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Friday, June 10

Senior Menu: Turkey sub sandwich, potato salad, broccoli, fruit, cookie.

6 p.m.: U10 hosts Renegades, DH, (R/B), Nelson Field

6 p.m.: T-Ball Scrimmage

Saturday, June 11

SEAS Confession: 3:45-4:15 p.m., SEAS Mass: 4:30 p.m.

U10 at Aberdeen Tourney (R/W)

U8 Tourney in Groton

3 Team Pool Play

POOL A (Falk Field)

9:00 Groton White vs Britton

10:15 Hannigan vs Britton

11:30 Groton White vs Hannigan

Pool B (Nelson Field)

9:00 Groton Red vs Borge

10:15 Borge vs Milbank

11:30 Groton Red vs Milbank

12:45 Pool A #3 vs Pool B #3 Falk Field

1:30 Pool A #2 vs Pool B #2 Nelson Field

2:45 Pool A #1 vs Pool B #1 Falk Field



Sunday, June 12

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

2 p.m.: Legion hosts Redfield, DH
U10 at Aberdeen Tourney (W/B)

Monday, June 13

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, coleslaw, peaches, whole wheat bread.

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

5 p.m.: Legion at Webster, DH

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

5:30 p.m.: U10 hosts Webster, Nelson Field, (R/B), DH

5:30 p.m.: U8 hosts Webster, Nelson Field, (R/B), DH

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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

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The final process was started yesterday morning at the Groton Municipal Swimming Pool. The crew from Go Get Fred arrived early in the morning and by the end of the day, half of the pool was done. They apply the plaster with a machine as the guy in the left photo is applying it with a blower. The work is expected to be completed today with finishing touches tomorrow morning. Around 11 a.m. today, the water can be added to the pool as the filling process begins.

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Doing the plastering is a project in itself. An additive was added to help speed up the curing process. They have to keep troweling until the plaster gets hard.

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Joe Foertsch of Patios Plus is pouring the concrete into the hole in front of City Hall. This will be the site for the new flag pole.

Activities association considers ways to improve sportsmanship

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — While they didn't have any ready answers, the South Dakota High School Activities Association staff and board of directors agreed on Thursday, June 9, that something needs to be done to improve sportsmanship at high school athletic events.

"It's becoming a huge issue," said SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos. "Some boundaries are being crossed."

Coaches, players, officials and school administrators have to take responsibility for making sure that the games are enjoyable for everyone, according to SDHSAA Assistant Executive Director Jo Auch.

"Our high school activities are supposed to be uplifting," Auch said, noting that a conference she'll attend this summer will discuss ways to implement a no tolerance policy for bad sportsmanship.

"If you've got one of those people in the stands, you've got to do something," Auch said. "We need our schools to step up and say, 'Knock it off.'"

Auch said that in some states student council members police the games, handing out colored cards. A yellow card is a warning and a red card means that the fan has to leave the game. "It's the kids that decide," Auch said.

Fans and players often take their cue from coaches who belittle officials.

"I do believe it starts with the coaches," said SDHSAA Assistant Executive Director Randy Soma. "They fly to the dark side once in a while."

Swartos noted that for all the discussion about unruly fans, he wanted board members to keep in mind that they were talking about a "loud, vocal minority."

"There's a small contingent of knuckleheads that can't control their emotions," said Swartos, who told the board that the SDHSAA staff would keep sportsmanship on future board agendas and continue to seek solutions.

—30—

Schools approve adjusting enrollment numbers using free lunch data

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — At its annual meeting in April, schools that belong to the South Dakota High School Activities Association were presented with seven constitutional amendments. Six of them were easily endorsed while the seventh came close to defeat.

The election results were ratified by the SDHSAA board of directors at its meeting on Thursday, June 9.

On a vote of 101 to 54, member schools endorsed an amendment instituting a formula that would allow a school's enrollment figures to be reduced by 30% using data based on how many students in the district were eligible for free and reduced lunches.

Enrollment figures are used to determine a school's classification in athletics and fine arts activities. Classifications are created on a two-year cycle. The lunch data will be used when classifications are determined for the 2024 to 2025 and 2025 to 2026 school years.

According to the organization's bylaws, constitutional amendments must garner 60% of the vote for passage. The free and reduced lunch amendment earned 65% of the vote.

The association's rationale for offering the amendment said: "We have a number of schools on the line between classifications with large populations of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. In general, those schools and students have severe discrepancies in access to equipment and school/personal access to outside training opportunities as compared to similar sized schools with low populations of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. This multiplier is used in several other states, and free and reduced lunch percentage has been widely accepted as a major factor in athletic/activity suc-

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cess. This multiplier would allow those schools to remain in a classification level that most appropriately reflects their opportunities.”

Two SDHSAA board members are school board members and both their boards voted against passage of the amendment.

Marty Weismantel said the Groton School Board took issue with the portion of the rationale noting that schools with large populations of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch are likely to have less access to training facilities. Weismantel said small, rural schools like Groton are also at a disadvantage when it comes to training facilities.

Mark Murphy said the Aberdeen School Board voted against passage of the amendment because its members believed that there are “more factors than this (free and reduced lunches) when it comes to determining poverty.”

The six other amendments were easily approved by the member schools, with two passing unanimously, two with just one no vote, one with two no votes and one with four no votes.

Approved by the schools were an amendment that would change the eligibility appeals process, two that would bring the association into compliance with recently passed laws regarding home-schooled students, two that would change the constitution to reflect current practices by the association and one that deletes a reference to No Child Left Behind.

—30—

High school football schedules won't be changed

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — Despite complaints from small schools about their 2023 football schedules, on Thursday, June 9, the South Dakota High School Activities Association board of directors voted unanimously to keep the schedules just the way they are.

At its April meeting, the board heard some complaints from schools that have nine-man football teams and from the 11B schools that football schedules for 2022 and 2023 were not to their liking. The schedules for some schools did not include conference games or games within their classification.

SDHSAA Assistant Executive Director Randy Soma, in his first year of creating the schedules, said his priority was ensuring that each school had a schedule of games.

It was determined by the board that it was too late to change the 2022 schedules. At the April meeting, Soma was directed to poll schools about whether or not they wanted to change their 2023 football schedules.

All nine 11AAA and all 10 11AA schools wanted to keep their 2023 schedules. Three of the 14 11A schools wanted their schedules changed. At the 11B level, the vote was 15-10 in favor of keeping the schedules. The 9AA vote was 9-5, the 9A vote was 10-7 and the 9B vote was 6-11.

Changing the schedule for just the 9B teams wouldn't be an option, Soma said, because many of them also play 9AA and 9A schools.

Soma noted that some schools filled out the survey three times, with votes coming in from the superintendent, the activities director and the football coach. Sometimes they disagreed on how to vote. When that happened, Soma said, he went with the superintendent's vote.

In 11B and the three nine-man classes, some schools failed to fill out Soma's survey.

“That what's disappointing to me,” said board chairman Tom Culver of Avon. “If you're going to complain, take the time to vote.”

According to SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos, making the football schedule calls for scheduling 800 games throughout seven classes. He told the board that the staff has been made aware of a computer program that may help with the schedules.

“I think the process will continue to get better,” Soma said.

—30—

SDHSAA makes plans for surplus revenue

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — A school year of record attendance at state tournaments has the South Dakota High School Activities Association projecting that it will have surplus revenue at the end of its budget year.

"We had a lot of record crowds this year," said SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos.

At the urging of its finance committee, on Thursday, June 9, the SDHSAA board of directors made plans for the distribution of an estimated \$231,000 in surplus revenue.

The board approved spending as much as \$24,000 for eight body composition scales and refractometers that can be used for wrestler weigh-ins. Swartos said the scales would be for schools to use at eight regional sites.

The board agreed to send an estimated \$46,000 to reimburse excess expenses incurred by schools that served as hosts for state tournaments.

The board approved using the remaining funds, approximately \$150,000 to replenish its reserve account which has been diminished over the past several years.

Board chairman Tom Culver of Avon said there was some concern about the optics of the association striving for a fund balance equal to 60% of its budget when school districts are limited to saving 30%.

"If we have another pandemic this organization is going to need that money," Culver said of the reserve account. "All it would take is a really bad winter" to cause the cancellation of basketball and wrestling tournaments and the loss of the revenue from those events.

—30—

Murphy will lead activities association board

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — Mark Murphy of Aberdeen was selected Thursday, June 9, as the new chairman of the South Dakota High School Activities Association board of directors. He will serve in that capacity for one year.

Elected as vice chairman was Kelly Messmer of Harding County.

Murphy will lead a board with two new members. Unanimously elected to the board by member schools was Watertown Superintendent Jeff Danielsen. He will take the place on the board of Terry Rotert of Huron.

Board member Derek Barrios of Elk Point-Jefferson is leaving the board after accepting a new position with the Watertown School District. The board selected Dani Walking Eagle of St. Francis to fill the one-year term of Barrios on the board.

—30—

The Life of Janet K. Thompson



Janet K. Thompson, 68, passed away peacefully August 22, 2021, at Brookdale Central Senior Living, Chandler, Arizona.

Janet was born October 15, 1952 in Aberdeen, South Dakota.

She graduated from Groton High School in Groton, South Dakota in 1971.

Janet worked in retail in Aberdeen, SD for 2 years prior to moving to Tempe, Arizona, where she worked for Ambassador Direct Mail Marketing in Tempe, Arizona until it closed in 1991. After its closing she and a co-worker opened their own direct mail marketing company, Valley Connections, in Tempe, Arizona where she remained until her retirement in 2013.

Janet is survived in death by her sister Cindy {Gregg} Finlay, Las Vegas, Nevada,

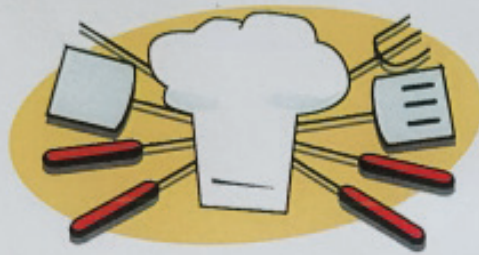
Her twin sister Janice {Kurt} Haugland, Mesa, Arizona, her brother Lee {Jennifer} Groton, South Dakota, nephews and nieces. Janet is preceded in death by her parents Ruth and Ivan Thompson of Groton, South Dakota.

Graveside services will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, June 17th at Groton Union Cemetery. Pastor Brandon Dunham will officiate.

If considering a memorial gift, Janet requested that families donate to a charity of their choice.

Condolences can be sent to Lee Thompson, 12859 404th Ave., Groton, SD 57445-5420.

Groton Transit Fundraiser



When: Thursday, June 16, 2022

Time: 4:00 pm-7:00 pm

Where: Groton Community Center

*** Groton Transit Fundraiser will be held at the Groton Community Center-
109 N 3rd Street- One block East of Groton Transit***

*Food*Fun*Door Prizes*

FREE WILL OFFERING

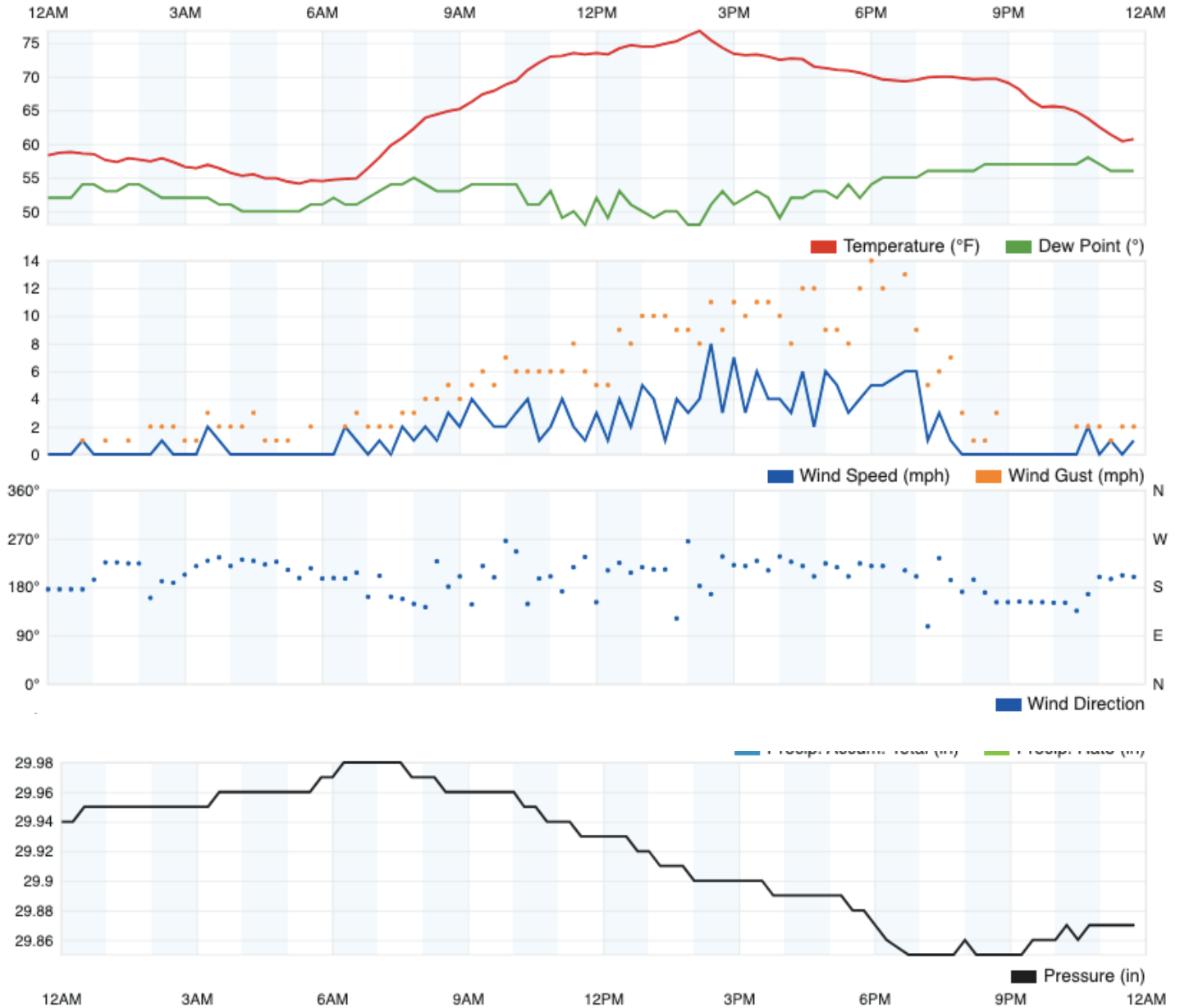
Please join us & Help support Groton Transit!

Also Serving State Fair Mini Donuts!!!!

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Areas Fog
then Slight
Chance
T-storms

High: 79 °F

Tonight



Chance
Showers then
Slight Chance
T-storms

Low: 62 °F

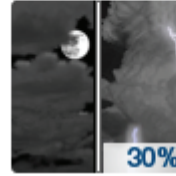
Saturday



Slight Chance
T-storms then
Partly Sunny

High: 85 °F

Saturday
Night



Mostly Cloudy
then Chance
T-storms

Low: 63 °F

Sunday



Slight Chance
T-storms

High: 86 °F



The Weekend Forecast

June 10, 2022
2:14 AM

Today

Patchy morning fog. Isolated showers/storms NE SD/WC MN this afternoon & evening, **Highs 75-86°**

Saturday

Slight chc mainly afternoon & evening showers/storms, **Highs 80-92°**

Sunday

Slight chc showers/storms, mainly northern SD. **Highs 80-90°**



National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A weekend warm up is on tap, along with slight chances for mainly afternoon/evening showers and thunderstorms. #sdwx #mnwx

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Today in Weather History

June 10, 1998: Torrential rains of two to three inches in a short period caused flash flooding on the Crow Creek, near Gann Valley. As a result, some dams and roads were washed out.

June 10, 2004: An F1 tornado damaged 3 barns and numerous other buildings on a farm located 22 miles west of Ft. Pierre. This tornado also downed power lines and broke windows out of a home. There were no injuries reported.

June 10, 2008: A strong low-level jet impinging on a frontal surface boundary extending across southern South Dakota brought many severe thunderstorms to central and northeast South Dakota. Large hail and high winds brought some tree damage, trees down, along with some structural damage. Eighty mph winds blew down a 46 by 100 foot Quonset with tin strewn over a quarter-mile. Several trees were also uprooted in Hosmer in Edmunds County. An EF1 tornado touched down briefly and downed a power pole, snapped off a road sign, and blew a metal shed 100 yards destroying it. The tornado also broke off several large tree branches. This tornado occurred eight miles east-northeast of Eden in Marshall County.

1752: It is believed that this was the day Benjamin Franklin narrowly missed electrocution while flying a kite during a thunderstorm to determine if lightning is related to electricity.

1957 - A dust devil at North Yarmouth, ME, lifted a 600 to 1000 pound chicken shelter into the air and carried it 25 feet. It landed upright with only slight damage. It is unknown whether any eggs were scrambled. (The Weather Channel)

1958 - A woman was sucked through the window of her home in El Dorado, KS, by a powerful tornado, and was carried sixty feet away. Beside her was found a broken phonograph record entitled Stormy Weather . (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms produced 2 to 4 inch rains in southern Texas. Two and a half inches of rain at Juno TX caused flooding and closed a nearby highway. Flooding on the northwest side of San Antonio claimed one life as a boy was swept into a culvert. Thunderstorms in the north central U.S. produced an inch and a half of small hail at Monida Pass MT. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Three dozen cities, mostly in the eastern U.S., reported record low temperatures for the date, including Elkins, WV, with a reading of 33 degrees. Unseasonably hot weather continued in the Northern High Plains Region. The record high of 105 degeees at Williston, ND, was their seventh in eight days. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather through the day and night across much of the southern half of the Great Plains Region. Thunderstorms spawned 14 tornadoes, and there were 142 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Hail three inches in diameter caused three millions dollars damage at Carlsbad, NM. Hail four inches in diameter was reported at Estelline TX and Stinnett, TX. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Odessa TX. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1997: Flash Flooding occurred in many locations in Mississippi. Highway 80 and many other streets were flooded in and around Vicksburg. Water engulfed one person's car, but the person was rescued. This event caused \$300,000 in property damages. Over 6 inches of rain fell in Lexington in a little over 3 hours. The torrential rains caused Bear Creek to overflow and flood much of the town of Lexington. 45 businesses were affected by the flooding and 30 of these suffered major losses. As many as 300 homes had water damage. This event caused 10 million dollars in property damages. Portions of Jones County experienced flash flooding as 3 inches of rain fell in just 1.5 hours over saturated ground.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 77 °F at 2:10 PM

Low Temp: 54 °F at 5:22 AM

Wind: 14 mph at 4:18 PM

Precip: 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 40 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 101 in 2021

Record Low: 37 in 1964

Average High: 79°F

Average Low: 54°F

Average Precip in June.: 1.15

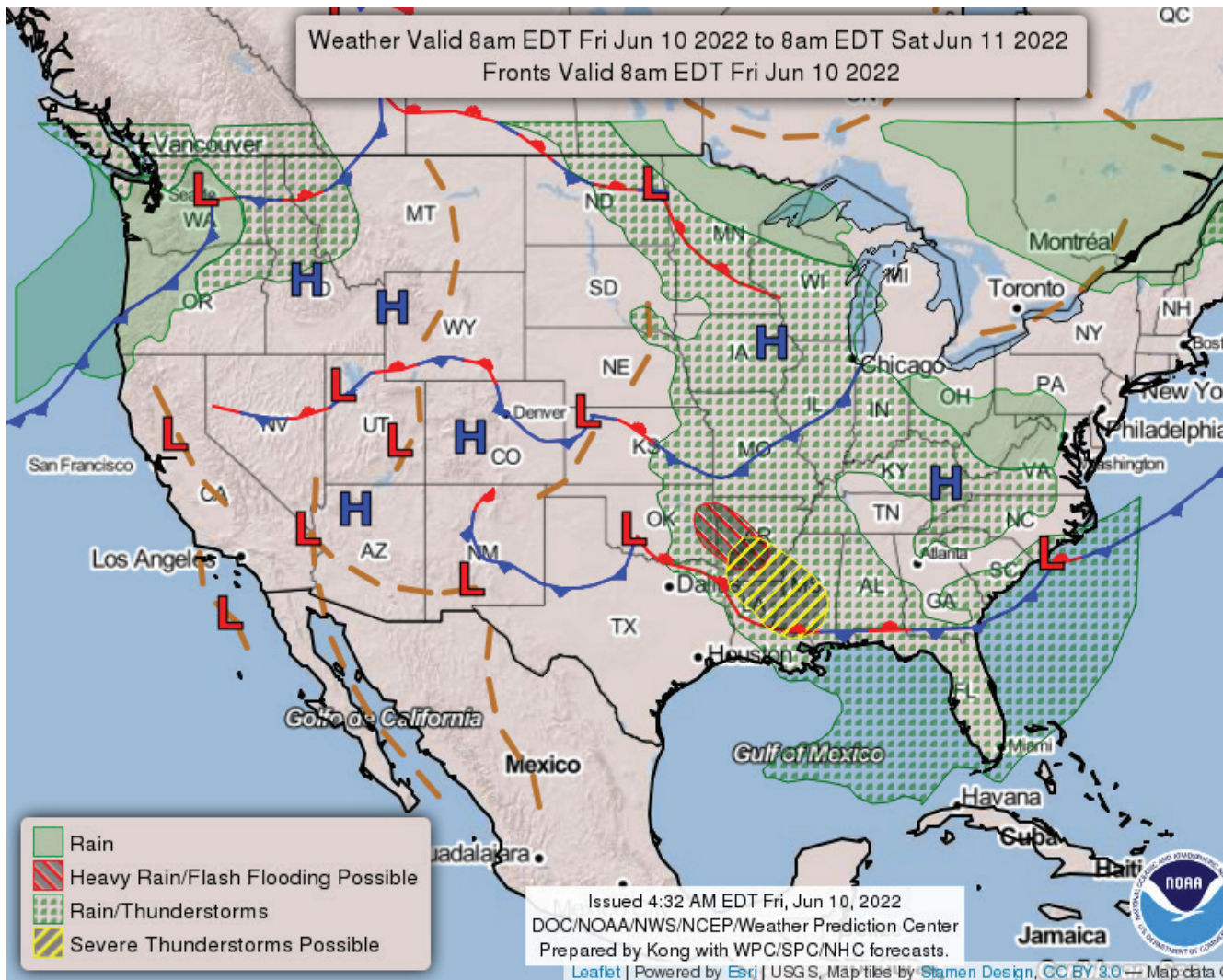
Precip to date in June.: 0.02

Average Precip to date: 8.40

Precip Year to Date: 11.18

Sunset Tonight: 9:21:56 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:41:43 AM



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Nothing New

Some years ago, a group of Navy scientists began to work on ways to change the direction of major storms. If they were able to do this, they reasoned they could direct them to do great damage to the enemy.

Furthermore, they thought, if they could direct the storms to disrupt the enemy, they would be able to control clouds and form high seas and waves. Also, they believed if they could create low, solid overcast clouds, they would be able to conceal troop movements.

But God used the weather to His advantage long before the military ever entertained the idea. A great story of God using the weather to accomplish His purpose is the story of Jonah.

One day the Lord said to Jonah, "Go to Nineveh." But he refused to listen to God and decided to go to Tarshish. However, he never got there. The Lord had a plan for Jonah, and, to accomplish His plan He needed a hurricane. So, He "turned" one loose, and the crew of Jonah's ship became frightened.

Jonah looked at them and said, "It's all my fault. Go ahead and throw me overboard." When they did, the sea stopped raging and became calm. But there's more.

God then ordered a great fish to get involved in His plan. Soon, the great fish swallowed Jonah and took him for a ride. Finally, the great fish spewed him out, and he went to Nineveh. God does not put up with disobedience. If He has to, He'll get all of nature to help Him accomplish His plan.

The Psalmist reminds us that "lightning and hail, snow and clouds, and stormy winds...do His bidding."

Prayer: Lord, we only fool ourselves if we think we can escape from Your plan. If wind and weather obey You, so should we! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Bible Verse: Fire and hail, snow and clouds, wind and weather that obey him. Psalm 148:8

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2022 Community Events

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

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All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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- ☐ Colored \$79.88/year
- ☐ Colored \$42.60/6 months
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News from the Associated Press

Man dealing meth out of motorhome sentenced to 27 years

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Minnesota man accused of dealing drugs out of a motorhome has been sentenced to 27 years in prison, according to federal authorities in South Dakota.

A federal indictment accuses Frank Stewart, 62, of participating in a drug ring that distributed massive amounts of methamphetamine in South Dakota and elsewhere.

"He personally distributed more than 500 grams of methamphetamine during his involvement in the conspiracy," U.S. Attorney Alison Ramsdell said.

Stewart, of Browns Valley, Minnesota, pleaded guilty in December to conspiracy to distribute a controlled substance. Two other defendants have been charged in the case.

Stewart was arrested last year in Todd County, Minnesota, where police searched his motorhome and discovered a half-pound of meth, more than \$9,000 in cash and two firearms, according to a west-central Minnesota drug task force.

South Dakota primary turnout highest since 2010 election

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Officials say South Dakota recorded its largest primary election turnout in more than a decade, with roughly one in every three registered voters casting a ballot.

The 32% showing was the most since the 2010 primary, when nearly 35% of voters cast ballots in a race with several Republicans fighting for the nomination for governor. The nod went to Dennis Daugaard.

The 2010 and 2022 primaries were similar in makeup in that Democratic presidents who were unpopular in the state, Joe Biden and Barack Obama, were in the middle of their first terms, the Argus Leader reported.

This year's turnout was bolstered by a historic number of Republican legislative primaries and a controversial constitutional amendment. The initiative proposed by Republican lawmakers would have placed a 60% vote threshold on ballot measures to raise taxes or spend more than \$10 million within five years of enactment.

All but 3% of people who cast ballots voted on Amendment C. The measure lost 67%-33%.

However, there were no topline statewide offices in doubt as Gov. Kristi Noem, Sen. John Thune and Rep. Dusty Johnson cruised to victories.

General election turnouts are much higher, particularly in presidential years. Turnout in the 2020 general election was 74%.

Zimbabweans count their toes as inflation soars above 130%

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Battling rampant inflation, Zimbabweans are counting their toes as they struggle to buy food for their families.

An internet rumor blazed through the country that desperate people were selling their toes for cash. The false report became so widespread that the country's Deputy Minister of Information Kindness Paradza visited street vendors in central Harare earlier this month to debunk it.

One-by-one the traders took off their shoes to show that they had all 10 toes, as Zimbabwe's state media recorded the digital investigation.

Paradza declared the toes-for-money story a hoax, as did local and foreign fact-checkers. Police later arrested a street vendor who now faces a fine or 6 months in jail on charges of criminal nuisance for allegedly starting the story.

It's starkly true, however, that Zimbabweans are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine, Zimbabwe's inflation rate has shot up from 66% to more than 130%, according to official statistics. The war is blamed for rising fuel and food prices.

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The war in Ukraine has exacerbated inflation rising around the world. Consumer prices in the 19 European Union countries that use the euro currency surged 8.1% in May, a record rate as energy and food costs climb. In the U.S. and the United Kingdom, annual inflation hit or was close to 40-year highs of 8.3% and 9%, respectively, in April. Turkey approached Zimbabwe's eye-watering prices, with inflation reaching 73.5% in May, the highest in 24 years.

In Zimbabwe, the impact of the Ukraine war is heaping problems on the already fragile economy. The war "coupled with our historical domestic imbalances, has created challenges in terms of economic instability seen through the currency volatility and spilling over into price volatility," Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube told Parliament in May.

Teachers "can no longer afford bread and other basics, this is too much," tweeted the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe in early June. The three largest teachers' unions are demanding the government pay their salaries in U.S. dollars because their pay in local currency is "eroded overnight."

"Because of high inflation, the local currency is collapsing," economic analyst Prosper Chitambara told The Associated Press. "Individuals and companies no longer trust the local currency and that has put pressure on the demand for U.S. dollars. The Ukraine war is simply exacerbating an already difficult situation."

Many fear Zimbabwe could return to the hyperinflation of 2008 which reached 500 billion%, according to the International Monetary Fund. At that time, plastic bags full of 100 trillion Zimbabwe dollar banknotes were not enough to buy basic groceries.

The economic catastrophe forced then-President Robert Mugabe to form a "unity government" with the opposition and adopt a multi-currency system in 2009 in which US dollars and the South African rand were accepted as legal tender.

The U.S. dollar continues to dominate with prices in local currency often benchmarked to the rates for the American currency on the flourishing illegal market, where most individuals and companies get their foreign currency.

Across the country, currency traders line the streets and crowd entrances to shopping centers waving wads of both the local currency and U.S. dollars.

Many Zimbabweans who earn in local currency such as government workers are forced to source dollars on the illegal market, where exchange rates are soaring, to pay for goods and services that are increasingly being charged in U.S. dollars.

Retailers said the rising rates for U.S. dollars on the illegal market are forcing them to frequently increase prices, often every few days, to allow them to restock.

The once-prosperous southern African country's economy is battered by years of de-industrialization, corruption, low investment, low exports and high debt. Zimbabwe struggles to generate an adequate inflow of greenbacks needed for its largely dollarized local economy.

Ordinary Zimbabweans are returning to coping mechanisms they relied on during the hyperinflationary era such as skipping meals. Others now buy food items in smaller quantities, sometimes in such tiny packages they are enough for just a single meal. Locals call them "tsaona," meaning "accident" in the local Shona language.

Promising better days ahead, Ncube, the finance minister, said the government "will not hesitate to act and intervene to cushion against price increases and exchange rate volatility."

Many are skeptical of such vows from the government, saying nothing short of a miracle will pull Zimbabwe out of its economic crisis. Even while coping with constantly rising prices, many can't help making grim jokes about the situation.

"I still have all my toes intact but it wouldn't hurt selling one," chuckled Harare resident Asani Sibanda. "I could still walk without it, but my family would at least get some food."

Biden visiting LA port as high inflation persists as threat

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Port of Los Angeles is a testament to President Joe Biden's unrewarded ef-

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ports to address what he calls his top economic priority: inflation.

Biden will speak at the port, America's busiest, on Friday with inflation persisting as a problem that has eluded his policy tweaks, deals brokered with the private sector, infrastructure spending and regulatory actions.

The port moved to round-the-clock operations last October under an agreement that the White House helped to shepherd. The goal was to remove backlogs of ships waiting to dock and containers waiting to flow into the country, a logjam that was pumping up prices as the world began to recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

The port is now moving out a record 200,000 containers on a rolling 30-day average. But the forces driving inflation have shifted to rising energy and food costs in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Democratic president's speech will overlap with the release of the consumer price index for May, a key measure of inflation. Economists surveyed by the data firm FactSet expect inflation rose at a yearly rate of 8.2%, only slightly below the 40-year peak of 8.5% set in March. The new report could be paired with average U.S. gasoline prices climbing above \$5 a gallon, a nominal record that is hurting Biden's public approval ahead of the midterm elections.

Gene Seroka, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, said there were many levers that caused performance to improve in terms of getting goods to consumers and businesses faster. But he specifically credited the "convening powers of the federal government to bring people to the table" and the Biden administration's focus on the supply chain.

"We've reduced those ships that have been waiting to get into the port by 75% this year," Seroka said. "These guys are really working because we've got strong consumer demand still."

The strong consumer demand has been a mixed blessing for Biden. It reflects the robust job growth and solid household balance sheets that followed the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package passed last year. But demand has consistently outpaced supply, causing prices to rise to levels that are forcing the Federal Reserve to try to slow growth and possibly risk a recession.

The White House said that Biden planned to say in his Friday remarks that the U.S. can tackle inflation without stumbling into a downturn. That's because the economy is so strong with its 3.6% unemployment rate that it can withstand a slowdown.

The president will also seek to frame inflation as a global challenge, having been triggered first by the pandemic and then by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Biden is attempting to rebut criticism by Republican lawmakers that inflation was the result of his government aid being too generous and his restrictions on U.S. oil production too onerous.

Biden has attempted to slow inflation by improving port operations and twice releasing oil from the U.S. strategic reserve, in addition to other regulatory initiatives and a domestic agenda that includes budget deficit reduction and would need congressional approval.

Before inflation became an economic and political threat, Biden had stressed that his key goal was improving the lives of middle-class workers. That could be put to the test as the union contract for the port expires on July 1 and workers try to increase their incomes and benefits.

The workers will continue to do their jobs after the contract expires, and it's rare for a new contract to be reached ahead of time, said Jennifer Sargent Bokaie, communications director for the Coast Longshore Division of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. She said there is an agreement between the union and the Pacific Maritime Association, which represents the port, to not discuss the status of contract negotiations with the news media.

The visit to the port occurs as Biden has been hosting the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles. On Friday, he will also announce a declaration on migration and hold a working luncheon with the heads of government and state attending the conference for nations in the Western Hemisphere.

And mindful of the campaign season, Biden on Friday will attend two fundraising receptions for the Democratic National Committee.

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Ukraine: Drivers risk all to bring aid, help civilians flee

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — As Russian artillery pummeled the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol in April, one family decided to flee, walking for miles with three young children in tow to a nearby village. But it was thanks to a volunteer driver who crossed the front line that they managed to eventually make it out of Russian-held territory.

"The driver, Zhenya, is a saint," said Luda Lobanova, 58, after stepping off a minibus in the central Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia in early May along with 8-year-old Ihor, 7-year-old Sofia and 2 1/2-year-old Vlad. "There were so many times that they turned us around. If it wasn't for Zhenya, we wouldn't have made it."

With tears in her eyes, Lobanova thanked him before he slipped away, clambering back into his minibus. He had more humanitarian aid to deliver, more people to pick up.

On the edge of the conflict zone in Ukraine, which runs along the country's east and south, volunteer drivers are risking everything to deliver humanitarian aid to Ukrainians behind the front lines, and to get people out. The routes are dangerous and long — sometimes several days' long — and the drivers face detention, injury or death. More than two dozen drivers have been captured, held for more than two months by Russian-backed separatists in the eastern Donetsk region, Ukrainian activists say.

A few do it for money, some drivers said, but many do it for free, either alone or in organized groups.

"I decided to do it because there are women and children there," said Oleksandr Petrenko, who carried out several evacuations from areas in and around Mariupol before he deemed his risk of detention too great because of his repeated forays into Russian-held territory.

"I also have a mother, I have a girlfriend. These people don't have to stay there, in that human grinder. Lives are broken there. If you don't do it, people might die," he said.

Joining more experienced drivers at first, Petrenko learned the routes and how to operate. He adopted a set of strict rules, which apply to drivers and passengers alike: Wipe photos and messages off mobile phones, don't criticize Russia or Russian-backed separatists and never, ever get into political discussions — the wrong comment with the wrong people could cost you your freedom, or your life.

His first trip was the scariest. Even the weather was foreboding. "It was gray and gloomy," he said. "It was raining. And when you enter a city of black color that burned down — it's like a movie."

Petrenko estimated that he managed to evacuate about 130 people from Russian-held areas before he stopped driving because of the risks.

Now he helps with logistics for a team of volunteer drivers operating out of Zaporizhzhia, the first safer major city encountered by many people fleeing Russian-held territory, particularly in the south from Mariupol and the surrounding areas.

None of the drivers who were still crossing front lines would speak on the record, for security reasons.

The risks are clear. Among the detained drivers is Vitaliy Sytnykov, a 34-year-old rock-climbing Mariupol taxi driver. He has been held since late March, according to one of his friends, journalist Alevtina Shvetsova, who fled Mariupol herself with her family earlier in March.

"He is a person with a big heart," Shvetsova said, speaking in early June in the central city of Kryvyi Rih. Sytnykov had managed to get out of Mariupol but joined a group of volunteer drivers evacuating others, she said. Then, on one of his runs, he was captured. It's not clear why.

The status of his and other drivers' detention is unclear. Information is scarce, gleaned from others held in the same detention facility who are later released, or from limited footage that has appeared on Russian television, Shvetsova said.

"He could have stayed in a safe place with (his) family," after he got out of the city, she said. "But ... he knew there were many women, children left in Mariupol."

Farther to the east, in the Donetsk and the neighboring Luhansk regions where Russian forces are doubling down on their offensive, volunteers' vans and minibuses zip through towns and down country roads, racing to evacuate civilians as the fighting draws closer.

Roman Zhylenkov, a no-nonsense man of few words, has been helping evacuate people from the path

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of the conflict since early March, just a few days after the start of the war. He started by taking people out of his now Russian-held hometown of Kreminna, north of the city of Sievierodonetsk, then continued in the Donetsk region.

Working with the Ukrainian aid group Vostok SOS, most of those he evacuates now from towns and cities such as Bakhmut, Kramatorsk and Sloviansk are elderly or ailing. Many cannot walk, and have to be carried out of houses and apartment blocks in stretchers or even in his arms.

"I would like to have a more quiet life," he said, pausing briefly from ferrying a group of elderly evacuees. "But it is war now."

On the back of his van, a sticker bears his organization's logo and a hashtag: "#LeaveNoOneBehind."

Capitol riot panel blames Trump for 1/6 'attempted coup'

By LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House panel investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol laid the blame firmly on Donald Trump Thursday night, saying the assault was hardly spontaneous but an "attempted coup" and a direct result of the defeated president's effort to overturn the 2020 election.

With a never-before-seen 12-minute video of extremist groups leading the deadly siege and startling testimony from Trump's most inner circle, the 1/6 committee provided gripping detail in contending that Trump's repeated lies about election fraud and his public effort to stop Joe Biden's victory led to the attack and imperiled American democracy.

"Democracy remains in danger," said Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., chairman of the panel, during the hearing, timed for prime time to reach as many Americans as possible.

"Jan. 6 was the culmination of an attempted coup, a brazen attempt, as one rioter put it shortly after Jan. 6, to overthrow the government," Thompson said. "The violence was no accident."

The hearings may not change Americans' views on the Capitol attack, but the panel's investigation is intended to stand as its public record. Ahead of this fall's midterm elections, and with Trump considering another White House run, the committee's final report aims to account for the most violent attack on the Capitol since 1814, and to ensure such an attack never happens again.

Testimony showed Thursday how Trump desperately clung to his own false claims of election fraud, beckoning supporters to the Capitol on Jan. 6 when Congress would certify the results, despite those around him insisting Biden had won the election.

In a previously unseen video clip, the panel played a quip from former Attorney General Bill Barr who testified that he told Trump the claims of a rigged election were "bull——."

In another, the former president's daughter, Ivanka Trump, testified to the committee that she respected Barr's view that there was no election fraud. "I accepted what he said."

Others showed leaders of the extremist Oath Keepers and Proud Boys preparing to storm the Capitol to stand up for Trump. One rioter after another told the committee they came to the Capitol because Trump asked them to.

"President Trump summoned a violent mob," said Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., the panel's vice chair who took the lead for much of the hearing. "When a president fails to take the steps necessary to preserve our union — or worse, causes a constitutional crisis — we're in a moment of maximum danger for our republic."

There was an audible gasp in the hearing room when Cheney read an account that said when Trump was told the Capitol mob was chanting for Vice President Mike Pence to be hanged for refusing to block the election results. Trump responded that maybe they were right, that he "deserves it."

At another point it was disclosed that Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., a leader of efforts to object to the election results, had sought a pardon from Trump, which would protect him from prosecution.

When asked about the White House lawyers threatening to resign over what was happening in the administration, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner scoffed they were "whining."

Police officers who had fought off the mob consoled one another as they sat in the committee room reliving the violence they faced on Jan. 6. Officer Harry Dunn teared up as bodycam footage showed riot-

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ers bludgeoning his colleagues with flagpoles and baseball bats.

In wrenching testimony U.S. Capitol Police officer Caroline Edwards told the panel that she slipped in other people's blood as rioters pushed past her into the Capitol. She suffered brain injuries in the melee.

"It was carnage. It was chaos," she said.

The riot left more than 100 police officers injured, many beaten and bloodied, as the crowd of pro-Trump rioters, some armed with pipes, bats and bear spray, charged into the Capitol. At least nine people who were there died during and after the rioting, including a woman who was shot and killed by police.

Biden, in Los Angeles for the Summit of the Americas, said many viewers were "going to be seeing for the first time a lot of the detail that occurred."

Trump, unapologetic, dismissed the investigation anew — and even declared on social media that Jan. 6 "represented the greatest movement in the history of our country."

Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee tweeted: "All. Old. News."

Emotions are still raw at the Capitol, and security was tight. Law enforcement officials are reporting a spike in violent threats against members of Congress.

Against this backdrop, the committee was speaking to a divided America. Most TV networks carried the hearing live, but Fox News Channel did not.

The committee chairman, civil rights leader Thompson, opened the hearing with the sweep of American history. saying he heard in those denying the stark reality of Jan. 6 his own experience growing up in a time and place "where people justified the action of slavery, the Ku Klux Klan and lynching."

Republican Rep. Cheney, the daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney, outlined what the committee has learned about the events leading up to that brisk January day when Trump sent his supporters to Congress to "fight like hell" for his presidency.

Among those testifying was documentary maker Nick Quested, who filmed the Proud Boys storming the Capitol — along with a pivotal meeting between the group's then-chairman Henry "Enrique" Tarrío and another extremist group, the Oath Keepers, the night before in nearby parking garage. Quested said the Proud Boys later went to get tacos.

Court documents show that members of the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers were discussing as early as November a need to fight to keep Trump in office. Leaders both groups and some members have since been indicted on rare sedition charges over the military-style attack.

In the weeks ahead, the panel is expected to detail Trump's public campaign to "Stop the Steal" and the private pressure he put on the Justice Department to reverse his election loss — despite dozens of failed court cases attesting there was no fraud on a scale that could have tipped the results in his favor.

The panel faced obstacles from its start. Republicans blocked the formation of an independent body that could have investigated the Jan. 6 assault the way the 9/11 Commission probed the 2001 terror attack.

Instead, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ushered the creation of the 1/6 panel through Congress and rejected Republican-appointed lawmakers who had voted on Jan. 6 against certifying the election results, eventually naming seven Democrats and two Republicans.

House GOP Leader Kevin McCarthy, who has been caught up in the probe and has defied the committee's subpoena for an interview, called the panel a "scam."

In the audience were several lawmakers who were trapped together in the House gallery during the attack.

"We want to remind people, we were there, we saw what happened," said Rep. Dean Phillips, D-Minn. "We know how close we came to the first non-peaceful transition of power in this country."

The Justice Department has arrested and charged more than 800 people for the violence that day, the biggest dragnet in its history.

Takeaways: 'Carnage' at the Capitol and a case against Trump

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, FARNOUSH AMIRI and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An injured officer who slipped in blood and spoke of "carnage." Video of a huge, violent mob pushing through the U.S. Capitol. Former President Donald Trump's allies and family members

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acknowledging his lies.

House investigators worked to lay out a devastating case Thursday in the first of a series of June hearings examining the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the Capitol. The House panel probing the attack showed violent video of the siege and showed clips of testimony examining the weeks beforehand in which Trump pushed falsehoods about widespread fraud in the election he lost.

While the basics of the attack on the Capitol are well known, the committee is trying to tell the story of how it happened, and how to prevent it from ever happening again, for history. The made-for-TV hearings — including video of police officers being brutally beaten and right-wing extremists leading the crowds into the Capitol — come as some have tried to downplay the violence.

"We can't sweep what happened under the rug," said Rep. Bennie Thompson, the chairman of the panel, as he opened the hearing. "The American people deserve answers."

The committee has conducted more than 1,000 interviews with people connected to the siege and collected more than 140,000 documents. They will use that evidence over the course of seven hearings this month to show how the attack was coordinated by some of the rioters in the violent mob that broke into the Capitol and interrupted the certification of President Joe Biden's victory — and how Trump's efforts started it all.

Takeaways from the Jan. 6 committee's first hearing:

LAYING IT ALL ON TRUMP

Thompson laid out the committee's initial findings that Trump led a "sprawling, multi-step conspiracy aimed at overturning the presidential election" and the insurrection was a culmination of that "attempted coup." The panel's vice chairwoman, Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, called it a "sophisticated seven-part plan."

"The attack on our Capitol was not a spontaneous riot," said Cheney, one of two Republicans on the nine-member panel.

The hearing featured never-before-seen video testimony from Trump's family and close aides, many of whom were interviewed by the committee remotely.

The panel started by showing a video interview with former Attorney General Bill Barr, who said he told Trump at the time that his fraud claims had no merit. Barr, who said publicly a month before the insurrection that the Justice Department had not found fraud, told the committee members that he had told Trump it was all "bull——."

The panel also showed video testimony from Trump's daughter, Ivanka Trump, who spoke to the committee in April. Ivanka Trump told the panel that Barr's declaration "affected my perspective."

"I respect Attorney General Barr so I accepted what he said," she told the committee.

Another Trump adviser, Jason Miller, told the panel that campaign advisors had told the president in "clear terms" that he had lost the election.

'THIS ISN'T EASY TO WATCH'

The committee showed new, graphic video from the insurrection, moving through a timeline of the violence. It started with rioters angrily walking toward the Capitol, then showed them breaking through thin police barriers and brutally beating police.

Using security footage, police body cameras, video from those who broke in and audio from the police scanner, the video showed rioters using flagpoles, tactical equipment and other weapons to hit officers as they overwhelmed them and broke inside. Some of the body camera footage was from the ground looking up, as officers watched their attackers beat them.

At the same time, it showed what was happening inside — the beginning of the joint session to certify Biden's election win and, people fleeing from the violence.

And it showed the rioters chanting "Hang Mike Pence," referring to the vice president who had defied Trump's orders to try to thwart Biden's certification, and chanting "Nancy! Nancy!" as they walked up a staircase inside the Capitol, referring to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

AN OFFICER OVERWHELMED AND INJURED

Caroline Edwards, a Capitol Police officer, testified in graphic terms about the bloody scene outside the

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Capitol that day and the traumatic brain injury she suffered when members of the Proud Boys and others pushed her to the ground as they led the mob into the Capitol.

Edwards was alone and holding two bike racks together at the front lines as the mob heaved toward her, pushing her and the racks to the ground. She hit her head on a concrete stairway, briefly falling unconscious.

Even with her injury, Edwards continued to fight off the crowd. She described a "war scene" out of the movies and hours of hand-to-hand combat that no law enforcement officer is trained to handle.

"They were throwing up — I saw friends with blood all over their faces," said Edwards, who has still not returned to duty in the first responders unit where she worked then. "I was slipping in people's blood. I was catching people as they fell. It was carnage. It was chaos."

EXTREMIST GROUPS' INVOLVEMENT

The panel's other witness was British filmmaker Nick Quested, who was with members of the Proud Boys as they walked from Trump's rally in front of the White House to the Capitol. Quested was also filming members of the group the day ahead of the attack as they planned and met with members of the Oath Keepers in an underground garage.

The committee used some of Quested's footage of the war zone in front of the Capitol.

"For anyone who didn't understand how violent that event was, I saw it," he said. "I documented it and I experienced it."

Thompson said Trump's call for people to come on Jan. 6 "energized" members of the Proud Boys and other extremist groups. They highlighted Trump's comment at a presidential debate that the Proud Boys should "stand back and stand by."

The panel showed video testimony with a witness named Jeremy Bertino, a member of the Proud Boys, who said the group's membership "tripled, probably" after Trump's comment.

MADE FOR TELEVISION

The committee took the unusual step of launching the hearings with a prime time show — aimed to gather as many viewers as possible.

It's still unclear how many will tune in, but the panel is producing the hearing in hopes of becoming must-see television, featuring never before seen video footage of the violent insurrection.

The hearing room was also set up for impact, with a huge screen hanging over the lawmakers.

'WE WERE THERE'

Lawmakers who were trapped together in the House during the insurrection are attending Thursday's hearing after having dinner together. The members, all Democrats, were caught in an upper gallery of the chamber as rioters beat on the doors.

Rep. Dean Phillips, D-Minn., said the House members, who were eventually evacuated without harm, are dismayed that an event that exposed the fragility of democracy could "somehow be whitewashed by tens of millions of people."

Some GOP lawmakers have tried to downplay the insurrection, charging that Democrats are overly focused on the attempt to thwart the peaceful transfer of power.

"We want to remind people, we were there, we saw what happened. We know how close we came to the first non-peaceful transition of power in this country," Phillips said.

Biden, leaders reach migration pact despite attendance flap

By ELLIOT SPAGAT and CHRIS MEGHERIAN Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — President Joe Biden and other Western Hemisphere leaders are set to announce on Friday what is being billed as a roadmap for countries to host large numbers of migrants and refugees.

"The Los Angeles Declaration" is perhaps the biggest achievement of the Summit of the Americas, which was undercut by differences over Biden's invitation list. Leaders of Mexico and several Central American countries sent top diplomats instead after the U.S. excluded Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

A set of principles to be announced Friday on the summit's final day includes legal pathways to enter countries, aid to communities most affected by migration, humane border management and coordinated

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emergency responses, according to a senior U.S. official who briefed reporters ahead of an official announcement.

It is a blueprint already being followed to a large extent by Colombia and Ecuador, whose right-leaning leaders were warmly greeted at the summit for welcoming many of the 6 million people who have left Venezuela in recent years.

President Guillermo Lasso of Ecuador last week announced temporary status for Venezuelans in his country, estimated to be around 500,000. He said at a panel discussion Tuesday that his country was paying back the generosity of Spain and the United States for welcoming large numbers of Ecuadoreans who fled more than two decades ago.

President Ivan Duque of Colombia got standing ovations at an appearance Thursday for describing how his government has granted temporary status to 1 million Venezuelans in the last 14 months and is processing another 800,000 applications.

"We did it out of conviction," Duque told The Associated Press, saying he couldn't be indifferent to Venezuelans who lost their homes and livelihoods and was prepared to suffer in approval ratings.

"They were invisible (in Colombia)," he said. "They couldn't open bank accounts, they couldn't work, they couldn't get health care. They were practically a community with no future."

While the measures are not universally popular, Venezuelans have assimilated without major backlash.

"The two most dangerous phenomena are xenophobia and indifference, and I believe we have managed to conquer both (in Colombia)," Duque said.

The United States has been the most popular destination for asylum-seekers since 2017, posing a challenge that has stumped Biden and his immediate predecessors, Donald Trump and Barack Obama.

But the U.S. is far from alone. Colombia and neighboring South American countries host millions of people who have fled Venezuela. Mexico fielded more than 130,000 asylum applications last year, many of them Haitians, which was triple from 2020. Many Nicaraguans escape to Costa Rica, while displaced Venezuelans account for about one-sixth the population of tiny Aruba.

U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said Thursday that the summit declaration acknowledged migration's regional dimensions.

"It's a hemispheric challenge," he said in an interview, singling out Colombia, Ecuador and Costa Rica for hosting large numbers of migrants.

The responses of Colombia and Ecuador cannot be replicated, said José Samaniego, the U.N. refugee agency's regional director for the Americas. Each country is different, and migration from Central America is more complicated than Venezuela.

"You don't want to copy and paste," he said, "but there are good practices."

Capitol officer recounts Jan. 6 'war scene' in her testimony

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Capitol Police Officer Caroline Edwards described to lawmakers Thursday night what she could only describe as the "war scene" that she and other officers faced when rioters began viciously attacking them on Jan. 6, 2021.

"It was something like I've seen in movies. I couldn't believe my eyes," Edwards said.

"There were officers on the ground. They were bleeding. I was slipping in people's blood."

"It was carnage," she said. "It was chaos."

The raw and at times explicit testimony from Edwards played out in the first public hearing on the findings of the House committee investigating the insurrection on the U.S. Capitol.

Her recollections of the day amounted to the latest moment in the spotlight for the police officers who fought for hours as a violent mob of pro-Trump rioters, some armed with pipes, bats and bear spray, charged into the Capitol, quickly overrunning the overwhelmed police force. More than 100 police officers were injured, many beaten, bloodied and bruised.

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Over her shoulder as Edwards testified sat fellow Capitol Police officers Harry Dunn and Aquilino Gonell and Metropolitan Police Officer Michael Fanone, all of whom testified about the violence they endured at a hearing of the panel last summer. There were moments in her testimony that brought Dunn, a 13-year veteran of the force, to tears.

Edwards' testimony was accompanied by a barrage of never-before-seen footage, testimony and evidence the committee has gathered in the past 11 months to document how then-President Donald Trump's words and actions led to the assault on the Capitol. Officers are seen in the footage being pummeled with flagpoles, trashcans and bike racks.

"My literal blood, sweat tears were shed in defending the building I spent countless holidays and weekends working in," Edwards said.

Edwards said she has worked on hundreds of civil disturbances but it quickly became apparent that this one was different. She asked her supervisor for backup.

"I think we're going to need a few more people down here," she recalled saying, calling it "the understatement of the century," as officers were quickly outnumbered by the hundreds of rioters.

She said she suffered a concussion after rioters forced a bike rack over the top of her head, pushing her backward. "I blacked out," she said, adding that she experienced fainting spells for months after the insurrection.

But the moment Edwards recalled most vividly was the moment when she saw fellow officer Brian Sicknick turn "ghostly pale."

Sicknick, who was injured while confronting rioters during the Jan. 6 insurrection, suffered a stroke and died from natural causes the day after the attack. Members of his family sat alongside officers Dunn and Gonell as Edwards described his injuries.

Before she could go to help Sicknick, Edwards said, she was pepper-sprayed by the mob.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think as a police officer, as a law enforcement officer that I would find myself in the middle of a battle," Edwards said. "I am not combat-trained. That day it was just hours of hand-to-hand combat."

Committee vice chair Liz Cheney thanked Edwards and the other officers and their families for being there and assisting in their investigation. The Wyoming Republican noted the sacrifice the officers made that day with the limited resources and equipment they had been given.

"As part of our investigation, we will present information about what the White House and other intelligence agencies knew, and why the Capitol was not better prepared," Cheney said.

But Cheney pushed back on Republicans who have challenged the Jan. 6 panel to focus more intently on security failures.

"We will not lose sight of the fact that the Capitol Police did not cause the crowd to attack," she said. "And we will not blame the violence that day, violence provoked by Donald Trump, on the officers who bravely defended all of you."

Ukraine fears a long war might cause West to lose interest

By COLLEEN BARRY and YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — As Russia's invasion of Ukraine grinds into its fourth month, officials in Kyiv have expressed fears that the specter of "war fatigue" could erode the West's resolve to help the country push back Moscow's aggression.

The U.S. and its allies have given billions of dollars in weaponry to Ukraine. Europe has taken in millions of people displaced by the war. And there has been unprecedented unity in post-World War II Europe in imposing sanctions on President Vladimir Putin and his country.

But as the shock of the Feb. 24 invasion subsides, analysts say the Kremlin could exploit a dragged-out, entrenched conflict and possible waning interest among Western powers that might lead to pressuring Ukraine into a settlement.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy already has chafed at Western suggestions he should accept

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some sort of compromise. Ukraine, he said, would decide its own terms for peace.

"The fatigue is growing, people want some kind of outcome (that is beneficial) for themselves, and we want (another) outcome for ourselves," he said.

An Italian peace proposal was dismissed, and French President Emmanuel Macron was met with an angry backlash after he was quoted as saying that although Putin's invasion was a "historic error," world powers shouldn't "humiliate Russia, so when the fighting stops, we can build a way out together via diplomatic paths." Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said such talk "can only humiliate France and every other country that would call for it."

Even a remark by former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger that Ukraine should consider territorial concessions drew a retort from Zelenskyy that it was tantamount to European powers in 1938 letting Nazi Germany claim parts of Czechoslovakia to curb Adolf Hitler's aggression.

Kyiv wants to push Russia out of the newly captured areas in eastern and southern Ukraine, as well as retaking Crimea, which Moscow annexed in 2014, and parts of the Donbas under control of Kremlin-backed separatists for the past eight years.

Every month of the war is costing Ukraine \$5 billion, said Volodymyr Fesenko, political analyst with the Penta Center think tank, and that "makes Kyiv dependent on the consolidated position of the Western countries."

Ukraine will need even more advanced weaponry to secure victory, along with Western determination to keep up the economic pain on Russia to weaken Moscow.

"It is obvious that Russia is determined to wear down the West and is now building its strategy on the assumption that Western countries will get tired and gradually begin to change their militant rhetoric to a more accommodating one," Fesenko said in an interview with The Associated Press.

The war still gets prominent coverage in both the United States and Europe, which have been horrified by images of the deaths of Ukrainian civilians in the biggest fighting on the continent since World War II.

The U.S. continues to help Ukraine, with President Joe Biden saying last week that Washington will provide it with advanced rocket systems and munitions that will enable it to more precisely strike key targets on the battlefield.

In a New York Times essay on May 31, Biden said, "I will not pressure the Ukrainian government — in private or public — to make any territorial concessions."

Germany, which had faced criticism from Kyiv and elsewhere for perceived hesitancy, has pledged its most modern air defense systems yet.

"There has been nothing like it, even in the Cold War when the Soviet Union appeared most threatening," said Nigel Gould-Davies, senior fellow for Russia and Eurasia at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

While he doesn't see a significant erosion in the "emphatic support for Ukraine," Gould-Davies said "there are hints of different tensions over what the West's goals should be. Those have not yet been clearly defined."

Europe's domestic concerns are nudging their way into the discourse, especially as energy prices and raw materials shortages start to take an economic toll on ordinary people who are facing higher electricity bills, fuel costs and grocery prices.

While European leaders hailed the decision to block 90% of Russian oil exports by the end of the year as "a complete success," it took four weeks of negotiations and included a concession allowing Hungary, widely seen as the Kremlin's closest EU ally, to continue imports. Weeks more of political fine-tuning are required.

"It shows that unity in Europe is declining a bit on the Russian invasion," said Matteo Villa, an analyst with the ISPI think tank in Milan. "There is this kind of fatigue setting in among member states on finding new ways to sanction Russia, and clearly within the European Union, there are some countries that are less and less willing to go on with sanctions."

Wary of the economic impact of further energy sanctions, the European Commission has signaled it

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won't rush to propose fresh restrictive measures targeting Russian gas. EU lawmakers are also appealing for financial aid for citizens hit by heating and fuel price hikes to ensure that public support for Ukraine doesn't wane.

Italy's right-wing leader Matteo Salvini, who has been seen as close to Moscow, told foreign journalists this week that Italians are ready to make sacrifices, and that his League supports the sanctions against Russia.

But he indicated that backing is not unlimited, amid signs the trade balance under sanctions has shifted in Moscow's favor, hurting small business owners in northern Italy who are part of his base.

"Italians are very available to make personal economic sacrifices to support Ukraine's defense and arrive at a cease-fire," Salvini said.

"What I would not like is to find us back here in September, after three months with the conflict still ongoing. If that is the case, it will be a disaster for Italy. Beyond the deaths, and saving lives, which is the priority, economically, for Italy, if the war goes on, it will be a disaster," he said.

Boris Johnson's weakness brings international complications

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — When British Prime Minister Boris Johnson survived a no-confidence vote this week, at least one other world leader shared his relief.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said it was "great news" that "we have not lost a very important ally."

It was a welcome boost for a British leader who divides his country, and his party, but has won wide praise as an ally of Ukraine.

Johnson's relatively narrow victory in Monday's Conservative Party vote — which left him in power but in danger of further rebellions — has implications beyond Britain's shores.

"It's quite hard to address whatever international challenges we face while you are battling your own political party," said David Lawrence, a research fellow at international affairs think-tank Chatham House.

Johnson has many opponents in London and at European Union headquarters in Brussels, but he gets a warmer reception in Kyiv. His staunch backing for Ukraine's fight against Russian invasion, backed by some 3 billion pounds (\$3.8 billion) in U.K. military and humanitarian aid, has won him many fans. A bakery in Ukraine's capital has even created a sweet treat named the "Boris Johnson": a puff pastry cake topped with meringue and ice cream, vaguely reminiscent of the British leader's blond mop.

Lawrence says Johnson's rapport with Zelenskyy — "both quite big personalities" — has been an asset for both leaders. But experts say Johnson's weakness is unlikely to have a serious impact on Britain's backing for Ukraine.

Support for military aid to Kyiv and tough sanctions on Moscow is strong among both Britain's governing Conservatives and the left-of-center Labour Party opposition.

"I think any British government would have done the same," Lawrence said.

Johnson's woes have more immediate repercussions for Britain's relations with the EU. He won election in 2019 on a promise to "get Brexit done" and has since feuded with the bloc over trade rules for Northern Ireland, the only part of the U.K. that shares a border with an EU member.

A dispute over customs checks on goods entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the U.K. has sparked a political crisis in Belfast that is destabilizing the delicate balance between Irish nationalist and British unionist communities that maintains Northern Ireland's peace.

Britain and the EU each accuse the other of refusing to compromise. Now Johnson says he will act unilaterally — and, critics say, illegally — by passing a law to rip up part of the binding treaty he signed with the bloc.

The no-confidence vote has delayed that bill, which had been expected this week. Experts say the vote has reduced Johnson's room to maneuver, because he can't afford to anger either Brexit hard-liners or more pro-EU lawmakers in his party. It has also made the EU less willing to compromise, increasing the

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chances of a trade war between Britain and the bloc.

"The European Union increasingly thinks that Boris Johnson is too weak to be worth making concessions to," said Anand Menon, director of the U.K. in a Changing Europe think-tank. "(There's) a sense on the EU side of 'Why the hell would we make concessions now, because this guy might not be in charge for very long?'"

Brexit is central to Johnson's foreign policy. He has long argued that leaving the EU gives the U.K. the chance to become a "Global Britain," striking new trade deals and alliances around the world.

He has given U.K. foreign policy an "Indo-Pacific tilt" that seeks to strengthen economic, diplomatic and military ties with countries including India and Japan to counter the growing assertiveness of China. At the same time, however, his government has cut foreign aid and proposed shrinking the diplomatic service — moves Lawrence says are "completely contradictory to 'Global Britain.'"

The no-confidence vote in Johnson was spurred by lockdown-breaching parties in government buildings during the COVID-19 pandemic, attended by Johnson's staff and in some cases the prime minister himself. The revelation that government officials partied while millions of Britons were barred from socializing with friends or even visiting dying family members caused anger in the country. It also crystallized some Conservatives' concerns about a leader who often behaves as if rules don't apply to him.

Under party rules, Johnson can't face another challenge for a year. But 41% of Conservative lawmakers voted to remove him, and few believe he is safe in his job.

If Johnson is ousted, or quits, the party will elect a new leader, who will also become prime minister. Several potential contenders have strong track records on foreign affairs and might tweak the focus of U.K. international policy. Current Foreign Secretary Liz Truss champions a "network of liberty" involving capitalist democracies. Ex-Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt has spoken of a "values based" foreign policy. Lawmaker Tom Tugendhat heads the House of Commons' influential foreign affairs committee and is hawkish on China.

Mujtaba Rahman, managing director for Europe at political consultancy the Eurasia Group, says that fixing the U.K.'s broken relationship with Europe remains the key challenge, not least to help patch up a trans-Atlantic relationship strained by Brexit. President Joe Biden, who is strongly attached to his Irish roots, has expressed concern that Britain's actions over EU trade could undermine peace in Northern Ireland.

"A lot hangs on the relationship with Europe," Rahman said. "If you recalibrate the relationship with the EU, that will obviously facilitate the relationship with the Biden administration."

The obstacle to that, he believes, is Boris Johnson.

"I think it's a structural issue with this government and Johnson," he said. "I can't see the conditions for improvement until he is replaced."

Japan eases foreign tourism ban, allows guided package tours

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan on Friday eased its borders for foreign tourists and began accepting visa applications, but only for those on guided package tours who are willing to follow mask-wearing and other antivirus measures as the country cautiously tries to balance business and infection worries.

Friday is the first day to start procedures needed for the entry and arrivals are not expected until late June at the earliest, even though airport immigration and quarantine offices stood by for any possible arrivals.

The Japan Tourism Agency says tours are being accepted from 98 countries and regions, including the United States, Britain, China, South Korea, Thailand and Singapore, which are deemed as having low infection risks.

Japan's partial resumption of international tourism that was halted during the coronavirus pandemic is being carried out under guidelines based on an experiment conducted in late May. It involved about 50 participants, mostly tour agency employees from Australia, Singapore, Thailand and the United States.

In one case, a tour for a four-member group was cancelled when one of the participants tested positive for COVID-19 after arriving in Japan.

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"We expect the resumption of inbound tourism will help stimulate the local economy," Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Tetsuo Saito told reporters Friday. "We will continue to make effort to recover demand for tourism while balancing anti-infection measures and social and economic activities."

Under the guidelines, participants are requested to wear face masks most of the time and to purchase insurance to cover medical costs in case they contract COVID-19. The rules don't set a cap for the number of people in one group, but tour guides must be present throughout the tour.

After facing criticism that its strict border controls were xenophobic, Japan began easing restrictions earlier this year. On June 1, it doubled its cap on daily entries to 20,000 people a day, including Japanese citizens, foreign students and some business travelers.

The daily limit will include the package tour participants for the time being, and officials say it will take some time before foreign visitors can come to Japan for free, individual tourism.

Business groups based in Japan representing the Group of Seven countries and European Union, in a joint statement Friday, welcomed Japan's gradual resumption of foreign tourism, but call on the government to "to further ease border control measures to facilitate an environment where people, goods, money and digital technologies can move freely, thus advancing Japan's economic growth."

They called on Japan to follow examples of other G-7 countries and resume individual tourism, eliminate testing at airports, lift the daily entry cap and resume international flights at more than a dozen regional airports.

Japan's inbound tourism business has lain dormant during the pandemic and even though the country welcomes tourists and their spending, infection concerns persist among Japanese, especially in popular tourist destinations.

Unlike most Western countries where mask-wearing has largely been abandoned, most people continue to wear them even in situations, such as outdoors in uncrowded settings, where they are no longer requested.

Japan is still reporting more than 10,000 new COVID-19 cases daily, though the number in Tokyo is below 2,000.

The latest mask wearing rules call for people to wear them on public transport systems, in hospitals and other public facilities. People can doff their masks outdoors when others are not around or talking loudly.

It's unclear how popular the package tours options will be with foreign tourists, most of whom have to apply for tourist visas that can take weeks to obtain. But the yen is trading at 20-year lows against the U.S. dollar and weak against other major currencies, which would make traveling in the high-cost country something of a bargain.

Foreign tourist arrivals fell more than 90% in 2020 from a record 31.9 million the year before, almost wiping out the pre-pandemic inbound tourism market of more than 4 trillion yen (\$30 billion).

Israeli settlers at risk of losing special West Bank status

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank may soon get a taste of the military rule that Palestinians have been living under for 55 years.

If Israel's parliament does not act, a special legal status accorded to the settlers will expire at the end of the month, with wide-ranging consequences. Lawyers who live in the settlements, including two members of Israel's Supreme Court, will no longer be allowed to practice law. Settlers would be subject to military courts usually reserved for Palestinians and would lose access to some public services.

While few expect things to reach that point, the looming deadline has put Israel's government on the brink of collapse and drawn dire warnings.

"Without this law, it would be a disaster," said Israel Ganz, governor of the Benyamin Regional Council, a cluster of settlements just outside Jerusalem. "The Israeli government will lose any control here. No police, no taxes."

For over half a century, Israel has repeatedly renewed regulations that today extend a legal umbrella to nearly 500,000 settlers — but not to the more than 2.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank. After failing

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to pass on Monday, the bill will be brought for another vote in the Knesset next week in a last-ditch effort to save the governing coalition — and the legal arrangement.

The law underpins separate legal systems for Jews and Palestinians in the West Bank, a situation that three major human rights groups say amounts to apartheid. Israel rejects that allegation as an attack on its legitimacy.

"This is the piece of legislation that enables apartheid," said Jessica Montell, director of the Israeli human rights group HaMoked, which provides legal aid to Palestinians.

"The whole settlement enterprise depends on them enjoying all the rights and benefits of being Israelis even though they are in occupied territory."

An overwhelming majority in the Knesset support maintaining the separate systems. The main reason the bill didn't pass was that the nationalist opposition — which strongly supports it — paradoxically refused to vote in favor in an attempt to bring down Israel's broad-based but fragile coalition government. In a similar vein, anti-settlement lawmakers voted in favor of the legislation to keep the coalition afloat.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war and has built more than 130 settlements there, many of which resemble small towns, with apartment blocks, shopping malls and industrial zones. The Palestinians want the West Bank to form the main part of their future state. Most countries view the settlements as a violation of international law.

Israel refers to the West Bank by its biblical name, Judea and Samaria, and considers it the heartland of the Jewish people. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett supports settlement expansion and is opposed to Palestinian statehood. Israel officially views the West Bank as disputed territory whose fate is subject to negotiations, which collapsed more than a decade ago.

The emergency regulations, first enacted in 1967 and regularly renewed, extend much of Israeli law to West Bank settlers — but not to the territory itself.

"Applying the law to the territory could be considered as annexing the territory, with all the political consequences that Israel did not want to have," said Liron Libman, a research fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute and a former top Israeli military prosecutor.

Failure to renew the bill by the end of this month would have far-reaching consequences.

The Israel Bar Association requires lawyers and judges to reside in the country. Without the law's carve-out, settlers would not be able to practice law in Israeli courts. That would include two Supreme Court justices, one of whom recently upheld an order to forcibly relocate hundreds of Palestinians.

The bill's lapse could also result in more settlers who run afoul of the law being tried in military courts — something Israel authorities have long tried to reserve for Palestinian suspects.

The settlers could lose their ability to use national health insurance for treatment inside the West Bank, and the ability to update their status in the population registry and get national ID cards — something routinely denied to Palestinians.

The law also provides a legal basis for Israel to jail thousands of Palestinians who have been convicted by military courts in prisons inside Israel, despite international law prohibiting the transfer of prisoners out of occupied territory. The law's lapse could force Israel to move those prisoners back to the West Bank, where there is currently only one Israeli prison.

The various consequences are seen as so catastrophic that many Israelis expect the bill to pass or the government to be replaced. It's also possible that Israeli authorities, who often bend to the settlers' demands, will find workarounds to blunt the worst effects.

"I'm not worried," said Ganz, the settler leader. "It's like when you owe the bank 1 million dollars, you are worried about it, but when you owe 1 billion, the bank manager is worried."

Asked if the separate legal systems amount to apartheid, Ganz said: "I agree with you, 100%."

His preferred solution is that Israel annex what's known as Area C, the 60% of the West Bank where, under interim peace accords, Israel already exercises complete control. Area C includes the settlements, as well as rural areas that are home to some 300,000 Palestinians, according to the U.N.

Most Palestinians live in Areas A and B — scattered, disconnected population centers where the Pales-

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tinian Authority exercises limited self-rule.

"It's strange that different populations in the same area have different laws," Ganz said. "So we have to bring Israeli law to everyone here in Area C."

Two years ago, Israel's then-prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu flirted with annexation before putting it on hold as part of an agreement with the United Arab Emirates to normalize relations.

The Palestinians, and much of the international community, view annexation as a violation of international law that would deal a fatal blow to any hope for a two-state solution, still widely seen internationally as the only way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Netanyahu, now opposition leader, and his allies strongly support the West Bank bill but hope its defeat will speed his return to power. The coalition cannot pass it on its own because a handful of lawmakers — mainly Palestinian citizens of Israel — refuse to vote for it.

The law may have been designed with an eventual partition in mind. But many Palestinians see its longevity as proof that Israel was never serious about a two-state solution.

"They could have easily undone the occupation by just not passing this law, time and again," said Diana Buttu, a Palestinian lawyer and former adviser to the Palestinian Authority. "It gets passed by the left and it gets passed by the right. That's why this idea of two states is such a fiction."

Uvalde school police chief defends Texas shooting response

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The Texas school police chief criticized for his actions during one of the deadliest classroom shootings in U.S. history said in his first extensive comments, published Thursday, that he did not consider himself the person in charge as the massacre unfolded and assumed someone else had taken control of the law enforcement response.

Pete Arredondo, the police chief of the Uvalde school district, also told the Texas Tribune that he intentionally left behind both his police and campus radios before entering Robb Elementary School. An 18-year-old gunman killed 19 children and two teachers behind a locked classroom door that the chief said was reinforced with a steel jamb and could not be kicked in.

Poor radio communications is among the concerns raised about how police handled the May 24 shooting and why they didn't confront the gunman for more than an hour, even as anguished parents outside the school urged officers to go in.

Separately, The New York Times reported Thursday that documents show police waited for protective equipment as they delayed entering the campus, even as they became aware that some victims needed medical treatment.

Arredondo told the Tribune that from the hallway of the school he used his cell phone to call for tactical gear, a sniper and keys to get inside the classroom. He said he held back from the door for 40 minutes to avoid provoking gunfire and tried dozens of keys brought to him, but that, one-by-one, they failed to work.

"Each time I tried a key I was just praying," he told the Tribune.

In the more than two weeks since the shooting, Arredondo's actions have come under intensifying scrutiny from both state officials and experts trained in mass shooting responses. Steven McCraw, the head of the Texas Department of Public Safety, has said the school police chief, who he described as the incident commander, made the "wrong decision" to not order officers to breach the classroom more quickly to confront the gunman.

But Arredondo, who told the Tribune he believed that carrying radios would slow him down as he entered the school and that he knew that radios did not work in some school buildings, said he never considered himself the scene's incident commander and did not give any instruction that police should not attempt to breach the building.

"I didn't issue any orders," Arredondo said. "I called for assistance and asked for an extraction tool to open the door."

Arredondo has not responded to repeated interview requests and questions from The Associated Press. Arredondo's account and records obtained by the Times were published Thursday as law enforcement

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and state officials have struggled to present an accurate timeline and details. They have also made frequent corrections to previous statements, and no information about the police response has been formally released by investigators since the days that followed the attack.

According to documents obtained by the Times, a man who investigators believe to be Arredondo could be heard on body camera footage talking about how much time was passing.

"People are going to ask why we're taking so long," said the man, according to a transcript of officers' body camera footage obtained by the newspaper. "We're trying to preserve the rest of the life."

Sixty officers had assembled on the scene by the time four officers made entry, according to the report. The two classrooms where the shooting took place included 33 children and three teachers.

Not all the victims were found dead when officers finally went inside: one teacher died in an ambulance and three children died at nearby hospitals, according to the records obtained by the Times, which included a review of law enforcement documents and video that have been gathered as part of the investigation.

The family of Xavier Lopez, 10, said the boy had been shot in the back and lost a lot of blood as he waited for medical attention.

"He could have been saved," Leonard Sandoval, the boy's grandfather, told the newspaper. "The police did not go in for more than an hour. He bled out."

The records obtained by the Times offered other new details, including that the gunman, Salvador Ramos, had a "hellfire" trigger device meant to allow a semiautomatic AR-15-style rifle to be fired more like an automatic weapon, but did not appear to have used it during the attack. Ramos had spent more than \$6,000 amassing an arsenal of weapons that included two AR-15-style rifles, accessories and hundreds of rounds of ammunition, according to the documents.

The Times reported that some of the officers who first arrived at the school had long guns, and that Arredondo learned the gunman's identity while inside the school and attempted to communicate with him through the closed classroom doors.

Eva Mireles, one of the teachers who was killed, made a phone call to her husband, a Uvalde school district police officer, during the attack. The documents obtained by the Times show that Ruben Ruiz informed responders on the scene that his wife was still alive in one of the classrooms.

"She says she is shot," Ruiz could be heard telling other officers as he arrived inside the school at 11:48 a.m., according to the body camera transcript obtained by the Times.

By 12:46 p.m., Arredondo seemed to give his approval for officers to enter the room, the Times reported.

"If y'all are ready to do it, you do it," he said, according to the transcript.

About a week after the shooting, department of public safety officials said Arredondo was no longer cooperating with the agency and had not responded to interview requests from the Texas Rangers, the agency's investigative unit.

Arredondo's attorney, George E. Hyde, told the Tribune for Thursday's story that Arredondo could not do an interview on the day the Rangers asked because he was covering shifts for his officers. Hyde said Arredondo is willing to cooperate with the Rangers investigation but would like to see a transcript of his previous comments.

"That's a fair thing to ask for before he has to then discuss it again because, as time goes by, all the information that he hears, it's hard to keep straight," Hyde said.

Britney Spears marries Sam Asghari in California

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Britney Spears has married her longtime partner Sam Asghari at a Southern California ceremony that came months after the pop superstar won her freedom from a court conservatorship.

Asghari's representative Brandon Cohen confirmed the couple's nuptials. He said: "I am very ecstatic this day has come, and they are married. I know he wanted this for so long. He is so caring and supportive every step of the way."

The wedding happened nine months after the pair were engaged and nearly seven months after Spears'

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conservatorship ended. While seeking an end to the court case that controlled many aspects of her life, Spears expressed her desire to marry Asghari and have children.

Spears got pregnant earlier this year, but experienced a miscarriage in March.

The couple met on the set of the "Slumber Party" music video in 2016.

The wedding day was not without unexpected drama — Spears' first husband was arrested after attempting to crash their wedding.

Ventura County Sheriff's Capt. Cameron Henderson said officers responded to a trespassing call after 2 p.m. Thursday. He says the pop singer's first husband, Jason Alexander, was detained at the site of the ceremony.

Henderson says Alexander was arrested after officers noticed he had a warrant for his arrest in another county.

Alexander went on his Instagram live when he approached the event security. In what appeared to be a mostly empty but decorated room, he told them Spears invited him.

"She's my first wife, my only wife," said Alexander, who was briefly married to Spears — his childhood friend — in 2014. Their marriage lasted only 55 hours.

Spears was previously married to Kevin Federline, with whom she shares two sons, ages 14 and 15.

Authorities: 3 dead, trooper wounded in Maryland shooting

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

SMITHSBURG, Md. (AP) — An employee opened fire at a manufacturing business in rural western Maryland on Thursday, killing three coworkers before the suspect and a state trooper were wounded in a shootout, authorities said.

Washington County Sheriff Doug Mullendore said that three victims were found dead at Columbia Machine Inc. in Smithsburg and a fourth victim was critically injured. The sheriff said at a news conference that the victims and suspect were all employees at the facility.

The suspect fled in a vehicle before authorities arrived at the scene and was tracked down by Maryland State Police, Mullendore said. The suspect and a trooper were wounded in an exchange of gunfire, according to the sheriff.

Mullendore said the suspect was a 42-year-old man but declined to release his name while criminal charges were being prepared.

The sheriff identified those killed in the shooting as Mark Alan Frey, 50; Charles Edward Minnick Jr., 31; and Joshua Robert Wallace, 30. Mullendore said the wounded victim was Brandon Chase Michael, 42.

Maryland State Police Lt. Col. Bill Dofflemeyer said that three troopers encountered the suspect's vehicle and that he opened fire when troopers made a traffic stop. Troopers returned fire, wounding the suspect. Dofflemeyer said the wounded trooper is doing well and that the suspect was being treated Thursday night.

Authorities declined to release a motive.

"We're still working with sheriff's office on what happened and why it kept escalating," Dofflemeyer told reporters.

Mullendore said the suspect used a semiautomatic handgun, which was recovered after the shootout. He declined to specify the caliber or model.

Family members of workers at the manufacturer were gathering at a fire station in downtown Smithsburg on Thursday evening, awaiting information on their loved ones. They declined to speak to a reporter.

Several hours after the shooting, numerous law enforcement officers remained at the scene. Police had closed off the road that runs past the Columbia Machine Inc. facility, and yellow tape blew in the wind outside the business.

Messages left seeking comment with the company weren't immediately returned.

Smithsburg, a community of nearly 3,000 people, is just west of the Camp David presidential retreat and about 75 miles (120 kilometers) northwest of Baltimore. The manufacturing facility was in a sparsely populated area northeast of the town's center with a church, several businesses and farmland nearby.

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U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen, a Maryland Democrat, lamented the loss of life in his state so soon after other recent shootings and vowed action.

"Today's horrific shooting comes as our state and nation have witnessed tragedy after tragedy, and it's got to stop," he said in a statement. "We must act to address the mass shootings and daily toll of gun violence on our communities."

David Creamer, 69, is a member of Smithsburg's volunteer fire department and has lived in town since 1988. He saw alerts related to the shooting go out shortly before 3 p.m.

Creamer said the last fatal shooting that he can recall in Smithsburg was roughly a decade ago.

"This stuff doesn't happen here," Creamer said. "Everybody pretty much knows everybody. It's a family atmosphere. We watch out for each other."

Creamer was chatting with neighbors at a Little League game on Thursday evening. He wore a T-shirt promoting a gun rights organization.

The shooting "makes me feel even stronger about it. I just feel that I should be able to protect my family and my neighbors. In a community like this, everybody is your neighbor," he said.

Funeral home employee Ashley Vigrass, 29, lives less than a mile (kilometer) from where the shooting occurred. She was home with her two children when her fiancée called to tell her about the shooting and urged her to keep the kids inside the house.

"The helicopters were out," she said.

Asked if she was shaken by the shooting, Vigrass said, "I feel like we come from a desensitized era."

"You feel something, but it's the same thing that you felt yesterday," she added as she watched the Little League game. "It's unfortunate, but you just got to make sure the kids are safe to play baseball and carry on."

A harrowing American moment, repackaged for prime time

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Promised: New footage. New testimony. New and damning revelations designed to eliminate all doubt. Hired to package it all for the airwaves: A former network news president. The time slot: 8 p.m. on the East Coast, once a plum spot for the most significant television programming in the land.

Presented in prime time and carefully calibrated for a TV-viewing audience (itself increasingly an anachronism), the debut of the Jan. 6 hearings was, in essence, a summer rerun. Designed as a riveting legislative docudrama about an event that most of the country saw live 18 months ago, it tried mightily to break new narrative ground in a nation of short attention spans and endless distractions.

But did it? Can it? Even with gripping, violent video and the integrity of American democracy potentially at stake, can a shiny, weeks-long production that prosecutes with yesterday's news — news that has been watched, processed and argued over ad nauseam — punch through the static and make a difference today?

"The idea of a televised investigative proceeding maybe feels a little obsolete when so many people already had so much access to what happened," said Rebecca Adelman, professor and chair of media and communication studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. "This is a population that by all evidence is fatigued by a lot of things. I'm not sure how much sustained attention anyone has left at this point."

That's why the hearings needed one key thing most legislative committees lack: a professional TV executive — someone who could arrange and curate violent amateur and surveillance video, 3D motion graphics, eyewitness testimony and depositions into a storyline built to echo.

Enter James Goldston, the former president of ABC News. The language Axios used in reporting his involvement was instructive. Goldston, it said, would approach Thursday night's hearing "as if it were a blockbuster investigative special" with "the makings of a national event."

Those are not often words you hear about a committee hearing. They're the words of showmanship — something politics has always had, actual governance less so.

During the media-savvy (for its era) Kennedy administration, the historian Daniel J. Boorstin famously

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coined the term “pseudo-event” — an event conducted expressly for the purpose of being noticed. While that isn’t the case with the Jan. 6 hearings — actual governance is taking place — the buildup and presentation makes it easy to conclude otherwise.

Could it be that this is the only way to grab the public’s attention? After all, since Jan. 6, 2021, much of America has moved on to fresh worries.

Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, seized on some of those in a series of tweets attacking the committee. “When’s the prime-time hearing,” he asked in six tweets, followed by “on \$5 per gallon gas,” “on baby formula shortages,” “on record crime in Democrat-run cities,” “on the left’s 2020 riots,” “on record high grocery prices,” “on Democrats attacking parental rights at school board meetings” and “on threats against Supreme Court Justices and their families.”

By many appearances, the country is operating as it was before the insurrection. Joe Biden was inaugurated as scheduled 14 days after the insurrection. No evidence of election fraud surfaced. The pandemic ebbed. People are talking about guns and gas prices and Russia — not its interference in U.S. elections, but its invasion of Ukraine.

All of this, of course, belies the fact that the Capitol riot undermined the sanctity and security of the democratic process. After more than 200 years in which the peaceful transfer of power was taken for granted in America, it suddenly and very violently wasn’t.

And yet, in this meme-soaked era when loud events fade from the consciousness and are replaced by other loud events within days, it apparently takes what is essentially a Very Special Episode of Congress, packaged up like a documentary brimming with video clips and text-message screengrabs, to get the public’s attention.

And that public is ... who, exactly?

The masses of Donald Trump supporters and opponents who have dug in their heels on both sides — those who think this is ridiculous political posturing and those who insist that day represented an existential threat to democracy — may not be the target audience. More likely, it is Americans who retain an open mind and have kind of moved on; who could use a reminder in the most American way possible: by being presented with an on-screen drama to consume. (Unless you watch Fox, which vociferously refused to air it.)

High-profile public legislative hearings about the workings of government — from the Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954 to the Watergate hearings in 1973 to the Iran-Contra hearings in 1987 — have a history of drawing the nation’s attention and being their era’s version of must-see government TV.

But all those came in the days when a “phone” was something that made calls and was plugged into the wall — well before the era of media fragmentation produced by the internet and, a decade later, the rise of social media and content creation in your pocket.

The raw material presented Thursday night was at times banal and procedural (depositions, speeches). But at times (the violent and profane video montage, the eyewitness testimony of Capitol police officer Caroline Edwards), it felt compelling, terrifying and immediate.

“We’ve lost the line! We’ve lost the line!” viewers heard one Capitol police officer shout as he was being attacked by rioters. Yelled another, terror in his voice: “Officer down!” And this chilling shout, from the background of one scene of chaos: “We’re coming!”

Then the production values took center stage — a perfectly timed voiceover of Trump saying, “They were peaceful people” and “the love in the air, I’ve never seen anything like it” before the sequence fades out.

These are surely the moments that will be cannibalized on social in coming hours and days. So much of political discourse happens online these days, and what was once must-see TV is now on your phone, on demand. Content producers on TikTok and Twitter and Instagram are driving the moments to remember. And if this was a produced TV show, those will be its tiny offspring.

“People will be making their own spinoffs, a few seconds at a time,” said Robert Thompson, director of the Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture at Syracuse University. “Now ... we’re in the age of developing stories as an interactive video game, where you take the coverage of that day and you turn it

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into a meme and get 30 million viewers. I think that's how a lot of people are going to experience these hearings."

So check out your social media feeds, 2022-style, for the next phase of this drama — political and entertaining and unsettling all at once, and aggressively, messily American.

"We watched the preseason. We watched the season. And now this is behind the scenes in 'American Politics: The Sport,'" said John Baick, a historian at Western New England University. "I don't think anyone's going to remember where they were when they watched the Capitol investigations."

Coach's comments deal another blow to Commanders reputation

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Sports Writer

ASHBURN, Va. (AP) — The NFL's Washington Commanders once again find themselves at the center of an off-the-field issue that has nothing to do with football, dealing another blow to their rapidly sagging reputation as one of the most dysfunctional franchises in professional sports.

The fallout from the latest misstep requiring an explanation or apology — assistant coach Jack Del Rio comparing the protests in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd to the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol — could have far-reaching consequences beyond the locker room.

It immediately scuttled the team's best opportunity to reach a deal to build a new stadium, which was the most important long-term project facing owner Dan Snyder amid a lengthy drought without a playoff victory and a dearth of fan enthusiasm. Multiple Virginia lawmakers pointed to Del Rio's comments as another reason not to vote on legislation luring the Commanders to the state, and by Thursday the bill already on its last legs was pushed off the table for the rest of the year.

In a brief interview with The Associated Press, Democratic Virginia Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw cited various investigations and "other issues to be answered."

The list of embarrassing and concerning issues facing the once-storied franchise continues to grow.

The Commanders, who rebranded after dropping their longtime name in 2020 amid the national reckoning over racism in the U.S. and played the last two seasons as the Washington Football Team, have been the subject of investigations into workplace culture since several employees detailed examples of sexual harassment.

Attorney Beth Wilkinson's investigation launched first by the team and taken over by the NFL unearthed a toxic workplace culture and prompted a \$10 million fine. When the league did not release a written report of the investigation last summer, Congress launched its own review of the sexual harassment allegations, which branched out into potential financial improprieties based on the testimony of a former employee.

While the Federal Trade Commission was informed of the possibility of financial laws being broken — which the team strongly denies — and Virginia and the District of Columbia officials also began looking into the matter, Congress turned its attention back to workplace culture. Just last week, the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform invited Snyder and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell to appear at a hearing June 22.

A spokeswoman said the committee has been in communication with the team and league about the request, which has now been pushed to the backburner by Del Rio's comments made this week on the verge of public hearings opening into the riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

"People's livelihoods are being destroyed, businesses are being burned down, no problem," Del Rio said Wednesday when asked about a social media post he made comparing the summer of 2020 protests to the insurrection. "And then we have a dust-up at the Capitol, nothing burned down, and we're going to make that a major deal. I just think it's kind of two standards."

He apologized hours later in a Twitter post, saying it was "irresponsible and negligent" to call Jan. 6 a "dust-up." Del Rio added he stands by comments "condemning violence in communities across the country."

The president of the NAACP on Thursday called for Del Rio to be terminated, saying the comments could not have been more offensive and ignorant.

"Downplaying the insurrection by comparing it to nationwide protests, which were in response to a public

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lynching, is twisted," Derrick Johnson said in a statement. "You can't coach a majority Black team while turning your back on the Black community."

There is no indication Del Rio's job is in danger as a result of his comments.

Coach Ron Rivera brushed off any notion of Del Rio's opinions becoming an issue around the Commanders, whose roster is made up of a majority of Black players. Del Rio's comments have not led to public outrage by Commanders players or around the league.

NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said the league has no comment on Del Rio when contacted by The Associated Press on Thursday.

Jonathan Allen, a team leader who is Black, told NBC Sports Washington: "I don't care about his opinion. As long as he shows up every day and he works hard, that's what I want from my defensive coordinator."

The potential impact of Del Rio's remarks on a stadium that wouldn't open until he, Rivera and almost every current player is no longer with the team may extend beyond Virginia. It already appeared unlikely for the team to return to its old home at the site of RFK Stadium in the District of Columbia, and several city councilmembers on Thursday made it "unequivocally" clear they won't support using that land for a new Commanders facility.

D.C. City Council Chairman Phil Mendelson, who was not one of the seven members to send a letter to Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton about RFK, said Del Rio's comment was inappropriate and evidence of revisionist history about the events of Jan. 6.

"It's just part of many controversies," Mendelson told The AP. He added his biggest issue with the team is the lack of a written report from the workplace misconduct investigation.

That remains an open issue, with no indication by the league that a report will ever be released. But Del Rio's comments are indicative of Washington's team culture, according to a lawyer who represents more than 40 former employees.

"Jack Del Rio's ignorant remarks, and the failure of the team leadership to immediately make clear that his comments were inappropriate and offensive, is only further evidence of the failure of this organization to evolve or grow," attorney Lisa Banks said. "It remains a dysfunctional, toxic environment with no conscience or accountability, despite all claims to the contrary."

NASA launches study of UFOs despite 'reputational risk'

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA is launching a study of UFOs as part of a new push toward high-risk, high-impact science.

The space agency announced Thursday that it's setting up an independent team to see how much information is publicly available on the matter and how much more is needed to understand the unexplained sightings. The experts will also consider how best to use all this information in the future.

NASA's science mission chief, Thomas Zurbuchen acknowledged the traditional scientific community may see NASA as "kind of selling out" by venturing into the controversial topic, but he strongly disagrees.

"We are not shying away from reputational risk," Zurbuchen said during a National Academy of Sciences webcast. "Our strong belief is that the biggest challenge of these phenomena is that it's a data-poor field."

NASA considers this a first step in trying to explain mysterious sightings in the sky known as UAPs, or unidentified aerial phenomena.

The study will begin this fall and last nine months, costing no more than \$100,000. It will be entirely open, with no classified military data used.

NASA said the team will be led by astrophysicist David Spergel, president of the Simons Foundation for advancing scientific research. In a news conference, Spergel said the only preconceived notion going into the study is that the UAPs will likely have multiple explanations.

"We have to approach all these questions with a sense of humility," Spergel said. "I spent most of my career as a cosmologist. I can tell you we don't know what makes up 95% of the universe. So there are things we don't understand."

3 foreigners who fought for Ukraine sentenced to death

By BERNAT ARMANGUÉ and YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

BAKHMUT, Ukraine (AP) — Two British citizens and a Moroccan were sentenced to death Thursday for fighting on Ukraine's side, in a punishment handed down by the country's pro-Moscow rebels.

The proceedings against the three captured fighters were denounced by Ukraine and the West as a sham and a violation of the rules of war.

Meanwhile, as the Kremlin's forces continued a grinding war of attrition in the east, Russian President Vladimir Putin appeared to liken his actions to those of Peter the Great in the 18th century and said the country needs to "take back" historic Russian lands.

A court in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic in Ukraine found the three fighters guilty of seeking the violent overthrow of power, an offense punishable by death in the unrecognized eastern republic. The men were also convicted of mercenary activities and terrorism.

Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti reported that the defendants — identified as Aiden Aslin, Shaun Pinner and Brahim Saadoun — will face a firing squad. They have a month to appeal.

The separatist side argued that the three were "mercenaries" not entitled to the usual protections accorded prisoners of war. They are the first foreign fighters sentenced by Ukraine's Russian-backed rebels.

Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesman Oleh Nikolenko condemned the proceedings as legally invalid, saying, "Such show trials put the interests of propaganda above the law and morality." He said that all foreign citizens fighting as part of Ukraine's armed forces should be considered Ukrainian military personnel and protected as such.

British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss pronounced the sentencing a "sham judgment with absolutely no legitimacy." Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman Jamie Davies said that under the Geneva Conventions, POWs are entitled to immunity as combatants.

Saadoun's father, Taher Saadoun, told the Moroccan online Arab-language newspaper Madar 21 that his son is not a mercenary and that he holds Ukrainian citizenship.

Aslin's and Pinner's families have said that the two men were long-serving members of the Ukrainian military. Both are said to have lived in Ukraine since 2018.

The three men fought alongside Ukrainian troops before Pinner and Aslin surrendered to pro-Russian forces in the southern port of Mariupol in mid-April and Saadoun was captured in mid-March in the eastern city of Volnovakha.

Another British fighter taken prisoner by the pro-Russian forces, Andrew Hill, is awaiting trial.

The Russian military has argued that foreign mercenaries fighting on Ukraine's side are not combatants and should expect long prison terms, at best, if captured.

In other developments, Putin drew parallels between Peter the Great's founding of St. Petersburg and modern-day Russia's ambitions.

When the czar founded the new capital, "no European country recognized it as Russia. Everybody recognized it as Sweden," Putin said. He added: "What was (Peter) doing? Taking back and reinforcing. That's what he did. And it looks like it fell on us to take back and reinforce as well."

Putin also appeared to leave the door open for further Russian territorial expansion.

"It's impossible — Do you understand? — impossible to build a fence around a country like Russia. And we do not intend to build that fence," the Russian leader said.

In other developments, French President Emmanuel Macron told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that France was ready to send more "heavy weapons" to Ukraine, according to Macron's office. French officials did not elaborate on the weaponry. The phone conversation came after Macron angered Ukrainian officials by saying world powers should not "humiliate" Putin.

Zelenskyy said the Ukrainian army continued to push Russian forces back from Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, which lies to the north of the Donbas. The transmission of Ukrainian television was restored after a TV tower was shelled.

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"Hitting television centers, destroying communication channels, leaving people isolated – this is the tactic of the occupiers that they cannot do without, for openness and honesty also are weapons against all that the Russian state does," he said late Thursday in his evening address.

On the battlefield:

— Fierce fighting dragged on in the city of Sievierodonetsk in a battle that could help determine the fate of the Donbas, Ukraine's industrial heartland in the east. Moscow-backed separatists already held swaths of the Donbas before the invasion, and Russian troops have gained more.

— Residents of Kharkiv reported what appeared to be cruise missile strikes. One hit a supermarket. Another hit a coke plant. No details were immediately available.

— Russian troops are trying to resume their offensive to completely capture the Zaporizhzhia region in Ukraine's southeast, Ukrainian authorities said. Kyiv continues to hold the northern part of the region, including the city of Zaporizhzhia.

— Thirteen civilians were killed in Ukrainian shelling of the separatist-controlled city of Stakhanov in the Donbas, a pro-Russian separatist envoy said on social media. It was not immediately possible to verify the claim.

— Russia claimed it used missiles to strike a base west of the capital in the Zhytomyr region, where, it said, mercenaries were being trained. There was no immediate response from Ukrainian authorities.

PGA Tour says Saudi-paid players no longer eligible for tour

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

Dustin Johnson and Phil Mickelson launched tee shots in the Saudi-funded golf league on Thursday, and it wasn't long before the PGA Tour said its players who took part were no longer welcome, even if they already had resigned.

PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan held a hard line on his pledge that players could choose one tour or the other, but not both.

Those who had resigned from the PGA Tour — Graeme McDowell said he did so 30 minutes before he teed off — were no longer eligible on any PGA Tour circuit. Those who remained members, such as Mickelson, were suspended.

"These players have made their choice on their own financial-based reasons," Monahan said in a memo to his membership. "But they can't demand the same PGA Tour membership benefits, considerations, opportunities and platform as you."

Ian Poulter said he would appeal the ruling. McDowell said he wanted to "keep the high moral ground" by resigning to try to keep litigation to a minimum. He thinks suspensions are a healthy way to go about business.

Mickelson had nothing to say except that he didn't want to talk about the PGA Tour in his first tournament in four months, only to confirm he will play all eight of the LIV events, five of which will be in the United States.

When told that people were interested in his situation, Mickelson replied, "I'm very flattered so many people are interested."

Still to be determined is whether those players are ever welcome back. For now, Monahan made it clear that the suspensions include the Presidents Cup — the International team (countries outside Europe) is determined by the world ranking.

Monahan said the players who resigned will have their names removed from the PGA Tour standings — FedEx Cup and Presidents Cup — after this week. He said the tour will make sure those who haven't resigned will not affect rankings on various lists of tour players.

The USGA already has said eligible players can still compete in the U.S. Open next week. The PGA Tour does not run the majors.

PGA champion Justin Thomas and four-time major champion Rory McIlroy welcomed the decision from the tour stop this week at the Canadian Open.

"I think anybody that's shocked clearly hasn't been listening to the message that Jay and everybody's

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been putting out," Thomas said. "They took that risk going into it, whether they thought it was a risk or not. I have great belief and great confidence in the PGA Tour and where we're going and continuing to grow to, and those guys just aren't going to be a part of it."

Ten players have resigned from the PGA Tour, a list that includes Johnson and Sergio Garcia. Mickelson, who has lifetime membership with 45 PGA Tour titles, is among those who has not.

LIV Golf, run by Greg Norman and funded by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, responded to the tour's decision by calling it vindictive and divisive.

"It's troubling that the tour, an organization dedicated to creating opportunities for golfers to play the game, is the entity blocking golfers from playing," LIV Golf said. "This certainly is not the last word on this topic. The era of free agency is beginning as we are proud to have a full field of players joining us in London, and beyond."

At issue is players competing without a conflicting event release from the PGA Tour.

Players typically receive three such releases a year for tournaments overseas. Monahan denied releases for the LIV Golf Invitational because it is an eight-tournament series that plans to compete directly with the PGA Tour in the United States.

The tour does not allow releases for events in North America.

"We have followed the tournament regulations from start to finish in responding to those players who have decided to turn their backs on the PGA Tour by willfully violating a regulation," he wrote.

LIV Golf has paid enormous signing fees, with The Daily Telegraph reporting \$150 million for Johnson and Mickelson declining to dispute reports he was paid \$200 million. Both are more than Tiger Woods' career earnings on the PGA Tour.

Norman has said LIV would support the players even if it wound up in the courts. McDowell said some players already have spoken to lawyers.

"We haven't been issued releases. We feel like we should have been issued releases. We've done it for the last 20 years, operated all over the world," McDowell said. "Listen, we all know the situation is about something bigger. It's competition and it's not liked. They are having to play the game the way they feel they have to play it, which is playing hard ball."

The European tour has not said whether it would suspend its players. It has an alliance with the PGA Tour commercially, including the first co-sanctioned events this year on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

The first test for PGA Tour players figures to be the Travelers Championship in Connecticut, the week after the U.S. Open. Johnson was among those listed in the field.

The LIV Golf Invitational was being streamed on YouTube and Facebook. Before the opening round, Norman said he was thrilled to see an effort 30 years in the making come to fruition.

He tried to start a World Golf Tour in the 1990s for only the elite players and had a TV contract lined up until the PGA Tour quashed the moment with support from Arnold Palmer. That circuit never got off the ground.

This one did, with the backing of riches the likes of which golf has never seen.

Each tournament offers \$25 million in prize money, with \$4 million for the individual winner. The PGA Tour's richest event is The Players Championship at \$20 million. The Canadian Open this week, which has five of the top-10 players in the world, has an \$8.7 million purse.

Justice Barrett's \$425K tops among Supreme Court's authors

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supreme Court justices took in \$800,000 in book royalties last year, a lucrative supplement to their judicial salaries, according to financial reports released Thursday.

By far the largest payment went to Justice Amy Coney Barrett, \$425,000 for a yet-to-be-released book and likely the first installment on a reported \$2 million deal she signed soon after joining the court in 2020.

Justices are being paid \$274,200 this year for their work on the bench; Chief Justice John Roberts gets a little more, \$286,700.

The largest advances before now have gone to Justices Clarence Thomas and Sonia Sotomayor, who each

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received more than \$1 million for their accounts of their rise from poverty to the nation's highest court. In all, Sotomayor has earned more than \$3 million in advances and royalties for her memoir, "My Beloved World," and other books.

Barrett is writing about how judges should avoid letting personal feelings shape their decisions, Politico has reported.

She is working with the conservative Sentinel imprint that is part of Penguin Random House. Barrett is represented by the Javelin Group, a Washington-area literary agent.

Justice Neil Gorsuch received \$250,000 in royalties last year from HarperCollins for a new book that has yet to be published. He previously reported \$650,000 from Penguin Random House for his book, "A Republic, If You Can Keep It," published in 2019. Gorsuch also reported a \$700 pair of cowboy boots he got as a gift from the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society.

Sotomayor, a prolific author since joining the court in 2009, collected \$115,000 in royalties and also reported a smaller payment, \$5,125, to potentially turn her children's book, "Just Ask!" into a television or video production.

Justice Stephen Breyer, who is retiring when the court finishes its work in early summer, reported \$7,800 in royalty income from Penguin Random House.

House approves 'red flag' gun bill unlikely to pass Senate

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House approved a "red flag" bill Thursday that would allow families, police and others to ask federal courts to order the removal of firearms from people at extreme risk of harming themselves or others.

It's the Democratic-controlled chamber's latest response to U.S. mass shootings and likely stands little chance in the Senate.

Nineteen states and the District of Columbia currently have such "red flag" laws. Under the House bill, a judge could issue an order to temporarily remove and store the firearms until a hearing can be held, up to two weeks later, to determine whether the firearms should be returned or kept for a specific period. The bill passed on a mostly party-line vote of 224-202.

"We are painfully aware that we cannot do enough to save every life, and there is no one answer that will solve this problem," said Rep. Jerrold Nadler, the Democratic chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. "But we do know that taking guns out of the hands of people who pose a danger to themselves, or others, would save countless lives."

The vote came after an emotional week that saw congressional testimony from victims of recent mass shootings in Uvalde, Texas, and Buffalo, New York, and came ahead of a planned march Saturday in Washington by groups advocating stronger gun controls.

On Wednesday the House passed a wide-ranging gun control bill that would raise the age limit for purchasing a semi-automatic rifle and prohibit the sale of ammunition magazines with a capacity of more than 15 rounds. It too, has virtually no chance in the Senate.

House Republicans criticized the "red flag" bill as giving the federal government the ability to take a law-abiding person's guns without them having the ability to contest it beforehand.

"It would allow the courts to take guns away from people without notice and without even the right to appear in the hearing to defend themselves in court," said Rep. Mike Johnson, R-La.

The Congressional Budget Office projects that the bill would lead to roughly 10,000 emergency petitions being filed annually with the courts.

The bill would also create a grant program at the U.S. Department of Justice to encourage states to adopt "red flag" laws and support the 19 states that have already implemented them.

Five Republican lawmakers voted for the bill: Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania, Anthony Gonzalez of Ohio, Chris Jacobs of New York, Adam Kinzinger of Illinois and Fred Upton of Michigan. Only Fitzpatrick is seeking reelection. Rep. Jared Golden of Maine was the only Democratic member to vote no.

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The lead sponsors of the bill were Democratic Reps. Salud Carbajal of California and Lucy McBath of Georgia, whose son, Jordan Davis, was slain at a Jacksonville, Florida gas station in 2012 by a white man angry over the loud music the Black teenager and his friends had been playing in their car.

President Joe Biden strongly supports the bill. The White House said it would "make significant progress toward keeping guns out of dangerous hands." However, the legislation is unlikely to advance in the Senate, where at least 10 Republican senators would be needed.

Instead, senators are focusing on incremental policy changes through a system that would send funds and other incentives to states to bolster security at school campuses, provide more mental health services to young people and possibly encourage states to pursue red-flag laws of their own.

Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, who is leading negotiations on the Republican side, said one focus is on enhancing the background check system known as NICS, to include young buyers' criminal records before they turned 18.

"Adding juvenile records to the NICS system is a common sense way to ensure we have a complete picture of the buyer's history," Cornyn said.

He voiced optimism that senators will be able to reach an agreement.

"Around here, if there's a will, there is a way, and I believe we do have the will and we will find the way," Cornyn said.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said the House stands ready to consider a gun bill from the Senate "if it's life-saving and can make a difference."

But she cautioned: "We cannot have subterfuge. We can't have them say well, it's about this and it's about that. No, it's about guns."

Justice Department opens probe into Louisiana State Police

By JIM MUSTIAN and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — The U.S. Justice Department is opening a sweeping civil rights investigation into the Louisiana State Police amid mounting evidence that the agency has a pattern of looking the other way in the face of beatings of mostly Black men, including the deadly 2019 arrest of Ronald Greene.

The federal "pattern-or-practice" probe announced Thursday followed an Associated Press investigation that found Greene's arrest was among at least a dozen cases over the past decade in which state police troopers or their bosses ignored or concealed evidence of beatings, deflected blame and impeded efforts to root out misconduct. Dozens of current and former troopers said the beatings were countenanced by a culture of impunity, nepotism and, in some cases, outright racism.

"We find significant justification to open this investigation now. ... We received information of the repeated use of excessive force, often against people suspected of minor traffic offenses, who are already handcuffed or are not resisting," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke, who oversees the Justice Department's civil rights division. She added there were also reports of troopers targeting Black residents in traffic enforcement and using "racial slurs and racially derogatory terms."

The federal probe, the first such action against a statewide law enforcement agency in more than two decades, comes more than three years after white troopers were captured on long-withheld body-camera video beating, stunning and dragging Greene on a rural roadside near Monroe. Despite lengthy, ongoing federal and state criminal investigations into a death troopers initially blamed on a car crash, no one has been charged.

AP's reporting found troopers have made a habit of turning off or muting body cameras during pursuits. When footage is recorded, the agency has routinely refused to release it. And a recently retired supervisor who oversaw a particularly violent clique of troopers told internal investigators last year that it was his "common practice" to rubber-stamp officers' use-of-force reports without ever reviewing body-camera video.

In some cases, troopers omitted uses of force such as blows to the head from official reports, and in others troopers sought to justify their actions by claiming suspects were violent, resisting or escaping, all of which were contradicted by video footage.

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"This systemic misconduct was blessed by top brass at the Louisiana State Police," said Alanah Odoms, executive director of the ACLU of Louisiana. She described a "culture of violence, terror, and discrimination" within the agency, calling Greene's death "the tip of the iceberg."

Clarke said the civil "pattern-or-practice" probe is aimed at driving needed reforms, if necessary by suing to implement a federal consent decree. She added that Gov. John Bel Edwards and the superintendent of the Louisiana State Police, Lamar Davis, have pledged their cooperation.

Davis, in an internal email obtained by AP, told troopers to "hold your heads high" and embrace the federal scrutiny. "We have nothing to hide and can only benefit from learning," he wrote.

Edwards issued a statement Thursday welcoming the investigation. "It is deeply troubling that allegations of systemic misconduct exist that would warrant this type of investigation," he said, "but it is absolutely critical that all Louisianans, especially African-Americans and other people of color, have their faith, confidence and trust in public safety officers restored."

Black leaders have been urging the Justice Department for months to launch a broader investigation into potential racial profiling by the overwhelmingly white state police, similar to other probes opened over the past year in Minneapolis, Louisville and Phoenix.

By its own tally, 67% of state police uses of force in recent years were against Black people, who make up 33% of the state's population.

The action comes as Edwards prepares to testify before a bipartisan panel of state lawmakers investigating Greene's death. AP reported last month that the Democratic governor and his lawyers privately watched video showing Greene taking his final breaths during his fatal arrest — footage that didn't reach prosecutors until nearly two years after Greene's May 10, 2019, death.

Federal prosecutors also are still investigating whether police brass obstructed justice to protect troopers in the Greene case — and whether they sought to conceal evidence of troopers beating other Black motorists.

The head of the state police at the time of Greene's arrest, Kevin Reeves, has denied the death was covered up but current commanders have told lawmakers investigating the state's response that it was. The agency's own use-of-force expert called what troopers did to Greene "torture and murder."

The AP also found that a former trooper implicated in three separate beatings, Jacob Brown, tallied 23 uses of force dating to 2015, 19 of which involved Black people. In one case that resulted in federal charges, Brown was seen on body-camera video beating Aaron Larry Bowman 18 times with a flashlight after deputies pulled him over for a traffic violation in 2019. State police didn't investigate the attack until 536 days later, and only did so after a lawsuit from Bowman, who was left with a gash to the head and a broken jaw, ribs and wrist.

"Finally!!!" Bowman's attorney, Donecia Banks-Miley, said in a text message upon hearing of the pattern-or-practice probe. "We still need transparency and accountability to help bring restoration to the pain that continues to occur with LSP and other law enforcement agencies."

Gas prices close in on \$5 a gallon in US, hit record in UK

By DAVID KOENIG AP Business Writer

DALLAS (AP) — The average price that Americans pay for gasoline is closing in on \$5 a gallon, another drain on the wallets of consumers who are paying more for many other essentials too.

AAA said the nationwide average for regular on Thursday was \$4.97 a gallon, up a quarter in just the last week and \$1.90 more than drivers were paying a year ago.

GasBuddy, a service that helps drivers find deals on gas, said the average surpassed \$5 for the first time ever.

Pump prices have been rising steadily for months, shooting past the \$4 mark in early March. They track the cost of crude oil, which was rising even before Russia's invasion of Ukraine drove oil even higher.

Fears of short supplies are being compounded by demand, which usually picks up around Memorial Day at the end of May — the unofficial start of summer and vacation trips in the U.S.

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California has the highest average price, at \$6.40 a gallon, according to AAA. Several other Western states and Illinois are higher than \$5.50.

The lowest average is in Georgia, at \$4.41.

Quentin McZeal of Oakland, California, said it used to cost him \$100 to fill up his tank and now it's more like \$140-\$160. The prices have forced him to change his behavior and make different choices, like turning down people who ask for rides unless they're willing to kick in for gas.

"It's a lot of other things I can't do because I have to pay for gas, you know what I'm saying?" McZeal said. "Less food, less playtime because I got to get gas. I got to go to work, right?"

He blames the government, and the war in Ukraine, for the high gas prices.

While the \$5 mark on average is new, Americans paid more for gasoline back in July 2008, when inflation is considered. The high of \$4.11 a gallon then would be equal to about \$5.40 a gallon today.

Americans aren't the only ones paying more to fill up. This week, gasoline prices in the United Kingdom hit a record 182.3 pence (\$2.30) per liter, or about \$8.80 per gallon.

Analysts expect prices will keep rising until they get so high that demand falls — nobody knows exactly when or where that might be. In the meantime, any unexpected refinery shutdowns — for example, from a hurricane along the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast — could send prices spiraling higher.

"I'm afraid we're not at the end of the road yet," said GasBuddy analyst Patrick De Haan. "We have very little margin for error this summer. We need every barrel of refining capacity we can get."

The pandemic led to refinery closures that have caused U.S. refining capacity to drop by about 800,000 barrels a day since the start of 2020, according to government figures. That has put pressure on remaining refiners to run hard to meet rising demand.

Refiners have been reluctant to invest in new facilities because the transition to electric vehicles is casting doubt on long-term demand for gasoline. The owner of one of the nation's largest refineries, in Houston, announced in April that it will close the facility by the end of next year.

Pump prices are surging just as consumers try to cope with inflation in the cost of food, housing, cars, airline tickets and other needs and wants. U.S. consumer prices in April were 8.3% higher than a year ago — only slightly better than March inflation, which was the highest since 1981. May figures are due out Friday.

On both sides of the Atlantic, pressure is growing on governments to do something to help motorists.

In Washington last month, House Democrats voted for a bill to crack down on what they called price gouging by oil companies, but Republican opposition made Senate approval unlikely. This week in the U.K., the president of the motoring association AA said prices are "crippling the lives of those on lower incomes, rural areas and businesses," and the government must intervene.

Michigan GOP hopeful charged in Jan. 6 riot, roiling primary

By ED WHITE and SARA BURNETT Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — A Republican candidate for Michigan governor and ardent defender of former President Donald Trump was charged with misdemeanors Thursday for his role in the 2021 post-election riot at the U.S. Capitol, further complicating an already messy GOP primary.

Ryan Kelley, 40, was arrested in western Michigan and appeared at a brief hearing in federal court in Grand Rapids, where he was released from custody without posting bail. The government did not ask that Kelley be detained.

His arrest came hours before the House committee investigating the insurrection holds a widely anticipated public hearing, showing never-seen video, audio and an array of evidence highlighting the deadly violence that erupted on Jan. 6, 2021.

Kelley walked away from the courthouse, joined by his wife and other family, saying only that he would comment later. His campaign posted on Facebook two words: "political prisoner," and the chairman of the state GOP accused Democrats of "weaponizing our justice system" against political opponents.

Defense attorney Heath Lynch said Kelley "has every intention of continuing his campaign in earnest."

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Kelley's arrest further roils a GOP field that initially had 10 candidates seeking to challenge Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in the battleground state this fall. Five of them, including two front-runners, were dropped from the primary ballot because forged signatures submitted by paid petition circulators left them below the 15,000 needed to make the race.

The four other Republicans in the race are businesswoman and conservative commentator Tudor Dixon, who recently was endorsed by the family of former Trump administration Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and the anti-abortion group Right to Life of Michigan, businessman Kevin Rinke, pastor Ralph Rebandt and chiropractor Garrett Soldano. Trump has not endorsed anyone in the race.

Kelley, a real estate broker who lives in Allendale Township, is accused of disruptive conduct, injuring public property and entering restricted space without permission, according to the criminal complaint.

In a court document made public Thursday, federal investigators said Kelley was recorded on video outside the U.S. Capitol on the day of the insurrection, repeatedly waving to the crowd and directing them toward stairs leading into the building. He used his phone to "film the crowd assaulting and pushing past U.S. Capitol police officers" and was in a crowd that climbed stairs to a Capitol entrance after causing police to retreat, the FBI said.

The document included multiple photos of Kelley that the FBI described as screengrabs from video taken that day, with Kelley wearing aviator sunglasses and a baseball cap worn backward, trying to rally the pro-Trump crowd.

Kelley has long acknowledged that he was at the insurrection and said that he didn't go inside the Capitol. He is among more than 800 people who are facing criminal charges in connection with the Jan. 6 riot. It wasn't clear why authorities decided to move against Kelley now, though the government continues to charge more people in the massive investigation, even nearly 18 months later.

Some supporters questioned the timing. Kelley's campaign manager, Karla Wagner, told WOOD-TV his arrest is political and an "intimidation tactic" orchestrated by Democrats. Fellow GOP candidate Rinke said on Twitter that he hopes the FBI is acting appropriately "because the timing here raises serious questions."

Kelley faces up to one year in prison or a fine of \$100,000. Of those already charged, more than 300 people have pleaded guilty, largely to misdemeanor offenses punishable by no more than one year in prison. Some who've pleaded guilty to misdemeanors have been sentenced to short stints behind bars while others have been sentenced to home confinement or probation.

Kelley became a vocal activist in Michigan during the coronavirus pandemic, when he protested restrictions put in place by Whitmer. During the early months of the pandemic, he organized a protest at the Michigan Capitol, inviting heavily armed militias to gather inside the statehouse.

Kelley also has made election fraud and the lie that Trump won the election a major focus of his activism and his campaign for governor. After the 2020 election, Kelley was a speaker at a "Stop the Steal" rally in Lansing, telling the crowd that Democrats were trying to steal Trump's victory. As a candidate, Kelley said that if elected governor, he would work to cancel contracts with companies that provide voting machines in Michigan and eliminate same-day voter registration.

Kelley has not been considered a front-runner in the field so far, though the arrest could improve his name recognition among GOP primary voters, said Michigan-based pollster Bernie Porn. He said polling by his firm, EPIC-MRA, has shown more than half of Michigan Republicans believe Trump won the 2020 election and had the victory taken from him, a falsehood Kelley has promoted.

"He may get more votes than he would have otherwise" in the primary, Porn said. But his beliefs about the 2020 election and actions on Jan. 6 would hurt him in a general election if he is the nominee, he added.

Michigan Democrats criticized the GOP field on Thursday as pushing "lies and extremism," and said Kelley has "no business seeking an elected position in the same government he tried to overthrow."

Ron Weiser, chairman of the Michigan Republican Party, countered that Democrats are weaponizing the justice system in an "unprecedented way."

"It's shameful and must end," he said.

Salvadoran leader rebuffs Blinken effort to bolster summit

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — It was the sort of diplomatic rebuff a small country like El Salvador generally can rarely afford to make.

In the run-up to this week's Summit of Americas in Los Angeles, senior U.S. officials frantically worked the phones seeking to boost attendance amid threats of a boycott from Mexico's president and other leftist leaders over the exclusion of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

Among those efforts, the State Department sent a message that Secretary of State Antony Blinken wanted to speak with President Nayib Bukele last weekend, a rare show of comity from a Biden administration that for months had been blasting the Central American leader as a power-hungry populist.

"Participating in the Summit is a very good opportunity for President Bukele to explain his perspective to the Salvadoran community in LA and Joe Biden," Assistant Secretary of State Brian Nichols wrote in a message to Bukele's ambassador in Washington.

In the end, Bukele didn't take the bait and the call never happened, said two people close to the Salvadoran president, who insisted on being given anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomatic dealings.

Another request to set up a call with Blinken, made through the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador, was similarly rebuffed, according to the two people, one of whom showed The Associated Press a copy of the messages.

The concerted effort by Blinken to reach out to one of the Biden administration's frequent targets in Latin America underscores the lengths to which U.S. officials went to avoid an embarrassing flop at the summit.

It also demonstrates how controversial leaders like Bukele, who skirted criticism from the Trump administration in exchange for wholesale support of its crackdown on migration, have struggled to adjust to a return to a traditional foreign policy under Biden.

Bukele is one of 11 Western Hemisphere leaders who have stayed away from the summit, which is taking place on U.S. soil for the first time since it was launched in 1994.

Some, like the leaders of Mexico, Honduras and Grenada, are doing so to protest the exclusion of fellow leftists from Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Others, like Bukele and Guatemala's Alejandro Giammattei, are frustrated with Washington's finger wagging over corruption and human rights abuses.

"It's clear the Biden administration wasn't sensitive to how these leaders were feeling," said Michael Shifter, who recently retired as head of the Washington-based Inter-American Dialogue. "You can be tough on corruption, but there's a tradeoff, and you shouldn't expect others to play along just because there's a phone call from the White House. That's the reality that the Biden team doesn't really grasp."

Shifter pointed out that both Bukele and Giammattei were not among the more than 100 leaders invited to attend last year's Summit for Democracy, which included leaders of authoritarian bent like Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro and Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines.

"These are things these leaders don't forget," Shifter said.

The State Department declined to comment when asked Thursday about the outreach to Bukele.

But Bukele's lack of a response to Blinken's request for a phone call convinced U.S. officials there wasn't much they could do to improve relations and the U.S. eventually dropped the diplomatic outreach, said a person familiar with the effort.

Bukele has won strong support from Salvadorans by taking a tough stance against gangs and going after traditional politicians in charge during decades of corrupt rule that followed the end of the country's bloody civil war.

His critics in the U.S. say that in concentrating power Bukele is undermining already fragile institutions. Since Biden has taken office the U.S. has sanctioned several of his top aides over corruption.

A similar dynamic has played out in neighboring Guatemala, where Blinken recently said Giammattei's choice for attorney general was engaged in "significant corruption."

The Biden administration has downplayed the leader absences, pointing to a summer visit to the White House by Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador as one example of how countries in the region

will continue to work with the United States on migration and other issues.

"The substantive work of the summit has in no way, shape or form been touched or adjusted or reduced by the participation question," National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters Wednesday aboard Air Force One on its way to the summit.

Blatter, Platini reiterate innocence in testimony to court

By DANIELLA MATAR AP Sports Writer

BELLINZONA, Switzerland (AP) — Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini strongly reiterated their innocence as the two former soccer leaders were questioned on day two of their criminal trial on charges of defrauding FIFA.

Blatter was due to testify on the opening day on Wednesday but the former FIFA president said he was bothered by chest pains and asked to respond the following morning.

"I feel much better, thank you," the 86-year-old Blatter said at the start of Thursday's session at the Federal Criminal Court of Switzerland in Bellinzona.

Blatter's 17-year reign as president came to an end in June 2015, when he resigned amid a corruption scandal. A few months later, federal prosecutors in Switzerland revealed their investigation into a \$2 million payment from FIFA to Platini from four years earlier.

The fallout from the case also ended Platini's campaign to succeed his former mentor and removed the France soccer great as president of UEFA.

Both have always denied wrongdoing and have also long questioned how the disputed payment came to light, airing unproven claims of prosecutors meeting a whistleblower on a park bench.

That was firmly refuted by Thursday's final witness, former federal prosecutor Olivier Thormann, as he gave testimony that was widely anticipated.

Blatter and Platini claim they had a verbal deal in 1998 for the latter to be paid 1 million Swiss francs (\$1.02 million) to serve as advisor to Blatter if he was elected as FIFA president. That defense first failed with judges at the FIFA ethics committee, which banned them from soccer, and later in separate appeals at the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Platini's contract with FIFA, signed in August 1999, was for 300,000 Swiss francs (\$312,000) annually and backdated to January. It is claimed Blatter said he would pay only the same as FIFA's then-secretary general, and promised the balance later.

"In the verbal contract we didn't determine the date he would get it, it was a contract between men, and we started work immediately. I didn't give him a precise time when he would get it," Blatter said.

"When I was elected FIFA president, we had a bad balance ... at the time I had no idea (when the payment would be made), I simply had this man with me and he was worth this million but I didn't know when and how he would get it."

Platini backed up Blatter's comments in his testimony and claimed he should have been paid more, but had miscalculated the discrepancy in the amount he had been promised and his salary during his four years in the advisory role.

"I made a mistake. I was convinced the salary was 500,000 (Swiss francs) and I realised when the prosecutor showed me the contract. But FIFA knew they cheated me," Platini said.

The 66-year-old Platini was asked why he waited until 2011 to send FIFA an invoice for the money allegedly owed. The bill came not long after FIFA paid a seven-figure severance to Jerome Champagne, a French former diplomat who was ousted as a Blatter aide.

"I trusted the president and I knew that one day or the other he would pay me. I wouldn't get into a deal with the president without trusting him," Platini said. "It wasn't vital for me that money. What was vital was the word of the president of FIFA."

"I have principles. I'm not going to ask for money from someone who owes me. Just that, one day, I knew that FIFA had given two big payments to employees who left and at that point I told myself it would be good that they remember they owe me money."

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The trial is set to last 11 days and the three federal judges hearing the case are scheduled to deliver their verdict on July 8. Blatter and Platini each face up to five years in prison, but suspended sentences are a likely option.

"I was in shock (when we were first questioned) and that shock has lasted seven years. It's still here," Blatter said. "I have already been punished for seven years. It has seemed like an eternity.

"That's why I'm happy we're in court now, to learn the truth about what happened. I'm happy we're here and this will finally end."

Blatter and Platini refused to answer questions from FIFA lawyer Catherine Hohl-Chirazi.

"What FIFA did to the president of FIFA and me is scandalous, they made us out to be cheaters, fraudsters, money launderers," Platini said. "Just so that I wouldn't become president.

"It's not easy when you're known worldwide to be criticised worldwide, especially when you have children and grandchildren ... I hope there will be justice one day."

Criminal proceedings were opened against Blatter in September 2015 and it was years later, after Thormann left the prosecution team, that Platini was targeted.

Platini's lawyer, Dominic Nellen, attempted to show in court the prosecution office had colluded with soccer officials, and that this helped Gianni Infantino become FIFA president in 2016. A FIFA ethics investigation into the \$2 million payment led to Platini being banned in 2015 and barred from the election race to succeed Blatter.

However, Thormann said information about the Platini payment was obtained in May 2015 from FIFA's then-chief financial officer Markus Kattner. Swiss authorities had seized documents and data at FIFA offices in Zurich as part of their wider investigation at the same time as United States federal agents led their own investigation of corruption in international soccer.

The documents detailed FIFA payments to all members of its executive committee, including Platini.

"We received an alert and we opened up a dossier," Thormann said in court, dismissing any notion of intrigue or conspiracy.

Facebook fails again to detect hate speech in ads

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The test couldn't have been much easier — and Facebook still failed.

Facebook and its parent company Meta flopped once again in a test of how well they could detect obviously violent hate speech in advertisements submitted to the platform by the nonprofit groups Global Witness and Foxglove.

The hateful messages focused on Ethiopia, where internal documents obtained by whistleblower Frances Haugen showed that Facebook's ineffective moderation is "literally fanning ethnic violence," as she said in her 2021 congressional testimony. In March, Global Witness ran a similar test with hate speech in Myanmar, which Facebook also failed to detect.

The group created 12 text-based ads that used dehumanizing hate speech to call for the murder of people belonging to each of Ethiopia's three main ethnic groups — the Amhara, the Oromo and the Tigrayans. Facebook's systems approved the ads for publication, just as they did with the Myanmar ads. The ads were not actually published on Facebook.

This time around, though, the group informed Meta about the undetected violations. The company said the ads shouldn't have been approved and pointed to the work it has done to catch hateful content on its platforms.

A week after hearing from Meta, Global Witness submitted two more ads for approval, again with blatant hate speech. The two ads, written in Amharic, the most widely used language in Ethiopia, were approved.

Meta said the ads shouldn't have been approved.

"We've invested heavily in safety measures in Ethiopia, adding more staff with local expertise and building our capacity to catch hateful and inflammatory content in the most widely spoken languages, including Amharic," the company said in an emailed statement, adding that machines and people can still make

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mistakes. The statement was identical to the one Global Witness received.

"We picked out the worst cases we could think of," said Rosie Sharpe, a campaigner at Global Witness. "The ones that ought to be the easiest for Facebook to detect. They weren't coded language. They weren't dog whistles. They were explicit statements saying that this type of person is not a human or these type of people should be starved to death."

Meta has consistently refused to say how many content moderators it has in countries where English is not the primary language. This includes moderators in Ethiopia, Myanmar and other regions where material posted on the company's platforms has been linked to real-world violence.

In November, Meta said it removed a post by Ethiopia's prime minister that urged citizens to rise up and "bury" rival Tigray forces who threatened the country's capital.

In the since-deleted post, Abiy said the "obligation to die for Ethiopia belongs to all of us." He called on citizens to mobilize "by holding any weapon or capacity."

Abiy has continued to post on the platform, though, where he has 4.1 million followers. The U.S. and others have warned Ethiopia about "dehumanizing rhetoric" after the prime minister described the Tigray forces as "cancer" and "weeds" in comments made in July 2021.

"When ads calling for genocide in Ethiopia repeatedly get through Facebook's net — even after the issue is flagged with Facebook — there's only one possible conclusion: there's nobody home," said Rosa Curling, director of Foxglove, a London-based legal nonprofit that partnered with Global Witness in its investigation. "Years after the Myanmar genocide, it is clear Facebook hasn't learned its lesson."

Biden's inflation crunch: Too much shopping — even at beach

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

REHOBOTH BEACH, Del. (AP) — While motorcading to his beach house last weekend, President Joe Biden could have looked out the window of his limousine and seen firsthand why he has struggled to contain inflation.

Lining Delaware's Coastal Highway as it leads into Rehoboth Beach are miles of strip malls, outlet stores, restaurants, hotels and gas stations. The advertised price of gasoline was approaching \$5 a gallon. Vacationgoers had packed into the parking lots of pubs and taquerias.

No one is happy that inflation is close to a 40-year high, but it will be hard to bring down prices so long as people keep eagerly spending.

Browsing the Polo Ralph Lauren factory store, Nina Cooper was displeased about her rising expenses yet she was still shopping for new outfits. Inflation was not enough to deter the hospital worker, who was grateful that a seven-minute commute spared her some pain at the gas pump.

"Everything is going up — look at these prices," Copper said. "But you still got to live."

Biden faces a delicate trade-off as he tries to help his fellow Democrats in the November elections. He needs U.S. consumers to pull back just enough so inflation eases, but not so much that the economy risks plunging into a recession.

The president has flicked at this idea in recent speeches, noting that the pace of hiring has slowed and "we're beginning a shift to steady growth" after a rapid recovery from the coronavirus-induced recession. That recovery that was fueled, in part, by his \$1.9 trillion relief package.

Consumers account for most U.S. economic activity, meaning they steer much of what happens with their collective choices. Their role tends to get overlooked in political speeches, which generally reduce the economy to talk about jobs, factories and other forms of production. Biden has gone so far as to say that his policies to promote port upgrades and domestic manufacturing will lower costs by improving production, a long-term fix to an immediate problem that can be reduced, simply, to demand exceeding supply.

Friday's report on consumer prices is expected to show that annual inflation slowed ever so slightly to 8.2% in May from 8.3% in April. Economists surveyed by FactSet indicate the decline will largely be driven by expenses other than food and energy, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to higher prices in those categories worldwide.

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Republicans are tapping into the public impatience with inflation remaining persistently high, instead of dropping as promised when the economy reopened after pandemic-related closures.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky has attacked higher electricity and gas prices as ultimately the result of an ideological choice by the Biden administration to move away from fossil fuels. The GOP solution is to embrace policies that it believes would increase energy supplies.

"A few days ago, President Biden said soaring gas prices were just part of 'an incredible transition' that will leave us 'less reliant on fossil fuels,'" McConnell said Tuesday in the Senate. "Did you hear that, American workers? Democrats say your financial pain is the necessary cost to make America more to the liking of the radical environmental left."

Part of the problem with inflation is that consumers have yet to significantly cut back. AAA reported that average prices at the pump have jumped 62% from a year ago. But the Energy Department reported that gasoline usage in the U.S. has only fallen 1.8% over the past year, meaning that most consumers are accepting the financial burden imposed by inflation.

University of Michigan economist Betsey Stevenson, a former adviser to the Obama White House, said it would be helpful if Americans reduced their spending. This would lessen demand and allow supplies to catch up, easing pressure on the Federal Reserve to lower inflation through higher short-term interest rates.

"Fundamentally, the problem right now is the opposite of stagflation -- it's regular inflation driven by an economy operating at or even above its potential, with consumer demand outstripping the capacity of the economy," Stevenson said. "I'm hoping that people stop digging into their savings and cut spending a little -- not enough to slow the economy, but enough to slow the price increases."

Stevenson also acknowledged that gas prices in particular might be driving the broader dissatisfaction, such that overall inflation could fall and do little to calm public anxieties so long as prices at the pump are high.

"Cars seem to be important to people's sense of control and high gas prices for some might feel like losing your ability to just hop in your car and go where you want," she said.

Despite the spike in prices, consumer spending increased faster than inflation during the first four months of this year. Whether consumers can maintain such robust spending will largely determine how the economy fares in the coming months.

There were visible signs that Rehoboth Beach's economy is zipping along.

Hotel rooms at discount chains off the crowded highway were charging \$250 a night on the weekends. There are shortages of summer workers as retailers are openly advertising jobs, a sign that prices might need to rise further to cover labor costs.

Tanger Factory Outlet Centers, which owns the outlets along the highway, reported to investors that sales are up 18.1% from pre-pandemic levels. Tanger CEO Stephen Yalof told investors on an earnings call last month that shoppers have returned "even as consumers face higher gas prices and an inflationary environment" and that he is confident that at his outlet "retailers will be able to weather and perform well" if a downturn occurs.

Carrie Lingo, a real estate agent who is chairwoman of the board of the Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce, said she has yet to see much of a slowdown caused by inflation. Their biggest obstacle is the absence of workers, not the prospect of lower sales.

Hiring usually swells during the summer with the tourists and pay was already up last year. Average weekly wages in the surrounding Sussex County were 12% higher during last year's summer peak than in 2020, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"Our visitation is up from last year but there are supply shortages," she said. "I think the companies are adjusting well and many times those prices are passed along to our consumers."

Mortgage rates jump again, buyers head to the sideline

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Average long-term U.S. mortgage rates jumped back up ahead of next week's

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Federal Reserve meeting where it's expected to announce another big increase to its main borrowing rate. Mortgage buyer Freddie Mac reported Thursday that the 30-year rate jumped to 5.23% this week from 5.09% last week. A year ago at this time, the average rate was 2.96%. Until April, the average rate hadn't exceeded 5% in more than a decade.

The brisk jump in rates, along with a sharp increase in home prices, has been pushing potential homebuyers out of the market.

Mortgage applications decreased 6.5% from one week earlier, the Mortgage Bankers Association reported Wednesday. The group's composite index, a measurement of mortgage loan application volume, is at its lowest level in 22 years. Its refinance index is 75% lower than a year ago.

Last month, the Federal Reserve intensified its fight against the worst inflation in 40 years by raising its benchmark interest rate by a half-percentage point and signaling more big rate hikes to come. The Fed's move, its most aggressive since 2000, means higher costs for mortgages as well as credit cards, auto loans and other borrowing for individuals and businesses.

Higher borrowing rates appear to be slowing the housing market, an important part of the economy. In April, sales of both existing homes and new homes showed signs of faltering, worsened by sharply higher home prices and a shrunken supply of available properties.

However, some economists expect that the tapering of demand could benefit the more determined home shoppers.

"The material decline in purchase activity, combined with the rising supply of homes for sale, will cause a deceleration in price growth to more normal levels, providing some relief for buyers still interested in purchasing a home," said Freddie Mac's Chief Economist Sam Khater.

Homeownership has become increasingly difficult lately, especially for first-time buyers. Besides staggering inflation, rising mortgage rates and soaring home prices, the supply of homes for sale continues to be scarce.

The average rate on 15-year, fixed-rate mortgages, popular among those refinancing their homes, rose to 4.38% from 4.32% last week.

Economists expect the Fed to raise its main borrowing rate by another half-point when it meets next week.

New vaccine may be option for troops with religious concerns

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A COVID-19 vaccine that could soon win federal authorization may offer a boost for the U.S. military: an opportunity to get shots into some of the thousands of service members who have refused other coronavirus vaccines for religious reasons.

At least 175 active duty and reserve service members have already received the Novavax vaccine, some even traveling overseas at their own expense to get it. The vaccine meets Defense Department requirements because it has the World Health Organization's emergency use approval and is used in Europe and other regions. The Food and Drug Administration is considering giving it emergency use authorization in the U.S.

The Novavax vaccine may be an acceptable option for some of the 27,000 service members who have sought religious exemptions from the mandatory vaccine. Military officials say many troops who refuse the shots cite certain COVID-19 vaccines' remote connection to abortions.

Laboratory-grown cell lines descended from fetuses that were aborted decades ago were used in some early-stage testing of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and to grow viruses used to manufacture the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The vaccines do not contain fetal cells. Novavax, however, says that "no human fetal-derived cell lines or tissue" were used in the development, manufacture or production of its vaccine.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin made COVID-19 vaccinations mandatory last year, saying the shots were critical to maintaining military readiness and the health of the force. Military leaders have argued that troops for decades have been required to get as many as 17 vaccines, particularly for those who are deploying overseas.

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One group involved in lawsuits targeting the military's vaccine requirement said it's possible some shot opponents may see Novavax as an amenable option.

"I definitely think it is for some, but certainly not for all," said Mike Berry, director of military affairs for First Liberty Institute. "There are some for whom abortion is really the ultimate issue, and once that issue is resolved for them spiritually, then they're willing."

Berry added, however, that for others, abortion is "just a tangential issue," and they have broader opposition to vaccines as a whole. "A rudimentary way of looking at it is that they've asked for God's will, and they believe that it would be wrong for them to get the vaccine," Berry said. "In other words, they believe that God has told them no."

Novavax also may appeal to people who are uncomfortable with the new genetic-based technology used in Pfizer and Moderna's so-called mRNA vaccines. They deliver genetic instructions for the body to make copies of the coronavirus' outer coating, the spike protein.

The Novavax vaccine is made with a more familiar technology, like those used for years to prevent hepatitis B and shingles. It trains the body to fight the coronavirus by delivering copies of the outer coating which are grown in insect cells, then are purified and packaged into nanoparticles that to the immune system resemble a virus, according to Novavax research chief Dr. Gregory Glenn.

While some religious groups oppose the shots, when COVID-19 vaccines first started rolling out the Vatican's doctrine office called the options "morally acceptable" and Pope Francis, who has received Pfizer shots, has strongly encouraged widespread vaccination.

First Liberty and the law firm Hacker Stephens LLP represent a number of Navy sailors in one lawsuit, and First Liberty and Schaerr Jaffe LLP represent nine airmen in another. Berry said he doesn't know how many would consider Novavax acceptable, but guessed it may be a small percentage.

Military officials declined to publicly detail the nature of any service members' religious exemption requests, but spoke on condition of anonymity to provide some descriptions. They said that the most predominant issue mentioned in waiver requests is the remote link to fetal cell lines, while others argue that their body is a temple that must remain pure. Others, officials said, describe reasons that appear to have less connection to faith.

Berry said his firm carefully screens individuals for the lawsuits, to make sure their objections are based on sincerely held religious beliefs, rather than political or other opposition masquerading as faith-based views.

The military can't administer the Novavax shot now, and won't pay for anyone's travel overseas to get it. But tens of thousands of American forces are based in Europe, where Novavax is available.

Earlier this week, advisers to the FDA backed the Novavax vaccine. Next, the FDA must decide whether to authorize it. A final FDA decision isn't expected immediately, as the agency finishes combing through the data.

Across the military, more than 5,000 service members have been discharged for refusing the vaccine, according to the latest statistics provided by the services. Of those who requested religious exemptions, only slightly more than 100 have been approved.

In the lawsuit against the Navy, a federal judge in Texas agreed the case can go forward as a class-action lawsuit and issued a preliminary injunction barring the service from taking action against sailors who objected to the vaccine on religious grounds. Berry said the Justice Department has said it will appeal the ruling to the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals.

In the Air Force lawsuit, Berry said, lawyers have asked that it also be a class action, and they are seeking a temporary restraining order preventing the Air Force from taking any adverse actions. The court has not yet ruled.

More Americans apply for jobless benefits last week

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — More Americans applied for jobless aid last week, but the total number of Americans collecting unemployment remains at a five-decade low.

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Applications for unemployment benefits rose by 27,000 to 229,000 for the week ending June 4, the most since mid-January, the Labor Department reported Thursday. First-time applications generally track the number of layoffs.

The four-week average for claims, which evens out some of the weekly volatility, rose by 8,000 from the previous week to 215,000.

The total number of Americans collecting jobless benefits for the week ending May 28 remained unchanged from the previous week at 1,306,000, the fewest since Jan. 10, 1970.

American workers are enjoying historically strong job security two years after the coronavirus pandemic plunged the economy into a short but devastating recession. Weekly applications for unemployment aid have been consistently below the pre-pandemic level of 225,000 for most of 2022, even as the overall economy contracted in the first quarter and concerns over inflation persist.

Last week, the government reported that U.S. employers added 390,000 jobs in May, extending a streak of solid hiring that has bolstered an economy under pressure from high inflation and rising interest rates.

Last month's gain reflects a resilient job market that has so far shrugged off concerns that the economy will weaken in the coming months as the Federal Reserve steadily raises interest rates to fight inflation. The unemployment rate remained 3.6%, just above a half-century low.

The job growth in May, though healthy, was the lowest monthly gain in a year. But it was high enough to keep the Fed on track to pursue what's likely to be the fastest series of rate hikes in more than 30 years.

Inflation at the consumer level eased slightly in April after months of relentless increases but remained near a four-decade high. Consumer prices jumped 8.3% last month from a year ago, just below the 8.5% year-over-year surge in March, which was the highest since 1981.

Earlier in May, the Federal Reserve intensified its fight against inflation by raising its benchmark short-term interest rate by a half-percentage point, signaling further large rate hikes to come.

The Fed meets again next week.

Virus testing the new normal as China sticks to 'zero-COVID'

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Thousands of coronavirus testing sites have popped up on sidewalks across Beijing and other Chinese cities in the latest development in the country's "zero-COVID" strategy.

Lines form every day, rain or shine, even where the spread of the virus has largely stopped. Some people need to go to work. Others want to shop. All are effectively compelled to get tested by a requirement to show a negative test result to enter office buildings, malls and other public places.

Liu Lele, who works for a live-streaming company, has no problem getting tested regularly but said the daytime operating hours don't always fit his schedule.

"Sometimes I get held up at work," he said after finishing a test Thursday near Beijing's historic Bell and Drum towers. "I wish there were sites open 24 hours or not closing until 7 or 8 p.m."

Regular testing of residents is becoming the new normal in many parts of China as the ruling Communist Party sticks steadfastly to a "zero-COVID" approach that is increasingly at odds with the rest of the world.

Major cities have been told to set up testing stations within a 15-minute walk for all residents. Beijing and Shanghai alone have put up 10,000 or more each. Some are made up of folding tables and chairs under a temporary canopy. Others are enclosed square booths from which gloved workers reach out through openings to take a quick throat swab from the next person in line.

Many cities including Beijing are requiring a negative test result within the last three days to enter a public place or take the bus or subway. Some have made it a week or 10 days. The tests are free, with the result reflected on the person's smartphone health app roughly 12 hours later.

"This is something we should do," said Beijing retiree Wang Shiyuan, who gets tested every three days in case he needs to go to the supermarket or take a bus. "Only when everyone obeys the requirements can we reduce the risk of transmission."

The move follows a recent outbreak in Shanghai that spread so widely that authorities locked down the

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entire city for two months to end it, trapping millions of people and dealing a blow to the national economy.

China kept the virus largely at bay for a year and a half by locking down buildings and neighborhoods and quarantining infected people, but the rapidly spreading omicron variant proved more difficult to stop. More than 580 people died in Shanghai — a large number in a country that had reported only a handful of deaths after an initial deadly outbreak in Wuhan in early 2020.

Guo Yanhong, an official with the National Health Commission, said testing has become more important because omicron is both more contagious and is spread by people without symptoms.

"We must adhere to the strategy of expanding prevention centered on nucleic acid testing, so as to control the epidemic earlier and faster," she said Thursday at a news conference.

A handful of new cases — some linked to a nightlife quarter in Beijing and a hair salon in Shanghai — prompted authorities to lock down areas in both cities Thursday. The cases followed an easing of restrictions on movement and the reopening of many retail businesses in the past week.

Andy Chen, a senior analyst with the Trivium China consultancy, said the proliferation of testing sites is a reaction to the failure of existing measures to control omicron in Shanghai, though officials have not explicitly said so.

Authorities have decided that early detection is needed to control omicron outbreaks without extreme measures that cause major economic disruption.

"The regular testing requirements are meant to improve the zero-COVID strategy," Chen said in an email. "The end goal is to keep the virus under control while avoiding another Shanghai-like lockdown."

Many other countries, their populations weary of pandemic restrictions and eager to move on, are betting that rising vaccination rates and the development of treatments for COVID-19 mean they can avoid lockdowns and other disruptive steps and live with the virus instead.

China's leaders have repeatedly signaled that they believe the "zero-COVID" approach remains the right one for China, even as they try to boost a flagging economy with business tax refunds, easier credit and spending on infrastructure projects.

Entry to the country remains restricted, with visas difficult to get and few international flights, making it costly and hard to get a seat. Anyone who does enter must quarantine in a hotel, usually for two weeks. Chinese generally can't leave the country unless it is for work or study.

Most analysts expect the zero-COVID policies to remain in place at least until after a major Communist Party congress this fall at which leader Xi Jinping is expected to get a third five-year term. The party touted its approach as a success when COVID-19 was ravaging other countries, and it doesn't want a major outbreak in the run-up to its meeting.

Today in History: June 10, Six-Day War ends

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, June 10, the 161st day of 2022. There are 204 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 10, 1967, six days of war in the Mideast involving Israel, Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq ended as Israel and Syria accepted a United Nations-mediated cease-fire.

On this date:

In 1692, the first execution resulting from the Salem witch trials in Massachusetts took place as Bridget Bishop was hanged.

In 1907, eleven men in five cars set out from the French embassy in Beijing on a race to Paris. (Prince Scipione Borghese of Italy was the first to arrive in the French capital two months later.)

In 1935, Alcoholics Anonymous was founded in Akron, Ohio, by Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith and William Griffith Wilson.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed into law the Equal Pay Act of 1963, aimed at eliminating wage disparities based on gender.

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In 1971, President Richard M. Nixon lifted a two-decades-old trade embargo on China.

In 1977, James Earl Ray, the convicted assassin of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., escaped from Brushy Mountain State Prison in Tennessee with six others; he was recaptured June 13.

In 1978, Affirmed, ridden by Steve Cauthen, won the 110th Belmont Stakes to claim horse racing's 11th Triple Crown.

In 1991, 11-year-old Jaycee Dugard of South Lake Tahoe, California, was abducted by Phillip and Nancy Garrido; Jaycee was held by the couple for 18 years before she was found by authorities.

In 2009, James von Brunn, an 88-year-old white supremacist, opened fire in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., killing security guard Stephen T. Johns. (Von Brunn died at a North Carolina hospital in January 2010 while awaiting trial.) Donald Trump fired Miss California USA Carrie Prejean, who'd sparked controversy when she said gays shouldn't be allowed to marry.

In 2013, jury selection began in Sanford, Florida, in the trial of neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman, charged with second-degree murder in the fatal shooting of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. (Zimmerman was acquitted.)

In 2016, Muhammad Ali was laid to rest in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, after an all-day send-off. "Mr. Hockey" Gordie Howe, who set scoring records that stood for decades, died in Sylvania, Ohio, at 88.

In 2020, protesters pulled down a century-old statue of Confederate President Jefferson Davis in Richmond, Virginia, the former capital of the Confederacy. NASCAR announced that it was banning the Confederate flag at all of its races and venues; the flag had been a common sight at those events for more than 70 years.

Ten years ago: Parts of northern Colorado and southern New Mexico battled wildfires that were spreading rapidly through mountainous forest land, forcing hundreds of evacuations. Shanshan Feng won the LPGA Championship to become the first Chinese player to win an LPGA Tour title and a major event, closing with a 5-under 67 for a two-stroke victory at Locust Hill Country Club in Pittsford, New York. The bittersweet "Once" won eight Tony Awards, including best musical; "Clybourne Park" won best play.

Five years ago: British Prime Minister Theresa May struck a deal in principle with Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party to prop up the Conservative government, which had been stripped of its majority in a disastrous election. Unseeded Jelena Ostapenko of Latvia stunned No. 3 Simona Halep 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 in the French Open final for the first title of her career.

One year ago: Republican lawmakers voted with majority Democrats in the Oregon House of Representatives to expel a Republican member, Mike Nearman, who had let violent, far-right protesters into the state Capitol in December 2020. The wife of Mexican drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman pleaded guilty in Washington to charges that she helped her husband run his multibillion-dollar criminal empire. (Emma Coronel Aispuro would be sentenced to three years in prison.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Alexandra Stewart is 83. Singer Shirley Alston Reeves (The Shirelles) is 81. Actor Jurgen Prochnow is 81. Media commentator Jeff Greenfield is 79. Actor Frankie Faison is 73. Football Hall of Famer Dan Fouts is 71. Country singer-songwriter Thom Schuyler is 70. Former Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C., is 69. Actor Andrew Stevens is 67. Singer Barrington Henderson is 66. Rock musician Kim Deal is 61. Singer Maxi Priest is 61. Actor Gina Gershon is 60. Actor Jeanne Tripplehorn is 59. Rock musician Jimmy Chamberlin is 58. Actor Ben Daniels is 58. Actor Kate Flannery is 58. Model-actor Elizabeth Hurley is 57. Rock musician Joey Santiago is 57. Actor Doug McKeon is 56. Rock musician Emma Anderson is 55. Country musician Brian Hofeldt (The Derailers) is 55. Rapper The D.O.C. is 54. Rock singer Mike Doughty is 52. R&B singer Faith Evans is 49. Actor Hugh Dancy is 47. R&B singer Lemisha Grinstead (702) is 44. Actor DJ Qualls is 44. Actor Shane West is 44. Country singer Lee Brice is 43. Singer Hoku is 41. Actor Leelee Sobieski is 40. Olympic gold medal figure skater Tara Lipinski is 40. Americana musician Bridget Kearney (Lake Street Dive) is 37. Actor Titus Makin is 33. Actor Tristin Mays is 32. Sasha Obama is 21. Actor Eden McCoy is 19.