Powers, the

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director of birth control access at the National Women's Law Center. "There's definitely a domino effect which I think people are really starting to wake up to and see this is how far it could go."

If Roe is overturned, as suggested by a leaked draft opinion, states will set their own abortion laws, and conservative lawmakers are already passing a steady stream of deeply restrictive regulations. Oklahoma lawmakers, for example, passed legislation Thursday banning abortion at conception, the strictest in the nation.

Although that bill has some exceptions, it signals a direction that is deeply worrisome for many doctors.

"I truly think the people writing these laws either have no concept of the broad implications or do not care about how this impacts so many aspects of women's health care," said Dr. Kristyn Brandi, a New Jersey OB-GYN who provides abortion care.

"In medicine, you are not considered pregnant until this fertilized egg is implanted into the uterus — which happens after fertilization," Brandi said. She said it is unclear whether doctors performing infertility treatments would be in violation of the law if they dispose of extra fertilized eggs. The Oklahoma measure "is not based in science and is incredibly confusing and frustrating for medical professionals trying to provide evidence based care."

The Roe decision was based on a constitutional right to privacy — and the decision leaned on another landmark case eight years earlier that gave married couples the right to birth control, *Griswold v. Connecticut*.

Reliable birth control is now a feature of life for millions of Americans, but in March U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee recorded a video message naming the *Griswold* decision as "constitutionally unsound." She's not proposing restrictions on birth control but hasn't commented further to clarify what she meant.

Other conservatives have conflated emergency contraception, often known as the morning-after pill, with abortion. In Idaho, for example, it was prohibited at school-based health clinics last year under a law banning public funding for "abortion related services."

Along with long-acting birth control devices called IUDs, emergency contraception has been attacked by abortion foes who believe life begins when an egg is fertilized.

But those pills have no effect once a pregnancy is established, after implantation in the womb, Brandi said.

"You can take Plan B all you want when you're pregnant. It will not do anything to your pregnancy," she said.

Emergency contraceptive pills like Plan B and IUDs may also prevent a fertilized egg from implanting in the womb, but experts say the science on that isn't clear. It is believed they mostly work by blocking fertilization.

Political attempts to block access to intrauterine devices and other birth control "would be consistent with the pattern that we're seeing right now," said Dr. Jennifer Kerns, an associate professor at the University of California, San Francisco who also provides abortion care. "Many of us are very concerned that that's kind of the next up on the chopping block."

In Missouri last year, for example, there was a failed effort to prevent IUDs and emergency contraception from being paid for by Medicaid. But in Tennessee, which just passed harsh penalties for providing abortion medication, Republican Senate Speaker Randy McNally pushed back on any suggestion that contraception could be in the crosshairs.

"Contraception and abortion are not the same thing. One is a responsible way to prevent pregnancy. The other ends a human life. It is a flagrant attempt to change the conversation and it won't work," spokesman Adam Kleinheider said in a statement.

The governor of Mississippi, one of 13 states that will immediately ban abortion if Roe is overturned, wouldn't say whether he'd sign a hypothetical birth-control ban when asked on "Meet the Press." Gov. Tate Reeves later clarified on Twitter: "I'm not interested in banning contraceptives."

But doctors also worry other forms of reproductive care, like treating ectopic pregnancies, could be targeted. These occur when a fertilized egg implants outside the uterus, often in a fallopian tube. They

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are often life-threatening medical emergencies because the fragile tube can rupture, causing massive internal bleeding.

In 2019, an Ohio Republican proposed a measure that would have compelled doctors to try transplanting ectopic pregnancies into the uterus or allowing insurers to cover the hypothetical procedure, which is considered medically impossible.

After Texas banned abortion after six weeks, Kerns said colleagues there have told of patients with ectopic pregnancies being transferred out of state for treatment, putting their health at risk.

Physicians may even become hesitant to treat miscarriage, said Brandi, the New Jersey OB-GYN.

Women often miscarry alone, early in pregnancy, with no need for medical assistance. For others, it involves heavy prolonged bleeding and treatment is exactly the same as abortion — the same pills or procedure. Doctors in states that outlaw abortion would fear repercussions for treating miscarriages, Brandi said. Most end safely but infection is a risk, she said.

Plus, Brandi added, it can take eight weeks for someone “once they’ve diagnosed with a miscarriage to actually pass the pregnancy” without intervention. That can be traumatic, particularly for women who wanted to be pregnant.

Roxanne Kelly, a mental health specialist in Arkansas, has a family history of miscarriages and ectopic pregnancies. Knowing she’s at high risk, she shudders hearing politicians equate treatment for both with abortion.

“Instead of receiving medical care, ... I would be treated potentially as a murderer,” Kelly said. She shared her fears with her husband recently, and he “immediately offered to get a vasectomy,” saying “it’s reversible and keeps you safe,” Kelly said.

Meanwhile, some states still have abortion bans on the books that date back to the 1800s. If Roe is overturned, those bans with vague definitions of abortion could snap back into effect.

“Some states don’t say what abortion is; they just say abortion is a crime,” said Mary Ziegler, a law professor at University of California, Davis. “There’s a history of defining abortion more broadly to include steps in IVF or some forms of contraception.”

The Supreme Court isn’t expected to issue its final ruling until June or July, but some states are already considering going beyond banning abortion. Lawmakers in Louisiana considered a proposal to make it a homicide — a plan the governor said could criminalize some types of contraception and parts of the in vitro fertilization process.

The legislation stalled, but it could signal future tactics.

Oklahoma passed a series of strict new anti-abortion measures after seeing abortions spike as a ban in nearby Texas sent women to surrounding states. Legislation passed Thursday and set to be signed by the governor has exceptions for ectopic pregnancies — despite opposition from at least one lawmaker — and contraception, too, but not a specific exception for in vitro fertilization.

The legislation, which is enforced through civil lawsuits similar to the Texas ban, would “provide strong, additional protection of the life of unborn children in Oklahoma,” Republican sponsor Rep. Wendi Stearnman said in a statement.

A line describing an “unborn child” as one at any stage of gestation means it likely would not apply to embryos fertilized in a lab, leading some fertility doctors to say this bill would have little effect on people seeking IVF, but it could still apply to the selective reduction process sometimes used to remove a fetus from a woman’s womb if fertility treatments result in multiple pregnancies, said Seema Mohapatra, health law and bioethics professor at SMU Dedman School of Law.

“I think it is very reasonable to be fearful of what comes next,” Mohapatra said. “At what point does your reproductive decision making, even for people that are really, really desperately wanting a child, become constrained?”

Opponents of federal vaccine mandate seek rehearing

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A federal appeals court is being asked to reconsider its decision allowing the

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Biden administration to require that federal employees get vaccinated against COVID-19.

A panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals last month vacated a lower court ruling blocking the mandate and ordered dismissal of a lawsuit challenging the policy, which was ordered by President Joe Biden in September.

However, that 2-1 ruling by the appellate panel doesn't take effect until May 31. On Saturday, opponents of the mandate, led by a group called Feds for Medical Freedom, filed a petition asking that the April ruling be vacated and that the full 17-member court hear new arguments in the case.

On Monday, the 5th Circuit asked the government to respond by June 2; it was unclear if the court would take any action before then.

Biden issued an order Sept. 9 that more than 3.5 million federal executive branch workers undergo vaccination, with no option to get regularly tested instead, unless they secured approved medical or religious exemptions.

U.S. District Judge Jeffrey Brown, who was appointed to the District Court for the Southern District of Texas by then-President Donald Trump, issued a nationwide injunction against the requirement in January. At the time, the White House said 98% of federal workers were already vaccinated.

In February, one 5th Circuit panel refused to block Brown's ruling pending appeal. After hearing arguments in March, a different panel ruled 2-1 that Brown didn't have jurisdiction in the case and those challenging the requirement could have pursued administrative remedies under Civil Service law.

Judges Carl Stewart and James Dennis, both nominated to the court by Democratic President Bill Clinton, were in the majority. Judge Rhesa Barksdale, a senior judge nominated by Republican President George H.W. Bush, dissented, saying the relief the challengers sought does not fall under the Civil Service Reform Act cited by the administration.

Court ruling extends uneven treatment for asylum-seekers

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

EAGLE PASS, Texas (AP) — As the sun set over the Rio Grande, about 120 Cubans, Colombians and Venezuelans who waded through waist-deep water stepped into Border Patrol vehicles, soon to be released in the United States to pursue their immigration cases.

Across the border in the Mexican town of Piedras Negras, Honduran families banded together in a section of downtown with cracked sidewalks, narrow streets and few people, unsure where to spend the night because the city's only shelter was full.

The opposite fortunes illustrate the dual nature of U.S. border enforcement under pandemic rules, known as Title 42 and named for a 1944 public health law. President Joe Biden wanted to end those rules Monday, but a federal judge in Louisiana issued a nationwide injunction that keeps them intact.

The U.S. government has expelled migrants more than 1.9 million times under Title 42, denying them a chance to seek asylum as permitted under U.S. law and international treaty for purposes of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

But Title 42 is not applied evenly across nationalities. For example, Mexico agrees to take back migrants from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico. For other nationalities, however, high costs, poor diplomatic relations and other considerations make it difficult for the U.S. to fly migrants to their home countries under Title 42. Instead, they are typically freed in the U.S. to seek asylum or other forms of legal status.

Hondurans in Piedras Negras ask Cubans arriving at the bus station for money, knowing Cubans will have no use for pesos because they will go directly across the border. While Mexico agreed in April to take some Cubans and Nicaraguans expelled under Title 42, the vast majority are released in the U.S.

"It was in and out," Javier Fuentes, 20, said of his one-night stay in a rented house in Piedras Negras. On Sunday morning, he and two other Cuban men walked across the Rio Grande and on a paved road for about an hour until they found a Border Patrol vehicle in Eagle Pass, a Texas town of 25,000 people where migrants cross the river to the edge of a public golf course.

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Overnight rains had raised water to about neck-level for most adults, a possible explanation for the absence of groups numbering in the dozens, even over 100, that frequent the area many days.

"Slow start to the morning," a Border Patrol agent said as he greeted Texas National Guard troops watching four Peruvians, including a 7-month-old boy who crossed with his parents after several days crammed into a rented room in Piedras Negras with 17 migrants.

As the water dropped again to waist-level, about three dozen migrants gathered at a riverfront public park that also drew local residents in Piedras Negras, which considers itself the birthplace of nachos. Infants and young children joined a largely Honduran crowd to cross. One Honduran woman was eight months' pregnant in obvious pain.

Eagle Pass, a sprawling town of warehouses and decaying houses that many major retailers have overlooked, is one of the busiest spots in the Border Patrol's Del Rio sector, which includes about 250 miles (400 kilometers) of sparsely populated riverfront. Last year, about 15,000 migrants, mostly Haitians, assembled in nearby Del Rio, which isn't much larger than Eagle Pass. Grain fields are about all that separates either town from San Antonio, about a three-hour drive to the east.

The relative ease of crossing — migrants walk across the river within a few minutes, often without paying a smuggler — and a perception that it is relatively safe on the Mexican side has made the remote region a major migration route.

Texas' Rio Grande Valley has long been the busiest of nine Border Patrol sectors on the Mexican border, but Del Rio has surged to a close second this year. Yuma, Arizona, another spot known for relative safety and ease of crossing, has jumped to third-busiest.

Del Rio and Yuma rank sixth and seventh in the number of agents among the nine sectors, a reflection of how Border Patrol staffing has long lagged shifts in migration flows.

Other parts of the border are less patrolled than Del Rio, a plus for migrants trying to elude capture, but are more rugged and remote, said Jon Anfinsen, president of the National Border Patrol Council's Del Rio sector chapter.

Anfinsen calls the Del Rio sector "sort of a happy medium" for migrants seeking to balance the appeal of remote areas with safety.

Cristian Salgado, who sleeps on streets of Piedras Negras with his wife and 5-year-old son after fleeing Honduras, said the Mexican border town is "one of the few places where you can more or less live in peace."

But his excitement about the Biden administration's plans to lift Title 42 on Monday evaporated with the judge's ruling. "Now there is no hope," he said.

Hondurans were stopped nearly 16,000 times on the border in April, with slightly more than half resulting in expulsion under Title 42. The rest could seek asylum in the U.S. if they expressed fear of returning home.

But Cubans fared far better. They were stopped more than 35,000 times in April, and only 451, or barely 1%, were processed under Title 42.

"Cubans get in automatically," said Joel Gonzalez, 34, of Honduras, who tried eluding agents for three days in Eagle Pass before getting caught and expelled. Agents told him asylum the U.S. was no longer available.

Isis Peña, 45, had turned down an offer from a fellow Honduran woman to cross the river. The woman called from San Antonio, saying she was freed without even being asked if she wanted to claim asylum. The woman now lives in New York.

Peña tried crossing herself the next day, an experience she doesn't want to repeat for fear of drowning. After about four hours in custody, an agent told her, "There is no asylum for Honduras."

New this week: Dinosaurs, Def Leppard and 'The Responder'

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's a collection curated by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists of what's arriving on TV,

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streaming services and music platforms this week.

MOVIES

— In the satirical comedy “Emergency,” college seniors Kunle (Donald Elise Watkins) and Sean (RJ Cyler) set out for an epic night of partying only to return home to a shocking scene: Their door is ajar and a woman is passed out on their floor. The men are Black and the woman is white and they know that calling the police is not a straightforward proposition. The film, directed by Carey Williams and written by KD Dávila, was one of the breakouts of the Sundance Film Festival earlier this year for its penetrating look at racial dynamics in a heightened, comedic setting. It’s currently playing in theaters for a limited time before streaming on Amazon Prime Video starting Friday.

— “Navalny,” the riveting documentary about Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has been making the rounds in theaters and on CNN, but starting Thursday it’ll be available on HBO Max as well. Taut and suspenseful, Daniel Roher’s film plays more like a John le Carré thriller than a true story. It has taken on even greater significance since the Russian war on Ukraine, too, according to many of the people involved. “It gives so much context to what’s happening now in Ukraine,” Maria Pevchikh, head of the investigative unit for Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation and an executive producer on the film, told the AP.

— While we sit and wait to see what the big breakouts will be at the Cannes Film Festival this year, the film streaming platform MUBI has one of the festival’s all-timers coming on Friday: David Lynch’s “Mulholland Drive,” which won Lynch the directing prize at the festival in 2001 (shared with Joel Coen for “The Man Who Wasn’t There”). And when you’re done wandering around the fringes of Hollywood with Naomi Watts and Laura Elena Harding, MUBI has an entire Cannes takeover section to explore with films like Andrea Arnold’s “Fish Tank,” Joachim Trier’s “Oslo, August 31st” (for new Trier fans thanks to “The Worst Person in the World”), as well as Ruben Östlund’s “The Square” and “Force Majeure.”

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr

MUSIC

— Def Leppard get back to basics with “Diamond Star Halos,” their 12th studio album and first work since 2015. The first single, “Kick,” is less hair metal and more classic arena rock. “You never quit” go the lyrics and that sounds apt for the band, too. Def Leppard recorded in three different countries, with singer Joe Elliott in Ireland, bassist Rick Savage in England, and guitarists Phil Collen and Vivian Campbell, as well as drummer Rick Allen, in the United States. The album nods to the members’ earliest collective influences, like David Bowie, T. Rex, and Mott the Hoople, among others, and the title comes from T. Rex’s “Bang a Gong (Get It On).”

— The weekend’s big movie is also a place for new music. The soundtrack from “Top Gun: Maverick” features the singles “Hold My Hand” by Lady Gaga and “I Ain’t Worried” by OneRepublic. There’s the return of “Danger Zone” by Kenny Loggins, while Miles Teller, who plays Goose’s son, recorded a live rendition of “Great Balls of Fire.” The album also features original tracks by the movie’s composers but there’s no reprise of “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feelin’” — perhaps that would have been a step too far into the danger zone.

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

TELEVISION

— The good old days for dinosaurs concluded some 60 million years ago, when they owned the ancient Earth in all its glory. That’s where “Prehistoric Planet” is set, using a mix of wildlife filmmaking, paleontology findings and visual effects for a promised “one-of-a-kind immersive experience.” Among the stars: the Mongolian Titan and the frightfully clawed Therizinosaurus, who along with other dinos are introduced in their respective land, sea and air habitats. The five-part Apple TV+ series, out Monday through Friday, May 23-27, boasts narrator David Attenborough and music by Oscar-winning composer Hans Zimmer.

— Martin Freeman keeps proving he can play anything. The “Sherlock” and “Brederers” actor stars as a deeply troubled English police officer in “The Responder,” debuting Tuesday, on the Britbox streaming service. Demoted from inspector, Chris Carson is patrolling the streets of his Liverpool, England, hometown, confronting crime and his own angst. He’s also reluctant partner to a rookie, played by Adelayo Adedayo, and his marriage is at risk. The series, inspired by the experiences of its creator and producer,

Tony Schumacher, unfolds over a week of night shifts as Chris tries to rescue a young addict from deadly jeopardy.

— “Keeping Company with Sondheim” follows the creation of Broadway’s reimagined, gender-swapping version of the Stephen Sondheim-George Furth musical “Company.” The documentary, filmed over a two-year period during the pandemic, also looks back at the original production’s debut during a bleak time for New York City. Marianne Elliott, director of the new production, and members of the original 1970 cast were among those interviewed for the film airing Friday as part of PBS’ “Great Performances.” So was Sondheim, the theater giant who died last November at age 91.

What’s next for COVID-19 vaccines for youngest US children

By The Associated Press undefined

Parents hoping to get their youngest children vaccinated against COVID-19 got some encouraging news Monday.

Pfizer said three small doses of its vaccine offers strong protection to youngsters under 5, according to preliminary data. That news comes a month after Moderna said it would ask regulators to OK its two doses for the youngest kids.

But a few steps remain before the shots are available. Health officials and their expert panels must first decide they are safe enough and provide enough protection to authorize them.

FDA REVIEW

U.S. Food and Drug Administration vaccine chief Dr. Peter Marks has pledged the agency will “move quickly without sacrificing our standards” in evaluating tot-sized doses from both Pfizer and Moderna.

The FDA has tentatively set a June 15 date for its scientific advisers to publicly review the two companies’ vaccines. After the advisers weigh in, the FDA determines whether to authorize the shot.

Moderna is seeking clearance for two low-dose shots for children under age 6 while Pfizer hopes to offer three extra-low doses to kids under age 5 — differences due to how each company studied its vaccine. Currently the U.S. recommends vaccinations for everyone age 5 and older, and Pfizer is the only option for those children. Moderna for now is used only in adults in the U.S.

CDC REVIEW

If either vaccine is cleared for the littlest kids, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would have to recommend whether all babies, toddlers and preschoolers should receive them or only those at high risk of a serious illness.

The CDC would convene its own panel of advisers to debate the recommendation before issuing its official guidance.

ROLLOUT

The Biden administration has said the shots will roll out rapidly, and most tots are expected to be vaccinated in pediatricians’ offices or health clinics. It’s not clear how much demand there will be to vaccinate the youngest kids, however. Pfizer shots for 5- to 11-year-olds opened in November, but only about 30% of that age group have gotten the recommended initial two doses.

Zelenskyy urges ‘maximum’ sanctions on Russia in Davos talk

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for “maximum” sanctions against Russia during a virtual speech Monday to corporate executives, government officials and other elites on the first day of the World Economic Forum gathering in Davos.

He said sanctions need to go further to stop Russia’s aggression, including an oil embargo, blocking all of its banks and cutting off trade with Russia completely.

“This is what sanctions should be: They should be maximum, so that Russia and every other potential aggressor that wants to wage a brutal war against its neighbor would clearly know the immediate con-

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sequences of their actions," Zelenskyy said through a translator.

He also pushed for the complete withdrawal of foreign companies from Russia to prevent supporting its war and said Ukraine needs at least \$5 billion in funding per month.

"The amount of work is enormous: we have more than half a trillion of dollars in losses, tens of thousands of facilities were destroyed. We need to rebuild entire cities and industries," Zelenskyy said, coming days after the Group of Seven leading economies agreed to provide \$19.8 billion in economic aid.

He said that if Ukraine had "received 100% of our needs at once, back in February" in terms of weapons, funding, political support and sanctions against Russia, "the result would be tens of thousands of lives saved."

The war was a key focus Monday at Davos, the village in the Swiss Alps that has been transformed into a glitzy venue for the four-day confab ostensibly dedicated to making the world a better place. The event resumed in person after a two-year hiatus because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which also delayed this year's meeting from its usual winter slot.

Besides the war, attendees tackled other major issues like the threat of rising hunger worldwide, climate change, inequality and persistent health crises. But it's hard to predict if the high-minded discussions will yield substantial announcements that make headway on the world's most pressing challenges.

Zelenskyy, who received a standing ovation after his remarks, reiterated that Russia was blocking critical food supplies, such as wheat and sunflower oil, from leaving Ukraine's ports.

Ukraine, along with Russia, is a major exporter of wheat, barley and sunflower oil, and the interruption of those and other staples is threatening food insecurity in countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia that rely on those affordable supplies.

The head of the U.N.'s World Food Program said in a panel that "the failure to open the ports is a declaration of war on global food systems." He told The Associated Press that the region's farmers "grow enough food to feed 400 million people."

If such supplies remain off the market, the world could face a food availability problem in the next 10 to 12 months, and "that is going to be hell on earth," WFP Executive Director David Beasley told the AP in an interview.

He warned that there are "49 million (people) knocking on famine's door right now in 43 countries," including Yemen, Lebanon, Mali, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Congo, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Beasley called on the world's billionaires to aid efforts to prevent hunger: "The world is in real serious trouble. This is not rhetoric and B.S. Step up now, because the world needs you."

Russian officials on Monday reiterated their assertion that they are not to blame for the food crisis, saying the country is not preventing Ukrainian grain shipments by rail.

"It is not us that are sources of problems leading to the world hunger threat, but those who imposed sanctions against the Russian Federation and the present sanctions themselves," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in call with journalists.

Besides Zelenskyy's speech, a sizable Ukrainian government delegation is attending in person, making their case for more Western support.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko pointed to the audience during a panel, saying, "We are defending you personally."

"We are fighting, first of all, for values" and to be part of the democratic world, Klitschko said. "And right now, everyone has to be proactive because we pay for that — the biggest prize, human lives every day."

Russian officials have not been invited to Davos this year, with what was dubbed the "Russia House" having been transformed by critics — including Ukrainian tycoon Victor Pinchuk and the country's Foreign Ministry — into what they call the "Russia War Crimes House." The venue features photos of crimes and cruelties that Russian forces are accused of perpetuating.

Meanwhile, the head of the International Energy Agency urged countries and investors not to see energy shocks from the war as a reason to increase fossil fuel investments — connecting the invasion to another major theme at Davos, climate change and environmental issues.

"We should not try to justify a new wave of long-term fossil fuel investments on the basis of what (Rus-

sian President Vladimir) Putin did," Fatih Birol said on an energy panel.

Instead, efficiencies, such as reducing leaked methane and even lowering thermostats by a few degrees this winter in Europe would help ensure adequate energy supply.

Russia is a major supplier of oil and natural gas, with the invasion sending European countries scrambling to reduce their reliance on Moscow through fossil fuel supplies from other countries, conservation and speeding up renewable development.

Yulia Klymenko, a member of the Ukrainian Parliament, had harsh words for European leaders, asking why they have failed to diversify their energy for decades.

"How come that you're all dependent and you are slaves of Putin de facto?" she asked on a panel called "The Return of the West?"

Seven years later, still no trial for Texas AG Ken Paxton

By PAUL J. WEBER and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Not many people charged with felony crimes go seven years without ever standing trial. One of them is Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton.

The twists and turns of how the Republican, who is on the cusp of winning the GOP nomination for a third term Tuesday, has yet to have his day in court after being indicted on securities fraud charges in 2015 has little comparison in American politics. And along the way, it has upended what it means to be a compromised officeholder in Texas.

Four different judges have overseen his case at some point. Where a trial would happen — if it ever does — has ping-ponged from Dallas to Houston to Dallas again. All the while, other clouds have gathered over Paxton: the FBI is investigating him over separate accusations of corruption, and the State Bar of Texas is weighing possible reprimands over his attempts to baselessly overturn the 2020 election.

Once, nearly a year passed with no movement in the case at all.

No single reason explains the delays. But altogether, Paxton has become an example of how powerful allies and acts of God can drag out career-threatening criminal charges, and allow a politician to rise above being written off as a political goner.

"I mean, this one is crazy," said Andrew Wheat, a leader of the watchdog Texans For Public Justice. His group in 2014 filed a complaint with prosecutors over Paxton's failure to register as a securities adviser, one of the criminal charges the Republican is battling.

Wheat is dubious that a trial will ever happen. "And by the time it does, if it ever does, will it have any significance left to it?" he said.

Paxton, who faces five to 99 years in prison if convicted, has pleaded not guilty. His attorneys point out that Paxton invoked his right to a speedy trial and blame the holdup on special prosecutors, who have spent years in a protracted battle over how much they're getting paid and where the case should be tried.

How much the case matters is a question Texas Republicans have, arguably, already answered.

Paxton was reelected in 2018 when the felony charges were still making front pages. He is now in reach of winning the nomination again Tuesday in a runoff against Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush, who finished second in a four-way primary in March, but still 20 percentage points behind Paxton.

Bush, the son of former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and the last of his famous family still in office, has staked a comeback on TV ads that splash the indictments across the screen and call Paxton unfit for office. Paxton has mostly ignored the attacks while flaunting former President Donald Trump's endorsement. Most top Texas Republicans have been restrained in voicing any concerns, but a rare exception came just days ahead of the runoff, when U.S. Sen. John Cornyn called the unresolved case an "embarrassment."

"Obviously the voters will have access to that information," Cornyn said last week. "They'll make their own decision and I can't predict what the outcome will be."

The indictments accuse Paxton of defrauding investors in a Dallas-area tech startup by not disclosing he was being paid by the company, called Servery, to recruit them. The indictments were handed up just months after Paxton was sworn in as Texas' top law enforcement officer.

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Not long after, allies of Paxton spearheaded attacks on special prosecutors' \$300 hourly rate, calling it an abuse of taxpayer money. Local leaders in Paxton's hometown of Collin County, which is controlled by Republicans, agreed and voted to slash the pay.

Since then, the criminal case has inched along. A court system brought to a standstill by a 2017 hurricane and then the coronavirus pandemic slowed the pace even more. As it stands now, special prosecutors are waiting on Texas' top criminal court to rule on an appeal to address payment issues and keep Paxton's case in Houston.

"The trial's extended delay was in no way attributable to improper influence of Mr. Paxton," said Philip Hilder, one of Paxton's attorneys, pointing the finger instead at prosecutors for challenging their pay and other pretrial rulings.

"In fact, Mr. Paxton invoked his right to speedy trial. Mr. Paxton is innocent of these charges and sought to have his day in a proper court long ago," he said in a statement.

In the intervening years, Paxton has drawn new scrutiny after eight of his top deputies accused him in 2020 of allegedly abusing his office to help a wealthy donor, Nate Paul, resist an earlier FBI investigation of the developer.

Both federal probes continue, with investigators in recent months collecting Paul's business records and asking how the developer might have been paying Paxton, according to people familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity because the investigation is ongoing.

Paul, whose lawyers did not respond to requests for comment, has denied bribing Paxton. The attorney general has broadly denied wrongdoing and his lawyers declined to comment on the FBI investigation.

In New Jersey, a two-year corruption indictment against U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez, a Democrat, ended with a hung jury in 2017. In Texas, attorneys and legal experts struggled to recall a case that has stretched as long as Paxton's without a resolution.

State Rep. Gene Wu, a Democrat and attorney who spent three years as a prosecutor in Houston, described the delays as unheard of, saying even high-level cases in Texas' largest county go to trial in two or three years.

"There is a legitimate criminal violation and justice is not being served because the people being charged have money and they have power," Wu said.

There is no time limit in which the charges against Paxton would expire. "But as a practical matter, the courts are going to get concerned. People's memories fade and the like," said David Kwok, co-director of the Criminal Justice Institute at the University of Houston Law Center.

The case hasn't outlasted Wheat's watchdog group but they've scaled back: He says financial support for their nonprofit, which also filed the complaint that led to former Texas Gov. Rick Perry's indictment in 2014, has been challenging in recent years.

After being forced into a runoff, Paxton's campaign raised more than \$2 million in about three months.

Defending champ Krejcikova loses to French foe in 1st round

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

PARIS (AP) — Barbora Krejcikova arrived at the French Open as the defending champion in singles and doubles. She also was coming off a three-month absence from the tour because of an injured right elbow, so even her own expectations were rather modest.

Krejcikova was right to be apprehensive — and on Monday, she became only the third woman in the professional era to exit in the first round at Roland Garros a year after earning the trophy.

The second-seeded Krejcikova got off to a terrific start before everything fell apart in a 1-6, 6-2, 6-3 loss to Diane Parry, a 19-year-old from France who is ranked 97th and entered the day with a 1-5 career record in Grand Slam matches.

"It was difficult. I mean, I expected it's going to be difficult, and it was," said Krejcikova, who wiped away tears at her news conference. "I think overall, tennis-wise, it wasn't that bad. I think physically, it was a little worse."

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In 2021, she was unseeded in Paris, was participating in singles at a Grand Slam tournament for only the fifth time and previously had won only one tour-level singles title of any sort.

Krejčíková said her elbow was not the issue Monday.

Instead, it was the lack of recent match play that led to an inability to get to shots quickly enough, and she faded as she "hit the wall" and "just collapsed," in her words.

Parry received raucous backing from spectators shouting for her at Court Philippe Chatrier, where the noise echoed under the retractable roof pulled shut because of rain.

"It's a dream for me. It was always a dream to play on this court, with the French crowd to support me. They clearly pushed me to victory today," Parry said. "I'm the happiest person right now."

The partisan crowd booed Krejčíková after she took a lengthy break to head to the locker room and change clothes before the third set.

This was Krejčíková's first match since February and the rust showed.

The only other women to lose in the first round a year after winning the title at Roland Garros were Anastasia Myskina in 2005 and Jelena Ostapenko in 2018 — both of whom, like Krejčíková, had been surprising champions.

Since the professional era began in 1968, Krejčíková is just the seventh reigning women's champion to be bounced in the first round at all of the Grand Slam tournaments.

Against Parry, Krejčíková double-faulted on the match's very first point, and then looked every bit someone ready to display her best tennis. The next 15 points in a row went Krejčíková's way as she raced to a 4-0 lead.

"It's never easy to start on this kind of court against the defending champion," Parry said. "You can get a bit tight, which happened in the first set. But then I managed to relax."

Did she ever.

After Krejčíková wrapped up that opening set, things turned around as Parry played more confidently.

Krejčíková's mistakes mounted: By the end, she had accumulated 45 unforced errors, 19 in the third set alone. Parry finished with 26 in all.

"I have to start somewhere, so it's a pity that it had to be here, and I didn't have any other matches," Krejčíková said, "but I think it's good way to move forward."

Theories emerge for mysterious liver illnesses in children

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Health officials remain perplexed by mysterious cases of severe liver damage in hundreds of young children around the world.

The best available evidence points to a fairly common stomach bug that isn't known to cause liver problems in otherwise healthy kids. That virus was detected in the the blood of stricken children but — oddly — it has not been found in their diseased livers.

"There's a lot of things that don't make sense," said Eric Kremer, a virus researcher at the Institute of Molecular Genetics of Montpellier, in France.

As health officials in more than a dozen countries look into the mystery, they are asking:

— Has there been some surge in the stomach bug — called adenovirus 41 — that is causing more cases of a previously undetected problem?

— Are children more susceptible due to pandemic-related lockdowns that sheltered them from the viruses kids usually experience?

— Is there some mutated version of the adenovirus causing this? Or some other not-yet-identified germ, drug or toxin?

— Is it some kind of haywire immune system reaction set off by a past COVID-19 infection and a later invasion by some other virus?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and investigators around the globe are trying to sort out what's going on.

The illnesses are considered rare. CDC officials last week said they are now looking into 180 possible

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cases across the U.S. Most of the children were hospitalized, at least 15 required liver transplants and six died.

More than 20 other countries have reported hundreds more cases in total, though the largest numbers have been in the U.K. and U.S.

Symptoms of hepatitis — or inflammation of the liver — include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, light-colored stools, joint pain and jaundice.

The scope of the problem only started to become clear last month, though disease detectives say they have been working on the mystery for months. It's been maddeningly difficult to nail a cause down, experts say.

Conventional causes of liver inflammation in otherwise healthy kids — the viruses known as hepatitis A, B, C, D and E — didn't show up in tests. What's more, the children came from different places and there seemed to be no common exposures.

What did show up was adenovirus 41. More than half of the U.S. cases have tested positive for adenovirus, of which there are dozens of varieties. In a small number of specimens tested to see what kind of adenovirus was present, adenovirus 41 came up every time.

The fact that adenovirus keeps showing up strengthens the case for it playing a role, but it's unclear how, Dr. Jay Butler, the CDC's deputy director for infectious diseases, told The Associated Press.

Many adenoviruses are associated with common cold symptoms, such as fever, sore throat and pink eye. Some versions — including adenovirus 41 — can trigger other problems, including inflammation in the stomach and intestines. Adenoviruses previously have been linked to hepatitis in children, but mostly in kids with weakened immune systems.

Recent genetic analysis has turned up no evidence that a single new mutant version of the virus is to blame, said Dr. Umesh Parashar, chief of the CDC group focused on viral gut diseases.

Adenovirus infections are not systematically tracked in the U.S., so it's not clear if there's been some recent surge in virus activity. In fact, adenoviruses are so common that researchers aren't sure what to make of their presence in these cases.

"If we start testing everybody for the adenovirus, they will find so many kids" that have it, said Dr. Heli Bhatt, a pediatric gastroenterologist who treated two Minnesota children with the liver problems.

One was a child who came in nearly five months ago with liver failure. Doctors couldn't figure why. Unfortunately, "not having a cause is something that happens," Bhatt said. Roughly a third of acute liver failure cases go unexplained, experts have estimated.

Bhatt said the second child she saw got sick last month. By that time, health officials had been drawing attention to cases, and she and other doctors began going back and reviewing unexplained illnesses since October.

Indeed, many cases added to the tally in the last few weeks were not recent illnesses but rather earlier ones that were re-evaluated. About 10% of the U.S. cases occurred in May, Butler said. The rate seems to be relatively flat since the fall, he added.

It's possible that doctors are merely discovering a phenomenon that's been going on for years, some scientists said.

COVID-19 vaccination has been ruled out because "the vast majority of these children are unvaccinated," Butler explained.

But past infection with the coronavirus itself might be factor, scientists say.

The CDC recently estimated that, as of February, 75% of U.S. children had been infected.

Only 10% to 15% of the children with the mysterious hepatitis had COVID-19, according to nasal swab tests given when they checked into a hospital, health officials say.

But investigators are wondering about previous coronavirus infections. It's possible that coronavirus particles lurking in the gut are playing a role, said Petter Brodin, a pediatric immunologist at Imperial College London.

In a piece earlier this month in the medical journal *Lancet*, Brodin and another scientist suggested that a combination of lingering coronavirus and an adenovirus infection could trigger a liver-damaging immune

system reaction.

"I think it's an unfortunate combination of circumstances that could explain this," Brodin told the AP.

Butler said researchers have seen complex reactions like that before, and investigators are discussing ways to better check out the hypothesis.

He said it was "not out of the realm of plausibility, at all."

A Case Western Reserve University preprint study, which has yet to be peer reviewed, suggested children who had COVID-19 had a significantly higher risk of liver damage.

Dr. Markus Buchfellner, a pediatric infectious diseases doctor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, was involved in the identification of the first U.S. cases in the fall.

The illnesses were "weird" and concerning, he said. Six months later, "we don't really know exactly what we're dealing with."

Report: Top Southern Baptists stonewalled sex abuse victims

By DEEPA BHARATH, HOLLY MEYER and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

The Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee — and thousands of its rank-and-file members — now have opportunities to address a scathing investigative report that says top SBC leaders stonewalled and denigrated survivors of clergy sex abuse over two decades while seeking to protect their own reputations.

The report, issued Sunday, says these survivors, and other concerned Southern Baptists, repeatedly shared allegations with the Executive Committee, "only to be met, time and time again, with resistance, stonewalling, and even outright hostility from some within the EC."

The seven-month investigation was conducted by Guidepost Solutions, an independent firm contracted by the Executive Committee after delegates to last year's national meeting pressed for a probe by outsiders.

Since then, several top Executive Committee leaders have resigned, and the body — under interim leadership — will meet Tuesday to discuss the report. Three weeks later, the SBC will convene its 2022 national meeting in Anaheim, California, and the report will be discussed there as well.

"Our investigation revealed that, for many years, a few senior EC leaders, along with outside counsel, largely controlled the EC's response to these reports of abuse ... and were singularly focused on avoiding liability for the SBC," the report said.

"In service of this goal, survivors and others who reported abuse were ignored, disbelieved, or met with the constant refrain that the SBC could take no action due to its polity regarding church autonomy — even if it meant that convicted molesters continued in ministry with no notice or warning to their current church or congregation," the report added.

The report asserts that an Executive Committee staffer maintained a list of Baptist ministers accused of abuse, but there is no indication anyone "took any action to ensure that the accused ministers were no longer in positions of power at SBC churches."

The most recent list includes the names of hundreds of abusers thought to be affiliated at some point with the SBC. Survivors and advocates have long called for a public database of abusers.

SBC President Ed Litton, in a statement Sunday, said he is "grieved to my core" for the victims and thanked God for their work propelling the SBC to this moment. He called on Southern Baptists to lament and prepare to change the denomination's culture and implement reforms.

"I pray Southern Baptists will begin preparing today to take deliberate action to address these failures and chart a new course when we meet together in Anaheim," Litton said.

Among the report's key recommendations:

— Form an independent commission and later establish a permanent administrative entity to oversee comprehensive long-term reforms concerning sexual abuse and related misconduct within the SBC.

— Create and maintain an Offender Information System to alert the community to known offenders.

— Provide a comprehensive Resource Toolbox including protocols, training, education, and practical information.

— Restrict the use of nondisclosure agreements and civil settlements which bind survivors to confiden-

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tiality in sexual abuse matters, unless requested by the survivor.

The interim leaders of the Executive Committee, Willie McLaurin and Rolland Slade, welcomed the recommendations, and pledged an all-out effort to eliminate sex abuse within the SBC.

"We recognize there are no shortcuts," they said. "We must all meet this challenge through prudent and prayerful application, and we must do so with Christ-like compassion."

The sex abuse scandal was thrust into the spotlight in 2019 by a landmark report from the Houston Chronicle and San Antonio Express-News documenting hundreds of cases in Southern Baptist churches, including several in which alleged perpetrators remained in ministry.

Last year, thousands of delegates at the national SBC gathering made clear they did not want the Executive Committee to oversee an investigation of its own actions. Instead they voted overwhelmingly to create the task force charged with overseeing the third-party review. Litton, pastor of Redemption Church in Saraland, Alabama, appointed the panel.

The task force had a week to review the report before it was publicly released. The task force's recommendations based on Guidepost's findings will be presented at the SBC's meeting in Anaheim.

The report offers shocking details on how Johnny Hunt, a Georgia-based pastor and past SBC president, sexually assaulted another pastor's wife during a beach vacation in 2010. In an interview with investigators, Hunt denied any physical contact with the woman, but did admit he had interactions with her.

On May 13, Hunt, who was the senior vice president of evangelism and leadership at the North American Mission Board, the SBC's domestic missions agency, resigned from that post, said Kevin Ezell, the organization's president and CEO. Ezell said, before May 13, he was "not aware of any alleged misconduct" on Hunt's part.

The report details a meeting Hunt arranged a few days after the alleged assault between the woman, her husband, Hunt and a counseling pastor. According to the report, Hunt admitted to touching the victim inappropriately, but said "thank God I didn't consummate the relationship."

In a statement Sunday, Hunt disputed the report.

"I vigorously deny the circumstances and characterizations set forth in the Guidepost report," he said. "I have never abused anybody."

Among those reacting strongly to the Guidepost report was Russell Moore, who formerly headed the SBC's public policy wing but left the denomination after accusing top Executive Committee leaders of stalling efforts to address the sex abuse crisis.

"Crisis is too small a word. It is an apocalypse," Moore wrote for Christianity Today after reading the report. "As dark a view as I had of the SBC Executive Committee, the investigation uncovers a reality far more evil and systemic than I imagined it could be."

According to the report, Guidepost's investigators, who spoke with survivors of varying ages including children, said the survivors were equally traumatized by the way in which churches responded to their reports of sexual abuse.

Survivors "spoke of trauma from the initial abuse, but also told us of the debilitating effects that come from the response of the churches and institutions like the SBC that did not believe them, ignored them, mistreated them, and failed to help them," the report said.

It cited the case of Dave Pittman, who from 2006 to 2011 made phone calls and sent letters and emails to the SBC and Georgia Baptist Convention Board reporting that he had been abused by Frankie Wiley, a youth pastor at Rehoboth Baptist Church when he was 12 to 15 years old.

Pittman and several others have come forward publicly to report that Wiley molested and raped them and Wiley has admitted to abusing "numerous victims" at several Georgia Southern Baptist churches.

According to the report, a Georgia Baptist Convention official told Pittman that the churches were autonomous and there was nothing he could do but pray.

The report also tells the story of Christa Brown, who says she was sexually abused as a teen by the youth and education minister at her SBC church.

When she disclosed the abuse to the music minister after months of abuse, she was told not to talk about it, according to the report, which said her abuser also went on to serve in Southern Baptist churches

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in multiple states.

Brown, who has been one of the most outspoken survivors, told investigators that during the past 15 years she has received "volumes of hate mail, awful blog comments, and vitriolic phone calls."

After reading through the report, Brown told The Associated Press that it "fundamentally confirms what Southern Baptist clergy sex abuse survivors have been saying for decades."

"I view this investigative report as a beginning, not an end. The work will continue," Brown said. "But no one should ever forget the human cost of what it has taken to even get the SBC to approach this starting line of beginning to deal with clergy sex abuse."

'Top Gun' and Tom Cruise return to the danger zone

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — In 1983, producer Jerry Bruckheimer was flipping through the May issue of California magazine when he was struck by a story. "Top Guns" read the headline, with a large photograph from inside the cockpit of an F-14 fighter jet. The story opened: "At Mach 2 and 40,000 feet over California, it's always high noon."

"I saw that cover and I said, 'We gotta do this. This looks great,'" recalls Bruckheimer. "It's 'Star Wars' on Earth."

And at the box office, "Top Gun" did nearly reach "Star Wars" proportions. It was the No. 1 film of 1986, a rocket-boosted, testosterone-fueled sensation that established the then 24-year-old Tom Cruise as a major star. It made Bomber jackets, Aviator sunglasses and playing homoerotic games of beach volleyball in jeans hip just as it did military service. In the jingoist Reagan-era '80s, "Top Gun" was about as American as it gets. The Navy set up recruitment tables in theaters. Enlistments soared.

If all of that — the go-go patriotism, a star-led blockbuster, magazines — sounds like a like time ago, it was. But almost four decades later, and after sitting on the shelf for two years due to the pandemic, "Top Gun: Maverick" is flying full throttle into a new world.

In the film, directed by Joseph Kosinski, there's a new mission to win and dogfights to wage. But this time, the task of "Top Gun" feels even weightier. It's here to, in a CGI, Marvel world, prove that a propulsive brand of moviemaking fueled by star power, practical effects and filmmaking prowess can, still, summon the need for speed.

"I wanted it to have that old-school experience," says Kosinski, director of "Tron: Legacy" and "Oblivion." "Just as Maverick is going back to Top Gun, I wanted to take the audience back to that type of filmmaking."

Paramount Pictures, which held off on pushing "Top Gun: Maverick" to streaming, has put a military-grade push behind the sequel. After kicking off aboard the USS Midway aircraft carrier in San Diego (where Cruise arrived by helicopter) a worldwide promotional tour has included stops at the Cannes Film Festival (where Cruise received an honorary Palme d'Or) and a royal premiere in London. The film, finally, opens in theaters Friday.

But where countless decades-later sequels have crashed and burned, "Top Gun: Maverick" may be a retro-blockbuster that succeeds — and maybe even rivals the original. The film has certain advantages, most notably the seemingly agelessness of its 59-year-old star.

But "Top Gun: Maverick," in which a middle-aged Maverick returns to the elite aviation training program to train a new generation of flying aces (among them Goose's hot-head son Rooster, played by Miles Teller), is an action adventure that recaptures a high-flying moviemaking style with modern-day technology. With visceral aerial scenes filmed inside the cockpit and a surprisingly emotional storyline soaked through with memory and loss, "Top Gun: Maverick" rekindles a daredevil spirit for digital times.

Early in the film, a skeptical general played by Ed Harris tells Maverick his kind is headed for extinction, a relic soon to be replaced by automation. Maverick replies, with a smirk, "Not today."

"In the film, he's talking about him as an aviator. But watching it last week, it did feel like Tom Cruise is talking about the movie business," says Kosinski. "In the age of streaming, he's still making a really, really strong case for the theatrical experience."

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But does a new "Top Gun" fit as seamlessly into today as the original did the Reagan '80s? The original "Top Gun" wasn't a hit with critics. Pauline Kael called it a "shiny homoerotic commercial," a thread that Quentin Tarantino picked in 1994's "Sleep With Me" when he, as an actor, called it "a story about a man's struggle with his own homosexuality."

Others saw a Pentagon-backed recruitment film with pumped up patriotism, and a portrait of American individualism set against a faceless, country-less enemy. Much of that is still present in "Maverick" — there's no shortage of disobeyed orders and the bad guys remain a blank slate. But Kosinski approached the film as foremost about the close-knit culture of aviators.

"I do feel like the theme of the first film is not really about politics. It really is about friendship, camaraderie, competition, sacrifice," says Kosinski. "That's what we wanted to do on this film very purposefully. We designed a fictional antagonist. The mission itself is one about keeping the world safe. It's not about invasion. It's really about the relationship between Maverick and Rooster."

In 2012, momentum was starting to gather for a sequel. The original film's director, Tony Scott, was meeting with Bruckheimer at the Naval Fighter Weapons School known as Top Gun in Nevada. Scott killed himself days later.

"We certainly were doubtful that it was going to happen," says Bruckheimer. "But we still had interest in trying to get the movie made."

Bruckheimer brought in Kosinski, who had directed Cruise in the sleek 2013 science-fiction adventure "Oblivion." Knowing from that experience what Cruise would respond to, Kosinski focused his pitch to the actor on character and emotion. He and Bruckheimer flew to Paris to meet with Cruise while he was shooting a "Mission: Impossible" film. The director, who came with a poster adorned with the title "Top Gun: Maverick," had 20 minutes to make his case.

"At the end of that meeting, Tom stood and he walked over to the phone and he called the head of the studio and said, 'We're making this film,'" says Kosinski. "I mean, that's a real movie star who can greenlight a movie with a phone call."

Cruise had a few stipulations. One was that Val Kilmer, who has difficulty speaking after throat cancer and numerous trachea surgeries, return to play Iceman. (The actor appears briefly but poignantly.) Another was that all the actors playing pilots be trained to ride in F-16s and withstand higher G-forces. On the original, only Cruise managed it.

"Tom devised a way to train the actors. In the first one, when they put them up in the air with one camera in the cockpit, everybody threw up. We had no usable footage. Their eyes were rolling back in their heads," says Bruckheimer. "Tom said, 'Listen, we have to figure out a way to put our actors up there so they can handle the G-forces.'"

It took 15 months, Bruckheimer says, to work out with the Navy, lawyers and the film crew how to have six cameras in the cockpit. Actors playing pilots — Glen Powell, Monica Barbaro, Greg Tarzan Davis, Danny Ramirez, Lewis Pullman and Jay Ellis — were trained over three months to prepare for the velocity of F-18 flights.

"Some actors said, 'I won't do it. I'm afraid of flying.' So we lost some talented people who just couldn't commit to making the movie in the way we did it," Bruckheimer says. "The majority of the pilots that we worked with on this current movie said they joined the military because they joined the first 'Top Gun.'"

So "Top Gun" has already proved that it can have a lasting effect in the real world. "Top Gun: Maverick" is hoping to show that, when done well, big Bruckheimer-styled blockbusters can still outrace anything else in theaters, or at home.

"This film is looking to the future," says Kosinski. "Not only the past."

Biden launches Indo-Pacific trade deal, warns over inflation

By JOSH BOAK and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — President Joe Biden launched a new trade deal with 12 Indo-Pacific nations Monday aimed at strengthening their economies as he warned Americans worried about high inflation that it is

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"going to be a haul" before they feel relief. The president said he does not believe an economic recession is inevitable in the U.S.

Biden, speaking at a news conference after holding talks with Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, acknowledged the U.S. economy has "problems" but said they were "less consequential than the rest of the world has."

He added: "This is going to be a haul. This is going to take some time." In answer to a question, he rejected the idea a recession in the U.S. is inevitable.

His comments came just before Biden's launch of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. His administration says the trade deal is designed to signal U.S. dedication to the contested economic sphere and to address the need for stability in commerce after disruptions caused by the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Nations joining the U.S. in the pact are: Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Along with the United States, they represent 40% of world GDP.

The countries said in a joint statement that the pact will help them collectively "prepare our economies for the future" after the fallout from the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Biden and Kishida were joined for the launch event by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while representatives from the other countries appeared by video. Modi was in Tokyo for Tuesday's meeting of the Quad, a four-country security group that also includes the U.S., Japan and Australia.

The White House said the framework will help the United States and Asian economies work more closely on issues including supply chains, digital trade, clean energy, worker protections and anticorruption efforts. The details still need to be negotiated among the member countries, making it difficult for the administration to say how this agreement would fulfill the promise of helping U.S. workers and businesses while also meeting global needs.

Critics say the framework has gaping shortcomings. It doesn't offer incentives to prospective partners by lowering tariffs or provide signatories with greater access to U.S. markets. Those limitations may not make the U.S. framework an attractive alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which moved forward without the U.S. after former President Donald Trump pulled out. China, the largest trading partner for many in the region, is also seeking to join TPP.

"I think a lot of partners are going to look at that list and say: 'That's a good list of issues. I'm happy to be involved,'" said Matthew Goodman, a former director for international economics on the National Security Council during President Barack Obama's administration. But he said they also may ask, "Are we going to get any tangible benefits out of participating in this framework?"

Kishida hosted a formal state welcome for Biden at Akasaka Palace, including a white-clad military honor guard and band in the front plaza. Reviewing the assembled troops, Biden placed his hand over his heart as he passed the American flag and bowed slightly as he passed the Japanese standard.

The Japanese premier took office last fall and is looking to strengthen ties with the U.S. and build a personal relationship with Biden. The two leaders ended their day with dinner at Kochuan, an iconic Tokyo restaurant on the grounds of a Japanese garden.

Kishida said at their meeting that he was "absolutely delighted" to welcome Biden to Tokyo on the first Asia trip of his presidency. Along with Biden, he drove a tough line against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, saying the aggression "undermines the foundation of global order."

Biden, who is in the midst of a five-day visit to South Korea and Japan, called the U.S.-Japanese alliance a "cornerstone of peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific" and thanked Japan for its "strong leadership" in standing up to Russia.

Kishida welcomed the new Biden trade pact but said he still hoped the president would reconsider the United States' position and return it to the Trans-Pacific pact that Trump withdrew from.

"We think it's desirable for the United States to return to the TPP," he said.

The new pact comes at a moment when the administration believes it has the edge in its competition

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with Beijing. Bloomberg Economics published a report last week projecting U.S. GDP growth at about 2.8% in 2022 compared to 2% for China, which has been trying to contain the coronavirus through strict lockdowns while also dealing with a property bust. The slowdown has undermined assumptions that China would automatically supplant the U.S. as the world's leading economy.

"The fact that the United States will grow faster than China this year, for the first time since 1976, is a quite striking example of how countries in this region should be looking at the question of trends and trajectories," said White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan.

The two leaders also met with families of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea decades ago. The White House said Biden "expressed his deepest condolences for their suffering, and called on North Korea to right this historic wrong and provide a full accounting of the 12 Japanese nationals who remain missing."

The launch of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, also known as IPEF, has been billed by the White House as one of the bigger moments of Biden's Asia trip and of his ongoing effort to bolster ties with Pacific allies. Through it all, administration officials have kept a close eye on China's growing economic and military might in the region.

In September the U.S. announced a new partnership with Australia and Britain called AUKUS that is aimed at deepening security, diplomatic and defense cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The U.S. president has also devoted great attention to the informal alliance known as the Quad, formed during the response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that killed some 230,000 people. Biden and fellow leaders from the alliance are set to gather Tuesday in Tokyo for their second in-person meeting in less than a year.

And earlier this month, Biden gathered representatives from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Washington for a summit.

Taiwan — which had sought membership in the IPEF framework— isn't among the governments that will be included. Participation of the self-ruled island of Taiwan, which China claims as its own, would have irked Beijing.

Sullivan said the U.S. wants to deepen its economic partnership with Taiwan, including on high technology issues and semiconductor supply on a one-to-one basis.

Biden also issued a stern warning to China over Taiwan, saying the U.S. would respond militarily if China were to invade the self-ruled island. "That's the commitment we made," Biden said.

The U.S. recognizes Beijing as the one government of China and doesn't have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. However, it maintains unofficial contacts with Taiwan, including a de facto embassy in Taipei, the capital, and supplies military equipment to the island for its defense.

Biden's comments drew a sharp response from China, which has claimed Taiwan to be a rogue province. A White House official said Biden's comments did not reflect a policy shift.

Today in History: May 24, first major league night game

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, May 24, the 144th day of 2022. There are 221 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 24, 1844, Samuel F.B. Morse transmitted the message "What hath God wrought" from Washington to Baltimore as he formally opened America's first telegraph line.

On this date:

In 1935, the first major league baseball game to be played at night took place at Cincinnati's Crosley Field as the Reds beat the Philadelphia Phillies, 2-1.

In 1937, in a set of rulings, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Social Security Act of 1935.

In 1941, the German battleship Bismarck sank the British battle cruiser HMS Hood in the North Atlantic, killing all but three of the 1,418 men on board.

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In 1961, a group of Freedom Riders was arrested after arriving at a bus terminal in Jackson, Mississippi, charged with breaching the peace for entering white-designated areas. (They ended up serving 60 days in jail.)

In 1962, astronaut Scott Carpenter became the second American to orbit the Earth as he flew aboard Aurora 7.

In 1974, American jazz composer and bandleader Duke Ellington, 75, died in New York.

In 1976, Britain and France opened trans-Atlantic Concorde supersonic transport service to Washington.

In 1980, Iran rejected a call by the World Court in The Hague to release the American hostages.

In 1994, four Islamic fundamentalists convicted of bombing New York's World Trade Center in 1993 were each sentenced to 240 years in prison.

In 1995, former British Prime Minister Harold Wilson died in London at age 79.

In 2006, "An Inconvenient Truth," a documentary about former Vice President Al Gore's campaign against global warming, went into limited release.

In 2011, Oprah Winfrey taped the final episode of her long-running talk show.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama doubled down on criticism of rival Mitt Romney's background as a venture capitalist, telling a rally at the Iowa State Fairgrounds there might be value in such experience but "not in the White House." Brian Banks, a former high school football star whose dreams of a pro career were shattered by what turned out to be a false rape accusation, burst into tears as a judge in Long Beach, California, threw out the charge that had sent Banks to prison for more than five years.

Five years ago: Setting past differences and rude comments aside, President Donald Trump and Pope Francis put a determinedly positive face on their first meeting at the Vatican. Ariana Grande suspended her Dangerous Woman world tour and canceled several European shows due to the deadly bombing at her concert in Manchester, England, two days earlier.

One year ago: Tennessee became the latest state to ban teachers from talking about certain aspects of race and racism in public schools. Samuel E. Wright, who famously voiced "Sebastian the Crab" in Disney's "The Little Mermaid" and had an acting career spanning five decades, died at 72.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-comedian-impressionist Stanley Baxter is 96. Jazz musician Archie Shepp is 85. Comedian Tommy Chong is 84. Singer Bob Dylan is 81. Actor Gary Burghoff is 79. Singer Patti LaBelle is 78. Actor Priscilla Presley is 77. Country singer Mike Reid is 75. Actor Jim Broadbent is 73. Actor Alfred Molina is 69. Singer Rosanne Cash is 67. Actor Cliff Parisi is 62. Actor Kristin Scott Thomas is 62. Rock musician Vivian Trimble is 59. Actor John C. Reilly is 57. Actor Dana Ashbrook is 55. Actor Eric Close is 55. Actor Carl Payne is 53. Rock musician Rich Robinson is 53. Former MLB pitcher Bartolo Colon is 49. Actor Dash Mihok is 48. Actor Bryan Greenberg is 44. Actor Owen Benjamin is 42. Actor Billy L. Sullivan is 42. Actor-rapper Jerod Mixon (aka Big Tyme) is 41. Rock musician Cody Hanson (Hinder) is 40. Dancer-choreographer-singer Mark Ballas is 36. Country singer Billy Gilman is 34. Rapper/producer G-Eazy is 33. Actor Brianne Howey is 33. Actor Cayden Boyd is 28.