

Groton Daily Independent

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June 27

Senior Menu: Chicken Alfredo, broccoli, spinach salad, Mandarin oranges, bread stick.

Noon.: Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, potluck dinner

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

5:30 p.m.: U10 at Webster, DH (R/B)

6 p.m.: U8 at Webster, DH (R/W)

6 p.m.: U10 SB hosts Britton, DH

6 p.m.: U8 SB hosts Britton, DH

5:30 p.m.: Jr. Legion at Milbank, DH

June 28

Elementary Library Open 9-11 (Reading time 10 a.m.)

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes, stewed tomatoes, apricots, whole wheat bread.

5:30 p.m.: Legion at Sisseton, DH

5:30 p.m.: U12 hosts Borge, Nelson Field, DH

6:30 p.m.: U10 hosts Borge, Falk Field, 1 game (R/W)

5:30 p.m.: U8 hosts Borge, Falk Field, 1 game (B/W)

6 p.m.: U12 SB at Faulkton, DH



-Jim Rohn

June 29

Senior Menu: Teriyaki chicken, almond rice with peas, pineapple strawberry ambrosia, orange sherbet, dinner roll.

10 a.m.: Little Free Library reading time (south Methodist Church)

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

5:30 p.m.: Jr. Teeners host Clark, 1 game

7:30 p.m.: U12 hosts Claremont, Falk Field, 1 game

7:30 p.m.: U10 hosts Claremont, Falk Field, 1 game (B/W)

5:30 p.m.: T-Ball Black hosts Claremont

June 30

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

10 a.m.: Reading Time at Wage Memorial Library

5:30 p.m.: Legion at Redfield, DH

5:30 p.m.: Jr. Teeners at Webster, DH

Groton Daily Independent
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Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

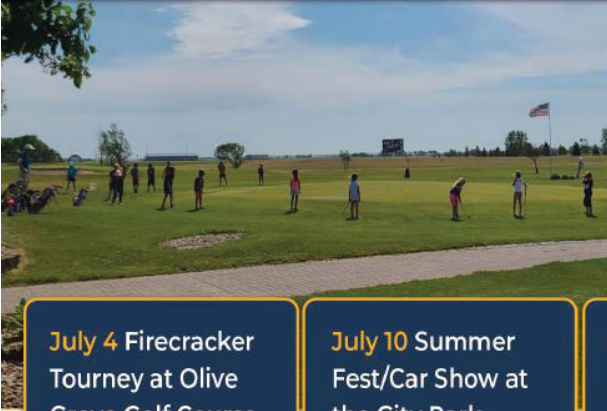
OPEN: **Recycling Trailer in Groton**
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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GROTON'S UPCOMING EVENTS



July 4 Firecracker
Tourney at Olive
Grove Golf Course

July 10 Summer
Fest/Car Show at
the City Park

July 21 Pro Am Golf
Tourney at Olive
Grove Golf Course

August 5 Wine on
Nine at Olive Grove
Golf Course

September 10
Fall Citywide
Rummage Sale

COME SPEND A WEEKEND IN GROTON!

- 5 camping spots with full-service hookups
- play centers and permanent corn hole boards
- swimming pool with slide and diving board
- 3 diamond baseball complex
- bowling alley
- 9-hole golf course



120 N Main St., Groton, SD 57445

605-397-8422

GrotonChamber.com

Inflammation and the Immune System



Jennifer May, MD

Many of my patients will say "Doctor, I am so inflamed". The use of the word inflammation is commonplace as we search the market for anti-inflammatory diets or self-help books on inflammation. The inflammatory response created by the immune system contributes to healing, but when left unchecked can contribute to chronic disease, allergy, and non-specific symptoms such as achy joints, fatigue, and malaise.

The immune system has two main parts. The first of these is the innate immune system which is the body's first line of defense. The innate immune system acts as a barrier that prevents harmful materials from entering the body and responds quickly when needed. The second part is the adaptive immune system. This system is more specialized and takes over if the innate immune system is unsuccessful. The adaptive immune system responds slower than the innate immune system but more accurately.

So, how can we make our immune system healthier? Here are four areas that one can focus on to improve immune health: quality rest, eating well, exercising, and managing stress.

Lack of sleep weakens the immune system and makes it easier to become ill. This means your colds last longer and you may get them more often. Researchers recommend that adults get 7-8 hours of good sleep each night, while teens need about 10 hours.

Physicians often propose anti-inflammatory diets for people with chronic disease, inflammatory conditions, and food sensitivities. No one diet fits all, but diets that avoid inflammatory foods have proven beneficial. Dietary recommendations include avoiding processed food, meaning, things that come in a box or a bag. Focus on whole foods, such as apples, brown rice, nuts, seeds, and legumes. A good diet for inflammation and cholesterol is the Mediterranean diet. It increases omega-3 fatty acids which help reduce inflammation and hopefully lower those cholesterol numbers.

Exercise also helps our immune system. Getting at least 20-30 minutes of moderate to high level exercise a day boosts antibody response which helps stave off illness. In addition, exercise will also improve your mood. Managing stress is difficult for everyone. However, unplugging and practicing mindfulness are good coping strategies that can help you decompress after a long day.

We are often overwhelmed by stressful, busy lives. Inflammation and immune system issues cannot be fixed with a pill or a bit of advice. It requires a personal commitment to assess your own habits. Then consider what changes are possible for you. Working on one or all the aforementioned areas is worth a try. The power to improve your health and immunity lies within.

Jennifer May, M.D. practices rheumatology in Rapid City, South Dakota. She is a contributing Prairie Doc® columnist and guest host this week on the Prairie Doc® encore television show. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit www.prairiedoc.org and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

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Weekly Vikings Roundup By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

As we continue the boring part of the offseason for the Vikings, we carry on with our analysis of the different position groups for the Vikings. We'll look at any competition that might occur, as well as make our predictions for who will make the final 53-man roster. This week we will look at the most polarizing position group for the Vikings over the last 10 years: the offensive line.

Offensive Line:

Lock to make the 53-man roster: Christian Darrisaw, Ezra Cleveland, Garrett Bradbury, Brian O'Neill, Jesse Davis, Chris Reed, Oli Udoh, and Ed Ingram

The biggest question mark heading into every season for the Vikings seems to always be, "how will the offensive line be?" Some years have been alright, some years have been bad, and some years have been horrific. This season, I have a more optimistic outlook on the offensive line.

To begin with, the Vikings have what appears to be two very good offensive tackles in Christian Darrisaw and Brian O'Neill, and a solid left guard in Ezra Cleveland. O'Neill, who made his first pro bowl last season, has been a staple for this offensive line since midway through his rookie year. Darrisaw, who although had his rookie struggles at times, is believed by many experts as a player who will develop into a very good left tackle in this league. And Cleveland has improved each year at the guard position for the Vikings, despite coming into the NFL as an offensive tackle prospect.

When the Vikings declined Garrett Bradbury's fifth-year option back in May, many believed that this was a sign that the Vikings were officially done with him as their starting center. Although the future of Bradbury with the Vikings might be bleak, all indications this offseason have been that Bradbury will be the starting center for the 2022 season.

The biggest question mark for the Vikings' offensive line is the right guard position. There will likely be a three-way race between Jesse Davis, Chris Reed, and rookie Ed Ingram for that position at training camp. It appears that Jesse Davis is the current leader in the clubhouse, but you never know with Ed Ingram. NFL teams sometimes will be quick to start a player when they just spent a first or second-round pick on the player.

The last offensive lineman that seems to be guaranteed to make the final roster is Oli Udoh. Last season, Udoh struggled at right guard and became somewhat of the glaring problem for the offensive line struggles. This season, Udoh has moved back to playing offensive tackle, which might be a more comfortable position for him. He will likely be the swing backup for both Darrisaw and O'Neill.

Players competing for the final spot on the offensive line: Austin Schlottmann, Vederian Lowe, Blake Brandel, and Wyatt Davis

The biggest surprise name on this list is Wyatt Davis. Davis was a third-round pick in 2021 and expected by many to be a future starting guard for the Vikings. Instead, he came into the 2021 season out of shape, saw zero playing time, and is now threatened with the possibility of being cut only two years into his career. Given that the new Vikings' regime has no ties to Davis, he is going to have to perform well in training camp if he wants to make the Vikings' final roster.

For the other three, Schlottmann has the best chance to make the Vikings' final roster simply because of his experience at the center position. If he were to make the team, he would be the only true center that could back up Bradbury.

Likely to be cut or placed on the practice squad: Josh Sokol, Kyle Hinton, and Timon Parris

53-man roster predictions:

Jack Kolsrud's prediction

Starting Lineup: Christian Darrisaw, Ezra Cleveland, Garrett Bradbury, Jesse Davis, Brian O'Neill

Backups: Oli Udoh, Ed Ingram, Chris Reed, Wyatt Davis

Duane Kolsrud's prediction

Starting Lineup: Christian Darrisaw, Ezra Cleveland, Garrett Bradbury, Jesse Davis, Brian O'Neill

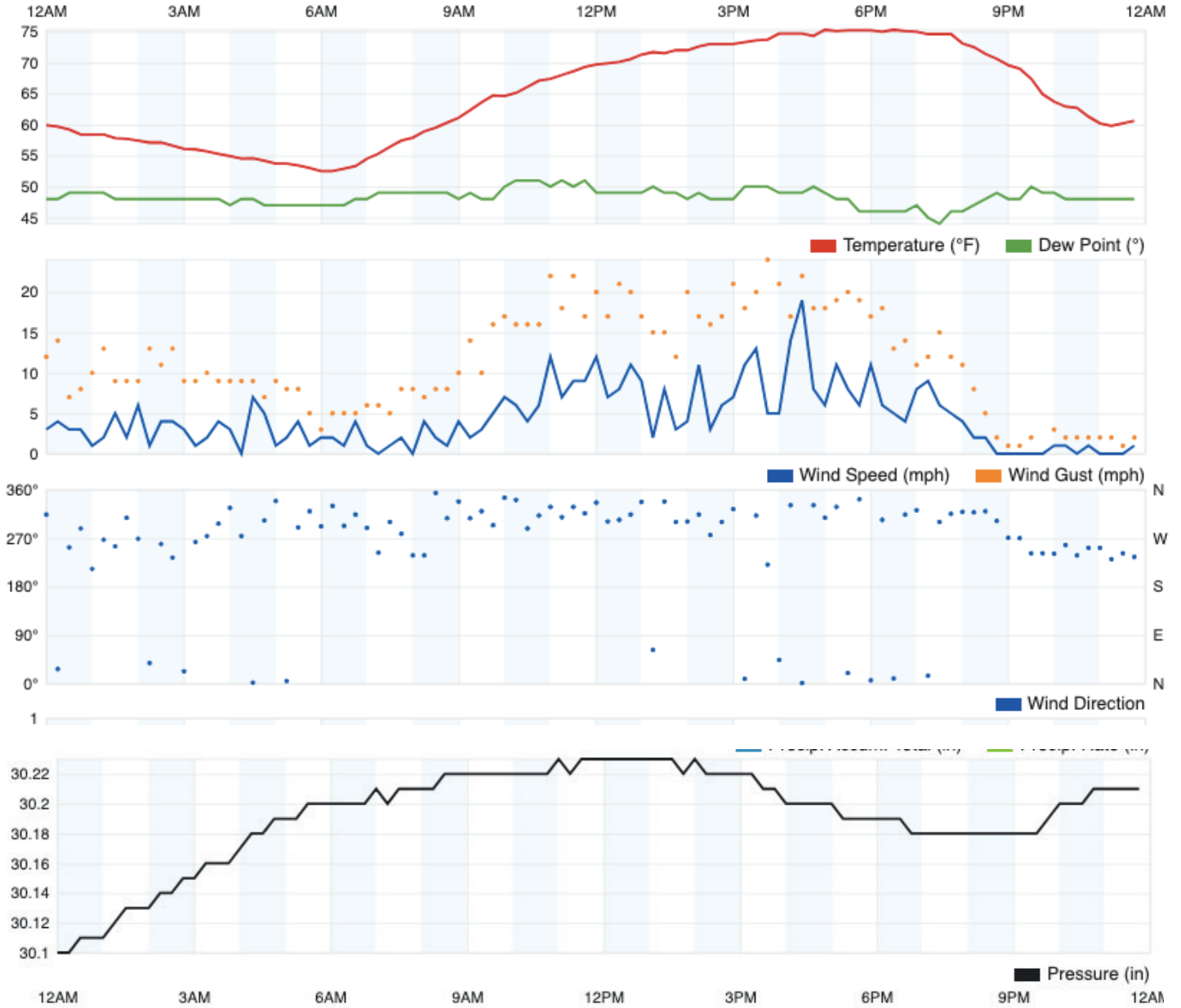
Backups: Oli Udoh, Ed Ingram, Chris Reed, Wyatt Davis, Riley Reiff*

*Dad wants the Vikings to bring back former Iowa Hawkeye, Riley Reiff, despite zero evidence the Vikings are interested.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 85 °F

Tonight



Chance
T-storms

Low: 58 °F

Tuesday



Sunny

High: 84 °F

Tuesday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 61 °F

Wednesday



Hot and
Breezy

High: 99 °F

Early Week Forecast

Today:



Highs: 80-88°

Tonight:



Lows: 55-62°

Tuesday:



Highs: 80-89°



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Dry weather continues today with slight/chances of showers and thunderstorms this evening through the overnight hours. Severe weather potential is limited, however, some of these storms could produce gusty winds at times. High temperatures through Tuesday will range in the 80s with quite the warmup on Wednesday. More chances of showers and thunderstorms return late Wednesday into early Thursday.

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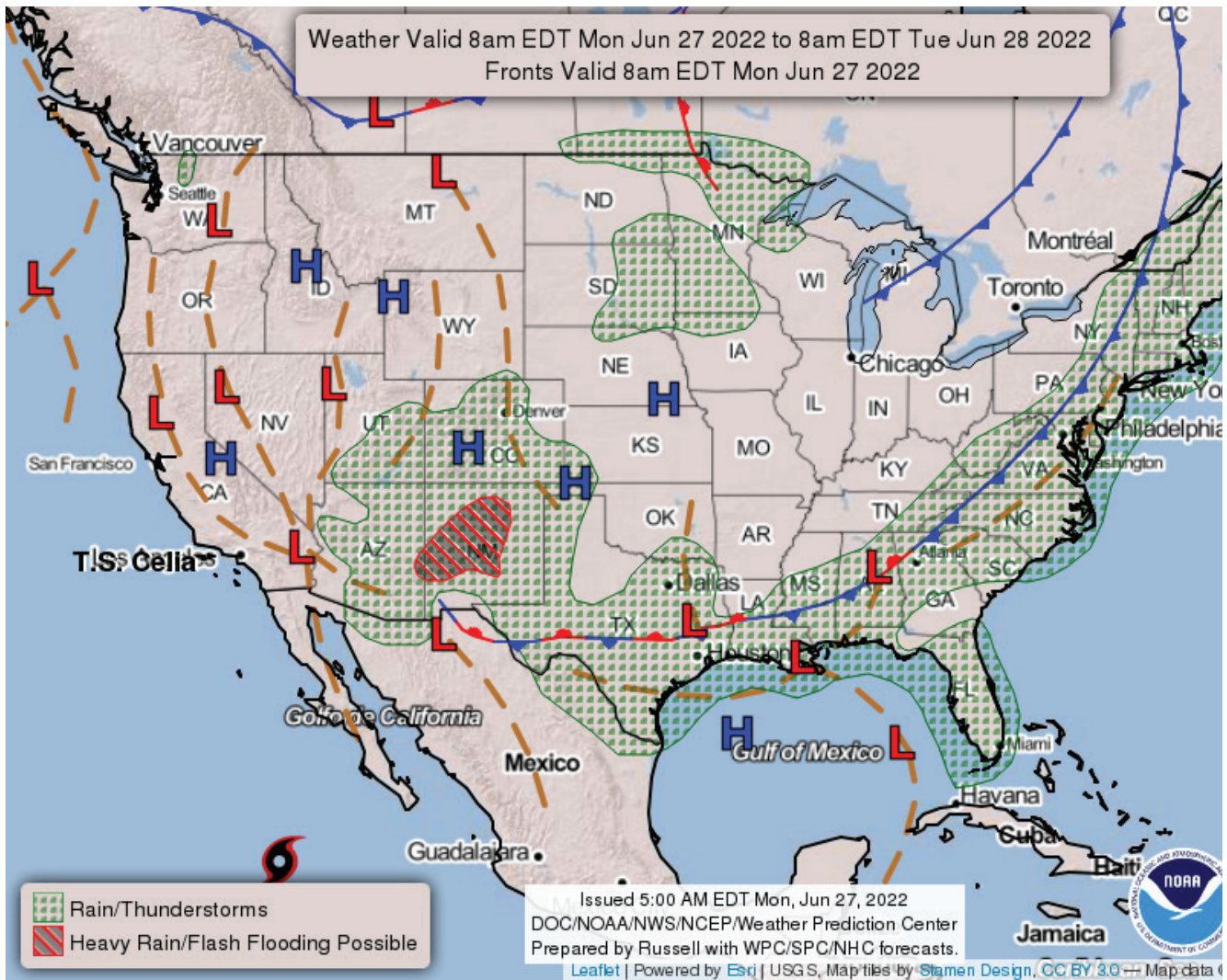
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 76 °F at 5:35 PM
Low Temp: 52 °F at 6:06 AM
Wind: 24 mph at 3:37 PM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 42 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1936
Record Low: 42 in 2017
Average High: 83°F
Average Low: 58°F
Average Precip in June.: 3.37
Precip to date in June.: 0.30
Average Precip to date: 10.62
Precip Year to Date: 11.46
Sunset Tonight: 9:26:54 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:44:38 AM



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Today in Weather History

June 27, 1894: Three people were injured as a tornado destroyed a home 5 miles north of Houghton in Brown County. Lumber on a wagon was scattered for over a mile. This tornado was estimated to be an F2. Also, a second F2 tornado formed south of Aberdeen and moved northeast and went near Randolph, to beyond Bath. Several barns and two homes were destroyed along the narrow path. Three other small funnels were seen to touch down. Another tornado with estimated F2 strength moved ENE from northeast of St. Lawrence to Bonilla and Hitchcock. At least one home was destroyed. One person was killed in the destruction of her home, north of Wessington. An estimated F2 tornado hit 2 miles south of Henry. At least two small houses were blown away. There was another possible tornado 12 miles north of Henry. Numerous tornadoes continued into Minnesota.

June 27, 1928: A long-lived estimated F2 tornado moved southeast from 7 miles west of Faulkton, passing north and east of Orient. Buildings were damaged on nine farms. One home near Orient was riddled with timbers from a nearby grain elevator. This tornado was estimated to travel a distance of 40 miles.

1901 - There was a rain of fish from the sky at Tiller's Ferry. Hundreds of fish were swimming between cotton rows after a heavy shower. (David Ludlum)

1915 - The temperature at Fort Yukon AK soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1957 - Hurricane Audrey smashed ashore at Cameron, LA, drowning 390 persons in the storm tide, and causing 150 million dollars damage in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Audrey left only a brick courthouse and a cement-block icehouse standing at Cameron, and when the waters settled in the town of Crede, only four buildings remained. The powerful winds of Audrey tossed a fishing boat weighing 78 tons onto an off-shore drilling platform. Winds along the coast gusted to 105 mph, and oil rigs off the Louisiana coast reported wind gusts to 180 mph. A storm surge greater than twelve feet inundated the Louisiana coast as much as 25 miles inland. It was the deadliest June hurricane of record for the U.S. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms moving out of Nebraska produced severe weather in north central Kansas after midnight. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph damaged more than fifty camping trailers at the state park campground at Lake Waconda injuring sixteen persons. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Beloit and Sylvan Grove. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - The afternoon high of 107 degrees at Bismarck, ND, was a record for the month of June, and Pensacola, FL, equalled their June record with a reading of 101 degrees. Temperatures in the Great Lakes Region and the Ohio Valley dipped into the 40s. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Ohio Valley to western New England. Thunderstorm spawned six tornadoes, and there were 98 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Tropical Storm Allison spawned six tornadoes in Louisiana, injuring two persons at Hackberry. Fort Polk LA was drenched with 10.09 inches of rain in 36 hours, and 12.87 inches was reported at the Gorum Fire Tower in northern Louisiana. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1995: The Madison County Flood on June 27, 1995, was the worst flash floods Virginia had seen since the remnants of Camille dropped up to 30 inches of rain one night in Nelson County in August 1969. The Nelson County flood ranked as one of the nation's worst flash floods of this century and resulted in the deaths of 117 people. The Madison County flood killed one person.

2011: Polar temperatures and unusual snowfall chill several cities in Brazil's southern states. Four cities in Santa Catarina state are blanketed in snow. The town of Urubici reported a temperature of 23.9 degrees Fahrenheit with a wind chill of 16.6 degrees below zero. In Florianopolis, the capital of Santa Catarina and a renowned sea resort, thermometers registered 21.2 degrees.

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Always Room For More

Whenever I hear the word "gain," I think it is related to "weight," especially my weight. There are very few mornings that I do not step on the scale to get my "daily report" on what I ate yesterday. Most nutritionists do not recommend such a program. But, my hope to see the arrow pointing downward remains steadfast.

A gain or increase can be good or bad, exciting or depressing, encouraging or discouraging, depending on what the gain refers to. If we depend on the stock market, a gain can be a good thing. But, if we see a gain in our debt, it can be disturbing. Our gains or losses, for the most part, are usually in the physical or material realm.

Solomon speaks of a particular type of "gain" - of being able to achieve some "things" that will last as long as we live. These "gains," these valuable lessons are available and offered to us in Proverbs. Our "attaining" more of God's wisdom, or "life gains" is very important for all Christians because we are constantly challenged to "grow" throughout Scripture, and Proverbs provides this path for us if we want to grow.

The word used for "wisdom" in this verse also means skillfulness - applying knowledge that comes from God to our lives every day. If we do so, we will "do the right things the right way."

When we go one step further, we come to the fact that it is possible to develop decision-making skills that are God-honoring and enable us to establish life-principals that will bring us success. God's proverbs can guide us through life, help us in our relationships with others, lead to good practices in business, enrich our homes, and bless God and others.

Prayer: Lord, You've left us "no excuses" on how we are to live life if we are Christians. Thanks for the directions on how to live a successful life! Now, give us courage! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Bible Verse: For gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight. Proverbs 1:2

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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
-6/20/2022 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
10/01/2022 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/07/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/12/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course
Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm
01/29/2023 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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News from the Associated Press

SD gov: Bar abortion pills, but don't punish women for them

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — South Dakota's Republican governor pledged on Sunday to bar mail-order abortion pills but said women should not face prosecution for seeking them.

In apparent defiance of legal guidance by the Justice Department after the Supreme Court last week stripped away women's constitutional protections for abortion, Kristi Noem indicated in national television interviews that she would put in place a plan approved by state lawmakers to restrict the pills. The majority ruling Friday by the court's conservative justices triggered abortion bans in South Dakota and elsewhere.

But Noem said doctors, not their patients, would likely be prosecuted for knowing violations of what would be one of the strictest laws on abortion pills in the United States.

"I don't believe women should ever be prosecuted," she said. "I don't believe there should be any punishment for women, ever, that are in a crisis situation or have an unplanned pregnancy."

At issue is mail-order or so-called telemedicine abortion pills, which have been on the rise in the country since 2000 when the Food and Drug Administration approved mifepristone — the main drug used in medication abortions.

More than 90% of abortions take place in the first 13 weeks of pregnancy, and more than half are now done with pills, not surgery, according to data compiled by the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights. Abortion pills are expected to become in higher demand as over half the states are likely to move to ban abortions following the Supreme Court's decision.

Noem, a strong opponent of abortion rights who faces reelection in November and is mentioned as a possible 2024 presidential contender, cast the distribution of abortion pills as unsafe and has called a special session to craft new laws.

"These are very dangerous medical procedures," said Noem, referring to abortion pills. "We don't believe it should be available, because it is a dangerous situation for those individuals without being medically supervised by a physician."

In a state where Republicans hold super-majorities in both statehouse chambers, South Dakota lawmakers have been floating proposals that also would make it more difficult for women to seek an abortion out of state. South Dakota voters rejected outright bans in 2006 and 2008, and abortion rights advocates are preparing for a similar referendum on abortion access.

In a statement Friday, President Joe Biden's attorney general, Merrick Garland, said the Justice Department will protect abortion providers and those seeking abortions in states where it is legal and will "work with other arms of the federal government that seek to use their lawful authorities to protect and preserve access to reproductive care."

"In particular, the FDA has approved the use of the medication mifepristone," he added. "States may not ban mifepristone based on disagreement with the FDA's expert judgment about its safety and efficacy."

The South Dakota law, passed in March, requires women seeking an abortion to make three separate trips to a doctor in order to take abortion pills and makes it clear that women in the state cannot get the pills through a telemedicine consultation. The law has been on hold after a federal judge in February ruled it likely "imposes an undue burden on a person's right to seek an abortion."

Two drugs are required. The first, mifepristone, blocks a hormone needed to maintain a pregnancy. A second drug, misoprostol, taken one to two days later, empties the uterus. Both drugs are available as generics and are also used to treat other conditions.

The FDA last year lifted a long-standing requirement that women pick up abortion pills in person. Federal regulations now also allow mail delivery nationwide. Even so, roughly 19 states have passed laws requiring a medical clinician to be physically present when abortion pills are administered to a patient.

South Dakota is among them, joining several states, including Texas, Kentucky, Arkansas, Ohio, Tennessee

and Oklahoma, where Republicans have moved to further restrict access to abortion pills in recent months.

One portion of the South Dakota law, which will take effect in July, contains a section that does not hinge on the federal courts: increasing to a felony the punishment for anyone who prescribes medication for an abortion without a license from the South Dakota Board of Medical and Osteopathic Examiners.

A broader court decision is pending in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling.

Noem spoke on ABC's "This Week" and CBS' "Face the Nation."

Will he go or not? Hong Kong awaits word on Xi Jinping visit

HONG KONG (AP) — Will he go or not?

Chinese President Xi Jinping kept Hong Kong guessing on Monday about his possible appearance at the 25th anniversary of the former British colony's return to Chinese rule.

The government has yet to say whether he will be physically present for the events, which include the inauguration of the city's new chief executive.

The event is hugely symbolic for Xi, who wants to be seen as propelling a "national rejuvenation" as he prepares for an expected third five-year term as head of the ruling Communist Party. Part of that is erasing the legacy of colonialism and what China regards as unequal treaties granting rights to foreign nations imposed during the waning years of the Qing Dynasty, which ended in 1911.

Asked about Xi's attendance plans at a daily briefing Monday, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said he had no additional information and that the reporter should ask the "department responsible," without giving further details.

Xi hasn't left mainland China since the start of the coronavirus pandemic 2 1/2 years ago, and his exchanges with foreign leaders have been mainly limited to video calls.

Hong Kong, meanwhile, faces a renewed rise in COVID-19 infections after an avalanche of cases this year threatened to overwhelm its hospitals.

China's official media have said only that Xi will participate in the July 1 commemorations, without describing any travel plans.

Xi gave a speech in Hong Kong for the 20th anniversary of its turnover in which he pledged the central government would take a hard line against any challenges to its authority.

Pro-democracy protests in 2019 were followed by a sweeping crackdown that has effectively ended political opposition in the city. As with most matters concerning the ruling Communist Party, the travel plans of top leaders are generally kept secret.

China has stuck to its "zero-COVID" strategy of eliminating outbreaks by mass testing the population and locking down buildings, neighborhoods or whole cities for weeks or even months.

While the Hong Kong commemorations are purely symbolic, they will include the installation Friday of former security chief John Lee, who led a harsh crackdown on the 2019 pro-democracy protests, as the city's chief executive.

After the protests, Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law that has jailed, silenced or exiled Hong Kong political activists; curtailed freedoms of expression and assembly; and removed or disqualified people from public office if they were deemed unpatriotic.

Xi's 2017 speech at the 20th anniversary marked a backing away from the "one country, two systems" framework under which Hong Kong was to retain its civil, political and economic liberties for 50 years, until 2047. China has declared the Sino-British Joint Declaration that laid the legal framework for Chinese rule as no longer relevant and has refused to acknowledge Hong Kong's former status as a British Crown Colony, saying it never accepted the treaties that were signed between the United Kingdom and the Qing empire.

Hong Kong political analyst Sonny Lo said he expects Xi to be present for Friday's ceremony, but that he will likely return at the end of the day to Shenzhen just across the border in mainland China for security reasons.

Xi's presence will demonstrate Beijing's confidence in its policies toward Hong Kong, including in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, Lo said.

Xi's government has emphasized the city's integration into the "Greater Bay Area" encompassing much of mainland China's manufacturing and technological bases in Guangdong province, and his message will likely focus in that direction rather than looking at past events, Lo said.

Having dealt with political opposition in Hong Kong, Xi will turn next to the task of unifying with the self-governing island of Taiwan, a close U.S.-ally which China claims as its own territory, Lo said. The sides split amid civil war in 1949 and China routinely flies military aircraft into the island's air defense identification zone to pressure it against taking steps toward formal independence.

China says it wants to bring the sides together through peaceful means, but does not rule out the use of force to achieve that goal.

"So half way to 2047, this visit is particularly significant," Lo said. "The positive overtone will be extremely important because we can expect Beijing to turn to Taiwan, to appeal for some kind of dialogue."

To combat coral bleaching, Kenya turns to reef nurseries

By WANJOHI KABUKURU Associated Press

WASINI, Kenya (AP) — Minutes away from the Kenyan mainland, the densely forested island of Wasini is one of several starting lines for coral reef restoration efforts in the western Indian Ocean. On a rare calm day during the normally turbulent monsoon season, four divers, carrying measuring equipment, shoes and toothbrushes descended in turns to the sea-bed reef restoration site on the Shimoni channel.

"We use coral fragments collected from wild populations to establish the nurseries," said diver Yatin Patel, before slipping into the turquoise waters. "After growing, they're taken to the coral garden." Patel and his team, who are part of the REEFolution foundation, clean the coral nurseries and measure the sizes of the growing corals, which are supported by plastic pipes and pyramid structured steel nets.

The marine area, jointly managed by the foundation and the island's community, has been planting over 8,000 corals a year since 2012 and placed about 800 artificial reef structures in the channel in a bid to restore Wasini's coral gardens. But the project is threatened by growing costs and a planned fishing port in Shimoni, a mere 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) away on Kenya's coast.

The United Nation's Ocean Conference, which begins Monday in Lisbon, Portugal, is set to put protection and restoration efforts for coral reefs back on the agenda. Small island states and coastal African nations will be following up on access to "blue financing" mechanisms, including a \$625 billion coral reef funding scheme aimed at protection and restoration efforts as well as cushioning communities who rely on oceans for their livelihoods. Previous commitments to reef restoration by the European Union and coral reef insurance will also be discussed.

The threat of waning fish populations due to dying corals adds to the woes of east African communities, millions of whom are already facing a worsening food crisis because of a prolonged drought in the east and Horn of Africa, as well as ripple effects from the war in Ukraine. In early March, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a dire warning on the threats faced by African coastal and island nations and a complete collapse of corals in the western Indian Ocean.

The Wasini Island coral initiative is one among many dotted across the Africa's western shores, after a series of severe coral bleaching bouts due to warming ocean waters. After a particularly devastating year in 1998, due in large part to the natural weather phenomenon El Nino, huge stretches of the Indian Ocean's corals — from Somalia to the South Africa — were badly affected.

Coral bleaching occurs when extreme temperatures and sun glare simultaneously trigger corals to flush out algae, causing them to turn white. Corals can survive bleaching events, but are under greater stress and can't effectively support marine life, threatening the populations that depend on them.

Tim McClanahan, a senior conservation zoologist at the Wildlife Conservation Society said that 1998 wasn't the first such event — there was one in 1983, and since then there have been three in the past two decades, in 2005, 2010 and 2016. The prevalence of mass coral bleaching along the western Indian Ocean has worried scientists for decades and intensive studies to understand and map out interventions to curb the phenomena are ongoing. Many of these bleaching events are directly linked to climate change,

McClanahan said.

The Wasini coral restoration project followed in the footsteps of Nature Seychelles, a conservation non-governmental organization in the Seychelles archipelago which initiated the western Indian Ocean's first coral replanting exercise in the same year and is still ongoing over a decade later. A similar project was undertaken in Tanzania.

But Wasini's corals in particular are in bad shape, said McClanahan.

"There are some areas in Tanzania, Mozambique and Madagascar that are in better condition. We are working to protect those reefs," he said. He argued that protection programs are much more successful than those that aim to restore badly bleached corals.

"We found it expensive and also over the long term many of the corals we planted died," he said of the Wildlife Conservation Society's coral restoration attempts. "The restoration efforts will not solve this big scale problem."

The Wasini reefs restoration project also faces the threat of destruction and pollution from the proposed construction of a deep sea fisheries port in Shimoni. The port is one of the key pledges that the Kenyan government made at the first U.N. ocean summit in Nairobi in 2018 and will be reiterated during the follow-up summit in Lisbon on Monday.

According to the environmental impact assessment report obtained by The Associated Press, the construction of the port will undermine corals, fish and other marine organisms due to the massive plumes that will be generated through dredging.

Live updates | Germany: gas search not against climate goals

The Associated Press undefined

ELMAU, Germany (AP) — The Latest on the G-7 summit, the annual meeting of the leading democratic economies, which this year is being held in the Bavarian Alps in Germany; and on the summit of NATO leaders that will start on Tuesday in Madrid:

The German government insists its plans to tap new sources of natural gas don't undermine the country's ambitious climate goals.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is promoting the idea of a 'climate club' at a meeting Monday with fellow leaders from the Group of Seven major economies and key developing nations such as Indonesia, South Africa and Argentina.

Speaking ahead of the talks, Scholz told German public broadcaster ZDF that the club would bring together those countries "that are willing to become CO2-neutral very quickly by mid-century."

The idea, which is still being fleshed out, would see members set common standards for curbing greenhouse gas emissions and agree not to impose climate-related tariffs on each others' imports.

Scholz described his own country's target of reducing emissions to net zero by 2045 - the earliest of any major industrial nation - as "very ambitious." But his government has been criticized by climate campaigners for seeking new suppliers of natural gas to replace the shortfall from Russia.

Government spokesman Wolfgang Buechner said new energy agreements being forged with Senegal, which including developing a natural gas field, were "in accordance" with Germany's emissions targets and the 2015 Paris climate accord. But Buechner declined to comment on reports that Germany was pressing other nations to soften existing agreements on reducing fossil fuel investments, saying talks at the G-7 summit in the Alpine resort of Elmau were ongoing.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS:

- G-7 leaders to commit to Ukraine, US sending anti-air system
- Tale of 2 summits: 'America's back' to America's backsliding
- EXPLAINER: G7 provides forum for like-minded democracies

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

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German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has welcomed the leaders of five top emerging democratic economies and of major international organizations to the Group of Seven summit.

G-7 leaders plan to discuss a range of key issues with their guests, Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, and Presidents Macky Sall of Senegal, Joko Widodo of Indonesia, Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, and Alberto Fernández of Argentina. Those issues include climate change, energy, health and the COVID-19 pandemic, food security and gender equality.

They're being joined Monday by the heads of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization and others.

Indonesia this year holds the presidency of the larger Group of 20 of major economies, which also includes Russia and China. That group faces a potentially awkward summit in Bali in November, in light of the possibility that Russian President Vladimir Putin could attend.

Finnish President Sauli Niinisto says that he and the Swedish prime minister will meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the NATO secretary-general on the sidelines of this week's NATO summit in the Spanish capital.

Finland and Sweden have applied to join the 30-member alliance in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But NATO member Turkey has so far blocked their applications, citing what it considers to be the two countries' soft approach on organizations Ankara considers as terrorist, such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK.

Turkey is demanding that Sweden and Finland grant extradition requests for individuals it claims are PKK members or are linked to a failed 2016 coup. Ankara also wants assurances that restrictions on arms sales that both countries imposed over its 2019 military incursion into northern Syria will be lifted.

Turkey's presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin told broadcaster Haberturk TV that "our attendance at this summit does not mean we will take a step back from our position."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has joined the Group of Seven leaders by video link at their summit in the Bavarian Alps.

Zelenskyy could be seen on a television screen next to the round table where the leaders sat Monday at the secluded Schloss Elmau luxury hotel. His address wasn't being shown to the public.

The G-7 leaders are committing themselves to supporting Ukraine for the long haul at their summit, with both immediate help and long-term rebuilding on the agenda.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz says ahead of a session with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that the G-7 countries' policies on Ukraine are "very much aligned," and that they see the need to be both tough and cautious.

Scholz said after meeting Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Monday that "we are taking tough decisions, that we are also cautious, that we will help ... Ukraine as much as possible but that we also avoid that there will be a big conflict between Russia and NATO."

He added that "this is what is of essence -- to be tough and thinking about the necessities of the time we are living in."

The G-7 leaders are to confer by video link Monday morning with Zelenskyy.

The Group of Seven economic powers are set to announce an agreement to pursue a price cap on Russian oil, aiming to curb Moscow's energy revenues, a U.S. official said Monday. The move is part of a joint effort of support for Ukraine that includes raising tariffs on Russian goods and imposing new sanctions on hundreds of Russian officials and entities supporting the four month long war.

Leaders were finalizing the deal to seek a price cap during their three-day summit in the German Alps. The details of how a price cap would work, as well as its impact on the Russian economy, were to be resolved by the G-7 finance ministers in the coming weeks and months. The largest democratic economies will also commit to raising tariffs on Russian imports to their countries, with the U.S. announcing new

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tariffs on 570 categories of goods, as well as use of sanctions to target Russia's defense supply chains that support its effort to rearm during the war.

The senior administration official spoke on the condition of anonymity to preview the announcements from the G-7 leaders' summit, where they are set to confer by video link with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

— By Zeke Miller in Elmau, Germany

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz says the West has no intention to "torpedo" the Group of 20 — the group of major economies that also includes Russia.

This year's G-20 summit is due to take place in Indonesia in November. There are questions over whether Western leaders will sit down with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Scholz, who is hosting this week's summit of the smaller Group of Seven industrial powers, on Monday also is hosting leaders from five major emerging democratic economies — India, Indonesia, Senegal, South Africa and Argentina.

So far, they don't all see eye-to-eye with the G-7 nations on the war in Ukraine or sanctions. Scholz told Germany's ZDF television that "it's all the more important that we discuss (the matter) with each other."

Scholz told Germany's ZDF television: "We must not walk into the trap Putin sets of asserting that the world is divided into the global West — the G-7 and its friends in the north — and all the rest. That's not true. There are democracies all over the world and they have very similar perspectives."

Scholz didn't give an explicit commitment to turn up to the G-20 summit regardless of whether Putin attends, but stressed the group's importance.

He said: "There is a common conviction ... that we don't want to torpedo the G-20."

President Joe Biden is set to announce that the U.S. is providing an advanced surface-to-air missile system to Ukraine, as well as additional artillery support, according to a person familiar with the matter, in the latest assistance meant to help the country defend against Russia's four-month invasion.

The U.S. is purchasing NASAMS, a Norwegian-developed anti-aircraft system, to provide medium- to long-range defense, according to the person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. NASAMS is the same system used by the U.S. to protect the sensitive airspace around the White House and U.S. Capitol in Washington.

Additional aid includes more ammunition for Ukrainian artillery, as well as counter-battery radars, to support its efforts against the Russian assault in the Donbas, the person said.

The announcement comes as Biden is huddling with allies this week on supporting Ukraine in meetings at the Group of Seven advanced economies summit in Germany and NATO leaders' annual gathering in Madrid.

— By Zeke Miller in Elmau, Germany

One year ago, Joe Biden strode into his first Group of Seven summit as president and confidently told the closest U.S. allies that "America is Back."

Now, there are worries that America is backsliding. As Biden meets this week with the heads of G-7 leading democratic economies in the Bavarian Alps, he brings with him the baggage of domestic turmoil.

The U.S. is grappling with political unrest, shocking mass shootings and the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to end constitutional protections for abortion.

Biden says other world leaders at the summit haven't been asking him about the abortion ruling. But the domestic unrest is no doubt troubling to his European allies.

Leaders of the Group of Seven economic powers are set to commit themselves to the long haul in supporting Ukraine as they meet in the German Alps and confer by video link with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The G-7 leaders will begin Monday's session of their three-day summit with a focus on Ukraine. Later,

they will be joined by the leaders of five democratic emerging economies — India, Indonesia, South Africa, Senegal and Argentina — for a discussion on climate change, energy and other issues.

The war in Ukraine was already at the forefront of the G-7 leaders' minds as they opened their summit at the secluded Schloss Elmau luxury hotel on Sunday — just as Russian missiles hit the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, for the first time in weeks.

Tale of 2 summits: 'America's back' to America's backsliding

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

ELMAU, Germany (AP) — One year ago, Joe Biden strode into his first Group of Seven summit as president and confidently told the closest U.S. allies that "America is Back." Now, many of them are worrying that America is backsliding.

As Biden meets this week in the Bavarian Alps with the heads of G-7 leading democratic economies, he carries with him the domestic baggage of political unrest, shocking mass shootings and the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to end constitutional protections for abortion.

Biden's 2021 summit was meant as a palate cleanser to the "America First" ideology of his predecessor, President Donald Trump.

Embracing multilateralism and global partnerships and restoring faith in America's alliances — especially NATO's mutual self-defense pact — were top on his agenda. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said of Biden, "We're totally on the same page."

Biden's election was seen by most allies as an American reset, returning to norms honed over decades, with predictability and stability at the fore.

A year later, the reception for Biden remains warm and the public emphasis on America's global leadership remains upbeat — especially in the context of Biden rallying the world against Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But increasingly, that view is set against a backdrop of potential turmoil ahead.

"I think Europeans no doubt look at the U.S. domestic situation with a degree of dread," said Max Bergmann, director of the Europe Program at the private Center for Strategic and International Studies. He added: "It's sort of the best of times, the worst of times."

Biden's visit to Europe comes as a congressional committee investigates the attempted overthrow of the 2020 presidential election by Trump and his allies, whose party stands poised to make substantial inroads in the November midterm elections. The crisis of mass shootings and gun violence — uniquely American among similarly positioned nations — draws condemnation from horrified allies. And the high court decision that allows states to ban abortion sparked a fresh round of denunciations and worries from some of the United States' closest partners.

"Abortion is a fundamental right for all women," tweeted French President Emmanuel Macron. "It must be protected. I wish to express my solidarity with the women whose liberties are being undermined by the Supreme Court of the United States."

Biden told reporters Sunday evening that the subject of the abortion decision had not come up in his chats with world leaders.

"Not related to Ukraine or any of the issues discussed," he said, replying flatly "no" when asked if the matter was broached to him by another summit attendee.

Yet when the Supreme Court ruling came down Friday morning, Biden ended up being the third G-7 leader to offer reaction, with Canada's Justin Trudeau and Britain's Johnson quickly condemning the ruling even before Biden had delivered remarks at the White House.

"I've got to tell you I think it's a big step backwards," Johnson said Friday. "I've always believed in a woman's right to choose and I stick to that view and that's why the U.K. has the law that it does and we recently took steps to make sure those laws were enforced throughout the whole of the U.K."

Trudeau called the decision "horrific," adding: "No government, politician or man should tell a woman what she can and cannot do with her body." He said he couldn't "imagine the fear and anger" women in the U.S. must be experiencing in the wake of the ruling.

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And after 19 students and two teachers were killed at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, condolences flowed in from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, even as his own country's armed forces suffer many times that number in casualties due to Russia's aggression.

"The people of Ukraine share the pain of the relatives and friends of the victims and all Americans," he tweeted at the time.

Bergmann said that while European leaders might have varying opinions on the merits of the Roe v. Wade ruling, they have broad concern about the upheaval that the ruling could unleash.

"They saw the January 6th insurrection, they are very concerned about America's domestic stability and then here is a decision ... that clearly has the potential to upend and explode American politics and make America's political divides even deeper and that is something that's incredibly worrying," he said.

The Europeans, he added, look at U.S. domestic discord through the lens of their own security.

"The underlying concern is what's this going to mean for the United States as their security guarantor," he said. "Will America be stable enough to uphold that?"

Pressed on how the abortion decision would affect America's standing in the world, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre called the ruling an "extreme decision" that endangered same-sex marriage and access to contraception by married couples. But she said Biden's position globally was unchanged.

"Look, we've heard from a lot of the leaders already," she told reporters aboard Air Force One on the way to Germany. "I know some of them have put out statements — very vocal — about what they have seen from this decision," saying they were "offering support to the American people."

"I don't think this stops the work that the president is going to do or wants to do or looking to do with leaders," Jean-Pierre added.

Johnson, for his part, denied he harbored specific fears about America's overall path.

"Looking from the outside, it was pretty weird," he told CNN on Sunday when asked about the Jan. 6, 2021, attempt to overthrow the presidential election. "But I don't believe that American democracy is under serious threat, far from it. I continue to believe that America is the greatest global guarantor of democracy and freedom."

Most G-7 nations tend to be more liberal than the U.S. on a range of issues, and Trump's flip questioning of longstanding alliances rattled more than just heads of state and government.

Biden's "America is Back" messaging has faced renewed scrutiny from everyday citizens of allied countries.

"I think America is divided," said Gabriele Jocher, 59, a freelance social worker from Garmisch, Germany, just miles from the summit site. "I think there are really very good forces and people who really want to move forward like that but also very backwards. And that just makes me think, globally, what's going on there that just like two forces are clashing."

Christina Maurer, 59, a homemaker and nurse in the picturesque town, added: "Everything that Mr. Biden wants to change now, I don't know. Then another one will come, his name will be Trump or something similar and he will ruin everything again."

G-7 leaders confer with Zelenskyy, prep new aid for Ukraine

By ZEKE MILLER, DARLENE SUPERVILLE and GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

ELMAU, Germany (AP) — Leading economic powers conferred by video link with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Monday as they underscored their commitment to Ukraine for the long haul with plans to pursue a price cap on Russian oil, raise tariffs on Russian goods and impose other new sanctions.

In addition, the U.S. was preparing to announce the purchase of an advanced surface-to-air missile system for Kyiv to help Ukraine fight back against Vladimir Putin's aggression.

The new aid and efforts to exact punishment on Moscow from the Group of Seven leaders come as Zelenskyy has openly worried that the West has become fatigued by the cost of a war that is contributing to soaring energy costs and price hikes on essential goods around the globe.

Leaders were finalizing the deal to seek a price cap during their three-day G-7 summit in the German Alps. The details of how a price cap would work, as well as its impact on the Russian economy, were to be

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resolved by the G-7 finance ministers in the coming weeks and months, according to a senior administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to preview the announcements from the summit.

The largest democratic economies will also commit to raising tariffs on Russian imports to their countries, with the U.S. announcing new tariffs on 570 categories of goods, as well as use of sanctions to target Russia's defense supply chains that support its effort to rearm during the war.

Biden is expected to announce the U.S. is purchasing NASAMS, a Norwegian-developed anti-aircraft system, to provide medium- to long-range defense, according to the person familiar with the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. NASAMS is the same system used by the U.S. to protect the sensitive airspace around the White House and U.S. Capitol in Washington.

Additional aid includes more ammunition for Ukrainian artillery, as well as counter-battery radars, to support its efforts against the Russian assault in the Donbas, the person said. Biden is also announcing a \$7.5 billion commitment to help Ukraine's government meet its expenses, as part of a drawdown of the \$40 billion military and economic aid package he signed into law last month.

The G-7 leaders began Monday's session of their three-day summit with a focus on Ukraine. Later, they will be joined by the leaders of five democratic emerging economies — India, Indonesia, South Africa, Senegal and Argentina — for a discussion on climate change, energy and other issues.

The war in Ukraine was already at the forefront of the G-7 leaders' minds as they opened their summit at the secluded Schloss Elmau luxury hotel on Sunday — just as Russian missiles hit the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv for the first time in weeks.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the summit's host, said that the G-7 countries' policies on Ukraine are "very much aligned," and that they see the need to be both tough and cautious.

Scholz said after meeting Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Monday that "we are taking tough decisions, that we are also cautious, that we will help ... Ukraine as much as possible but that we also avoid that there will be a big conflict between Russia and NATO."

He added that "this is what is of essence -- to be tough and thinking about the necessities of the time we are living in."

Biden said Sunday that Russian President Vladimir Putin "has been counting on, from the beginning, that somehow NATO and the G-7 would splinter, but we haven't and we're not going to."

Biden hopes to use his trip to Europe to proclaim the unity of the coalition pressing to punish Russia for its invasion of Ukraine as much as he is urging allies to do even more — seeking to counter doubts about its endurance as the war grinds into its fifth month.

The summit's host, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, said last week that he wants to discuss the outlines of a "Marshall plan for Ukraine" with his G-7 counterparts, referring to the U.S.-sponsored plan that helped revive European economies after World War II.

With the war still in progress and destruction mounting by the day, it's unlikely to be a detailed plan at this stage. Scholz has said that "rebuilding Ukraine will be a task for generations."

The G-7 already is committed to help finance Ukraine's immediate needs. Finance ministers from the group last month agreed to provide \$19.8 billion in economic aid to help Kyiv keep basic services functioning and prevent tight finances from hindering its defense against Russian forces.

A senior U.S. administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations between the G-7 leaders, said the U.S. and Europe are aligned in their aims for a negotiated end to the conflict, even if their roles sometimes appear different.

Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron have tried to facilitate that through active conversations with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Zelenskyy, while also supplying weapons to Ukraine. The U.S. has largely cut off significant talks with Russia and aims to bolster Ukraine's battlefield capacity as much as possible so that its eventual position at the negotiating table is stronger.

The endurance of the tough sanctions on Russia may ultimately come down to whether the G-7 and other leaders can identify ways to ease energy supply issues and skyrocketing prices once winter hits, as they seek to disengage from Russian sources of fuel.

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The G-7 meeting is sandwiched between a European Union summit last week that agreed to give Ukraine the status of a candidate for membership — kicking off a process that is likely to take years with no guarantee of success — and a summit of NATO leaders starting Tuesday in Madrid.

The leaders of the G-7 — the U.S., Germany, France, the U.K., Italy, Canada and Japan — may hope to make some progress in bringing their counterparts from their five guest countries closer to Western views on sanctions against Russia.

Scholz also is eager to win over such countries for his idea of a “climate club” for nations that want to speed ahead when it comes to tackling the issue.

EXPLAINER: What’s the impact of a Russian debt default?

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia is poised to default on its foreign debt for the first time since the Bolshevik Revolution more than a century ago, further alienating the country from the global financial system following sanctions imposed over its war in Ukraine.

A 30-day grace period on interest payments originally due May 27 expired Sunday. But it could take time to confirm a default.

“While there is a possibility that some magic could occur” and Russia gets the money through financial institutions to bondholders despite sanctions, “nobody’s making that bet,” said Jay S. Auslander, a top sovereign debt lawyer at the firm of Wilk Auslander in New York. “The overwhelming probability is they won’t be able to because no bank is going to move the money.”

Last month, the U.S. Treasury Department ended Russia’s ability to pay its billions in debt back to international investors through American banks. In response, the Russian Finance Ministry said it would pay dollar-denominated debts in rubles and offer “the opportunity for subsequent conversion into the original currency.”

Russia says it has the money to pay its debts but sanctions have frozen its foreign currency reserves held abroad.

“It’s not a default of our country, but an artificial, man-made collapse of the international financial system,” Konstantin Kosachev, a deputy speaker of the upper house of Russian Parliament, said Monday in remarks carried by the state RIA Novosti news agency.

The U.S. and Europe Union have deliberately created “artificial obstacles for Russia to service its sovereign debt in order to put the tag of default on it,” Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said last week.

On the other side, the argument is that “this happened because of sanctions, but sanctions were fully in your control,” Auslander said. “All of this was under your control, because all you had to do was not invade Ukraine.”

Here are key things to know about a Russian default:

HOW MUCH DOES RUSSIA OWE?

About \$40 billion in foreign bonds, about half of that to foreigners. Before the start of the war, Russia had around \$640 billion in foreign currency and gold reserves, much of which was held overseas and is now frozen.

Russia has not defaulted on its international debts since the Bolshevik Revolution, when the Russian Empire collapsed and the Soviet Union was created. Russia defaulted on its domestic debts in the late 1990s but was able to recover from that default with the help of international aid.

Investors have expected Russia to default for months. Insurance contracts that cover Russian debt have priced a 80% likelihood of default for weeks, and rating agencies like Standard & Poor’s and Moody’s have placed the country’s debt deep into junk territory.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF A COUNTRY IS IN DEFAULT?

Ratings agencies can lower the rating to default or a court can decide the issue. Bondholders who have credit default swaps — contracts that act like insurance policies against default — can ask a committee of financial firm representatives to decide whether a failure to pay debt should trigger a payout, which still

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isn't a formal declaration of default.

The Credit Default Determination Committee — an industry group of banks and investment funds — ruled June 7 that Russia had failed to pay required additional interest after making a payment on a bond after the April 4 due date. But the committee put off taking further action due to uncertainty over how sanctions might affect any settlement.

WHAT CAN INVESTORS DO?

The formal way to declare default is if 25% or more of bondholders say they didn't get their money. Once that happens, provisions say all Russia's other foreign bonds are also in default, and bondholders could then seek a court judgment to enforce payment.

In normal circumstances, investors and the defaulting government typically negotiate a settlement in which bondholders are given new bonds that are worth less but that at least give them some partial compensation.

But sanctions bar dealings with Russia's finance ministry. And no one knows when the war will end or how much defaulted bonds could wind up being worth.

In this case, declaring default and suing "might not be the wisest choice," Auslander said. It's not possible to negotiate with Russia and there are so many unknowns, so creditors may decide to "hang tight for now."

Investors who wanted out of Russian debt have probably already headed for the exits, leaving those who may have bought bonds at knocked-down prices in hopes of profiting from a settlement in the long run. And they might want to keep a low profile for a while to avoid being associated with the war.

Once a country defaults, it can be cut off from bond-market borrowing until the default is sorted out and investors regain confidence in the government's ability and willingness to pay. But Russia has already been cut off from Western capital markets, so any return to borrowing is a long way off anyway.

The Kremlin can still borrow rubles at home, where it mostly relies on Russian banks to buy its bonds.

WHAT WOULD BE THE IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S DEFAULT?

Western sanctions over the war have sent foreign companies fleeing from Russia and interrupted the country's trade and financial ties with the rest of the world. Default would be one more symptom of that isolation and disruption.

Investment analysts are cautiously reckoning that a Russia default would not have the kind of impact on global financial markets and institutions that came from an earlier default in 1998. Back then, Russia's default on domestic ruble bonds led the U.S. government to step in and get banks to bail out Long-Term Capital Management, a large U.S. hedge fund whose collapse, it was feared, could have shaken the wider financial and banking system.

Holders of the bonds — for instance, funds that invest in emerging market bonds — could take serious losses. Russia, however, played only a small role in emerging market bond indexes, limiting the losses to fund investors.

While the war itself is having devastating consequences in terms of human suffering and higher food and energy prices worldwide, default on government bonds would be "definitely not systemically relevant," International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has said.

Tokyo warned of power crunch as Japan endures heat wave

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — People in Tokyo are sweating it out as the government warns of possible power shortages and urges greater efforts to conserve energy while Japan endures unseasonably hot temperatures.

Weather officials announced the earliest end to the annual summer rainy season since the Japan Meteorological Agency began keeping records in 1951. The rains usually temper the summer heat, often well into July.

The sultry temperatures would be considered mild compared to some South and Southeast Asian countries. But they are adding to worries over power shortages over the summer. Some coal-fired plants serving the region were taken offline for repairs after a strong earthquake in mid-March. The government

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warned of potential problems in late March, though no actual outages occurred.

The economy and industry ministry urged people living in the region serviced by the Tokyo Electric Power Co. to conserve power in the afternoons, especially when demand peaks at 4-5 p.m.

Kaname Ogawa, director of electricity supply policy at the ministry, said electricity demand Monday was bigger than expected because the temperature exceeded Sunday's forecast. A similar warning was issued for Tuesday.

"We are struck by unusual heat for the season," Ogawa said. "Please cooperate and save as much power as possible."

Ogawa, however, said people should use air conditioning appropriately and take precautions against heat stroke.

Heat stroke is a big concern since many older Japanese tend to avoid using air-conditioning, partly out of habit and partly to avoid running up big electricity bills. Older Japanese homes also tend to lack insulation and are stifling hot in the summer and very cold in the winter.

TEPCO said it was expecting contributions from the Tohoku Electric Power Co., which serves Japan's northern prefectures, to help ease the crunch.

The Japanese archipelago has seen record high temperatures for June in some areas. In Isezaki, north of Tokyo, the temperature rose to 40.2 Centigrade (104.4 Fahrenheit) on Saturday, the highest ever for June. Temperature in downtown Tokyo rose to nearly 35C (95F) on Monday, higher than the forecast Sunday of 34C (93F).

With humidity at about 44%, temperatures felt still warmer.

With hot air coming from a powerful high atmospheric pressure system stalled over the Pacific Ocean, high temperatures were expected through early July, the meteorological agency said.

More than 250 people were taken to hospitals in Tokyo over the weekend for treatment of heat stroke, according to the Mainichi newspaper.

The power supply is relatively tight after Japan idled most of its nuclear reactors after 2011 meltdowns in Fukushima. Japan. It also has been closing down old coal plants to meet promises for reducing carbon emissions.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government has been pushing to restart more nuclear reactors that have passed upgraded safety standards.

Japan also faces a potential shortage of fossil fuel imports amid sanctions against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

No reruns: Committee tries new approach to break through

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — As television programming goes, expectations were widespread that the Jan. 6 committee hearings would essentially be reruns. Instead, they have been much more.

The five sessions have revealed a storyteller's eye, with focus, clarity, an understanding of how news is digested in modern media, and strong character development — even if former President Donald Trump's allies suggest there aren't enough actors.

The hearings are pausing for a break until next month, leaving Americans much to digest.

As seen during Trump's impeachments, modern congressional hearings tend to produce more heat than light. That was part of why the Jan. 6 committee faced low expectations, along with the sense — 18 months after the insurrection, an event that played out on live television — that there may be little new to learn.

House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy's decision not to participate gave the committee a gift, the chance to craft hearings as a unicorn of sorts in today's political age.

The hearings are concise, no more than 2 ½ hours, each day with a specific theme. It goes like this: First, viewers are told at the outset what they're going to hear. Then they hear it. Then they are told at the end what they just heard. Usually there's a preview of what's next — a trick that likely reflects the advice of James Goldston, a former ABC News producer hired as a consultant.

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Keeping the presentations understandable with short, simple bursts of information reflects lessons learned from the impeachment, said Norm Eisen, a former lawyer on the House Judiciary Committee who worked on those hearings and is now at the Brookings Institution.

"It's just focused on the witnesses and the evidence," said Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff of California, a member of the panel who also led the second Trump impeachment hearings. "We know we have a precious opportunity to get this information to the American people, and we don't want to waste a minute of it."

The committee uses clips from taped testimony like a journalist would include quotes in a story. Questioning of live witnesses doesn't wander.

Committee Chairman Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., and Republican Vice Chair Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., question witnesses alongside one other member who is in charge of each hearing.

The result is a rare sight in Congress: lawmakers staying silent.

"I'm surprised by the discipline involved in doing this effectively, because politicians love to grandstand," said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a specialist in political communication and director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. "And if people were grandstanding, it wouldn't work."

As a result, sound bites that emerge from each hearing and are repeated online and in news reports — the way many Americans learn about these sessions — consistently reflect the narrative the committee is trying to advance, Jamieson said.

Each day's hearing fits the overall theme — that the plot to nullify the 2020 election was multi-faceted, with the events of Jan. 6, 2021, only one part, and that many of the people surrounding Trump didn't believe his claims of election fraud.

Witness testimony gains power because it mostly comes from Republicans, Trump's former aides and allies, Jamieson said. It's one thing to have Schiff declare Trump's rigged election claims were bull, quite another to have it come from the former president's attorney general, with an Ivanka Trump endorsement.

Former Vice President Mike Pence, who defied Trump's pleas not to certify the election, received the type of praise he'd never expect from a committee led by Democrats.

The most pointed political messages come from Cheney, who has spoken directly to Republican Trump supporters even as she knows many are furious with her.

"It can be difficult to accept that President Trump abused your trust, that he deceived you," she said at the conclusion of Thursday's hearing. "Many will invent excuses to ignore that fact. But that is a fact. I wish it weren't true. But it is."

The hearings also command the attention of journalists by consistently offering something new or unexamined, such as Thursday's revelation of congressmen who pleaded for presidential pardons, or the extent of Trump's fundraising off his false claims of fraud.

"Things really couldn't have gone much better from the committee's point of view," said veteran television producer Chris Whipple, author of a forthcoming book on the first year of the Biden administration. "The production has been fine, but it really has been a masterpiece of casting."

Citing the creator of "The West Wing," Whipple added: "Aaron Sorkin couldn't have dreamed up a character like Rusty Bowers," the Republican Arizona House speaker who resisted Trump's request to appoint false electors.

The committee has also created villains like John Eastman, architect of the effort to nullify the election, and Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani, diminishing Giuliani by reports that he was intoxicated on election night.

The testimony of Georgia elections worker Wandrea "Shaye" Moss put a face on common Americans who were affected by false accusations of voter fraud.

Even an anchor on the frequently Trump-friendly Fox News Channel, Neil Cavuto, said after the hearing where Moss was featured that "this just seems to make Donald Trump look awful."

Trump seems to have sensed it. He criticized McCarthy, who pulled all of his Republican appointees off the Jan. 6 committee after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi rejected two of them. At the very least, having Trump allies on the panel would have hurt the committee's ability to control its message, Jamieson said.

Tim Graham of the conservative watchdog Media Research Center said he objects to the media portray-

ing the commission's work as bipartisan when the only two Republicans — Cheney and Illinois Rep. Adam Kinzinger — are longtime Trump critics.

"The fact that this is not a balanced commission is really a shame," said Jonathan Turley, a George Washington University professor and Fox News analyst. "Having someone there to ask probing questions, rather than scripted questions, I think would have added greater authority and power to this hearing."

Given the evidence presented, Whipple wondered how effective additional Republicans would have been. "I'm not sure it would have helped them one iota," he said, "and it might have hurt them."

US basketball star Griner due in Russian court

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — More than four months after she was arrested at a Moscow airport for cannabis possession, American basketball star Brittney Griner is to appear in court Monday for a preliminary hearing ahead of her trial.

The Phoenix Mercury star, considered in some polls to be the United States' most gifted female athlete, could face 10 years in prison if convicted on charges of large-scale transportation of drugs. Fewer than 1% of defendants in Russian criminal cases are acquitted, and unlike in the U.S., acquittals can be overturned.

The trial date has not been announced, but is expected soon; Griner was recently ordered to remain in pretrial detention until July 2. The hearing in the court of the Moscow suburb of Khimki is to address procedural issues.

Griner's detention and trial come at an extraordinarily low point in Moscow-Washington relations. She was arrested at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport less than a week before Russia sent troops into Ukraine, which aggravated already-high tensions with sweeping sanctions by the United States and Russia's denunciation of U.S. weapon supplies to Ukraine.

Amid the tensions, Griner's supporters had taken a low profile in hopes of a quiet resolution, until May, when the State Department reclassified her as wrongfully detained and shifted oversight of her case to its special presidential envoy for hostage affairs — effectively the U.S. government's chief negotiator.

That move has drawn additional attention to Griner's case, with supporters encouraging a prisoner swap like the one in April that brought home Marine veteran Trevor Reed in exchange for a Russian pilot convicted of drug trafficking conspiracy.

Russian news media have repeatedly raised speculation that she could be swapped for Russian arms trader Viktor Bout, nicknamed "The Merchant of Death," who is serving a 25-year sentence on conviction of conspiracy to kill U.S. citizens and providing aid to a terrorist organization.

Russia has agitated for Bout's release for years. But the discrepancy between Griner's case — she allegedly was found in possession of vape cartridges containing cannabis oil — and Bout's global dealings in deadly weapons could make such a swap unpalatable to the U.S.

Others have suggested that she could be traded in tandem with Paul Whelan, a former Marine and security director serving a 16-year sentence on an espionage conviction that the United States has repeatedly described as a set-up.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, asked Sunday on CNN whether a joint swap of Griner and Whelan for Bout was being considered, sidestepped the question.

"As a general proposition ... I have got no higher priority than making sure that Americans who are being illegally detained in one way or another around the world come home," he said. But "I can't comment in any detail on what we're doing, except to say this is an absolute priority."

Any swap would apparently require Griner to first be convicted and sentenced, then apply for a presidential pardon, Maria Yarmush, a lawyer specializing in international civil affairs, told Kremlin-funded TV channel RT.

Death toll of children in Afghanistan quake rises to 155

GAYAN, Afghanistan (AP) — The death toll of children in last week's devastating earthquake in south-

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eastern Afghanistan has risen to at least 155, the United Nations said as the scope of the deadliest quake to hit the impoverished country in two decades comes into focus.

The U.N.'s humanitarian coordination organization, OCHA, said on Sunday that another 250 children were injured in the magnitude 6 temblor that struck the mountainous villages in the Paktika and Khost provinces near the country's border with Pakistan, flattening homes and triggering landslides. Most of the children died in Paktika's hard-hit Gayan district, which remains a scene of life in ruins, days after the quake.

Afghanistan's Taliban rulers have put the total death toll from the quake at 1,150, with hundreds more injured, while the U.N. has offered a slightly lower estimate of 770, although the world body has warned the figure could still rise.

The quake has also left an estimated 65 children orphaned or unaccompanied, the U.N. humanitarian office added.

The disaster — the latest to convulse Afghanistan after decades of war, hunger, poverty and an economic crash — has become a test of the Taliban's capacity to govern and the international community's willingness to help.

When the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan as the United States and its NATO allies were withdrawing their forces last August, foreign aid stopped practically overnight. World governments piled on sanctions, halted bank transfers and froze billions more in Afghanistan's currency reserves, refusing to recognize the Taliban government and demanding they allow a more inclusive rule and respect human rights.

The former insurgents have resisted the pressure, imposing restrictions on the freedoms of women and girls that recall their first time in power in the late 1990s, triggering Western backlash.

Aware of their limitations, the Taliban have appealed for foreign aid. The U.N. and an array of overstretched aid agencies in the country that have tried to keep Afghanistan from the brink of starvation have swung into action. Despite funding and access constraints, convoys of aid have trickled into the remote provinces.

The U.N. children's agency said on Monday it was working to reunite children that had been separated from their families in the chaos of the quake. It also has set up clinics to offer mental health and psychological support to children in Gayan traumatized by the disaster.

People's war: Ukraine, Russia crowd-funding gear for troops

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — In one of the combat zones against Russia, the supply chief for a Ukrainian fighting brigade places his online order for war supplies — a long list ranging from drones, trucks and thermal sights to batteries, generators and tape. They are needed, he writes, to equip two new battalions and "combat against armed aggression."

In a makeshift supply depot in the capital, Kyiv, crowd-funders start busying themselves with his request. Their bustle will get the equipment to the 72nd Brigade within days, all paid for with public donations. In their ramshackle office, a poster with the Vietnam-era peace slogan exhorts: "Drop acid, Not bombs."

With attritional combat devouring soldiers and resources, Ukraine is waging a people's war, fought away from front lines by self-starting networks of donors and volunteers. Tech-savvy systems they've thrown together convert millions of dollars in donations into swift Amazon-like deliveries of war gear direct to the battlefields. They're helping keep Ukraine in the fight at a critical juncture of the Russian invasion, as its better-supplied aggressor applies tremendous, grinding pressure on battlefields to the east and south.

Civilian volunteering is also boosting morale, providing tangible proof to Ukrainians that they're together in their battle for survival, even if they don't have guns in their hands. From grandmothers cutting old clothes into strips to make camouflage netting to the bereaved girlfriend of a slain soldier who walked into the supply depot after his burial saying she wanted to help, most everyone seems to be doing their bit, big and small or by direct debit.

Civilian assistance for the military effort has been a feature of Ukrainian resistance from Day 1 of the Feb. 24 invasion, as ordinary folk dropped everything to help and raided their bank accounts to equip hastily assembled new units. From modest beginnings, including telephone hotlines for donations that

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were immediately overwhelmed with calls, crowd-funding initiatives have matured into well-oiled machines. They have online payment systems and slick websites explaining their needs, and volunteers applying their expertise in civilian fields — logistics, technology, purchasing, electronics — to help get supplies into troops' hands.

Five months into the invasion, creative fund-raising is also keeping money flowing in — belying the notion that Ukrainians are losing interest and feeling less imperiled in the uneasy peace that has returned to Kyiv and other cities since badly mauled Russian forces withdrew from the north in April, refocusing on capturing Ukraine's eastern Donbas region.

An appeal last week by Ukrainian television personality and politician Serhiy Prytula for \$15 million in donations to buy three Turkish-made Bayraktar combat drones went viral. He subsequently announced that he'd surged past the target, raising \$20 million — enough for four Bayraktars — in under three days.

His foundation is one of the biggest crowd-funding initiatives. Among other, more unusual ones are women and men who send erotic photos of themselves as a reward to donors who can prove, with a receipt, that they gave to a war-support fund. "Teronlyfans" says its aim "is to incentivize donations for the needs of Ukraine and thereby bring our victory closer." The volunteers say they've helped raise \$750,000 by baring all.

"We make sure that the photos are not pornographic. This is beautiful, aesthetic erotica," said Nastya Kuchmenko, one of the group's co-founders. "It's not about objectifying the body, it's about the freedom to use your body as you want."

"People want to be useful," she said.

On the opposing side, some Russians, including soldiers' mothers, also are getting supplies to troops. But the Russian effort isn't as organized, massive and spontaneous, in part because the Kremlin is downplaying the scale, reach and cost of its invasion, insisting that it's a mere "military operation."

The United People's Front, a Kremlin-created effort to foster public support for the government, launched a crowd-funding campaign in early June, under the slogan "All for Victory!"

"The guys on the front line who are dying for the right to be Russians, who are fighting for our common freedom, will greatly appreciate any help you can offer," Mikhail Kuznetsov, a United People's Front executive, said of the drive for front-line gear and medicines. "They will win in any case, but they will win faster and with smaller casualties if we help them."

On the Ukrainian side, victory is the goal, too.

The foundation run by Prytula, the TV personality, prioritizes its aid for units in combat hot spots. Unit commanders list their needs and locations on an online form.

That's how "Tokha" — the nom de guerre of the quartermaster for the 72nd Brigade — submitted his order. Gear on his wish-list hinted at the ferocity of the fighting around his location in the east, with requests for 100 periscopes for peering from trenches, a dozen tablets pre-loaded with software to correct artillery fire, and even wire — presumably for use as tripwires. Bigger-ticket items included six vans and pick-up trucks.

Convoys of vans, trucks and other vehicles, sourced second-hand from elsewhere in Europe, set off loaded with gear every week from the foundation's depot in Kyiv. Some vehicles are repainted in army green to make them battle-ready. Their front-line lives can be short: Two recently delivered ambulances lasted just two days before Russian bombs destroyed them.

The foundation says it has raised more than \$34 million since the invasion began, mostly as donations — ranging from pennies to a businessman's gift in cryptocurrency of \$1.3 million. The foundation also auctioned the Eurovision Song Contest trophy won and then donated by Ukrainian band Kalush Orchestra and raffled the bright bucket hat worn by its frontman. Together, they fetched \$1.25 million.

The foundation says it has fulfilled 2,200 orders from units in just the last two months. On the receiving end, the troops or volunteers who make the deliveries take photos to prove that aid is being used as intended.

"Ukrainians are a nation of volunteers and we can do unimaginable things together," said Maria Pysarenko,

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who works with Prytula. "It's also about not just the fundraising but community-building and showing that, 'Yes, we can.'"

Ecuador president cuts gasoline price amid Indigenous strike

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso announced a cut in gasoline prices Sunday that appeared to fall short of the reduction demanded by Indigenous leaders to end a strike that has paralyzed parts of the country for two weeks.

The reduction cuts the price of gasoline by 10 cents per gallon. The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador has demanded compliance with a 10-point agenda, including the reduction of the price of extra gasoline from 2.55 to 2.10 dollars a gallon and diesel from 1.90 to 1.50.

Speaking on national television late Sunday, Lasso said the price of fuel "has become the cornerstone that maintains the conflict."

"Ecuadorians who seek dialogue will find a government with an outstretched hand, those who seek chaos, violence and terrorism will face the full force of the law," he said, emphasizing that the country must return to normality.

There was no immediate reaction from the Indigenous confederation.

The move comes shortly after Lasso lifted a state of emergency he'd imposed in six provinces and government officials held initial talks with protest leaders. It also comes as lawmakers discuss an opposition request to remove Lasso from office amid the strike, which has caused food shortages and hurt the economy.

Indigenous protesters are demanding a cut in gasoline prices, price controls on agricultural products and a larger budget be set for education. Lasso had accused the leader of the at-times violent strike of seeking to stage a coup.

On Thursday, the Indigenous confederation said a demonstrator died of pellet wounds in the chest and abdomen while protesting near the National Assembly in Quito, where about 100 other people suffered a variety of injuries. Police tweeted that officers were also injured by pellets.

In Quito, protesters blocking roads have brought the city to a near halt and people are experiencing food and fuel shortages. Groups of protesters have roamed the city attacking vehicles and civilians and forcing the closure of businesses, some of which were looted.

Avalanche dethrone Lightning to win Stanley Cup for 3rd time

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writer

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Nathan MacKinnon could not find the words. Gabriel Landeskog cracked a smile and a joke.

After years of playoff disappointments, the Colorado Avalanche are back atop hockey's mountain after dethroning the two-time defending champions.

Behind a goal and an assist from MacKinnon, the Avalanche won the Stanley Cup for the third time in franchise history and first in more than two decades by beating the Tampa Bay Lightning 2-1 in Game 6 of the final Sunday night.

"It's just been building over time," playoff MVP-winning defenseman Cale Makar said about the Avalanche's journey. "I've been here only three years. A couple of tough exits in the playoffs. It was just all leading up to this."

It's the first title for the Avs' core group led by MacKinnon, captain Gabriel Landeskog, Mikko Rantanen and Makar, and it follows several early postseason exits — in the second round each of the past three seasons and the first round in 2018. The 2016-17 team was the worst in hockey, finishing with just 48 points.

"It's hard to describe," said MacKinnon, who led the way in the clincher by blocking shots and taking big hits in addition to his offensive production. "Some tough years mixed in there, but it's all over now. We never stopped believing."

With a mix of speed, high-end talent and the experience gained from those defeats, Colorado broke

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through this time — earning every bit of the championship by knocking off a deep and gritty team that hoisted the Cup the past two years.

“To beat them is probably a little more satisfying, to be honest, because they are champions,” said veteran forward Andrew Cogliano, who hoisted the Cup for the first time at age 35. “They know how to win. And, ultimately, when you can beat the champions, you know you really earned it.”

Like the Avalanche fully expected, it wasn't easy.

An early turnover by Makar led to an easy goal by Steven Stamkos, putting Colorado in a hole and several more bumps and bruises followed. The Avalanche tied it when MacKinnon beat 2021 playoff MVP Andrei Vasilevskiy with a near-perfect shot and went ahead on another big goal by trade deadline acquisition Artturi Lehkonen. They locked things down by holding on to the puck and held Tampa Bay without a shot on Darcy Kuemper until midway through the third period.

When the Lightning finally did, he was there. Brought in from Arizona in a trade last summer to shore up the sport's most important position, Kuemper was solid again and made his most important save with under seven minutes left when he slid over to deny star Nikita Kucherov.

His teammates finished the job and Colorado improved to 9-1 on the road this postseason.

Much like the Lightning went all in multiple times by trading high draft picks and prospects to load up for the best chance to win the Cup, Avalanche general manager Joe Sakic was not afraid to ante up in March to acquire Lehkonen, defenseman Josh Manson and Cogliano. They became the perfect complement to Colorado's core that had showed plenty of playoff promise but until now hadn't produced a championship.

Sakic, who captained Colorado's first two title-winning teams in 1996 and 2001, used a familiar recipe to get his team over the hump. Much like Pierre Lacroix, the architect of those Avalanche teams that had so much success after the organization moved to Denver, Sakic prioritized skill, speed and versatility.

That speed overwhelmed every opponent on the way to the final, from an opening sweep of Nashville through a hard-fought, six-game series against St. Louis and another sweep of Edmonton. It was a different challenge against Tampa Bay, when the Avalanche needed to absorb counter-punches from the back-to-back champs to close it out.

Tampa Bay ended up two victories short of becoming the NHL's first three-peat champion since the early 1980s New York Islanders dynasty.

“It stings just as much as the first time,” Stamkos said, referring to the Lightning's loss to Chicago in the 2015 final.

Before the series, Makar said he and his teammates were trying to end a dynasty and begin a legacy. That legacy finally involves a championship, thanks in large part to steady coach Jared Bednar, who in his sixth season found a way to focus his team on the mission at hand from the start of training camp. Bednar became the first coach to win the Stanley Cup, American Hockey League's Calder Cup and ECHL's Kelly Cup — all after that miserable 48-point showing in his first season behind the Colorado bench.

“He stuck with it, also,” Rantanen said. “He had a tough first year in the league, and I did, too. I can't believe we're here six years after.”

Bednar won the chess match with Jon Cooper, also a Stanley and Calder Cup champion who is considered one of the best tacticians in the NHL. The Lightning fell into an 0-2 hole facing their stiffest competition since their run of success began in 2020 and then went down 3-1 before forcing Game 6.

Asked how other teams might be able to copy the Avalanche's success, Landeskog quipped, “Get a Cale Makar somewhere.” Indeed, Makar won the Conn Smythe after leading Colorado in scoring with 29 points in 20 games.

Injuries that sidelined top center Brayden Point and limited other key contributors proved too much against a stacked opponent. Depth allowed the Avalanche to overcome losing defenseman Samuel Girard to a broken sternum and finish off the Lightning even with standout forward Andre Burakovsky sidelined by injury and with Valeri Nichushkin hobbling around on an injured right foot and center Nazem Kadri playing through a broken right thumb.

The Avalanche beat the Lightning before attrition could take too much of a toll and before the scary possibility of facing elimination in Game 7 against Vasilevskiy. Instead, they'll return to Denver to celebrate

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with the Stanley Cup. A parade is expected on Thursday.

While not as emotional as the past two years when Stamkos got the trophy, Colorado's series-ending victory marks another completion of an NHL season during a pandemic — the first back to 82 games with a normal playoff format since 2019. It was not without its stumbles, including postponing dozens of games and pulling out of the Olympics. Commissioner Gary Bettman wasn't even able to hand the Cup to Landeskog because he tested positive for the coronavirus, leaving deputy Bill Daly to do the honors.

The Avalanche and Lightning dealt with occasional rough ice playing late into June, something that should not happen again as the league gets back to its regular schedule. When that happens, Colorado will get the chance to defend its crown and attempt to follow Tampa Bay in becoming a perennial Cup contender.

What to watch in primaries in Colorado, Illinois, elsewhere

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Politics Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Seven states are set to host primary elections Tuesday as the nation comes to terms with last week's stunning Supreme Court ruling eliminating the constitutional right to an abortion.

This week's nominating contests could offer the first clues as to whether the political landscape has shifted. Abortion is particularly relevant in Colorado, where GOP voters are deciding whether to nominate a rare abortion-rights-supporting Republican for U.S. Senate.

And in Illinois, a Donald Trump-backed congresswoman ignited a political firestorm over the weekend by celebrating the overturning of Roe v. Wade as "a victory for white life," phrasing that her spokesman later called a "stumble" and was meant to be "right to life."

The primaries will also offer new insight about the state of the Republican Party, with the central issue in virtually every GOP contest being fealty to Trump and his baseless conspiracy theories. Those Republicans who have pushed back at all, including a senator in Oklahoma and a congressman in Mississippi, are facing fierce challenges.

Democrats have their own challenges. Illinois voters will decide a rare incumbent-on-incumbent primary for a House seat, while in South Carolina, Democrats are picking which candidate will take on South Carolina Republican Sen. Tim Scott this fall.

In all, primary elections are playing out across Colorado, Illinois, Mississippi, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Utah on Tuesday. Nebraska is holding a special election.

What to watch:

COLORADO

GOP businessman Joe O'Dea, who has spoken publicly about his support for abortion rights, is running for the nomination to take on Democratic Sen. Michael Bennet this fall. O'Dea's top rival is state Rep. Ron Hanks, who opposes abortion in all circumstances and attended the Jan. 6 rally that preceded the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

O'Dea said he backs a ban on late-term abortions and government funding of abortions, but the decision to terminate a pregnancy in the initial months is "between a person and their God."

While Colorado has trended Democratic over the past decade, Tuesday's top Republican primary contests will show whether far-right candidates are making progress in their quest to take on uncontested Democrats like Bennet, Gov. Jared Polis and Secretary of State Jena Griswold, who's led the national fight against 2020 election deniers.

One of them is Republican Tina Peters, a conspiracy-theorist county elections clerk who's been indicted for tampering with voting equipment and posting data online. Peters wants to unseat Griswold as Colorado's top elections official despite calls from the state GOP for Peters to suspend her campaign. She's running against Republican Pam Anderson, a former head of the state's clerks association and defender of Colorado's mail-in elections system.

Colorado's congressional primaries will measure the staying power of first-term GOP firebrand Rep. Lauren Boebert in a sprawling western Colorado district that leans more Republican after redistricting. She's up against state Sen. Don Coram, a hemp farmer and GOP moderate.

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In the Republican race to take on Polis, a former suburban Denver mayor, Greg Lopez, is facing Heidi Ganahl, the lone statewide-elected Republican as a University of Colorado regent.

ILLINOIS

As he is in most GOP contests, Trump is a central issue in Illinois' Republican primary for governor.

Darren Bailey, a conservative farmer who earned Trump's endorsement over the weekend and often reads from the Bible in campaign videos, is part of a six-candidate Republican field. His rivals include Richard Irvin, the first Black mayor of Illinois' second-largest suburb, who had \$50 million in support from billionaire Ken Griffin but was heavily targeted by Democrats who see Bailey as an easier matchup for Pritzker.

While Trump endorsed Bailey, he also campaigned alongside first-term Rep. Mary Miller, who is challenging five-term Rep. Rodney Davis in one of the state's two incumbent-on-incumbent primaries.

But at Saturday's rally, Miller described the Supreme Court's reversal of *Roe v. Wade* as "a victory for white life." A spokesperson later said she had intended to say the decision was a victory for a "right to life."

But the Illinois congresswoman is no stranger to provocative statements. Soon after joining the House, Miller quoted Adolf Hitler, saying he was right to say that "whoever has the youth has the future."

Davis is a powerful, more moderate lawmaker who is the top Republican on the House Administration Committee, which deals with election legislation and the Capitol complex.

Meanwhile, two Democratic incumbents — Reps. Sean Casten and Marie Newman — are facing off for a Chicago-area seat. Also on the Democratic side, about two dozen candidates are fighting to succeed Rep. Bobby Rush, the only lawmaker to ever defeat Barack Obama. They include John Jackson, son of civil rights leader the Rev. Jesse Jackson, and Karin Norington-Reaves, who has Rush's endorsement.

NEW YORK

Gov. Kathy Hochul, who was vaulted into office last fall when Andrew Cuomo resigned amid a sexual harassment scandal, is trying to hold on to her job.

Hochul, a Democrat from western New York, is facing challenges from New York City's elected public advocate, Jumaane Williams, and Rep. Tom Suozzi, a moderate congressman from Long Island.

Tuesday's elections cover New York's statewide offices and state assembly races, but primary elections for U.S. House seats and the state Senate will be held Aug. 23. Those elections were delayed because of a redistricting lawsuit that led a court to throw out new political maps.

Hochul, who was Cuomo's lieutenant governor for six years, promised to restore New Yorkers' faith in its government after stepping into the office last summer, but she hit a major stumbling block in April, when her handpicked lieutenant governor was arrested in a federal corruption probe.

Williams, a progressive running to Hochul's left, said Hochul is either "consistently shamefully out of the loop, or shamefully enabling through her inaction." Suozzi, running to Hochul's right, says she's not being tough enough on crime, suggesting she should have gone further to harden the state's bail law.

On the Republican side, Rep. Lee Zeldin is considered the front-runner in a crowded field that features Andrew Giuliani, the son of New York City's former mayor Rudy Giuliani; Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino; and businessman Harry Wilson. Former Vice President Mike Pence has endorsed Zeldin, who also enjoys the backing of the state GOP and Conservative Party, but Trump has stayed out of the race.

UTAH

The Republican primary for U.S. Senate pits one of Trump's closest allies, GOP incumbent Sen. Mike Lee, against two challengers who have spent months questioning Lee's loyalty to the former president.

Former state lawmaker Becky Edwards and political operative Ally Isom have attacked Lee as a divisive politician who cares less about governing than about television appearances and winning Trump's favor. Unlike Lee, neither voted for Trump in 2020.

Both Republican challengers have highlighted the post-election text messages Lee sent to Trump's chief of staff, which show his early involvement in efforts to overturn the election. Edwards has also stood out by saying she disagreed with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to revisit *Roe v. Wade*.

The Senate primary is testing whether Trump's brand of divisive politics and conspiracy theories resonates with members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who make up a majority of Utah's

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population.

In November, the winner will take on independent Evan McMullin, a former Republican who won backing from the state Democratic Party in April.

MISSISSIPPI

Congressional primary runoffs are rare in Mississippi, but on Tuesday, two of the state's Republican incumbents are fighting to keep their jobs in runoffs against challengers from their own party.

Rep. Steven Palazzo is seeking a seventh term and was considered vulnerable after being accused in a 2021 congressional ethics report of abusing his office by mispending campaign funds.

Rep. Michael Guest is seeking a third term. He voted to create an independent commission to investigate the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection and was forced into a runoff amid criticism that he was disloyal to Trump.

Both Palazzo and Guest failed to cross the 50% threshold to win outright in their June 7 primaries. Palazzo is facing Mike Ezell, the sheriff of a coastal county, while Guest is going up against Michael Cassidy, a former Navy fighter pilot who has highlighted his allegiance to Trump.

OKLAHOMA

Republicans are picking two U.S. Senate nominees on Tuesday.

A crowd of high-profile GOP contenders is vying to replace retiring Sen. Jim Inhofe, including Trump's former Environmental Protection Agency administrator, Scott Pruitt, who resigned from his Washington post under a cloud of ethics scandals. Other candidates include Rep. Markwayne Mullin; T.W. Shannon, the state legislature's first Black House speaker; and Luke Holland, Inhofe's longtime chief of staff.

Republican Sen. James Lankford is facing a primary test of his own that centers on Trump.

Lankford, among the Senate's most conservative members, has faced backlash from Trump loyalists for not embracing the former president's lies about election fraud. Lankford is facing Tulsa evangelical pastor Jackson Lahmeyer, a political newcomer endorsed by Michael Flynn, Trump's former national security adviser.

NEBRASKA

A judge on Tuesday will sentence longtime Nebraska congressman Jeff Fortenberry on campaign contribution charges on the same day voters will decide who should serve out the Republican's term. Fortenberry resigned in March.

Republican Mike Flood will be favored to win the election in the Republican-leaning district over Democrat Patty Pansing Brooks. Both are state legislators.

Regardless of who wins the special election, Flood and Pansing Brooks will face off again in the November general election. The eastern Nebraska district includes Lincoln and parts of suburban Omaha as well as rural area.

Andrew Giuliani invokes famous dad in bid for NY governor

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — After 2020, Rudy Giuliani is not someone most politicians would summon to hold a news conference on their behalf.

As the frontman of former President Donald Trump's false claims of election fraud, Giuliani made notorious appearances before cameras where he espoused baseless theories — once while doing an impression of actor Joe Pesci as dark streaks of what appeared to be hair dye ran down his face — and another outside a Philadelphia landscaping company. This past week, his unsupported accusations and the fallout of those claims became the centerpiece of hearings from the House committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol.

But one place the former New York City mayor is in high demand these days is on the campaign of his son, Andrew Giuliani, who on Tuesday is hoping to become the Republican nominee for governor of New York.

The campaign is considered a long shot, with the favored U.S. Rep. Lee Zeldin as the presumed front-runner in the Republican race with the endorsements of the state's GOP and Conservative Party. And in

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an otherwise favorable year for Republicans, Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul is expected to win the office in November.

New York is one of the bluest states in the country, where Democrats have more than twice as many registered voters as Republicans and have held the governor's mansion for 15 years. It's also a state where — outside of Republican voters — the only name less popular than "Trump" might be "Giuliani."

Andrew Giuliani mentions both names often.

The 36-year-old worked as an aide in Trump's White House and as a commentator on the conservative network Newsmax, but has never held elected office before.

Before launching his campaign, he had been principally known for appearing, while still a child, next to his father at his 1994 mayoral inauguration. He comically mimicked his father's gestures and repeated his words, antics that were parodied on "Saturday Night Live" by Chris Farley.

As he campaigns for governor, the younger Giuliani still seems to be doing an imitation of his father. He not only shares some of his mannerisms, but has frequently used his appearances to make false claims about the 2020 presidential election, including falsely stating that Trump won the election.

Andrew Giuliani has also been accused of somewhat conspicuously omitting his first name on his website and campaign materials, perhaps to give the impression among Republicans that his father might be the candidate.

"People would say, well with a famous last name, it's easy to run in politics," Giuliani said, responding to the criticism during a debate on Newsmax.

"I would tell you with a name like Andrew, it's very difficult to be the leading candidate for governor in a Republican primary," Andrew Giuliani quipped, referring to former three-term New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat who resigned in disgrace last year amid sexual harassment allegations.

Andrew Giuliani said he was very proud of his father and called him "New York's greatest crime fighter."

Before he was known as Trump's attorney describing unfounded international election plots on television, Rudy Giuliani was hailed a national hero for leading New York City through the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

He had been a U.S. attorney in New York famous for prosecuting mafia figures and later was a Republican mayor known for tackling crime with his "broken windows" theory of policing. The philosophy involved deterring serious crime by cracking down on minor offenses such as public urination or panhandling window-washers known as "squeegee men."

Critics said the theory was not effective and targeted minorities, but in his campaign, Andrew Giuliani has called for the return of "broken windows" policing "all around the state of New York."

Andrew Giuliani has frequently appeared with his father at news conferences, rallies and other campaign events, the two standing side by side behind a podium or in the back of a truck decorated with a "Giuliani" sign. Often they wear red Giuliani campaign hats — a design that evokes Trump's famous "Make America Great Again" hat.

Rudy Giuliani has sought to assure people that his son's experience includes watching his father serve as mayor.

"It is true he was a child during most of my tenure, but I don't know. Do you consider a 15-, 16-, 17-year-old a child? He worked with me on those things when I was there," Giuliani said at a news conference on Thursday. "In many of those situations, your candidate Andrew Giuliani has helped me. He knows it backwards and forwards from the time he was a kid."

In New York, the backing of a political party and its apparatus has in most every case mattered. Zeldin, with his resume and wide support on the right, is expected to win Tuesday, said Thomas Doherty, a political strategist and former aide to New York's last Republican governor, George Pataki.

Doherty said Andrew Giuliani has name recognition but a thin resume and is not seen as a serious contender.

"I'm sure that whatever votes he gets, he's getting on the name of his father," Doherty said. "There's nothing wrong with that except for the fact that there's nothing on his resume that says 'I can be governor of New York.'"

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Zeldin made that point during the last GOP debate, derisively referring to Giuliani's experience in the Trump administration as the "Chick-fil-A runner at the White House outranked by the White House Easter egg bunny."

Outside of his childhood antics at his father's inauguration, Andrew Giuliani was in the headlines when he sued Duke University in 2008, claiming he had been improperly cut from the golf team. The school said Giuliani's dismissal was based on bullying behavior, which he denied. His lawsuit was dismissed in 2010.

He worked on Trump's 2016 presidential campaign and then in the Trump White House. He served as an associate director of the Office of Public Liaison and later as a special assistant to the president.

Rudy Giuliani said his son's "four years with Trump — that's like five college educations. He's much better prepared for this."

The former mayor acknowledged some will be skeptical of his son and may think he's too young and inexperienced to be the governor of a state of nearly 20 million people.

"You're taking a chance. You took a chance on me," the candidate's father said at Thursday's news conference. "The chance is worth it because he's got that exceptional spirit, Teddy Roosevelt kind of spirit."

Roe ruling shows complex relationship between court, public

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court ruling to overturn its 1973 Roe v. Wade decision is unpopular with a majority of Americans — but did that matter?

The relationship between the public and the judiciary has been studied and debated by legal and political scholars. The short answer: it's complicated. There's evidence that the public has an indirect role in the judiciary, but that might be changing.

In the final opinion, Justice Samuel Alito wrote that the court "cannot allow our decisions to be affected by any extraneous influences such as concern about the public's reaction to our work."

Polls following the leaked draft of the opinion show approval of the Supreme Court — which was already suffering — slumped even further, driven by those who supported keeping Roe.

The court and public opinion have clashed at times, but they've entered into a "symbiotic relationship" over the last 60 years, Barry Friedman suggests in his 2009 book "The Will of the People." The court doesn't stray too far from popular opinion.

How that happens and whether it remains true are harder to know for certain. "We don't have a viewfinder that shows us what the justices are doing," said Maya Sen, political scientist and professor at the Harvard Kennedy School. "It's a complicated chicken-and-egg situation where we can try to disentangle these forces, but it's very hard to do."

IS PUBLIC OPINION ON ABORTION CLEAR?

Public opinion on abortion is nuanced, but polling shows broad support for Roe and for abortion rights. Seventy percent of U.S. adults said in a May AP-NORC poll that the Supreme Court should leave Roe as is, not overturn it.

Roe is one of "a handful of cases" that people recognize, Sen said, and it's "recognized as important Supreme Court precedent."

Only 8% in the May poll said abortion should be illegal in all cases, but many Americans support some restrictions. An AP-NORC poll last year showed majorities of adults say abortion in the second and third trimesters should be illegal in all or most cases, and opinions were closely divided over whether a pregnant woman should be able to obtain a legal abortion for any reason.

"I think many Americans believe that there should be some sort of kind of sliding scale where the right is protected and then as the pregnancy continues, then the interests of the potential life become more significant," Sen said, adding that Roe allowed for that nuanced thinking.

DOES PUBLIC OPINION FACTOR DIRECTLY IN COURT DECISION-MAKING?

Researchers have found — and some of the justices themselves have acknowledged — that court decisions and public opinion are often aligned, but some experts say it's probably not a direct link.

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The most important thing in decision-making is justices' "set of political and judicial philosophies that give them preferences over the outcomes of the cases," said Joseph Ura, political science professor at Texas A&M University. "Everything else is kind of marginal around that."

Justices themselves experience the same things that everyday Americans do, which makes it harder to assess causality.

"It's really hard to decipher: was it public opinion that's driving these decisions or is it just that the justices have preferences and they're exposed to the same thing that most of us are exposed to?" said Elizabeth Lane, assistant professor of political science at Louisiana State University.

DOES PUBLIC OPINION INDIRECTLY INFLUENCE THE COURT?

Scholars point to judicial appointments and court legitimacy as potential ways that the public has indirect influence on the court.

For one, voters elect a president, who nominates justices, and senators, who confirm them.

"Over the longer run, assuming there's kind of a reasonable rotation of the justices leaving office for whatever reason that aligns with the party's historical alternation in power, the court can preserve its alignment with public opinion," said Ura.

That's been undermined recently, experts say. By chance and by political maneuvering, a larger number of sitting justices — six of them — were appointed by Republican presidents.

In their dissent, the court's liberal justices wrote: "The Court reverses course today for one reason and one reason only: because the composition of this Court has changed."

Justices may also consider how the public will receive a ruling, though the new abortion ruling makes clear some on the court don't believe that's an important consideration.

While the court can issue its ruling, it has to rely on other actors — the public, politicians and even lower courts — to accept and implement it, said Charles Franklin, professor of law and public policy and director of the Marquette Law School poll.

"I doubt that the justices wake up every morning and check the polls to see if people agree, but over the long haul, the court does need a level of public support as a mechanism for their rulings being enforced," Franklin said.

The threshold of support that the court needs might be changing. A reaction from the public or elected officials has "less currency" than it used to because of deepening political polarization, Ura said. A controversial or unpopular decision won't necessarily raise the ire of a bipartisan coalition.

DOES IT MATTER IF THE PUBLIC'S FAITH IN THE COURT IS LOW?

The court has historically enjoyed consistently positive views among the public. But polling showed confidence in and approval of the court began to dip last year, and it has worsened since the leaked draft. Does it matter if the public's faith in the court is low?

"The idea of the legitimacy of the court was a way it could sustain itself when it ruled counter to the majority opinion," Franklin said.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor recently emphasized the need for public faith in the court system. Justice Elena Kagan in 2018 spelled out why: "You know we don't have an army. We don't have any money. The only way we can get people to do what we think they should do is because people respect us."

Michael Salamone, political science professor at Washington State University, explained that "specific support" for the court — what's measured in polls — can easily fluctuate with reactions to court decisions. But "diffuse support" — faith in the institution's role in democracy — is historically resilient. It remains to be seen whether that diffuse support will suffer because of the decision to overturn Roe.

"Just based on the amount of rhetoric and the high-profile nature of so many of these decisions," he said, "I'm wondering if we've perhaps reached our limit to that resilience."

More than 1 million voters switch to GOP in warning for Dems

By STEVE PEOPLES and AARON KESSLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A political shift is beginning to take hold across the U.S. as tens of thousands of suburban swing voters who helped fuel the Democratic Party's gains in recent years are becoming

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Republicans.

More than 1 million voters across 43 states have switched to the Republican Party over the last year, according to voter registration data analyzed by The Associated Press. The previously unreported number reflects a phenomenon that is playing out in virtually every region of the country — Democratic and Republican states along with cities and small towns — in the period since President Joe Biden replaced former President Donald Trump.

But nowhere is the shift more pronounced — and dangerous for Democrats — than in the suburbs, where well-educated swing voters who turned against Trump's Republican Party in recent years appear to be swinging back. Over the last year, far more people are switching to the GOP across suburban counties from Denver to Atlanta and Pittsburgh and Cleveland. Republicans also gained ground in counties around medium-size cities such as Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Raleigh, North Carolina; Augusta, Georgia; and Des Moines, Iowa.

Ben Smith, who lives in suburban Larimer County, Colorado, north of Denver, said he reluctantly registered as a Republican earlier in the year after becoming increasingly concerned about the Democrats' support in some localities for mandatory COVID-19 vaccines, the party's inability to quell violent crime and its frequent focus on racial justice.

"It's more so a rejection of the left than embracing the right," said Smith, a 37-year-old professional counselor whose transition away from the Democratic Party began five or six years ago when he registered as a libertarian.

The AP examined nearly 1.7 million voters who had likely switched affiliations across 42 states for which there is data over the last 12 months, according to L2, a political data firm. L2 uses a combination of state voter records and statistical modeling to determine party affiliation. While party switching is not uncommon, the data shows a definite reversal from the period while Trump was in office, when Democrats enjoyed a slight edge in the number of party switchers nationwide.

But over the last year, roughly two-thirds of the 1.7 million voters who changed their party affiliation shifted to the Republican Party. In all, more than 1 million people became Republicans compared to about 630,000 who became Democrats.

The broad migration of more than 1 million voters, a small portion of the overall U.S. electorate, does not ensure widespread Republican success in the November midterm elections, which will determine control of Congress and dozens of governorships. Democrats are hoping the Supreme Court's decision on Friday to overrule *Roe v. Wade* will energize supporters, particularly in the suburbs, ahead of the midterms.

Still, the details about party switchers present a dire warning for Democrats who were already concerned about the macro effects shaping the political landscape this fall.

Roughly four months before Election Day, Democrats have no clear strategy to address Biden's weak popularity and voters' overwhelming fear that the country is headed in the wrong direction with their party in charge. And while Republicans have offered few policy solutions of their own, the GOP has been working effectively to capitalize on the Democrats' shortcomings.

Republicans benefited last year as suburban parents grew increasingly frustrated by prolonged pandemic-related schools closures. And as inflation intensified more recently, the Republican National Committee has been hosting voter registration events at gas stations in suburban areas across swing states like Arizona, Michigan, Nevada and Pennsylvania to link the Biden administration to record-high gas prices. The GOP has also linked the Democratic president to an ongoing baby formula shortage.

"Biden and Democrats are woefully out of touch with the American people, and that's why voters are flocking to the Republican Party in droves," RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel told the AP. She predicted that "American suburbs will trend red for cycles to come" because of "Biden's gas hike, the open border crisis, baby formula shortage and rising crime."

The Democratic National Committee declined to comment when asked about the recent surge in voters switching to the GOP.

And while Republican officials are quick to take credit for the shift, the phenomenon gained momentum shortly after Trump left the White House. Still, the specific reason or reasons for the shift remain unclear.

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At least some of the newly registered Republicans are actually Democrats who crossed over to vote against Trump-backed candidates in GOP primaries. Such voters are likely to vote Democratic again this November.

But the scope and breadth of the party switching suggests something much bigger at play.

Over the last year, nearly every state — even those without high-profile Republican primaries — moved in the same direction as voters by the thousand became Republicans. Only Virginia, which held off-year elections in 2021, saw Democrats notably trending up over the last year. But even there, Democrats were wiped out in last fall's statewide elections.

In Iowa, Democrats used to hold the advantage in party changers by a 2-to-1 margin. That's flipped over the last year, with Republicans ahead by a similar amount. The same dramatic shift is playing out in Ohio.

In Florida, Republicans captured 58 percent of party switchers during those last years of the Trump era. Now, over the last year, they command 70 percent. And in Pennsylvania, the Republicans went from 58 to 63 percent of party changers.

The current advantage for Republicans among party changers is playing out with particular ferocity in the nation's suburbs.

The AP found that the Republican advantage was larger in suburban "fringe" counties, based on classifications from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, compared to smaller towns and counties. Republicans boosted their share of party changers in 168 of 235 suburban counties AP examined — 72 percent — over the last year, compared with the last years of the Trump era.

These included suburban counties across Georgia, Iowa, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Ohio, Virginia and Washington state.

Republicans also gained ground in further-out suburban counties, which the CDC lumps in with medium-size cities and calls "medium metro" — more than 62 percent of such counties, 164 in all, saw Republican growth. They range from the suburban counties north of Denver, like Larimer, to Los Angeles-area ones like Ventura and Santa Barbara in California.

The Republican advantage was nearly universal, but it was stronger in some places than others.

For example, in Lorain County, Ohio, just outside Cleveland, nearly every party switcher over the last year has gone Republican. That's even as Democrats captured three-quarters of those changing parties in the same county during end of the Trump era.

Some conservative leaders worry that the GOP's suburban gains will be limited if Republicans don't do a better job explaining to suburban voters what they stand for — instead of what they stand against.

Emily Seidel, who leads the Koch-backed grassroots organization Americans for Prosperity, said her network is seeing first-hand that suburban voters are distancing themselves from Democrats who represent "extreme policy positions."

"But that doesn't mean that they're ready to vote against those lawmakers either. Frankly, they're skeptical of both options that they have," Seidel said. "The lesson here: Candidates have to make their case, they have to give voters something to be for, not just something to be against."

Back in Larimer County, Colorado, 39-year-old homemaker Jessica Kroells says she can no longer vote for Democrats, despite being a reliable Democratic voter up until 2016.

There was not a single "aha moment" that convinced her to switch, but by 2020, she said the Democratic Party had "left me behind."

"The party itself is no longer Democrat, it's progressive socialism," she said, specifically condemning Biden's plan to eliminate billions of dollars in student debt.

21 dead in South African nightclub; cause not yet known

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — South African police were investigating the deaths of at least 21 people at a nightclub in the coastal town of East London early Sunday and authorities said most of the victims were minors as young as 13 years old

It is unclear what led to the deaths of the young people, who were reportedly attending a party to

celebrate the end of winter school exams.

Local newspaper Daily Dispatch reported that bodies were strewn across tables and chairs without any visible signs of injuries.

"At this point we cannot confirm the cause of death," said health department spokesperson Siyanda Manana. "We are going to conduct autopsies as soon as possible to establish the probable cause of death."

Police minister Bheki Cele said the victims' ages ranged from 13 to 17, raising questions about why the underaged teenagers were being served alcohol.

President Cyril Ramaphosa expressed condolences to the families of those who died.

"The President is, however, concerned about the reported circumstances under which such young people were gathered at a venue which, on the face of it, should be off limits to persons under the age of 18," Ramaphosa said in a statement.

The death toll from the incident rose to 21.

The owner of the club, Siyakhangela Ndevu, told local media he was called to the scene early Sunday morning.

"I am still uncertain about what really happened, but when I was called in the morning I was told the place was too full and that some people were trying to force their way into the tavern," he said. "However, we will hear what the police say about the cause of death."

Norway: Suspect in Pride Month attack won't talk to police

By KOSTYA MANENKOV and JARI TANNER Associated Press

OSLO, Norway (AP) — The suspect in a mass shooting during an LGBTQ festival in Norway has refused to explain his actions to investigators and will remain in pretrial custody for the next four weeks, police and his defense lawyer said Sunday.

The man, whom authorities described as a 42-year-old Norwegian citizen originally from Iran, was arrested shortly after the shooting in Oslo's nightlife district early Saturday. He is being held on suspicion of murder, attempted murder and terrorism.

Two people were killed and more than 20 were injured in what the Norwegian security service called an "Islamist terror act."

Oslo police said they tried to question the suspect on Saturday and again on Sunday without success. Norwegian media identified him as Zaniar Matapour.

Matapour's defense lawyer, John Christian Elden, told The Associated Press by email that his client refused to have his statement recorded and videotaped unless police released the entire recording to the public "with no time delay so it won't be censored or manipulated."

Recording interrogations is a standard police practice.

Elden previously said his client did not deny being the shooter but had not divulged any motive. The lawyer said Sunday that Matapour did not object to remaining in custody for four weeks so would not appear in court on Monday.

In Norway, pre-trial detention hearings are normally held every four weeks.

Norway's prime minister and members of the royal family joined mourners at a memorial service Sunday at Oslo Cathedral for the victims of the attack.

The gunman opened fire at three locations, including outside the London Pub, a popular gay bar in Oslo. Police investigators said it was too early to say whether the attacker specifically targeted the LGBTQ community.

A Pride parade scheduled for Saturday was called off because of the shooting.

Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere said during Sunday's memorial service that "the shooting in the night hours put an end to the Pride parade, but it did not stop the fight and the efforts to fight discrimination, prejudice and hatred."

He also addressed Norway's Muslim community.

"I know how many of you felt when it turned out that the perpetrator belonged to the Islamic com-

munity. Many of you experienced fear and unrest. You should know this: We stand together, we are one community and we are responsible for the community together," Stoere said during the church service, which was also attended by Crown Princess Mette-Marit.

Norwegian media said Matapour arrived in Norway with his family from a Kurdish part of Iran in the 1990s. He had a prior criminal record that included a narcotics offense and a weapons offense for carrying a knife. Investigators said they seized two weapons after Saturday's shootings: a handgun and an automatic weapon.

The Norwegian domestic security agency, known by its Norwegian acronym PST, said Saturday it first became aware of the suspect in 2015 and later grew concerned he had become radicalized and was part of an unspecified Islamist network.

On Sunday, Norwegian media outlets reported that Matapour allegedly was in close contact with an Islamic extremist living in Norway whom Norwegian police had been aware of for a long time.

After Roe's demise, clergy lead faithful in praise, laments

By HOLLY MEYER and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

Praise and lament for the overturning of abortion rights filled sacred spaces this weekend as clergy across the U.S. rearranged worship plans or rewrote sermons to provide their religious context -- and competing messages -- about the historic moment.

Abortion is a visceral issue for deeply divided religious Americans. Some are sad or angry in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's seismic *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision Friday. Others are grateful and elated.

At St. Paul Cathedral in Pittsburgh, the Very Rev. Kris Stubna discarded his planned Sunday homily and focused on the decision, calling it "a day of great joy and blessing." He said the overturning of the nearly 50-year-old *Roe v. Wade* ruling was the result of prayers and efforts of many Catholics and others.

"This law violated the very law of God, that every life is sacred," he said. "A person cannot support abortion and still be a faithful member of the church."

Stubna's comments would be considered divisive by some since U.S. Catholics disagree on abortion rights. Supporters include high-profile members of the faith like President Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi who face Communion restrictions as a result.

Not everyone sat through Stubna's entire homily. Although unable to ask their reasons, an Associated Press photographer saw one woman leave during it. Security personnel estimated three others also exited early.

Views on abortions are not just polarizing within denominations; the divisions span the religious landscape.

"SCOTUS just dealt a terrible blow to women, to girls, to all childbearing people, to freedom," said the Rev. Jacqui Lewis, senior minister at Middle Collegiate Church, a multicultural Protestant congregation in Manhattan.

She mourned the overturning of *Roe*, expressing deep emotions during a service Sunday, saying, "It took safe legal abortions off the table, opening the door for states to rush in and crush reproductive justice. We are reeling. Spinning. So hurt we can hardly move. We are feeling the loss, the pain of it."

A majority of adults from Buddhist, Hindu, historically Black Protestant, Jewish, mainline Protestant, Muslim and Orthodox Christian faiths support legal abortion in all or most cases, according to a Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Study.

Rabbi Sarah DePaolo carved out time at the start of Friday night's Shabbat service at Congregation Shir Ha-Ma'alot in Irvine, California, to express her disappointment, urging community members to support each other and create space for the fearful.

"One of the most upsetting things about this decision is that while it claims to represent people of faith, it does not represent our faith," DePaolo said. "It does not reflect our Jewish law. It does not reflect our traditions. It does not reflect our community."

Catholics are split on the issue while most evangelical Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints say abortion should be illegal in all or most instances,

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according to the Pew Research Center study.

The Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, views the ruling as a moral and spiritual victory. On Sunday, he told his California congregation at New Season that now is the time for an unprecedented adoption movement.

"We're gonna adopt babies, but we're gonna adopt moms, pregnant moms ... who have abortions because they can't afford to have a baby," he said.

Southern Baptists, who are members of the nation's largest Protestant denomination, are staunch supporters of anti-abortion views. On Sunday, several pastors praised the ruling from their pulpits.

The congregation at First Baptist Concord in Knoxville, Tennessee, broke into applause when Pastor John Mark Harrison addressed it. He invited a panel of advocates to explain how everyone can continue supporting those with unwanted pregnancies via mentorship, fostering, adoption, addressing systemic issues and more.

"There's so much anger and emotion," Harrison said. "What we need to understand is that we're not called to fuel the emotions of the right or the left. We're called to walk in and through the gospel of Jesus Christ ... and minister to real people in real times of crisis."

At Central Church, in College Station, Texas, lead Pastor Phillip Bethancourt echoed that overturning Roe is not the finish line: "It's the starting gate of a new chapter. Abortion should be not just be unlawful but unnecessary and unthinkable."

David Rhoades, lead pastor of Broadview Baptist Church in Lubbock, Texas, said in an email the court decision was on a par with the Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth, and will reverberate for years.

He hoped church members left Sunday's service with a clear understanding of what they must do next, including "minister to both the baby and its mother, and continue to work to elect pro-life representatives."

Other faith leaders doubled down on their support for abortion rights.

Women should be able to make their own decisions, preached the Rev. Fletcher Harper at the Episcopal Church of Our Saviour in Secaucus, New Jersey.

"Outlawing abortion is a sinful act that perpetuates male domination and the subjugation of women," he said. "It extends the coercive power of the state into a place where it should have no business."

During a service Sunday at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania, director of music Mary Pratt read aloud a denominational statement affirming it would remain "committed to reproductive justice."

Pratt said members were shocked and grieving, although they expected the outcome. "They were looking for reminders of why we need to get back out and fight," she said.

The start of services at Pilgrim United Church of Christ in Durham, North Carolina, included two verses of "We Shall Overcome" and a prayer by the Rev. Melinda Keenan Wood for those outraged, heartbroken and fearful about Roe's demise.

"We know that this decision will be measured in deaths, incarcerations and life-altering trauma as politicians rush to control the most painfully intimate of decisions," Keenan Wood said.

A prominent Black pastor in Columbus, Ohio — Bishop Timothy Clarke of the First Church of God — tried to strike a balance in his Saturday message to congregants, acknowledging conflicting views on abortion and calling on the church to show compassion.

"I know and love persons in both camps," Clarke said. "They are sincere, committed. ... They truly see this as a life altering issue."

Pride parades march on with new urgency across US

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Pride parades kicked off in New York City and around the country Sunday with glittering confetti, cheering crowds, fluttering rainbow flags and newfound fears about losing freedoms won through decades of activism.

The annual marches in New York, San Francisco, Chicago and elsewhere took place just two days after

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one conservative justice on the Supreme Court signaled, in a ruling on abortion, that the court should reconsider the right to same-sex marriage recognized in 2015.

"We're here to make a statement," said 31-year-old Mercedes Sharpe, who traveled to Manhattan from Massachusetts. "I think it's about making a point, rather than all the other years like how we normally celebrate it. This one's really gonna stand out. I think a lot of angry people, not even just women, angry men, angry women."

Thousands of people — many decked in pride colors — lined the parade route through Manhattan, cheering as floats and marchers passed by. Organizers announced this weekend that a Planned Parenthood contingent would be at the front of the parade.

In Chicago, Mayor Lori Lightfoot called the top court ruling a "momentary setback" and said Sunday's events were "an opportunity for us to not only celebrate Pride, but be resolved for the fight."

"We will not live in a world, not in my city, where our rights are taken from us or rolled back," said Lightfoot, Chicago's first openly gay mayor, and the first Black woman to hold the office.

In San Francisco, some marchers and spectators held signs condemning the court's abortion ruling. U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who rode in a convertible holding a gavel and a rainbow fan, said the large turnout was an acknowledgement that Americans support gay rights.

"Even in spite of the majority on the court that's anti our Constitution, our country knows and loves our LGBTIQ+ community," she told KGO-TV.

The warning shot from the nation's top court came after a year of legislative defeats for the LGBTQ community, including the passage of laws in some states limiting the discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity with children.

As anti-gay sentiments resurface, some are pushing for the parades to return to their roots — less blocks-long street parties, more overtly civil rights marches.

"It has gone from being a statement of advocacy and protest to being much more of a celebration of gay life," Sean Clarkin, 67, said of New York City's annual parade while enjoying a drink recently at Julius', one of the oldest gay bars in Manhattan's Greenwich Village.

As he remembers things, the parade was once about defiance and pushing against an oppressive mainstream that saw gays, lesbians and transgender people as unworthy outsiders.

"As satisfying and empowering as it may be to now be accepted by the mainstream," Clarkin said, "there was also something energizing and wonderful about being on the outside looking in."

New York's first Pride March, then called the Christopher Street Liberation Day March, was held in 1970 to mark the first anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion, a spontaneous street uprising triggered by a police raid on a gay bar in Manhattan.

San Francisco's first march was in 1972 and had been held every year since, except during the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Celebrations are now global, taking place throughout the year in multiple countries, with many of the biggest parades taking place in June. One of the world's largest, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, was held June 19.

In the United States, this year's celebrations take place amid a potential crisis.

In a Supreme Court ruling Friday striking down the right to abortion, Justice Clarence Thomas said in a concurring opinion that the court should also reconsider its 2015 decision legalizing same-sex marriage and a 2003 decision striking down laws criminalizing gay sex.

New York City parade spectator Jackie English said she and her fiancée Dana had yet to set a wedding date, but have a new sense of urgency.

"Now we feel a bit pressured," she said, adding they might "jump the gun a little sooner. Because, what if that right gets taken away from us?"

More than a dozen states have recently enacted laws that go against the interests of LGBTQ communities, including a law barring any mention of sexual orientation in school curricula in Florida and threats of prosecution for parents who allow their children to get gender-affirming care in Texas.

Several states have put laws in place prohibiting transgender athletes from participating in team sports

that coincide with the gender in which they identify.

According to an Anti-Defamation League survey released earlier this week, members of LGBTQ communities were more likely than any other group to experience harassment. Two-thirds of respondents said they have been harassed, a little more than half of whom said the harassment was a result of their sexual orientation.

In recent years, schisms over how to commemorate Stonewall have opened, spawning splinter groups events intended to be more protest-oriented.

In New York City, the Queer Liberation March takes place at the same time as the traditional parade, billing itself as the "antidote to the corporate-infused, police-entangled, politician-heavy Parades that now dominate pride celebrations."

San Francisco's parade was marked by the return of uniformed police, who were banned in 2020 after a 2019 confrontation with protesters who staged a parade-stopping sit-in. Critics accused them of using excessive force. On Sunday, San Francisco Police Chief William Scott, in full dress uniform, passed out small rainbow pride flags to spectators.

Despite the criticism of growing commercialism, a strong streak of activism was apparent among attendees this year.

"The recent overturning of Roe v. Wade has caused a very strong uproar about what went down," said Dean Jigarjian, 22, who crossed the river from New Jersey with his girlfriend to take part in the New York City parade. "So as you can see here, the crowd seems to be very energized about what could be next."

EXPLAINER: What's the impact of a Russian debt default?

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia is poised to default on its foreign debt for the first time since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, further alienating the country from the global financial system following sanctions imposed over its war in Ukraine.

The country faces a Sunday night deadline to meet a 30-day grace period on interest payments originally due May 27. But it could take time to confirm a default.

"While there is a possibility that some magic could occur" and Russia gets the money through financial institutions to bondholders despite sanctions, "nobody's making that bet," said Jay S. Auslander, a top sovereign debt lawyer at the firm of Wilk Auslander in New York. "The overwhelming probability is they won't be able to because no bank is going to move the money."

Last month, the U.S. Treasury Department ended Russia's ability to pay its billions in debt back to international investors through American banks. In response, the Russian Finance Ministry said it would pay dollar-denominated debts in rubles and offer "the opportunity for subsequent conversion into the original currency."

Russia calls any default artificial because it has the money to pay its debts but says sanctions have frozen its foreign currency reserves held abroad.

"There is money and there is also the readiness to pay," Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said last month. "This situation, artificially created by an unfriendly country, will not have any effect on Russians' quality of life."

Tim Ash, senior emerging market sovereign analyst at BlueBay Asset Management, tweeted that the default "is clearly not" beyond Russia's control and that sanctions are preventing it from paying its debts because it invaded Ukraine.

Here are key things to know about a Russian default:

HOW MUCH DOES RUSSIA OWE?

About \$40 billion in foreign bonds, about half of that to foreigners. Before the start of the war, Russia had around \$640 billion in foreign currency and gold reserves, much of which was held overseas and is now frozen.

Russia has not defaulted on its international debts since the Bolshevik Revolution more than a century ago, when the Russian Empire collapsed and the Soviet Union was created. Russia defaulted on its do-

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mestic debts in the late 1990s but was able to recover from that default with the help of international aid.

Investors have expected Russia to default for months. Insurance contracts that cover Russian debt have priced a 80% likelihood of default for weeks, and rating agencies like Standard & Poor's and Moody's have placed the country's debt deep into junk territory.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF A COUNTRY IS IN DEFAULT?

Ratings agencies can lower the rating to default or a court can decide the issue. Bondholders who have credit default swaps — contracts that act like insurance policies against default — can ask a committee of financial firm representatives to decide whether a failure to pay debt should trigger a payout, which still isn't a formal declaration of default.

The Credit Default Determination Committee — an industry group of banks and investment funds — ruled June 7 that Russia had failed to pay required additional interest after making a payment on a bond after the April 4 due date. But the committee put off taking further action due to uncertainty over how sanctions might affect any settlement.

WHAT CAN INVESTORS DO?

The formal way to declare default is if 25% or more of bondholders say they didn't get their money. Once that happens, provisions say all Russia's other foreign bonds are also in default, and bondholders could then seek a court judgment to enforce payment.

In normal circumstances, investors and the defaulting government typically negotiate a settlement in which bondholders are given new bonds that are worth less but that at least give them some partial compensation.

But sanctions bar dealings with Russia's finance ministry. And no one knows when the war will end or how much defaulted bonds could wind up being worth.

In this case, declaring default and suing "might not be the wisest choice," Auslander said. It's not possible to negotiate with Russia and there are so many unknowns, so creditors may decide to "hang tight for now."

Investors who wanted out of Russian debt have probably already headed for the exits, leaving those who may have bought bonds at knocked-down prices in hopes of profiting from a settlement in the long run. And they might want to keep a low profile for a while to avoid being associated with the war.

Once a country defaults, it can be cut off from bond-market borrowing until the default is sorted out and investors regain confidence in the government's ability and willingness to pay. But Russia has already been cut off from Western capital markets, so any return to borrowing is a long way off anyway.

The Kremlin can still borrow rubles at home, where it mostly relies on Russian banks to buy its bonds.

WHAT WOULD BE THE IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S DEFAULT?

Western sanctions over the war have sent foreign companies fleeing from Russia and interrupted the country's trade and financial ties with the rest of the world. Default would be one more symptom of that isolation and disruption.

Investment analysts are cautiously reckoning that a Russia default would not have the kind of impact on global financial markets and institutions that came from an earlier default in 1998. Back then, Russia's default on domestic ruble bonds led the U.S. government to step in and get banks to bail out Long-Term Capital Management, a large U.S. hedge fund whose collapse, it was feared, could have shaken the wider financial and banking system.

Holder of the bonds — for instance, funds that invest in emerging market bonds — could take serious losses. Russia, however, played only a small role in emerging market bond indexes, limiting the losses to fund investors.

While the war itself is having devastating consequences in terms of human suffering and higher food and energy prices worldwide, default on government bonds would be "definitely not systemically relevant," International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has said.

Russia strikes Kyiv as Western leaders meet in Europe

By OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI Associated Press

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KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia shattered weeks of relative calm in the Ukrainian capital with long-range missiles fired toward Kyiv early Sunday, an apparent Kremlin show-of-force as Western leaders meet in Europe to strengthen their military and economic support of Ukraine.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said the missiles hit at least two residential buildings, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said a 37-year-old man was killed and his 7-year-old daughter and wife injured. Associated Press journalists saw emergency workers battling flames and rescuing civilians.

The strikes also damaged a nearby kindergarten, where a crater pocked the courtyard. U.S. President Joe Biden called the attacks “barbarism” after he arrived in Germany for a Group of Seven summit.

Later Sunday, a local official reported a second death, telling the Unian news agency that a railroad worker was killed and several others were injured in the attacks while servicing rail infrastructure.

Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuriy Ignat said the first air-launched weapons successfully to target the capital since June 5 were Kh-101 cruise missiles fired from warplanes over the Caspian Sea, more than 1,500 kilometers (932 miles) away.

Kyiv’s mayor told journalists he thought the airstrikes were “maybe a symbolic attack” ahead of a NATO summit in Madrid that starts Tuesday. A former commander of U.S. forces in Europe said the strikes also were a signal to the leaders of G-7 nations meeting Sunday in Germany.

“Russia is saying, ‘We can do this all day long. You guys are powerless to stop us,’” retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, the former commanding general of U.S. Army forces in Europe, said. “The Russians are humiliating the leaders of the West.”

The G-7 leaders were set to announce the latest in a long series of international economic steps to pressure and isolate Russia over its war in Ukraine: new bans on imports of Russian gold. Standing with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the three-day meeting’s host, Biden said of the missile strikes on Kyiv: “It’s more of their barbarism.”

Zelenskyy, speaking in his nightly video address, appealed to the G-7 leaders for more help, saying stopping Russian aggression “is possible only if we get everything we ask for, and in the time we need it - weapons, financial support and sanctions against Russia.”

A Ukrainian parliament member, Oleksiy Goncharenko, wrote on the Telegram messaging app that preliminary information indicated that Russia launched 14 missiles toward the capital region and Kyiv itself. Zelenskyy said some were intercepted, and he vowed revenge against “all pilots, dispatchers, technicians and other people who ensure the launch of missiles in Ukraine.”

“We will find you all. Each of you will be responsible for these blows,” Zelenskyy vowed. “And if someone thinks he will evade responsibility by saying that this was an order, you are wrong. When your missiles hit homes, it’s a war crime. The court is what awaits you all. And you will not hide anywhere - neither on the shores of the Caspian Sea, over which your missiles are launched, nor in Belarus ... Nowhere.”

In a phone interview, retired U.S. general Hodges told The Associated Press that Russia has a limited stock of precision missiles and “if they are using them, it’s going to be for a special purpose,”

Russia has denied targeting civilians during the 4-month-old war, and Hodges said it was hard to know if the missiles launched Sunday were intended to strike the apartments buildings.

Russian forces tried to seize control of Kyiv early in the war. After Ukrainian troops repelled them, the Kremlin largely shifted its focus to southern and eastern Ukraine.

Russian rocket strikes in the city of Cherkasy, about 160 kilometers (100 miles) southeast of Kyiv, killed one person and injured five, regional governor Ihor Taburets said Sunday.

In the east, Russian troops fought to consolidate their gains by battling to swallow up the last remaining Ukrainian stronghold in Luhansk province. Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai said Sunday that Russia was conducting intense airstrikes on the city of Lysychansk, destroying its television tower and seriously damaging a road bridge.

“There’s very much destruction. Lysychansk is almost unrecognizable,” he wrote on Facebook.

For weeks, Lysychansk and the nearby city of Sievierodonetsk have been subject to a bloody and destructive offensive by Russian forces and their separatist allies aimed at capturing all of Ukraine’s eastern

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Donbas region.

They have made steady and slow progress, with Haidai confirming Saturday that Sievierodonetsk, including a chemical plant where hundreds of Ukrainian troops and civilians were holed up, had fallen.

Commenting on the battle for Sievierodonetsk, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said late Saturday that Russian and Moscow-backed separatist forces now control not only the city but the villages surrounding it. He said the Russian military had thwarted Ukrainian forces' attempt to turn the Azot chemical plant into a "stubborn center of resistance."

Capturing Lysychansk would give Russian and separatist forces control of every major settlement in Luhansk. At last report, they controlled about half of Donetsk, the second province in the Donbas.

On Saturday, Russia launched dozens of missiles on several areas across the country far from the heart of the eastern battles. Some of the missiles were fired from Russian long-range Tu-22 bombers deployed from Belarus for the first time, Ukraine's air command said.

Reacting to the shelling from the Russian bombers, Zelenskyy appealed to the people of Belarus to resist cooperation with the Russian military. "The Russian leadership wants to draw you - all Belarusians - into the war, wants to sow hatred between us," he said in his video address Sunday. "You can refuse to participate in this war. Your lives belong only to you, not to someone in the Kremlin."

Belarus hosts Russian military units and was used as a staging ground before Russia invaded Ukraine, but its own troops have not crossed the border. In a meeting Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin told Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko that Russia planned to supply Belarus with the Iskander-M missile system.

On the economic front, U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said banning imports of Russian gold would represent a significant escalation of sanctions.

"That is the second-most lucrative export that Russia has after energy," Blinken told American news channel CNN. "It's about \$19 billion a year. And most of that is within the G-7 countries. So cutting that off, denying access to about \$19 billion of revenues a year, that's significant."

Russia is poised to default on its foreign debt for the first time since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, further alienating the country from the global financial system following international sanctions imposed over its war in Ukraine.

The country faces a Sunday night deadline to meet a 30-day grace period on interest payments originally due May 27. But it could take time to confirm a default.

Russia calls any default artificial because it has the money to pay its debts but says sanctions have frozen its foreign currency reserves held abroad.

Biden urges Western unity on Ukraine amid war fatigue

By ZEKE MILLER, DARLENE SUPERVILLE and GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

ELMAU, Germany (AP) — President Joe Biden and Western allies opened a three-day summit in the Bavarian Alps on Sunday intent on keeping economic fallout from the war in Ukraine from fracturing the global coalition working to punish Russia's aggression. Britain's Boris Johnson warned the leaders not to give in to "fatigue" even as Russia lobbed new missiles at Kyiv.

The Group of Seven leaders were set to announce new bans on imports of Russian gold, the latest in a series of sanctions the club of democracies hopes will further isolate Russia economically. They also were looking at possible price caps on energy meant to limit Russian oil and gas profits that Moscow can pump into its war effort.

And following up on a proposal from last year's G-7 summit, Biden formally launched a global infrastructure partnership designed to counter China's influence in the developing world. The initiative aims to leverage \$600 billion with fellow G-7 countries by 2027 for global infrastructure projects. Some \$200 billion would come from the United States, Biden said.

U.S. officials have long argued that China's infrastructure initiative traps receiving countries in debt and that the investments benefit China more than their hosts.

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In a pre-summit show of force, Russia launched its first missile strikes against the Ukrainian capital in three weeks, striking at least two residential buildings, according to Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko.

Biden condemned Russia's actions as "more of their barbarism," and stressed that allies need to remain firm even as the economic reverberations from the war take a toll around the globe in inflation, food shortages and more.

"We have to stay together, because Putin has been counting on, from the beginning, that somehow NATO and the G-7 would splinter, but we haven't and we're not going to," Biden said during a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who holds the G-7's rotating presidency and is hosting the gathering.

As the G-7 leaders sat down for their opening session, they took a light-hearted jab at Putin. Johnson could be heard asking whether he should keep his jacket on, adding, "We all have to show that we're tougher than Putin." Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau chimed in: "A bare-chested horseback ride."

Over the years, the Kremlin has released several photos of the Russian leader in which he appears shirtless.

Biden and his counterparts were using the gathering to discuss how to secure energy supplies and tackle inflation triggered by the war's fallout.

The leaders also came together on the new global infrastructure partnership meant to provide an alternative to Russian and Chinese investment in the developing world. One by one, the leaders stepped up to the microphone to discuss the partnership and their roles in it — without mentioning China by name.

Ukraine cast a shadow over the gathering, but the leaders were determined to project resolve.

Scholz told Biden that the allies all managed "to stay united, which obviously Putin never expected."

Biden said of Putin's war: "We can't let this aggression take the form it has and get away with it."

Scholz, who has faced criticism at home and abroad for perceived reluctance to send Ukraine heavy weapons, said, "Germany and the U.S. will always act together when it comes to questions of Ukraine's security."

Johnson, for his part, urged fellow leaders not to give in to "fatigue." He has expressed concern that divisions may emerge in the pro-Ukraine alliance as the four-month-old war grinds on.

Asked whether he thought France and Germany were doing enough, Johnson praised the "huge strides" made by Germany to arm Ukraine and cut imports of Russian gas. He did not mention France.

Biden and Scholz, in their pre-summit meeting, agreed on the need for a negotiated end to the Ukraine war, but did not get into specifics on how to achieve it, said a senior Biden administration official, who requested anonymity to reveal details of a private conversation.

However, they did not have an extensive discussion about oil price caps or inflation, the official said.

Other leaders echoed Biden's praise of coalition unity.

The head of the European Union's council of governments said the 27-member bloc maintains "unwavering unity" in backing Ukraine against Russia's invasion with money and political support, but that "Ukraine needs more and we are committed to providing more."

European Council President Charles Michel said EU governments were ready to supply "more military support, more financial means, and more political support" to enable Ukraine to defend itself and "curb Russia's ability to wage war."

The EU has imposed six rounds of sanctions against Russia, the latest one being a ban on 90% of Russian crude oil imports by the end of the year. The measure is aimed at a pillar of the Kremlin's finances, its oil and gas revenues.

Biden and the leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan, plus the EU, spent Sunday in both formal and informal settings discussing the war's effects on the global economy, including inflation.

Biden said G-7 nations, including the United States, will ban imports of gold from Russia. A formal announcement was expected Tuesday as the leaders wind up their annual summit.

Johnson said the ban will "directly hit Russian oligarchs and strike at the heart of Putin's war machine."

"Putin is squandering his dwindling resources on this pointless and barbaric war. He is bankrolling his ego at the expense of both the Ukrainian and Russian people," Johnson said. "We need to starve the

Putin regime of its funding.”

Gold, in recent years, has been the top Russian export after energy — reaching almost \$19 billion or about 5% of global gold exports, in 2020, according to the White House.

Of Russian gold exports, 90% was consigned to G-7 countries. More than 90% of those exports, or nearly \$17 billion, was exported to the U.K. The United States imported less than \$200 million in gold from Russia in 2019, and under \$1 million in 2020 and 2021.

As for the idea of price caps on energy, Michel said, “we want to go into the details, we want to fine-tune ... to make sure we have a clear common understanding of what are the direct effects and what could be the collateral consequences” if such a step were to be taken by the group.

LIV Golf heads to Oregon, where local officials aren't happy

By ANNE M. PETERSON AP Sports Writer

Saudi Arabia-backed LIV Golf is getting a chilly reception in Oregon, its first stop in the United States.

This coming week, the series, which is paying enormous signing fees for players like Phil Mickelson and Dustin Johnson, descends on Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club in tiny North Plains, nestled in the rolling hills west of Portland.

But the North Plains mayor, as well as officials from surrounding cities, have written the club's owner, Escalante Golf, with concerns. Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden is speaking out against the tournament, and some members of the pricy club also are uncomfortable with the situation.

Opponents point to Saudi Arabia's human rights abuses, including the murder of U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi. But in Oregon, there also is anger over the hit-and-run death of 15-year-old Fallon Smart in 2016.

Saudi student Abdulrahman Sameer Noorah was facing a trial on first-degree murder charges when he removed a tracking device and vanished. U.S. authorities believe the Saudi government helped arrange for a fake passport and provided a private jet for travel back to Saudi Arabia. The case was featured on “60 Minutes.”

“It's wrong to be silent when Saudi Arabia tries to cleanse blood-stained hands, in the fight for Oregonians to get justice — Fallon Smart was killed very close to our house in Southeast Portland, and the person charged with the crime, a hit-and-run death, was, based on all the evidence, whisked out of the country by the Saudis before he stood for trial,” Wyden said in an interview with The Associated Press.

There is also concern the event could bring protests to North Plains, a town of just 3,400 people. Tickets to the event prohibit fans from displaying any political signs.

“We oppose this event because it is being sponsored by a repressive government whose human rights abuses are documented. We refuse to support these abuses by complicitly allowing the Saudi-backed organization to play in our backyard,” said a letter signed by North Plains Mayor Teri Lenahan and 10 other mayors from surrounding cities.

Wyden accuses the Saudi government of sportswashing.

“It's just a page out of the autocrats' playbook covering up injustices by misusing athletics in hopes of normalizing their abuses,” he said.

The event also has put Pumpkin Ridge members in a difficult spot. Some decided to leave the club over the tournament, but it's unclear how many departed.

“A lot of members are like stuck between a rock and a hard place right now where politically they don't agree with it at all,” said member Kevin Palmer of Beaverton. “But I also joined last year and put down like \$12,000, and if I leave I don't get any of that money back.”

Greg Norman is CEO of LIV Golf Investments and the face of a circuit that aims to rival the PGA Tour. The 48-man field in Portland will compete for \$20 million in prize money for individual play, and \$5 million in team play, with 12 teams. Teams will be announced Tuesday after a draft.

Johnson, who had been No. 1 in the world longer than any player since Tiger Woods, and six-time major champion Mickelson were among the first big names to join. The Portland field since has added Bryson

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DeChambeau, Brooks Koepka and Patrick Reed, all major champions, though none among the current top 20 players in the world ranking.

The PGA Tour has suspended every member who competed in the first LIV event because they did not have conflicting event releases. Those in Portland also will be suspended when they tee it up.

The tour typically awards three such releases a year, only for tournaments overseas. It does not allow its members to compete in tournaments held in North America.

The Portland event is held the same week as the John Deere Classic in Illinois.

"The PGA Tour, an American institution, can't compete with a foreign monarchy that is spending billions of dollars in attempt to buy the game of golf," Commissioner Jay Monahan said last week. "We welcome good, healthy competition. The LIV Saudi golf league is not that. It's an irrational threat, one not concerned with the return on investment or true growth of the game."

The LIV tour consists of eight events this year, five in the United States. Following the stop in Portland, the tour moves to the Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster.

Texas-based Escalante Golf, owner of Pumpkin Ridge and another course on the LIV series, did not respond to a request for comment.

"We believe that we have a moral obligation to take a stand and speak out against this event in order to protect the people we serve," the mayors wrote in their letter to the company. "While our local jurisdictions may not be able to prevent this event, we stand together to voice our concerns about the unwelcomed potential risks, visitors and harm this event could have on our communities."

A 'sucker punch': Some women fear setback to hard-won rights

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

At 88, Gloria Steinem has long been the nation's most visible feminist and advocate for women's rights. But at 22, she was a frightened American in London getting an illegal abortion of a pregnancy so unwanted, she actually tried to throw herself down the stairs to end it.

Her response to the Supreme Court's decision overruling Roe v. Wade is succinct: "Obviously," she wrote in an email message, "without the right of women and men to make decisions about our own bodies, there is no democracy."

Steinem's blunt remark cuts to the heart of the despair some opponents are feeling about Friday's historic rollback of the 1973 case legalizing abortion. If a right so central to the overall fight for women's equality can be revoked, they ask, what does it mean for the progress women have made in public life in the intervening 50 years?

"One of the things that I keep hearing from women is, 'My daughter's going to have fewer rights than I did. And how can that be?'" says Debbie Walsh, of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. "If this goes, what else can go? It makes everything feel precarious."

Reproductive freedom was not the only demand of second-wave feminism, as the women's movement of the '60s and '70s is known, but it was surely one of the most galvanizing issues, along with workplace equality.

The women who fought for those rights recall an astonishing decade of progress from about 1963 to 1973 including the right to equal pay, the right to use birth control, and Title IX in 1972 which bans discrimination in education. Capping it off was Roe v. Wade a year later, granting a constitutional right to abortion.

Many of the women who identified as feminists at the time had an illegal abortion or knew someone who did. Steinem, in fact, credits a "speak-out" meeting she attended on abortion in her 30s as the moment she pivoted from journalism to activism — and finally felt enabled to speak about her own secret abortion.

"Abortion is so tied to the women's movement in this country," says Carole Joffe, a sociologist at the University of California, San Francisco medical school who studies and teaches the history of abortion. "Along with improved birth control, what legal abortion meant was that women who were heterosexually active could still take part in public life. It enabled the huge change we've seen in women's status over the last 50 years." Joffe says many women, like her, now feel that the right to contraception could be at risk — something she calls "unthinkable."

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One of them is Heather Booth. When she was 20 and a student in Chicago, a male friend asked if she could help his sister obtain an abortion. It was 1965, and through contacts in the civil rights movement, she found a way to connect the young woman, nearly suicidal at the prospect of being pregnant, to a doctor willing to help. She thought it would be a one-off, but Booth ended up co-founding the Jane Collective, an underground group of women who provided safe abortions to those in need. In all, the group performed some 11,000 abortions over about seven years — a story recounted in the new documentary “The Janes.”

Booth, now 76, sees the Roe v. Wade upheaval as a chilling challenge to the triumphs of the women’s movement.

“I think we are on a knife’s edge,” she says. “On the one hand, there’s been 50 years of a change in women’s condition in this society,” she adds, recalling that when she was growing up, women could only respond to employment ads in the “women’s section,” to list just one example.

“So there’s been an advance toward greater equality, but ... if you ask about where we stand, I think we are on a knife’s edge in a contest really between democracy and freedom, and tyranny, a dismantling of freedoms that have been long fought for.”

Of course, not every woman feels that abortion is a right worth preserving.

Linda Sloan, who has volunteered the last five years, along with her husband, for the anti-abortion organization A Moment of Hope in Columbia, South Carolina, says she values women’s rights.

“I strongly believe and support women being treated as equals to men ... (in) job opportunities, salary, respect, and many other areas,” she says. She says she has tried to instill those values in her two daughters and two sons, and upholds them with her work at two women’s shelters, trying to empower women to make the right choices.

But when it comes to Roe v. Wade, she says, “I believe that the rights of the child in the mother’s womb are equally important. To quote Psalm 139, I believe that God ‘formed my inner parts’ and ‘knitted me together in my mother’s womb.’”

Elizabeth Kilmartin, like Sloan, volunteers at A Moment of Hope and is deeply pleased by the court’s decision.

In her younger years she considered herself a feminist and studied women’s history in college. Then, over the years she came to deeply oppose abortion, and no longer considers herself a feminist because she believes the word has been co-opted by those on the left. “No women’s rights have been harmed in the decision to stop killing babies in the womb,” Kilmartin says. “We have all kinds of women in power. Women aren’t being oppressed in the workplace anymore. We have a woman vice president ... It’s just ridiculous to think that we’re so oppressed.”

Cheryl Lambert falls squarely in the opposing camp. The former Wall Street executive, now 65, immediately thought back to the gains she made earlier in her banking career, becoming the first woman to be named an officer at the institution she worked for. She calls the court decision “a sucker punch.”

“My thought was, what era are we living in?” Lambert says. “We are moving backwards. I’m just furious on behalf of our children and our grandchildren.”

Lambert herself needed an abortion as a young mother when the fetus was found to carry a genetic disease. “I thought it would get easier, not harder, to have an abortion in this country,” she says.

Now, she and many other women fear a return to dangerous, illegal abortions of the past — and a disproportionate impact on women without the means to travel to abortion-friendly states. Still, many are trying to see a positive side: that as bleak as the moment may seem, change could come via new energy at the ballot box.

“We’re in it for the long haul,” says Carol Tracy, of the Women’s Law Project in Philadelphia.

Steinem, too, issued a note of resolve.

“Women have always taken power over our own bodies, and we will keep right on,” she wrote in her email message. “An unjust court can’t stop abortion, but it guarantees civil disobedience and disrespect for the court.”

'Elvis,' 'Top Gun' tie for box-office crown with \$30.5M each

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Baz Luhrmann's Elvis Presley biopic "Elvis" shook up theaters with an estimated \$30.5 million in weekend ticket sales, but — in a box-office rarity — "Elvis" tied "Top Gun: Maverick," which also reported \$30.5 million, for No. 1 in theaters.

Final figures Monday, once Sunday's grosses are tabulated, will sort out which film ultimately won the weekend. With a high degree of accuracy, studios can forecast Sunday sales based on Friday and Saturday business, though numbers often shift by a few hundred thousand dollars.

But for now, the unlikely pair of "Elvis" and "Maverick" are locked in a dance off (if you favor "Elvis") or a dead heat (if you prefer "Maverick"). That it was this close at all was due to both a better-than-expected opening for "Elvis" and remarkably strong continued sales for "Top Gun: Maverick." The "Top Gun" sequel reached \$1 billion in worldwide box office in its fifth week of release.

"Elvis," starring newcomer Austin Butler as Presley, came into the weekend with expectations closer to \$25 million. Among recent music biopics, a \$30.5 million debut puts the King ahead of the pace of Elton John ("Rocketman" launched with \$25.7 million in 2019) though not in the same class as Freddie Mercury ("Bohemian Rhapsody" opened with \$51.1 million in 2018).

"I'm less concerned with who's number one and who's number two, and I'm more concerned that we hit this big number given that this audience has been the slowest to return to movie theaters," said Jeff Goldstein, distribution chief for Warner Bros.

About 60% of the audience for "Elvis" was over the age of 35. Older audiences have been among the most hesitant to return to theaters in the pandemic but that's changing — in part, Goldstein noted, because of "Top Gun," which brought back fans of the 1986 original.

"Elvis," which cost about \$85 million to make, was propelled by strong reviews (78% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes), good word of mouth (an A- CinemaScore) and a glitzy Cannes Film Festival premiere. It added \$20 million overseas over the weekend.

"Elvis" ranks as Luhrmann's second best opening after 2013's "The Great Gatsby" (\$50.1 million). Luhrmann was on the cusp of beginning production in Australia when, in an indelible early moment in the pandemic, star Tom Hanks tested positive for COVID-19.

"'Elvis' was a risky proposition: the music is dated, the character is not directly familiar, and the lead actor is unproven on the big screen," David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research wrote in a newsletter. "But critics and audiences are responding. This is the Baz Luhrmann show, a music, dance and sex appeal spectacular — it's a hit."

Meanwhile, "Top Gun: Maverick" continues to soar. The Paramount Pictures film became the first 2022 release to reach \$1 billion in worldwide ticket sales, and the first starring Tom Cruise to do so.

In its fifth weekend of release, "Maverick" dipped just 32% domestically to bring its total so far to \$521.7 million in U.S. and Canadian theaters. It continues to move up the record books, sitting 15th all-time domestically, not accounting for inflation. Internationally, the "Top Gun" sequel added another \$44.5 million.

The "Elvis"/"Top Gun" showdown — along with the new Blumhouse horror release "The Black Phone" and big holdovers in "Jurassic World: Dominion" and Pixar's "Lightyear" — made for one of the most competitive, and busy, weekends in movie theaters in the pandemic era.

Most studios came away celebrating, though Disney's "Lightyear" dropped a steep 65% in its second weekend. After opening softly last week, the "Toy Story" spinoff grossed \$17.7 million domestically, falling to fifth place. "Lightyear," which has made \$152 million worldwide to date, will soon face more competition for families with the Friday release of "Minions: The Rise of Gru."

Counterprogramming came from Universal Pictures' "The Black Phone," the Scott Derrickson-directed supernatural thriller starring Ethan Hawke as an escaped killer. The Blumhouse production rode strong reviews (84% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) to a better-than-expected launch of \$23.4 million.

After two weeks in first place, Universal's "Jurassic World: Dominion" took in \$26.4 million, sliding to third. It's now passed \$300 million domestically, and hauled in \$746.7 million globally.

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A much smaller-scaled film, "Marcel the Shell With Shoes On," debuted with good sales in limited release. The warmly received stop-motion animation film, in which Jenny Slate voices a one-inch-tall mollusk with a googly eye, opened with \$169,606 on six screens, for a per-screen average of \$28,267.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. (Tie) "Elvis," \$30.5 million.
1. (Tie) "Top Gun: Maverick," \$30.5 million.
3. "Jurassic World: Dominion," \$26.4 million.
4. "Black Phone," \$23.4 million.
5. "Lightyear," \$17.7 million.
6. "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness," \$1.7 million.
7. "Jugjugg Jeeyo," \$725,000.
8. "Everything Everywhere All at Once," \$533,000.
9. "The Bob's Burgers Movie," \$513,000.
10. "The Bad Guys," \$440,000.

Illinois governor's race is also battle among billionaires

By SARA BURNETT and JOHN O'CONNOR Associated Press

WAUCONDA, Ill. (AP) — The race to be Illinois' next governor is also a battle among billionaires, including two whose names won't appear on Tuesday's primary ballot.

Republican candidates Darren Bailey, who as a state lawmaker fought pandemic measures such as mask mandates, and former prosecutor Richard Irvin, the first Black mayor of Chicago's largest suburb, each has a benefactor who has pushed a different vision for the GOP and put their money behind it.

Billionaire businessmen Ken Griffin and Richard Uihlein — among the country's biggest Republican donors — have combined to pour more than \$60 million into the race. Griffin backs Irvin and Uihlein supports Bailey.

Billionaire Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker, meanwhile, along with the Democratic Governors Association, has spent millions trying to ensure Irvin, an Army veteran and Aurora mayor, isn't the GOP nominee.

The money has funded a monthslong barrage of ads that have attacked Irvin and propped up Bailey, the opponent Pritzker would rather face in November. The ads note Bailey's strident far-right positions, including being "100% pro-life," and his allegiance to former President Donald Trump — qualities that may help Bailey in a Republican primary but would be a liability for a general election in a state Trump twice lost by double digits. Trump endorsed him at a rally Saturday night in Mendon.

Although rich men in politics certainly aren't rare, there may never have been a battle of the billions to match this one in a state election, particularly in a primary. It's left Irvin, once considered the front-runner, scrambling to convince GOP primary voters that he's the only one who can beat Pritzker.

"J.B. Pritzker is telling you that every time he takes out an ad. He's telling you that 'This is the guy I'm the most most afraid of,'" Irvin said during a stop at an Illinois manufacturing plant.

Irvin's downfall may be a record that is considerably more moderate than that of his GOP rivals. Unlike Bailey and the four other men in the race, Irvin avoids saying if he voted for Trump or talking much about issues such as abortion, focusing instead on steps he would take to reduce crime and taxes. He has been criticized for saying "Black Lives Matter" during protests over police brutality that turned destructive in his hometown, then filming a TV ad where he said "All Lives Matter."

Bailey has built a reputation during three years in the Legislature as an uncompromising conservative unafraid to take people on.

"People say J.B. Pritzker wants me to win this primary because he believes that I'm the easiest opponent to beat," Bailey said during a campaign stop at a restaurant. "Well, I've got news for J.B. Pritzker: Be careful what you wish for because it's coming. Friends, we're going to win on Nov. 8."

Bailey, a farmer from rural Xenia, jumped onto the statewide scene in summer 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when he filed a lawsuit against Pritzker over a stay-at-home order the gover-

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nor issued to slow transmission of the virus. Bailey was seen by supporters as a maverick when he was escorted from the floor of the Legislature for refusing to wear a mask in defiance of Democratic leaders. His backers like that he speaks often of his faith. Bailey, who speaks with a prairie twang, ends his nearly daily online video messages with prayer.

"He's a godly man. He isn't afraid to put his faith out there," said supporter Ruth Bast, 63, of Springfield.

The three billionaires — Pritzker, Griffin and Uihlein — have a long history of clashing politically in Illinois and elsewhere.

Griffin, the founder and CEO of hedge fund company Citadel, has been a vocal critic of Pritzker's administration, particularly over the issue of crime in Chicago. In addition to the \$50 million he gave Irvin this cycle, he also spent millions to help get former Gov. Bruce Rauner elected in 2014 and on Rauner's loss to Pritzker in 2018. He bankrolled a successful campaign to block Pritzker and other Democrats from changing Illinois' tax structure to levy more on the highest earners.

In 2020, Griffin gave \$37 million to the GOP's Senate campaign arm, making him the PAC's second-largest individual donor, according to OpenSecrets, which tracks campaign spending.

Asked at a forum last year if he would support Trump should he run for president in 2024, Griffin replied, "I think it's time for America to move on," adding that Trump had been "pointlessly divisive."

In a statement to The Associated Press, Griffin criticized Pritzker for "interfering" in the GOP primary, saying "spending tens of millions of dollars in cahoots with his cronies attacking the most successful Black political leader in Illinois is despicable." Pritzker has defended his actions, saying an ad attacking Irvin is "telling the truth."

Uihlein, a founder of the office supply company Uline Inc., is a major Trump supporter who has a long record of donating to far-right candidates and groups. That includes PACs and people strongly opposed to abortion, and the House Freedom Fund, which backs the most conservative candidates and strongest Trump backers.

The other candidates seeking the GOP nomination are businessman Gary Rabine, venture capitalist Jesse Sullivan, former state Sen. Paul Schimpf and attorney Max Solomon. Pritzker's only rival in the Democratic primary is Beverly Miles.

Trump's lasting legacy grows as Supreme Court overturns Roe

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden rarely mentions his predecessor by name. But as he spoke to a nation processing a seismic shift in the rights of women, he couldn't ignore Donald Trump's legacy.

"It was three justices named by one president — Donald Trump — who were the core of today's decision to upend the scales of justice and eliminate a fundamental right for women in this country," Biden said Friday after the Supreme Court's conservative majority voted to overturn Roe v. Wade, the landmark ruling from 1973 that provided constitutional protections for women seeking abortions.

The abortion decision marked the apex in a week that reinforced the former president's ongoing impact in Washington more than a year and a half after he exited the White House.

A court that includes three Trump-appointed conservatives also decided to weaken restrictions on gun ownership. And across the street at the Capitol, which was ravaged by a mob of Trump supporters in the final days of his presidency in 2021, new details surfaced of his gross violations of democratic norms. The House's Jan. 6 committee used a public hearing last week to spotlight the intense pressure that Trump put on top Justice Department officials to overturn the 2020 election, along with discussions of blanket pardons for cooperative members of Congress.

The developments were a reminder of the awkward political bargain social conservatives embraced to achieve their grandest ambitions. In refusing to consider Barack Obama's Supreme Court nominee during the final year of his presidency, then-Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., ensured that the next president would be able to make his mark on the court. As Trump pledged to transform the Supreme Court's ideological leanings — even providing a list of the judges he would choose from — reluctant

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conservative Republicans and evangelical Christians rallied behind Trump, a thrice-married man who had previously described himself as "very pro-choice."

"When he ran in 2016, he promised that he would appoint conservative and pro-life judges to the federal courts starting with the U.S. Supreme Court. And he kept his word," said Ralph Reed, an evangelical leader and chair of the The Faith and Freedom Coalition, who was criticized in some corners for his embrace of Trump. "Those in the faith community that felt it was worth taking a chance on Donald Trump in 2016 have been vindicated."

The GOP is now at something of a turning point in its relationship with a man who has fundamentally transformed the party with his populist, "Make America Great Again" agenda and his fight against the establishment Republicans who used to control the party. There's a growing debate within the party about whether Trump's resonance is beginning to fade as he lays the groundwork for a third presidential run in 2024.

Other leading Republicans, including former Vice President Mike Pence, and Trump's former secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, are taking increasingly bold steps toward White House bids of their own. And many of Trump's own supporters are eagerly embracing Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis as Trump's natural successor as they look to the future.

Pence, Pompeo and DeSantis are among those who have made clear that a Trump candidacy would not influence their own decisions about whether to run. If they do run, they will all be competing for support from the same conservatives who fueled Trump's rise.

Trump himself seems somewhat uncertain about how to navigate the political fallout from the past week, particularly the abortion ruling. He has privately expressed concern to aides that the decision could energize Democrats going into the November elections, The New York Times first reported.

Indeed, in a Fox News interview after the abortion opinion was released, Trump said that, "in the end, this is something that will work out for everybody."

Asked about his own role in the eventual decision, Trump responded that, "God made the decision."

Trump grew more emboldened as Friday unfolded, raising money off the decision and issuing a statement in which he took full credit for what he called "the biggest WIN for LIFE in a generation."

He said that it and "other decisions that have been announced recently, were only made possible because I delivered everything as promised, including nominating and getting three highly respected and strong Constitutionals confirmed to the United States Supreme Court. It was my great honor to do so!"

At a Saturday night rally, Trump took another victory lap to cheers from the crowd.

"Yesterday the court handed down a victory for the Constitution, a victory for the rule of law, and above all, a victory for life," he told supporters, who broke into a chant of "Thank you Trump!"

While Democrats are hoping the decision will galvanize its voters heading into November's midterm elections, Michael Caputo, a former Trump campaign and White House adviser, argued the decision would be beneficial to Trump's future political prospects, helping to cement his standing with conservative voters if he runs again.

"President Trump has been accepting his share of the credit for the Trump Court's decision, as he should," Caputo said. "This is yet another confirmation of his transformational presidency. Suburban Republican angst is a progressive myth; real suburban Republicans know their handwringing is performative: This decision simply moves the abortion issue to the states where it has always belonged."

Meanwhile, the Jan. 6 committee and related investigations, including a special grand jury in Fulton County, Georgia, looking at whether Trump and others illegally meddled in the 2020 election, continue to loom.

As the committee has held a series of public hearings, few Republicans have surfaced to defend Trump's actions, which increasingly drew comparisons to President Richard Nixon's actions during the Watergate scandal 50 years ago.

The committee last week showed how a defeated Trump tried to use the Justice Department for his own political ends, much the way Nixon fired his top ranks in the "Saturday Night Massacre" before his resignation.

John Dean, who served as White House counsel to Nixon and famously testified against Nixon in hear-

ings about the scandal, said that watching the three Trump-era Justice Department officials recount how Trump pressured them to investigate baseless allegations and threaten mass resignations brought him back to conversations he had had with Nixon.

"I did fall back and was reminiscent of my March 21 'Cancer on the presidency' conversation with Nixon where I kept pushing and escalating the problems. And he clearly had made up his mind," he recounted. "Nothing I could say seemed to get through."

He said he hoped the Jan. 6 hearings would help the public "understand the seriousness of what Trump tried to do, that he is a threat to democracy and those who support him are a threat to democracy. Authoritarianism and democracy just don't work together."

Carpe diem: In Ukraine, war turning love into marriages

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — When the couple awoke to the rumble of war on Feb. 24, they'd been dating for just over a year. Russia was invading and Ihor Zakvatskyi knew there was no more time to lose.

He fished out the engagement ring he'd bought but, until then, not yet been ready to give to Kateryna Lytvynenko and proposed. If death do us part, he figured, then let it be as husband and wife.

"I did not want to waste a single minute without Katya knowing that I wanted to spend my life with her," Zakvatskyi, 24, said as he and his 25-year-old bride exchanged vows and wedding rings this month in the capital, Kyiv.

The newlyweds joined a growing army of Ukrainian couples who are speedily turning love into matrimony because of the war. Some are soldiers, marrying just before they head off to fight. Others are simply united in determination that living and loving to the full are more important than ever in the face of so much death and destruction.

Ukraine's wartime martial laws include a provision allowing Ukrainians, both soldiers and civilians, to apply and marry on the same day. In Kyiv alone, more than 4,000 couples have jumped at the expedited opportunity. Before the war, a one-month wait was the norm.

After a three-month interruption in normal service, Kyiv's Central Civil Registry Office is fully open again and working almost at a prewar pace. Since Russia withdrew its badly bloodied invasion forces from around Kyiv in April, redirecting them to front lines east and south, many people who'd fled the fighting have returned. Weddings have increased accordingly.

The returnees include Daria Ponomarenko, 22, who fled to Poland. Her boyfriend, Yevhen Nalyvaiko, 23, had to stay, because of rules preventing men aged 18 to 60 from leaving the country.

Reunited, they quickly wed — because "we don't know what will happen tomorrow," she said.

Jealously guarding their intimacy after their painful months apart, it was just the two of them, without friends and family. Rather than a puffy bridal gown, she wore a Ukrainian embroidered shirt, the traditional Vyshyvanka chosen now by many brides to stress their Ukrainian identity.

In peacetime, they would have opted for a traditional wedding with many guests. But that seemed frivolous in war.

"Everything is perceived more sharply, people become real during such events," he said.

Anna Karpenko, 30, refused to let the invasion crimp her wedding — she arrived in a white limousine.

"Life must go on," she said. She and her new husband dated for seven years, often talking about marriage, before the war turned the plan into action.

Pavlo and Oksana Savryha already had 18 years of civil marriage under their belts before the invasion prompted them to renew their vows — this time in a small 12th-century church in the war-damaged northern city of Chernihiv.

"Our souls told us to do so. Before the invasion, we were constantly running somewhere, in a hurry, and the war forced us to stop and not postpone the important decisions until tomorrow," Pavlo said.

With Oksana sheltering in the basement of their home, her husband took up arms, joining a territorial defense force, when Russian forces surrounded and bombarded Chernihiv in the initial failed stage of the

invasion.

He subsequently joined the regular army. They celebrated their love in church this month. The next day, he was sent to the front.

'Biblical' insect swarms spur Oregon push to fight pests

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press/Report for America

ARLINGTON, Ore. (AP) — Driving down a windy canyon road in northern Oregon rangeland, Jordan Maley and April Aamodt are on the look out for Mormon crickets, giant insects that can ravage crops.

"There's one right there," Aamodt says.

They're not hard to spot. The insects, which can grow larger than 2 inches (5 centimeters), blot the asphalt.

Mormon crickets are not new to Oregon. Native to western North America, their name dates back to the 1800s, when they ruined the fields of Mormon settlers in Utah. But amidst drought and warming temperatures — conditions favored by the insects — outbreaks across the West have worsened.

The Oregon Legislature last year allocated \$5 million to assess the problem and set up a Mormon cricket and grasshopper "suppression" program. An additional \$1.2 million for the program was approved earlier this month.

It's part of a larger effort by state and federal authorities in the U.S. West to deal with an explosion of grasshoppers and Mormon crickets that has hit from Montana to Nevada. But some environmental groups oppose the programs, which rely on the aerial spraying of pesticides across large swaths of land.

Maley, an Oregon State University Extension Agent, and Aamodt, a resident of the small Columbia River town of Arlington, are both involved in Mormon cricket outreach and surveying efforts in the area.

In 2017, Arlington saw its largest Mormon cricket outbreak since the 1940s. The roads were "greasy" with the squashed entrails of the huge insects, which damaged nearby wheat crops.

Rancher Skye Krebs said the outbreaks have been "truly biblical."

"On the highways, once you get them killed, then the rest of them come," he explained. Mormon crickets are cannibalistic and will feast on each other, dead or alive, if not satiated with protein.

The insects, which are not true crickets but shield-backed katydids, are flightless. But they can travel at least a quarter of a mile in a day, according to Maley.

Aamodt fought the 2017 outbreak with what she had on hand.

"I got the lawnmower out and I started mowing them and killing them," she said. "I took a straight hoe and I'd stab them."

Aamodt has organized volunteers to tackle the infestation and earned the nickname "cricket queen."

Another infestation last year had local officials "scrambling," Maley said.

"We had all those high-value crops and irrigation circles," he explained. "We just had to do what we could to keep them from getting into that."

In 2021 alone, Oregon agricultural officials estimate 10 million acres of rangeland in 18 counties were damaged by grasshoppers and Mormon crickets.

Under the new Oregon initiative, private landowners like farmers and ranchers can request the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) survey their land. If ODA finds more than three Mormon crickets or eight grasshoppers per square yard it will recommend chemical treatment. In some areas near Arlington surveyed in May soon after the hatch there were 201 Mormon crickets per square yard.

State officials recommend the aerial application of diflubenzuron. The insecticide works by inhibiting development, preventing nymphs from growing into adults. Landowners can be reimbursed for up to 75% of the cost.

Diana Fillmore is a rancher participating in the new cost-sharing initiative. She says "the ground is just crawling with grasshoppers" on her property.

ODA recommended she treat her 988-acre ranch in Arock in southeastern Oregon. As the program's protocol calls for applying insecticide to only half the proposed area, alternately targeting swaths then

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skipping the next one, this means nearly 500 acres of her land will actually be sprayed.

Fillmore decided to act, remembering last year's damage.

"It was horrible," Fillmore said. "Grasshoppers just totally wiped out some of our fields." She was forced to spend \$45,000 on hay she normally wouldn't have to buy.

Todd Adams, an entomologist and ODA's Eastern Oregon field office and grasshopper program coordinator, said as of mid-June ODA had received 122 survey requests and sent out 31 treatment recommendations for roughly 40,000 acres (16,187 hectares).

Landowners must act quickly if they decide to spray diflubenzuron as it is only effective against nymphs.

"Once they become adults it's too late," Adams said.

Oregon's new program is geared toward private landowners. But the federal government owns more than half of Oregon's total land, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture has its own program for outbreaks on Western public land.

The U.S. government's grasshopper suppression program dates back to the 1930s, and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has sprayed millions of acres with pesticides to control outbreaks since the 1980s.

APHIS National Policy Director William Wesela said the agency sprayed 807,000 acres (326,581 hectares) of rangeland across seven Western states in 2021. So far this year, it has received requests for treatment in Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Nevada and Arizona, according to Jake Bodart, its State Plant Health Director for Oregon.

In a 2019 risk assessment APHIS recognized the main insecticide used, diflubenzuron, remains "a restricted use pesticide due to its toxicity to aquatic invertebrates," but said risks are low.

APHIS says it follows methods to reduce concerns. It instructs pesticide applicators to skip swaths and apply the insecticide at lower rates than listed on the label.

But environmental groups oppose the program. Last month, the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation and the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) sued APHIS in the U.S. District Court in Portland. In their filing, they accuse APHIS of harming rangeland ecosystems and not adequately informing the public about treatment areas.

They also allege the agency violated the National Environmental Policy Act by not assessing all the alternatives to pesticides or analyzing the cumulative effects of the program.

Federal officials declined to comment on the suit because it is pending before courts.

Environmentalists say the reduction of grasshoppers diminishes the food source of other wildlife that prey on them.

"We're very concerned about the impact of these broad, large sprays to our grassland and rangeland ecosystems," said Sharon Selvaggio, the Xerces Society's Pesticide Program Specialist.

Selvaggio added the sprays can be "toxic to a wide variety of insects" beyond grasshoppers and Mormon crickets, expressing particular concern for pollinators such as bees.

The two environmental groups want the agency to adopt a more holistic approach to pest management, by exploring methods such as rotational grazing.

"We're not trying to stop APHIS from ever using pesticides again," said Andrew Missel, staff attorney at Advocates for the West, the nonprofit law firm that filed the suit. "The point is really to reform" the program, he added.

In Arlington, the "cricket queen" Aamodt said residents had experimented with pesticide alternatives. During 2017, some covered trees in duct tape to trap the insects. The following year, local officials brought in goats to graze hillsides.

For now, those fighting against future infestations hope the new state program will bring much-needed support.

"Keep in mind that these are people that are taking time out from their own lives to do this," said OSU Extension Agent Maley. "The volunteers made a huge difference."

Iran launches rocket into space as nuclear talks to resume

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By NASSER KARIMI and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iranian state television said Sunday that Tehran had launched a solid-fueled rocket into space, drawing a rebuke from Washington ahead of the expected resumption of stalled talks over Tehran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers.

It's unclear when or where the rocket was launched, but the announcement came after satellite photos showed preparations at Imam Khomeini Spaceport in Iran's rural Semnan province, the site of Iran's frequent failed attempts to put a satellite into orbit.

State-run media aired dramatic footage of the blastoff against the backdrop of heightened tensions over Tehran's nuclear program, which is racing ahead under decreasing international oversight.

Iran had previously acknowledged that it planned more tests for the satellite-carrying rocket, which it first launched in February of last year.

Ahmad Hosseini, spokesman for Iran's Defense Ministry, said Zuljanah, a 25.5 meter-long rocket, was capable of carrying a satellite of 220 kilograms (485 pounds) that would ultimately gather data in low-earth orbit and promote Iran's space industry. Zuljanah is named for the horse of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad.

The White House said it was aware of Iran's announcement and criticized the move as "unhelpful and destabilizing."

The launch comes just a day after the European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, traveled to Tehran in a push to resuscitate negotiations over Iran's nuclear program that have stalemated for months. A few significant sticking points remain, including Tehran's demand that Washington lift terrorism sanctions on its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

Borrell said on Saturday that talks over the nuclear deal would resume in an unnamed Persian Gulf country in the coming days, with Iranian media reporting that Qatar would likely host the negotiations.

Former President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the nuclear deal in 2018 and reimposed crushing sanctions on Iran. Tehran responded by greatly ramping up its nuclear work and now enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels.

In a further escalation that limits the international community's view into its nuclear program, Iran removed over two dozen International Atomic Energy Agency cameras from its nuclear sites this month. The agency's director called the move a "fatal blow" to the tattered nuclear deal.

Tehran's rocket launches have raised alarm in Washington amid the unraveling of the nuclear deal. The U.S. warns the launches defy a United Nations Security Council resolution calling on Iran to steer clear of any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

The White House on Sunday said it was committed to using sanctions and other measures to prevent further advances in Iran's ballistic missile program.

The U.S. intelligence community's 2022 threat assessment, published in March, claims such a satellite launch vehicle "shortens the timeline" to an intercontinental ballistic missile for Iran as it uses "similar technologies."

Iran, which long has said it does not seek nuclear weapons, maintains its satellite launches and rocket tests do not have a military component.

Even as Iran's government has sharpened its focus on space, sending several short-lived satellites into orbit and in 2013 launching a monkey into space, the program has seen recent troubles. There have been five failed launches in a row for the Simorgh program, a type of satellite-carrying rocket. A fire at the Imam Khomeini Spaceport in February 2019 also killed three researchers.

The launch pad used in the preparations for the launch of the Zuljanah rocket remains scarred from an explosion in August 2019 that even drew the attention of then-President Trump. He later tweeted what appeared to be a classified surveillance image of the launch failure. Satellite images from February suggested a failed Zuljanah launch earlier this year, though Iran did not acknowledge it.

Meanwhile, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard in April 2020 revealed its own secret space program by successfully launching a satellite into orbit. The Guard operates its own military infrastructure parallel to Iran's regular armed forces.

As summit host, Spain urges NATO to watch its southern flank

By JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — While Russia's invasion of Ukraine is certain to dominate an upcoming NATO summit in Madrid, Spain and other member nations are quietly pushing the Western alliance to consider how mercenaries aligned with Russian President Vladimir Putin are spreading Moscow's influence to Africa.

As the host of the summit taking place from Tuesday to Thursday, Spain wants to emphasize its proximity to Africa as it lobbies for a greater focus on Europe's southern flank in a new document outlining NATO's vision of its security challenges and tasks.

The Strategic Concept is NATO's most important working document after the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949, which contained the key provision holding that an attack on one member is viewed as an attack upon all. The security assessment is updated roughly every decade to reset the West's security agenda.

The current version, approved in Lisbon in 2010, stated the risk of a conventional war on NATO territory was "low." It did not explicitly mention concerns about instability in Africa. At the time, the alliance viewed apathy as its biggest military threat; U.S. complaints that some European members were not paying their due featured heavily in summit talks.

Fast forward a dozen years, and the view looks very different from NATO headquarters in Brussels. After Russia brought war close to NATO's eastern borders, the alliance has worked to provide Ukraine with an assortment of more powerful weapons and to avoid the very real risk of getting drawn into the fighting.

But there appears to be a consensus among NATO members heading into the Madrid summit that while Russia remains concern No. 1, the alliance must continue to widen its view globally. Spain's position for an increased focus on "the South" is shared by Britain, France and Italy.

In their view, the security challenges in Africa arise from a Putin apparently dead-set on restoring the imperial glories of Russia as well as from an expansive China. Russia has gained traction thanks to the presence of its mercenaries in the Sahel region, a semiarid expanse stretching from Senegal to Sudan that suffers from political strife, terrorism and drought.

"Each time I meet with NATO ministers, the support of the allies is total due to the instability that we see on the alliance's southern frontier and especially the situation in the Sahel region right now," Spanish Foreign Minister José Albares said.

The Kremlin denies links to the Wagner Group, a mercenary force with an increasing presence in central and North Africa and the Middle East. The private military company, which has also participated in the war in Ukraine, has developed footholds in Libya, Mali, Sudan and Central African Republic.

In Mali, Wagner soldiers are filling a void created by the exit of former colonial power France. In Sudan, Russia's offer of an economic alliance earned it the promise of a naval base on the Red Sea. In Central African Republic, Wagner fighters protect the country's gold and diamond mines. In return, Putin gets diplomatic allies and resources.

French President Emmanuel Macron has long called for a "greater involvement" from NATO in the Sahel region. Now that Wagner has moved into Mali, French authorities underlined that Wagner mercenaries were accused of human right abuses in the Central African Republic, Libya and Syria.

Former NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana said that Russia's brutal military campaign in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad during his country's long civil war left it emboldened.

"Syria gave (the Russians) the sentiment that they could be more active in that part of the world," Solana told The Associated Press. "They have very good relations with Algeria and they have (...) the Wagner type of people in the Sahel, which is delicate."

With the Sahel, Morocco and Algeria at risk of worsening instability, "the southern part of NATO, for Portugal, Spain, Greece, etc., they would like to have an eye open to that part of the world," he said.

Italy is another NATO member attuned to the political climate across the Mediterranean Sea. The country hosts NATO's Joint Force Command base in Naples, which in 2017 opened a south hub focusing on terrorism, radicalization, migration and other issues emanating from North Africa and the Middle East.

The Italian ambassador to NATO, Francesco Maria Talo, said in a May interview with Italian news agency

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ANSA that humanitarian crises in Africa must concern all NATO allies.

"Near us there's Africa, with a billion inhabitants at risk of poverty, aggravated by food insecurity, terrorism and climate change, all factors that combine to create insecurity," Talo said. "And Russia is present there, too."

The importance of the other side of the Mediterranean became painfully evident to Spain over the past year due to a series of diplomatic crises involving Morocco and Algeria and their rivalry over the fate of Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony.

Amid the disputes, reduced border security allowed migrants to enter Spanish territory, and there were perceived threats to energy supplies. Analysts consider both to be tactics of "hybrid warfare" when governments use them against other countries.

Speaking in Madrid last month, British Defense Minister Ben Wallace noted the problems caused last year when Belarus, a Putin ally, allegedly encouraged migrants to cross its borders into Poland and other neighboring countries.

"If the likes of Wagner get the control they have or they'd like to have in places like Libya or indeed what we see they're already doing in Mali, do not think that Spain will be untouched by that," Wallace said.

NATO is also expected to include in the new Strategic Document a reference to China's growing military reach both in and beyond the Pacific theater.

U.S. Army Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, commander of U.S. Africa Command, warned last month that China was trying to build a military naval base on Africa's Atlantic coast. He said Beijing "has most traction" toward establishing the base in Equatorial Guinea, a tiny oil-rich dictatorship that was once Spain's only sub-Saharan African colony.

China only operates one acknowledged foreign military base, located in Djibouti in East Africa. But many believe its People's Liberation Army is busy establishing an overseas military network, even if it doesn't use the term "base."

NATO has invited the leaders of Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand to the summit to demonstrate its interest in the Asian-Pacific.

The foreign minister of Mauritania, a former French colony in West Africa, is also invited to attend a working dinner of fellow foreign ministers at the NATO summit. NATO said the country, which borders Western Sahara, Algeria, Mali and Senegal, was "closely associated with the preparatory work" for the new Strategic Concept.

Paul McCartney wows Glastonbury with Dave Grohl and The Boss

LONDON (AP) — Paul McCartney's Glastonbury Festival show was two years late. Fans thought it was worth the wait.

The former Beatle pulled out all the stops — and brought on big-name rock 'n' roll guest stars — for a 2½-hour concert at the southwest England festival on Saturday night.

McCartney was due to play Glastonbury in 2020. That year's festival and the 2021 edition were both scuttled by the coronavirus pandemic.

Now, at 80, he's the festival's oldest-ever solo headliner.

McCartney and his band treated the huge crowd to Beatles classics like "Get Back," "Hey Jude," "Blackbird" and "Let it Be," along with solo hits including "Live and Let Die" and newer material.

Foo Fighters frontman Dave Grohl came on to play "Saw Her Standing There" and "Band on the Run." Then Bruce Springsteen and McCartney — the Boss and the Beatle — dueted on Springsteen's "Glory Days" and the early Lennon-McCartney song "I Wanna Be Your Man."

McCartney paid tribute to Beatles bandmate George Harrison, who died in 2001, by performing the Harrison-penned "Something." Thanks to technology, he sang with footage of John Lennon, murdered in 1980, on "I've Got a Feeling."

"I think I've probably just seen one of the most legendary performances ever," fan Jake Richardson said after the show.

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Actor-comedian Steve Coogan, who was also in the crowd, described the experience as "quite overwhelming."

"I don't think there's anyone else in the world who can just give such unadulterated joy to people," he told the BBC.

Glastonbury wraps up Sunday with a headline set by Kendrick Lamar.

Some 200,000 people are attending the four-day festival at Worthy Farm in southwest England, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

The 3,000 performers included Billie Eilish, Ziggy Marley, Megan Thee Stallion, Foals, Olivia Rodrigo, Diana Ross, Herbie Hancock and the Pet Shop Boys.

Guests also included environmental activist Greta Thunberg, who made a passionate speech about climate change, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who addressed the festival by video on Friday.

Today in History: June 27, Thurgood Marshall retires

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, June 27, the 178th day of 2022. There are 187 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 27, 2016, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its strongest defense of abortion rights in a quarter-century, striking down Texas' widely replicated rules that sharply reduced abortion clinics.

On this date:

In 1844, Mormon leader Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, were killed by a mob in Carthage, Illinois.

In 1880, author-lecturer Helen Keller, who lived most of her life without sight or hearing, was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama.

In 1942, the FBI announced the arrests of eight Nazi saboteurs put ashore in Florida and Long Island, New York. (All were tried and sentenced to death; six were executed while two were spared for turning themselves in and cooperating with U.S. authorities.)

In 1944, during World War II, American forces liberated the French port of Cherbourg (SHEHR'-boorg) from the Germans.

In 1950, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution calling on member nations to help South Korea repel an invasion from the North.

In 1957, Hurricane Audrey slammed into coastal Louisiana and Texas as a Category 4 storm; the official death toll from the storm was placed at 390, although a variety of state, federal and local sources have estimated the number of fatalities at between 400 and 600.

In 1974, President Richard Nixon opened an official visit to the Soviet Union.

In 1991, Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first Black jurist to sit on the nation's highest court, announced his retirement. (His departure led to the contentious nomination of Clarence Thomas to succeed him.)

In 2005, the Supreme Court ruled, in a pair of 5-4 decisions, that displaying the Ten Commandments on government property was constitutionally permissible in some cases but not in others. BTK serial killer Dennis Rader pleaded guilty to 10 murders that had spread fear across Wichita, Kansas, beginning in the 1970s. (Rader later received multiple life sentences.)

In 2006, a constitutional amendment to ban desecration of the American flag died in a Senate cliffhanger, falling one vote short of the 67 needed to send it to states for ratification.

In 2011, former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich (blah-GOY'-uh-vich) was convicted by a federal jury in Chicago on a wide range of corruption charges, including the allegation that he'd tried to sell or trade President Barack Obama's U.S. Senate seat. (Blagojevich was later sentenced to 14 years in prison; his sentence was commuted by President Donald Trump in February 2020.)

In 2018, Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, whose vote often decided cases on abortion, gay rights and other contentious issues, announced his retirement.

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Ten years ago: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and former Irish Republican Army commander Martin McGuinness offered each other the hand of peace during a private meeting inside Belfast's riverside Lyric Theatre. A 22-year-old former Texas Tech University student from Saudi Arabia, Khalid Ali-M Aldawsari (KAH'-lih-d ah-lee-EHM' al-duh-SAHR'-ee), was convicted in Amarillo of attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction; prosecutors said he had researched possible bombing targets, including the Dallas home of former President George W. Bush. (Aldawsari was later sentenced to life in prison.)

Five years ago: A new and highly virulent outbreak of malicious data-scrambling software began causing mass disruption across the world, hitting Europe — and Ukraine — especially hard.

One year ago: A historic heat wave in the Pacific Northwest pushed daytime temperatures into the triple digits, setting records in places where many residents were without air conditioning; the temperature in Portland, Oregon, reached 112 degrees. The U.S. track and field trials in Eugene, Oregon, were halted and fans were asked to evacuate the stadium because of the extreme heat. According to studio estimates, "F9," the ninth installment of the "Fast & Furious" movie franchise, took in \$70 million in its first weekend, the biggest opening for a film since the pandemic began.

Today's Birthdays: Former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt is 84. Singer-musician Bruce Johnston (The Beach Boys) is 80. Fashion designer Vera Wang is 73. Actor Julia Duffy is 71. Actor Isabelle Adjani is 67. Country singer Lorrie Morgan is 63. Actor Brian Drillinger is 62. Writer-producer-director J.J. Abrams is 56. Former Sen. Kelly Ayotte (AY'-aht), R-N.H., is 54. Olympic gold and bronze medal figure skater Viktor Petrenko (peh-TREHN'-koh) is 53. Latin singer Draco Rosa is 53. Actor Edward "Grapevine" Fordham Jr. is 52. TV personality Jo Frost is 52. Actor Yancey Arias is 51. Actor Christian Kane is 50. Actor Tobey Maguire is 47. Gospel singer Leigh Nash is 46. Christian rock singer Zach Williams is 44. Musician Chris Eldridge (Punch Brothers) is 40. Reality TV star Khloe Kardashian (kar-DASH'-ee-uhn) is 38. Actor Drake Bell is 36. Actor Sam Claflin is 36. Actor India de Beaufort is 35. Actor Ed Westwick is 35. Actor Matthew Lewis (Film: "Harry Potter"; TV: "Ripper Street") is 33. Actor Madylin Sweeten is 31. Pop singer Lauren Jauregui (Fifth Harmony) (TV: "The X Factor") is 26. R&B singer H.E.R. is 25. Actor Chandler Riggs is 23.