

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 1 of 93

## [1- Upcoming Events](#)

### [1- Ken's Help Wanted](#)

Part 2 of Senior Profiles

### [2- Jackson Cogley](#)

### [3- Jace Craig](#)

### [4- Ryder Daly](#)

### [5- Andrea Davidson](#)

### [6- Megan Fliehs](#)

### [7- Kelsie Frost](#)

### [8- Marcos Garcia](#)

### [9- Brayden Hansen](#)

### [10- Wyatt Hearnen](#)

### [11- Brooklyn Imrie](#)

### [12- Sarah Jacobs](#)

### [13- Rease Jandel](#)

### [14- Trey Johnson](#)

### [15- Groton Area Fourth Quarter Honor Roll](#)

### [16- Several named to LATI President's List](#)

### [16- State Track Meet begins Thursday](#)

### [16- Marzahn to compete in 200m Dash at State](#)

### [17- Flags at Half Mast](#)

### [18- Weather Pages](#)

### [22- Daily Devotional](#)

### [23- 2022 Community Events](#)

### [24- Subscription Form](#)

### [25- News from the Associated Press](#)

## 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

7:30 p.m.: Amateurs at Clark

**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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## Jackson Patrick Cogley

Son of Steve and Michele Cogley of Claremont.

**Brothers:** Ryland Strom-28, David Strom-27, Chance Strom-25, Quinn Cogley-12.

**Hobbies:** hunting, fishing, working out, hanging out with friends.

**School/Community activities:** football, baseball, track, basketball, soccer, golf, and FFA.

**Favorite high school memory:** Winning the Northeast Conference Championship in football my senior year.

**Future plans:**

Attend South Dakota State University majoring in Aviation Education Specialization.

**Awards:** SDSU yellow & Blue Scholarship, Jack-rabbit Journey Scholarship, South Dakota Freedom Scholarship, Samuli – Rix Scholarship



**Weber Landscaping**

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*Best of Luck! Congrats!*

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 3 of 93

## Jace Lon Craig

Son of Lon and Carmen Craig of Claremont.

**Brother:** Braden-23.

**Hobbies:** fixing up old pickups and driving them.

**School/community activities:** trap shooting, FFA, underwater basket weaving club.

**Favorite high school memory:** spending time in the shop with Mr. Donley and my classmates.

**Future plans:** attend Lake Area Tech for diesel technology.



## Allied Climate Professionals Heating & Cooling Installations & Services



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Kevin Nehls at **626-6522**



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 4 of 93

## Ryder James Daly

Son Doug and Kaye Daly and Darlyne Daly.

**Hobbies:** Rc racing, hunting, go kart racing.

**School/community activities:** trap shooting.

**Favorite high school memory:** graduating.

**Future plans:** Lake Area for ag business.

**Awards:** Columbia American Legion Auxiliary Scholarship, Robert Knickrehm Agricultural Scholarship, Howard Memorial Fund Scholarship



## Doug Abeln Seed Company

Call Doug at 605/380-0200

**Latham.**  
HI-TECH SEEDS

**BECK'S**

**ROB-SEE-CO**

## Andrea Linn Davidson

Daughter of Russel and Karla Davidson of Groton.

**Brothers and sisters:** Kris, Michaela, Alec, and Clarie.

**Hobbies:** hanging out with friends and family.

**School/Community Activities:** soccer and FCCLA.

**Favorite high school memory:** building floats for homecoming.

**Future plans:** Human services- Lake Area



**DACOTAH BANK**

**Dacotah Insurance**

## Megan Kathleen Fliehs

Daughter of Jarod and Kristie Fliehs of Groton.

**Sister and Brother:** Ashley Fliehs-20, Brevin Fliehs-15.

**Hobbies:** dancing, singing, spending time with family and friends, babysitting, going to the lake in the summer.

**School/community activities:** show choir, chamber choir, volleyball, marching band, cheerleading, dance team, flag corp, FCCLA, FBLA, FCA, St Elizabeth Ann Seton Youth Group, band.

**Favorite high school memory:** homecoming week senior year or going to state basketball to cheer.

**Future plans:** attend NDSU and major in Interior Design.

**Awards:** DAR Good Citizen Award, Columbia American Legion Auxiliary Scholarship, Groton Class of 1969 Scholarship, Groton Chamber of Commerce Scholarship, Tom & Barbra Paepke Fine Arts Scholarship, Stratford Community Theatre Scholarship, Lion's Scholarship



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

## Kelsie Marie Frost

Daughter of Jason and Britt Frost of Groton.

**Sister and Brother:** Hollie Frost-17 and Charlie Frost- 15.

**Hobbies:** I enjoy being at the lake and hanging out with my friends and family.

**School/community activities:** I was stats/team manager for the volleyball team. I am currently an FCCLA officer. I am also a part of the SEAS youth group.

**Favorite high school memory:** My favorite high school memory is all of us volleyball seniors going to state volleyball together.

**Future plans:**

I plan on attending Lake Area Tech and get a degree in business administration.

**Award:** FCCLA Service award, Knights of Columbus scholarship, Edna Bugner Scholarship



**Sponsored by Kari Goldade**

*Good Luck Kelsie!*

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 8 of 93

## Marcos A. Garcia

Son of Anthony Garcia and Melissa Garica of Groton.

**Brothers and Sister:** Nathalia-16, Anthony Garcia-13, and Micheal Garica-6.

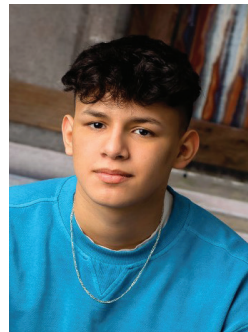
**Hobbies:** sports, hanging out with friends, and family time.

**School/community activities:** football.

**Favorite high school memory:** football NEC champions.

**Future plans:** Marine Corps.

**Awards:** United States Marine Post 9-11 Government Issued Bill. Montgomery GI Bill Military Tuition, Fees, book allowance & Living expenses.



Becky Kotzer, Owner

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# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 9 of 93

## Brayden Jack Hansen

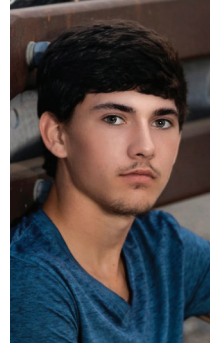
Son of Craig and Stacy Hansen of Aberdeen.

**Sisters:** Brooklyn and Kennedy Hansen-15.

**Hobbies:** hunting, hanging out with friends, fishing.

**School/community activities:** soccer.

**Future plans:** attend Lake Area Tech for Ag Business.



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## Wyatt John Hearnen

Son of Becky and Ryan Hearnen of Groton.

**Hobbies:** buying bitcoin, playing basketball, hanging out with friends, going to the lake, and going hunting.

**School/community activities:** I played on the Groton basketball team.

**Favorite high school memory:** going to state in basketball my senior year.

**Future plans:** Move to Colorado and join the workforce.



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Fertilizer

Joel Bierman  
397-4003



## Brooklyn Clara Imrie

Daughter of Mike and Dawn Imrie of Groton.

**Brother and sister:** Braxton Imrie-16 and Brenna Imrie-13.

**Hobbies:** dance, ice skating, and traveling.

**School/community activities:** ARCC dance, Carnival of Silver Skates and St. John's Lutheran Youth Group member.

**Favorite high school memory:** graduating.

**Future plans:** go to Century Technical School and major in human services.

**Awards:** Girls State representative, FCCLA Service Award



**JAMES VALLEY**  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS



[jamesvalley.com](http://jamesvalley.com)

## Sarah Noel Jacobs

Daughter of Debbie and Henry Jacobs of Groton.

**Brother:** Spencer Jacobs.

**Hobbies:** reading, drawing, singing, bike rides.

**School/community activities:** work for Brock Abeln.

**Favorite high school memory:** Freshman year, the only year my brother was in band with me.

**Future plans:** Live my life.



## Doug Abeln Seed Company

Call Doug at 605/380-0200



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 13 of 93

## Rease Katheryn Jandel

Daughter of Heather and Cole Jandel of Bath.

**Sisters:** Kya-20, and Shea-16.

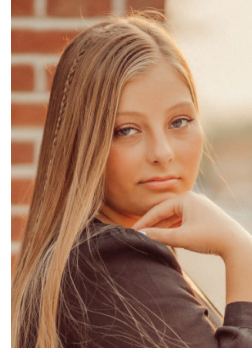
**Hobbies:** hanging out with friends and family, working-out, hanging out with Mr. Franken, and petting my ducks.

**School/community activities:** FCCLA, show choir.

**Favorite high school memory:** watering my plant in the greenhouse.

**Future plans: joining the Airforce.**

**Awards:** Post 9-11 Montgomery GI Bill, Tuition assistance, & automatic acceptance into community college of the Air Force.



	New Construction Remodeling Hoop Barns Shops	13379 Sperry Ln, Bath
	Perry Blocker	605/216-2677 prblocker@hotmail.com

*Congrats and Best Wishes!*

## Trey Matthew Johnson

Son of Matt and Tanya Johnson of Huffton.

**Brothers:** Peyton, Aeydon, and Deylon.

**Hobbies:** underwater basket weaving, snowmobiling, and hanging out with friends.

**School/community activities:** underwater basket weaving club.

**Favorite high school memory:** leaving school everyday.

**Future plans:** Lake Area Tech for Ag production.



## Doug Abeln Seed Company

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# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 15 of 93

## Groton Area Fourth Quarter Honor Roll

### Seniors

4.0 GPA: Madelin Flihs, Allyssa Locke, Alyssa Thaler, Trista Keith, Travis Townsend, Kennedy Anderson, Jordan Bjerke, Megan Flihs, Hannah Gustafson, Seth Johnson, Julianna Kosel, Kansas Kroll

3.99-3.50: Pierce Kettering, Kaden Kurtz, Jackson Cogley, Madisen Bjerke, Wyatt Hernen, Lane Krueger, Kelsie Frost, Landon Kokales, Kody Lehr, Ryder Daly, Brayden Hansen, Emilie Thurston, Jayden Zak

3.49-3.00: Jace Kroll, Riley Leicht, Favian Sanchez-Gonzalez, Michal Tabke, Trey Johnson, Evin Nehls, Cassandra Schultz, Trinity Smith

### Juniors

4.0 GPA: Jackson Dinger, Jacob Lewandowski, Ethan Clark, Elliana Weismantel, Brooke Gengerke, Caleb Hanten, Andrew Marzahn, Cole Simon

3.99-3.50: Cole Bisbee, Aspen Johnson, Gracie Traphagen, Kaleb Antonsen, Cade Larson, Cadance Tullis, Porter Johnson, Tate Larson, Shaylee Peterson

3.49-3.00: Carter Barse, Kaylynn Overacker, Ashtyn Bahr, Tannor McGannon, Shallyn Foertsch, Cameron Johnson, Sierra Ehresmann, Ethan Gengerke

### Sophomores

4.0 GPA: Emily Clark, Kyleigh Englund, Claire Heinrich, Lydia Meier, Hannah Monson, Ashlyn Sperry

3.99-3.50: Cadence Feist, Abigail Jensen, Camryn Kurtz, Jaycie Lier, Holden Sippel, Jackson Garstecki, Colby Dunker, Lexi Osterman, Sara Menzia, Bradin Althoff, Anna Fjeldheim, Faith Flihs, Sydney Leicht, Dillon Abeln

3.49-3.00: Carly Guthmiller, Bryson Wambach, Anna Bisbee, Shea Jandel, Emma Schinkel, Karsyn Jangula, Lane Tietz, Logan Ringgenberg

### Freshmen

4.0 GPA: Gretchen Dinger, Elizabeth Flihs, Payton Mitchell, Axel Warrington

3.99-3.50: Diego Eduardo Nava Remigio, Faith Traphagen, Corbin Weismantel, Blake Pauli, Brooklyn Hansen, Jeslyn Kosel, Emma Kutter, Laila Roberts, Kayla Lehr, Kaden Kampa, Easten Ekern, Aiden Heathcote, Kellen Antonsen, Brevin Flihs, Savannah Bible, Kianna Sander

3.49-3.00: Kennedy Hansen, Korbin Kucker, Rebecca Poor, Carter Simon, Karrah-Jo Johnson, Ashlyn Feser, Riley Carman, Blake Dennert, Emily Overacker, Teylor Diegel, Logan Pearson, Turner Thompson, Christian Ehresmann, Carson Herrick, Ashley Johnson, Kayleigh McGannon, Karlie McKane

### Eighth Graders

4.0 GPA: Carly Gilbert, Jaedyn Penning, Nathan Unzen, Talli Wright

3.99-3.50: Natalia Warrington, Mia Crank, Logan Warrington, Lucas Carda, Benjamin Hoefft, London Bahr, Raelee Lilly, Jerica Locke, De Eh Tha Say, Gage Sippel, Ryder Johnson, Karter Moody, Olivia Stiegelmeier, Cali Tollifson, Karsten Flihs, Keegen Tracy, Rylee Dunker

3.49-3.00: Lincoln Krause, Paisley Mitchell, Hannah Sandness, Cambria Bonn, Breslyn Jeschke, Garrett Schultz, Jayden Schwan

### Seventh Graders

4.0 GPA: Teagan Hanten, Ashlynn Warrington

3.99-3.50: Carlee Johnson, Brody Lord, McKenna Tietz, Liby Althoff, Halee Harder, Kira Clocksene, Colt Williamson, Emerlee Jones, Gavin Kroll, Aiden Strom, Leah Jones, Walker Zoellner

3.49-3.00: Addison Hoffman Wipf, Blake Lord, Claire Schuelke, Kella Tracy, Taryn Traphagen, Zander Harry, Hayden Zoellner, Avery Crank, Brenna Imrie, Hailey Pauli

### Sixth Graders

4.0 GPA: Makenna Krause, Thomas Schuster

3.99-3.50: Elizabeth Cole, Layne Johnson, Sydney Locke, Addison Hoefft, Easton Weber, Kyleigh Kroll, Taryn Thompson, Chesney Weber, Dee Eh June Say, Mya Feser, Rylie Rose, Ryelle Gilbert, Ryder Schelle, Wyatt Wambach, JoHanne Beauchamp, Brysen Sadness, Karson Zak

3.49-3.00: Aimee Heilman, Jace Johnson, John Bisbee, Rylen Ekern, Ethan Kroll, Journey Zieroth, Kinsley Rowen, Alex Abeln, Shaydon Wood

## Several named to LATI President's List

Paxton Bonn, Austin Anderson, Tiara DeHoet and Kale Pharis were named to the President's List at Lake Area Technical College. DeHoet achieved a 4.0 GPA.

The President's List is a record of outstanding students who, through their initiative and ability, have indicated a seriousness of purpose in their educational program. The President's List is limited to full-time students who have achieved a semester grade point average of 3.5 to 4.0.

## SDHSAA STATE TRACK MEET TO TAKE PLACE THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY

PIERRE – The 116th running of the SDHSAA State Track & Field Championship Meet will take on a new format this year with the meet being held over a three day period at one site. The entire track meet will be held at Howard Wood Field in Sioux Falls. May 24-26, 2022, beginning at 12:30 on Thursday.

All seven defending team champions will return squads to this year's event. (Class AA boys), Sioux Falls Lincoln, (Class AA girls) Brandon Valley & O'Gorman, (Class A Boys), Sioux Falls Christian, (Class A girls) West Central, (Class B boys) Hanson, and (Class B girls), Colman-Egan. Sioux Falls Lincoln's boys team will return to the state meet seeking their 6th straight Class AA boys' title.

Overall, a total of 2778 individual athletes from 141 South Dakota High School teams will be participating in this weekend's meet. A breakdown of athletes by class is as follows:

Class B: 469 Girls, 486 Boys – 955 Total Athletes  
Class A: 459 Girls, 494 Boys – 953 Total Athletes  
Class AA: 424 Girls, 446 Boys – 870 Total Athletes

Full Championship Meet information, including meet entries, records, event video and up-to-the minute results can be found online via South Dakota Public Broadcasting ([www.sdpb.org/track](http://www.sdpb.org/track)) or through the SDHSAA Website ([www.sdhsaa.com](http://www.sdhsaa.com)).

## Marzahn to compete in 200m Dash at State

Andrew Marzahn will be competing in the 200m Dash at the State Track Meet. He was originally listed as 28th place, just outside of the top 24. Coach Shaun Wanner said some athletes will not be running in the 200m Dash and that allowed for Marzahn to move up to the 24th spot.





## **Flags at Half-Staff in Honor of Victims of Shooting in Uvalde, TX**

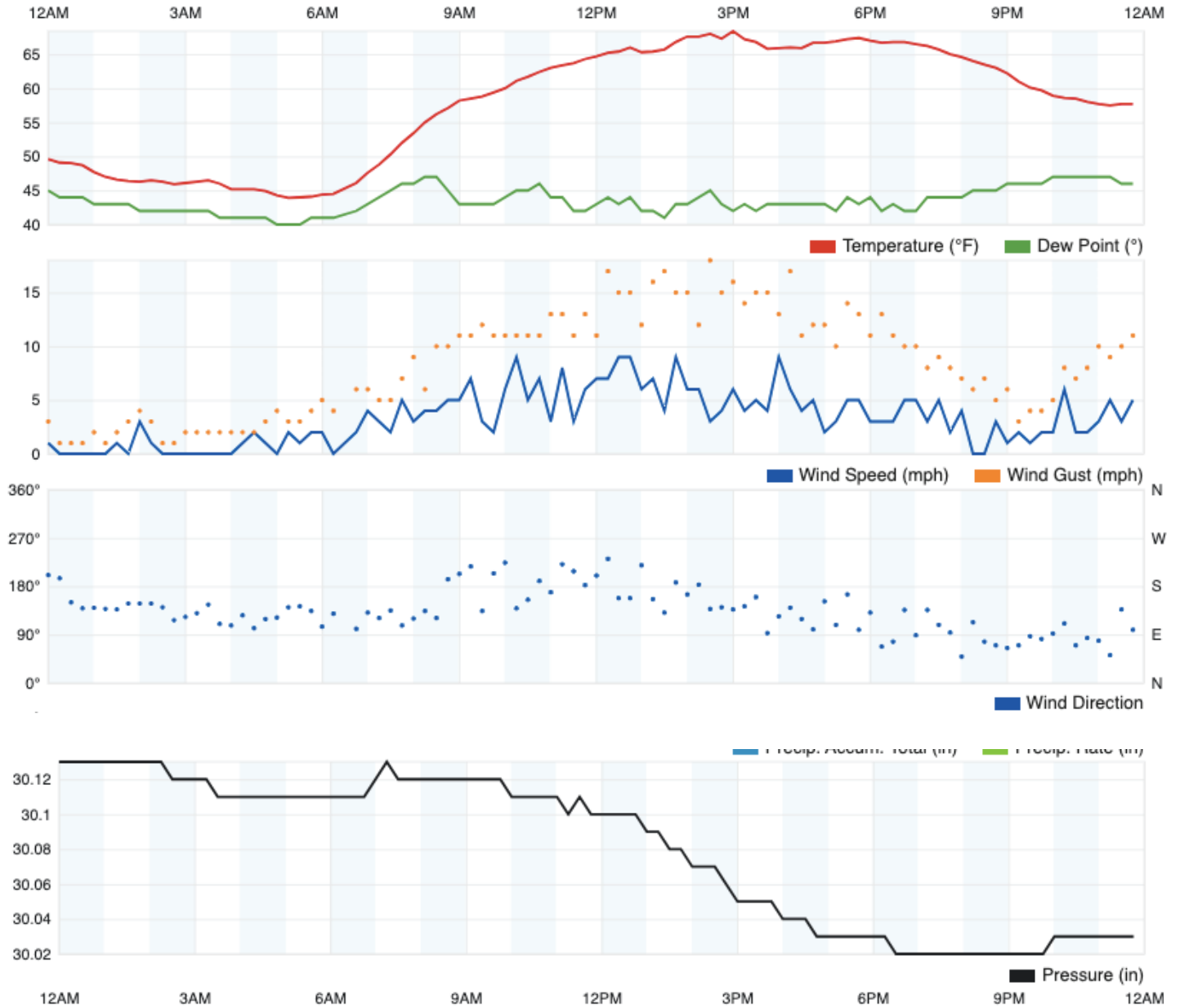
PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem ordered that flags be flown at half-staff statewide effective immediately until sunset on Saturday, May 28, 2022, in honor of the victims of the tragic shooting in Uvalde, TX.

“May our Heavenly Father comfort those in pain and sorrow. All South Dakotans stand with the people of Uvalde,” said Governor Kristi Noem.

# Groton Daily Independent






Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 18 of 93

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 19 of 93

Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
Decreasing Clouds	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 64 °F	Low: 41 °F	High: 74 °F	Low: 51 °F	High: 80 °F

## T-storm potential

Saturday and Sunday  
(Memorial Day Weekend)

### Overview

-A few thunderstorms may form either day, having the potential to strengthen to severe levels.

-The risk for severe weather is low at this time, and details are fuzzy at best, this far out in time.

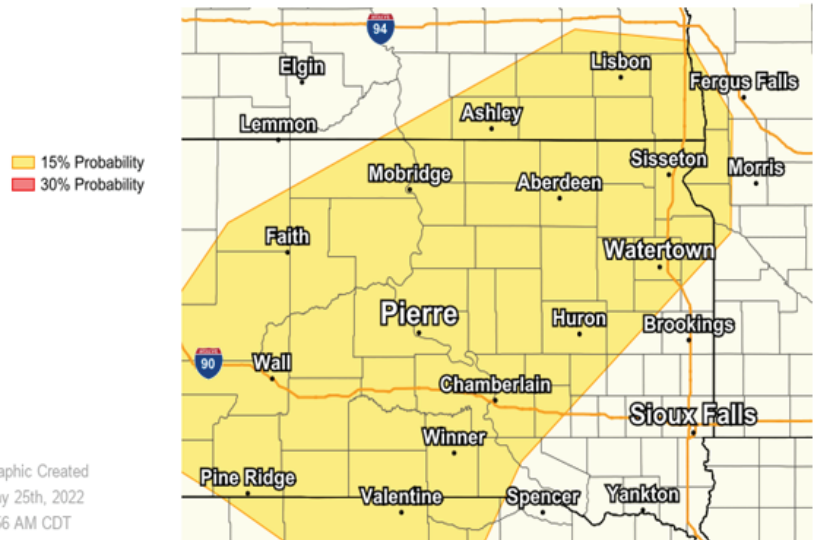
-Weekend plans should include some weather consideration

### Some Cities That Could Be At Risk

Mobridge, Pierre, Aberdeen, Sisseton, and Watertown.



## Saturday Severe Weather Outlook



Graphic Created  
May 25th, 2022  
4:56 AM CDT



ISSUED: 5:14 AM - Wednesday, May 25, 2022

The next chance for thunderstorms in the forecast appears to be over the upcoming holiday weekend, the unofficial start to summer. While it's too far out in time to start trying to nail down any sort of details on severe weather type, timing, location, now does seem like a good time to provide that initial heads up that there could be a few strong to perhaps severe thunderstorms around this weekend. So, keep that in mind as you start ramping up your weekend plans.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 20 of 93

## Today in Weather History

May 25, 1880: An estimated F2 tornado moved northeast through the town of Mitchell. Two men were killed when they ran out the back door of a saloon to reach the cellar entrance. The caulk stone saloon was destroyed along with two homes and several businesses. This tornado was one of the first significant tornadoes on record for the state of South Dakota.

May 25, 1985: During the afternoon hours, thunderstorms developed along the east side of the Black Hills. The storms produced quite a bit of lightning and over the course of 2 hours started 18 small fires in the Black Hills. Fortunately, most of the fires were small and quickly contained. One unfortunate firefighter was struck by lightning as he was helping to extinguish a blaze that burned some 50 acres of grassland and forest. Thankfully, the man lived, but he did suffer several broken bones, burns, and major damage to his ears. The strike was so powerful that a man standing over 150 feet away was dropped to his knees.

1896: An estimated F5 tornado hit Oakwood, Ortonville, and Thomas, Michigan. Forty-seven people were killed, and 100 were injured. Trees were debarked "even to the twigs, as though done by the careful hand of an experienced artisan." Parts of houses were found up to 12 miles away.

1917 - A tornado ripped through southeast Kansas, traveling 65 mph. The average speed was a record for any tornado. (The Weather Channel)

1955: An estimated F5 tornado moved north and NNW through the heart of Blackwell, Oklahoma. About 400 homes were destroyed, and many were leveled and swept away. About 500 other homes were damaged. The tornado dissipated just over the Kansas border, as the Udall, Kansas tornado was forming to the east. The Blackwell tornado was accompanied by unusual electrical activity, with up to 25 discharges per second recorded on sferics equipment. The funnel was said to glow and have "arcs" of glowing light. The Udall, Kansas tornado was estimated to be an F5 as well. Over half of the population of Udall was killed or injured as the tornado completely devastated a large portion of town. Seventy-five people were killed, and many of the 270 injuries were serious.

1975: On Raccoon Lake, Indiana, lightning struck the motor of a speedboat and traveled up the control wires, killing the driver. The 38-year-old man was knocked into the water by the bolt. His wife and two children, also in the boat, were not injured.

1987 - Thunderstorms spawned fifteen tornadoes in West Texas. One thunderstorm spawned a powerful tornado near Gruver, TX, along with golf ball size hail and 75 mph winds. A man on a boat on Lake Bistineau in northwest Louisiana was struck and killed by lightning, while the other three persons in the boat were unharmed. The man reportedly stood up in the boat and asked to be struck by lightning. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Unseasonably cool weather prevailed in the Upper Midwest. Marquette, MI, reported a record low of 26 degrees. Thunderstorms in the north central U.S. produced wind gusts to 62 mph at Idaho Falls, ID, and produced 4 inches of rain in less than four hours in northern Buffalo County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a strong cold front produced severe weather from Oklahoma to Ohio through the day and night. Thunderstorms spawned nine tornadoes, and there were 155 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Hail three and a half inches in diameter was reported at Dittmer, MO, and thunderstorm winds gusting to 90 MPH caused twenty million dollars damage at Rockville IN. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2008: A rare, large and destructive EF5 tornado created a 43-mile long path across Butler and Black Hawk counties in Iowa. This tornado killed eight people, injured dozens and caused several millions of dollars in damage. The tornado was nearly three-quarters of a mile wide as it moved through the southern end of Parkersburg. A third of the town was affected by devastating damage with nearly 200 homes destroyed. This storm produced the first EF5 tornado in Iowa since 6/13/1976 and only the third EF5 tornado to occur in the United States in the past ten years.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 21 of 93

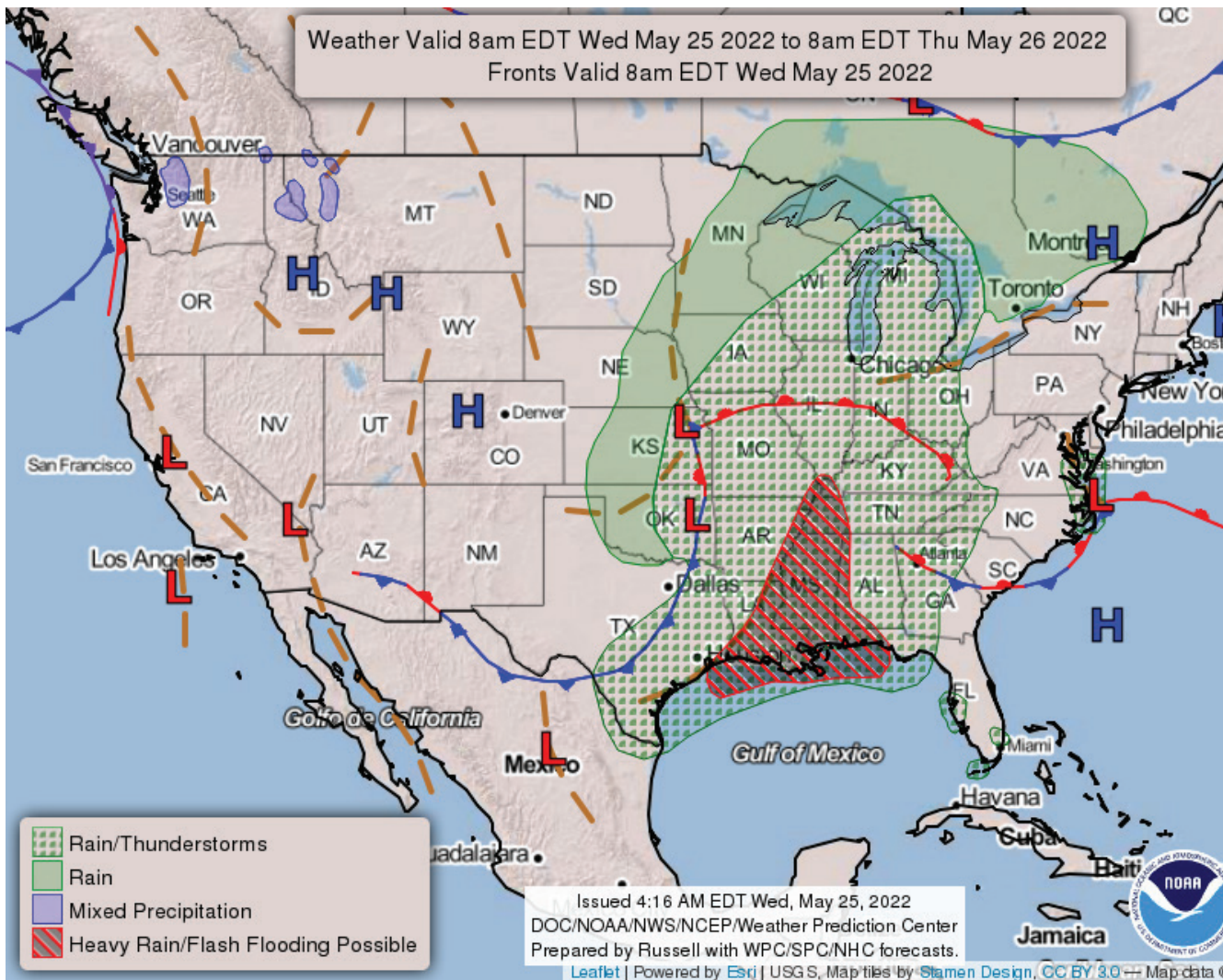
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 68.4 °F at 3:00 PM**  
**Low Temp: 43.9 °F at 5:15 AM**  
**Wind: 18 mph at 2:30 PM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

Day length: 15 hours, 18 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 94 in 2018  
Record Low: 29 in 1924  
Average High: 74°F  
Average Low: 48°F  
Average Precip in May.: 2.70  
Precip to date in May.: 2.48  
Average Precip to date: 6.67  
Precip Year to Date: 8.98  
Sunset Tonight: 9:08:43 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:49:13 AM



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 22 of 93



## **PRAISE, PRAISE AND MORE PRAISE**

Years ago, two masked thieves quietly entered a church as the pastor offered the invocation. Immediately after he said, "Amen," they shouted, "Everyone keep standing, raise your hands toward heaven and sing 'My Hope is Built on Christ Alone' as though your life depended on it. 'Cause it does."

With the worshipers' hands held high, the thieves were able to go through pockets and purses at a rapid pace. After they were finished and fled from the church, the minister of music said in a trembling voice, "I'm sure that God heard us sing that song of hope this morning as we've never sung it before!"

The hope that we have in and from God must always be in our hearts and on our lips. Unfortunately, when our days are trouble free and uncontested, we seem to forget the importance of hope, and the blessings that come with it. However, the hope we have in Him and because of Him should fill our hearts with praise for His grace at all times. Hear the words of the Psalmist: "Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life. I will sing praise to my God as long as I live!" Praise was as natural as breathing, and he did not need special days or favors to praise God. Every day was a day to praise God.

In good times or hard times, the Psalmist joyfully expressed his gratitude to God for everything. "All my life...as long as I live...I will praise Him!"

Good days or bad days, joyous days or painful days, "smiley face days" or tear-filled days: Praise Him!

Prayer: Help us, Father, to constantly raise our voices in grateful praise to You. In good and challenging times, we praise You for Your never-ending blessings! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life. I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. Psalm 146:2

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 23 of 93

## 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)

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 24 of 93

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

03-05-06-63-68, Mega Ball: 25, Megaplier: 3

(three, five, six, sixty-three, sixty-eight; Mega Ball: twenty-five; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$157,000,000

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: 135,000,000

### Planned Parenthood to step in if North Dakota clinic closes

By DAVE KOLPACK Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Planned Parenthood said Monday it will offer abortion services at its clinic in Moorhead, Minnesota, if North Dakota's only abortion clinic does not quickly relocate from Fargo should the U.S. Supreme Court overturn Roe v. Wade.

Planned Parenthood said it expected Red River Women's Clinic, a private clinic not affiliated with it, to make the short move across the river by July 1, if necessary.

"However, if that is not the case, Planned Parenthood will begin offering abortions at our Moorhead facility so that women in the region have no interruption in services," said Sarah Stoesz, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood North Central States.

The Red River Women's Clinic has long operated as the only abortion provider in the state. Owner Tammi Kromenaker has said she would cross over to Moorhead if forced to do so, but told The Associated Press in recent interviews that she has been too busy to explore details of such a move.

Kromenaker said Monday "there are too many unknowns to confirm a specific date" for relocation.

"We plan to continue to provide our unique and excellent brand of abortion care in the region and will work tirelessly to ensure there is no disruption in services," Kromenaker said. "We are here to stay."

A leaked draft opinion from the U.S. Supreme Court suggests that a majority of justices support overturning the 1973 Roe vs Wade decision legalizing abortion. Such a move would trigger a law in North Dakota making abortion illegal, giving Kromenaker 30 days to close.

The nearest clinics to the Fargo-Moorhead are both about 240 miles (386.24 kilometers) away, in Minneapolis and Sioux Falls, South Dakota, though the Sioux Falls clinic would also shut down if Roe v. Wade is overturned.

Moving to Moorhead, part of a metro area with Fargo that comprises about 250,000 people, likely would not be difficult for Kromenaker's clinic.

Brenda Huston, Moorhead's city planner and zoning administrator, said there's plenty of commercial and mixed-use space available in areas already zoned for medical facilities and a building permit for a new or remodeled abortion clinic would be a formality.

Moorhead Mayor Shelly Carlson all but endorsed the move.

"I cannot speak to the thoughts of Moorhead residents as a whole, but overall Moorhead is a welcoming community that embraces and respects diversity of thought," Carlson said. "We know that we all do not and will not think alike on every issue, but for the most part our citizens strive to exist as one community."

A spokesman for Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life declined to comment when asked whether the group would try to discourage or stop the move.

Kromenaker, 50, who began working at an abortion clinic while she was in college, was named director of the Red River facility when it opened in 1998 and bought the clinic in 2016. Patients come mostly from North Dakota, Minnesota and South Dakota.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 26 of 93

In an interview with AP last week, Kromenaker said she was unsure how she would fund relocation, though she said she would welcome donations.

In North Dakota, many donors seeking to support abortion access give to the nonprofit North Dakota WIN Abortion Access Fund, with the money intended to help pay for abortions, transportation and after-care, including tests and birth control prescriptions.

Destini Spaeth, the volunteer leader of the WIN Fund, said donations have quadrupled since the draft opinion was publicized. Spaeth said the WIN Fund has not done any fundraising for a new clinic but the group is open to that discussion.

Ken Koehler, of West Fargo, a regular protester outside the clinic in downtown Fargo, said if the clinic moves, he and his fellow demonstrators will follow it.

"I think we'll still be out," Koehler said.

## Lower Brule tribe sues Lyman County over redistricting plan

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe is suing Lyman County in federal court for delaying a redistricting plan that would ensure the timely election of tribal candidates to the County Commission.

The tribe says the delay prevents them from electing two commissioners in the upcoming election. Instead, the Lower Brule will have to wait until 2024 and 2026.

Lyman County has had an at-large election process since 1992. That means candidates running for the five commissioner seats can live anywhere within the county.

Lyman County contains part of the Lower Brule reservation and has a Native American population of 38%. With at-large elections, no Native American candidate has ever succeeded in winning a seat on the commission, South Dakota Public Broadcasting reported.

To avoid a lawsuit, Lyman County and Lower Brule agreed that the county must establish two commissioner positions chosen by Native American voters.

In October 2021, Lower Brule proposed five single-candidate districts, two of them with a Native American majority and three with a white majority. According to plaintiffs, that scheme was legal under existing South Dakota law.

But in February, the Lyman County Commission enacted an ordinance establishing just two voting districts, one white with three commissioners and one Native American with two commissioners. The commission also voted to delay the changes until after the next election, leaving the at-large system in place.

As a result, only one Native American commissioner could be elected in 2024, with the second one elected in 2026.

Lyman County has not yet filed a response to the lawsuit.

## Pine Ridge man guilty in shooting that caused paralysis

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A Pine Ridge man, accused in a shooting that left the victim partially paralyzed, has been found guilty of eight federal charges.

The U.S. Attorney's Office says 30-year-old Isaac Roubideaux was convicted of assault with a dangerous weapon, assault resulting in serious bodily injury and six other charges.

Roubideaux was indicted by a federal grand jury in December. The assault and firearms charges relate to Roubideaux shooting another man in the back on Nov. 18, 2021, resulting in the victim suffering permanent paralysis below his waistline.

The case was investigated by the Oglala Sioux Tribe Department of Public Safety Criminal Investigations Division, the U.S. Marshals Service, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives.

A presentence investigation was ordered. The defendant was turned over to the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service.

## Gunman kills 19 children, 2 adults in Texas school rampage

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 27 of 93

By ACACIA CORONADO and JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas (AP) — An 18-year-old gunman killed 19 children as he went from classroom to classroom at a Texas elementary school in a rampage that also left two adults dead, officials said, adding to a gruesome, yearslong series of mass killings at churches, schools and stores.

The attacker was killed by a Border Patrol agent who rushed into the school without waiting for backup, according to a law enforcement official.

Tuesday's assault at Robb Elementary School in the heavily Latino town of Uvalde was the deadliest shooting at a U.S. school since a gunman killed 20 children and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut, in December 2012.

Hours after the attack, families were still awaiting word on their children. At the town civic center where some gathered, the silence was broken repeatedly by screams and wailing. "No! Please, no!" one man yelled as he embraced another man.

"My heart is broken today," said Hal Harrell, the school district superintendent. "We're a small community, and we're going to need your prayers to get through this."

Gov. Greg Abbott said one of the two adults killed was a teacher.

Adolfo Cruz, a 69-year-old air conditioning repairman, was still outside the school as the sun set, seeking word on his 10-year-old great-granddaughter, Eliajha Cruz Torres.

He drove to the scene after receiving a terrifying call from his daughter shortly following the first reports of the shooting. He said other relatives were at the hospital and the civic center.

Waiting, he said, was the heaviest moment of his life.

"I hope she is alive," Cruz said.

The attack was the latest grim moment for a country scarred by a string of massacres, coming just 10 days after a deadly, racist rampage at a Buffalo, New York, supermarket. And the prospects for any reform of the nation's gun regulations seemed as dim, if not dimmer, than in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook deaths.

But President Joe Biden appeared ready for a fight, calling for new gun restrictions in an address to the nation hours after the attack.

"As a nation we have to ask, when in God's name are we going to stand up to the gun lobby? When in God's name are we going to do what has to be done?" Biden asked. "Why are we willing to live with this carnage?"

It was not immediately clear how many people in all were wounded, but the school district's police chief, Pete Arredondo, said there were "several injuries."

Staff members in scrubs and devastated victims' relatives could be seen weeping as they walked out of Uvalde Memorial Hospital, which said 13 children were taken there. Another hospital reported a 66-year-old woman was in critical condition.

Officials did not immediately reveal a motive, but they identified the assailant as Salvador Ramos, a resident of the community about 85 miles (135 kilometers) west of San Antonio. Law enforcement officials said he acted alone.

Uvalde, home to about 16,000 people, is about 75 miles (120 kilometers) from the border with Mexico. Robb Elementary, which has nearly 600 students in second, third and fourth grades, is in a mostly residential neighborhood of modest homes.

The attack came as the school was counting down to the last days of the school year with a series of themed days. Tuesday was to be "Footloose and Fancy," with students wearing nice outfits.

Ramos had hinted on social media that an attack could be coming, according to state Sen. Roland Gutierrez, who said he had been briefed by state police. He noted that the gunman "suggested the kids should watch out," and that he had bought two "assault weapons" after turning 18.

Before heading to the school, Ramos shot his grandmother, Gutierrez said.

Other officials said that the grandmother survived and was being treated, though her condition was not known.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 28 of 93

Investigators believe Ramos posted photos on Instagram of two guns he used in the shooting, and they were examining whether he made statements online in the hours before the assault, a law enforcement official said.

Law enforcement officers were serving multiple search warrants Tuesday night and gathering telephone and other records, the official said. Investigators were also attempting to contact Ramos' relatives and were tracing the firearms.

The official could not discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The attack began about 11:30 a.m., when the gunman crashed his car outside the school and ran into the building, according to Travis Considine, a spokesman for the Texas Department of Public Safety. A resident who heard the crash called 911, and two local police officers exchanged gunfire with the shooter.

Both officers were shot. It was not immediately clear where on the campus that confrontation occurred or how much time elapsed before more authorities arrived on the scene.

One Border Patrol agent who was working nearby when the shooting began rushed into the school without waiting for backup and shot and killed the gunman, who was behind a barricade, according to a law enforcement official speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk about it.

The agent was wounded but able to walk out of the school, the law enforcement official said.

Meanwhile, teams of Border Patrol agents raced to the school, including 10 to 15 members of a SWAT-like tactical and counterterrorism unit, said Jason Owens, a top regional official with the Border Patrol.

He said some area agents have children at Robb Elementary.

"It hit home for everybody," he said.

Condolences poured in from leaders around the world. Pope Francis pleaded that it was time say "enough" to the indiscriminate trade of weapons!" Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba of Ukraine, which is at war with Russia after Moscow invaded, said that his nation also knows "the pain of losing innocent young lives."

The tragedy in Uvalde was the deadliest school shooting in Texas history, and it added to a grim tally in the state, which has been the site of some of the deadliest shootings in the U.S. over the past five years.

In 2018, a gunman fatally shot 10 people at Santa Fe High School in the Houston area. A year before that, a gunman at a Texas church killed more than two dozen people during a Sunday service in the small town of Sutherland Springs. In 2019, another gunman at a Walmart in El Paso killed 23 people in a racist attack targeting Hispanics.

The shooting came days before the National Rifle Association annual convention was set to begin in Houston. Abbott and both of Texas' U.S. senators were among elected Republican officials who were the scheduled speakers at a Friday leadership forum sponsored by the NRA's lobbying arm.

In the years since Sandy Hook, the gun control debate in Congress has waxed and waned. Efforts by lawmakers to change U.S. gun policies in any significant way have consistently faced roadblocks from Republicans and the influence of outside groups such as the NRA.

A year after Sandy Hook, Sens. Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat, and Patrick J. Toomey, a Pennsylvania Republican, negotiated a bipartisan proposal to expand the nation's background check system. But the measure failed in a Senate vote, without enough support to clear a 60-vote filibuster hurdle.

Last year, the House passed two bills to expand background checks on firearms purchases. One bill would have closed a loophole for private and online sales. The other would have extended the background check review period. Both languished in the 50-50 Senate, where Democrats need at least 10 Republican votes to overcome objections from a filibuster.

## Biden says 'we have to act' after Texas school shooting

By ZEKE MILLER and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lamenting a uniquely American tragedy, an anguished and angry President Joe Biden delivered an urgent call for new restrictions on firearms after a gunman shot and killed at least 19 children at a Texas elementary school.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 29 of 93

Biden spoke Tuesday night from the White House barely an hour after returning from a five-day trip to Asia that was bracketed by mass shootings in the U.S. He pleaded for action to address gun violence after years of failure — and bitterly blamed firearm manufacturers and their supporters for blocking legislation in Washington.

“When in God’s name are we going to stand up to the gun lobby?” Biden said with emotion. “Why are we willing to live with this carnage? Why do we keep letting this happen?”

With first lady Jill Biden standing by his side in the Roosevelt Room, the president, who has suffered the loss of two of his own children — though not to gun violence — spoke in visceral terms about the grief of the loved ones of the victims and the pain that will endure for the students who survived.

“To lose a child is like having a piece of your soul ripped away,” Biden said. “There’s a hollowness in your chest. You feel like you’re being sucked into it and never going to be able to get out.”

He called on the nation to hold the victims and families in prayer — but also to work harder to prevent the next tragedy, “It’s time we turned this pain into action,” he said.

At least 19 students were killed at Robb Elementary School in the heavily Latino town of Uvalde, Texas, according to local officials. The death toll also included two adults. The gunman died after being shot by responding officers, local police said.

It was just a week earlier that Biden, on the eve of his overseas trip, traveled to Buffalo to meet with victims’ families after a racist, hate-filled shooter killed 10 Black people at a grocery store in Buffalo, New York.

The back-to-back tragedies served as sobering reminders of the frequency and brutality of an American epidemic of mass gun violence.

“These kinds of mass shootings rarely happen anywhere else in the world,” Biden said, reflecting that other nations have people filled with hate or with mental health issues but no other industrialized nation experiences gun violence at the level of the U.S.

“Why?” he asked.

It was much too early to tell if the latest violent outbreak could break the political logjam around tightening the nation’s gun laws, after so many others — including the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut that killed 26, including 20 children — have failed.

“The idea that an 18-year-old kid can walk into a gun store and buy two assault weapons is just wrong,” Biden said. He has previously called for a ban on assault-style weapons, as well as tougher federal background check requirements and “red flag” laws that are meant to keep guns out of the hands of those with mental health problems.

Late Tuesday, Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer set in motion possible action on two House-passed bills to expand federally required background checks for gun purchases, but no votes have been scheduled.

Biden was somber when he returned to the White House, having been briefed on the shooting on Air Force One. Shortly before landing in Washington, he spoke with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and offered “any and all assistance” needed, the White House said. He directed that American flags be flown at half-staff through sunset Saturday in honor of the victims in Texas.

His aides, some of whom had just returned from Asia with the president, gathered to watch Biden’s speech on televisions in the West Wing.

“I’d hoped when I became president I would not have to do this, again,” he said. “Another massacre.”

In a stark reminder of the issue’s divisiveness, Biden’s call for gun measures was booed at a campaign event in Georgia hosted by Herschel Walker, who won the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate.

Speaking at an Asian Pacific American event that was intended to celebrate Biden’s Asia trip, Vice President Kamala Harris said earlier that people normally declare in moments like this, “our hearts break — but our hearts keep getting broken ... and our broken hearts are nothing compared to the broken hearts of those families.”

“We have to have the courage to take action ... to ensure something like this never happens again,” she

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 30 of 93

said.

Echoing Biden's call, former President Barack Obama, who has called the day of the Sandy Hook shooting the darkest of his administration, said, "It's long past time for action, any kind of action."

"Michelle and I grieve with the families in Uvalde, who are experiencing pain no one should have to bear," he said in a statement. "We're also angry for them. Nearly ten years after Sandy Hook—and ten days after Buffalo—our country is paralyzed, not by fear, but by a gun lobby and a political party that have shown no willingness to act in any way that might help prevent these tragedies."

Congress has been unable to pass substantial gun violence legislation ever since the bipartisan effort to strengthen background checks on firearm purchases collapsed in the aftermath of the 2012 shooting.

Despite months of work, a bill that was backed by a majority of senators, fell to a filibuster — unable to to overcome the 60-vote threshold needed to advance.

In impassioned remarks on the Senate floor Tuesday, Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., who represented Newton, Connecticut, in the House at the time of the Sandy Hook massacre, asked his colleagues why they even bother running for office if they're going to stand by and do nothing.

"I'm here on this floor to beg — to literally get down on my hands and knees — to beg my colleagues," he said.

Murphy said he was planning to reach out to Texas Republican Sen. John Cornyn after the two had teamed on an earlier background check bill that never became law. He said he would also reach out to Texas' other Republican Sen. Ted Cruz.

"I just don't understand why people here think we're powerless," Murphy said. "We aren't."

Cornyn told reporters he was on his way to Texas and would talk with them later. Cruz issued a statement calling it "a dark day. We're all completely sickened and heartbroken."

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., who sponsored gun legislation that failed to overcome a filibuster in the Senate after Sandy Hook, said, "We're just pushing on people who just won't budge on anything."

"It makes no sense at all why we can't do commonsense things and try to prevent some of this from happening," he said.

## Ukraine: Russia must withdraw to pre-war positions for talks

By RICARDO MAZALAN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's president said Wednesday that Russia must pull back to its pre-war positions as a first step before diplomatic talks, a negotiating line that Moscow is unlikely to agree to anytime soon.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he currently sees no willingness on the part of Russia to resume earnest negotiations on ending the three-month war.

"At the beginning, there was an impression that we can move ahead, that there would be a certain result or some outcome of those talks. But it all has stalled," Zelenskyy said through an interpreter by video link to attendees at this year's World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

He expressed a willingness to negotiate with Russian President Vladimir Putin directly, but stressed that Moscow needs to make clear its willingness to engage in serious talks.

"They should demonstrate at least something like steps withdrawing their troops and equipment to the position before the 24th of February," the day Russia's invasion began, he said. "That would be a correct step, first step in negotiations."

Zelenskyy also made clear that Ukraine's aim is to regain all of its lost territory.

"Ukraine is not going to concede our territory. We are fighting in our country, on our land," he said.

Russia, which has gradually narrowed its own military goals in Ukraine amid fierce resistance from Ukrainian forces, might be playing for time, Zelenskyy added.

A regional governor in eastern Ukraine says that at least six civilians have been killed by the latest Russian shelling in a town at the epicenter of fighting

Luhansk region Gov. Serhiy Haidai said Wednesday that another eight people have been wounded in the

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 31 of 93

shelling of Sievierodonetsk over the past 24 hours. He accused the Russian troops of deliberately targeting shelters where civilians were hiding.

The town is located in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas, where the Russian forces have been pressing their offensive despite stiff Ukrainian resistance.

Moscow-backed separatists have fought Ukrainian forces in the Donbas for eight years and hold large swaths of territory. Sievierodonetsk and neighboring cities are the only part of the Donbas' Luhansk region still under Ukrainian government control.

Injuries were also reported from the eastern town of Pokrovsk in the Donetsk region early Wednesday morning.

Pokrovsk's administration head Ruslan Trebushkin said in a Facebook post that the damage caused and the number of injured were still being assessed.

One strike left a crater at least three meters (10 feet) deep, the remnants of what appeared to be a rocket still smoldering. A row of low terraced houses near the strike suffered significant damage, with roofing tiles blown off, door frames ripped from the walls and pieces of concrete scattered around.

"There's no place to live in left, everything is smashed," said Viktoria Kurbonova, a mother-of-two who lived in one of the terraced houses. The windows had been blown out by an earlier strike about a month ago, and they had replaced them with plastic sheeting. That, she said, probably saved their lives as at least there was no glass flying around.

Late Tuesday, Zelenskyy said the country's forces in the region faced a difficult situation.

"Practically the full might of the Russian army, whatever they have left, is being thrown at the offensive there," he said in his nightly address to the nation. "Liman, Popasna, Sievierodonetsk, Slaviansk — the occupiers want to destroy everything there."

A solution to getting wheat out of Ukraine for export doesn't appear to be imminent.

British military authorities say Ukraine's overland export routes are "highly unlikely" to offset the problems caused by Russia's blockade of the Black Sea port of Odessa, putting further pressure on global grain prices.

The U.K. Ministry of Defense, in an update posted Wednesday morning, says there has been no "significant" merchant shipping in or out of Odessa since the start of the Russian invasion.

The ministry says that the blockade, combined with the shortage of overland shipping routes, means that significant supplies of grain remain in storage and can't be exported.

Russia said the strategic Ukrainian port of Mariupol has become functional after three months of fighting.

The military has completed clearing the port of land mines and it has been made fully operational, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Wednesday.

Russian forces have taken full control over Mariupol, on the Sea of Azov, after the last Ukrainian defenders at the giant Azovstal seaside steel plant laid down their weapons.

## UK 'partygate' report blames culture of Johnson's office

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A report into lockdown-breaching U.K. government parties published Wednesday said blame for a "culture" of rule-breaking in Prime Minister Boris Johnson's office must rest with those at the top.

Senior civil servant Sue Gray's long-awaited report into the "partygate" scandal said the "senior leadership team ... must bear responsibility" for a culture that allowed events to take place that "should not have been allowed to happen."

Gray investigated 16 gatherings attended by Johnson and his staff in 2020 and 2021 while people in the U.K. were barred from socializing under coronavirus restrictions imposed by Johnson's Conservative government.

Gray said there had been "failures of leadership and judgment in No. 10," a reference to the prime minister's Downing Street office.

"Those in the most junior positions attended gatherings at which their seniors were present, or indeed organized," she said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 32 of 93

Johnson plans to address Parliament on the report's findings later Wednesday.

A separate police investigation resulted in 83 people getting hit with fines, including Johnson — making him the first British prime minister ever found to have broken the law while in office. The scandal has led to calls for Johnson to resign.

He previously apologized but insisted he didn't knowingly break the rules. The British media and opposition politicians have found that hard to square with staff member's accounts of "bring your own booze" parties and regular "wine time Fridays" in the prime minister's 10 Downing St. office at the height of the pandemic.

A partial version of Gray's report was published in January after police asked her to leave out details to avoid prejudicing their inquiries. The interim report criticized the "failures of leadership and judgment" that allowed the parties to take place, and it described a Downing Street operation marked by excessive drinking and dysfunctional dynamics.

Claims that Johnson and his staff enjoyed illegal office parties while millions in the country were prevented from seeing friends and family in 2020 and 2021 first surfaced late last year.

In his statement to Parliament, Johnson will have to explain why he told lawmakers previously that no parties were held in Downing Street and no rules were broken.

Critics, some of them inside Johnson's Conservative Party, say the prime minister lied to Parliament. Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament are expected to resign.

Johnson has clung on to power so far, partly because Russia's invasion of Ukraine diverted public and political attention. Some Conservatives who considered seeking a no-confidence vote in their leader decided it would be rash to push Johnson out in the middle of the war, which is destabilizing Europe and fueling a cost-of-living crisis.

The prime minister got a further reprieve when the Metropolitan Police told him last week that he wouldn't be getting any more fines even though he attended several events under investigation.

But Gray's conclusions could revive calls from Conservative lawmakers for a no-confidence vote in the leader who won them a big parliamentary majority just over two years ago. Under party rules, such a vote is triggered if 15% of party lawmakers — currently 54 people — write letters calling for one.

If Johnson lost such a vote, he would be replaced as Conservative leader and prime minister. It's unclear how many letters have been submitted so far.

Environment Secretary George Eustice defended the prime minister on Wednesday but acknowledged that the "boundary between what was acceptable and what wasn't got blurred, and that was a mistake."

"The prime minister himself has accepted that and recognizes there were of course failings and therefore there's got to be some changes to the way the place is run," Eustice told Times Radio.

## Seoul: N Korea fires suspected ICBM and 2 other missiles

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

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea test-launched a suspected intercontinental ballistic missile and two shorter-range weapons toward its eastern waters Wednesday, South Korea said, hours after President Joe Biden ended a trip to Asia where he reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to defend its allies in the face of the North's nuclear threat.

The suspected ICBM didn't fly its full range. But if confirmed, it would still be North Korea's first test of an ICBM system in about two months amid stalled nuclear diplomacy with the United States. The launch suggests North Korea is determined to continue its efforts to modernize its weapons arsenal despite its first COVID-19 outbreak, which has caused outside worries about a humanitarian disaster.

"North Korea's sustained provocations can only result in stronger and faster South Korea-U.S. combined deterrence and can only deepen North Korea's international isolation," the South Korean government said in a statement after an emergency security meeting.

Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi called the launches "an act of provocation and absolutely impermissible." The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command earlier said the missile launches highlight "the destabilizing



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 33 of 93

impact of (North Korea's) illicit weapons program" though they didn't pose an immediate threat to U.S. territory and its allies.

According to South Korea's military, the three missiles lifted off from the North's capital region one after another on Wednesday morning.

A military statement said the first missile was likely an ICBM and that it reached a maximum height of 540 kilometers (335 miles) while traveling 360 kilometers (223 miles). The statement said the second missile disappeared from South Korean radar at some point and the third missile flew 760 kilometers (472 miles) on an apogee of 60 kilometers (37 miles).

Kim Tae-hyo, South Korea's deputy national security adviser, told reporters that the first missile was assessed as the North's biggest Hwasong-17 missile, whose potential range includes the entirety of the U.S. mainland. He said the missile was fired at a high angle and that its launch appeared aimed at reviewing the weapon's propellant and stage separations, though he couldn't conclusively say whether the test was successful.

He said the tests of the two other missiles, both short-range weapons, implied North Korea's intention to improve its ability to launch nuclear strikes on its rivals.

While the North Korean launches were part of its weapons development program, they were also strategically timed to the end of Biden's Asian tour and likely designed to test the readiness of South Korea's new government, which took office about two weeks ago, Kim said.

The flight details for the suspected ICBM were similar to those of two previous North Korean launches this year, which the South Korean and U.S. militaries have said were meant to test components of the Hwasong-17 missile in launches that flew medium distances, not the full range. North Korea said at the time it launched rockets to test cameras for a spy satellite.

After the two launches, South Korea's military in March detected what it said was a North Korean Hwasong-17 missile that blew up soon after lift-off. Later in the month, North Korea claimed to have successfully launched the Hwasong-17 in its first full-range ICBM flight test that broke its self-imposed 2018 moratorium on long-distance launches.

South Korea said North Korea may have fired a smaller ICBM, not a Hwasong-17. Whichever it was, the missile flew longer and higher than any other weapon the North has ever tested, experts say.

Chang Young-keun, a missile expert at Korea Aerospace University in South Korea, said the North's two earlier launches prior to its exploded missile were likely aimed at testing clustered engines. Given that, he said he doubts whether North Korea truly launched an ICBM again Wednesday because the country would have no reason to conduct the same test repeatedly and waste an ICBM that costs about 10-20 billion won (\$8-16 million).

Chang said the flight details of the third missile resemble those of the hypersonic missile that North Korea tested in January. Other analysts say it could also be the North's highly maneuverable, nuclear-capable KN-23 missile.

There's less ambiguity about what North Korea was trying to show by mix-launching an ICBM and short-range missile. After Biden recently stressed America's commitment to defend South Korea and Japan during his visits to those countries, North Korea responded by demonstrating its pursuit of an ability to conduct nuclear attacks on both the U.S. mainland and its allies in Asia, according to Lee Choon Geun, an honorary research fellow at South Korea's Science and Technology Policy Institute.

"(The launches) were a political message. They're saying they feel bad" about Biden's recent summit with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, Chang said.

Biden and Yoon said after their meeting Saturday that they would consider expanded military exercises to deter North Korean nuclear threats.

Biden brushed aside questions about any possible provocation by North Korea during his trip, saying, "We are prepared for anything North Korea does." Biden later met with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Tokyo, and they vowed to work closely to address security challenges, including North Korea's nuclear and ballistic programs and what they called China's "increasingly coercive" behavior in the region.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 34 of 93

After the North's launches, the South Korean and U.S. militaries said they fired surface-to-surface missiles to demonstrate their striking capabilities. South Korea said its air force on Tuesday conducted an "elephant walk" involving 30, fully armed F-15K fighter jets parading along a runway in formation.

Wednesday's launches were North Korea's 17th round of missile firings this year. Experts have said North Korea wants to move ahead with its push to expand its weapons arsenals and apply more pressure on its rivals to wrest sanctions relief and other concessions amid dormant nuclear diplomacy.

U.S., South Korean and Japanese officials have said North Korea could soon conduct its first nuclear test in nearly five years as well. Kim, the South Korean official, said North Korea has been testing a trigger system for a nuclear explosive device.

Before Wednesday, North Korea's most recent missile tests occurred on May 12, hours after the country acknowledged a COVID-19 outbreak.

The country in the past few days has said there has been "a positive sign" in its anti-virus campaign. Since admitting to the outbreak, North Korea has identified about 3 million cases of an unidentified fever but said only 68 people died, an extremely low death toll for COVID-19.

Experts say North Korea has limited health resources and may be underreporting mortalities to prevent possible political damage to Kim.

North Korea has so far ignored South Korean and U.S. offers to send vaccines, medicines and other support items. Much of North Korea's 26 million people remain unvaccinated and the country's once-free socialist public health care system has been in shambles for decades.

"At a time when North Korean people are suffering the pain of a COVID-19 spread, North Korea is using its crucial resources to develop nuclear weapons and missiles instead of measures to fight the virus and improve livelihoods, which is very regrettable," South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin said.

## School massacre continues Texas' grim run of mass shootings

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Once again, one of America's deadliest mass shootings happened in Texas.

Past shootings targeted worshippers during a Sunday sermon, shoppers at a Walmart, students on a high school campus and drivers on a highway. Among the latest victims were 19 children in the small town of Uvalde, west of San Antonio, where on Tuesday a gunman opened fire inside an elementary school in the nation's deadliest school shooting in nearly a decade.

Each of those tragedies in Texas — which resulted in more than 85 dead in all — occurred in the last five years.

But as the horror in Uvalde plunges the U.S. into another debate over gun violence, Texas and the state's Republican-controlled government have by now demonstrated what is likely to happen next: virtually nothing that would restrict gun access.

Lawmakers are unlikely to adopt any significant new limits on guns. Last year, gun laws were actually loosened after a gunman at a Walmart in El Paso killed 23 people in a racist 2019 attack that targeted Hispanics.

"I can't wrap my head around it," said state Sen. Roland Gutierrez, a Democrat whose district includes Uvalde. "It's disturbing to me as a policymaker that we have been able to do little other than create greater access to these militarized weapons to just about anyone who would want them."

Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott identified the gunman as 18-year-old Salvador Ramos. Two other adults also died in the attack. The gunman was killed by authorities.

The cycle in Texas — a mass shooting followed by few if any new restrictions on guns — mirrors GOP efforts to block stricter laws in Congress and the ensuing outrage from Democrats and supporters of tougher gun control.

President Joe Biden angrily made a renewed push Tuesday evening after the tragedy in Uvalde. "When in God's name are we going to stand up to the gun lobby?" he asked in an address from the White House.

The shooting in Texas happened days before the National Rifle Association is set to hold its annual meet-

ing in Houston, where Abbott and other Republican leaders are scheduled to speak.

Even as Biden's party has slim control of Congress, gun violence bills have stalled in the face of Republican opposition in the Senate. Last year, the House passed two bills to expand background checks on firearms purchases, but both languished in the 50-50 Senate where Democrats need at least 10 Republican votes to overcome objections from a filibuster.

"It sort of centers around the issue of mental health. It seems like there's consensus in that area," No. 2 Senate GOP leader John Thune said about how Congress should respond to the Uvalde shooting. He did not specify what that would be.

In Texas, any changes to gun access would not come until lawmakers return to the Capitol in 2023. In the past, calls for action have faded.

Abbott, who is up for reelection in November, said the shooting in Uvalde was carried out "horrifically, incomprehensibly" on children. He did not immediately say how or whether Texas would respond to this latest mass shooting on a policy level, but since he became governor in 2015, the state has only gotten more relaxed when it comes to gun laws.

Exactly one year before the Uvalde shooting, the GOP-controlled Legislature voted to remove one of the last major gun restrictions in Texas: required licenses, background checks and training for the nearly 1.6 million registered handgun owners in the state at the time.

Abbott signed the measure, which came at the end of what was the Texas Legislature's first chance to act after the Walmart attack.

A year later, a man went on a highway shooting rampage in the West Texas oil patch that left seven people dead, spraying bullets into passing cars and shopping plazas and killing a U.S. Postal Service employee while hijacking her mail truck.

Following a shooting at Santa Fe High School in 2018 that killed 10 people near Houston, Abbott signaled support for so-called red flag laws, which restrict gun access for people deemed dangerous to themselves or others. But he later retreated amid pushback from gun-rights supporters.

Republican Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, who won the GOP nomination for a third term Tuesday, told Fox News after the Uvalde shooting that the best response would be training teachers and "hardening" schools.

Democrat state Rep. Joe Moody recalled the hope he felt that the Walmart shooting in his border city might finally lead to reforms.

"And the only answer you get when we go to the Capitol is, 'More guns, less restrictions,'" Moody said. "That's it."

## Families mourn, worry in wake of elementary school shooting

By JIM VERTUNO and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas (AP) — Distraught families gathered at a local civic center and turned to social media to mourn and to make desperate pleas for help finding missing children as the death toll in a gruesome school shooting at a Texas elementary school rose to at least 19 students. Authorities said the gunman also killed two adults.

By nightfall, names of those killed during Tuesday's attack at Robb Elementary School in the town of Uvalde began to emerge. One man at the civic center walked away sobbing into his phone "she is gone." On the backside of the building, a woman stood by herself, alternately crying and yelling into her phone, shaking her fist and stamping her feet.

Manny Renfro said he got word Tuesday that his grandson, 8-year-old Uziyah Garcia, was among those killed.

"The sweetest little boy that I've ever known," Renfro said. "I'm not just saying that because he was my grandkid."

Renfro said Uziyah last visited him in San Angelo during spring break.

"We started throwing the football together and I was teaching him pass patterns. Such a fast little boy

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 36 of 93

and he could catch a ball so good," Renfro said. "There were certain plays that I would call that he would remember and he would do it exactly like we practiced."

Fourth-grade teacher Eva Mireles, 44, was remembered as a loving mother and wife.

"She was adventurous. I would definitely say those wonderful things about her. She is definitely going to be very missed," said 34-year-old relative Amber Ybarra, of San Antonio.

Ybarra prepared to give blood for the wounded and pondered how no one noticed trouble with the shooter in time to stop him.

"To me, it's more about raising mental health awareness," said Ybarra, a wellness coach who attended the elementary school where the shooting happened. "Someone could possibly have seen a dramatic change before something like this happened."

Lisa Garza, 54, of Arlington, Texas, mourned the death of her cousin, Xavier Javier Lopez, who had been eagerly awaiting a summer of swimming.

"He was just a loving 10-year-old little boy, just enjoying life, not knowing that this tragedy was going to happen today," she said. "He was very bubbly, loved to dance with his brothers, his mom. This has just taken a toll on all of us."

She also lamented what she described as lax gun laws.

"We should have more restrictions, especially if these kids are not in their right state of mind and all they want to do is just hurt people, especially innocent children going to the schools," Garza said.

On social media, pictures of smiling children were posted, their families begging for information. Classes had been winding down for the year and each school day had a theme. Tuesday's was Footloose and Fancy. Students were supposed to wear a nice outfit with fun or fancy shoes.

Adolfo Cruz, a 69-year-old air conditioning repairman, remained outside the school Tuesday night, waiting for word about his 10-year-old great-granddaughter, Eliajha Cruz Torres, whose whereabouts remained unknown to family.

Cruz drove to the scene after receiving a tearful and terrifying call from his daughter shortly after the first reports that an 18-year-old gunman had opened fire at the school. While he waited outside the school Tuesday night, his family was at the hospital and civic center waiting for any potential word on her condition.

Cruz called the waiting the heaviest moment of his life.

"I hope she is alive," Cruz said. "They are waiting for an update."

Federico Torres waited for news about his 10-year-old son Rogelio. He told KHOU-TV that he was at work when he learned about the shooting and rushed to the school.

"They sent us to the hospital, to the civic center, to the hospital and here again, nothing, not even in San Antonio," Torres said. "They don't tell us anything, only a photo, wait, hope that everything is well."

Torres said he was praying that "my son is found safe ... Please if you know anything, let us know."

Hillcrest Memorial Funeral Home, which is located across the street from Robb Elementary School, said in a Facebook post on Tuesday evening that it would be assisting families of the shooting victims with no cost for funerals.

## For new Somalia government, al-Shabab a threat to authority

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

A Somali police officer recently received an unexpected summons from the enemy. An unknown caller ordered him to report to a town outside the capital, Mogadishu, where the extremist group al-Shabab would settle a dispute between him and his brother. The caller assured the officer he would be safe even if he showed up in uniform.

Overcoming his fear, Khadar traveled to meet with a panel of four bearded men in an office made from iron sheets. The al-Shabab men wanted to know why he was denying his brothers a share of the land they inherited from their father.

"After an hour and a half of debate, the men directed me to distribute the inheritance among my brothers," Khadar recalled in an interview with The Associated Press, withholding his last name for safety concerns.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 37 of 93

Khadar complied, an extraordinary gesture to an armed group that continues to pose a deadly threat to his police colleagues and his government at large.

The al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab is projecting authority and asserting a wider role in public life in this troubled Horn of Africa nation, underlining the extent of the challenge Africa's deadliest Islamic extremist group presents to the newly elected government of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. The threats range beyond regular attacks on places frequented by officials and include militant control of vast territory where federal officials don't dare go and can't even collect taxes.

The group, which seeks to create an Islamic caliphate out of Somalia, is also increasingly undermining authorities by offering a parallel justice system — enforced by the threat of violence — in a country where many have little faith in conventional courts.

Some people who spoke to the AP expressed a favorable view of al-Shabab, saying its mobile courts are not corrupt and that the group appears able to protect vulnerable people in ways the federal government cannot.

"You will get justice in al-Shabab courtrooms if you know you are doing the right thing," said farmer Muallim Abdi, a father of eight children who lives in another al-Shabab-controlled village near Mogadishu. "But in the government-controlled areas it will take time, and the formal courts are corrupt."

Abdi acknowledged that life under al-Shabab is "extremely difficult," citing the children forced to join the group, the tax burden and the inability to enjoy private property. Last Ramadan, he said, al-Shabab asked residents to raise money to buy livestock to be slaughtered for the Eid feast, an unreasonable demand at a time when the riverbed was dry and some people were on the verge of displacement amid drought.

Al-Shabab "remains in a healthy financial position" thanks to illicit taxation as well as income derived from the ongoing sale of \$40 million in charcoal stockpiles in the city of Kismayo, a U.N. panel of experts reported last year.

Al-Shabab's tax code compels all those intending to buy or sell farmland to register with the group's land office, through which sales can be finalized. Farmers are ordered to notify al-Shabab of the quantities they are harvesting.

"Once I harvested and sold 2,247 bags of onions but did not inform al-Shabab because I had an emergency to attend to," Abdi said. "I was home when two men on motorcycles arrived. I was accosted for not telling them about the harvest. I was detained in a small, dark room and nearly suffocated." There's no room for appeal in the al-Shabab system.

Despite the \$1,123 fine he paid, Abdi still sees al-Shabab in a positive light because later it ruled in his favor to settle a land dispute with a neighbor. Both claimants were summoned and told to prove ownership before a committee that found his papers authentic, he said.

"The public would rally behind al-Shabab if they stopped killing people," Abdi said.

Al-Shabab, which has killed thousands of civilians in the last decade, is estimated to have anywhere between 4,000 and 7,000 fighters, according to the Mogadishu-based security think tank Hiraal Institute.

Although al-Shabab's extortionate power has been a major concern among traders, some businesspeople said they feel more confident in its mediation of disputes.

"They are becoming more reliable, and the people are counting on them," Hiraal Institute's Samira Gaid said of al-Shabab's court system.

Somalis from minority clans, a growing community, see al-Shabab courts as fair, she said.

Al-Shabab has seized even more territory in recent years, taking advantage of rifts among security personnel as well as disagreements between the government seat in Mogadishu and regional states.

Forced to retreat from Mogadishu in 2011, al-Shabab is slowly making a comeback from the rural areas to which it retreated, defying the presence of African Union peacekeepers as well as U.S. drone strikes targeting its fighters.

The militants in early May attacked a military base for AU peacekeepers outside Mogadishu, killing many Burundian troops. The attack came just days before the presidential vote that returned Mohamud to power five years after he had been voted out.

Al-Shabab's strategy is to "bleed the system" while patiently waiting for the exit of foreign troops, said Gaid, the security analyst.

The restructured AU peacekeeping mission is set to wind down by the end of 2024, when Somali forces would take over security responsibilities.

American officials cited the heightened threat posed by al-Shabab in mid-May as President Joe Biden signed an order to redeploy hundreds of U.S. troops to Somalia. Somali authorities have welcomed the decision reversing a 2021 order to withdraw U.S. troops.

Mohamud has said securing Mogadishu will depend heavily on pushing militants out of the neighboring regions of Lower Shabelle and Middle Shabelle. That could be challenging.

Al-Shabab "has sharply increased its infiltration of state institutions, particularly security institutions," said political analyst Abdi Aynte, a former government minister.

Rebuilding Somalia's security system "isn't an administrative problem but ultimately a political one," with the new president needing to reform the security services in a way that's accommodative of all competing groups, he said.

## China wants 10 Pacific nations to endorse sweeping agreement

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — China wants 10 small Pacific nations to endorse a sweeping agreement covering everything from security to fisheries in what one leader warns is a "game-changing" bid by Beijing to wrest control of the region.

A draft of the agreement obtained by The Associated Press shows that China wants to train Pacific police officers, team up on "traditional and non-traditional security" and expand law enforcement cooperation.

China also wants to jointly develop a marine plan for fisheries — which would include the Pacific's lucrative tuna catch — increase cooperation on running the region's internet networks, and set up cultural Confucius Institutes and classrooms. China also mentions the possibility of setting up a free trade area with the Pacific nations.

China's move comes as Foreign Minister Wang Yi and a 20-strong delegation begin a visit to the region this week.

Wang is visiting seven of the countries he hopes will endorse the "Common Development Vision" — the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea.

Wang is also holding virtual meetings with the other three potential signatories — the Cook Islands, Niue and the Federated States of Micronesia. He is hoping the countries will endorse the pre-written agreement as part of a joint communique after a scheduled May 30 meeting in Fiji he is holding with the foreign ministers from each of the 10 countries.

But Micronesia's President David Panuelo has written an eight-page letter to the leaders of other Pacific nations saying his nation won't be endorsing the plan and warning of dire consequences if others do.

Panuelo said in his letter, which the AP has obtained, that behind attractive words in the agreement like "equity" and "justice" are many worrying details.

Among other concerns, he said, is that the agreement opens the door for China to own and control the region's fisheries and communications infrastructure. He said China could intercept emails and listen in on phone calls.

Panuelo said in his letter that the agreement is "an intent to shift those of us with diplomatic relations with China very close to Beijing's orbit, intrinsically tying the whole of our economies and societies to them."

He warns the agreement would needlessly heighten geopolitical tensions and threaten regional stability.

In his letter, Panuelo said the Common Development Vision is "the single most game-changing proposed agreement in the Pacific in any of our lifetimes," and it "threatens to bring a new Cold War era at best, and a World War at worst."

Panuelo declined to comment on the letter or the proposed agreement.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Wednesday he didn't know about Panuelo's

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 39 of 93

letter.

"But I don't agree at all with the argument that cooperation between China and the South Pacific island countries will trigger a new Cold War," he said.

He said that China "has a long history of friendly relations with the South Pacific island countries" and had long provided them economic and technical assistance without any political strings attached.

Like some other countries in the Pacific, Micronesia is finding itself increasingly caught between the competing interests of Washington and Beijing.

Micronesia has close ties to the U.S. through a Compact of Free Association. But it also has what Panuelo describes in his letter as a "Great Friendship" with China that he hopes will continue despite his opposition to the agreement.

The security aspects of the agreement will be particularly troubling to many in the region and beyond, especially after China signed a separate security pact with the Solomon Islands last month.

That pact has raised fears that China could send troops to the island nation or even establish a military base there, not far from Australia. The Solomon Islands and China say there are no plans for a base.

The May 30 meeting will be the second between Wang and the Pacific islands' foreign ministers after they held a virtual meeting last October.

Those who follow China's role in the Pacific will be scrutinizing the wording of the draft agreement.

Among its provisions: "China will hold intermediate and high-level police training for Pacific Island countries."

The agreement says the countries will strengthen "cooperation in the fields of traditional and non-traditional security" and will "expand law enforcement cooperation, jointly combat transnational crime, and establish a dialog mechanism on law enforcement capacity and police cooperation."

The agreement would also see the nations "expand exchanges between governments, legislatures and political parties."

The draft agreement also stipulates that the Pacific countries "firmly abide" by the one-China principle, under which Taiwan, a self-ruled island democracy, is considered by Beijing to be part of China. It would also uphold the "non-interference" principle that China often cites as a deterrent to other nations speaking out about its human rights record.

The agreement says that China and the Pacific countries would jointly formulate a marine spatial plan "to optimize the layout of the marine economy, and develop and utilize marine resources rationally, so as to promote a sustainable development of blue economy."

China also promises more investment in the region by mobilizing private capital and encouraging "more competitive and reputable Chinese enterprises to participate in direct investment in Pacific Island countries."

China also promised to dispatch Chinese language consultants, teachers and volunteers to the islands.

The AP has also obtained a draft of a five-year action plan that's intended to sit alongside the Common Development Vision, which outlines a number of immediate incentives that China is offering to the Pacific nations.

In the action plan, China says it will fully implement 2,500 government scholarships through 2025.

"In 2022, China will hold the first training program for young diplomats from Pacific Island countries, depending on the pandemic situation," the draft plan states, adding that China will also hold seminars on governance and planning for the Pacific nations.

In the draft action plan, China says it will build criminal investigation laboratories as needed by the Pacific nations that can be used for fingerprint testing, forensic autopsies, and electronic forensics.

China also says it will also spend an additional \$2 million and send 200 medics to the islands to help fight COVID-19 and promote health, and promises to help the countries in their efforts to combat climate change.

## **Saving the children: War closes in on eastern Ukrainian town**

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

BAKHMUT, Ukraine (AP) — Chunks of thick, twisted metal and wood splinters lie among the swings and

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 40 of 93

slides in the playground outside a bombed-out school. Some streets away, a yellow bathtub dangles over the void left when part of an apartment building collapsed in a bombing.

The eastern Ukrainian town of Bakhmut has been coming under increasing bombardment in Russia's war, particularly over the last week, local officials and residents say, as Russian forces try to press forward in an effort to encircle and capture the key city of Sieverodonetsk to the northeast.

Moscow-backed separatists have fought Ukrainian forces in the Donbas for eight years and hold large swaths of territory. Sieverodonetsk and neighboring cities are the only part of the Donbas' Luhansk region still under Ukrainian government control.

Most of Bakhmut's population has already fled, and more are leaving every day. Evacuation minibuses run mainly by volunteers shuttle back and forth, sometimes even during bombardments, to get people out.

"Now it's a question of saving the children," said Olga Hordiyenko, 51, as she stood in a playground on Tuesday near her apartment building. "The Russians are shelling us, so there's this burning issue to get the children out of here."

Ignoring the repeated background sounds of shelling, her three grandchildren, girls ages 7, 9 and 11, focused on learning dance moves from a video on their mother's mobile phone.

Hordiyenko and her daughter Anna Dyachenko, 28, wanted to leave on Tuesday but there was no room on the bus for them, they said. Instead, they would be leaving on Wednesday, heading to western Ukraine initially and then abroad to relatives.

"People say it's time to go, and we're happy to leave," Dyachenko said. But they still fear they will have nothing to come home to once the war is over.

"Here we have our apartment, our house," she said. "Everything will be smashed and destroyed."

With a pre-war population of around 85,000, there are now around 30,000 people left, Bakhmut City Council Secretary Ganna Petrieynko-Poluhina said. While authorities are encouraging more people to leave, some are hesitant, she said.

"Life is the most important thing for a person. But people are tied to their homes, to what they remember," Petrieynko-Poluhina said. "Every day we see that shelling happens more often, and people leave. We would like that more people leave."

The shelling has increased in recent days, and it's becoming harder to get humanitarian aid into the town, she said. As if to prove her point, the thudding of artillery reverberated, and the city council staff headed toward the bomb shelter.

Strikes in Bakhmut have hit everything from apartment blocks to dormitories, houses and even schools.

"It was a usual school, children studied, then there was a bomb," said local resident Olena Kryvobok as she walked around a playing field and children's playground just outside what was left of the school. Students' notebooks lie tattered in the grass, a child's drawing still pinned to the wall of what used to be a classroom.

"I don't even know what to say, because I have so much indignation, so many emotions," Kryvobok said, adding that it was pure luck that there had been no children in the playing field when the bomb struck.

"In one moment, everything crashed," she said. "I don't know, it is horror."

## **Sale of Chelsea by sanctioned Abramovich approved by UK govt**

By ROB HARRIS AP Global Soccer Writer

LONDON (AP) — Roman Abramovich's 19-year ownership of Chelsea is ending after the British government approved the sale of the Premier League club by the sanctioned Russian oligarch to a consortium fronted by Los Angeles Dodgers part-owner Todd Boehly.

The government had to be sure that Abramovich, who was sanctioned over his links to Russian President Vladimir Putin after the invasion of Ukraine, did not profit from the enforced sale of the club that his investment turned into one of the most successful in European football.

The reigning FIFA Club World Cup winners and 2021 European champions will be sold for 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.1 billion) — the highest price ever for a sports team — with Premier League approval already



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 41 of 93

granted on Tuesday.

Chelsea has been operating under a government license since Abramovich's assets were frozen in March and it expires on May 31.

"Given the sanctions we placed on those linked to Putin and the bloody invasion of Ukraine, the long-term future of the club can only be secured under a new owner," British Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said. "We are satisfied the proceeds of the sale will not benefit Roman Abramovich or other sanctioned individuals."

There were weeks of discussions between officials from Chelsea and the government over securing the guarantee Abramovich could not gain financially. The sale proceeds will initially go into a frozen account before going to charity.

"We will now begin the process of ensuring the proceeds of the sale are used for humanitarian causes in Ukraine, supporting victims of the war," the British government said in a statement. "The steps today will secure the future of this important cultural asset and protect fans and the wider football community."

Delays approving the sale centered on the fate of 1.6 billion pounds (\$2 billion) loaned to Chelsea by Abramovich since 2003 that provided the funding to build a men's squad that won 21 trophies during his ownership. Government assurances were needed from Abramovich, who has not condemned Russia's war in Ukraine, about writing off the debt that was linked to companies he controlled.

Boehly has already started attending Chelsea games in recent weeks since the club approved the sale to the consortium that also features Dodgers principal owner Mark Walter, Swiss billionaire Hansjorg Wyss, and funding from private equity firm Clearlake Capital.

It was a hotly-contested sale process, with four groups in the final running, before Boehly's group was chosen on May 7 after guaranteeing 1.75 billion pounds (\$2.2 billion) of investment in the team.

Chelsea fans have become accustomed to lavish spending under Abramovich, with more than \$1 billion net spending on players.

Chelsea's ability to sell match tickets and commit to new player spending has been curbed by the sanctions but now the new ownership is set to provide investment to manager Thomas Tuchel to strengthen the squad.

The certainty is that Chelsea will be playing in the Champions League next season after finishing third in the Premier League last Sunday despite the off-field turmoil. The women's team won a league and cup double with a squad funded by Abramovich's investment.

Chelsea had won the men's championship only once — in 1955 — when Abramovich bought the club in 2003. Helped by expensive signings, the club won the Premier League two years later and has added four more since then, most recently in 2017.

Investment is needed in Stamford Bridge. Chelsea has the smallest and most dated stadium of the Premier League's most successful clubs, with plans for a rebuild of the 41,000-capacity venue put on hold by Abramovich in 2018 when British-Russian diplomatic tensions deepened.

The \$3.1 billion cost of Chelsea eclipses the \$2.3 billion paid in 2018 for the NFL's Carolina Panthers.

As well as being part owner of the MLB's Dodgers, Boehly also has minority stakes in the NBA's Los Angeles Lakers and WNBA's Los Angeles Sparks.

## Scars of war seem to be everywhere in Ukraine after 3 months

By ELENA BECATOROS and YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KRAMATORSK, Ukraine (AP) — Piano music wafted from an apartment block on a recent spring evening in Kramatorsk, blending with distant artillery fire for a surreal soundtrack to a bomb-scarred neighborhood in the eastern Ukrainian city.

No matter where they live, the 3-month-old war never seems to be far away.

Those in towns and villages near the front lines hide in basements from constant shelling, struggling to survive with no electricity or gas — and often no running water.

But even in regions out of the range of the heavy guns, frequent air raid sirens wail as a constant reminder

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 42 of 93

that a Russian missile can strike at any time — even for those walking their dogs, riding their bicycles and taking their children to parks in cities like Kyiv, Odesa and Lviv.

Curfews, checkpoints and fortifications are commonplace. So are fresh cemeteries, uprooted villagers and war-scarred landscapes, as Moscow intensifies its attacks in eastern and southern Ukraine.

“City residents are trying to return to regular life, but with every step, they stumble upon either a crater or a ruined house or a grave in the yard,” said Andriy Pustovoi, speaking by phone to The Associated Press from the northern city of Chernihiv. “No one is cooking food over a bonfire or drinking water from a river anymore, but there’s a long way to go to a normal life.”

Chernihiv was in the way of Russian forces as they advanced toward Kyiv early in the war. It was heavily bombarded, and Mayor Vladyslav Atroshenko said about half of its buildings were damaged or destroyed. At least 700 residents were killed, and part of a city park now holds a cemetery, where some of them are buried.

Its streets are mostly empty now, half of the shops have not reopened and public transportation is not working properly, said Pustovoi, a 37-year-old engineer.

Rail service to Kyiv was only restored this month, but people who fled are in no rush to return.

“The scariest thing is that neighboring Russia and Belarus are not going away from Chernihiv, which means that some of the residents that left when the war started may not come back,” Atroshenko said sadly.

Few people are seen on the streets of Kramatorsk, where storefront windows are boarded up or protected by sandbags, and it’s no wonder.

The eastern city has been hit several times, with the deadliest attack on April 8, when a missile struck near its train station where about 4,000 people had gathered to be evacuated before fighting intensified. In an instant, the plaza was turned into a scene of horror, with bodies lying on bloodstained pavement amid discarded luggage. A total of 57 people were killed, and over 100 wounded.

Kramatorsk is one of the largest in the industrial Donbas region of eastern Ukraine that has not been taken over by Russian forces. The region has been the site of battles between Moscow-backed separatists and Ukrainian government forces since 2014.

Elsewhere in the Donbas, the picture is even bleaker.

Ryisa Rybalko fled the village of Novomykhailivka, where she had been living first in a basement and then a bomb shelter at a school because of frequent shelling.

“We haven’t been able to see the sun for three months. We are almost blind because we were in darkness for three months,” Rybalko said. She arrived with her family in the town of Kiurakhove, driven by a fellow villager, and waited on Monday for a westbound bus.

Her son-in-law, Dmytro Khaliapin, said their village was pounded by artillery.

“Houses are ruined. It’s a horror,” he said.

In neighboring Luhansk province, 83-year-old Lida Chuhay left the hard-hit town of Lyman, also near the front line.

“Ashes, ruins. The northern parts, the southern parts, all are ruined,” she said Sunday as she sat on a train heading west from the town of Pokrovsk. “Literally everything is on fire: houses, buildings, everything.”

Chuhay and others from Lyman said much of the town was reduced to rubble by the bombardment. Anyone still there is hiding in shelters because it is too dangerous to venture out.

“They ruined everything,” said Olha Medvedeva, sitting opposite Chuhay on the train. “The five-story building where we were living, everything flew away — the windows, the doors.”

In cities farther from the front lines, air raid sirens sound so often that few pay attention and continue about their daily business.

After Russian forces failed to capture Kyiv in the opening weeks of the invasion and withdrew to the east, residents started to flow back into the capital. The nightly curfew has been cut by an hour, and public transportation started running longer to accommodate passengers.

Residents face long lines at gas stations, and the Ukrainian currency, the hryvnya, has weakened from 27 to the dollar at the start of the war to 37.

“Ukraine is being destroyed — not just by Russian bombs and missiles,” said Volodymyr Sidenko, an

analyst at the Kyiv-based Razumkov Center think tank. "The fall in GDP (gross domestic product) and the sharp reduction in the revenue side of the budget have already been felt by every Ukrainian today. And this is just the beginning."

But the National Opera resumed performances last week in Kyiv, with the audience advised how to reach the air raid shelter. No Russian operas are on the program.

And some restaurants, cafes and shops in cities such as Odesa and Zaporizhzhia have reopened.

Lviv, the city in western Ukraine about 45 miles (70 kilometers) from the Polish border, has been inundated with more than 300,000 people fleeing the war. About 1,000 arrive at its railway station daily.

"We judge the intensity of the fighting in the east not by (what) the news says but by waves of refugees, which have been growing in recent weeks again," said Alina Gushcha, a 35-year-old chemistry teacher who volunteers at the rail station to help arrivals.

Hotels, campgrounds, universities and schools ran out of space long ago, and the city has built temporary housing that resembles shipping containers in city parks.

"In the months of the war, I've learned to be happy about every day without shelling and bombardment," said Halyna Shcherbin, 59, outside her container-like home in Stryiskyi Park, where she lives with her daughter and two granddaughters. That gratitude is perhaps linked to the fact that they left Kramatorsk the day before the deadly missile attack.

Lviv also comes under regular Russian bombardment because it's the gateway for Western military aid. Its Old Town architectural treasures, including the Boim Chapel and the Latin Cathedral, are protected by either metal shielding or sandbags.

In cities and towns of southern Ukraine, not far from the Crimean Peninsula that Moscow annexed in 2014, the war continues to flare with regularity.

Parts of the city of Mykolaiv often come under attack, and its streets are mostly empty and businesses closed. In some neighborhoods, the scars of war are clear, with blast marks on sidewalks, burned-out stores and shrapnel embedded in walls. The Russian-occupied city of Kherson is only 58 kilometers (36 miles) to the east.

In the village of Velyka Kostromka, south of the city of Kryvy Rih, the remaining residents try to go on with life despite the occasional shelling.. At least 20 houses were damaged on a recent morning, including three that were destroyed. A woman and her three children narrowly escaped with their lives.

Hours later, a farmer was back in his potato field, surveying a small crater left behind. With barely a shrug, he raked over it.

## 1.1 million Afghan children could face severe malnutrition

By RAHIM FAIEZ and LEE KEATH Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — In Afghanistan, 1.1 million children under the age of 5 will likely face the most severe form of malnutrition this year, according to the U.N., as increasing numbers of hungry, wasting-away children are brought into hospital wards.

U.N. and other aid agencies were able to stave off outright famine after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan last year, rolling out a massive emergency aid program that fed millions.

But they are struggling to keep pace with relentlessly worsening conditions. Poverty is spiraling and making more Afghans in need of aid, global food prices are mounting from the war in Ukraine and promises of international funding so far are not coming through, according to an assessment report issued this month.

As a result, the vulnerable are falling victim, including children but also mothers struggling to feed themselves along with their families.

Nazia said she had lost four children to malnutrition — two daughters and two sons under 2 years old. "All four died due to financial problems and poverty," the 30-year-old Nazia said. When her children fell ill, she didn't have the money to treat them.

Nazia spoke to The Associated Press at Charakar Hospital in the northern province of Parwan, where she and her 7-month-old daughter were both being treated for malnutrition. Her husband is a day laborer but is

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 44 of 93

also a drug addict and rarely brings in an income, she said. Like many Afghans, she uses only one name.

UNICEF, the U.N. children's agency, said 1.1 million children this year are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition, also known as severe wasting, nearly double the number in 2018 and up from just under 1 million last year.

Severe wasting is the most lethal type of malnutrition, in which food is so lacking that a child's immune system is compromised, according to UNICEF. They become vulnerable to multiple bouts of disease and eventually they become so weak they can't absorb nutrients.

The numbers of children under 5 being admitted into health facilities with severe acute malnutrition have steadily mounted, from 16,000 in March 2020 to 18,000 in March 2021, then leaping to 28,000 in March 2022, the UNICEF representative in Afghanistan, Mohamed Ag Ayoya, wrote in a tweet last week.

Hit by one of its worst droughts in decades and torn by years of war, Afghanistan was already facing a hunger emergency; but the Taliban takeover in August threw the country into crisis. Many development agencies pulled out and international sanctions cut off billions in finances for the government, collapsing the economy.

Millions were plunged into poverty, struggling to afford food for their families. By the end of last year, half the population of around 38 million lived under the poverty line, according to U.N. figures. As the economy continues to crumble and prices mount, that could rise this year to as high as 97% of the population by mid-2022, according to the U.N. Development Program.

Because of poverty, "mothers do not have proper nutrition during pregnancy, and are not able to eat properly after birth, said Mohammad Sharif, a doctor at Charakar hospital.

At the Mirwais Hospital in southern Kandahar province, 1,100 children with malnutrition have been admitted in the past six months, 30 of whom died, said Dr. Mohammad Sediq, head of the children's ward.

One mother, Kobra, said she had been unable to breastfeed her 6-month-old child. "He is constantly losing weight and cries a lot, I know it is all because of hunger, but can't do anything" she said.

At her home in an impoverished district of Kandahar city, Jamila said her 8-month-son died last month after being diagnosed with severe malnutrition. If she doesn't get help, she fears for her other four children, she said.

"The government hasn't helped us at all, no one has asked us if we are hungry or have something to eat or not," she said.

U.N. agencies launched a massive, accelerated aid program after the Taliban takeover, ramping up to a point that they now deliver food assistance to 38% of the population.

The number of people facing acute food insecurity fell slightly from 22.8 million late last year to 19.7 million currently, according to a May report by IPC, a partnership among U.N. and other agencies that assesses food security. From June to November this year, that number is expected to fall a little further, to 18.9 million, IPC said.

But those small reductions "are far from indicating a positive trend," it warned.

The decrease was low compared to the scale of the aid, it said. Moreover, deteriorating conditions threaten to overwhelm the effort. It pointed to the continued crumbling of the economy, higher food and fuel prices and supply disruptions caused by the Ukraine war, and "unprecedented inflation" in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, lack of funding threatens aid's reach. The proportion of the population receiving food aid could plummet to only 8% over the next six months because so far only \$601 million of the \$4.4 billion needed has been received from the world community, the IPC said. Just over \$2 billion has been pledged.

Melanie Galvin, chief of UNICEF's nutrition program in Afghanistan, said the 1.1 million children figure came from the agency's annual assessment, conducted last fall and based on expected conditions.

"Every year, all the factors connected to malnutrition keep going up," she told the AP. It just keeps going up and up in terms of a deteriorating situation.

Drought has been the main driver of food insecurity, she said, compounded by growing poverty, lack of access to clean water and to medical care, need for greater vaccination for diseases like measles that hit malnourished children.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 45 of 93

The good news is that agencies have access to the entire country now, she said. UNICEF opened around 1,000 treatment sites in remote locations where parents can bring their malnourished children rather than having to trek to larger urban centers.

But an emergency response is not sustainable in the longer term, she said. "We need all these factors in the external environment to improve."

## Takeaways: Trump's big defeat; election denial backfiring

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

Former President Donald Trump's crusade for vengeance suffered two devastating blows after Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp and Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger won their primaries Tuesday despite rejecting Trump's entreaties to reverse his 2020 election loss.

It's a huge warning sign for the way Republican voters view the former president's crusade to punish those who were not willing to overturn the will of the voters in 2020.

Voters also demonstrated an openness to embracing scandal-plagued candidates — depending on the candidate, and the scandal.

Here are some takeaways from Tuesday's primary elections in Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, Texas and Minnesota:

### TRUMP'S BIGGEST PRIMARY DEFEAT

Trump had hoped to turn Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp into an example of the danger in defying him. Instead, Kemp on Tuesday became an example of how Republican incumbents might not have as much to fear from Trump as the former president would like.

Kemp cruised past former U.S. Sen. David Perdue in the Republican primary. The victory came a year and a half after Kemp rejected Trump's demands to help overturn the presidential election by declaring Trump the winner in Georgia instead of Joe Biden, who actually won.

Perdue's campaign fixated on Trump's lie that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from him, but Kemp won by flexing the power of his office. To rally the base, he signed laws allowing most Georgians to carry guns without a permit and banning most abortions after a fetal heartbeat is detected. He also announced an investment by Hyundai in a new plant in the state to make batteries for electric vehicles.

Now Kemp will face Democrat Stacey Abrams in a rematch of their 2018 gubernatorial clash. Unlike Trump in 2020, Perdue accepted his defeat Tuesday night, even seeming to brush aside some supporters who took up a chant suggesting there was fraud.

"I'm sorry, but what we're going to do right now is make sure Stacey Abrams is not governor of this state," Perdue said.

### DANGER OF ELECTION DENIAL

The Georgia governor's race wasn't the only Trump grudge match that backfired on the former president. Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, who personally rejected Trump's call to "find" enough votes to declare him the winner in Georgia, defeated his Trump-backed primary challenger as well.

Trump recruited U.S. Rep. Jody Hice from a safe congressional seat to face Raffensperger in the Republican primary, but Hice lost. Trump endorsed primary challengers to the insurance commissioner and attorney general, and they, too, lost.

It's clear the former president's harping on 2020 simply did not speak to Republican voters in Georgia, the country's newest battleground state.

"Georgia underscores one of Trump's big problems if/when he runs again," Brendan Buck, a former spokesperson for onetime House Speaker Paul Ryan, tweeted Tuesday. "He, of course, won't be able to let go of the 2020 nonsense, and nobody wants to hear his whining about it anymore."

Trump has scored some primary victories with election deniers — most significantly last week in Pennsylvania, when Republican voters there chose his preferred gubernatorial candidate Doug Mastriano, who said he wouldn't have certified Biden's 2020 win of the state.

But multiple Republicans have made clear they're eyeing 2024 presidential bids, including Pence and

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 46 of 93

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. And they have distanced themselves in ways large and small from Trump's election allegations. Elections are usually about the future, and by the time the 2024 GOP primary rolls around, November 2020 will be ancient history.

## DECLINING POWER OF SCANDAL

Trump did notch some wins Tuesday. They came with baggage, but that didn't seem to stop them.

Former football great Herschel Walker, Trump's pick for U.S. Senate in Georgia, dominated his Republican challengers. Party leaders had first shied away from him because of his checkered history.

Walker, in his autobiography, admits struggling with mental illness. His ex-wife said that during their marriage he held a gun to her head and threatened to kill her. He claimed to have founded a chicken processing company employing hundreds but reported only eight workers when applying for a loan during the coronavirus pandemic. He lied about founding a charity to help veterans get aid with mental health.

But eventually even Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell ended up embracing Walker as the party's best chance to oust Democratic U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock. The bet is that voters won't care as much about scandals in post-Trump America.

That theory certainly got a boost Tuesday in Texas. Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton was indicted in 2015 on securities fraud charges and is still awaiting trial. He's under investigation for corruption by the FBI and by the state bar of Texas for his role in trying to overturn the 2020 presidential election. Yet he easily won his primary against Land Commissioner George P. Bush, powered by his ability to use his office to cater to conservative causes by, for example, investigating the parents of transgender children.

Back in Georgia, firebrand Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene won her Republican primary, shrugging off challengers who complained Greene was giving the party a bad name by engaging in Holocaust denial and other headline-grabbing, bombastic behavior.

Trump set the model in 2016, and his followers are perfecting it — never let a scandal get in the way of winning an election.

## A GAME OF INCHES

The marquee Democratic matchup of the night -- in Texas' 28th Congressional District, between progressive Jessica Cisneros and centrist Rep. Henry Cuellar, one of the last abortion rights opponents in the Democratic caucus -- was too early to call Wednesday.

The two candidates were separated by the thinnest margin of votes in a rematch two months after they were forced into a runoff. It drove home two realities: Elections are a game of inches, and even a victory won't resolve the great left versus center divide in the Democratic Party.

After the collapse of much of Biden's agenda in Congress, progressives have gotten a boost in recent primaries. Their candidate, Summer Lee, narrowly won the primary in Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District last week. In Oregon's 5th Congressional District, centrist Rep. Kurt Schrader was trailing a progressive challenger after their primary last week; the results were delayed by ballot counting problems.

Also Tuesday, Rep. Lucy McBath handily defeated Rep. Carolyn Bourdeaux in the Democratic primary in Georgia's 7th Congressional District in the Atlanta suburbs. While neither has embraced the left wing of the party, Bourdeaux was better known as a moderate than McBath.

Still, the left lost a key congressional primary in the Cleveland area just a few weeks ago. They had an awful track record in 2020. And some Democrats worry — and Republicans hope — that leftist wins in places like Oregon's 5th or Texas' 28th will make it harder for the party to hold those relatively moderate districts, especially in what's looking like a dismal fall for Democrats.

Sometimes, though, races are so close that there's eventually a winner but no resolution to the political debate they embody. Progressives can note Cisneros improved her margin after losing to Cuellar in 2020. Centrists can point to how the incumbent kept it close even amid the party's fury about a possible end to the right to abortion.

After Texas, the struggle between the Democrats' left and centrist wings seems poised to go on.

## Osaka's mental health discussion resonates at French Open

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP National Writer

PARIS (AP) — Naomi Osaka's 2022 French Open is over following a first-round loss. The players remaining in the tournament see and hear products of her frank discussion about anxiety and depression a year ago — from new "quiet rooms" and three on-call psychiatrists at Roland Garros to a broader sense that mental health is a far-less-taboo topic than it once was.

"I remember after I got back from France last year and having photographers follow me even at random places like the grocery store. It felt really odd and a bit overwhelming, until one day a woman came up to me and told me that by speaking up, I helped her son," Osaka wrote in a recent email to The Associated Press. "In that moment, it did all feel worthwhile."

In conversations with The AP shortly before or during the French Open, which began Sunday, several professional tennis players credited Osaka with helping bring the subject out of the shadows for their sport and, in concert with the voices of other athletes such as Olympic champion gymnast Simone Biles, helping foster more awareness and concern.

"I definitely think it's something that is paid attention to way more than it was, at least when I was coming up as a teenager. I don't even think I knew what it was when back then. And we're seeing people speak out and normalize it a bit in a way where it's OK if you're struggling with something — it doesn't matter if it's on the court, off court, whatever," said Jessica Pegula, a 28-year-old from New York who reached the French Open's second round Tuesday.

"In tennis, the life we kind of live is not so normal," she said. "It can lead to a lot of unhealthy habits."

Taylor Fritz, at No. 14 the highest-ranked American man, agreed.

"Traveling every week. Never being home. The pressure of the rankings," he said. "Everyone's different, so I feel like I'm a laid-back, easygoing person and not a lot of things really bother me, but I definitely understand that it is an extremely mentally draining sport."

Osaka was not the first to broach this.

But her place of prominence, as a four-time Grand Slam champion and former No. 1-ranked player, and her decisions to withdraw from Roland Garros, to explain why and to take two mental health breaks last season resonated widely.

"Anytime an athlete shares their vulnerability and their authenticity, it's going to affect other athletes in that sport. There's a relatability," said Becky Ahlgren Bedics, the vice president of mental health and wellness for the WTA. "So I don't know that I would attribute it necessarily to one person or one event, but ... that makes other folks sit up and notice and kind of say, 'Well, maybe I should pursue something along those lines, too.'"

Paola Badosa, a 24-year-old from Spain who won Tuesday, has not shied away from talking about her own anxiety.

She, like others, appreciated Osaka's forthrightness.

"All of us are humans. All of us have to deal with all of these mental struggles. We struggle," Badosa said. "And it's important that players like her talk about it."

Another more recent example: 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu, a 21-year-old Canadian set to face Olympic gold medalist Belinda Bencic in Paris on Wednesday, announced in December she would sit out the start of this season, including the Australian Open, so she could "re-set, recover, and grow" after two difficult years.

"Definitely more and more players are speaking out on it or about it. Some are even taking time off to regroup and be away from the noise. There is, for sure, a lot of noise, especially when you're in the spotlight or win big tournaments and there is a lot pressure to back it up," said another Canadian player, 23-year-old Denis Shapovalov, a Wimbledon semifinalist last year. "With social media now, it's not an easy era. And one key is that you kind of have to know whose voice is important and whose voice you don't need to focus on."

Before Roland Garros last year, Osaka said she didn't intend to speak to the media. After her first-round

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 48 of 93

victory, she was fined \$15,000 for skipping a mandatory news conference (a requirement that has not changed at the French Open or other major championships) and threatened by the four Grand Slam tournaments with further punishment if she did so again.

Instead, Osaka pulled out of the event, revealed what she had been going through for years and opted to take time away from tennis.

"I think everybody was surprised and was not ready for that," said Kildine Chevalier, who was hired in October as the French tennis federation's manager of player services and relations.

"It's important now we take into consideration those problems," said Chevalier, a former pro player who has not worked previously in the area of mental health, "not to repeat a similar situation and to prevent (it) instead of acting when it's already here."

According to Chevalier, new amenities for players at this French Open include an 850-square-foot room in the main stadium with 11 beds and noise-reducing headphones, a yoga room with daily workshops on meditation and breathing, a tea room, a nail salon and telephone hotlines to reach out to psychologists or psychiatrists.

That is separate from what the men's and women's tours offer, such as a member of the WTA mental health and wellness team who is on-site at Roland Garros. Chevalier said that office is near hers, "So I see players coming all day long. ... She is working a lot."

Those meetings have been available for years on the women's tour, but Ahlgren Bedics estimated there has been a 30% increase in sessions for WTA players over the initial months of 2022, compared to the first quarter of 2021.

"That's a pretty significant jump," she said. "If an athlete wants to pop in for 10 minutes and say, 'I'm really frustrated the way practice went today and I just need to vent,' that could be a 10-minute thing. Or the exact same symptoms could be 90 minutes. It really is up to the athlete as to how much they want to share and kind of what they want to accomplish in their time with us."

Rebecca Marino, a former top-40 player from Canada, left the tour for nearly five years because of depression but is back now and earned her first French Open berth since 2011 by getting through qualifying rounds. She notices a difference in the way mental health is discussed these days — in tennis, yes, but also across society — and said she has "a lot of praise" for the way the WTA approaches the matter.

"People didn't really understand what I was going through with my mental health and why I was stepping away from the sport," Marino said. "Now we have a lot more athletes who are discussing the importance of mental health in their careers. It's really opened up the conversation to a lot more people and it's created more positive conversation, which I think is really wonderful and I'm glad that that's starting to happen."

Still, Frances Tiafoe, a 24-year-old from Maryland who considers Osaka a close friend, noted there is work to be done to make people realize they should talk about mental health problems.

"Sometimes, you don't want to get vulnerable with each other," he said Tuesday after winning a French Open match for the first time. "If you complain, then you're called 'soft.' But when you think about it, you're actually strong. Sometimes people really are going through a lot on the inside, but they hide it and try to put up a facade like they're super tough. Sometimes you just need to verbalize it. You need a safe space to be heard. With Naomi, she was going through some stuff at that moment."

Osaka, a 23-year-old who was born in Japan and now lives in the United States, has remained a part of the conversation in a public way, whether merely by letting people know she speaks to a therapist or by becoming an investor with a role of chief community health advocate for Modern Health, which calls itself a "global workplace mental health and wellness platform."

She records meditations the company is making available to the public, and CEO and founder Alyson Watson said Osaka "can play such a big role in destigmatizing mental health" and "really pave the way, not only for athletes, but for other people, to speak up about struggling, as well."

In her email to The AP, Osaka wrote about keeping quiet about her feelings growing up, about moving past that and, with regard to her 2021 French Open, added: "This year, I am in a different state, for sure."

On Tuesday night, a day after exiting the tournament, Osaka tweeted: "These past few weeks in Europe have been a real character test but I'm glad I came. ... I'm leaving with a completely different emotion



than the previous one.”

## **Katie Britt, U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks in Alabama Senate runoff**

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Alabama’s Republican primary for U.S. Senate is going to a June runoff between Katie Britt and U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks, who overcame losing former President Donald Trump’s endorsement to remain a contender for the GOP nomination.

The candidates are seeking the Senate seat now held by U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby, who is retiring. Britt is Shelby’s former chief of staff and the former leader of the Business Council of Alabama. Brooks is a six-term congressman from north Alabama.

The two edged out Mike Durant, a businessman best known as the helicopter pilot shot down and held captive in the events chronicled in “Black Hawk Down,” to advance to a June 21 runoff, which is required when no candidate captures more than 50% of the initial vote.

“It is clear tonight that Alabamians want new blood. They want someone to go to Washington, D.C., and shake it up. It is clear that they want a true Christian conservative Republican who will lead on the America first agenda and doesn’t just talk about it but knows how to actually get something done,” Britt told supporters gathered in Montgomery.

Some had largely written Brooks off two months ago when Trump dramatically dumped his once-favored candidate in the primary. Brooks fought his way back to a second-place finish behind Britt, harnessing his history with voters, stumping with Texas Sen. Ted Cruz and benefiting from a series of negative ads targeting Durant.

Brooks had continued to run under the banner of “MAGA Mo,” referencing Trump’s Make America Great Again slogan. In his Tuesday night speech, Brooks called himself the “America First, MAGA candidate” in the race, and said he has a proven record on issues like border security and opposition to abortion.

“This Senate runoff is a battle for the soul of the Republican Party. It’s a battle to advance the United States of America,” Brooks said.

Trump had initially endorsed Brooks in the race, rewarding the firebrand congressman who spoke at the “Stop the Steal” rally on Jan. 6, 2021. But the former president rescinded that backing in March, citing unhappiness with Brooks’ performance and accusing the conservative congressman of going “woke” for suggesting it was time to move on from Trump’s false claims of 2020 election fraud. Trump did not endorse another candidate in the primary.

Phil. T. McCuiston Jr., 83, wore a cap emblazoned with “Trump” Monday to hear Brooks speak with Texas Sen. Ted Cruz in Huntsville.

“Trump gets 95% of them right, but on this one I’m going to stand with Brooks,” said McCuiston, a retired businessman. “He’s got the record.”

In east Montgomery, Jack Graham, 71, voted for Britt on Tuesday.

“It’s time to let the young people take over. Let’s see what she can do. I think she’s smart. She’s level-headed. She has a good background. She’s got good experience,” Graham said.

Outside groups pumped more than \$20 million into the race, and Brooks benefited from a series of ads that took aim at Durant, including one from a political action committee that portrayed the former prisoner of war as opposing gun rights. Durant has called the ad “patently false” and said it was difficult to overcome an opponent with “zero integrity and unlimited resources.” He urged supporters to back candidates who want to go to Washington to do something different.

“You can’t stand here and complain about what’s going on in Washington, D.C., and then go cast your vote for somebody who’s part of the establishment,” Durant said in his concession speech Tuesday.

The Republican nominee will face the Rev. Will Boyd, a minister and engineer from Hoover, who defeated two opponents in Tuesday’s primary. Boyd was the Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor in 2018 but lost to Republican Will Ainsworth.

## Ukraine: 200 bodies found in basement in Mariupol's ruins

By ELENA BECATOROS, OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI and RICARDO MAZALAN Associated Press KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Workers digging through the rubble of an apartment building in Mariupol found 200 bodies in the basement, Ukrainian authorities said Tuesday, as more horrors come to light in the ruined city that has seen some of the worst suffering of the 3-month-old war.

The bodies were decomposing and the stench hung over the neighborhood, said Petro Andryushchenko, an adviser to the mayor. He did not say when they were discovered, but the sheer number of victims makes it one of the deadliest known attacks of the war.

Heavy fighting, meanwhile, was reported in the Donbas, the eastern industrial heartland that Moscow's forces are intent on seizing. Russian troops took over an industrial town that hosts a thermal power station, and intensified efforts to encircle and capture Sievierodonetsk and other cities.

Twelve people were killed by Russian shelling in the Donetsk region of the Donbas, according to the regional governor. And the governor of the Luhansk region of the Donbas said the area is facing its "most difficult time" in the eight years since separatist fighting erupted there.

"The Russians are advancing in all directions at the same time. They brought over an insane number of fighters and equipment," the governor, Serhii Haidai, wrote on Telegram. "The invaders are killing our cities, destroying everything around." He added that Luhansk is becoming "like Mariupol."

Mariupol was relentlessly pounded during a nearly three-month siege that ended last week after some 2,500 Ukrainian fighters abandoned a steel plant where they had made their stand. Russian forces already held the rest of the city, where an estimated 100,000 people remain out a prewar population of 450,000, many of them trapped during the encirclement with little food, water, heat or electricity.

At least 21,000 people were killed in the siege, according to Ukrainian authorities, who have accused Russia of trying to cover up the horrors by bringing in mobile cremation equipment and by burying the dead in mass graves.

During the assault on Mariupol, Russian airstrikes hit a maternity hospital and a theater where civilians were taking shelter. An Associated Press investigation found that close to 600 people died in the theater attack, double the figure estimated by Ukrainian authorities.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused the Russians of waging "total war" and 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 said, referring to end of World War II.

Moscow-backed separatists have fought Ukrainian forces in the Donbas for eight years and hold large swaths of territory. Sievierodonetsk and neighboring cities are the only part of the Donbas' Luhansk region still under Ukrainian government control.

Russian forces have achieved "some localized successes" despite strong Ukrainian resistance along dug-in positions, British military authorities said.

Zelenskyy said Ukrainian forces in the region are facing a difficult situation.

"Practically the full might of the Russian army, whatever they have left, is being thrown at the offensive there," Zelenskyy said late Tuesday in his nightly address to the nation. "Liman, Popasna, Sievierodonetsk, Slaviansk — the occupiers want to destroy everything there."

In the Donetsk region, Moscow's troops took over the industrial town of Svitlodarsk, which hosts a thermal power station and had a prewar population of about 11,000, and raised the Russian flag there.

"They have now hung their rag on the local administration building," Serhii Goshko, the head of the local Ukrainian military administration, told Ukraine's Vilny Radio, in a reference to the Russian flag. Goshko said armed units were patrolling Svitlodarsk's streets, checking residents' documents.

Russian troops also shelled the eastern city of Slovyansk with cluster munitions, hitting a private building, according to Mayor Vadym Lyakh. He said casualties were avoided because many people had already left their homes, and he urged the remaining residents to evacuate west. Heavy fighting was also underway in the city of Lyman.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 51 of 93

Amid the fighting, two top Russian officials appeared to acknowledge that Moscow's advance has been slower than expected, though they vowed the offensive would achieve its goals.

Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of Russia's Security Council, said the Russian government "is not chasing deadlines." And Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told a meeting of a Russia-led security alliance of former Soviet states that Moscow is deliberately slowing down its offensive to allow residents of encircled cities to evacuate — though forces have repeatedly hit civilian targets.

Hours later, Zelenskyy mocked Shoigu's assertion.

"Well, after three months of searching for an explanation for why they were unable to break Ukraine in three days, they couldn't think of anything better than to say that's what they planned," he said in his video address.

Russian officials also announced that Moscow's forces had finished clearing mines from the waters off Mariupol and that a safe corridor will open Wednesday for the exit of as many as 70 foreign ships from Ukraine's southern coast.

In Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, there were signs of recovery after weeks of bombardment. Residents formed long lines to receive rations of flour, pasta, sugar and other staples this week. Moscow's forces withdrew from around Kharkiv earlier this month, pulling back toward the Russian border in the face of Ukrainian counterattacks, though Russia continues to shell the area from afar, Ukrainian officials said Tuesday.

Galina Kolembed, the aid distribution center coordinator, said that more and more people are returning to the city. Kolembed said the center is providing food to over 1,000 people every day, a number that keeps growing.

"Many of them have small kids, and they spend their money on the kids, so they need some support with food," she said.

Meanwhile, the wife of the top commander who held out inside the Azovstal steel mill in Mariupol said Tuesday that she had a brief telephone conversation with her husband, who surrendered to the Russians and was taken prisoner last week.

Kateryna Prokopenko, who is married to Azov Regiment leader Denys Prokopenko, said the call broke off before he could say anything about himself.

She said the call was made possible under an agreement between Ukraine and Russia, mediated by the Red Cross.

Prokopenko and Yuliia Fedosiuk, the wife of another soldier, said several families received calls in the past two days. The women said they are hopeful the soldiers will not be tortured and will eventually "come back home."

Denis Pushilin, the leader of the Moscow-backed separatists in the Donetsk region, told the Russian Interfax agency that preparations are underway for a trial of captured Ukrainian soldiers, including the Mariupol defenders.

## **Biden to sign policing order on anniversary of Floyd's death**

By MIKE BALSAMO, ZEKE MILLER and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With Congress deadlocked over how to address racism and excessive use of force, President Joe Biden plans to sign an executive order on policing Wednesday, the second anniversary of George Floyd's death.

The decision reflects Biden's struggle to use the limited powers of his office to advance his campaign promises, as well as his attempt to strike a balance between police and civil rights groups at a time when rising concerns about crime are eclipsing calls for reform.

Most of the order is focused on federal law enforcement agencies — for example, requiring them to review and revise policies on use of force. It would also create a database to help track officer misconduct, according to the White House.

Although the administration cannot require local police departments to participate in the database, which

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 52 of 93

is intended to prevent problem officers from hopping from job to job, officials are looking for ways to use federal funding to encourage their cooperation.

In addition, the order would restrict the flow of surplus military equipment to local police.

The public announcement is scheduled for the first day after Biden's return from his first trip to Asia as president.

Rev. Al Sharpton described Biden's order as "an important step" that showed the president "took the initiative" when Congress failed to act, but he said activists would "never give up" on pushing for legislation.

"George Floyd woke us up, and we should not go back to sleep," Sharpton said in a statement.

Biden is expected to appear alongside relatives of Floyd, whose killing by Minneapolis police sparked nationwide protests two years ago.

It was the largest series of demonstrations in American history, occurring in the midst of coronavirus lockdowns and President Donald Trump's divisive reelection campaign.

However, transforming the initial outcry into political change has proven difficult.

When four officers were convicted last year for killing Floyd, Biden urged Congress to pass legislation to reform police by the anniversary of his death.

The guilty verdict was "not enough," he said, and "we can't stop here."

However, no legislation was passed, and bipartisan talks dragged on, and later broke down.

The White House eventually decided to move forward with executive actions rather than wait for Congress.

In September, the Justice Department curtailed federal agents' use of no-knock warrants — which allow law enforcement agents to enter a home without announcing their presence — and updated its policy to prohibit agents from using chokeholds in most circumstances.

But extending such rules to local police is more challenging, and White House officials have spent months in negotiations with civil rights groups and police organizations.

The resulting set of policies is less extensive than originally sought, not to mention delayed by a year.

"We know full well that an executive order cannot address America's policing crisis the same way Congress has the ability to, but we've got to do everything we can," said a statement from NAACP President Derrick Johnson.

The order goes beyond issues involving misconduct and use of force. It would also assess the impact of facial recognition software on civil liberties, look for ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in federal correctional facilities and suggest better ways to collect data on police practices.

The research could eventually lay the groundwork for more changes within American law enforcement in the future.

## Georgia primary running smoothly despite new election law

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY and GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — In the first statewide test of new voting restrictions, Georgia's high-stakes primary election appeared to be running smoothly Tuesday with no reports of major problems in one of the nation's most important battleground states.

A record number of ballots cast during the early voting period in the three weeks before Election Day helped ease the strain at polling places. There were no reports of long lines or widespread equipment problems despite hotly contested GOP primary races for governor and U.S. Senate.

"It's all quiet, and quiet is good," said Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, who also was facing a GOP primary challenger in his re-election bid.

He said overall turnout was on track to set a record for a midterm election in the state.

Tuesday's primary was the first major election since the GOP-controlled Legislature and Republican governor adopted tighter rules following the 2020 presidential election and amid a concerted effort by former President Donald Trump to cast doubt on his loss with unsubstantiated claims of fraud.

Lawmakers added restrictions to mail voting, limited drop boxes and changed rules that could make it harder for voters who run into problems on Election Day to have their ballots counted. That's despite no

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 53 of 93

evidence of widespread fraud that would have changed the results of the 2020 presidential election in Georgia, a state that Democrat Joe Biden won by about 11,800 votes.

Election Day capped a record-setting early voting period in Georgia. Nearly 860,000 ballots had been cast through Friday, the majority of which were done in-person as opposed to mail. State election officials said the early turnout marked a 168% increase from the 2018 primary and a 212% increase from 2020.

Republicans have touted the early voting numbers as evidence that the Georgia elections law, known as Senate Bill 202, has not harmed voters.

"Now we are seeing the hard evidence that as we all knew, the hysteria was never based on fact to begin with," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said on the Senate floor Tuesday.

Since primaries tend to draw more experienced voters, it may be too soon to draw any sweeping conclusions about the effects of the Georgia law. In the fall, more first-time and infrequent voters — those who are more likely to encounter challenges at the polls — will be casting ballots.

Georgia's primary also was expected to draw far higher turnout among Republicans because of the closely contested GOP races for governor and secretary of state, and a high-profile U.S. Senate race. The two leading Democratic candidates for governor and U.S. Senate were facing little to no opposition.

"Nothing I have seen so far has changed the fact that Georgia could have celebrated the historic turnout we saw in 2020 and made voting more accessible," said Sophia Lin Lakin, deputy director of the ACLU's Voting Rights Project.

Georgia was among three states, along with Alabama and Arkansas, holding regular primaries Tuesday. Texas had runoff elections for the GOP primary for attorney general and for a Democratic congressional seat, while Minnesota was holding a special primary for the seat of former Republican U.S. Rep. Jim Hagedorn, who died in February.

Georgia — along with other states that have held early primaries — has seen a dramatic decline in the use of mailed ballots since the record numbers reported in 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when voters were seeking alternatives to crowded polling places.

Brad Conlon, who cast his ballot at a church in the north Georgia town of Holly Springs, said he prefers voting in-person because he believes it's more secure. He said poll workers checked his ID twice.

"I have a lot of concerns about methods that aren't really well-watched, protected," said Conlon, who owns a small business in heavily Republican Cherokee County.

Across the state, election officials and voting rights groups reported a few instances of polling locations opening late, minor equipment troubles and some voters showing up at the wrong voting location — in some cases because of errors in the voting materials they received. Officials acknowledged the error for some voters in Chatham County, home of Savannah, and posted signs on the door of at least one polling place redirecting voters. State election officials said a drawn-out redistricting process gave election offices tight deadlines to ensure that all voters were assigned to their proper precinct.

Voting was being extended in at least seven precincts in Georgia that delayed their morning opening. There were no immediate reports of major voting issues in the other states.

The new Georgia elections law made several changes. It made it harder to request a mail ballot by shortening the period voters can apply for one and added new ID requirements to the applications and the ballot itself. Voters could request a ballot online two years ago, but now they must print or obtain a paper form, sign it in ink and send it in by mail, email or fax.

As of Monday, about 72,000 mail ballots had been returned out of nearly 97,000 requested by Georgia voters. About 1,300 applications were rejected for arriving past the new, earlier deadline, or about 1.4% of those submitted.

Texas primary voters in March were tripped up by new identification requirements, resulting in an abnormally high rate of mail ballot rejections. Lawmakers in Alabama and Arkansas also shortened the period for those requesting absentee ballots.

**Live updates | Russia-Ukraine War**

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 54 of 93

By The Associated Press undefined

The Russian parliament gave preliminary approval Tuesday to a bill that would allow the government to appoint new management of foreign companies that pulled out of Russia after its invasion of Ukraine.

According to the state news agency Tass, the new law would transfer control over companies that left Russia not for economic reasons but because of "anti-Russian sentiment in Europe and the U.S. Tass said foreign owners would still be able to resume operations in Russia or sell their shares.

Many foreign companies have suspended operations in Russia. Others have walked away entirely, despite their huge investments.

McDonald's announced this month that it is selling its 850 restaurants in Russia.

The State Duma, the lower house of Russia's parliament, approved the bill in the first of three readings on Tuesday. After final approval, it would go to the upper house and then to President Vladimir Putin for his signature.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said the new law made it even more imperative for foreign companies remaining in Russia to leave. "It's the last chance to save not only your reputation but your property," he said in a statement.

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR:

- After 3 months, Russia still bogged down in Ukraine war
- 200 bodies found in Mariupol as war rages in Ukraine's east
- AP-NORC poll: US economy, not punishing Russia, is top priority
- Pentagon says more high-tech weapons going to Ukraine
- After 3 months of war, life in Russia has profoundly changed

Follow AP's coverage of the war in Ukraine at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

## OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

KYIV, Ukraine — The Ukrainian military said Russia has fired at Ukrainian border guards in the north-eastern Sumy region in the latest of a series of alleged cross-border attacks over the past few weeks.

Military officials say observers Tuesday night recorded seven shots from Russian territory toward the village of Boyaro-Lezhachi, most likely mortar fire.

The Ukrainian Operational Command North said on its Facebook post that eight other shots were heard Tuesday afternoon near a neighboring village. There were no reports of any deaths.

Meanwhile Tuesday, Russian shelling continues around Ukraine's second-largest city of Kharkiv, even after Russian troops withdrew from its surroundings last week.

Ukrainian regional officials say the city of Derhachi was hit and a 69-year-old woman died and another person was injured.

Derhachi is southwest of the city of Kharkiv and has previously come under Russian shelling.

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia is using everything at its disposal in the fight for four cities in the eastern Donbas region.

"The situation in the Donbas now is very difficult," Zelenskyy said late Tuesday in his nightly address to the nation. "Practically the full might of the Russian army, whatever they have left, is being thrown at the offensive there. Liman, Popasna, Sievierodonetsk, Slaviansk – the occupiers want to destroy everything there."

Zelenskyy said the Ukrainian army is fighting back, but "it will take time and a lot more effort by our people to overcome their advantage in the amount of equipment and weapons."

He told Ukrainians they should be proud of having held off Russia for three months in a war that many in Russia and the West expected to last three days.

Zelenskyy appealed for even more weapons from the West to keep Ukraine in the fight including multiple-rocket launchers and tanks.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 55 of 93

In addition, Zelenskyy mocked the statement made Tuesday by the Russian defense minister that Russia was deliberately slowing its offensive to allow residents of encircled cities time to evacuate.

**KYIV, Ukraine** — The Ukrainian governor of the eastern Luhansk region said Tuesday that the area was facing “the most difficult time” since conflict with Russia-backed separatists began in 2014.

“Now, for the Luhansk region, is the most difficult time in the eight years of the war,” Serhii Haidai wrote on Telegram. “The Russians are advancing in all directions at the same time, they brought over an insane number of fighters and equipment.”

He also accused Moscow’s troops of deploying scorched-earth tactics across the region, one of two which make up Ukraine’s eastern industrial heartland.

“It’s only getting worse. What the Russians are doing is hard to describe in words. The invaders are killing our cities, destroying everything around. ... The situation is on the verge of being critical. The free Luhansk region is now like Mariupol,” Haidai added, in a reference to the ruined port city captured by Moscow last week.

**KYIV, Ukraine** — The top military commander who fought until last week to keep Ukrainian control of the southern port city of Mariupol is alive in Russian-controlled territory, his wife said Tuesday after holding a brief telephone conversation.

Kateryna Prokopenko, who is married to Azov Regiment leader Denys Prokopenko, said that her husband asked her how she was, but that the line broke off before he could say anything about himself.

She said the phone call was possible under an agreement between the governments of Ukraine and Russia and thanks to the mediation of the Red Cross, which has been visiting some of the Ukrainian fighters who surrendered.

Earlier this month Russia announced its takeover of Mariupol with the surrender of the fighters holed up at the massive Azovstal steel mill.

Prokopenko, who spoke to The Associated Press in Kyiv together with another wife of a soldier, Yuliia Fedosiuk, said that the Ukraine and Russia agreement guarantees proper burial of dead soldiers and certain conditions for the prisoners of war, including allowing them to hold telephone calls with family members a few times per week.

The two women said several families had received calls in the past two days. They said they could not reveal more details of the agreement but they were hopeful that the soldiers will not be tortured and that they eventually will “come back home.”

**BERLIN** — Germany has rejected suggestions that it is reneging on a promise to provide Poland with tanks to make up for those that Warsaw has delivered to Ukraine.

Polish President Andrzej Duda told German broadcaster Welt that he was “very disappointed” Berlin had not fulfilled its promise on the delivery of Leopard tanks to Poland.

Speaking after a meeting with her Polish counterpart in Berlin on Tuesday, Germany’s Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said the issue had been discussed in order to resolve “misunderstandings.”

She said Germany could not supply heavy weapons “at the press of a button” as there were numerous questions to consider, not least what arms are actually available.

Poland’s Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau said his country regretted that the situation with regard to arms deliveries to Ukraine was “not as dynamic” as hoped, but acknowledged that “the devil lies in the detail” on the issue.

Poland gave Soviet-designed T-72 tanks to Ukraine with the expectation that NATO, the U.S. and Germany would fill that void.

Germany has agreed to several similar circular swaps with allied countries such as Slovenia and the Czech Republic, who in turn are sending older Soviet-era tanks to Ukraine.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 56 of 93

DAVOS, Switzerland — European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Tuesday accused Russia of deliberately bombarding grain warehouses across Ukraine and weaponizing food supplies.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has provoked disruptions of global food supplies, and the blockade of Ukrainian ports has been particularly harmful. Ukraine accounted for 90% of grain and oilseed exports before the war, according to the EU.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the head of the EU's executive arm said about 20 million tons of wheat are currently stuck in Ukraine.

"And on top of this, Russia is now hoarding its own food exports as a form of blackmail — holding back supplies to increase global prices, or trading wheat in exchange for political support," she said. "This is using hunger and grain to wield power."

Von der Leyen said that fragile countries and vulnerable populations suffer the most. She said bread prices in Lebanon increased by 70%, and food shipments from Odesa have been blocked from reaching Somalia.

LVIIV, Ukraine — An adviser to the mayor of Mariupol said on Tuesday that workers removing rubble from a collapsed apartment building in the devastated Ukrainian city found about 200 corpses in the building's basement.

Petro Andryushchenko said on Telegram that the bodies were decomposing and that the stench permeated the neighborhood. It's not clear when they were discovered and the report could not be independently verified.

Perched on the Sea of Azov, Mariupol was relentlessly pounded during a monthslong siege that finally ended last week after some 2,500 Ukrainian fighters abandoned a steel plant where they had made their last stand in the strategic port city.

BRUSSELS — A European Union plan to suspend all tariffs on imports from Ukraine for one year cleared the final political hurdle on Tuesday when EU finance ministers endorsed the move.

Meant to help the Ukrainian economy battered by Russia's invasion, the removal of the EU duties will apply to Ukrainian industrial products, including steel, and to farm goods such as fruits and vegetables.

The EU has already scrapped most of its tariffs on Ukrainian products as a result of a 2016 free-trade agreement. Ukrainian exports to the EU were worth 24.1 billion euros (\$25.8 billion) last year, with the main goods being metals, agricultural products and machinery.

Two top Russian security officials vowed on Tuesday that Moscow will achieve all the goals set for the "military operation" in Ukraine, appearing to address the fact that the invasion, expected by many to be a blitzkrieg, has entered its fourth month this week.

The secretary of Russia's Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev, said in an interview published Tuesday that the Russian government "is not chasing deadlines."

"Nazism must either be 100% eradicated, or it will raise its head in a few years, and in an even uglier form," he said in a response to a question about the war dragging on.

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.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said at a meeting of security officials that Russia is deliberately slowing down its offensive by arranging cease-fires and humanitarian corridors "in order to avoid casualties among the civilians."

AP's reporting on the ground found that the Russian forces have repeatedly hit civilian targets, such as hospitals, schools and venues where civilians were sheltering.

PARIS — A Ukrainian government minister pushed Tuesday for a quick decision on eventual Ukrainian membership in the European Union, even as France warns that it could be decades before Ukraine joins the bloc.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 57 of 93

Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Olga Stefanishyna met with French Europe Minister Clement Beaune Tuesday in Paris and argued that Ukraine has made deep and difficult reforms aimed at improving its chances at EU membership.

"As politicians, we must find a way for Ukraine to truly become part of this family, both economically and politically," she told reporters.

The European Commission aims to deliver a first opinion in June on Ukraine's request to become a member. But the process usually takes many years, and French President Emmanuel Macron has said it could be decades.

In the meantime France is proposing an interim arrangement that would allow more political cooperation with Ukraine and other potential EU members.

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DAVOS, Switzerland — European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen says Russia can be reintegrated into the orbit of European nations if it finds its way back to "democracy, the rule of law, the respect for the international rules-based order."

Von der Leyen spoke at the World Economic Forum's annual gathering Tuesday. Insisting on the historical and cultural links between Europe and Russia, the head of the EU's executive arm said reconciliation is "certainly a distant dream and hope.

"But this also says that our standing up against this brutal invasion is standing up against the leadership in Russia. It is the Russian people who are the ones who decide about the future of their country. They have it in their hands."

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ANKARA, Turkey — The leader of a Turkish nationalist party that is allied with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey should consider leaving NATO if "circumstances become inextricable" and Turkey is forced to approve Sweden and Finland membership.

Devlet Bahceli, the leader of the Nationalist Action Party, said in a speech to his party's legislators on Tuesday that Turkey isn't without alternatives and could be part of a possible security alliance that could be made up of Turkic-speaking states and Muslim nations.

"Turkey is not without options. Turkey is not helpless. Leaving NATO should be put on the agenda as an alternative option if the circumstances become inextricable," Bahceli said. "We did not exist with NATO, and we will not perish without NATO."

Turkey is objecting to Sweden's and Finland's historic bid to join the alliance, citing as reasons their perceived support to the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and other groups that Turkey considers to be terrorists.

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ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu says a delegation made up of officials from Sweden and Finland are expected to arrive in Turkey later on Tuesday to discuss Ankara's objection to their membership in NATO.

Cavusoglu told a group of journalists traveling with him on a two-day visit to the Palestinian territories and Israel that the delegation would meet with Presidential Spokesman Ibrahim Kalin and Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Onal on Wednesday.

Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto also confirmed the meeting.

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

"There should be a Russian military base in the Kherson region," deputy head of the Russia-installed administration in Kherson Kirill Stremousov was quoted as saying by the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti. "We will be asking for it, the entire population is interested in it. It is vitally important and will become a security guarantee for the region and its residents."

Russian forces took control of the Kherson region in southeastern Ukraine early on in the war and installed

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 58 of 93

its own administration there. Ukrainian officials have speculated that Russia plans to stage a referendum in the region to declare its independence, similar to the ones that took place in eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions in 2014. Moscow recognized the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics two days before invading Ukraine and used it as a pretext to send troops to its ex-Soviet neighbor.

Stremousov denied such plans earlier this month and said the region will ask the Kremlin to make it part of Russia instead. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said it is up to the people of Kherson to decide how and where they want to live.

LONDON — British military authorities say Russian forces have intensified efforts to encircle and capture Severodonetsk and neighboring cities, the only part of the Luhansk region that remains under Ukrainian government control.

The U.K. defense ministry, in a briefing posted Tuesday morning, says the northern and southern arms of the Russian operation are currently separated by about 25 kilometers (15 miles) of Ukrainian-held territory.

The ministry says Russian forces have achieved "some localized successes" despite strong resistance from Ukrainian troops that occupy well dug-in defensive positions.

The ministry says the battle for Severodonetsk is only one part of the Russian campaign to take the larger Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, and the fall of the city may cause logistical problems for the Kremlin.

"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.

## Cannes Film Festival, born out of war, grapples with Ukraine

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — The war in Ukraine took a starring role on the opening night of the 75th Cannes Film Festival and it has rarely been far out of frame since.

The parties have continued nonstop, as has the red-carpet frenzy. But throughout the French Riviera spectacular has run a discourse about the role of cinema in wartime. Movie screens have lit up with footage from the front lines and films with trenchant meaning in relationship to the conflict.

Sergei Loznitsa, one of Ukraine's most acclaimed filmmakers, was putting the finishing touches on his documentary "The Natural History of Destruction" when Russia invaded Ukraine in February. The film, which premiered Monday in Cannes, uses extensive archival footage to depict the Allied bombing campaign of Germany during World War II. The question at the heart of the film, inspired by W.G. Sebald's 1999 book of the same name, is about the morality of targeting civilian populations in times of war.

With Russian bombs falling on maternity hospitals, theaters and other places crowded with sheltering civilians, "The Natural History of Destruction" transformed into a film less about the past than the present.

"It became clear that the lessons of 80 years ago haven't been learned," said Loznitsa in an interview. "It seems possible for us as humans to be thrown back 80 years to the stage where all these atrocities and terrible things were possible."

"If we want to remain human, we need to stop this," added Loznitsa, the director of "Donbass" and "Babi Yar." "This should not be acceptable to a civilized society."

The Cannes Film Festival was born out of war. The start of World War II forced the postponement of the inaugural festival, in 1939. Cannes was initially conceived as a counter to the Venice Film Festival, which had then fallen under the influence of Mussolini and Hitler.

This year's festival has unspooled against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, and sometimes in spite of it. Sit-ins haven't replaced late-night soirees on the Croisette, nor has attention wavered substantially from the parade of stars posing in front of barricades of photographers. Jet fighters have been airborne here, but only to promote Tom Cruise's "Top Gun: Maverick." After two years of pandemic, Cannes has very eagerly gotten back to frolicking in the Cote d'Azur sun.

On opening night last week, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy challenged filmmakers to take up the mantle of Charlie Chaplin's "The Great Dictator" and "demonstrate that the cinema of our time is not

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 59 of 93

silent." And in the days that have followed, the role of cinema while thousands are dying in Ukraine has been an ongoing dialogue — and Cannes has been a platform for protest.

One woman burst onto the red carpet and shed her clothes to reveal the Ukrainian flag painted on her torso, blood drawn on her body and the message "Stop raping us." On Wednesday, the filmmakers of the Ukrainian film "Butterfly Vision," by Maksym Nakonechny, planned to walk the steps at the Debussy Theatre with air sirens ringing out.

"The sound of air alert will give viewers the feeling of what Ukrainians are going through each single day and let them share this experience," the filmmakers said in a statement.

"War is about killing people. It's about destroying everything," said Kirill Serebrennikov, a Russian filmmaker who has fled his homeland after several years of home arrest and travel ban. "Art is always against war."

The very presence of Serebrennikov, who premiered the period drama "Tchaikovsky's Wife," at Cannes has been much debated. His film was partly financed by Russian oligarch and former Chelsea owner Roman Abramovitch. Cannes' artistic director, Thierry Fremaux, acknowledged on the eve of the festival that he had wrestled with the decision but ultimately decided to screen "Tchaikovsky's Wife" since the film took funding from Abramovitch before sanctions were enacted, and because Serebrennikov challenges state propaganda.

Cannes, a kind of Olympics for film, elected to ban Russian delegates and Russians with ties to the Kremlin. In most years, the yachts of Russian oligarchs are a regular presence off the Cannes shores.

In Ruben Ostlund's social satire "Triangle of Sadness" (one of the films competing for Cannes' Palme d'Or), Woody Harrelson plays a Marxist yacht captain who drunkenly debates politics with a Russian oligarch.

"I'm an anarchist," Harrelson told reporters. "I'm the kind of guy who thinks it's abominable when a superpower with all this military might and with no provocation attacks a country."

Tilda Swinton, who stars with Idris Elba in George Miller's "Three Thousand Years of Longing," an expansive modern fairy tale about the nature of storytelling, drew a pointed parallel between propaganda and the diverse perspectives of fiction.

"The thing that's dangerous is when you have only one story," said Swinton. "It's when people can't hear any other stories that things go down the tubes very fast."

Other films were more directly connected with the war. Lithuanian filmmaker Mantas Kvedaravicius was killed last month in Ukraine. His fiancée Hanna Bilobrova brought the footage he shot out of Ukraine and, with editors, assembled the documentary "Mariupolis 2." Introducing the film, Bilobrova cried as she thanked the crowd for honoring Kvedaravicius' legacy.

"What madness," a Mariupol man says in the film, with bombs echoing nearby. "I don't know how the Earth holds up."

The contrast between such films and Cannes' more frivolous, celebrity-crazed side can be head-spinning. For filmmakers like Loznitsa, it can be surreal being at one of the most glamorous places in the world while 1,000 miles to the northwest the war rages on.

"I don't think the role of cinema, of art, in general has changed. Our duty as filmmakers is to try to understand what's going on around us," said Loznitsa, who was kicked out of the Ukrainian Film Academy for not supporting a boycott of Russian filmmakers. "I believe our duty is defend culture, all culture. The culture of any nation, of any people, belongs to the entire world."

To explain the feeling of being in Cannes, Loznitsa cited the W.H. Auden poem "September 1, 1939," written in New York on the day WWII broke out:

"I sit in one of the dives/On Fifty-second Street/Uncertain and afraid/ As the clever hopes expire."

## US safety, savings rules set stage for baby formula shortage

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A massive recall is getting most of the blame for the U.S. baby formula shortage, but experts say the products have long been vulnerable to this type of crisis due to decades-old policies

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 60 of 93

that have allowed a handful of companies to corner the market.

Those government rules — aimed at assuring safe, affordable formula — are getting renewed scrutiny as President Joe Biden's administration rushes to import formula from Europe.

"There's perfectly good and safe baby formula available around the world. We just don't have access to it," said Bindiya Vakil, CEO of Resilinc, a supply chain analytics firm. "We've created this problem by not setting up an infrastructure for imports."

Abbott Nutrition said Tuesday it expects to restart its shuttered Michigan plant June 4 and begin shipping new formula to stores about three weeks later. The factory is the largest of its kind in the U.S. and has been closed since February, hobbling supplies of popular formulas and specialty formulas for children with rare medical conditions.

The company also said it received permission from regulators to release 300,000 cans of its EleCare specialty formula for babies with allergic and digestive disorders. The product was not part of a February recall.

Lawmakers will hold three hearings on the issue this week, calling on company executives, government regulators and outside experts to testify. The attention could spur changes to government safety and contracting rules that have been in place since the 1980s and favor big U.S. manufacturers that are capable of navigating the complex requirements.

Baby formula is one of the few American products essentially unaffected by globalization, with 98% of the supply manufactured domestically. Four companies account for roughly 90% of the market: Abbott, Reckitt, Nestle and Perrigo, according to industry figures. That consolidation mirrors similar trends across the food industry.

But infant formula wasn't part of a Biden administration initiative last year spotlighting dangerously concentrated industries, including prescription drugs, airlines, hearing aids and internet services.

The Federal Trade Commission announced Tuesday that it has launched an inquiry into the formula shortage, seeking information on any deceptive or fraudulent business practices related to it. The agency said it also aims to shed light on what led to the concentration in the baby formula market and the weak supply chains.

Food experts say strict formula regulations set by the Food and Drug Administration have long limited competition.

Beginning in 1980, Congress gave the FDA authority to rigorously enforce the nutritional content of all formula sold in the U.S., imposing extra research and manufacturing standards that have few equivalents worldwide. The changes came after some babies were sickened by deficient formulas in the 1970s.

"They are pretty much the strictest food safety guidelines in the U.S. and America has some of the strictest guidelines in the world," said Wendy White, a food safety expert at Georgia Tech.

Companies must consult with the FDA before selling a new formula, altering ingredients in an existing one or making major manufacturing changes. The result is only the biggest manufacturers have plants and procedures that comply with federal rules. And would-be competitors have little incentive to enter the field, given the declining U.S. birth rate.

"You have to have a lot of expertise, a lot of resources and a lot of research dollars," White said.

There are other hurdles for foreign manufacturers looking to compete. The U.S. has long imposed tariffs and quotas on dairy imports from abroad, including Canada, in order to shield American milk producers from competition.

Responding to political pressure, the Biden administration has begun airlifting shipments of formula from Europe. In a related move, the FDA said Tuesday it would allow the importation of 2 million cans of Kendal Nutricare formula from the U.K to boost supplies. The products are expected to begin arriving in U.S. stores early next month.

The biggest driver of the U.S. market, by far, is a massive federal nutrition program that provides formula and other foods to lower-income women and children. The WIC program accounts for more than 50% of the U.S. market, providing formula for more than 1.2 million babies, according to the National WIC Association, which represents state and local administrators who run the benefit.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 61 of 93

Beginning in 1989, federal law has required states to award contracts to a single formula company, based on whichever one can offer the biggest discounts.

The effect is that contract winners quickly squeeze out much of the competition on store shelves. Today, all 50 WIC contracts are held by three companies: Abbott, Reckitt and Nestle, according to the association. Abbott is the leader, with 34 state contracts.

The competitive effects of these sole-source contracts have been researched for years. A 2011 study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture found that whichever company wins a state's WIC contract typically sees their market share grow by 74%, on average, as WIC recipients switch to their brand.

But not everyone supports overhauling the system. Brian Dittmeier of the National WIC Association says doing away with sole-source contracts would jeopardize the savings that allow the plan to serve so many Americans. Instead he says manufacturers should be held accountable for not investing in their own capacity.

"This is a manufacturing failure," Dittmeier said. "The fact is there just is not enough product to fulfill the demand that manufacturers have drummed up over the years." His group supports calls by some lawmakers for a federal antitrust investigation into the industry.

WIC contracts are generally rebid every four years and market share swings back and forth between the handful of players who compete.

Dr. Steven Abrams, a pediatrician at the University of Texas at Austin, says Congress should revisit the WIC program.

"We need to take a comprehensive look at where the failures happened and where we can fix them" said Abrams. "We need to consider whether we really want to have a situation where there's that much dominance in the program."

## Top Southern Baptists plan to release secret list of abusers

By DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

Top administrative leaders for the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in America, said Tuesday that they will release a secret list of hundreds of pastors and other church-affiliated personnel accused of sexual abuse.

An attorney for the SBC's Executive Committee announced the decision during a virtual meeting called in response to a scathing investigative report detailing how the committee mishandled allegations of sex abuse and stonewalled numerous survivors. The committee anticipates releasing the list Thursday.

During the meeting, top leaders and several committee members vowed to work toward changing the culture of the denomination and to listen more attentively to survivors' voices and stories.

The 288-page report by Guidepost Solutions, which was released Sunday after a seven-month investigation, contained several explosive revelations. Among those were details of how D. August Boto, the Executive Committee's former vice president and general counsel, and former SBC spokesman Roger Oldham kept their own private list of abusive pastors. Both retired in 2019. The existence of the list was not widely known within the committee and its staff.

"Despite collecting these reports for more than 10 years, there is no indication that (Oldham and Boto) or anyone else, took any action to ensure that the accused ministers were no longer in positions of power at SBC churches," the report said.

Boto joined the Executive Committee in 1995 and became executive vice president and general counsel in 2007.

On Tuesday, the committee released a statement singling out and denouncing Boto's words written in a communication to survivors and their advocates on Sept. 29, 2006 that "continued discourse between us (the Executive Committee and survivors' advocates) will not be positive or fruitful."

The committee, in its new statement, said it "rejects the sentiment (of Boto's words) in its entirety and seeks to publicly repent for its failure to rectify this position and wholeheartedly listen to survivors."

Gene Besen, the committee's interim counsel, said during Tuesday's virtual meeting that releasing the list is an important step toward transparency. The names of survivors, confidential witnesses and any

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 62 of 93

uncorroborated allegations of sexual abuse will be redacted from the list that will be made public, he said.

Besen said the committee's leaders will also look into revoking retirement benefits for Boto and others who were involved in the cover-up. He urged committee members to set aside past divisions and stay united in a collective commitment to end sexual abuse in the SBC.

Willie McLaurin, the Executive Committee's interim president and CEO, issued a formal public apology to all those who suffered sexual abuse within the SBC, which has a membership of over 47,000 churches.

"We are sorry to the survivors for all we have done to cause pain and frustration," he said. "Now is the time to change the culture. We have to be proactive in our openness and transparency from now."

Executive Committee Chair Rolland Slade began the virtual meeting by acknowledging the survivors.

"Our commitment is to be different and do different," he said. "We can't come up with half-baked solutions."

After the report's release, more sexual abuse survivors have been contacting the Executive Committee to tell their stories, Besen said. He said he has asked Guidepost to open up a hotline so survivors who reach out "are directed to the proper place and receive the proper care." The committee will publicize the hotline number as soon as it goes live, McLaurin said.

The Sexual Abuse Task Force, appointed at the demand of SBC delegates during last year's meeting in Nashville, expects to make its formal motions based on the Guidepost report public next week. Those recommendations will then be presented to the delegates for a vote during this year's national meeting scheduled for June 14-15 in Anaheim, California, according to Pastor Bruce Frank who led the task force.

Frank, lead pastor of Biltmore Baptist Church in Arden, North Carolina, said the crux of the task force's recommendations based on Guidepost's report would be to prevent sexual abuse, to better care for survivors when such abuse does occur and to make sure abusers are not allowed to continue in ministry.

Survivors and advocates have long called for a public database of abusers. The creation of an "Offender Information System" was one of the key recommendations in the report 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 that resulted from Guidepost's seven-month investigation presented to thousands of delegates attending this year's national meeting

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 by Tuesday's announcement that the secret list would be made public.

"I hope that will happen in the very near future. I'll be watching and waiting," she told The Associated Press. "It boggles my mind to try to imagine how they could have rationalized keeping this list secret for so many years - since 2007. It suggests a level of moral bankruptcy that I find incomprehensible."

## UCLA to pay record of nearly \$700M in doctor abuse lawsuits

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The University of California system announced Tuesday it will pay nearly \$375 million to more than 300 women who said they were sexually abused by a UCLA gynecologist, bringing a record amount in total payouts by a public university in a wave of sexual misconduct scandals by campus doctors.

The settlement followed previous deals with hundreds of other patients who said Dr. James Heaps groped them, made suggestive comments or conducted unnecessarily invasive exams during his 35-year career.

"Dr. Heaps sexually abused patients for years while UCLA Health put profits over their safety," attorney Jennifer McGrath said in a statement. "Today's settlement is the result of the bravery of these victims, and sends a message that healthcare institutions must protect vulnerable patients and act decisively at complaints of abuse."

The university has agreed to pay nearly \$700 million to Heaps's patients, dwarfing a \$500 million settlement by Michigan State University in 2018 that was considered the largest by a public university. The University

of Southern California, a private institution, has agreed to pay more than \$1 billion to settle thousands of cases against the school's longtime gynecologist.

Heaps, 65, who retired as the scandal unfolded, has pleaded not guilty to 21 felony counts for allegedly sexually assaulting seven women.

Women who brought the lawsuits said UCLA ignored their complaints and deliberately concealed abuse that happened for decades during examinations at the UCLA student health center, the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center or in Heaps' campus office.

UCLA acknowledged it received a sex abuse complaint against Heaps from a patient in December 2017 and it launched an investigation the following month that concluded she was sexually assaulted and harassed, attorneys said.

Heaps, however, continued to practice until his retirement in June 2018. The university did not release its finding in the investigation until November 2019 — months after Heaps was arrested.

The university previously reached settlements with other patients of Heaps for \$316 million. The most recent settlement with 312 women resolves the vast majority of claims against Heaps, the university said.

"The conduct alleged to have been committed by Heaps is reprehensible and contrary to our values," UCLA said in a statement. "We are grateful to all those who came forward, and hope this settlement is one step toward providing some level of healing for the plaintiffs involved."

The university said it would pay for the settlements through a combination of insurance, risk financing and capital bond proceeds.

Sex abuse by doctors on college campuses has led to massive settlements at Ohio State University, Johns Hopkins University and Columbia University.

Michigan State paid \$500 million to 300 women and girls who said they were assaulted by Larry Nassar, who was a campus sports doctor and a doctor for USA Gymnastics. Nassar, who also sexually abused Olympic gold medal gymnasts, is serving prison sentences likely to keep him behind bars for the rest of his life.

The University of Michigan reached a \$490 million settlement with more than 1,000 people who said they were sexually assaulted by the late Dr. Robert Anderson, during his nearly four-decade career as a sports doctor at the school.

## Witness for Depp cryptically contradicts key Heard witness

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (AP) — Jurors in Johnny Depp's libel lawsuit against ex-wife Amber Heard heard a snippet of testimony Tuesday contradicting one of Heard's key witnesses, but much of the context was stripped away.

Jennifer Howell — who once employed Heard's sister, Whitney Henriquez — testified briefly Tuesday in the six-week civil trial through a recorded deposition.

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.

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.

Howell testified that she sent an email in 2020 to Henriquez begging her to tell the truth.

Jurors, though, did not see the letter, nor did Howell explain in what way she thought Henriquez was being untruthful. The edited deposition played in court for less than 15 minutes — Howell appeared to walk out of the deposition before lawyers had completed their questioning.

In a court document, though, Howell goes into much greater detail. She gives a four-page declaration in which she says Henriquez confided in her that Heard was the aggressor in the fight and Henriquez allegedly said she thought Heard "was going to kill Johnny."

Howell also says in the declaration that Henriquez told her and others in their workplace that Heard cut

off Depp's finger in a fight the couple had in Australia. The severed finger has been a point of dispute throughout the trial. Depp says the finger was severed when Heard lobbed a vodka bottle at him. Heard says Depp did it to himself on a night when he was in a drunken rage and sexually assaulted her with a bourbon bottle.

Henriquez is the only one of Heard's witnesses who testified in the six-week trial that she personally witnessed Depp physically assault Heard, in a fight where she said each landed blows on the other while she was caught between the two.

It's not entirely clear why Howell's testimony was so limited. Throughout the trial, though, Judge Penney Azcarate has strictly enforced rules limiting hearsay evidence, and Howell's description of what Henriquez told her would likely be a classic example of hearsay unless Depp's lawyers could claim some sort of exception to the hearsay rule.

In Howell's declaration, she acknowledged that she was upset when she learned that Heard had pledged millions of dollars to the American Civil Liberties Union and a children's hospital, when Howell thought the money could do more good at The Art of Elysium, the nonprofit she ran and that had employed Henriquez.

The limited nature of Howell's testimony makes it unclear if jurors will draw the connections that Depp's team hopes to make.

Howell testified as a rebuttal witness for Depp after Heard rested her case Tuesday morning without calling Depp to the stand — Heard's lawyers had initially suggested they would call Depp as a witness.

Jurors may still hear more from Depp. His team has indicated they may call him to the stand Wednesday.

Both Depp and Heard have each testified extensively already about details of their toxic relationship.

Also Tuesday, the celebrity news site TMZ filed an emergency motion seeking to block the testimony of a former employee, Morgan Tremain.

TMZ said it's concerned that Tremain is prepared to testify Wednesday for Depp and violate a pledge of confidentiality that the news outlet provided to a source who gave TMZ information related to the couple's high-profile divorce.

Heard has denied that she tipped off news outlets to the fact that she obtained a temporary restraining order after filing for divorce from Depp in 2016. Heard alleged Depp abused her in that application, and Heard was photographed by paparazzi leaving the courthouse with an apparent bruise on her cheek.

Depp's lawyers have said she sought publicity about her abuse allegations to falsely damage his reputation.

Also Tuesday, Judge Penney Azcarate rejected a motion from Depp's attorneys to toss out a \$100 million counterclaim she filed against Depp. The counterclaim alleges Depp's then-lawyer, Adam Waldman, defamed Heard when he called her abuse allegations a hoax.

Azcarate said the bar for tossing out a claim before it goes to the jury is exceedingly high, and said there is enough evidence to allow it to go forward. She had already ruled Depp could be held responsible for statements made by his lawyer, a principle Depp's team disputes.

## Léa Seydoux, once again, rules the Cannes Film Festival

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — The Cannes Film Festival, yet again, belongs to Léa Seydoux.

The French actress has already shared in a Palme d'Or at the festival, in 2013 for "Blue Is the Warmest Color," which made her and Adèle Exarchopoulos the first actors to ever win Cannes' top prize, which they shared with director Abdellatif Kechiche.

Last year, she had four films at the festival, but missed all of them because she tested positive for COVID-19. But this year, Seydoux gives two of the best performance of her career in a pair of films unveiled at Cannes: Mia Hansen-Love's "One Fine Morning" and David Cronenberg's "Crimes of the Future." Together, they have only reinforced the view that Seydoux is the premier French actress of her generation.

On a recent afternoon a few blocks from Cannes' Palais des Festivals, Seydoux greeted a reporter cheerfully. How was she? "Great!" she answered. "Should I not be great?"

The 36-year-old Seydoux has already made a major mark in Hollywood, most notably by taking the once



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 65 of 93

stereotypical role of "Bond Girl" and stretching the character — a "Bond Woman" she redefined — across several films, adding a new dimension of depth to the franchise. Seydoux was so good that even James Bond wanted to settle down.

But it's especially clear at this year's Cannes that Hollywood was only one stop of many in the fast-evolving, exceptionally varied career of Seydoux, who has managed to be one of Europe's most famous faces while still exuding a mysterious melancholy on screen. She's ubiquitous and elusive at the same time.

"I carry a sadness," Seydoux says, tracing it to a shy childhood. "Cinema for me is something playful. It's a real consolation because, in a way, I transformed my sadness into an object of beauty. Or I tried to, anyway. It's not like it works every time."

"If I didn't have cinema, I would have been very sad," she adds. "That's why I work all the time. It's a way to be connected."

In "One Fine Morning," one of the standouts of Cannes, Seydoux plays a young widow raising a daughter in Paris while tending to her elderly father, whose memory is slipping. After reconnecting with an old friend, a passionate affair follows. "One Fine Morning," a semi-autobiographical movie Hansen-Love wrote shortly before her own father died of COVID-19, throbs with the irreconcilable coexistence of grief and love, death and rebirth, and life's vexing impermanence. Hansen-Love, the "Bergman Island" filmmaker, wrote it with Seydoux in mind.

"She was maybe my favorite actress for this generation," explains Hansen-Love. "She's enigmatic in a way that very few actresses are. She's not trying to show things. She's not affected."

"There's a sadness and melancholy about her that contrasts with her status as a superstar that moves me," adds the writer-director. "On the one hand, she's a very glamorous figure in the landscape of cinema. She's very sexy. She's in films where she's seen from the viewpoint of a masculine fantasy, and she enjoys that a lot, I think. But there's an innocence and simplicity about her that gives me the same feeling when I film unknown actors."

Sony Pictures Classics acquired the film Monday for U.S. theatrical distribution, citing it as Seydoux's "finest performance to date."

Leading up to this moment, Seydoux has experienced some of the worst sides of the movie business. In 2017 she said Harvey Weinstein once forcibly tried to kiss her in a hotel room in a meeting that was ostensibly about a potential role. The filming technique of the lesbian romance "Blue Is the Warmest Color," in which Kechiche would shoot up to 100 takes of a single shot, has also been questioned.

But Seydoux, who recently signed up to adapt the erotic novel "Emmanuelle" with "Happening" filmmaker Audrey Diwan, says she's never hesitated to express her sexuality on screen. "One Fine Morning," with the benefit of Hansen-Love's perspective, is one of the most sensual films at Cannes.

"I felt that this movie was about passion," says Seydoux. "I don't have problems with nudity. It's something I like to see as a spectator, as a viewer. I think it's beautiful. I love sex scenes in films."

In Cronenberg's "Crimes of the Future," which opens June 3 in theaters, Seydoux stars alongside Viggo Mortensen in a film yet more focused on the body. In a future where humans and plastics have drawn closer, she plays a surgeon who performs operations to remove tumors and organs with the flare of an artist.

"To be honest, I didn't understand everything about the film," Seydoux says, smiling. "For me, it's like a metaphor about what it is to be an artist."

"Crimes of the Future" may present an usual science-fiction world but Seydoux is remarkably grounded in it. Eager for more open-ended cinematic adventures, Seydoux says doing a variety of films "is how I feel free. I don't want to be stuck in one place."

"I'm not crazy about films that are 'entertaining,'" says Seydoux. "I don't think that I go to the cinema to be entertained. I know it's a big thing in America. I like to ask myself questions more. I don't like to be given answers. I don't want to stop thinking. I think certain films are just to feed you with images."

"I love to feel that I've touched something truthful," Seydoux adds. "In this world we're living in today, Instagram and all that, is just lies. I feel that with cinema we can touch a certain truth. And there are many truths. I love to be touched. I feel alive."

## New names for Fort Bragg, 8 other Army bases recommended

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fort Bragg would become Fort Liberty. Fort Gordon would be Fort Eisenhower. And, for the first time, Army bases would be named after Black soldiers and women. An independent commission on Tuesday recommended new names for nine Army posts that now commemorate Confederate officers.

The recommendations are the latest step in a broader effort by the military to confront racial injustice, most recently in the aftermath of the May 2020 police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Fort Bragg, in North Carolina, is the only base that wouldn't be named after a person. Two others would be named after Black soldiers, and three would include women's names. Fort Gordon in Georgia would get the most well-known name — commemorating President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who led allied forces in Europe in World War II.

Other proposed renamings would honor lesser-known heroes, including several who received the Medal of Honor, the military's highest award. Fort Polk, in Louisiana, would be renamed Fort Johnson, after Sgt. William Henry Johnson, a Black Medal of Honor recipient who served in the Army in World War I.

Fort Pickett in Virginia, would be named after Tech Sgt. Van Barfoot, a Medal of Honor recipient who served in World War II, and Fort Rucker in Alabama, would be named Fort Novosel, after Chief Warrant Officer Michael Novosel, a Medal of Honor recipient who served in World War II and Vietnam.

Fort A.P. Hill in Virginia would be renamed Fort Walker, after Mary Edwards Walker, a doctor who treated soldiers in the Civil War and later received a Medal of Honor.

Fort Hood, Texas, would be renamed Fort Cavazos, in honor of Gen. Richard Cavazos, who served in the Korean War, received the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest military award, and became the Army's first Hispanic four-star general.

Fort Benning, Georgia, would be named after a married couple: Lt. Gen. Hal Moore, who served in Vietnam and received the Distinguished Service Cross, and his wife Julia, who prompted the creation of teams that do in-person notifications of military casualties.

And Fort Lee, Virginia, would get a hyphenated name — Fort Gregg-Adams — and is the only one that would commemorate someone who remains alive today: Lt. Gen. Arthur J. Gregg, known as a logistics leader. Lt. Col. Charity Adams - the other half of the name — led the first female Black unit of the Army deployed in World War II.

A final report is due to Congress by Oct. 1, and will include the costs of removing and changing the names. The renaming process was laid out in a law passed by Congress in late 2020. The secretary of defense is expected to implement the commission's plan no later than Jan. 1, 2024.

The proposal to change the names triggered widespread discussion and debate within the bases' communities around the country. Panel members visited the bases, met with local leaders and residents, and relied heavily on their recommendations when choosing the final names, said the vice chairman, Ty Seidule.

For years, U.S. military officials had defended the naming of bases after Confederate officers. As recently as 2015 the Army argued that the names did not honor the rebel cause but were a gesture of reconciliation with the South.

But in the aftermath of the Floyd killing, and the months of racial unrest that followed, Congress ordered a comprehensive plan to rename the military posts and hundreds of other federal assets such as roads, buildings, memorials, signs and landmarks that honored rebel leaders.

The change in the military's thinking was reflected in congressional testimony by Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a month after Floyd's death. He said that the current base names could be reminders to Black soldiers that rebel officers fought for an institution that may have enslaved their ancestors.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin — the nation's first Black Pentagon chief — has spoken bluntly of his own personal brushes with racism. During his Senate confirmation hearing, he told of serving as a lieutenant colonel with the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg when three white soldiers, described as self-styled skinheads,

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 67 of 93

were arrested in the murder of a Black couple who were walking down a street.

Investigators concluded the two were targeted because of their race, and all told, 22 soldiers were linked to skinhead and other similar groups or found to hold extremist views.

The current chief of the Air Force, Gen. Charles Q. Brown, posted an emotional video last June in which he discussed the difficulties he experienced as a young Black pilot. Brown, the first Black Air Force chief, said he had to prove to white supervisors "that their expectations and perceptions of African-Americans were invalid."

Created in 2020, the Naming Commission first met in March 2021 and began taking name recommendations from the public in September. Overall, the commission received more than 34,000 potential names, which it said included about 3,670 unique ones that could possibly be used. That list was later narrowed to about 100 before the final nine were chosen to be recommended to Congress.

U.S. Rep. Anthony Brown, D-Md., who learned to fly helicopters at Fort Rucker and also spent time at Fort Bragg and Fort Benning, called the new names a significant step forward.

"All these bases honored men who wouldn't want me or other Black Americans serving in uniform, let alone in Congress," he said. "We cannot ask today's servicemen and women to defend our country, while housing and training them and their families on installations celebrating those who betrayed our country in order to enslave others and preserve white supremacy."

Panel members said Tuesday that the decisions were difficult because they had so many heroes to choose from. But in all cases, they said they had widespread agreement from the local communities.

In at least one case, however, the panel members said that local residents were adamant that they wanted a name that wasn't on the final list: Fort Liberty. During the panel's final visit to Fort Bragg, people at the meeting "were very, very adamant about the name Fort Liberty," said Lawrence Romo, a commission member. "We gave a lot of deference to what the Fort Bragg community wanted."

Seidule said that the panel wanted names that "will inspire soldiers to achieve the highest standards demanded by their nation in peace and in war."

The panel also is considering new names for two Navy ships: the USS Chancellorsville and USNS Maury. Those and the new names for hundreds of streets, buildings and other assets, will be in the final report.

A final report is due to Congress by Oct. 1, and will include the costs of removing and changing the names. Under the law, the secretary of defense is expected to implement the commission's plan no later than Jan. 1, 2024.

## Court battles go down to count deadline in Pa. Senate race

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Former hedge fund CEO David McCormick went to Pennsylvania's highest court Tuesday in an eleventh-hour bid to help him close the gap in votes with celebrity heart surgeon Dr. Mehmet Oz in Pennsylvania's neck-and-neck Republican primary contest for U.S. Senate.

McCormick's request for the state Supreme Court's intervention came less than four hours before Tuesday's 5 p.m. deadline for counties to report their unofficial results to the state elections office.

A separate court battle could go to the U.S. Supreme Court, with the candidates separated by fewer than 1,000 votes.

Even so, counties will continue counting hundreds of ballots after the deadline — including provisional, military and overseas absentee ballots — and the contest is almost certainly headed for a recount that will drag into June.

In the filing with the state Supreme Court, McCormick asked justices to order counties to obey a brand-new federal appeals court decision and promptly count mail-in ballots that lack a required handwritten date on the return envelope.

There are hundreds — if not thousands — of such ballots sitting in county offices across the state, as McCormick scrapes for enough votes to overtake Oz. The justices ordered counties to respond by 4 p.m. Thursday.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 68 of 93

The state and national Republican parties have signaled that they — like Oz — oppose counting the ballots in question.

In a statement, the Republican National Committee's chief counsel, Matt Raymer, said "election laws are meant to be followed, and changing the rules when ballots are already being counted harms the integrity of our elections."

McCormick is doing better than Oz in mail-in ballots and has insisted that "every Republican vote should count." McCormick's campaign chair, James Schultz, lashed out at the state party chairman, Lawrence Tabas, saying Tabas "cares so little" about Republicans who voted for McCormick.

Tabas is supposed to "grow GOP voters and bring the party together, not to cast them aside and drive wedges," Schultz said.

Meanwhile, Tuesday, Gov. Tom Wolf's administration issued guidance to counties saying that any ballots without dates must be counted, citing the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals' decision from Friday.

But it also said counties should keep those ballots separate — an acknowledgment that lawyers for defendants in the federal appeals court case said they will appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

McCormick's lawsuit is the first — but likely not the last — court battle in the contest between Oz and McCormick.

Oz led McCormick by 987 votes, or 0.07 percentage points, out of 1,341,395 ballots reported by the state as of Tuesday afternoon.

The race is close enough to trigger Pennsylvania's automatic recount law, with the separation between the candidates inside the law's 0.5% margin. The Associated Press will not declare a winner in the race until the likely recount is complete. That could take until June 8.

Oz and McCormick are vying for the nomination to take on Democratic nominee John Fetterman in a presidential battleground contest that is expected to be among the nation's most competitive races this fall. The seat is open because two-term Republican Sen. Pat Toomey is retiring, creating the Democrats' best opportunity to pick up a seat in the closely divided Senate.

It's not clear precisely how many mail-in ballots that lack a handwritten date have been received by counties.

Ruling in a separate case late Friday, the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the state election law's requirement of a date next to the voter's signature on the outside of return envelopes was "immaterial." The lawsuit emerged from a county judicial election last year, and the three-judge panel said it found no reason to refuse counting the ballots in that race.

The ruling went against the position that Republicans in Pennsylvania have taken in courts repeatedly in the past to try to disqualify legal ballots cast on time by eligible voters for technicalities, such as lacking a handwritten date.

The state law requires someone to write a date on the envelope in which they mail in their ballots. However, the envelope is postmarked by the post office and timestamped by counties when they receive it.

In the filing Tuesday urging the state Supreme Court to act, McCormick's lawyers wrote that county election boards "have not been forthcoming" about the actual number of ballots that lacked handwritten dates on envelopes. But that said they believe the number is likely in the thousands.

In previous court filings, they have said that the date the voter filled out the ballot envelope has nothing to do with whether they are qualified to vote or whether the ballot was cast on time.

The law does not even require the voter to write down the precise date they filled out the envelope or help prevent any hypothetical act of fraud, McCormick's lawyers wrote.

"In short, enforcing the dating requirement serves only one purpose—to gratuitously disenfranchise qualified Pennsylvania voters who have cast otherwise valid ballots on a timely basis," they wrote.

## **Pandemic-weary Americans plan for summer despite COVID surge**

By CALEB JONES and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — A high school prom in Hawaii where masked dancers weren't allowed to touch. A

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 69 of 93

return to virtual city council meetings in one Colorado town after the mayor and others tested positive following an in-person session. A reinstated mask mandate at skilled nursing facilities in Los Angeles County after 22 new outbreaks in a single week.

A COVID-19 surge is underway that is starting to cause disruptions as the school year wraps up and Americans prepare for summer vacations. Many people, though, have returned to their pre-pandemic routines and plans, which often involve travel.

Case counts are as high as they've been since mid-February and those figures are likely a major undercount because of unreported positive home test results and asymptomatic infections. Earlier this month, an influential modeling group at the University of Washington in Seattle estimated that only 13% of cases were being reported to U.S. health authorities.

Hospitalizations are also up and more than one-third of the U.S. population lives in areas that are considered at high risk by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Northeast has been hit the hardest.

Yet vaccinations have stagnated and elected officials nationwide seem loath to impose new restrictions on a public that's ready to move on even as the U.S. death toll surpassed 1 million people less than 2 1/2 years into the outbreak.

"People probably are underestimating the prevalence of COVID," said Crystal Watson, public health lead in the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security's Coronavirus Resource Center. "I think there's a lot more virus out there than we recognize, and so people are much, much more likely than they anticipate to be exposed and infected."

A major metric for the pandemic — the seven-day rolling average for daily new cases in the U.S. — skyrocketed over the last two weeks, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. The figure was about 76,000 on May 9 and jumped to nearly 109,000 on Monday. That was the highest it had been since mid-February, when the omicron-fueled surge was winding down.

Deaths are still on the decline and hospital intensive care units aren't swamped like they were at other times during the pandemic, likely because vaccinations and immunity from people who have already had the disease are keeping many cases less severe.

"The nature of the disease has changed. Two years ago I was seeing a steady flow of bad pneumonia cases. Now we are in a situation where people should be able to avoid that outcome by taking advantage of vaccines, pre-exposure prophylaxis (for high risk), and early anti-viral therapy," Dr. Jonathan Dworkin, a clinical infectious diseases physician in Hawaii, said by email.

In Hawaii, which once had one of the nation's lowest rates of infection, hospitalization and death, new cases are surging among the state's 1.4 million residents. The University of Hawaii will again require masks indoors across its 10-campus system beginning Wednesday.

With cases climbing for eight straight weeks, Hawaii has the second highest infection rate of any state, trailing only Rhode Island. But because positive home test results aren't counted in official data, Hawaii's health department estimates that the case count is actually five or six times higher.

Despite its surge, visitors have been flocking to Hawaii's beaches, especially in recent months.

Yaling Fisher, owner of Hawaii Aloha Travel, said bookings to the islands haven't slowed during the surge. On the contrary, they've increased.

"Even now we are still busy," she said. "We don't see any cancellations."

Samantha Hanberg, who was in Hawaii this week with her newlywed husband, said the couple left their masks at home in California when they left for vacation. She said she contracted COVID-19 early in the pandemic and subsequently got fully vaccinated, so she too feels safe.

"Nobody wants to get sick, but it's definitely not at the forefront of my thought process anymore," she said, snacking on shave ice on Waikiki Beach. "I'm to the point now where I just I want to go back to living and enjoying life, and not being so worried."

Officials initially shut down Hawaii's tourism industry by requiring all incoming passengers to quarantine. They shifted to a testing requirement and then a vaccination exemption before dropping all restrictions in March.

Hawaii was the last state in the nation to drop its mask mandate, though it remains the only state to require all public school students to wear masks while indoors — a rule that will remain in effect throughout the summer and possibly into the next school year.

Nearly two years after California Gov. Gavin Newsom imposed the nation's first statewide stay-home order, the state formally shifted to an "endemic" approach in February. Like Hawaii and many other states, its weekly infection rate has risen dramatically of late.

The new surge led the school districts in Pacific Grove and Berkeley to reinstate their indoor mask mandates, while an outbreak at a Northern California long-term healthcare facility had sickened 26 residents and 10 staff members by Monday.

Some Northeastern school districts have also revived their mask mandates, including those in Philadelphia and Providence, Rhode Island.

However New York, which was once the U.S. epicenter of the pandemic, doesn't seem likely to follow suit. The city is dealing with another surge in cases, but Mayor Eric Adams has all but ruled out bringing back a citywide mask mandate unless hospitals get inundated again.

The city's school district jettisoned its practice of closing classrooms if multiple students test positive, merely recommends that masks be worn and even abandoned its requirement that students need to be vaccinated to attend prom.

## Ricky Gervais' Netflix special blasted as 'anti-trans rants'

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Following in Dave Chappelle's footsteps, Ricky Gervais ridicules transgender women in his new Netflix comedy special. As with Chappelle, the British stand-up quickly drew backlash for what a LGBTQ advocacy group called "anti-trans rants."

In "SuperNature," released Tuesday on the streaming service, Gervais jokes about "old-fashioned women. They're the ones with wombs."

He then imagines a conversation with such a woman who objects to sharing a restroom with a trans woman. "They are ladies, look at their pronouns. What about this person isn't a lady?" Gervais said, supplying the response: "Well, his penis."

In the hourlong special, Gervais defended his remarks as equal-opportunity humor and not a reflection of his views on trans or other rights. But transgender and LGBTQ defenders fired back, with GLAAD asserting that the special violates a Netflix policy against content designed to incite hate or violence.

"We watched the Ricky Gervais 'comedy' special on Netflix so you don't have to," the media watchdog group said. "It's full of graphic, dangerous, anti-trans rants masquerading as jokes," along with anti-gay rhetoric and inaccurate statements on HIV.

"The LGBTQ community and our allies have made it very clear that so-called comedians who spew hate in place of humor, and the media companies who give them a platform, will be held accountable," GLAAD said in a statement.

Alexis Rangel, policy counsel with the National Center for Transgender Equality, said that jokes based on "dehumanizing myths about transgender people" disregard how such falsehoods fuel hatred and anti-trans violence, especially for trans youngsters.

She cited a 2015 organization survey that found 54% of those in kindergarten through 12th grade who were out or perceived as transgender were verbally harassed, 24% were physically attacked and 13% were sexually assaulted.

Such unfunny attempts at humor "give people permission to discriminate, harass and even commit violence," Rangel said in a statement.

Netflix and a representative for Gervais didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

Last year, Chappelle and Netflix created a furor when his stand-up special, "The Closer," was accused of anti-trans humor by gay rights groups and some Netflix employees. Ted Sarandos, the streaming giant's CEO, declined to remove the special, citing creative freedom, and Netflix and Chappelle remain in

business together.

In an Instagram video last October, Chappelle blamed the media for framing the dispute as him versus the LGBTQ community, and said the controversy was "about corporate interest and what I can say and what I cannot say."

Gervais is familiar to audiences as a repeat host of the Golden Globes. He's an Emmy-winner for his role in the comedy "Extras" and as a producer of "The Office," based on the original British series of the same name that he co-created.

His trans mockery comes early in the "SuperNature" special, in which he also targets Asians and the Holocaust, among others. At a later point, he defends his approach by dismissing the idea that "a joke is a window into a comedian's true soul."

"That's just not the case. I'll take on any view to make the joke funny. I'll pretend to be right wing, I'll pretend to be left-wing. ... Full disclosure: Of course I support trans rights. I support all human rights. And trans rights are human rights," he said.

"Live your best life. use your preferred pronouns, be the gender that you feel that you are," Gervais said — then added another trans-directed punchline.

## Indiana lawmakers enact trans sports ban with veto override

By CASEY SMITH Associated Press/Report for America

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Republican lawmakers in Indiana voted Tuesday to override the GOP governor's veto of a bill banning transgender females from competing in girls school sports and join about more than a dozen other states adopting similar laws in the past two years.

State senators voted 32-15 in favor of overriding Gov. Eric Holcomb following the same action in a 67-28 vote by the House earlier in the day. Holcomb had said in his veto message that bill did not provide a consistent policy for what he called "fairness in K-12 sports" when he unexpectedly vetoed it in March.

The override votes were nearly party line and no lawmakers changed their votes from earlier this year. Four Republican senators joined all Democratic senators in voting to uphold the veto. In the House, three Republicans voted to sustain the veto, while one Democrat supported overriding it.

Opponents have argued the bill is a bigoted response to a problem that doesn't exist. The American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana filed a lawsuit minutes following the override in hopes of blocking the law from taking effect as scheduled on July 1.

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of a 10-year-old girl who plays on her school's all-girls softball team in Indianapolis. The new law would deny the fourth-grader the right to rejoin her team because she is a transgender girl, which is a violation of Title IX and the U.S. Constitution, according to the complaint.

Holcomb said in a statement following the override that his "position hasn't changed."

"There remains zero cases and the process, which is managed by the (Indiana High School Athletic Association), is working. I stand behind my decision to veto HB 1041," he said.

Republican sponsors of the bill maintain it is needed to protect the integrity of female sports and opportunities for girls to gain college athletic scholarships but have pointed out no instances in the state of girls being outperformed by transgender athletes.

"(This measure) does not solve an issue. It does not bring people together. It does not benefit our state in any way," Democratic Sen. J.D. Ford of Indianapolis said shortly before the Senate vote. "Why do you press upon the government to solve this issue, which there is no issue?"

Republican Senate President Pro Tem Rodric Bray said the state needs the policy and called it "a matter of simple fairness."

"We don't like to get to the state of Indiana sued, but it happens from time to time," Bray said. "It's a policy that I think we can stand behind."

The veto override votes came during a special one-day meeting 11 weeks after this year's regular legislative session ended. Democrats had called for lawmakers to take action, instead, on a proposal to suspend the state's 56 cents per gallon in taxes on gasoline amid the nationwide spike in fuel prices. Republicans disregarded that request.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 72 of 93

House Democratic Leader Phil GiaQuinta of Fort Wayne lamented that Republicans focused on divisive cultural issues that “won’t do anything to help move the state of Indiana forward.”

“Certainly, we have some pressing issues out there that are affecting Hoosiers every day, specifically, including the high price of gasoline that we’re seeing all over the state,” GiaQuinta said. “Wish we could have potentially used this day to better help Hoosiers.”

Activists held a rally against the ban ahead of the Legislature’s votes. Dozens of attendees, including several families with transgender youth, played sidewalk games around the Statehouse lawn. They argued that Indiana’s ban isn’t targeting elite athletes, but rather kids who want to play on a team with their friends.

“We’re here to stand against hate and discrimination that could have a lifelong impact for my family,” said Cara Nimskey, the mother of a transgender girl from Bloomington. “My daughter dreams of playing basketball in high school. It’s unfair exclusion — she’ll be crushed if this goes through.”

Holcomb’s veto came a day before Republican Utah Gov. Spencer Cox vetoed a similar ban on grounds that such laws target vulnerable children who are already at high risk of suicide. Utah’s Republican lawmakers overrode the veto days later amid a wave of such laws that political observers describe as a classic “wedge issue” to motivate conservative supporters.

In his veto letter, Holcomb pointed to the IHSAA, which has a policy covering transgender students wanting to play sports that match their gender identity and has said it has had no transgender girls finalize a request to play on a female team. The law wouldn’t prevent students who identify as female or transgender males from playing on boys sports teams.

Holcomb said in his veto message the bill presumed “there is an existing problem in K-12 sports in Indiana that requires further state government intervention” but that he found no evidence to support that claim “even if I support the effort overall.”

## Celestine Chaney, Buffalo supermarket victim, mourned

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Images of Celestine Chaney’s shooting death in a hate-fueled attack inside a Buffalo supermarket made their way across the internet in the days that followed. At her funeral Tuesday, images from a treasured life filled the space, showing her smiling and holding her family close.

Chaney, 65, was among 10 Black people killed May 14 when a white gunman wearing body armor and a helmet-mounted camera targeted shoppers and workers at a Tops Friendly Market. Three others were injured in the attack, which federal authorities are investigating as a hate crime.

Chaney’s son, Wayne Jones Sr., told mourners inside the Elim Christian Fellowship sanctuary that he felt empty despite being “somewhat prepared mentally for this day” after watching his mother survive breast cancer and three brain aneurysms.

A single mother after a divorce, Chaney had taught her only child how to survive, Jones said.

“When the lights were off, we lit candles. When the heat was off we just got in one room,” he said. “When there was nothing to eat we got one meal and we shared it.”

“Life will never be the same,” said Jones, who before the service placed a hand on his mother’s white casket as members of the congregation she was devoted to stretched their right hands toward him in support.

The alleged gunman, 18-year-old Payton Gendron, of Conklin, has been charged with murder and is being held without bail.

The oldest of Chaney’s nine grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren, Wayne Jones Jr., said he wished for one more phone call from his funny and caring grandmother who had celebrated her 65th birthday with steak, lobster and mimosas a week before her death.

“Of course she wanted the most expensive thing on the menu,” granddaughter Kayla Jones said to laughter.

Mayor Byron Brown labeled Tuesday “Celestine Chaney Day” in Buffalo in a proclamation read at the service. A slideshow of family photos played on an oversized screen as the service came to a close.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 73 of 93

Wayne Jones Sr. said last week that his mother's death was confirmed for him when he first saw a photo and then video of the shooting. Chaney and her 74-year-old sister had been shopping for strawberry shortcakes and other groceries on a warm Saturday afternoon.

Shopping was typically how the mother and son had spent time together, hitting store after store and grabbing a hot dog or McDonald's along the way, he said.

"This is one ride we can't go with her. She's got to take this one alone," Jones told mourners, breaking down.

"I wish I could go with her," he said. "Just to protect her."

More funerals are scheduled throughout the week.

On Monday, family, friends and co-workers said goodbye to 72-year-old Katherine "Kat" Massey, who was remembered as a community activist and education advocate dedicated to improving her city.

## Mothers pass torch to daughters in abortion's forever war

By WONG MAYE-E Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — They are mothers, they are daughters, they are comrades.

Generations of women came together for a Manhattan protest against the U.S. Supreme Court's anticipated ruling overturning Roe v. Wade. There were women who have been fighting for nearly a half century to hold on to abortion rights; there were daughters who now face the prospect of a long battle to regain those rights.

The abortion war would seem to be a forever war, one that spans generations. There was the fight before Roe v. Wade, the fight ever since and the fight to come. No one knows when or if abortion rights might be restored. And even then, it is almost unthinkable that the battle will end.

So mothers who joined their daughters at the May 14 protest, marching to Manhattan on the Brooklyn Bridge, were not only raging against the court and its expected decision; they were entrusting their cause to another generation.

AMNET RAMOS AND INAIA HERNANDEZ

Amid all the agitation of the rally, Amnet Ramos looked around her -- particularly at her 12-year-old daughter, Inaia -- and she was serene. The future is in good hands.

"If this is who I'm going to pass my torch down to, I feel good," said Ramos, 44.

"You know, I have a fighter and I know. And a fighter for justice for everyone. So I know that there's a generation of kids that are way more aware at this age than I ever was at that age. And so I feel confident that we can pass that torch."

Inaia seems up to the challenge. "I'm pretty much willing to do anything to, like, fight for our rights," they said. More than anything, they want "a free world like it once was."

But Inaia and her siblings do not have their mother's life story: The pregnancy she considered aborting when she was 21, but did not, giving birth to the first of her three kids, a son who "saved my life." The tubal ligation that failed to prevent an ectopic pregnancy a couple of years ago; she would have had an abortion, but miscarried.

Ramos wants other women to have those choices. She has protested since the Trump administration, and the threat to abortion rights has steeled her resolve to be heard -- and that of her daughter.

On Inaia's arm, in indelible ink, they had written "Give our rights" -- forgetting, in their haste and excitement, to include the word "us."

LINDSAY WALT AND EVE THOMSON

Growing up in the Midwest, Lindsay Walt remembers girls who were pregnant at 13 and dropped out of school. And friends who went to New York for abortions.

"And they were lucky. They had the money, they had the means to do it," said Walt, 66.

She protested in favor abortion before 1973, when Roe came down. She would go to New York -- not

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 74 of 93

for an abortion, but to live and raise a family, and eventually to protest against abortion restrictions again. "I think it's really tragic that we're here all these years later," she said.

Her 27-year-old daughter Eve Thomson was at her side. "My mom's been bringing me to protests for all different things, but since I was a little kid. So it's kind of remarkable that this is something we're still going through and still something we have to fight for."

Still, she says she is "more than willing" to take up the cause.

"It's kind of a necessity," she said, "to continue supporting and continue fighting for the same thing my mom fought for for so long."

## RITA AND FAIRUZ NAKOUZI

More than 20 years ago, Rita Nakouzi and her family came to the United States from Beirut with high expectations. But in recent years she has been disappointed -- "what makes America what it is is being denigrated and broken down."

Living in Brooklyn, she has joined many protests over the past 10 years. And now, abortion.

"I mean, I haven't had a close call, but for all the friends that I know ... this has been something that has really helped their lives in many ways. And whether it's from an assault to just not being financially able to get to, it's not the right time for them," she said. "And just to have that right, which is their body and their life, is very crucial."

Her kids are being raised in America, they're half American. "And I want those freedoms for them."

Her daughter, Fairuz, held up a sign: "Trust women, protect choice."

She is, she said, "ready to fight for other women." And at 13, she does not despair.

"I'm hopeful for the future," she said. "And I'm hoping that in the future, women have a better future for their bodies."

## CLAUDIA ORELLANA and ISABELLA ROSARIO

Thirteen-year-old Isabella Rosario marches with her mother, Claudia Orellana. And her mother's story fuels her passion.

"I don't want that to happen to me or anything similar to happen to anyone," she said.

Orellana said she was 12 -- younger than her daughter -- when she was raped by her uncle. She had no idea of what had happened; she was five months pregnant when her mother found out and arranged for her to have an abortion.

She's 46 now. When she hears abortion opponents propose new laws that lack exceptions, even for rape or incest, and when she looks at her three daughters, the Jersey City, New Jersey, woman is infuriated.

"We're strong, you know what I mean? And I will continue to fight. And no matter what condition, what age I am, you know, I'm going to continue to fight for the rights of my daughters and my friends. Daughters and everybody's daughters," she said.

"I'm just trying to lead by example," she said. "You know, my dad is always like, 'Oh, my God, you're always going out to these, you know, to these marches and all these things. ... I think you need to pay more attention to, you know, to your kids.'"

"And I'm like, 'This is me paying attention to my kids. This is for my kids.'"

Those kids are the future. "I hope that they will get the same enthusiasm that I do," she said. "It took me years to get here. So I'm trying to just be the change that I want to see in them."

## Stormy repeat: NOAA predicts busy Atlantic hurricane season

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Federal meteorologists are forecasting a record-shattering seventh straight unusually busy Atlantic hurricane season.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted Tuesday that the summer in the Atlantic will produce 14 to 21 named storms, six to 10 becoming hurricanes and three to six turbo-charging into

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 75 of 93

major hurricanes with winds greater than 110 mph. Even with normals shifting upwards to reflect more active storm seasons in recent decades, these predictions are above the 30-year average of 14 named storms, seven hurricanes and three major hurricanes.

The National Hurricane Center ran out of names for Atlantic storms in the last two years, with a record-setting 30 named storms in 2020 and 21 last year. In the past five years there have been more Category 4 and 5 hurricane landfalls in the United States than in the previous 50 years combined.

This hurricane season "is going to be similar to last year and given that you need only one bad storm to dramatically affect your life, if you fail to plan around this outlook, you're planning to fail," NOAA Administrator Rick Spinrad told The Associated Press Tuesday. "You can take this outlook to the bank literally when it looks to protecting your property."

Every weather factor pointed to a busier season, said Matthew Rosencrans, lead hurricane season outlook forecaster for NOAA's Climate Prediction Center. He pointed to a multi-decade long trend to more storms in the Atlantic, an active monsoon season in West Africa, a La Nina — the natural and occasional cooling of parts of the equatorial Pacific that changes weather worldwide — and warmer than normal ocean temperatures, which scientists say are stoked by climate change.

Several outside hurricane experts agree with NOAA that the Atlantic conditions are ripe for yet another active hurricane season. They say La Nina reduces wind shear that could decapitate storms. The warmer water — about half a degree warmer (0.3 degrees Celsius) than last year in storm-forming areas, according to Rosencrans — serves as hurricane fuel. A reduction in pollution particles in the air has taken away artificial cooling in the Atlantic and a new study links that to increasing storms.

Last week President Joe Biden also warned the nation about "another tough hurricane season" coming. "We're seeing these storms happen more frequently. They're lasting longer," FEMA Director Deanne Criswell said in a New York City press conference. NOAA says 13 people in the city died during Hurricane Ida with 11 of them dying in flooded basements. It is also the 10th anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, a downgraded hurricane that became one of the most expensive weather disasters in American history with massive flooding in New York.

"We've seen such a dramatic change in the type of weather events that could be seen as a result of climate change," Criswell said.

NOAA said there's a 65% chance for an "above-normal" hurricane season, a 25% chance for a normal season and only a one in 10 chance for an unusually quiet season.

One key indicator, that takes into account the number of storms, how strong they are and how long they last, is called Accumulated Cyclone Energy index or ACE and Rosencrans said this year could be as much as double what's been normal since 1950. The calculation is used when determining what is an average season and what's above average.

The average ACE since 1950 is just shy of 100, while the last six years have ranged from 132 to 225 in 2017.

That stretch of six straight above-average years is a record, smashing the old mark of three-in-a-row, said Colorado State University hurricane researcher and seasonal forecaster Phil Klotzbach. He said it is highly likely that the record will stretch to seven this year.

"It's really a strange thing that we've had six consecutive seasons be so active," said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy.

NOAA's predictions mesh with ten other meteorological teams — government, university and private — that have made their hurricane season predictions. The average of their predictions is 20 named storms, eight becoming hurricanes and four becoming major hurricanes.

Because La Nina has a different effect in the Pacific and conditions usually are opposite, earlier this month NOAA predicted a quieter than normal Pacific storm season.

Atlantic hurricane season starts June 1.

**At Davos, Kerry cites progress on China-US climate group**

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 76 of 93

By PETER PRENGAMAN Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — John Kerry, America's top official on climate change, said Tuesday that the U.S. and China were making progress on putting together a group from both countries to work toward quickly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In an interview with The Associated Press during the World Economic Forum gathering in Davos, Kerry said the two nations, the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases, were close to agreeing on the structure of the group and how decisions would be made.

"We are going to work on the practicalities of how we move faster" to reduce emissions, said Kerry. "Maybe we can help with technology of some kind to help China move faster. Maybe China could help us better understand some things we could do better."

The agreement was reached during the U.N. climate summit last year in Glasgow, Scotland. For the first time, China agreed to crackdown on methane leaks, a highly potent greenhouse gas. On Tuesday, Kerry said that reducing coal consumption would also be a central area of focus for the group.

The progress report came as government officials, corporate leaders and other elites at the World Economic Forum grappled with how to confront climate change and its devastating effects. A central question was: 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, the kind of thing critics of the forum, which takes place in a tony ski village in the Swiss Alps, would say had no relevance to the real world. But today, the question is 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.

Kerry, Fatih Birol, head of the International Energy Agency, and several European officials argued Tuesday that the war in Ukraine should not be used as an excuse to lose focus on renewable energy goals.

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen warned the 27-nation bloc should never again become 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 rather 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.

"We must avoid falling into the same trap as with oil and gas," she said. "We should not replace old dependencies with new ones."

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 member countries have yet to find a deal on sanctions on Russia's oil and gas.

Attendees in Davos this week were also discussing several other high-priority issues, like the Russia-Ukraine war, the threat of rising hunger worldwide, inequality and persistent health crises.

That included Turkey's pushback to Finland and Sweden applying for NATO membership. Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto said at Davos that a delegation from his country and Sweden will travel to the Turkish capital Wednesday for talks.

Both Haavisto and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said in separate comments at the gathering that they believe they can overcome Turkey's concerns about what it sees as Finland's and Sweden's support for groups it considers terrorists.

"We have to do what we always do in NATO, and that is to sit down and address concerns when allies express concerns," Stoltenberg said.

But even in discussions of those issues, climate change was often ever present, as was the tension over what role oil and gas companies may play in a transition to green energy. Davos represented one of the

biggest platforms to discuss climate change ahead of the next U.N. climate summit in Egypt in November.

Vicki Hollub, CEO of Occidental Petroleum a major oil company, said 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 on Monday. "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 Monday that 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.

Kerry, in the interview, said he was still hopeful that climate change legislation in Congress was still possible. There is no sign of progress, or even any movement, by the Biden administration.

"When you are a legislator, hope springs eternal," said Kerry. "You always are working to try to get the votes to make something happen."

When asked whether he planned to step down soon, as some have speculated because Congress is clearly stalled on climate legislation, Kerry said no.

"Nobody is going to be in one job forever, are they?" Kerry asked. "But I'm not planning to move on. I'm working toward the COP (in Egypt) and we'll see what happens."

## Economy bigger priority than punishing Russia: AP-NORC poll

By NOMAAN MERCHANT and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 78 of 93

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 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."

## **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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 79 of 93

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.

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."

A reminder of tensions in the region came during Biden's trip. Chinese and Russian strategic bombers conducted joint flights around Japan on Tuesday.

Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi described the exercise as a "threat" and "an increased level of provocation," and said the cooperation between China and Russia was "concerning and unacceptable."

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.

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

After a one-on-one meeting with Modi in Japan, 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 did not refer to the war in Ukraine, instead ticking off several trade and investment programs that he discussed with the president.

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.

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 80 of 93

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 asleep 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.

## Ex-White House press secretary Jen Psaki hired by MSNBC

By MARK KENNEDY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former White House press secretary Jen Psaki has officially landed at MSNBC, where she is expected to make appearances on the network's cable and streaming programs as well as host a new original show.

The program, set to debut in the first quarter of 2023, will "bring together her unique perspective from behind the podium and her deep experience in the highest levels of government and presidential politics," the network said in a statement Tuesday.

Psaki will also appear on NBC and during MSNBC's primetime special election programming throughout the midterms and 2024 presidential election.

In a tweet, Psaki wrote that she was thrilled to join the network this fall. "Breaking down the facts and getting to the bottom of what's driving the issues that matter most to people in this country has never been more important," she wrote.

Psaki most recently served as White House spokesperson for the first 16 months of the Biden administration. She previously served as White House communications director under former President Barack Obama and as the spokeswoman for the Department of State.

"Her extensive experience in government and on the campaign trail and perspective as a White House and Washington insider is the type of analysis that sets MSNBC apart," MSNBC President Rashida Jones said in a statement. "She's a familiar face and trusted authority to MSNBC viewers, and we look forward to her insight during this consequential election season."



At MSNBC, on-air personalities are mostly sympathetic to Biden and the Democrats. During Psaki's White House tenure, Democrats saw her as a champion of their causes, while conservatives found her combative and standoffish.

MSNBC has also hired Symone Sanders, former chief spokeswoman for Vice President Kamala Harris. NBC News has taken pains to draw distinctions between its journalists and MSNBC, which has beefed up its opinion programming.

## **Powell: 'Soft' economic landing may be out of Fed's control**

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, fresh off winning Senate confirmation for a second term earlier in the day, acknowledged for the first time Thursday that high inflation and economic weakness overseas could thwart his efforts to avoid causing a recession.

For weeks, Powell has portrayed the Fed's drive to raise interest rates as consistent with a so-called "soft landing" for the economy. Under that scenario, the Fed would manage to tighten borrowing costs enough to cool the economy and curb inflation without going so far as to tip the economy into recession.

But in an interview on American Public Media's "Marketplace," Powell conceded that that balancing act — which many economists have said they doubt the Fed can achieve — could be undercut by economic slowdowns in Europe and China.

"The question whether we can execute a soft landing or not — it may actually depend on factors that we don't control," the Fed chair said. "There are huge events, geopolitical events going on around the world, that are going to play a very important role in the economy in the next year or so."

Such comments reflect less confidence in avoiding a recession than Powell has previously conveyed. Just last week, he said at a news conference: "I think we have a good chance to have a soft or softish landing or outcome."

On Thursday, he said that slowing inflation to the Fed's 2% annual target — from its current 6.6%, according to the central bank's preferred measure — "will also include some pain, but ultimately the most painful thing would be if we were to fail to deal with it and inflation were to get entrenched in the economy at high levels."

Europe's economies are suffering from high inflation, exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting spike in natural gas and oil prices. Europe has been far more dependent on Russian energy supplies than the United States has been.

China's strict COVID lockdown policies have shut down ports, hindering exports and slowing consumer spending in cities like Shanghai, where millions of Chinese have been largely restricted to their homes for weeks.

In his interview on "Marketplace," Powell also seemed to suggest that the Fed would at least consider raising its benchmark rate by an extremely large three-quarters of a point if inflation failed to show signs of easing in the coming months. Last week, the stock market initially soared when Powell appeared to take a three-quarter-point rate hike off the table.

After repeating his comment from last week that half-point hikes were likely at each of the next two Fed meetings, in June and July, Powell added Thursday: "If things come in better than we expect, then we're prepared to do less. If they come in worse than when we expect, then we're prepared to do more."

When asked if "do more" meant a three-quarter point hike, Powell said: "You've seen this committee adapt to the incoming data and the evolving outlook. And that's what we'll continue to do."

## **EXPLAINER: What is monkeypox and where is it spreading?**

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — Health authorities in Europe, North America, Israel and Australia have identified more than 100 cases of monkeypox in recent days.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 82 of 93

Officials around the world are keeping watch for more cases because, for the first time, the rare disease appears to be spreading among people who didn't travel to Africa, where monkeypox is endemic. They stress, however, that the risk to the general population is low.

## WHAT IS MONKEYPOX?

Monkeypox is a virus that originates in wild animals like rodents and primates, and occasionally jumps to people. It belongs to the same virus family as smallpox.

Most human cases have been in central and west Africa and outbreaks have been relatively limited.

The illness was first identified by scientists in 1958 when there were two outbreaks of a "pox-like" disease in research monkeys — thus the name monkeypox. The first known human infection was in 1970, in a young boy in a remote part of Congo.

## WHAT CAUSED THIS LATEST OUTBREAK?

Health officials are still investigating, but a top adviser to the World Health Organization said this week that the leading theory is that monkeypox was likely spread after sexual activity at two recent raves in Europe.

Dr. David Heymann, who chairs WHO's expert advisory group on infectious hazards, said monkeypox can spread when there is close contact with someone already infected with the disease, and that "it looks like sexual contact has now amplified that transmission."

Authorities in countries including Britain, Spain, Germany and Portugal say most of the known cases in Europe have been among men who have sex with men, but experts emphasize that anyone can be infected through close contact with a sick person, their clothing or bedsheets.

Scientists say it will be difficult to determine whether the spread is being driven by sex or merely close contact.

## WHY ARE MOST OF THE CURRENT INFECTIONS OUTSIDE AFRICA IN MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN?

It's unclear, but the disease is no more likely to infect gay and bisexual men than anyone else.

"This may just be unlucky that (monkeypox) happened to get into this one particular community first," said Dr. Jake Dunning, an infectious diseases researcher at the University of Oxford, who is also involved in treating cases in London. "It's just that they are a community and by having sex with each other, that is how it's spreading," he said.

Other experts warn the disease could spread more widely if measures aren't taken to stop the outbreak.

"Infectious diseases don't care about borders or social networks. Some groups may have a greater chance of exposure right now, but by no means is the current risk of exposure to monkeypox" exclusive to men who have sex with men, said the CDC's Dr. John Brooks.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS AND HOW IS IT TREATED?

Most monkeypox patients experience only fever, body aches, chills and fatigue. People with more serious illness may develop a rash and lesions on the face and hands that can spread to other parts of the body.

Most people recover within about two to four weeks without needing to be hospitalized, monkeypox can be fatal for up to 6% of cases and is thought to be more severe in children.

Smallpox vaccines are effective against monkeypox and anti-viral drugs are also being developed.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control recommended all suspected cases be isolated and that high-risk contacts be offered a smallpox vaccine. The U.K. is offering high-risk contacts the smallpox vaccine and recommending anyone who might be infected to isolate until they recover.

The U.S. has 1,000 doses of a vaccine approved for the prevention of monkeypox and smallpox, plus more than 100 million doses of an older-generation smallpox vaccine in a government stockpile, officials said.

## HOW WORRYING IS THIS OUTBREAK?

Any outbreak of an emerging virus is concerning, but most of the cases have been mild and there have been no deaths so far.

Monkeypox also requires very close contact to spread, so it is not likely to prompt big waves of disease like COVID-19, which can be transmitted in the air by people with no symptoms.

Still, Britain's Health Security Agency has said it expects to see new infections "on a daily basis" and WHO's Europe director warned that the summer season of festivals and parties could spread the disease. Many of the cases being identified have no links to previous infections, suggesting the virus is already

spreading widely.

On Tuesday, Germany's Health Minister Karl Lauterbach said the outbreak "is not the beginning of a new pandemic" but needed to be contained quickly.

HOW MANY MONKEYPOX CASES ARE THERE TYPICALLY?

The World Health Organization estimates there are thousands of monkeypox infections in about a dozen African countries every year. Most are in Congo, which reports about 6,000 cases annually, and Nigeria, with about 3,000 cases a year.

In the past, isolated cases of monkeypox have been spotted outside Africa, including in the U.S. and Britain. The cases were mostly linked to travel in Africa or contact with animals from areas where the disease is more common.

In 2003, 47 people in six U.S. states had confirmed or probable cases. They caught the virus from pet prairie dogs that been housed near imported small mammals from Ghana.

## 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 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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 84 of 93

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 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.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 85 of 93

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 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 says it 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.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 86 of 93

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 caught 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.

During the summit, Chinese and Russian strategic bombers conducted joint flights near Japan, Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said, calling it an "increased level of provocation" and a threat to the Quad.

Chinese H-6 bombers joined Russian TU-95s over the Sea of Japan and flew to areas over the East China Sea, but did not violate Japanese airspace, Kishi said. Separately, a Russian IL-20 reconnaissance plane was spotted flying off the northern Japanese coast.

Kishi said Japan conveyed "serious concern" to both Beijing and Moscow.

China's Ministry of Defense said the Chinese and Russian militaries carried out joint strategic air patrols above the Sea of Japan, the East China Sea and the western Pacific.

In a meeting later Tuesday, Albanese and Kishida shared concern about China's new security pact with the Solomon Islands, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said. They also agreed to further cooperation in defense,

a new U.S.-led regional economic framework, clean energy and supply chain resilience, it said.

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."

During a separate meeting with Biden, Albanese recounted that the U.S. government had paid for him to visit the gambling center of Las Vegas during a program he participated in in his 20s, eliciting laughter.

"I'm not quite sure where that fit in, but it was a good trip indeed," he said. "And of course my government is very committed to the alliance."

Albanese said he will visit Washington to see Biden again before hosting the next Quad summit in Australia.

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.

## 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.

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 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.

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

Russian artillery and warplanes relentlessly pound Ukrainian positions, 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. Russia recently lost hundreds of personnel and dozens of combat vehicles 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, adding that small towns and villages were changing hands every day in the Donbas.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, Russian forces have methodically targeted Western weapons shipments, ammunition and fuel depots, and critical infrastructure in hopes of weakening Kyiv's military and economy.

But in trying to gain ground, Russian forces have also relentlessly shelled cities and laid siege to some of them. In the latest example of the war's toll, 200 bodies were found in a collapsed building in Mariupol, Ukrainian authorities said Tuesday.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 88 of 93

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 give Moscow a land corridor to Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria, where Russian troops are stationed.

But Russia 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 the 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."

Two top officials appeared to acknowledge Tuesday the advance has been slower than expected. Secretary of Russia's Security Council Nikolai Patrushev said it "is not chasing deadlines," and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said the pace was deliberate to allow civilians to flee, even though forces have repeatedly hit civilian targets.

Many in Ukraine and the West thought Putin would pour resources into the 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, however, the Kremlin opted for tactical mini-offensives, aimed at steadily trying 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 troop mobilization, with British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace saying he might do it on Victory Day. That never happened, with Russia continuing to rely on a limited force that was clearly insufficient.

A massive mobilization would likely foment discontent in Russia, fuel antiwar sentiment and carry 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 war began. Some of those forces apparently were redeployed to the Donbas, but it wasn't enough to tip the scales.

"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 become artillery duels, and "it might go on for quite a long time without much movement in the lines," he said.

"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 arms, 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 Sunhurovskyi, 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.

Russian hard-liners warn that Moscow can't win if it doesn't conduct a large mobilization and concentrate all of its resources in a decisive attack.

Igor Strelkov, a former security officer who led the separatists in 2014, denounced what he described



as the Kremlin's indecision, saying it could lead to defeat.

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

Ukrainian authorities are increasingly emboldened by the slow pace of the Russian offensive and growing Western support. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reaffirmed last week that pushing the Russians back to pre-invasion positions would represent a victory, but some 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 grinding out military gains. The Kremlin may also hope the West's attention will shift elsewhere.

"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."

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

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

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. On Tuesday, Britain's energy regulator warned that domestic energy bills could shoot up again by another 800 pounds per annum in the autumn, 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."

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 90 of 93

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.

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."

## Stock market slump unsettling Americans eyeing retirement

By ALEX VEIGA and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

Americans on the cusp of retiring are facing a tough choice as they watch their nest eggs shrink: Stay the course or keep working.

A stock market slump this year has taken a big bite out of investors' portfolios, including retirement plans like 401(k)s. The S&P 500, the benchmark for many index funds, is down about 17% since its all-time high in early January.

The sharp reversal after a banner 2021 for Wall Street has been particularly unsettling for those who have been planning to retire sooner, rather than later, and banking on a healthier stock portfolio to help fund their post-work lifestyle.

It doesn't help that the cost of everything from gasoline to food is up sharply amid the highest inflation since the 1970s. And that the Federal Reserve's recipe for fighting inflation — hiking interest rates — has heightened fears the U.S. economy will slide into a recession. All of that is bad news for corporate earn-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 91 of 93

ings growth, which is a key driver of stock prices.

The market skid has financial planners hearing more often from anxious clients seeking advice and reassurance in equal measure. They say some clients are opting to push back their retirement date in hopes that will buy time for their investments to bounce back. Meanwhile, retirees already tapping their investments may have to consider beefing up their savings with a part-time job or putting off major travel or spending plans.

"From late 2020 through 2021 we saw a wave of clients retire because of the large gains in the stock market and because they no longer wanted to work in the COVID 'new normal' work environment," said Mark Rylance, a financial planner in Newport Beach, California.

This year, half the clients who discussed retirement opted to still retire, while the other half decided to hold off, he said.

Historically, the stock market has tended to deliver positive returns within a year following steep declines. But unlike younger investors who can ride out Wall Street's sharp swings, workers closing in on retirement don't have as much time to make up losses from hefty market downturns.

"I am a little afraid — I don't want to work until I'm 70," said Nancy Roberts, a librarian in Meridian, Idaho.

The 60-year-old is counting on her IRA to fund her retirement, which is a little over 4 years away. But the market decline has her feeling stressed.

"I do know I've lost money, but I'm trying not to freak out and look at it every day," she said.

Many soon-to-be retirees are also terrified about inflation, which can be "devastating" over decades, said Mark Struthers, a financial adviser with Sona Wealth Advisers in St. Paul, Minneapolis.

Social Security has a built-in inflation adjustment, but it doesn't keep up with real inflation, and pensions — which far fewer workers have these days — often max out the inflation adjustment at 1.5%, he said.

"Compounding is magical when it is working for you, but devastating when it's working against you," Struthers said.

He advises retirees who are worried about getting by on their savings to be willing to cut back on spending on big-ticket items. That could mean taking a big vacation every other year, instead of annually, or waiting 10 years rather than 7 to buy a new car. Struthers also strongly recommends that retirees work part-time.

When stocks are in a downward spiral, investors traditionally shift money into bonds, which are less risky than stocks. But bonds have not been a refuge from losses lately. High inflation has made bonds, and the fixed payments they make, less attractive. One index of high-quality U.S. bonds has lost more than 9% so far this year.

Despite the market's decline, investors like Mark Bendell in Boca Raton, Florida, are sticking to their retirement timeline.

The engineer decided early in 2021 that he would retire before the end of this year. The 62-year old reviewed his finances with a financial adviser and came away confident he would be able to live off his nest egg, which includes a 401(k) plan he's been contributing to for about 34 years, a small pension, savings and Social Security. His wife Laurie, a teacher, plans to retire next year.

Not that watching the stock market plunge hasn't been difficult.

"I have a stiff drink about a couple of times a week and then I take a look at my investments," Bendell said. "I don't look as much as when the market was climbing."

Other than tweaking his 401(k) to make sure it wasn't heavily invested in more speculative holdings, Bendell hasn't made any major changes to his investment strategy since he started his retirement count-down clock.

"I stayed the course," he said. "Trying to time the market doesn't work, and I believe that."

That approach, even during big market slumps, is typical among investors with 401(k)s or IRAs. A Fidelity Investments review of 24,000 retirement investment plans found that only 5.6% of people with a 401(k) made a change to their plan's allocation in the first quarter. That compares to 5.3% in the last three months of 2021 and 6.4% in the first quarter last year, the company said.

The set-it-and-forget-it strategy helped, but didn't shield investors entirely from losses this year. The

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 92 of 93

average Fidelity 401(k) plan balance stood at \$127,100 in the first quarter, down 2% from a year ago and off 7% from the fourth quarter.

Wall Street has been racking up gains more often than losses over the past decade. The market plunged 34% in March 2020 at the height of the pandemic lockdowns and climbed to new highs a few months later. Last year, the S&P 500 scored its third-best performance in the last decade, delivering a total return of nearly 29%, including dividends.

That's why Americans who've long been socking away money into 401ks and other retirement investment accounts are likely still well ahead. Consider: The 1.7 million investors who have had a 401(k) through Fidelity the past 10 years saw their balance soar by an average of nearly fivefold to \$383,100.

However, as of the end of 2019, only about 60 million employed Americans had a 401(k) plan, according to the Investment Company Institute, an association representing investment funds.

Previous years' stock market gains are hard to keep in perspective when one's retirement account balance shrinks by the day, however.

Having the bulk of her retirement savings in her IRA as the market declined has been "unnerving," said Roberts, the librarian from Meridian.

So, she's leaving it in the hands of her financial adviser, who sends her regular updates and has moved some of her money from higher-risk investments into mutual funds.

"They'll move some money to cash if they have to, temporarily," she said.

Roberts works four days a week at a library, spending the rest of the week caring for her elderly mother and taking her to doctor's appointments. If she had to, she could try to work five days a week, though it would be a strain.

"I want to have some time to spend with my adult daughters, so I'm really hoping that my IRA hangs on," she said.

## Today in History: May 25, death of George Floyd

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, May 25, the 145th day of 2022. There are 220 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a Black man, was killed when a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee on Floyd's neck for about 9 1/2 minutes while Floyd was handcuffed and pleading that he couldn't breathe; Floyd's death, captured on video by a bystander, would lead to worldwide protests, some of which turned violent, and a reexamination of racism and policing in the U.S.

On this date:

In 1787, the Constitutional Convention began at the Pennsylvania State House (Independence Hall) in Philadelphia after enough delegates had shown up for a quorum.

In 1946, Transjordan (now Jordan) became a kingdom as it proclaimed its new monarch, Abdullah I.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy told Congress: "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth."

In 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court, in Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, ordered the Virginia county to reopen its public schools, which officials had closed in an attempt to circumvent the Supreme Court's 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka desegregation ruling.

In 1968, the Gateway Arch in St. Louis was dedicated by Vice President Hubert Humphrey and Interior Secretary Stewart Udall.

In 1977, the first "Star Wars" film (later retitled "Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope") was released by 20th Century Fox.

In 1979, 273 people died when an American Airlines DC-10 crashed just after takeoff from Chicago's

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 322 ~ 93 of 93

O'Hare Airport.

In 2008, NASA's Phoenix Mars Lander arrived on the Red Planet to begin searching for evidence of water; the spacecraft confirmed the presence of water ice at its landing site.

In 2011, a judge in Salt Lake City sentenced street preacher Brian David Mitchell to life in prison for kidnapping and raping Elizabeth Smart, who was 14 at the time of her abduction in 2002. A judge in Tucson, Arizona, ruled that Jared Lee Loughner, the man accused of wounding U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and killing six in a shooting rampage, was mentally incompetent to stand trial. (Loughner would later plead guilty; he was sentenced to seven life terms in prison.)

In 2016, actor Johnny Depp's wife, Amber Heard, filed for divorce in Los Angeles, citing irreconcilable differences after 15 months of marriage.

In 2018, Harvey Weinstein was charged in New York with rape and another sex felony in the first prosecution to result from the wave of allegations against him. (Weinstein was convicted of rape and sexual assault; he is serving a 23-year prison sentence.)

In 2020, a white woman, Amy Cooper, called 911 to claim she was being threatened by "an African American man," Christian Cooper, who had confronted her for walking her dog without a leash in New York's Central Park. (After a video of the confrontation was widely circulated, Amy Cooper lost her job with investment firm Franklin Templeton and was charged with filing a false police report; the charge was dismissed after she completed a counseling program.)

Ten years ago: The private company SpaceX made history as its Dragon capsule docked with the International Space Station. In Syria, more than 100 people were killed in one day in a cluster of villages in central Homs province; U.N. investigators blamed pro-government gunmen for at least some of the killings, but the Syrian regime denied responsibility and blamed rebels for the deaths.

Five years ago: Surrounded by stone-faced allies, President Donald Trump rebuked fellow NATO members for failing to meet the military alliance's financial benchmarks. Republican Greg Gianforte won a special election for Montana's sole U.S. House seat a day after being charged with assaulting a reporter.

One year ago: The White House confirmed that President Joe Biden and Russia's Vladimir Putin would hold a summit in June in Geneva. The family of George Floyd met at the White House with President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris on the first anniversary of Floyd's death during his arrest by police in Minneapolis. Former Republican Sen. John Warner of Virginia died at the age of 94; the former Navy secretary was married to film star Elizabeth Taylor when he first ran for the Senate in 1978, and he held that Senate seat for 30 years.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Ann Robinson is 93. Former White House news secretary Ron Nessen is 88. Actor Sir Ian McKellen is 83. Country singer Jessi Colter is 79. Actor-singer Leslie Uggams is 79. Movie director and Muppeteer Frank Oz is 78. Actor Karen Valentine is 75. Actor Jacki Weaver is 75. Rock singer Klaus Meine (The Scorpions) is 74. Actor Patti D'Arbanville is 71. Playwright Eve Ensler is 69. Musician Cindy Cashdollar is 67. Actor Connie Sellecca is 67. Rock singer-musician Paul Weller is 64. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., is 62. Actor-comedian Mike Myers is 59. Actor Matt Borlenghi is 55. Actor Joseph Reitman is 54. Rock musician Glen Drover is 53. Actor Anne Heche (haych) is 53. Actors Lindsay and Sidney Greenbush (TV: "Little House on the Prairie") are 52. Actor-comedian Jamie Kennedy is 52. Actor Octavia Spencer is 52. Actor Justin Henry is 51. Rapper Daz Dillinger is 49. Actor Molly Sims is 49. Actor Erinn Hayes is 46. Actor Cillian Murphy is 46. Actor Ethan Suplee (soo-PLLEE') is 46. Rock musician Todd Whitener is 44. Actor Corbin Allred is 43. Actor-singer Lauren Frost is 37. Actor Ebonee Noel is 32. Musician Guy Lawrence (Disclosure) is 31. Olympic gold medal gymnast Aly Raisman is 28.