

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 1 of 82

[1- Upcoming Events](#)

[2- Chamber Ad](#)

[3- Groton Jr. Teeners 14U Loses Lead Early in Defeat](#)

[9- Two pitchers team up as Groton Post 39 Jr Legion shuts out Clark Area 16U](#)

[10- West Nile update – June 29, 2022](#)

[11- Weather Pages](#)

[15- Daily Devotional](#)

[16- 2022 Community Events](#)

[17- Subscription Form](#)

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

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

July 5

5 p.m.: Jr. Legion hosts Watertown, DH

5:30 p.m.: U12 hosts Hannigan, 1 game

5 p.m.: U10 vs. Flash at Foundation Fields, Watertown, DH (B/W)

6 p.m.: U12 SB hosts Webster, DH

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

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

July 6

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

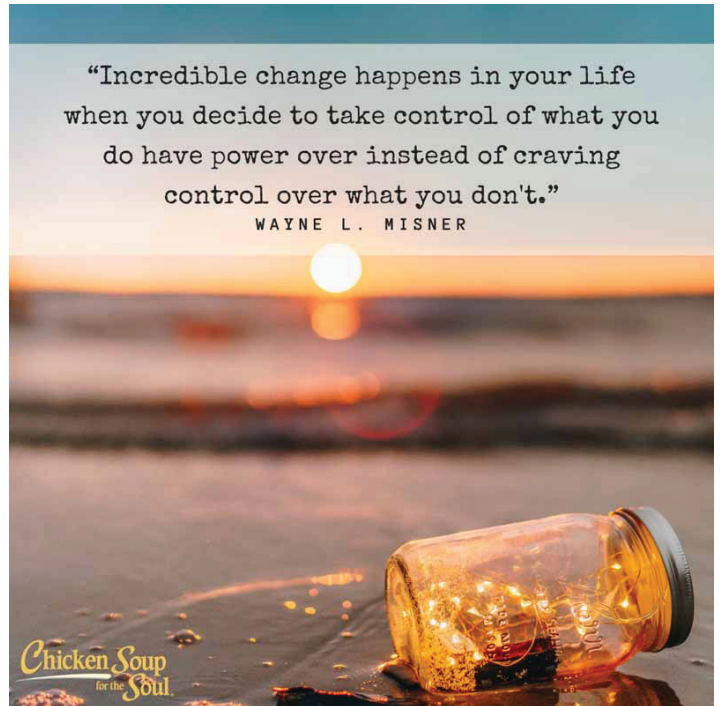
7:30 p.m.: U12 at Claremont, 1 game

7:30 p.m. U10 at Claremont, 1 game, (R/B)

5:30 p.m.: T-Ball Gold at Claremont

July 7

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



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

6 p.m.: U8 SB at Mellette, 1 game

7 p.m.: U10 SB at Mellette, 1 game

8 p.m.: U12 SB at Mellette, DH

July 7-9

Legion at Clark Tourney

July 8

6 p.m.: T-Ball Scrimmage

July 8-11

U12 State Tourney in Parker

July 11

5:30 p.m.: U8 hosts Webster, DH (All Groups), Nelson Field

5:30 p.m.: U8 hosts Doland, 1 game (All Groups), Falk Field

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

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

**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 2 of 82

## 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

**GROTON**  
Chamber Of Commerce

120 N Main St., Groton, SD 57445

**605-397-8422**

**GrotonChamber.com**

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 3 of 82

## Groton Jr. Teeners 14U Loses Lead Early in Defeat

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U watched the game slip away early and couldn't recover in a 13-6 loss to Clark on Wednesday. Clark scored on a double by Josh Kannegieten in the first inning, a double by Michael Severson in the first inning, and a groundout by Mats Denrgier in the second inning.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U collected five hits and Clark had 23 in the high-scoring affair.

Clark got things moving in the first inning. Kannegieten doubled on a 0-1 count, scoring two runs.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U notched three runs in the fifth inning. The big inning was thanks to walks by Gavin Kroll and Nick Groeblichhoff and a groundout by Gavin Englund.

Emmerson Larson was the winning pitcher for Clark. The hurler surrendered three runs on four hits over four innings, striking out eight. Jacob Steen and Ky Vandersnick entered the game out of the bullpen and helped to close out the game in relief.

Nicholas Morris took the loss for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. The pitcher surrendered nine runs on 16 hits over six innings, striking out four and walking zero.

Kellen Antonsen started the game for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. The righthander lasted one-third of an inning, allowing six hits and four runs while walking zero.

Morris led Groton Jr. Teeners 14U with two hits in three at bats. Karsten Flihs led Groton Jr. Teeners 14U with two stolen bases, as they ran wild on the base paths with nine stolen bases.

Clark racked up 23 hits in the game. Vandersnick, Severson, Kannegieten, Larson, Damion Severson, Max Bratland, Logan LaBrie, and Deagan Moes each had multiple hits for Clark. Clark tore up the base paths, as three players stole at least two bases. Denrgier led the way with two. Clark didn't commit a single error in the field. Vandersnick had six chances in the field, the most on the team.



**Carter Simon makes the catch at third base and throws to first for the play.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



**Gavin Englund makes the play at first for the out.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 4 of 82



**Jarrett Erdmann makes the play in the out-field.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



**So close! Nicholas Groeblichhoff just missed hitting the ball on this pitch.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

To order reprints of photos, go to <https://gdi.smugmug.com/>

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 5 of 82



**Lincoln Krause slides safely to third.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 6 of 82



**Karsten Flihs hits a foul ball on this swing.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

**The ball lands right in the glove on this shot as Karsten Flihs was the catcher.**

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 7 of 82



**Nick Morris was the pitcher for the Groton Jr. Teeners game with Clark Wednesday in Groton.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 8 of 82

## Clark 13 - 6 Groton Jr. Teeners 14U

Home Wednesday June 29, 2022

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
CLRK	4	1	2	3	0	2	1	13	23	0
GRTN	1	0	1	1	3	0	0	6	5	1

### BATTING

Clark	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
M Denrgier (CF)	4	2	1	1	0	1
J Steen (SS, P)	4	1	1	0	0	0
E Larson (P)	4	3	3	1	0	0
J Kannegieten (1B...	4	3	3	3	0	0
D Severson (RF)	4	2	2	1	0	1
L LaBrie (2B)	2	0	2	1	0	0
M Bratland (2B, C)	2	0	2	2	0	0
M Severson (C, 1B)	4	0	3	2	0	0
L Garcia (RF, LF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
E Garcia (RF)	2	1	1	0	0	0
C Pommen (3B)	1	0	0	0	0	0
W Houde (3B, 2B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
K Vandersnick (C,...	4	1	3	2	0	0
D Moes (LF, RF)	4	0	2	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

**2B:** E Larson 2, J Kannegieten 2, M Severson, K Vandersnick, **TB:** L LaBrie 2, D Moes 2, E Larson 5, J Kannegieten 5, M Severson 4, M Bratland 2, E Garcia, K Vandersnick 4, J Steen, D Severson 2, M Denrgier, **HBP:** M Denrgier, **SB:** J Kannegieten 2, E Garcia 2, D Severson, M Denrgier 2, **LOB:** 10

### PITCHING

Clark	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
E Larson	4.0	4	3	3	5	8	0
K Vandersni...	1.0	1	3	3	5	1	0
J Steen	2.0	0	0	0	2	3	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>

**W:** E Larson, **P-S:** E Larson 97-47, K Vandersnick 37-12, J Steen 32-18, **WP:** E Larson, **HBP:** E Larson, **BF:** E Larson 20, K Vandersnick 9, J Steen 8

Groton Jr. Teeners	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
T McGannon (CF,...	3	1	0	0	1	2
K Fliehs (2B, C)	2	1	1	1	2	1
C Simon (SS, 3B)	1	2	0	0	2	1
R Jangula (LF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
N Morris (C, P, SS)	3	1	2	1	1	0
G Englund (3B, 1B)	3	0	0	0	0	1
J Erdmann (LF, CF)	2	1	0	0	2	1
K Moody (1B, RF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
G Kroll (RF)	1	0	0	1	1	1
N Groeblichhoff (...)	2	0	1	1	1	1
L Krause (RF, 2B)	2	0	1	0	1	1
K Antonsen (2B, S...	2	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>

**3B:** N Morris, **TB:** N Morris 4, N Groeblichhoff, L Krause, K Fliehs, **HBP:** G Englund, **SB:** J Erdmann, C Simon, K Antonsen 2, L Krause 2, T McGannon, K Fliehs 2, **LOB:** 10

Groton Jr. Te	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Antonsen	0.1	6	4	4	0	0	0
N Morris	6.0	16	9	9	0	4	0
N Groeblich...	0.2	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>

**L:** N Morris, **P-S:** N Morris 92-65, N Groeblichhoff 4-3, K Antonsen 14-12, **HBP:** N Morris, **BF:** N Morris 34, N Groeblichhoff 3, K Antonsen 7



## Two pitchers team up as Groton Post 39 Jr Legion shuts out Clark Area 16U

Groton Post 39 Jr Legion defeated Clark Area 16U 10-0 on Thursday as two pitchers combined to throw a shutout. Caden McInerney induced a groundout from Waylan Olson to finish off the game.

Groton Post 39 Jr Legion opened up scoring in the first inning, when Korbin Kucker singled on a 3-1 count, scoring one run.

Groton Post 39 Jr Legion put up five runs in the sixth inning. Groton Post 39 Jr Legion's offense in the inning came from by McInerney and Braxton Imrie, a single by Kaleb Antonsen, and a fielder's choice by Teylor Diegel.

One bright spot for Clark Area 16U was a single by Collin Gaikowski in the second inning.

Kaleb Hoover pitched Groton Post 39 Jr Legion to victory. The pitcher surrendered zero runs on one hit over five innings, striking out nine. McInerney threw one inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Tyson Huber took the loss for Clark Area 16U. The righthander went five and two-thirds innings, allowing ten runs on five hits and striking out six.

Brevin Flihs led Groton Post 39 Jr Legion with two hits in three at bats. Groton Post 39 Jr Legion didn't commit a single error in the field. Ryan Groeblichhoff had nine chances in the field, the most on the team.

Collin Gaikowski went 1-for-1 at the plate to lead Clark Area 16U in hits.

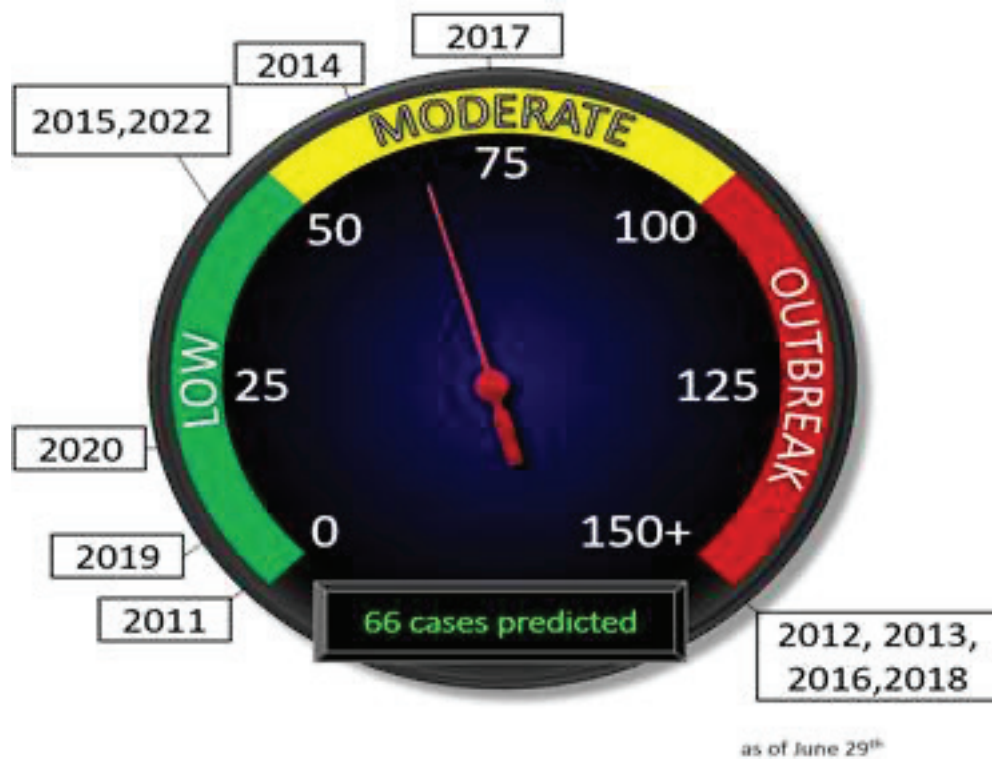
## West Nile update – June 29, 2022

The first West Nile virus positive mosquito pool has been detected this year in Brown County. No human WNV cases have been reported at this time. Last year, 2021, there were 28 WNV fever cases, 19 Neuroinvasive cases, 27 hospitalizations, 1 death and 6 positive blood donors reported in South Dakota residents.

SD WNV (as of June 29): No human cases reported  
1 county with positive mosquito pools (Brown)

US WNV (as of June 28): 10 cases (AZ, GA, MS, TX) and 1 death

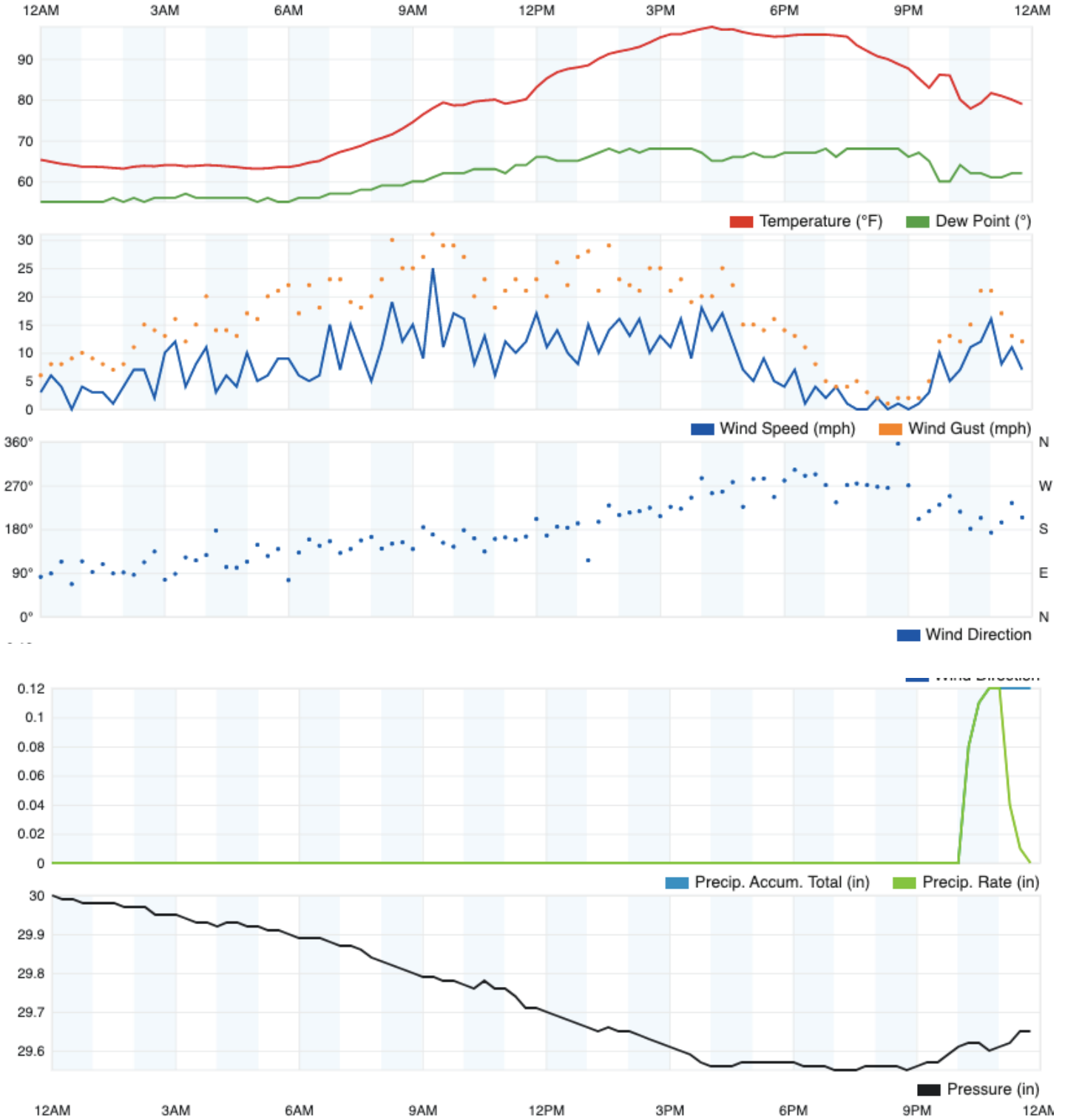
WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2022, South Dakota (as of June 29)



# Groton Daily Independent




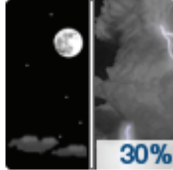

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 11 of 82

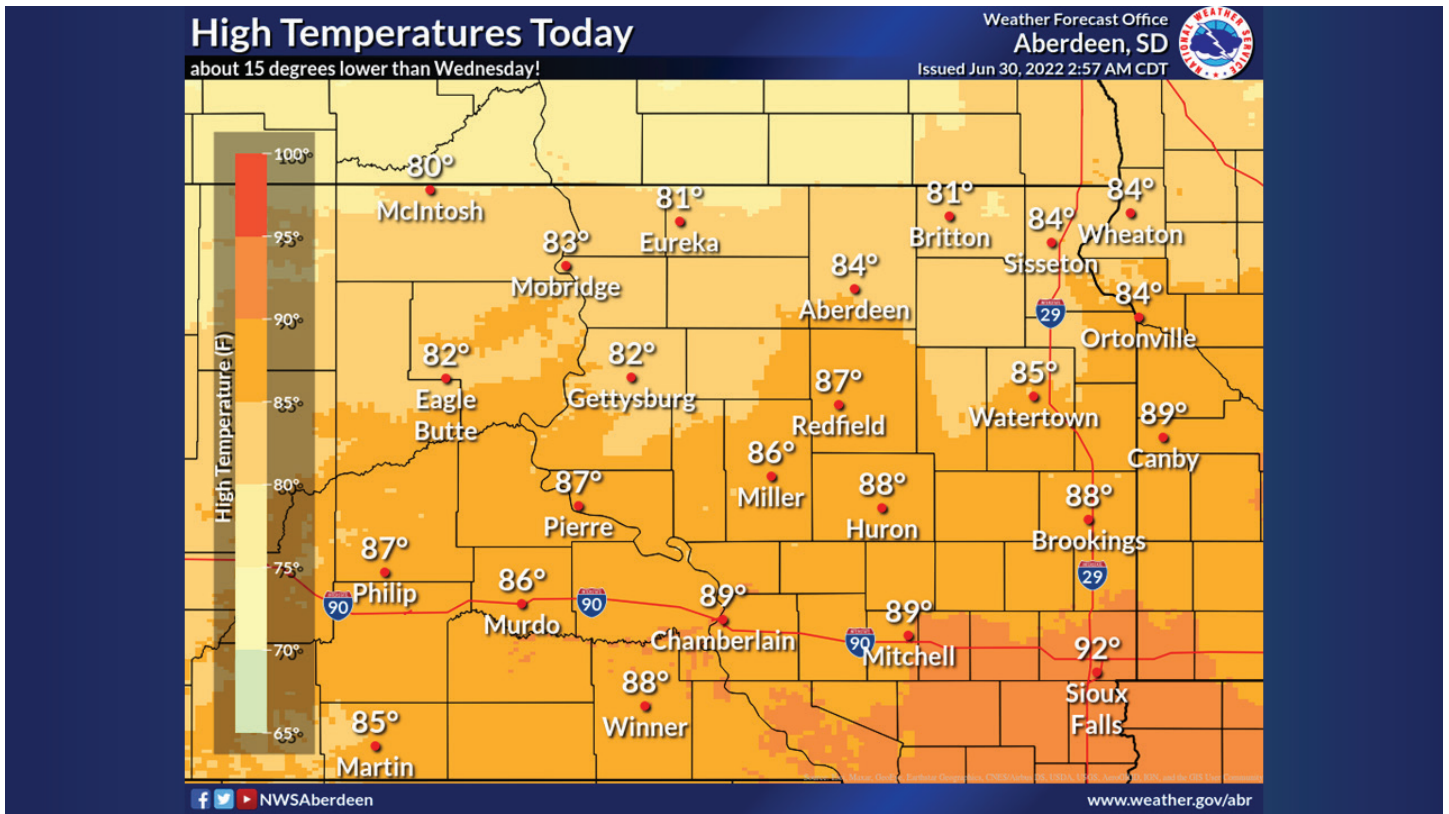
## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 12 of 82

Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
				
Mostly Sunny then Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear then Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms
High: 84 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 82 °F	Low: 61 °F	High: 83 °F



High temperatures will return to seasonal values today, topping out in the 80s. This will be about 15 degrees lower than what we experienced Wednesday.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 13 of 82

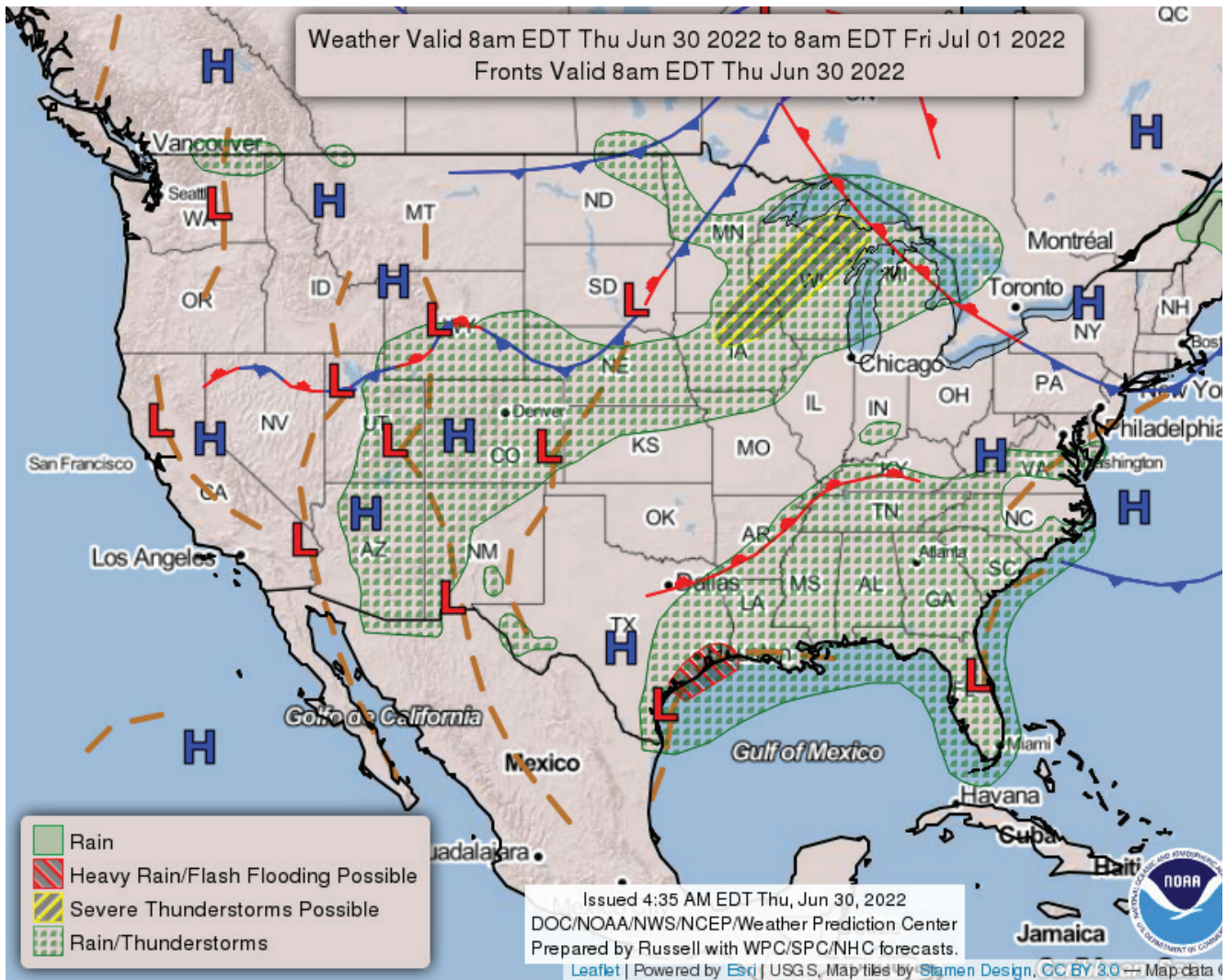
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 97.8 °F at 4:15 PM**  
**Low Temp: 63.1 °F at 5:15 AM**  
**Wind: 31 mph at 9:30 AM**  
**Precip: 0.12**

Day length: 15 hours, 40 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1931  
Record Low: 38 in 1918  
Average High: 84°F  
Average Low: 58°F  
Average Precip in June.: 3.76  
Precip to date in June.: 0.42  
Average Precip to date: 11.01  
Precip Year to Date: 11.58  
Sunset Tonight: 9:26:37 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:46:14 AM



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 14 of 82

June 30, 1991: Thunderstorms dropped over 2 inches of rain over Brown, Marshall, and Roberts County. The rain washed out many county roads and flooded low-lying areas. Several streets were impassable in Aberdeen. Officially, Aberdeen recorded 1.91 inches of rain.

June 30, 1992: An F2 tornado lifted a roof off a house 18 miles east of Pierre. A barn was destroyed, and power lines and trees were downed. Also, an estimated wind gust of 61 mph was observed 5 miles west of Miller in Hand County.

1792: The first recorded tornado in Canadian history struck the Niagara Peninsula between Foothill and Port Robinson, leveling some houses and uprooting trees between the communities.

1886 - The second destructive hurricane in nine days hit the Apalachicola-Tallahassee area. (David Ludlum)

1900: The combination of high winds and the presence of wooded fuel-filled cargo helped to spread fire on the Hoboken Docks in New Jersey. The fire began when cotton bales caught fire and spread to nearby volatile liquids. The fire killed at least 300 people and was seen in New York City.

1912: An estimated F4 tornado ripped through Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada on this day. The storm became the deadliest tornado in Canada's history as it killed 28 people along a rare, 18.5-mile track from south to north.

1942 - The temperature at Portland, OR, hit 102 degrees, an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1972 - The entire state of Pennsylvania was declared a disaster area as a result of the catastrophic flooding caused by Hurricane Agnes, which claimed 48 lives, and caused 2.1 billion dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Hot weather prevailed in the Pacific Northwest, with readings above 100 degrees reported as far north as southern British Columbia. Yakima, WA, reported a record high of 100 degrees, while temperatures near the Washington coast hovered near 60 degrees all day. Thunderstorms prevailed from southwest Texas to New England. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph at Gettysburg, PA, killed one person. High winds and large hail caused more than five million dollars damage to property and crops in Lancaster County, PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms in eastern Kansas drenched Worden with 12.21 inches of rain, and a wall of water two to four feet deep swept through Lone Star, KS, flooding every home in the town. Up to ten inches of rain was reported southeast of Callaway, NE. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 75 mph at Winfield, KS. Seventeen cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Duluth, MN, with a reading of 36 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Winnfield, LA, reported 22.52 inches of rain in three days, and more than thirty inches for the month, a record for June. Shreveport LA received a record 17.11 inches in June, with a total for the first six months of the year of 45.55 inches. Thunderstorms also helped produce record rainfall totals for the month of June of 13.12 inches at Birmingham AL, 14.66 inches at Oklahoma City, OK, 17.41 inches at Tallahassee FL, 9.97 inches at Lynchburg, VA, and more than 10.25 inches at Pittsburgh, PA. Pittsburgh had also experienced a record wet month of May. (The National Weather Summary)

1999: Mount Baker, Washington closed out a record snowfall season both for the United States and the verifiable world record as the seasonal total from July 1, 1998, to June 30, 1999, finished with 1,140 inches.



## Look At It This Way...

"One thing is for certain about you, Guido," he said as he looked at my messy desk, "you don't have OCD!"

"What do you mean, I don't have OCD?" I asked.

"Well, if you had an obsessive-compulsive disorder you would be arranging and rearranging your desk to make it neat and orderly. Then you would do it over and over again. But, it's not neat, never has been, and probably never will be. I'll bet that your drawers are the same."

Realizing that he was right, I decided not to argue with him. He was a psychologist, and I was embarrassed.

Many people do arrange and then rearrange things. Some people do things over and over again, and then again, to make sure that everything is perfect, or as close to perfect as it can be. They check and then recheck what they have already checked. Being around people who have habits like that make me feel guilty. They have to do things right!

But there is a vast difference between doing things right and doing the right things. We can waste an entire day arranging and then rearranging food in our homes while our neighbor goes hungry. Or, we may arrange and then rearrange our cramped closets when we know there are people who wear worn out, ragged clothing because they have no other choice. We may be doing things right but we are certainly not doing the right things.

Righteousness in God's Word is a combination of both behaviors. Not only do we want to do things right - as He commands us to do in His Word - but we must do the right things that will please and honor Him, as we serve others in need - spiritually and morally.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to be aware of how we do "righteousness." May our lives meet Your expectations. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Bible Verse: For receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair. Proverbs 1:3

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 16 of 82

## 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)



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 17 of 82

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White ..... \$48.99/year
- Colored ..... \$79.88/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
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# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 18 of 82

## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

09-13-17-19-35

(nine, thirteen, seventeen, nineteen, thirty-five)

Estimated jackpot: \$90,000

Lotto America

17-29-33-40-52, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 4

(seventeen, twenty-nine, thirty-three, forty, fifty-two; Star Ball: ten; ASB: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$16,290,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 360,000,000

Powerball

08-40-49-58-63, Powerball: 14, Power Play: 3

(eight, forty, forty-nine, fifty-eight, sixty-three; Powerball: fourteen; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000,000

### Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

Yankton Press & Dakotan. June 27, 2022.

Editorial: Abortion Ruling Won't End Abortion Fight

One sliver of consensus emerged from Friday's momentous Supreme Court ruling on the Roe v. Wade abortion law: It was a historic day for America.

After that, opinions diverged strongly, which was no surprise given the contentious emotional gravity of the issue. The decision — which scuttled the constitutional right of women to have an abortion and instead referred the matter to the states — hammered an American raw nerve, even though this outcome had been telegraphed several weeks ago when a draft opinion indicating this direction was leaked to the public.

The court decision was many things on many fronts, but there was one thing that it wasn't: the end of the abortion issue.

Far from it.

First and foremost, abortions will not go away. Some states will opt to offer them and others will not, thus creating a checkerboard across the land. And those women who cannot afford to travel to a pro-choice state may seek out other, more dangerous means to do the procedure.

The court's decision will be political dynamite, and it will be intriguing to see how this develops. National polls have consistently shown that a majority of Americans favor at least limited access to abortion in specific circumstances such as health matters or instances of rape or incest. How this decision will play with that majority will be important to watch.

South Dakota is one such case. Gov. Kristi Noem celebrated Friday's court decision and is planning to call a special session to outlaw abortion in this state, apparently without provisions for rape or incest cases. The state's voters rejected extremely restrictive abortion laws twice in the 2000s, but that doesn't seem to be a factor in whatever plans are being drawn up in Pierre today. (Perhaps any proposed limitations or bans should be put before voters so they can have a say in what the state "wants.")

Also, there has been talk of emboldened conservatives targeting other issues they oppose, such as same-sex marriage, contraception and LGBTQ rights — issues that, again, all enjoy majority support (in some cases, by sizable margins) among Americans. In fact, Justice Clarence Thomas's opinion Friday virtually

invited groups to do just that, suggesting those efforts may find some sympathetic ears on the court. As extraordinary as the abortion decision is, striking at these other issues would not only further polarize the nation but it would also potentially call into question the spirit of a court inclined to take away rights from more and more Americans.

This is a stormy age in U.S. history, and the seas have just gotten even rougher. In terms of abortion, nothing is settled, and the stakes may be getting higher in the days to come.

## South Dakota Freedom Caucus to push policy further right

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A contingent of South Dakota Republican lawmakers on Wednesday formally announced they were forming a group billed the “South Dakota Freedom Caucus” as they try to drive politics further to the right in a Statehouse where the GOP holds every statewide office and 90% of the Legislature.

In its first official statement, the caucus called for an immediate special legislative session to address the state’s abortion laws. The state already has a trigger law that banned abortion last week when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, but the GOP is pushing to bolster that prohibition.

Republican Gov. Kristi Noem and legislative leaders are already planning a special session, but have not said when it will be or what specific legislation will be considered.

The formalization of the Freedom Caucus threatens to drive a further wedge among GOP lawmakers in Pierre. Republican House lawmakers have fought with the governor and establishment Republicans who control the Senate in recent years over issues like COVID-19 vaccine exemptions, transgender athletes, tax cuts and commercial surrogacy with hardline conservatives pushing the Legislature to take more aggressive positions.

A score of the most socially conservative House Republicans has informally rallied on those issues, referring to themselves by monikers like the conservative caucus or basement caucus. They have often taken a contrarian stand and showed a willingness to defy Noem.

Republican Rep. Tony Randolph, who is the Freedom Caucus vice-chair, declined to say how many lawmakers are part of the group outside its three officers. He said they were looking to recruit members, but insisted they were not splitting from the Republican caucus.

“We are not trying to create a new party,” Randolph said. “We are still Republicans — nothing has changed.”

But Randolph charged that the Republican Party has been infiltrated recently by Democrats-turned-Republican who do not hold to the party’s platform. He added that the new caucus would look to halt the expansion of state government while promoting gun rights and “life.”

“We believe that life begins at conception and ends at natural death — period,” Randolph said.

House Republican leaders Reps. Kent Peterson and Chris Johnson did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the Freedom Caucus. Senate Republican leader Sen. Gary Cammack said he had recently learned about the caucus and declined to comment further on it.

## South Dakota interim AG dismisses 2 of Ravensborg’s top aides

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota’s interim attorney general on his first day in office Tuesday dismissed two of former Attorney General Jason Ravensborg’s top appointees who were involved in the aftermath of Ravensborg’s 2020 fatal car crash.

Ravensborg was removed from office last week after the Senate convicted him on impeachment charges for his conduct surrounding the crash. Gov. Kristi Noem appointed the lead prosecutor in the Senate impeachment trial, Pennington County State’s Attorney Mark Vargo, as interim attorney general.

Vargo quickly dismissed Ravensborg’s chief of staff, Tim Bormann, and the Director of the Division of Criminal Investigation, David Natvig, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported.

Both Bormann and Natvig had earlier this year testified to a House committee weighing impeachment

charges. They had also texted with Ravensborg after the crash.

Bormann accompanied Ravensborg to the crash site the morning after the crash, when Ravensborg says he discovered the body of the man he struck for the first time.

Vargo did not give a reason for their dismissal.

The attorney general's office on Wednesday issued a news release saying that Vargo praised the rest of the staff in a meeting and told them he plans no largescale changes for the rest of his 5-month tenure.

## **Biden grants South Dakota disaster declaration for May storm**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — President Joe Biden on Wednesday granted South Dakota's request for a presidential disaster declaration to aid the recovery from May storms that included over a dozen tornadoes.

Gov. Kristi Noem requested the declaration, which allows the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist in recovery efforts. The storms hit the eastern part of the state on May 12 with tornadoes, straight-line winds and flooding. Two people were killed, roads were temporarily closed and thousands of people were left without power, according to the Republican governor.

"This is good news for those in our state who were impacted by this severe weather," Noem said in a statement. "I appreciate FEMA giving us a response. This means FEMA can start providing assistance in a timely manner."

## **Russian forces leave Snake Island, keep up eastern assault**

By FRANCESCA EBEL Associated Press

SLOVIANSK, Ukraine (AP) — Russia on Thursday pulled back its forces from a strategically placed Black Sea island where they have faced relentless Ukrainian attacks, but kept up its push to encircle the last bulwark of Ukraine's resistance in the eastern province of Luhansk.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it withdrew its forces from the Zmiyinyy (Snake) Island off Ukraine's Black Sea port of Odesa in what it described as a "goodwill gesture." Ukraine's military said the Russians fled the island in two speedboats following a barrage of Ukrainian artillery and missile strikes.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov insisted that the withdrawal was intended to demonstrate that "the Russian Federation wasn't hampering the United Nations' efforts to establish a humanitarian corridor for taking agricultural products from the territory of Ukraine."

Ukraine and the West have accused Russian of blockading Ukrainian ports to prevent exports of grain, contributing to the global food crisis. Russia has denied the accusations and charged that Ukraine needs to remove sea mines from the Black Sea to allow safe navigation.

Turkey has sought to broker a deal on unblocking grain exports from Ukraine, but the talks have dragged on without any sign of quick progress, with Kyiv voicing concern that Russia could use the deal to launch an attack on Odesa.

Russia took control of the island that sits along a busy shipping lane in the opening days of the war in apparent hope to use it as a staging ground for an attack on Odesa.

The island came to epitomize the Ukrainian resistance to the Russian invasion, when Ukrainian troops there received a demand from a Russian warship to surrender or face bombardment. "Russian warship," the answer came back, "go (expletive) yourself."

The Ukrainian defenders of the island were captured by the Russians but later freed as part of a prisoner exchange.

After the island was taken, the Ukrainian military relentlessly bombarded a small Russian garrison and air defense assets stationed there.

— In the east of Ukraine on Thursday, Moscow kept up its push to take control of the entire Donbas region. It is focused on the city of Lysychansk, the last remaining Ukrainian stronghold in the Luhansk province. Russian troops and their separatist allies control 95% of Luhansk and about half of Donetsk, the two provinces that make up the mostly Russian-speaking Donbas.

The Ukrainian General Staff said that the Russian troops were shelling Lysychansk and clashing with

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 21 of 82

Ukrainian defenders around an oil refinery on the edge of the city.

Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai said Russian reconnaissance units tried to enter Lysychansk Wednesday, but were repelled by Ukrainian forces. He said the Russians were trying to block a highway used to deliver supplies and fully encircle the city.

“The Russians have thrown practically all their forces to seize the city,” Haidai said.

— Speaking on a visit to Turkmenistan early Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said his goals in Ukraine haven’t changed since the start of the war. He said they were “the liberation of the Donbas, the protection of these people and the creation of conditions that would guarantee the security of Russia itself.” He made no mention of his original stated goals to “demilitarize” and “de-Nazify” Ukraine.

He denied Russia had adjusted its strategy after failing to take Kyiv in the early stage of the conflict. “As you can see, the troops are moving and reaching the marks that were set for them for a certain stage of this combat work. Everything is going according to plan,” Putin said at a news conference in Turkmenistan.

— Funerals were to be held Thursday for some of the 18 people confirmed killed by Monday’s Russian missile strike on a busy shopping mall in the central city of Kremenchuk. Crews continued to search through the rubble in search of another 20 people who remain missing.

Ukrainian State Emergency Services press officer Svitlana Rybalko told The Associated Press that along with the 18 bodies, investigators found fragments of eight more bodies. It was not immediately clear whether that meant there were more victims. A number of survivors suffered severed limbs.

— After the attack on the mall, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia of becoming a “terrorist” state. On Wednesday, he reproached NATO for not embracing or equipping his embattled country more fully.

He asked for more modern artillery systems and other weapons and warned the NATO leaders they either had to provide Ukraine with the help it needed to defeat Russia or “face a delayed war between Russia and yourself.”

On Thursday, Sweden announced plans to send more military support to Ukraine, including anti-tank weapons, support weapons and demining equipment that it says Kyiv had requested. “It is important that the support to Ukraine from the democratic countries in Europe is continuous and long-term,” Defense Minister Peter Hultqvist said, according to the Swedish news agency TT.

Hultqvist didn’t say when and how the equipment would be delivered . Sweden was invited at a NATO summit this week to join the Western military alliance.

— Russia, shunned by the West, has been intent on bolstering ties elsewhere. On Thursday, Iranian state media said that Iran has proposed expanding financial exchanges with Russia as well as cooperating in the energy field within a framework independent of the Western financial exchange system, while both countries are under heavy sanctions.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Putin met on the sidelines of a summit of the Caspian Sea Littoral States in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, state-run IRNA news agency reported Thursday.

Putin was quoted as saying that the volume of trade and overall economic relations between the two countries has increased in recent months and that this path should continue.

— The death toll from Wednesday’s Russian missile strike on an apartment building in the southern city of Mykolaiv has risen to six, according to Gov. Vitaliy Kim. Another six people were wounded. Mykolaiv is a major port and seizing it — as well as Odesa farther west — would be key to Russia’s objective of cutting off Ukraine from its Black Sea coast.

## About half say Trump should be charged for 1/6: AP-NORC poll

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and NUHA DOLBY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — About half of Americans believe former President Donald Trump should be charged with a crime for his role in the U.S. Capitol attack on Jan. 6, 2021, a new poll shows.

The survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that 48% of U.S. adults say the Republican former president should be charged with a crime for his role, while 31% say

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 22 of 82

he should not be charged. An additional 20% say they don't know enough to have an opinion. Fifty-eight percent say Trump bears a great deal or quite a bit of responsibility for what happened that day.

The poll was conducted after five public hearings by the House committee investigating Jan. 6, which has sought to paint Trump's potential criminal culpability in the events that led to deadly insurrection. But it was taken before Tuesday's surprise hearing featuring former Trump White House aide Cassidy Hutchinson. Her explosive testimony provided the most compelling evidence yet that the former president could be linked to a federal crime, experts say.

Views on Trump's criminal liability break down predictably along party lines, with 86% of Democrats but only 10% of Republicans saying Trump should be charged with a crime. Among Republicans, 68% say he should not be charged and 21% say they don't know. Still, the fact that nearly half the country believes he should be prosecuted is a remarkable position for the former president, pointing to the difficulties he could face if he makes another run at the White House in 2024.

For Ella Metze, a South Carolina Democrat, Trump's culpability has been clear from the beginning, when he urged his supporters to march to the Capitol on the morning of Jan. 6 and "fight like hell."

"It was meant to provoke violence because he kept encouraging them," the 86-year-old told The Associated Press. "As it happened, I watched it all and I just thought why doesn't somebody stop this? Why doesn't he stop this?"

Chris Schloemer, a Texas independent, agreed Trump holds responsibility for egging on the crowd with his baseless claims of election fraud. But, the 61-year-old doesn't lay the blame solely on Trump.

Schloemer feels Republicans in Congress have a hand in what happened that day, too: "I feel like people were afraid of Donald Trump, especially Republican politicians, and so they wouldn't rein him in, and I think that just emboldened him."

And he's not alone. While views of Trump's role have not changed since December, Americans are somewhat more likely now than they were then to say Republicans in Congress were significantly responsible for the events of Jan. 6.

Forty-six percent say that now, up slightly from 41% in December. An additional 21% say GOP lawmakers had some responsibility and 30% say they were not responsible. The change in the share saying Republicans in Congress have a large amount of responsibility was driven mostly by Democrats and independents.

Ulysses Bryant, a Democrat from Florida, said while he always believed Trump and the rioters should be charged with a crime, he hadn't known of the involvement of congressional Republicans until he began to follow the hearings.

Close to 6 in 10 Americans — 56% — say they followed news about the congressional hearings. A smaller but still sizeable share -- 42% -- say they watched or listened.

The nine-member panel, comprising seven Democrats and two Republicans, has worked around the clock for the past year to investigate the connection between Trump and his allies and the violence and chaos that ensued on the Capitol. The public hearing phase of their investigation is meant to put all of that investigative work on display to the American public in an effort to create a historical record of what occurred.

Seventy-five percent of Democrats and 42% of Republicans say they followed news about the hearings. More Democrats than Republicans also say they tuned in, 58% to 27%. The first of the public hearings, which began in early June, received high ratings for TV viewership, though subsequent hearings have received more modest ratings.

Kathlyn Keller, a retired investment banker from San Francisco, is one of the GOP voters who has tuned into the hearings and still believes Trump holds no responsibility for the events of that day.

The 83-year-old thinks the only people who should be charged are those who brought weapons to the Capitol, or anyone who got into the building and caused damage inside. Trump "absolutely shouldn't be charged with anything," she told the AP.

Nonetheless, the committee plans to continue its congressional probe and present new evidence in the coming weeks to its many viewers, including the most important one: Attorney General Merrick Garland. Regardless of public opinion about Trump's likely criminal involvement, lawmakers continue to face a stark

reality: While they can investigate Jan. 6 and issue subpoenas to gather information, only the Justice Department can bring criminal charges.

But there are clear signs in recent weeks that the Justice Department appears to be escalating its probe of pro-Trump efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election. Federal agents on Wednesday seized the cellphone of Trump lawyer John Eastman, who was the architect behind a plan to pressure then-Vice President Mike Pence into rejecting the electoral college results.

Last week, authorities searched the Virginia home of Jeffrey Clark, who was known at the Justice Department to champion Trump's false claims of election fraud. Agents also served subpoenas to the Republican Party chairmen of Arizona, Nevada and Georgia, three states that went for Democrat Joe Biden and where Trump allies created slates of "alternate electors" intended to subvert the vote. And Republicans in two other states — Michigan and Pennsylvania — disclosed they had been interviewed by the FBI.

## Buttigieg launches \$1B pilot to build racial equity in roads

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg on Thursday launched a \$1 billion first-of-its-kind pilot program aimed at helping reconnect cities and neighborhoods racially segregated or divided by road projects, pledging wide-ranging help to dozens of communities despite the program's limited dollars.

Under the Reconnecting Communities program, cities and states can now apply for the federal aid over five years to rectify harm caused by roadways that were built primarily through lower-income, Black communities after the 1950s creation of the interstate highway system.

New projects could include rapid bus transit lines to link disadvantaged neighborhoods to jobs; caps built on top of highways featuring green spaces, bike lanes and pedestrian walkways to allow for safe crossings over the roadways; repurposing former rail lines; and partial removal of highways.

Still, the grants, being made available under President Joe Biden's bipartisan infrastructure law, are considerably less than the \$20 billion the Democratic president originally envisioned. Advocacy groups say the money isn't nearly enough to have a major impact on capital construction for more than 50 citizen-led efforts nationwide aimed at dismantling or redesigning highways — from Portland, Oregon, to New Orleans; St. Paul, Minnesota; Houston; Tampa, Florida; and Syracuse, New York. Meanwhile, some Republicans, including possible 2024 presidential contender Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, have derided the effort as the "woke-ification" of federal policy, suggesting political crosswinds ahead in an election season.

"Transportation can connect us to jobs, services and loved ones, but we've also seen countless cases around the country where a piece of infrastructure cuts off a neighborhood or a community because of how it was built," said Buttigieg, who was announcing the pilot program later Thursday in Birmingham, Alabama. He described Reconnecting Communities as a broad department "principle" — not just a program — to address the issue with many efforts underway.

"This is a forward-looking vision," Buttigieg said. "Our focus isn't about assigning blame. It isn't about getting caught up in guilt. It's about fixing a problem. It's about mending what has been broken, especially when the damage was done with taxpayer dollars."

The Transportation Department has aimed to help communities that feel racially harmed by highway expansions, with the Federal Highway Administration last year taking a rare step to pause a proposed \$9 billion widening project in Houston, partly over civil rights concerns. That move likely spurred action in other places such as Austin, Texas, where environmental and racial justice groups recently filed a lawsuit to force the Texas transportation agency to better lay out the impacts of a proposed highway expansion there.

Buttigieg drew fire from some Republicans earlier this year when he said the federal government had an obligation to address the harms of racist design in highways. "There's trees they're putting in, they're saying that highways are racially discriminatory. I don't know how a road can be that," DeSantis said in February, dismissing it as "woke."

Under the program, \$195 million in competitive grants is to be awarded this year, of which \$50 million will be devoted for communities to conduct planning studies.

The department will also launch a "Thriving Communities" initiative to provide technical support for potential projects that serve disadvantaged communities alongside the Housing and Urban Development Department.

The Transportation Department has previously estimated it could help as many as 20 U.S. communities under the new program to remove portions of interstates and redesign streets by tapping into other transportation funds. According to the department, communities that win the Reconnecting Communities grants but still need additional funds will be prioritized in their applications for other pots of federal transportation money. Dozens more communities could derive benefit from the planning grants.

"Prior to 2021, the idea that we would deal with highway infrastructure that has divided communities was very much a fringe idea," said Ben Crowther, coordinator for the Boston-based Freeway Fighters Network, which is supported by the Congress for the New Urbanism. "The Biden administration has really transformed that into mainstream thinking. We are thinking now this is something that is possible — that you can remove a highway and instead build safe streets that are walkable, add housing and address other community needs besides travel time."

## Russia and China slam NATO after alliance raises alarm

By JILL LAWLESS, JOSEPH WILSON and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — NATO faced rebukes from Moscow and Beijing on Thursday after it declared Russia a "direct threat" and said China posed "serious challenges" to global stability.

The Western military alliance was wrapping up a summit in Madrid, where it issued a stark warning that the world has been plunged into a dangerous phase of big-power competition and myriad threats, from cyberattacks to climate change.

NATO leaders also formally invited Finland and Sweden to join the alliance, after overcoming opposition from Turkey. If the Nordic nations' accession is approved by the 30 member nations, it will give NATO a new 800-mile (1,300 kilometer) border with Russia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned he would respond in kind if the Nordic pair allowed NATO troops and military infrastructure onto their territory. He said Russia would have to "create the same threats for the territory from which threats against us are created."

Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas said Putin's threats were "nothing new."

"Of course, we have to expect some kind of surprises from Putin, but I doubt that he is attacking Sweden or Finland directly," Kallas said as she arrived at the summit's conference center venue. "We will see cyberattacks definitely. We will see hybrid attacks, information war is going on. But not the conventional war."

China accused the alliance of "maliciously attacking and smearing" the country. Its mission to the European Union said NATO "claims that other countries pose challenges, but it is NATO that is creating problems around the world."

NATO leaders turned their gaze south for a final summit session Thursday focused on Africa's Sahel region and the Middle East, where political instability — aggravated by climate change and food insecurity sparked by the war in Ukraine — is driving large numbers of migrants toward Europe.

"It is in our interest to continue working with our close partners in the south to fight shared challenges together," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

But it was Russia that dominated the summit. Stoltenberg said Moscow's invasion of Ukraine had brought "the biggest overhaul of our collective defense since the end of the Cold War."

The invasion shattered Europe's peace, and in response NATO has poured troops and weapons into Eastern Europe on a scale unseen in decades. Member nations have given Ukraine billions in military and civilian aid to strengthen its resistance.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who addressed the summit by video link, asked for more. He urged NATO to send modern artillery systems and other weapons and warned the leaders they either had to provide Kyiv with the help it needed or "face a delayed war between Russia and yourself."

"The question is, who's next? Moldova? Or the Baltics? Or Poland? The answer is: all of them," he said.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 25 of 82

At the summit, NATO leaders agreed to dramatically scale up military force along the alliance's eastern flank, where countries from Romania to the Baltic states worry about Russia's future plans.

They announced plans to increase almost eightfold the size of the alliance's rapid reaction force, from 40,000 to 300,000 troops, by next year. The troops will be based in their home nations but dedicated to specific countries in the east, where the alliance plans to build up stocks of equipment and ammunition.

U.S. President Joe Biden, whose country provides the bulk of NATO's firepower, announced a hefty boost in America's military presence in Europe, including a permanent U.S. base in Poland, two more Navy destroyers based in Rota, Spain, and two more F35 squadrons in the U.K.

The expansion will keep 100,000 troops in Europe for the foreseeable future, up from 80,000 before the war in Ukraine began.

Biden said Putin had believed NATO members would splinter after he invaded Ukraine, but the Russian leader got the opposite response.

"You're gonna get the NATO-ization of Europe," Biden said. "And that's exactly what he didn't want, but exactly what needs to be done to guarantee security for Europe."

Still, strains among NATO allies have emerged as the cost of energy and other essential goods has skyrocketed, partly because of the war and tough Western sanctions on Russia. There also are tensions over how the war will end and what, if any, concessions Ukraine should make.

Money remains a sensitive issue — just nine of NATO's 30 members currently meet the organization's target of spending 2% of gross domestic product on defense.

Britain, one of the nine, announced a further 1 billion pounds (\$1.21 billion) in military support to Ukraine on Thursday,

At what Stoltenberg called a "transformative" summit, the leaders published NATO's new Strategic Concept, its once-a-decade set of priorities and goals.

The last such document, in 2010, called Russia a "strategic partner." Now, NATO is accusing Russia of using "coercion, subversion, aggression and annexation" to extend its reach.

The 2010 document made no mention of China, but the new one addressed Beijing's growing economic and military reach.

"China is not our adversary, but we must be clear-eyed about the serious challenges it represents," Stoltenberg said on Wednesday.

NATO said that China "strives to subvert the rules-based international order, including in the space, cyber and maritime domains" and warned of its close ties with Moscow.

The alliance said, however, that it remained "open to constructive engagement" with Beijing.

China shot back that NATO was a source of instability and vowed to defend its interests.

"Since NATO positions China as a 'systemic challenge,' we have to pay close attention and respond in a coordinated way. When it comes to acts that undermine China's interests, we will make firm and strong responses," its statement said.

## Israel's parliament dissolves, sets 5th election in 4 years

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's parliament voted Thursday to dissolve itself, marking the end of a year-old experimental coalition government, and sending the country to the polls in November for the fifth time in less than four years.

Yair Lapid, Israel's foreign minister and architect of the outgoing coalition government, will become the country's caretaker prime minister just after midnight on Friday. He will be the 14th person to hold that office, taking over from Naftali Bennett, Israel's shortest serving prime minister.

Following the vote, Lapid embraced Bennett before the two swapped chairs. He posted, "thanks, Naftali, my brother" on Twitter.

The government collapsed just over a year after it was formed in a historic move that saw longtime leader Benjamin Netanyahu ousted after 12 years in power by a coalition of ideologically diverse parties,

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 26 of 82

the first to include an Arab faction.

The motion to dissolve passed with 92 lawmakers in favor, and none against, after days of bickering by coalition and opposition lawmakers over the date of new elections and other last-minute legislation.

New elections will be held on Nov. 1.

The move brings a formal end to a political experiment in which eight parties from across the Israeli spectrum tried to find common ground after a period of prolonged gridlock in which the country held four elections in two years.

The upcoming elections are an extension of Israel's protracted political crisis, at the heart of which sits Netanyahu and his ongoing corruption trial. The four deadlocked elections in the previous three years were largely referendums on Netanyahu's fitness to serve while facing charges of accepting bribes, fraud and breach of trust. Netanyahu has denied any wrongdoing.

Lapid, a former talk-show host who heads a center-left party, is expected to campaign as caretaker prime minister to keep the job as the main alternative to Netanyahu, and will likely get an early boost when he welcomes President Joe Biden to the country next week.

Polls by Israeli media show Netanyahu and his allies are projected to gain seats, although it is unclear whether they would have enough to form a 61-seat majority in the 120-member Knesset. If neither he nor anyone else succeeds in doing so, Israel could go to elections yet again.

On Wednesday, Bennett said he would be taking a hiatus from politics and would not be running in the upcoming elections. His Yamina party was riven by infighting and splintered following the formation of the government last year as its members broke away in protest of what they considered Bennett's excessive compromises to more liberal coalition allies.

The death blow came earlier this month, when the government failed to renew an emergency law that preserves the special legal status of Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank, legislation that most Israelis view as essential. Because the Knesset was dissolved before the end of the month, the emergency law is automatically renewed until after the formation of a new government.

"They promised change, they spoke about healing, they tried an experiment, and the experiment failed," Netanyahu said in an address to parliament ahead of the vote. "We are the only alternative: a strong, stable, responsible nationalist government."

The outgoing governing coalition made history by being the first to include an Arab party. Mansour Abbas, leader of the Islamist Ra'am faction, joined the coalition to secure better services and more government funding for Israel's Arab minority, which makes up some 20% of the population.

Netanyahu and his allies accused coalition members of partnering with terrorist sympathizers. His allies have provided little evidence to back those claims, citing only Abbas' Islamist roots, and Netanyahu himself also reportedly courted the party after the previous election last year.

Israel's Arab citizens face widespread discrimination and are seen by many Jewish Israelis as a fifth column because they have close family ties to Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, and largely support their struggle for independence.

## Marcos takes helm in Philippines, silent on father's abuses

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the namesake son of an ousted dictator, praised his father's legacy and glossed over its violent past as he was sworn in as Philippine president Thursday after a stunning election victory that opponents say was pulled off by whitewashing his family's image.

His rise to power, 36 years after an army-backed "People Power" revolt booted his father from office and into global infamy, upends politics in the Asian democracy, where a public holiday, monuments and the Philippine Constitution stand as reminders of the end of Ferdinand Marcos Sr.'s tyrannical rule.

But in his inaugural speech, Marcos Jr. defended the legacy of his late father, who he said accomplished many things that had not been done since the country's independence.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 27 of 82

"He got it done, sometimes with the needed support, sometimes without. So will it be with his son," he said to applause from his supporters in the crowd. "You will get no excuses from me."

"My father built more and better roads, produced more rice than all administrations before his," Marcos Jr. said. He praised the infrastructure projects by his predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, who ended his six-year term also with a legacy of violence, strong-man rule and contempt for those who stood in his path.

The new president called for unity, saying "we will go farther together than against each other. He did not touch on the human rights atrocities and plunder his father was accused of, saying he would not talk about the past but the future.

Activists and survivors of the martial law era under his father protested Marcos Jr.'s inauguration, which took place at a noontime ceremony at the steps of the National Museum in Manila. Thousands of police officers, including anti-riot contingents, SWAT commandos and snipers, were deployed in the bayside tourist district for security.

Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan and U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris's husband, Doug Emhoff, were among foreign dignitaries, who attended the event, which featured a 21-gun salute, a military parade and air force jet fly-bys.

"Wow is this really happening?" asked Bonifacio Ilagan, a 70-year-old activist who was detained and severely tortured by counterinsurgency forces during the elder Marcos's rule. "For victims of martial law like me, this is a nightmare."

Marching in the streets, the protesters displayed placards that read, "Never again to martial law" and "Reject Marcos-Duterte."

Such historical baggage and antagonism stand to hound Marcos Jr. during a six-year presidency beginning at a time of intense crises.

The Philippines has been among the countries worst-hit in Asia by the two-year coronavirus pandemic, after more than 60,000 deaths and extended lockdowns sent the economy to its worst recession since World War II and worsened poverty, unemployment and hunger. As the pandemic was easing early this year, Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent global inflation soaring and sparked fears of food shortages.

Last week, Marcos Jr. announced he would serve as secretary of agriculture temporarily after he takes office to prepare for possible food supply emergencies.

He also inherits decades-old Muslim and communist insurgencies, crime, gaping inequality and political divisions inflamed by his election.

Congress last month proclaimed his landslide victory, as well as that of his running mate Sara Duterte, the daughter of the outgoing president, in the vice-presidential race.

"I ask you all pray for me, wish me well. I want to do well because when the president does well, the country does well," he said after his congressional proclamation.

Marcos Jr. received more than 31 million votes and Sara Duterte more than 32 million of the more than 55 million votes cast in the May 9 election — massive victories that will provide them robust political capital as they face tremendous challenges as well as doubts arising from their fathers' reputations. It was the first majority presidential victory in the Philippines in decades.

Outgoing President Duterte presided over a brutal anti-drugs campaign that left thousands of mostly poor suspects dead in an unprecedented scale of killings the International Criminal Court was investigating as a possible crime against humanity. The probe was suspended in November, but the ICC chief prosecutor has asked that it be resumed immediately.

Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte have faced calls to help prosecute her father and cooperate with the international court.

Marcos Jr., a former governor, congressman and senator, has refused to acknowledge massive human rights abuses and corruption that marked his father's reputation.

During the campaign, he and Sara Duterte avoided controversial issues and focused on a vague call for national unity.

His father was toppled by a largely peaceful pro-democracy uprising in 1986, and died in 1989 while in exile in Hawaii without admitting any wrongdoing, including accusations that he, his family and cronies

amassed an estimated \$5 billion to \$10 billion while in office.

A Hawaii court later found him liable for human rights violations and awarded \$2 billion to more than 9,000 Filipinos who filed a lawsuit against him for torture, incarceration, extrajudicial killings and disappearances.

Imelda Marcos and her children were allowed to return to the Philippines in 1991 to engineer a stunning reversal of their political fortunes, helped by a well-funded social media campaign to refurbish the family name. Imelda, the 92-year-old family matriarch, sat in at the inauguration in a traditional light-blue Filipiniana dress, kissed her son and posed for pictures on the stage.

Marcos Jr.'s alliance with Sara Duterte, whose father remains popular despite his human rights record, and a powerful name of one of the country's most well-known political dynasties, helped him capture the presidency. Many Filipinos too remained poor and grew disenchanted with post-Marcos administrations, Manila-based analyst Richard Heydarian said.

"These allowed the Marcoses to present themselves as the alternative," Heydarian said. "An unregulated social media landscape allowed their disinformation network to rebrand the dark days of martial law as supposedly the golden age of the Philippines."

Along metropolitan Manila's main avenue, democracy shrines and monuments erected after Marcos' 1986 downfall stand prominently. The anniversary of his ouster is celebrated each year as a special national holiday, and a presidential commission that has worked for decades to recover ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses still exists.

Marcos Jr. has not explained how he will deal with such stark reminders of the past.

## Despair and denial amid search for Ukrainian mall victims

By FRANCESCA EBEL Associated Press

KREMENCHUK, Ukraine (AP) — How do you grieve when there is no body to be found? How do you move forward when the person you loved vanished into the dust in a matter of seconds? These are some of the unthinkable questions many in Kremenchuk are now grappling with after a Russian airstrike obliterated a busy shopping mall.

Many hoped the war would not reach as far as their city. Since the invasion, checkpoints had been erected at the entrance to the town. Air raid sirens wailed occasionally. There had been two strikes, without casualties, on a oil refinery on the outskirts of town. But for the citizens of Kremenchuk, a breezy city on the banks of the Dnipro river in central Ukraine, hundreds of kilometers from the front lines, the town offered them a sense of relative safety.

Then a Russian cruise missile crashed through the Amstor shopping mall, igniting a fierce blaze that burned through the building and those trapped inside within minutes.

Some had just stopped by the mall on their way home from work, to fix their phone or shop for clothes. But before they could register what was happening, the building became a black, choking inferno, the fire inside so hot it melted the metal and glass.

Survivors told the AP that at the time of impact there were "hundreds" of people inside the building. So far 18 people have been confirmed dead, at least 20 other people have been reported missing, while dozens are in intensive care. In the hours after the strike, local Telegram groups were filled with panicked messages asking for information about missing daughters, brothers, friends.

Among those still searching for their relative is Oleksandr Baybuza, whose brother-in-law Kostiantyn Voznyi was working inside Amstor at the time of the attack.

Baybuza told the AP that the family had no information about Voznyi's whereabouts.

"Everyone hopes he is alive, that he is injured somewhere. Nobody is losing hope. Everyone is waiting for good news. We are very worried" said Baybuza, his face pale and exhausted.

When the war started, Voznyi had sent his wife and children to safety abroad. He stayed in Kremenchuk, unable to leave the country due to martial law, and wound up working at an electronics store on the central aisle of the Amstor mall. Oleksandr says witnesses saw him working there that afternoon.

The family has not been able to find him at any local hospitals. DNA samples have been taken from

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 29 of 82

Voznyi's children and his father. Now begins the terrible wait.

Fourteen emergency service psychologists are currently working at the blast site with families like Voznyi's and with survivors. The psychologists are up against a difficult task: The explosion was so powerful it is possible relatives may never find any trace of their loved ones.

Svitlana Rybalko, a press officer for the State Emergency Services, told the AP that alongside the identified dead, investigators had found the fragments of 8 additional bodies. "The police cannot say for sure how many (victims) there are. So we are finding not the bodies but the fragments of bodies. Now we are clearing at the very epicentre of the blast. Here we practically cannot find bodies, as such."

The psychologists are working to help families come to terms with the idea that they may not ever find their relatives.

"The main thing is: we do not give them extra hope. We do not say that everything will be all right. That your loved ones will be taken out of the rubble alive after several days. If we say so, they will have false hope, false expectations" says Yuliia Falieva, a State Emergency Service psychologist.

"It's important that they accept this reality as soon as possible" said another psychologist, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. "It's better to release the emotions now rather than store them up for later."

Falieva says that the psychologists' main job is to remain close to those who are suffering, to listen, to help them through this deeply traumatic period. She says that mostly people do not approach the psychologists to ask for help, so it is their job to identify who needs support.

"We visually select people who need help most of all. It could be a person who is too excited, is trembling, cries too much or behaves aggressively" says Falieva, adding that she has helped people looking for their children, former mall employees concerned about colleagues and anxious citizens alike.

On Wednesday morning, several people still hoping for news of their loved ones stood by the wreckage of the mall. A young woman sat cross-legged on the ground and wept, concealing her tears with dark sunglasses. Another woman was comforted by one of the psychologists. One, man who did not want to give his name, appeared distressed as he stood staring at the ruins. He had brought yellow flowers to lay at the nearby memorial. "I was in there, I almost died" he said "I shouldn't have come here, it was a bad idea — I can't even look at this... I want to kill these Russian scumbags."

Like many of the residents who now come to stare in silent disbelief at the wreckage of Amstor, Falieva, an experienced crisis psychologist, is still in shock.

"I've been working for 20 years but this is the first experience of the kind. Before we had crisis situations connected with nature, road traffic collisions. ... Throughout these long days all of us are feeling this kind of shock, confusion, and anger."

Kremenchuk, Ukrainian officials say, must serve as a reminder that while the country is at war, nowhere is safe. Iryna Venediktova, Ukraine's Prosecutor General, who visited the blast site on Tuesday, said that all citizens should expect incoming missiles "every minute" and "be ready".

Psychologically it is difficult for many to accept the tragedy that struck their quiet, riverside town.

One resident, Denys Ipatov, says, "I still can't believe the war came to our city. ... Why do all that? To peaceful citizens, to a peaceful facility. I don't understand the sense of this war. ... What drives these barbarians?"

## **OPEC+ may not be much help with high oil, gasoline prices**

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Oil prices are high, and drivers are paying more at the pump. But the OPEC oil cartel and allied producing nations may not be much help as they decide Thursday how much more crude to send to world markets.

That's because the 23-member OPEC+ alliance, which includes Russia, is struggling to produce enough oil to keep up with the rebounding demand for fuel since the COVID-19 pandemic. Plus, Western buyers are shunning barrels from Russia over its war in Ukraine, meaning there's less oil on the market to go around.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 30 of 82

OPEC, led by Saudi Arabia, and its allies will decide whether to boost production in August beyond the increase of 648,000 barrels per day that the group agreed to at its last meeting. That boost was a modest step at providing some relief to soaring prices. Before, OPEC+ had been adding about 432,000 barrels per day monthly to put oil back on the market after cutting production dramatically during the height of the pandemic.

Gasoline prices around the world have reached painful highs. In the U.S., they surpassed \$5 a gallon for the first time this month before dipping in recent days as global oil prices fell on fears of a recession. U.S. President Joe Biden has been under pressure to do whatever he can to reduce gasoline prices for struggling Americans, including urging Congress to suspend gas and diesel taxes, although many experts say there's little he can do.

OPEC, on the other hand, could help lower prices by increasing production — in theory. But that doesn't mean it will, even as Biden has urged the group to do so.

Production has fallen substantially behind OPEC+ quotas. Angola and Nigeria have longstanding shortfalls, among others, and questions have arisen about how much spare production capacity Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have in reserve.

There's also little incentive for OPEC+ countries to boost production even if they are able, said Heather Heldman, managing partner at Luminae Group.

"At the end of the day, they're worried about their economic bottom line, not the political fortune of a foreign leader," Heldman said.

In addition, Biden is planning his first trip to Saudi Arabia as president, and both countries will want something positive to announce after that summit next month, Heldman said.

"From the Saudi perspective and Emirati perspective, there's really no need to make any meaningful gesture now," she said.

Russia's war in Ukraine has contributed to high oil prices fueling inflation around the world. At a summit of the Group of Seven leading economies this week, the U.S. pushed for a price cap on Russian oil imports to try to blunt the price spikes and reduce money from oil sales flowing into the Kremlin's war chest.

The G-7 agreed to explore imposing the cap by tying it to services needed to sell oil such as insurance and shipping. Service providers would face sanctions if they facilitate the sale of oil over the cap. But the proposal left many important aspects open and will be the subject of talks in the weeks ahead.

The European Union, a key importer of Russian oil, also has approved a ban on 90% of Russian oil imports by year's end.

As of May, surplus production capacity in non-OPEC countries decreased by 80% compared with 2021, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Surplus capacity is oil production that can be brought online within 30 days and sustained for at least 90 days. In 2021, about 60% of the surplus production capacity was in Russia, but much of that was eliminated as of May 2022 due to sanctions, the agency said.

High gasoline prices in the U.S. aren't just about rising oil prices and less oil on the market. Most American refineries are operating at capacity, so even if there was more oil produced, they wouldn't be able to alleviate high prices by quickly turning it into gasoline, jet fuel and diesel.

U.S. crude traded down 0.2% at \$109.70 per barrel ahead of the meeting, while international benchmark Brent dropped 0.6% to \$115.35 per barrel.

## Xi arrives in Hong Kong for 25th anniversary of handover

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Chinese leader Xi Jinping arrived in Hong Kong on Thursday ahead of the 25th anniversary of the British handover and after a two-year transformation bringing the city more tightly under Communist Party control. It is Xi's first trip outside of mainland China in nearly 2 ½ years.

Supporters waving Chinese and Hong Kong flags chanted "Welcome, welcome! Warm welcome!" as Xi's train pulled into the train station.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 31 of 82

Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, were welcomed by city leader Carrie Lam as they alighted the train. Xi waved at supporters who welcomed him on the platform, and later greeted John Lee, the city's incoming leader, and Leung Chun-ying, a former chief executive of the city, along with other officials.

"I'm very happy to be in Hong Kong," Xi said in a speech at the Hong Kong West Kowloon train station. "It's been five years since I last visited, and in the past five years I've been paying attention to and thinking about Hong Kong."

Under Xi's leadership, China has reshaped Hong Kong in the past two years, cracking down on protest and freedom of speech and introducing a more patriotic curriculum in schools. The changes have all but eliminated opposition voices and driven many to leave.

Hong Kong and nearby Macao are special administrative regions that are governed separately from the rest of China, known as the Chinese mainland.

Xi has not left China since the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. China has maintained a strict "zero-COVID" policy that aims to keep the virus out. Xi's last overseas trip was to Myanmar in January 2020.

At the train station, Xi said Hong Kong has overcome many challenges over the years and had been "reborn from the ashes" with "vigorous vitality."

"As long as we stick to the 'one country, two systems' framework, Hong Kong will certainly have a brighter future and will make new and bigger contributions to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people," he said.

Later Thursday, Xi is expected to visit the Hong Kong Science Park before meeting with pro-Beijing politicians and tycoons, and then attend a closed-door banquet hosted by Lam, the outgoing chief executive, according to local newspaper South China Morning Post.

Both Xi and Peng are likely to spend Thursday night in the Chinese city of Shenzhen — 15 minutes away from Hong Kong by high-speed train — and return to the city on Friday morning to attend the July 1 events.

On Friday, Xi will attend a ceremony marking Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule on July 1, 1997 and officiate an inauguration ceremony for the new government led by incoming leader Lee.

Ahead of his arrival in Hong Kong, thousands of guests — including top officials, lawmakers and diplomats — checked in to quarantine hotels earlier this week and have been taking daily nucleic acid tests as part of coronavirus precautions.

Police have also ramped up security, designating security zones and road closures as well as a no-fly zone for Friday.

More than 10 journalists from local and international media outlets had their applications to cover the July 1 events rejected earlier this week on "security grounds," with the government saying it was "striking a balance between the need of media work and security requirements."

## Big cats in urban jungle: LA mountain lions, Mumbai leopards

By CHRISTINA LARSON and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

Los Angeles and Mumbai, India, share many superlatives as pinnacles of cinema, fashion, and traffic congestion. But another similarity lurks in the shadows, most often seen at night walking silently on four paws.

These metropolises are the world's only megacities of 10 million-plus where large felines — mountain lions in one, leopards in the other — thrive by breeding, hunting and maintaining territory within urban boundaries.

Long-term studies in both cities have examined how the big cats prowl through their urban jungles, and how people can best live alongside them — lessons that may be applicable to more places in coming decades.

"In the future, there's going to be more cities like this, as urban areas further encroach on natural habitats," said biologist Audra Huffmeyer, who studies mountain lions at the University of California, Los Angeles. "If we want to keep these large carnivores around on the planet, we have to learn to live with them."

**FREEWAYS AND FRAGMENTED HABITAT**

Twenty years ago, scientists in Los Angeles placed a tracking collar on their first cat, a large male moun-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 32 of 82

tain lion dubbed P1, that defended a wide swath of the Santa Monica Mountains, a coastal range that lies within and adjacent to the city.

"P1 was as big as they get in southern California, about 150 pounds," said Seth Riley, a National Park Service ecologist who was part of the effort. "These dominant males are the ones that breed — they won't tolerate other adult males in their territory."

With GPS tracking and camera traps, the scientists followed the rise and fall of P1's dynasty for seven years, through multiple mates and litters of kittens. "2009 was the last time we knew anything about P1," said Riley. "There must have been a fight. We found his collar, blood on a rock. And never saw him again. He was reasonably old."

Since then, Riley has helped collar around 100 more mountain lions in Los Angeles, building a vast database of lion behavior that's contributed to understanding how much territory the cats need, what they eat (mostly deer), how often they cross paths with people and what may imperil their future.

As with medieval European kings, the biggest threat turned out to be inbreeding. Living in small territories separated by highways has caused some males to mate with daughters and granddaughters, who weren't able to naturally disperse farther away. That's led to genetic problems such as fertility issues and kinked tails.

"Based on genetic analysis, we know that P1 mated with P6, his daughter — that was the first case we documented of this very close inbreeding," said Riley.

## LEOPARDS IN URBAN LANDSCAPE

In Mumbai, one of the world's most densely populated cities, the leopards are packed in, too: about 50 have adapted to a space ideally suited for 20. And yet the nocturnal cats also keep mostly out of sight.

"Because these animals are so secretive, you don't know much about them. You can't just observe them," said Vidya Athreya, director of Wildlife Conservation Society in India and part of a research team that recently fitted five leopards with tracking collars.

The leopards' core range is centered around Sanjay Gandhi National Park, a protected area boxed on three sides by an urbanized landscape, including a neighborhood that's home to 100,000 people and nearly a dozen leopards.

Researchers tackled specific questions from park managers, such as how the cats cross busy roads near the park.

To get the answer, they collared a big male dubbed Maharaja. They found that it walked mostly at night and traversed over 60 kilometers (37 miles) in about a week, from the park in Mumbai to another nearby. The leopard crossed a busy state highway, using the same spot to pass, on three occasions. It also crossed a railway track.

The path chosen by Maharaja is nearby a new highway and a freight corridor under construction. Researchers said that knowing the big cats' highway crossing habits can help policy makers make informed decisions about where to build animal underpasses to reduce accidents.

## LIVING ALONGSIDE BIG CATS

In Los Angeles, long-term mountain lion research showing the harm of fragmented habitat helped fuel a successful campaign to build a wildlife crossing bridge over U.S. Route 101, one of the city's busiest freeways. Construction began on April 22.

When it's finished in three years, the bridge will be covered in native plants and include special sound walls to minimize light and noise disturbances for nocturnal animals. It will connect Santa Monica Mountains and Simi Hills, enlarging the dating pool for resident mountain lions.

But learning to live alongside cats is not only a matter of infrastructure decisions, but also human choices and education.

When Athreya first started advocating for co-existence with Mumbai's leopards, she was met with skepticism and pushback from other biologists and policy makers. They thought it would be impossible for big cats to live alongside people without significant friction, or worse.

"The dominant narrative was about conflict," she said. But she helped push the conversation to be about



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 33 of 82

"negotiations, improving the situation for both wildlife and people."

That is not to say living alongside a big predator is without perils. In Mumbai, Purvi Lote saw her first leopard when she was 5, on the porch of a relative's home. Terrified, she ran back inside to her mother. But now the 9-year-old says she isn't as afraid of the big cats.

Like other children, she doesn't step outdoors alone after dark. Children and even adults travel in groups at night, while blaring music from their telephones to ensure that leopards aren't surprised. But the most fundamental rule, according to the youngster: "When you see a leopard, don't bother it."

## AVOIDING DEADLY CONFLICTS

Leopards in Mumbai adapted to mainly hunt feral dogs that frequent garbage dumps outside the forest and mostly attacked people when cornered or attacked. But in 2010, 20 people in Mumbai died in leopard attacks, said Jagannath Kamble, an official at Mumbai's protected forest.

The turning point was the realization that the understaffed forest department couldn't just keep reacting to individual attacks by capturing and transporting leopards to forests since they returned. Instead, it decided to focus on trying to get people to coexist with the predators.

Officials roped in volunteers, nongovernmental groups and the media for a public education program in 2011. Since then, fatalities have dropped steadily and no one has been killed in an attack since 2017.

The last known victim was Muttu Veli's 4-year-old daughter Darshini. Veli, an office worker who came to Mumbai in 1996, said Darshini was playing outside their home in a slum at the edge of the forest and she just didn't return home. Eventually, her mauled body was recovered.

"My daughter is gone. She won't come back," he said.

In Los Angeles, there have been no human deaths attributed to mountain lions, but one nonfatal attack on a child occurred in 2021.

Both cities have learned that trying to capture, kill or relocate the cats isn't the answer.

"Relocation and killing makes conflict worse," said Beth Pratt, California regional director at National Wildlife Federation. "It's better to have a stable population, than one where hierarchies and territories are disrupted."

Avoidance is the safest strategy, she said. "These big cats are shy — they tend to avoid human contact as much as they can. They're really extreme introverts of the animal kingdom."

## 'We cannot pause our lives': Ukrainians begin rebuilding

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

YAHIDNE, Ukraine (AP) — On the outskirts of a Ukrainian village stand the remnants of a small school that was partially destroyed in the early weeks of the Russian invasion.

Surrounded by tall pine trees, the school's broken windows offer glimpses of abandoned classrooms that are unlikely to see students again anytime soon. It is just one of many buildings in Yahidne that were shattered by the war.

But this village and others are gradually returning to life a few months after Russian troops retreated from the northern Chernihiv region. Now people are repairing homes, and the sound of construction tools fills the air. Volunteers from all over Ukraine, and from other countries, are coming to help because there is so much to do before another winter approaches.

Among the workers are a copywriter and a cameraman who have been repairing the roof of the apartment block in front of the school for several days under a scorching sun.

Denys Ovcharenko, 31, and Denys Huschuk, 43, came from the capital, Kyiv. They joined a volunteer building organization called Dobrobat, a name that combines "dobro," or kindness, with "bat" for battalion.

The men and 22 other volunteers help their compatriots return to their homes as soon as possible.

"While the guys are protecting us, we work here," Huschuk said, referring to troops at the front.

No one in the village yet plans to rebuild the school, which was used by the Russians as a base. Villagers prefer not to mention the place at all.

Most of Yahidne's residents — almost 400 people — spent a month in the school's basement, where

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 34 of 82

they were held around the clock as human shields to protect against an attack by the Ukrainian army. Only occasionally did the Russian troops allow villagers to climb upstairs and enter the yard. But that was not enough. Ten people died in the dark, crowded basement. Survivors blame the lack of fresh air.

The Russians left the village at the end of March.

The Dobrobat group plans to repair the roofs of 21 houses in the coming weeks. The volunteers include teachers, athletes and programmers. About 80% of them have no experience in construction.

Yahidne is just one of the villages in northern Ukraine that suffered from Russia's aggression. And Dobrobat is just one of the groups responding, sometimes drawing volunteers from beyond Ukraine.

A father and son from the Czech Republic decided to spend their annual family trip in Ukraine this year. Michal and Daniel Kahle see each other for only a few weeks each summer, as the son studies in the United States.

"We wanted to do something meaningful instead of just being tourists," said Daniel, 21.

That's how they came to the town of Makariv in the Kyiv region. Many buildings there were destroyed or damaged in the first weeks of the war.

Father and son joined the youth volunteer movement Building Ukraine Together, which since 2014 has helped restore damaged buildings in eastern Ukraine. For several days, together with young people from different parts of Ukraine, they worked to rebuild the Makariv fire department, which was hit by an artillery shell on March 12.

"It's a long game. We cannot pause our lives, sit at home and wait for the war to end," said Tetyana Symkovych, the volunteer group's coordinator in Makariv.

Many Ukrainians volunteer because they want to be helpful. But that is not the only reason Yulia Kapustienko comes to the fire department every morning to putty the walls. At the end of April, the young woman left Mariupol after spending two months in the besieged port city.

"I saw dead bodies and burned houses. Still, when I see a normal house, I automatically imagine what will happen to it after the rocket hits," she said. "It is impossible to erase this from your mind. But at the same time, I try not to get stuck in the past, so it is important for me to do something, to take responsibility."

The 23-year-old is originally from Horlivka in the eastern Donetsk region. Her first experience of armed occupation was in 2014. After that, she cried for three years, unable to endure the loss of her hometown.

This time, she chose a different strategy.

"I know now that you need to do something," Kapustienko said. "I don't care what to rebuild. The main thing is for it to be in Ukraine."

## New Zealand designates Proud Boys a terrorist organization

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand's government has declared that American far-right groups the Proud Boys and The Base are terrorist organizations.

The two groups join 18 others including Islamic State that have been given an official terrorist designation, making it illegal in New Zealand to fund, recruit or participate in the groups, and obligating authorities to take action against them.

The U.S. groups are not known to be active in New Zealand, although the South Pacific nation has become more attuned to threats from the far right after a white supremacist shot and killed 51 Muslim worshippers at two Christchurch mosques in 2019.

The New Zealand massacre inspired other white supremacists around the world, including a white gunman who killed 10 Black people at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York.

In the U.S., the State Department only lists foreign groups as terrorist entities. But the Proud Boys were last year named a terrorist group in Canada, while The Base has previously been declared a terrorist group in Britain, Canada and Australia.

In a 29-page explanation of the Proud Boys designation published Thursday, New Zealand authorities said the group's involvement in the violent attack on the U.S. Capitol building on Jan. 6, 2021 amounted

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 35 of 82

to an act of terrorism.

The statement said that while several militia groups were involved, it was the Proud Boys who incited crowds, coordinated attacks on law enforcement officers and led other rioters to where they could break into the building.

The statement said there are unlinked but ideologically affiliated chapters of the Proud Boys operating in Canada and Australia.

New Zealand authorities argued that before the Capitol attack, the Proud Boys had a history of using street rallies and social media to intimidate opponents and recruit young men through demonstrations of violence. It said the group had put up various smoke screens to hide its extremism.

Earlier this month, the former leader of the Proud Boys, Henry "Enrique" Tarrío, and four others linked to the group were charged in the U.S. with seditious conspiracy for what federal prosecutors say was a coordinated attack on the Capitol.

The indictment alleges that the Proud Boys conspired to forcibly oppose the lawful transfer of presidential power. The five are scheduled to stand trial in August in Washington, D.C.'s federal court.

Asked by media Thursday in New Zealand if the Proud Boys weren't better known for protest actions rather than extreme violence, New Zealand Police Minister Chris Hipkins said: "Well, violent protests attempting to overthrow the government, clearly there is evidence of that."

In making its case against The Base, New Zealand authorities said a key goal of the group was to "train a cadre of extremists capable of accelerationist violence."

The statement said founder Rinaldo Nazario "has repetitively counselled members online about violence, the acquisition of weapons, and actions to accelerate the collapse of the U.S. government and survive the consequent period of chaos and violence."

## Sri Lanka crisis gives India chance to gain sway vs China

By DAVID RISING and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Sri Lanka's strategic location has attracted outsized interest in the small island nation from regional giants China and India for more than a decade, with Beijing and its free-flowing loans and infrastructure investments widely seen as having gained the upper hand in the quest for influence.

But Sri Lanka's economic collapse has proved an opportunity for India to swing the pendulum back, with New Delhi stepping in with massive financial and material assistance to its neighbor.

"There is no such thing as charity in international politics," said Sreeram Chaulia, who heads the School of International Affairs at O.P. Jindal University in Sonapat, India.

"The intent is to drive China away from India's backyard and restore the balance in New Delhi's favor."

Sri Lanka, a country of 22 million, sits off the southern coast of India on the Indian Ocean shipping lanes through which China receives the vast majority of its imported oil from the Middle East.

As part of Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative to pump money into infrastructure projects across Asia and Africa, former Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa took on many loans, including \$1.1 billion to build a port in his home region of Hambantota despite the plan having been rejected by an expert panel.

When the deep-water port failed to generate the foreign revenue needed to pay China back, Sri Lanka in 2017 was forced to hand the facility and thousands of acres of land around it to Beijing for 99 years — giving China a key foothold directly opposite regional rival India's coastline.

That stoked India's ongoing concerns about China's growing influence in South Asia, particularly in smaller countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal and Maldives.

Concerns over China's increasing regional assertiveness deepened in 2020 when Indian and Chinese soldiers clashed in deadly skirmishes on the disputed Himalayan Ladakh border.

In its maritime approach, Beijing's military focus is currently more on the South China Sea and the Pacific, while its interest in Sri Lanka and the Indian Ocean appears to be more economically motivated, said Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, a London-based analyst with the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 36 of 82

"On the security side for China it's not a priority, but it is an emerging opportunity for China to bolster its influence in South Asia and ... to counter India's influence," he said.

Caught in between is Sri Lanka itself which, like many others in the region, needs both China and India, whose combined population is nearly 3 billion people, Roy-Chaudhury said.

"It's not black and white," he said. "The leaders of these countries have to be pro-India and pro-China at the same time."

Sajith Premadasa, the current Sri Lankan opposition leader, emphasized that while the country is "extremely grateful" for India's help in the current crisis, the government needs to ensure that Sri Lanka's sovereignty and political independence are not impacted by the situation.

"What Sri Lanka should do always is to ensure our own national interests — in order to maximize our own national interests," he told The Associated Press. "We should work with everyone in international society, irrespective of which power group or power bloc anybody belongs to."

Sri Lanka has been rocked by protests since April after its foreign currency reserves ran dry, leading to widespread food and fuel shortages and power cuts, with demonstrators calling for the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the brother of Mahinda Rajapaksa who was elected in 2019.

In May, Mahinda, who had been appointed prime minister, himself resigned, but Gotabaya has clung to power.

Gotabaya inherited an economy already in a slump after a series of attacks in early 2019 by Islamic extremists caused a dramatic drop-off in tourism, a major source of income, and enormous foreign debt from infrastructure projects, many bankrolled by Chinese money and commissioned by brother Mahinda.

But a series of unwise economic decisions made the situation worse, and it was further exacerbated by the global coronavirus hitting the tourism sector again, while the war in Ukraine has driven up food and fuel costs.

The government now owes \$51 billion and is unable to make interest payments. It has suspended repayment of \$7 billion in foreign debt due this year out of \$25 billion to be repaid by 2026, pending the outcome of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund on a rescue package.

China, Sri Lanka's third largest creditor after Japan and the Asian Development Bank, accounts for about 10% of its debt.

China has offered to lend more on favorable terms but has balked at forgiving some of Sri Lanka's debt, possibly over concerns it would prompt other borrowers across Asia and Africa to demand the same relief.

But Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who took office after Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned, has said that Sri Lanka has not been able to access \$1.5 billion in loans offered by China, because Beijing has made the money contingent on the country having enough foreign reserves for three months.

Beijing has also promised to "play a positive role" in Sri Lanka's talks with the IMF and is providing some 500 million yuan, about \$75 million, in humanitarian aid, according to Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijan.

Meanwhile, India has stepped in with millions of dollars worth of rice, milk powder, medicine and other humanitarian aid, as well as diesel fuel and gasoline.

India has also extended Sri Lanka a \$4 billion credit line on favorable terms that has been widely credited with helping the country's crisis from worsening, even as Wickremesinghe last week declared the economy had "completely collapsed."

Wickremesinghe, who has served as prime minister several times before, is seen as pro-India, though he has limited leverage in his current role with Gotabaya Rajapaksa remaining president.

While the Rajapaksa family is considered pro-China, and with the general perception that China has been partially responsible for the country's problems, the political winds seem to be shifting in India's favor, Chaulia said.

India has not been actively promoting the perception that Chinese loans contributed to the crisis in Sri Lanka, but it also has not fought it, seeing the idea of a Chinese "debt trap" as an advantageous narrative for it regionally.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 37 of 82

"India is not worried if this message comes across," Roy-Chaudhury said.

New Delhi has recently succeeded in wresting away some of Beijing's important projects in Sri Lanka, which is also a major destination for Indian exports.

In March, Sri Lanka finalized a joint venture with India to develop a solar power plant in the island nation. That same month, Colombo also terminated a contract with a Chinese company to build a \$12 million wind farm in the country and offered it to an Indian rival.

"While India is trying to maintain its strategic footprint in Sri Lanka, its main aim appears to be to minimize Chinese hold in the country," said K C Singh, a former Indian foreign secretary and a strategic affairs expert.

Coming to Sri Lanka's aid also fits neatly into Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Neighborhood First" foreign policy initiative, which focuses on cultivating and sustaining relations with nearby countries, and it is also in India's self interest not to have a neighboring country like Sri Lanka collapse into chaos, Roy-Chaudhury said.

But at the same time India does not want to find itself in a position where it is stuck alone with an economic bailout, so it has been pushing Sri Lanka to turn to the IMF and asking for other countries to help.

"In security terms, yes, it would want to be a preferred security partner," Roy-Chaudhury said.

"In economic terms, I think it would want to be one of a number of countries providing economic reassurance or support."

## Climate concerns grow as US helps Europe replace Russian gas

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Amos Hochstein, President Joe Biden's point man for global energy problems, says he knows that transitioning away from the climate-wrecking pollution of fossil fuels is the only way to go. He advocates urgently for renewable energy, for energy-smart thermostats and heat pumps.

But when it comes to tackling the pressing energy challenges presented by Russia's war on Ukraine, Hochstein also can sound like nothing as much as the West's oilfield roustabout, taking a giant pipe wrench to the world's near-crisis-level energy shortfalls.

Appearing before a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee this month on U.S. help in Europe's Russian-fueled energy problems, Hochstein spoke enthusiastically of prospects for a new floating natural gas terminal in Albania, new gas connections elsewhere in the Balkans, bumping up the flow of gas from Central Asia and getting gas out of Spain to the rest of Europe.

"We have to face the reality that today Europe's system is dependent on gas," Hochstein told the AP after the hearing. It was a relatively rare public account from an envoy whose work normally is behind the scenes. "And I need to make sure that people in the winter have heating, and they have electricity."

Increasingly, however, some climate advocates are expressing concern at what they see as an emphasis from the Biden administration on new, U.S.-heavy natural gas and infrastructure projects as part of an all-out effort by Europe and the U.S. to wrest Europe away from its reliance on Russian oil and gas.

Climate groups charge that new spending on building pipelines, terminals, port facilities and storage threatens to lock in increased reliance on fossil fuel for decades to come, while doing little to solve Europe's most immediate energy crisis.

Criticism increased Tuesday, after Biden and other leaders in the Group of Seven softened their 2021 climate pledges to move away from public financing of new fossil fuel infrastructure, citing Russia's war.

"Public support for gas infrastructure is not the climate presidency Joe Biden promised," Kate DeAngelis, international finance program manager of Friends of the Earth, said in a statement in response.

But as U.S. companies have nearly tripled America's exports of liquified natural gas to Europe in the months since Russia invaded Ukraine, Hochstein cites his immediate challenge: getting Europeans through the end of the year without freezing in their homes.

The European Union received roughly 40% of its natural gas from Russia before the war. Western-led sanctions and Russian cutoffs, as well as Europe's major switch to non-Russian suppliers, are depriving

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 38 of 82

Europe of Russian natural gas.

Democratic and Republican lawmakers alike welcomed Hochstein's efforts to decouple Europe from Russian pipelines, and asked for more. Climate change and clean energy are "important challenges," Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, chair of the Europe and Regional Security Cooperation panel where Hochstein appeared, told the AP. "But I think our No. 1 priority here needs to be to defeat Putin and help Ukraine."

The Biden administration has struggled to ease two problems simultaneously: a global energy crunch and a rapidly heating Earth.

The shortfalls in oil and gas supplies are creating problems for European and Asian allies that if left unaddressed could threaten the united economic front against Russian President Vladimir Putin. At home, the energy shortfall is contributing to high gasoline prices, inflation and discontent that threatens Democrats in November's midterm elections and Biden's reelection down the road.

But at the same time, scientists, climate advocates and the Biden administration itself say global governments are counting down the time in the last few years left to stave off the more devastating scenarios of climate change.

The rate at which the world now burns through oil, natural gas and coal gives humans a 50-50 chance of blasting through the hoped-for maximum average temperatures targeted in the Paris climate accord within five years, the World Meteorological Organization said last month.

Some climate advocates fear the current energy shortfalls have Biden and other world leaders reverting to an oil and gas drill-and-build outlook they'd sworn off in the name of climate change, despite Biden's climate efforts elsewhere.

Many were dismayed by the joint declaration this week from Biden and other leaders in the G-7 club of wealthy democracies that it was once again OK for governments to invest in gas infrastructure as a "temporary response."

A dangerous move, and an unnecessary one, climate advocates said of the G-7's climate step back.

"New funding for fossil fuel exploration and production infrastructure is delusional," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres tweeted after the G-7 statement. "Fossil fuels are not the answer. Renewable energy is."

Climate advocates are wary of what they see as Hochstein's support of some infrastructure projects in Europe for liquified natural gas.

Friends of the Earth points to his oil and gas industry ties. Those include his serving as a senior vice president for Houston-based LNG exporter Tellurian and as an advisory board member for Ukraine's state-owned Naftogaz, before resigning in 2020 to protest corruption he outlined in a newspaper column. In Hochstein's government position, Biden has entrusted him with top policy missions, including working with oil giant Saudi Arabia at a time of frosty relations.

Hochstein described the U.S.-backed LNG buildout in Europe as essential to blocking Russia from wielding power over Europe's energy and economy.

"Unfortunately, we don't have the clean infrastructure to replace natural gas in the short- or medium-term," Hochstein told the AP. "So that is a tough and difficult balance to have. But that is what we're committed to."

"And I agree with all those who say this only strengthens the absolute need to accelerate the energy transition" from oil and gas, he added.

Energy experts with environmental groups say there are cleaner ways to break from Russian gas.

Moving faster to curb gas flaring and venting by the energy industry, and plug natural gas leaks — both things the Biden administration already has pledged to work on — could get fast results without damaging the climate further, said Mark Brownstein, a senior vice president for energy at the Environmental Defense Fund.

Brownstein pointed to an International Energy Agency finding that the fossil fuel industry leaked or otherwise wasted more natural gas last year than all the gas used across Europe's power sector.

Natural gas is mostly methane. Methane from agriculture and fossil fuels alone drives about a quarter of all climate damage.

David Kieve, president of the Environmental Defense Fund's advocacy arm, said the days have "come and gone" from when natural gas could be considered a "bridge fuel." He was director of public engagement at the White House's Council on Environmental Quality in Biden's first year.

"I think there's an understanding that we need to go even much much faster."

## Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas has a lot to celebrate

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Last week, as he marked his 74th birthday, Clarence Thomas achieved two long-sought goals: expanding gun rights and overturning *Roe v. Wade*'s nationwide protection for abortion.

If he was ready to take a victory lap, Thomas didn't let on. Instead, he called on his colleagues to do more, to revisit the Supreme Court's cases acknowledging rights to same-sex marriage, gay sex and contraception.

After 30 years on the court, Thomas' influence has never been greater, and yet he remains a lightning rod for controversy. That includes recent questions about his wife's role in attempting to overturn the results of the 2020 election and his decision not to recuse himself from cases that involved it. Thomas has said nothing in response to the criticism, and he could still serve another decade or more, racking up additional victories with a court that has become more conservative.

"If you serve long enough sometimes things go your way eventually," said Ohio Northern University professor Scott Gerber, the author of a book on Thomas. Gerber said that at this point there are people who have moved through the conservative legal movement, studying conservatives like Thomas and the late Justice Antonin Scalia, who have now joined Thomas on the court. "They've learned from him and agree," he said.

Thomas is now the senior member of a group of conservative justices with the votes to control the court, not only what cases the court takes on but how broadly it rules. That's a change for Thomas, whose views were for years seen as far out of the mainstream.

"He's always been known as not taking quite the same approach," said George Mason University law professor Jennifer Mascott, who worked for Thomas as a law clerk. But in the guns case, she said: "Everybody joined with him, his approach."

Ralph Rossum, who has also written a book about Thomas, said the justice once compared himself to a marathon runner who has to take the long view. Now, as time has gone on and more conservative justices have joined the court, Thomas is, in a sense, running "faster and faster" and "lengthening his stride," Rossum said.

Thomas declined an interview request from The Associated Press.

On top of the criticism Thomas has faced over the years for his views, he and his wife, conservative activist Virginia Thomas, have faced criticism recently for their actions following former President Donald Trump's defeat in the 2020 election. Among other things, Virginia Thomas exchanged messages with then-White House chief of staff Mark Meadows encouraging him to work to overturn President Joe Biden's victory and urged Republican lawmakers in Arizona, where Biden won, to choose their own slate of electors. The House committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the Capitol has asked her for an interview.

As for the justice, there has been criticism that because of his wife's actions he should have recused himself from a case involving the committee's access to presidential documents and lawsuits challenging the election results, challenges the court turned away. Democrats in Congress wrote in a letter that his participation is "exceedingly difficult to reconcile with federal ethics requirements."

In recent days, following the abortion decision, thousands signed a petition saying he should no longer be allowed to teach a class at George Washington University's law school. The university rejected that idea.

More personally, after a draft of the abortion decision leaked, there were protests at his house and the homes of other conservative justices. In an appearance after the leak Thomas drew a contrast between liberals and conservatives in unusual us-versus-them terms. "You would never visit Supreme Court justices' houses when things didn't go our way. We didn't throw temper tantrums," Thomas said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 40 of 82

What many Americans know about Thomas stems largely from his bruising 1991 confirmation hearing, when he was accused of sexual harassment charges by former employee Anita Hill — charges he denied. He wrote a bestselling book in 2007 but for years — partly because he chose not to ask questions during arguments at the court and partly because he is a self-described introvert — Thomas spoke largely through his opinions. Not infrequently, because his views were so conservative compared with the rest of the court, he wrote opinions that spoke only for himself.

That has changed. The court has grown more conservative over the last several years during Trump's administration, particularly after the death of the liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and her replacement in 2020 by conservative Justice Amy Coney Barrett. Conservatives now have a six-justice majority and can lose the vote of Chief Justice John Roberts, who is sometimes less willing to issue sweeping rulings, and still have a majority.

Thomas has also become more vocal in general over the past two years. When the court began hearing arguments by telephone because of the pandemic and changed the arguments' format so justices asked questions one by one, Thomas joined in. He continued asking questions when the justices returned to their courtroom last fall, his colleagues deferring to him for the first questions.

Thomas' influence has been felt in other ways, too. Many of the men and women Thomas mentored as law clerks held political appointments in the Trump administration. That includes John Eastman, the conservative lawyer who aided Trump's efforts to undo the 2020 election results. Ten other former law clerks are now federal judges who hold lifetime appointments. Their ranks include Kathryn Kimball Mizelle, the federal judge in Florida who in April struck down the national mask mandate on airplanes and mass transit.

Thomas is 74. Justice Stephen Breyer is retiring this year, just before his 84th birthday. Ginsburg served until her death at 87. In 2028, Thomas would surpass Justice William O. Douglas as the longest-serving justice ever.

Gerber, the Ohio professor, said Thomas has always said that becoming a justice is a lifetime job.

Said Gerber: "It's like Queen Elizabeth. She's been in power 70 years and she's going to stay until she's carried out in a box. That's his view also."

## Resilience Story: A bullet, a wheelchair, then perseverance

By MARTHA IRVINE AP National Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — There is a large photo of Jonathan Annicks on a wall at the rehab hospital where he was once a patient.

Sometimes when he rolls by in his wheelchair, he gazes at the black-and-white image, taken shortly after he was shot and paralyzed. He was 18 then, his cheeks a little rounder, his wavy hair shorter.

He looks confident, calm even. "I let on the facade that ... "Yeah, we're good to go!" Jonathan said.

At the time, he saw no other choice than to hold it together, for his family, for himself. If he cracked, he said then, his world might completely crumble.

But he was harder on himself than he let on, and confused.

"I don't know what I'm doing," he recalls thinking. He was scared to go outside, especially without legs that worked. What if someone came after him again? He wouldn't be able to run.

"Oh gosh, Jonathan, you're so great. You're doing so well," people would gush.

"Yes, he is," his mother, Herlinda Annicks, said. But even now, "that doesn't mean he's not internally struggling with everything because, you know, this completely changed his world around."

Admitting he's not OK all the time hasn't been easy for the young man who never wants to be seen as a complainer. "Everyone has bad days," Jonathan said.

But, at age 24, a bit older and wiser, he's learned that triumph over tragedy rarely comes in neat packages.

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The gunman who shot him in April 2016 was never caught. He ambushed Jonathan as he was retrieving a cell phone charger from a car parked in front of his family's longtime home in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood. A few weeks later, an Associated Press team met with him and his family to document his



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 41 of 82

story.

The first few months were a whirlwind.

The young man with the big brown eyes and an easy smile amazed everyone when he went to prom two months after the shooting.

Shortly after, while crossing the stage to collect his high school diploma, he celebrated by popping a wheelie with his wheelchair.

That fall, he began classes at DePaul University, taking the train and eventually driving himself in his car, modified with hand controls.

"There's no point in going back and sulking over something that I can't change," he said at the time.

Still, he worried about burdening his family. He and his girlfriend broke up after she went to college in another state. And, while he continued to rely on a small group of friends he'd made before the shooting, he found it hard to make new ones in college.

He wanted to be more than just "the guy in the wheelchair." But his social anxiety, longstanding but made worse by his injury, could be paralyzing in its own way.

By the winter of 2020, Jonathan hit a major low. He had assured his family that he was getting his classwork done. Then his mom got a phone call, a wellness check from DePaul. He hadn't been going to class or turning in assignments.

"You could have knocked me over with a feather because I thought, oh my God, I have been asking him for weeks, 'What are you doing? What's going on? How's school?'" his mother said.

They had a long talk. He'd been "in his own head," he said. "It was a confidence thing." Getting caught up felt overwhelming. But he realized that telling no one what was happening had been weighing him down.

It was a turning point.

About that time, his mom got the chance through her employer, BMO Harris Bank, to earn her Master of Business Administration degree at DePaul, Jonathan's school.

During the pandemic, they both attended classes online at home, and earlier this month, they graduated, together. Mom presented Jonathan with the cover for his bachelor's degree in communications and media. He presented hers for her MBA.

Mom fought back tears, as her husband Mike, and a small group of family and friends whistled and clapped from the stands.

"I could never ask for anything better than this," Herlinda said, recalling the many days and nights she spent helping care for Jonathan at the hospital and afterward.

She had prayed that a day like this would come.

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Since Jonathan was shot in 2016, the number of shootings in Chicago had been on the decline, until the pandemic hit.

Some gunshot victims and people with other kinds of spinal cord injuries come to the Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital, as he did.

Now Jonathan, the former patient, is a mentor who helps teach them life skills to those who are paralyzed.

This spring, he accompanied a group, all in wheelchairs, to a Chicago Bulls basketball game. He's taught some of them how to navigate the benefits system and how to make their homes more accessible.

Recently, he showed Cesar Romero, a rehab patient, how to transfer from his wheelchair into a car. The 45-year-old Chicagoan worked construction until he was shot last year on his way to the grocery store.

"A ver?" Jonathan asked his student in Spanish. You see? Being bilingual has made him even more valuable to the hospital, where he hopes he might work his way into the marketing department, now that he's graduated.

"OK, let's go!" Romero said, as he shifted into the driver's seat, gleefully grabbing the steering wheel and rocking it back and forth.

"If he can do it, I can do it," Romero said.

These moments bring Jonathan joy and help give him purpose.

So does playing wheelchair softball.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 42 of 82

On a concrete diamond on Chicago's North Side, adults and children with various disabilities play the no-glove version of the game with a slightly larger ball.

At a recent practice, Jonathan hit an in-the-park home run, as his teammates and coaches cheered.

"This is going to sound cheesy ... but people like Johnny provide a beacon to people who are out there," said Jorge "Georgie" Alfaro, a peer mentor for the team, which is sponsored by the Chicago Park District and the Shirley Ryan Ability Lab, among others.

"I want a little kid in a wheelchair to come and play softball for the first time and meet people like Johnny ... and the parents say, 'My God, my kid's going to be OK.'"

Again, OK doesn't mean it's easy.

Jonathan tells his younger brothers that, if he could just pee under his own control, he wouldn't mind being paralyzed. Waking up to the occasional mess in his bed, he says, is demoralizing.

Pressure sores are also a constant worry. They can afflict people who sit for long periods or who are bed-ridden and can lead to life-threatening infections. One of his friends had a toe amputated. Another had to drop out of school.

But the challenges haven't stopped Jonathan from dreaming. He wants to live on his own, meet a special someone and have children of his own, which is still possible despite his injury.

"Having kids would be crazy, having little mini-me's running around," he said, quietly, grinning shyly.

If that's going to happen, he concedes, he'll have to actually go out and socialize. "Not easy for me. But I gotta do it."

He wishes he could go back and reassure his 18-year-old self, the one in the photo on the Schwab hospital wall.

He'd tell him, "Don't be so mean to yourself. You'll figure it out, eventually. Stop stressing about it."

It makes Jonathan realize just how far he's come.

## Migrants in Texas trailer tragedy died seeking better lives

By DELMÉR MARTÍNEZ, SONIA PÉREZ D. and CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN Associated Press

LAS VEGAS, Honduras (AP) — Children set out hoping to earn enough to support their siblings and parents. Young adults who sacrificed to attend college thinking it would lead to success left their country disillusioned. A man already working in the U.S. who returned to visit his wife and children decided to take a cousin on his return to the U.S.

As families of the 67 people packed into a tractor-trailer and abandoned on Monday in Texas began to confirm their worst fears and talk of their relatives, a common narrative of pursuing a better life took shape from Honduras to Mexico.

Fifty-three of those migrants left in the sweltering heat on the outskirts of San Antonio had died as of Wednesday, while others remained hospitalized. The tedious process of identifications continues, but families are confirming their losses.

The dead included 27 people from Mexico, 14 from Honduras, seven from Guatemala and two from El Salvador, said Francisco Garduño, chief of Mexico's National Immigration Institute.

Each put their lives in the hands of smugglers. News of the trailer full of bodies struck horror in cities and villages accustomed to watching their young people leave, trying to flee poverty or violence in Central America and Mexico.

In Las Vegas, Honduras, a town of 10,000 people about 50 miles south of San Pedro Sula, Alejandro Miguel Andino Caballero, 23, and Margie Tamara Paz Grajeda, 24, had believed his degree track in marketing and hers in economics would open doors to economic stability.

Already together for nearly a decade, the young couple spent recent years applying for jobs with companies. But time and again they were denied.

The pandemic hit, hurricanes devastated the northern part of the country and they grew disillusioned.

So when a relative of Andino Caballero's living in the United States offered to help him and his younger brother, 18-year-old Fernando José Redondo Caballero, finance the trip north, they were ready.

"You think that when people have a higher level of education, they have to get more employment op-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 43 of 82

portunities," said Karen Caballero, the brothers' mother. "Because that's why they work, study."

Caballero did not feel like she could hold them back anymore, including 24-year-old Paz Grajeda, who lived with Alejandro in his mother's home and who Caballero referred to as her daughter-in-law though they had not married.

"We all planned it as a family so they could have a different life, so they could achieve goals, dreams," Caballero said.

When they left Las Vegas on June 4, Caballero accompanied them to Guatemala. From there, the young trio were smuggled across Guatemala and then Mexico in the back of semi-trailers.

"I thought things were going to go well," she said. "Who was a little afraid was Alejandro Miguel. He said, 'Mom, if something happens to us.' And I told him, 'Nothing is going to happen, nothing is going to happen. You are not the first nor will you be the last human being to travel to the United States.'"

Caballero last spoke to them Saturday morning. They told her they had crossed the Rio Grande at Roma, Texas, were headed to Laredo and on Monday expected to head north to Houston.

She had just gotten home Monday evening when someone told her to turn on the television. "I couldn't process it," she said of seeing the report about the trailer in San Antonio. "Then I remembered how my sons had traveled, that they had been in trucks since Guatemala and the whole stretch in Mexico."

Caballero was able to confirm their deaths Tuesday after sending their details and photos to San Antonio.

Alejandro Miguel was creative, jovial, known for hugging everyone and being a good dancer. Fernando José was enthusiastic and noble, willing to help anyone in need. He imitated his older brother in everything from his haircut to his clothes. They were soccer fanatics, filling their mother's home with shouts.

The deaths of her sons and Paz Grajeda, who was like a daughter, are devastating. "My children leave a void in my heart," she said. "We're going to miss them a lot."

Nearly 400 miles away, the prospects for Wilmer Tulul and Pascual Melvin Guachiac, 13-year-old cousins from Tzucubal, Guatemala, had been considerably more narrow.

Tzucubal is an Indigenous Quiche community of about 1,500 people in the mountains nearly 100 miles northwest of the capital, where most live by subsistence farming.

"Mom, we're heading out," was the last message Wilmer sent to his mother Magdalena Tepaz in their native Quiche on Monday. They had left home June 14.

Hours after hearing that audio message, a neighbor told the family there had been an accident in San Antonio and they feared the worst, Tepaz said through a translator.

The boys had grown up friends and did everything together: playing, going out, even planning to go to the United States despite not speaking Spanish well, said Melvin's mother, María Sipac Coj.

A single mother of two, she said Melvin "wanted to study in the United States, then work and after build my house." She received a voice message from her son Monday saying they were leaving. She has erased it because she couldn't stand to listen to it anymore.

Relatives who arranged and paid for the smuggler awaited the boys in Houston. Those relatives told her of their deaths, and the Guatemalan government confirmed them to her Wednesday.

Wilmer's father, Manuel de Jesús Tulul, could not stop crying Wednesday. He said he had no idea how the boys would get to Houston, but never imagined they would be put in a trailer. His son had left school after elementary and joined his father clearing farmland for planting.

Tulul said Wilmer did not see a future for himself in a town where modest homes were built with remittances sent from the United States. He wanted to help support his three siblings and have his own house and land some day.

The smuggler charged \$6,000, almost half of which they had paid. Now Tulul was only thinking about getting his son's body back and hoping the government would cover the cost.

In Mexico, cousins Javier Flores López and Jose Luis Vásquez Guzmán left the tiny community of Cerro Verde in the southern state of Oaxaca also hoping to help their families. They were headed to Ohio, where construction jobs and other work awaited.

Flores López is now missing, his family said, while Vásquez Guzmán is hospitalized in San Antonio.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 44 of 82

Cerro Verde is a community of about 60 people that has largely been abandoned by the young. Those who remain work earning meager livings weaving sun hats, mats, brooms and other items from palm leaves. Many live on as little as 30 pesos a day (less than \$2).

It was not the first trip to the U.S.-Mexico border for Flores López, now in his mid-30s, who left Cerro Verde years ago and went to Ohio, where his father and a brother live.

He was back home to see his wife and three small children briefly, said a cousin, Francisco López Hernández. Vásquez Guzmán, 32, decided to go with his cousin for his first trip across the border and hoped to reach his oldest brother who is in Ohio as well.

While everyone knew the risks, countless people from Cerro Verde had made it safely across the U.S.-Mexico border with the help of smugglers, so it came as a shock, López Hernández said. The family believes Flores López was, too, but they are still awaiting confirmation.

Vásquez Guzmán's mother had intended on getting a visa to visit her hospitalized son, but on Wednesday he was moved out of intensive care and she was able to speak with him by phone. She decided to stay in Mexico and await his recovery, said Aida Ruiz, director of the Oaxaca Institute for Migrant Attention.

López Hernández said most people rely on those who have made it to the U.S. to send them money for the journey, which usually costs around \$9,000.

"There are a lot of risks but for those who are lucky, the fortune is there, to be able to work, earn a living" he said.

## Jan. 6 panel subpoenas counsel who resisted Trump schemes

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection issued a subpoena Wednesday to former White House counsel Pat Cipollone, whose reported resistance to Donald Trump's schemes to overturn his 2020 election defeat has made him a long-sought and potentially revelatory witness.

Cipollone is said to have stridently and repeatedly warned the former president and his allies against their efforts to challenge the election, at one point threatening to resign as Trump eyed a dramatic reshuffling atop the Justice Department. One witness said Cipollone referred to a proposed letter making false claims about voter fraud as a "murder-suicide pact." Another witness said Cipollone had warned her that Trump was at risk of committing "every crime imaginable."

It's the first action from the committee since Tuesday's dramatic testimony from Cassidy Hutchinson, whose gripping account of what she saw and heard as an aide in the White House raised new questions about whether Trump or some of his allies could face criminal liability. As Trump's top White House lawyer, Cipollone was present for key meetings in the turbulent weeks after the election when Trump and associates — including GOP lawmakers and lawyer Rudy Giuliani — debated and plotted ways to challenge the election.

The subpoena sets the stage for a possibly protracted legal fight between a Congress determined to assert its authority and a former executive branch employee privy to intimate and sensitive Oval Office deliberations. As White House counsel, effectively the administration's chief lawyer, Cipollone could try to argue that his conversations with the president are privileged and that he is therefore exempt from testifying, though such claims would likely need to be resolved in the courts.

The committee pressed ahead anyway, saying Cipollone could have information about several efforts by Trump allies to subvert the Electoral College, from organizing so-called alternate electors in states Biden won to trying to appoint a loyalist as attorney general who championed false theories of voter fraud. While Cipollone has sat for an informal interview in April, the committee said it required his cooperation on the record after it obtained evidence about which he was "uniquely positioned to testify."

Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, the committee's Democratic chairman, and Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, the panel's Republican vice chairwoman, suggested that Cipollone had resisted transcribed testimony because of concerns about executive privilege. In a statement announcing the subpoena, they said that "any concerns Mr. Cipollone has about the institutional prerogatives of the office he previously held are

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 45 of 82

clearly outweighed by the need for his testimony.”

“We are left with no choice but to issue you this subpoena,” Thompson wrote in a letter to Cipollone.

While Cipollone’s words and warnings have been prominent throughout the public hearings this month, Hutchinson shared more about his actions, revealing that he was trying frantically in the days before Jan. 6 to prevent Trump from going to the Capitol as the election results were certified.

On Jan. 3, Cipollone warned that there were “serious legal concerns” if Trump accompanied the protesters to the Capitol, saying, “We need to make sure that this doesn’t happen.” By the morning of Jan. 6, Cipollone was urging Hutchinson, then an aide to chief of staff Mark Meadows, to “keep in touch” about any possible movements by the president and “please make sure we don’t go up to the Capitol, Cassidy.”

If Trump did go to the Capitol, Hutchinson recalled Cipollone saying, “we’re going to get charged with every crime imaginable.” He had previously identified obstruction of justice or defrauding the electoral count as among the possibilities, she said.

Back at the White House as the violent insurrection unfolded that afternoon, Hutchinson again placed Cipollone at the center of events, recounting how he at one point came “barreling down the hallway” for an urgent conversation with Meadows.

“And I remember Pat saying to him something to the effect of, the rioters have gotten to the Capitol, Mark. We need to go down and see the president now. And Mark looked up at him and said, he doesn’t want to do anything, Pat.”

Hutchinson said she also heard Meadows tell Cipollone that Trump was sympathetic to rioters wanting to hang then-Vice President Mike Pence over his refusal to try and stop the certification of Joe Biden’s election victory.

“You heard it, Pat,” Meadows told Cipollone, in her recollection. “He thinks Mike deserves it. He doesn’t think they’re doing anything wrong.”

The Jan. 6 committee said it issued the subpoena in order to have Cipollone’s testify on the record, something they said “other former White House counsels have done in other congressional investigations.” An on-the-record interview would be transcribed, while informal interviews generally are not.

Rep. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, the other Republican on the committee, said last week that Cipollone told the committee he tried to intervene when he heard Trump was being advised by Jeffrey Clark, a former Justice Department official who wanted to push false claims of voter fraud. Federal agents recently seized Clark’s cell phone and conducted a search of his Virginia home.

Clark had drafted a letter for key swing states that was never sent but would have falsely claimed the department had discovered troubling irregularities in the election. Cipollone was quoted by one witness as having told Trump in an Oval Office meeting that the letter was a “murder-suicide pact.”

## **Trial winds down in shooting death of rapper Nipsey Hussle**

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Both sides rested their cases Wednesday in the trial of a man charged with the killing of rapper Nipsey Hussle after a day’s delay because of an assault on the defendant by fellow jail inmates.

Closing arguments are set to begin Thursday in the trial of Eric Ronald Holder Jr., who is charged with first-degree murder in Hussle’s killing and attempted murder of two other men struck by gunfire.

Holder appeared in court with swollen eyes and staples closing a wound in the back of his head.

He was punched and cut with a razor by two inmates while waiting in a holding cell to come to court on Tuesday, his attorney Aaron Jansen said.

The motive for the attack was unclear, and the issue was not discussed in the courtroom.

Holder did not take the stand during his trial.

Jansen called two witnesses for the defense, including a private investigator and gang expert who testified to the seriousness of “snitching” allegations that the prosecution says were the motive for the shooting.

“As you grow up in the neighborhood, everybody knows the consequences of what it means to be labeled

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 46 of 82

a snitch," the investigator, Robert Freeman, said.

Both Hussle and Holder grew up in the same South Los Angeles neighborhood, and had ties to the same gang, the Rollin' 60s.

Without naming Hussle, Jansen asked whether discussions of acting as an informant are especially serious if they come from a revered figure in the group.

"If they're an OG or looked upon, whatever they say is almost gold in the streets," Freeman answered.

Previous witnesses testified that on March 31, 2019, in a conversation outside the hip-hop star's clothing store The Marathon, Hussle told Holder there were rumors of "paperwork" suggesting he'd been informing to authorities, and that Holder needed to address it. Holder returned about 10 minutes later and shot Hussle, the witnesses and prosecution said.

In his cross-examination of Freeman, Deputy District Attorney John McKinney got him to acknowledge that such conversations are not unusual, and that while beatings over them are frequent, killings over them are very rare.

"That kind of admonition is common in the hood among homies, among friends, is that correct?" McKinney asked.

"Yes," Freeman answered.

"It's not uncommon for someone to hear about it, and then address it. It happens all the time, right?"

Freeman again answered, "yes."

"That person can do everything from deny it to get a piece of paper to say it didn't happen," McKinney said, and Freeman agreed.

The issue of "snitching" has hung over the entire case, not only as the alleged motive but in the reluctance to testify of prosecution witnesses, one of whom, Hussle's friend and shooting eyewitness Evan "Rimpau" Mackenzie, failed to appear despite a subpoena and a bench warrant.

McKinney had rested the prosecution's case earlier Wednesday, the eighth day of testimony though the first in nearly a week after a pair of planned days off and the delay over Holder's assault, which was first reported by Rolling Stone.

In the face of overwhelming evidence including eyewitnesses who knew both Hussle and Holder, surveillance photos and video, and testimony from the woman who acted as his unwitting getaway driver, Jansen acknowledged in his opening statement that Holder was the shooter, but said there were mitigating circumstances, including a lack of premeditation, that mean he is not guilty of first-degree murder.

Hussle, whose legal name was Ermias Asghedom, had just released his major-label debut after years of underground acclaim and had been nominated for his first Grammy Award when he was killed at age 33.

## Louisiana AG warns doctors against performing abortions

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Arizona's Republican attorney general on Wednesday said that a total ban on abortions that has been on the books since before statehood can be enforced, putting him at odds with GOP Gov. Doug Ducey, who says a 15-week abortion ban he signed in March takes precedence.

Attorney General Mark Brnovich has been reviewing the law that's been on the books since at least 1901 since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned its 1973 Roe v. Wade decision last week. Abortion clinics across Arizona immediately stopped performing the procedure after Friday's court ruling out of fear of prosecution.

Other states are also grappling with when and how to enforce bans that had been blocked nationwide under Roe. Louisiana's attorney general on Wednesday issued a warning to doctors against performing abortions, despite a judge's order blocking the state from enforcing its ban on the procedure.

In a letter to the Louisiana State Medical Society, Attorney General Jeff Landry said that the state judge's Monday order blocking enforcement "has limited reach" and abortion has been a crime since Friday's decision giving states the power to outlaw abortions.

"It is incumbent on this office to advise you that any medical provider who would perform or has performed an elective abortion after the Supreme Court's decision in Dobbs is jeopardizing his or her liberty

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 47 of 82

and medical license," Landry wrote, referencing the Friday decision.

The high court decision has set off legal battles in multiple states where lawmakers have sought to ban or restrict abortion.

Kentucky's two abortion clinics asked a judge Wednesday to issue a temporary restraining order to block a state law that took effect after Friday's U.S. Supreme Court ruling. Attorneys for a Louisville clinic argued that Kentucky's constitution allows for abortion. They said one of the clinics has turned away about 200 potential patients since the Friday ruling.

The Arizona conflict between two Republicans was not unexpected. The leader of the group that helped write the law and the Republican state senator who sponsored it, Nancy Barto, argued that the old law could be enforced. They pointed to a specific provision that said it did not override that law. Brnovich came down on their side.

"Our office has concluded the Legislature has made its intentions clear with regards to abortion laws," Brnovich said on Twitter. "ARS 13-3603 (the pre-statehood law) is back in effect and will not be repealed" when the new law takes effect in late September.

Ducey spokesman C.J. Karamargin the governor's office was reviewing Brnovich's decision and had no immediate comment.

Abortion providers also pointed to the old law, and another passed last year that conferred all rights on eggs and fetuses, as reasons for stopping the procedures.

The old law was in place at least since 1901, 12 years before statehood. It says anyone who helps a pregnant woman obtain an abortion can be sentenced to two to five years in prison. The only exception is if the life of the woman is in jeopardy.

It has been blocked since 1973, but Brnovich says he'll see to have that injunction removed.

Lawyers for Ohio abortion providers asked that state's Supreme Court on Wednesday to use its powers to overturn a ban on abortions at the first detectable "fetal heartbeat." The American Civil Liberties Union, Planned Parenthood Federation of America and others argued the law violates the Ohio Constitution's broad protections of individual liberty.

A challenge to West Virginia's abortion ban was announced Wednesday by the ACLU of that state. The organization said it was joining others in filing the suit in Kanawha County Circuit Court on behalf of Women's Health Center of West Virginia. The ACLU says the state ban dates back to the 1800s and has been superseded by numerous laws passed since, including a 20-week abortion ban that was passed in 2015 and acknowledges a patient's right to an abortion.

Earlier, Alabama's Attorney General Steve Marshall was quick to warn that elective abortions are illegal in the state. His Friday pronouncement came after a federal judge lifted an injunction soon after the Supreme Court decision.

The decision has also led to an increase in demand for emergency contraceptives — and to limits by some retailers on how many emergency contraceptives consumers can buy,

In Louisiana, Landry's spokesman did not immediately respond to a message asking whether his office would seek to prosecute doctors who perform abortions while the judge's order is in effect.

The three abortion clinics in the state have said they would resume operations while the order is in effect. It was not immediately clear whether that decision would be affected by Landry's letter.

Louisiana and Kentucky are among states that had "trigger" laws designed to ban abortion, with few exceptions, in anticipation of a Supreme Court ruling ending abortion rights.

## 1st Native American treasurer to push economic development

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mohegan Chief Marilyn "Lynn" Malerba, the nation's first Native American U.S. treasurer, comes from a line of chiefs who instilled in her the need to keep her tribe healthy and to survive.

"It's our job to leave footprints on the path for those who come behind us — so they may find their way easily," she said in an interview Wednesday with The Associated Press.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 48 of 82

Now Malerba, 68, will bring that mindset to two new jobs in Washington: Last week President Joe Biden appointed her U.S. treasurer and overseer of a new Office of Tribal and Native Affairs at the Treasury Department.

As part of the first role, her name will appear on all new U.S. currency. "I hope to sign the currency either Chief Lynn Malerba or Chief Many Hearts Lynn Malerba," she said, referencing the meaning of her name within her tribe, "Mutáwi Mutáhash."

In the latter role, she will be thinking of new ways to help tribes develop their economies to overcome challenges that are unique to tribal lands.

"Tribes cannot offer tax incentives on their reservations" in the same way that states and local municipalities would tax economic development, she said. She added that tribes haven't been able to offer tax-exempt bonds for things like concert halls and golf courses like municipalities can.

Helping tribes develop plans to economically prosper will have benefits for the rest of the country, she said, adding: "When tribes succeed, everyone succeeds."

The Mohegan tribe has seen success with various enterprises, including casinos and resorts on the reservation and in places like Atlantic City, the Las Vegas Strip and the international airport in South Korea. The WNBA team, the Connecticut Sun, also is part of the tribe's portfolio.

As treasurer, Malerba's duties will include oversight of the U.S. Mint, serving as a liaison with the Federal Reserve and overseeing Treasury's Office of Consumer Policy.

Malerba spoke about her new roles from the Tribal Community Center and Government Building in Uncasville, Connecticut. Treasury said Malerba will begin working at the agency within the coming weeks.

Malerba, who will remain lifetime chief of the Mohegan Indian Tribe — made up of roughly 2,400 people — previously worked as a registered nurse, and has served in various tribal government roles.

She said the Mohegan tribe has grown since the baby boomer generation, where at one point the collective was down to 500 people. The tribe's reservation is located on the Thames River in Uncasville, Connecticut.

"For the first time in history, a Tribal leader and Native woman's name will be the signature on our currency," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said at the announcement of Malerba's new role last week.

"Chief Malerba will expand our unique relationship with Tribal nations, continuing our joint efforts to support the development of Tribal economies and economic opportunities for Tribal citizens," Yellen said.

Treasury's relationship with tribes has faced challenges even recently.

More than a dozen Native American tribes sued the Treasury Department in 2020 over the distribution of federal coronavirus relief funding, some of which was delayed by months.

Other tribes sued, alleging they were shortchanged because the Treasury Department relied on inaccurate population data for tribes. The Government Accountability Office, the auditing arm of Congress, detailed the agency's missteps in a report published last October. The Treasury Department agreed to update its tribal consultation policy, but the government watchdog said Wednesday it hasn't seen a revised document.

Malerba is one of 9.7 million people in the U.S. who identify as Native American or Alaska Native, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. And while roughly eight million Native Americans are eligible to cast a ballot, census surveys estimate that large portions of the population are not registered to vote.

Biden has taken several steps to demonstrate his commitment to tribal nations. He named Deb Haaland as the first Native American to lead the Interior Department and has appointed at least three Native American judges to the federal court system.

Haaland, who is from Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico, is overseeing the federal government's reckoning of its decades-long role in Native American boarding schools, which sought to strip children of their cultures and identities. Haaland is a product of those policies, as her grandparents were removed from their families and sent to boarding schools.

Malerba said Native representation in the federal government is important because she, along with others, can help Americans honor the "culture, the history and the lands that we come from."

"It is truly unique to be one of the first peoples of the United States, to be indigenous to these lands,"



she said.

At Treasury, "I will listen first and then develop a strategic plan going forward."

"What's most exciting to me about this role is to be a part of senior leadership at Treasury and the be able to understand how we can affect change."

## Mexican migrant in Texas tragedy hoped to reach kin in Ohio

By JULIE WATSON and FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The two cousins returned to the tiny, hardscrabble hamlet they grew up in in southern Mexico about two weeks ago to say goodbye in what has become a rite of passage for generations of migrants from their remote, impoverished mountainous region in Oaxaca state.

After the farewells in the community of Cerro Verde, Javier Flores López and Jose Luis Vásquez Guzmán began their trek north to the U.S.-Mexico border and toward their final destination in Ohio, where construction jobs and other work awaited.

Flores López is now missing, his family said, while Vásquez Guzmán is hospitalized in San Antonio after surviving stifling heat inside a tractor-trailer near the Texas city that killed at least 53 people in the deadliest smuggling episode ever in the U.S. The perilous trip for migrants who climbed into what would become a death chamber for many reflects the growing risks people face in fleeing abject poverty, violence and other desperate situations in Mexico and Central America to seek a better life.

Cerro Verde is a community of about 60 people that has largely been abandoned by the young. Those who remain work earning meager livings weaving sun hats, mats, brooms and other items from palm leaves. Many live on as little as 30 pesos a day (less than \$2).

"The truth is people leave here out of necessity," said Felicitos García, who owns a small grocery store in nearby San Miguel Huautla, adding that he saw the two men about two weeks ago. "Life is tough here. People survive by growing their own crops like corn, beans and wheat. Sometimes the land gives and sometimes it doesn't, when the rains arrive late. There is nothing in place for people to have other resources. People live one day to the next."

It was not the first trip to the U.S.-Mexico border for Flores López, now in his mid-30s, who left Cerro Verde years ago and went to Ohio, where his father and a brother live.

He was back home to see his wife and three small children briefly, said a cousin, Francisco López Hernández. Vásquez Guzmán, 32, decided to go with his cousin for his first trip across the border and hoped to reach his oldest brother who is in Ohio as well.

While everyone knew the risks, countless people from Cerro Verde had made it safely across the U.S.-Mexico border with the help of smugglers, so it came as a shock, López Hernández said, to learn Vásquez Guzmán was among 67 people packed into the trailer found abandoned Monday near auto salvage yards. The family believes Flores López was, too, but they are still awaiting confirmation.

The driver along with two other men from Mexico remained in custody as the investigation continues.

Officials had potential identifications on 37 of the victims as of Wednesday morning, pending verification with authorities in other countries, according to the Bexar County Medical Examiner's Office.

The dead include 27 people from Mexico, 14 from Honduras, seven from Guatemala and two from El Salvador, said Francisco Garduño, chief of Mexico's National Immigration Institute.

Identifying them has been challenging because some were found without identification documents and in one case carried a stolen ID. Remote villages, like Cerro Verde, have little to no phone service to reach family members and fingerprint data has to be shared and matched by the governments involved.

Vásquez Guzmán's mother, who is trying to get a visa to see her son in Texas, raised him and his three siblings alone after their father died when Vásquez Guzmán was 10. She now is the only one of the family left in Cerro Verde. Vásquez Guzmán left when he was 18 and joined the Mexican military.

His oldest brother, Eloy, went to the United States just over a year ago and settled in Ohio, said López Hernández, who grew up on the neighboring ranch.

"I imagine that he commented to him about how the work situation was and everything and how to

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 50 of 82

make more money," López Hernández said. "I imagine he called him so that he would come over, too, to have a better life. That's the draw for why he was going."

Vásquez Guzmán, who had been living in Mexico City the past six years, returned to Cerro Verde only to say goodbye to his mother, López Hernández said.

He knew it was an expensive and risky trip. López Hernández said most people rely on those who have made it to the U.S. to send them money for the journey, which usually costs around \$9,000.

"There are a lot of risks but for those who are lucky, the fortune is there, to be able to work, earn a living" he said.

With so many leaving and heading to the United States, it is easy to find a smuggler and until now the people have gotten across safely, López Hernández said.

"I don't know in this case if they changed or what happened, why they were abandoned," he said.

López Hernández, who also has a brother living in Ohio, has thought about joining him. But he said family, work, school and other responsibilities have kept him in Mexico.

This week, he asked his uncle if he had heard from Vásquez Guzmán. He told him he was in Texas.

"I told him, 'How cool, that's he's trying hard and we'll see him on his return,'" López Hernández replied before they lost their phone signal.

He later learned from the Internet about the tragedy.

## 1/6 hearings fuel the question: Did Trump commit a crime?

By ERIC TUCKER and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Jan. 6 committee has heard dramatic testimony from former White House aides and others about Donald Trump's relentless efforts to overturn the 2020 election — and his encouragement of supporters who stormed the U.S. Capitol bent on achieving his goal. But the big question remains: Was any of it criminal?

Cassidy Hutchinson, an aide in Trump's White House, added fresh urgency to the question Tuesday as she delivered explosive new testimony about Trump's actions before and during the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection. She said Trump was informed that there were armed protesters at his morning rally before he stood onstage and told them to "fight like hell" at the Capitol. Then he argued with his security detail, she said, trying to go with the crowd.

Trump's aides knew there could be legal consequences. Hutchinson said White House Counsel Pat Cipollone told her "we're going to get charged with every crime imaginable" if Trump had gone to the Capitol that day as Congress was certifying President Joe Biden's win. Cipollone said Trump could be exposing himself to obstruction of justice charges or defrauding the electoral count, she said.

On the heels of Hutchinson's public testimony, the House committee on Wednesday issued a subpoena for Cipollone, saying in a letter that while he had provided an "informal interview" on April 13, his refusal to provide on-the-record testimony made their subpoena necessary.

The Justice Department has recently expanded its investigation into the Jan. 6 attack, targeting some of Trump's allies in Washington and around the country who participated in his scheme to invalidate Biden's victory. But prosecutors have not indicated whether they will bring a case against the former president.

A look at potential crimes, and what Congress and the Justice Department might do:

### WHAT HAS THE EVIDENCE SHOWN?

Witnesses have testified that Trump was repeatedly advised by campaign aides and top government officials that he had lost the election to Biden and that his claims of widespread voter fraud were divorced from reality.

Yet he pressed ahead, shouting the false allegations that culminated in the riot at the Capitol.

Still in office, he leaned on the Justice Department to get government law enforcement officials to take up his cause. He pressured the states — asking Georgia's secretary of state to "find" votes, for example — and Vice President Mike Pence, who was presiding over the joint session of Congress that day.

Hutchinson testified that Trump said he wanted metal detectors removed from the area near where he

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 51 of 82

was delivering a speech on Jan. 6. He said it did not matter to him if the supporters, who were to head to the Capitol, were carrying weapons because they were not there to hurt him.

Trump took to his social media website on Tuesday to deny much of Hutchinson's testimony, which was based on both her own interactions with Trump and information from others who talked to him that day.

## WERE ANY CRIMES COMMITTED BY TRUMP?

He hasn't been charged, but legal experts believe the testimony, presuming it can be corroborated, does give prosecutors avenues to pursue.

Federal law, for instance, makes it a crime to incite, organize, encourage or promote a riot like the one that enveloped the Capitol. But that's a high bar for prosecutors to clear. Trump's exhortation to "fight like hell" could be construed as a more general call to action. He was acquitted by the Senate of an incitement charge in his impeachment trial after the insurrection.

Still, a federal judge in February, in rejecting a request by Trump to toss out conspiracy lawsuits from Democratic lawmakers and two Capitol Police officers, said Trump's words "plausibly" led to the riot. And Hutchinson's first-hand account of hearing Trump complain about metal detectors suggested he was aware that some supporters were capable of violence but brushed it off.

A more likely option for prosecution, said Jimmy Gurule, a former federal prosecutor who is a Notre Dame law professor, would be to pursue a case that Trump conspired to defraud the United States through his wide-ranging efforts to overturn the election and to obstruct the congressional proceeding at which the results were to be certified.

That broad statute was cited by the House committee when it asserted in a March legal filing that it had evidence Trump had engaged in a "criminal conspiracy."

"He was perpetuating the big lie. To what end? To remain in power and to prevent Biden from assuming the reins of the presidency," Gurule said. "It was fraud on the American people."

Some legal experts say it doesn't matter if Trump believed the election was stolen or not. But others say much would depend on the president's intent and state of mind and whether he supported activities he knew to be unlawful. Though witnesses have testified under oath about telling Trump he had lost, it would be hard to prove what he actually believed.

"I can confidently say that any serious felony-level federal crime that is going to be charged here is going to require proof beyond a reasonable doubt of criminal intent," said Samuel Buell, a Duke University criminal law professor.

"Any argument that he doesn't believe that he's doing something that is against the law ... is still an argument he can make and still something the prosecutor has to prove."

## WILL THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ACTUALLY BRING A CASE?

That's anyone's guess. The congressional hearings have produced eye-popping testimony, but the one-sided presentation of facts, with no opportunities for cross-examination of witnesses, is a far cry from the burden of proof and trial constraints in criminal prosecutions.

One of the more striking accounts from Hutchinson — that Trump, irate at being driven to the White House instead of the Capitol on Jan. 6, tried to grab at the steering wheel of his presidential vehicle — was something she heard second-hand, likely inadmissible before a jury.

There are clear signs prosecutors are moving beyond the rioters, serving subpoenas last week on multiple state Republican Party chairmen in examining a scheme by Trump allies to create slates of alternate, or fake, electors in an attempt to subvert the vote.

Attorney General Merrick Garland, a former federal appeals court judge and circumspect by nature, has pledged the Justice Department will hold accountable wrongdoers "at any level" — more than 800 people have been charged so far — but he has not said one way or another that he's considering a case against Trump.

Some Democrats in Congress have been pressing Garland to act. The Jan. 6 committee itself could make a formal criminal referral based on its more than 1,000 interviews. The Justice Department wouldn't have to act on such a referral, but it has been pressuring the panel to hand over its interview transcripts as it weighs making its own case.

A Justice Department spokesman declined to comment.

There's no legal bar to prosecuting Trump as a former president. Since he is no longer in office, Justice Department legal opinions that shielded him from criminal charges no longer apply.

But while it may be hard for the department to turn away from a case if the cumulative evidence is provable beyond a reasonable doubt, there are other factors to consider. No former president has ever been prosecuted by the Justice Department, and a criminal case against the already polarizing former president risks dividing the country even further.

Trump has also been laying the groundwork for another presidential run, and the department may want to avoid any perception that it is targeting a political adversary of Biden in the heat of an election.

"It will be," Buell said, "one of the hardest issues that any U.S. attorney general has ever confronted."

## Russians fight to encircle Ukraine's last eastern stronghold

By FRANCESCA EBEL and YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KREMENCHUK, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces battled Wednesday to surround the Ukrainian military's last stronghold in a long-contested eastern province, as shock reverberated from a Russian airstrike on a shopping mall that killed at least 18 in the center of the country two days earlier.

Moscow's battle to wrest the entire Donbas region from Ukraine saw Russian forces pushing toward two villages south of Lysychansk while Ukrainian troops fought to prevent their encirclement.

Britain's defense ministry said Russian forces were making "incremental advances" in their offensive to capture Lysychansk, the last city in the Luhansk province under Ukrainian control following the retreat of Ukraine's forces from the neighboring city of Sievierodonetsk.

Russian troops and their separatist allies control 95% of Luhansk and about half of Donetsk, the two provinces that make up the mostly Russian-speaking Donbas.

The latest assessment by the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said the Ukrainians were likely in a fighting withdrawal to seek more defensible positions while draining the Russian forces of manpower and resources.

Avril Haines, the U.S. director of national intelligence, said Russia "may think time is on its side" due to the escalating costs borne by the West and fatigue as the war grows longer. The most likely scenario predicted by American intelligence, Haines said, is a "grinding struggle" in which Russia consolidates its hold over southern Ukraine by the fall.

The U.S. correctly predicted Russia would invade Ukraine in February, but was wrong in assessing that it would quickly seize Kyiv. Speaking at an event in Washington on Wednesday, Haines said Russian President Vladimir Putin "has effectively the same political goals that he had previously, which is to say that he wants to take most of Ukraine" and push it away from NATO.

"We perceive a disconnect between Putin's near-term military objectives in this area and his military's capacity, a kind of mismatch between his ambitions and what the military is able to accomplish," Haines said.

Putin also said his goals in Ukraine have not changed since the start of the war. He said they were "the liberation of the Donbas, the protection of these people and the creation of conditions that would guarantee the security of Russia itself." He made no mention of his original stated goals to "demilitarize" and "de-Nazify" Ukraine.

He denied Russia adjusted its strategy after failing to take Kyiv. "As you can see, the troops are moving and reaching the marks that were set for them for a certain stage of this combat work. Everything is going according to plan," Putin said at a news conference in Turkmenistan.

Meanwhile, crews continued to search through the rubble of the shopping mall in Kremenchuk where Ukrainian authorities say 20 people remain missing.

Ukrainian State Emergency Services press officer Svitlana Rybalko told The Associated Press that along with the 18 people killed, investigators found fragments of eight more bodies. It was not immediately clear whether that meant there were more victims. A number of survivors suffered severed limbs.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 53 of 82

"The police cannot say for sure how many (victims) there are. So we are finding not the bodies but the fragments of bodies," Rybalko said. "Now we are clearing at the very epicenter of the blast. Here, we practically cannot find bodies as such."

Several families stood by what was left of the Amstor shopping center Wednesday morning in hope of finding missing loved ones.

"This is pure genocide," local resident Tatiana Chernyshova said while going to lay flowers at the site. "Such things cannot happen in the 21st century."

"We need to engage everyone to help stop the war, help us fight these scum — these Russian aggressors," Chernyshova said.

Psychologists working at the site with families said they were trying to help people come to terms with their loss.

"We are trying to help them release their emotions now, as later it becomes harder and much more painful," said one psychologist, who did not give his name as he was not authorized to speak to the press.

After the attack on the mall, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia of becoming a "terrorist" state. On Wednesday, he reproached NATO for not embracing or equipping his embattled country more fully.

"The open-door policy of NATO shouldn't resemble old turnstiles on Kyiv's subway, which stay open but close when you approach them until you pay," Zelenskyy told NATO leaders meeting in Madrid, speaking by video link. "Hasn't Ukraine paid enough? Hasn't our contribution to defending Europe and the entire civilization been sufficient?"

He asked for more modern artillery systems and other weapons and warned the NATO leaders they either had to provide Ukraine with the help it needed to defeat Russia or "face a delayed war between Russia and yourself."

Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on Wednesday dismissed what she claimed was the Ukrainian government's "blatant provocation" in trying to blame the mall missile strike on Russia's military.

Britain's defense ministry said there was a "realistic possibility" that the mall strike "was intended to hit a nearby infrastructure target."

"Russian planners highly likely remain willing to accept a high level of collateral damage when they perceive military necessity in striking a target," the ministry said. "It is almost certain that Russia will continue to conduct strikes in an effort to interdict the resupplying of Ukrainian front-line forces."

Russia's military also is experiencing a shortage of more modern precision strike weapons, which is compounding civilian casualties, the British ministry said.

In southern Ukraine, a Russian missile strike on a multi-story apartment building Wednesday in the city of Mykolaiv killed at least four people and injured five, regional governor Vitaliy Kim said. Mykolaiv is a major port and seizing it — as well as Odesa farther west — would be key to Russia's objective of cutting off Ukraine from its Black Sea coast.

Russia's defense ministry said in a statement that the missile strike on Mykolaiv targeted a base for training "foreign mercenaries," as well as ammunition depots.

In other developments Wednesday:

— A senior Russian lawmaker warned that Lithuania's refusal to allow some goods targeted by European Union sanctions through to Russia's Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad could trigger a military confrontation.

The statement by Vladimir Dzhubarov, a deputy head of the foreign affairs committee in the lower house of Russia's parliament, followed the Kremlin's warning that it will retaliate against restrictions of transit to Kaliningrad. The region borders EU and NATO members Poland and Lithuania.

— Russia's foreign ministry summoned Norway's charge d'affaires to protest Oslo's blocking of a shipment of supplies to a Russian coal-mining town in the Svalbard islands.

Although the Svalbards are Norwegian territory, a 1920 treaty allows all signatory countries the right to exploit its natural resources. Russia operates a coal mine in Barentsburg, a settlement of about 450 people, which relies on shipments from the mainland of food, machinery and other supplies. Norway imposed

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 54 of 82

sanctions on shipments from Russia in April.

— Ukrainian military intelligence says that in the largest prisoner swap since the start of the war 144 Ukrainian troops were released from Russian captivity. Of those released, 95 were involved in defending the Azovstal steel plant in Ukraine's devastated southern city of Mariupol before Russian forces captured it weeks ago. Denis Pushilin, the separatist leader in Donetsk, said an equal number of soldiers was released by both sides.

— European Union leaders approved a 600-million euro (\$631 million) package to address food security issues brought on by the Ukrainian war in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

— British businessman Richard Branson met with Zelenskyy in Kyiv and also visited the Hostomel airport outside the city. Zelenskyy said Branson, whose Virgin Group includes an airline, may be interested in rebuilding the airport, which was badly damaged early in the war.

— Britain is imposing sanctions on Russia's second-richest man and on a cousin of Putin's. Vladimir Potanin, owner of the Interross conglomerate, has continued to amass wealth while backing Putin, acquiring Rosbank and shares in Tinkoff Bankonith in the period following the invasion of Ukraine, a U.K. government statement said Wednesday.

The statement said Putin's cousin, Anna Tsivileva, and her husband, Sergey Tsivilev, have "significantly benefited" from their relationship with Putin. Tsivileva is president of the JSC Kolmar Group coal mining company, and Tsivilev is governor of the coal-rich Kemerovo region.

## 2-time Wimbledon champ Murray loses to Isner in 2nd round

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — The recurring cries of "Come on, Andy!" at Centre Court meandered somewhere along the continuum from pushing to pleading as two-time champion Andy Murray's shortest stay at Wimbledon came to a close.

Unable to overcome big John Isner's big serves, the way he always has in the past, the revered Murray lost in the second round to the 20th-seeded American 6-4, 7-6 (4), 6-7 (3), 6-4 on Wednesday night at the All England Club, capping a disappointing afternoon and evening in the grass-court Grand Slam tournament's main stadium for the locals.

Prior to Murray vs. Isner, the host country's other leading player, reigning U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu, was eliminated by Caroline Garcia of France 6-3, 6-3.

Asked whether he plans to be back a year from now, the 35-year-old Murray replied: "It depends on how I am physically. If physically I feel good, we'll try to keep playing. But it's extremely difficult, with the problems I've had with my body the last few years, to make predictions."

Murray needed multiple operations on his hip and now has an artificial joint. He also recently dealt with an abdominal issue that hampered his preparations last week.

In addition to becoming Britain's first men's singles title winner in 77 years at Wimbledon when he claimed the trophy in 2013 — and adding another in 2016 — Murray always had managed to make it to at least the third round in his 13 prior appearances. He lost that early twice, in his 2005 debut and in 2021.

"It's no secret that I am most definitely not a better tennis player than Andy Murray. I might have been just a little bit better than him today. It was an incredible honor to play him on this court, in front of this crowd," said the 37-year-old Isner, who won the longest match in tennis history by a 70-68 score in the fifth set at Wimbledon in 2010 and reached the semifinals there in 2018. "At the age I'm at now, I need to relish these moments. This was one of the biggest wins of my career."

Murray can still hit crisp, clean groundstrokes, and he accumulated merely 13 unforced errors to 39 winners against the 6-foot-10 (2.08-meter) Isner. And Murray can still return about as well as anyone, often getting serves topping 130 mph (210 kph) back over the net. But he could not quite do that enough: Isner hit 36 aces — moving him four away from Ivo Karlovic's total of 13,728, a record since the ATP began tracking that stat in 1991 — and delivered another 60 unreturned serves across the match's nearly 3 1/2 hours.

Murray, who entered the day 8-0 against Isner, only managed to obtain two break points. Both came after about a dozen minutes of play, right after Isner broke to go up 2-1 in the opening set.

Isner erased the first with a drop volley winner, part of a tremendous display of deft touch up at the net, where he won the point on 43 of 61 trips forward.

"This is why I still play," Isner said. "This is why I work hard."

When the second break chance for Murray arrived moments later, Isner got out of the game this way: 128 mph (206 kph) ace, 126 mph (203 kph) ace, 134 mph (216 kph) service winner.

Murray made things interesting by taking the third-set tiebreaker, celebrating by hopping around and shouting and pumping his right fist while the crowd rose and roared.

But Isner quickly broke to go up 3-2 in the fourth and that, essentially, was that.

How did Isner hold off any chance of a comeback by Murray?

"I served," Isner said with a laugh. "That's really all it came down to. I guess I didn't give him many opportunities to spin his web and get me tangled up in it. If I got embroiled in too many rallies with him, it just wasn't going to go well for me. I had an incredible serving day and I needed every single bit of it to beat him."

Next for Isner is a third-round matchup against No. 10 seed Jannik Sinner. Other men who won Wednesday included three-time defending champion Novak Djokovic and No. 5 Carlos Alcaraz, while No. 3 Casper Ruud — the runner-up to Rafael Nadal at the French Open — lost 3-6, 6-2, 7-5, 6-4 to Ugo Humbert, and No. 15 Reilly Opelka was defeated by Tim Van Rijthoven 6-4, 6-7 (8), 7-6 (7), 7-6 (4).

Only four of the top 11 men in the ATP rankings are in the bracket after Day 3.

In addition to No. 10 Raducanu's exit, No. 2 Anett Kontaveit lost to Juke Niemeier of Germany 6-4, 6-0, and No. 9 Garbiñe Muguruza, the champion at Wimbledon in 2017 and the French Open in 2016, was beaten by Greet Minnen 6-4, 6-0.

Women's winners included 2021 runner-up Karolina Pliskova, No. 8 Jessica Pegula, three-time major champion Angelique Kerber and 2017 French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko.

Raducanu won the championship at Flushing Meadows in September as an unseeded player who went through qualifying at age 18.

Since then, she's had a birthday — and has not made it past the second round at a major.

"There's no pressure. Like, why is there any pressure? I'm still 19. Like, it's a joke. I literally won a Slam," Raducanu said. "Yes, I have had attention. But I'm a Slam champion, so no one's going to take that away from me. Yeah, if anything, the pressure is on those who haven't done that."

## R. Kelly sentenced to 30 years in sex trafficking case

By TOM HAYS, BOBBY CAINA CALVAN and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Disgraced R&B superstar R. Kelly was sentenced Wednesday to 30 years in prison for using his fame to sexually abuse young fans, including some who were just children, in a systematic scheme that went on for decades.

Through tears and anger, several of Kelly's accusers told a court in New York City, and the singer himself, that he had misled and preyed upon them.

"You made me do things that broke my spirit. I literally wished I would die because of how low you made me feel," said one unnamed survivor, directly addressing Kelly, who kept his hands folded and his eyes downcast.

"Do you remember that?" she asked.

Kelly, 55, didn't give a statement and showed no reaction on hearing his penalty, which also included a \$100,000 fine. He has denied wrongdoing, and he plans to appeal his conviction.

The Grammy-winning, multiplatinum-selling songwriter was found guilty last year of racketeering and sex trafficking at a trial that gave voice to accusers who had previously wondered if their stories were being ignored because they were Black women.

Victims "are no longer the preyed-on individuals we once were," another one of his accusers said at the sentencing.

"There wasn't a day in my life, up until this moment, that I actually believed that the judicial system

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 56 of 82

would come through for Black and brown girls," she added outside court.

A third woman, sobbing and sniffing as she addressed the court, also said Kelly's conviction renewed her faith in the legal system.

The woman said Kelly victimized her after she went to a concert when she was 17.

"I was afraid, naive and didn't know how to handle the situation," she said, so she didn't speak up at the time.

"Silence," she said, "is a very lonely place."

Kelly's lawyer, Jennifer Bonjean, said he was "devastated" by the sentence and saddened by what he had heard.

"He's a human being. He feels what other people are feeling. But that doesn't mean that he can accept responsibility in the way that the government would like him to and other people would like him to. Because he disagrees with the characterizations that have been made about him," she said.

The sentence caps a slow-motion fall for Kelly, who is known for work including the 1996 hit "I Believe I Can Fly" and the cult classic "Trapped in the Closet," a multipart tale of sexual betrayal and intrigue.

He was adored by legions of fans and sold millions of albums even after allegations about his abuse of young girls began circulating publicly in the 1990s. He beat child pornography charges in Chicago in 2008, when a jury acquitted him.

Widespread outrage over Kelly's sexual misconduct didn't emerge until the #MeToo reckoning, reaching a crescendo after the release of the documentary "Surviving R. Kelly."

"I hope this sentencing serves as its own testimony that it doesn't matter how powerful, rich or famous your abuser may be or how small they make you feel — justice only hears the truth," Brooklyn U.S. Attorney Breon Peace said Wednesday.

A Brooklyn federal court jury convicted the singer, born Robert Sylvester Kelly, after hearing that he used his entourage of managers and aides to meet girls and keep them obedient, an operation that prosecutors said amounted to a criminal enterprise.

Several accusers testified that Kelly subjected them to perverse and sadistic whims when they were underage.

The accusers alleged they were ordered to sign nondisclosure forms and were subjected to threats and punishments such as violent spankings if they broke what one referred to as "Rob's rules."

Some said they believed the videotapes he shot of them having sex would be used against them if they exposed what was happening.

According to testimony, Kelly gave several accusers herpes without disclosing he had an STD, coerced a teenage boy to join him for sex with a naked girl who emerged from underneath a boxing ring in his garage, and shot a shaming video that showed one victim smearing feces on her face as punishment for breaking his rules.

"The horrors your victims endured," U.S. District Judge Ann Donnelly said as she sentenced him. "No price was too high to pay for your happiness."

Lizzette Martinez was a 17-year-old aspiring singer when she met Kelly at a Florida mall. She was promised mentorship but quickly ended up "a sex slave," she said Wednesday outside court.

Asked whether Kelly's 30-year sentence was sufficient punishment, she paused before answering.

"I, personally, don't think it's enough," she said, "but I'm pleased with it."

At the trial, evidence also was presented about a fraudulent marriage scheme hatched to protect Kelly after he feared he had impregnated R&B phenom Aaliyah in 1994 when she was just 15. Witnesses said they were married in matching jogging suits using a license falsely listing her age as 18; he was 27 at the time.

Aaliyah worked with Kelly, who wrote and produced her 1994 debut album, "Age Ain't Nothing But A Number." She died in a plane crash in 2001 at age 22.

Kelly didn't testify at his trial, but his then-lawyers portrayed his accusers as girlfriends and groupies who weren't forced to do anything against their will and stayed with him because they enjoyed the perks



of his lifestyle.

His current lawyers had argued he should get no more than 10 years in prison because he had a traumatic childhood "involving severe, prolonged childhood sexual abuse, poverty, and violence."

As an adult with "literacy deficiencies," the star was "repeatedly defrauded and financially abused, often by the people he paid to protect him," his lawyers said.

The Associated Press does not name people who say they have been sexually assaulted or abused, unless they come forward publicly, as Martinez has. Several women who spoke at Kelly's sentencing were identified only by first names or pseudonyms.

Kelly has been jailed without bail since in 2019. He still faces child pornography and obstruction-of-justice charges in Chicago, where a trial is scheduled to begin Aug. 15.

## Lone surviving attacker in Paris massacre guilty of murder

By NICOLAS VAUX-MONTAGNY, JEFFREY SCHAEFFER and BARBARA SURK Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The lone survivor of a team of Islamic State extremists who terrorized Paris in 2015 was convicted Wednesday of murder and other charges and sentenced to life in prison without parole for the deadliest peacetime attacks in French history.

The special terrorism court also convicted 19 other men involved in the assault on the Bataclan concert hall, cafes and the national stadium, which killed 130 people and injured hundreds, some permanently maimed. It also led to intensified French military action against extremists abroad and a lasting shift in France's security posture at home.

Survivors and victims' families emerged from the packed courtroom dazed or exhausted after an excruciating nine-month trial that's been crucial in their quest for justice and closure.

Chief suspect Salah Abdeslam was found guilty of murder and attempted murder in relation to a terrorist enterprise. The court found that his explosives vest malfunctioned, dismissing his argument that he ditched the vest because he decided not to follow through with his part of the attack on the night of Nov. 13, 2015.

The other nine attackers either blew themselves up or were killed by police that night.

Abdeslam, a 32-year-old Belgian, was given France's most severe sentence possible. The sentence of life without parole has only been pronounced four times in the country — for crimes related to rape and murder of minors. Neither he nor his lawyer spoke publicly after the verdict.

Of the other defendants, 18 were given various terrorism-related convictions, and one was convicted on a lesser fraud charge. Some were given life sentences; others walked free after being sentenced to time served.

They have 10 days to appeal. The sentences were broadly expected, and those present expressed little surprise; mainly, a bit of relief.

"I hope to be able to put the word 'victim' into the past," said Bataclan survivor Arthur Denouveaux.

"When things like this happen you have no reparation possible. That's why you have justice," he said, even if "justice can't do everything."

During the trial, Abdeslam initially proclaimed his radicalism but later appeared to evolve, weeping, apologizing to victims and pleading with judges to forgive his "mistakes."

For months, the packed main chamber and 12 overflow rooms in the 13th century Justice Palace heard harrowing accounts by the victims, along with testimony from Abdeslam. The other defendants were largely accused of helping with logistics or transportation. At least one is accused of a direct role in the deadly March 2016 attacks in Brussels, which also was claimed by the Islamic State group.

The trial was an opportunity for survivors and those mourning loved ones to recount the deeply personal horrors inflicted that night and to listen to details of countless acts of bravery, humanity and compassion among strangers. They wanted to tell the accused directly that they have been left irreparably scarred, but not broken.

"I feel like I've grown up" thanks to the trial, said David Fritz Geoppinger, who was held hostage in the Bataclan. "It's important as a victim to hear justice speak."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 58 of 82

France was changed in the wake of the attacks: Authorities declared a state of emergency and armed officers now constantly patrol public spaces. The violence sparked soul-searching among the French and Europeans, since most of the attackers were born and raised in France or Belgium. And they transformed forever the lives of all those who suffered losses or bore witness.

Presiding judge Jean-Louis Peries said at the trial's outset that it belongs to "international and national events of this century." France emerged from the state of emergency in 2017, after incorporating many of the harshest measures into law.

Fourteen of the defendants were in court, including Abdeslam. All but one of the six men convicted in absentia are presumed killed in Syria or Iraq; the other is in prison in Turkey.

Most of the suspects were accused of helping create false identities, transporting the attackers back to Europe from Syria or providing them with money, phones, explosives or weapons. Abdeslam was the only defendant tried on several counts of murder and kidnapping as a member of a terrorist organization.

"Not everyone is a jihadi, but all of those you are judging accepted to take part in a terrorist group, either by conviction, cowardliness or greed," prosecutor Nicolas Braconnay told the court in closing arguments this month.

Some defendants said innocent civilians were targeted because of France's policies in the Middle East and hundreds of civilian deaths in Western airstrikes in Islamic State-controlled areas of Syria and Iraq.

During his testimony, former President François Hollande dismissed claims that his government was at fault. The Paris attackers did not shoot, kill, maim and traumatize civilians because of religion, he said, but "fanaticism and barbarism."

The night of the attack was a balmy Friday evening, with the city's bars and restaurants packed. At the Bataclan concert venue, the American band Eagles of Death Metal were playing to a full house. At the national stadium, a soccer match between France and Germany had just begun, attended by then-President Hollande and then-Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The sound of the first suicide bombing at 9:16 p.m. barely carried over the noise of the stadium's crowd. The second came four minutes later. A squad of gunmen opened fire at several bars and restaurants in another part of Paris.

Worse was to follow. At 9:47 p.m., three more gunmen burst into the Bataclan, firing indiscriminately. Ninety people died within minutes. Hundreds were held hostage – some gravely injured – for hours before Hollande ordered it stormed.

During closing arguments Monday, Abdeslam's lawyer Olivia Ronen told a panel of judges that her client shouldn't be convicted of murder because he was the only one in the group of attackers who didn't set off explosives to kill others that night.

She emphasized through the trial that she is "not providing legitimacy to the attacks" by defending her client in court.

Abdeslam apologized to the victims at his final court appearance Monday, saying that listening to victims' accounts of "so much suffering" changed him, he said.

Georges Salines, who lost his daughter Lola in the Bataclan, felt Abdeslam's remorse was insincere. "I don't think it's possible to forgive him," he said.

But for Salines, life without parole is going too far.

"I don't like the idea of in advance deciding that there is no hope," he said. "I think it is important to keep hope for any man."

## 1955 warrant in Emmett Till case found, family seeks arrest

By JAY REEVES and EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — A team searching a Mississippi courthouse basement for evidence about the lynching of Black teenager Emmett Till has found the unserved warrant charging a white woman in his 1955 kidnapping, and relatives of the victim want authorities to finally arrest her nearly 70 years later.

A warrant for the arrest of Carolyn Bryant Donham — identified as "Mrs. Roy Bryant" on the document

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 59 of 82

— was discovered last week by searchers inside a file folder that had been placed in a box, Leflore County Circuit Clerk Elmus Stockstill told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Documents are kept inside boxes by decade, he said, but there was nothing else to indicate where the warrant, dated Aug. 29, 1955, might have been.

"They narrowed it down between the '50s and '60s and got lucky," said Stockstill, who certified the warrant as genuine.

The search group included members of the Emmett Till Legacy Foundation and two Till relatives: cousin Deborah Watts, head of the foundation; and her daughter, Teri Watts. Relatives want authorities to use the warrant to arrest Donham, who at the time of the slaying was married to one of two white men tried and acquitted just weeks after Till was abducted from a relative's home, killed and dumped into a river.

"Serve it and charge her," Teri Watts told the AP in an interview.

Keith Beauchamp, whose documentary film "The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till" preceded a renewed Justice Department probe that ended without charges in 2007, was also part of the search. He said there's enough new evidence to prosecute Donham.

Donham set off the case in August 1955 by accusing the 14-year-old Till of making improper advances at a family store in Money, Mississippi. A cousin of Till who was there has said Till whistled at the woman, an act that flew in the face of Mississippi's racist social codes of the era.

Evidence indicates a woman, possibly Donham, identified Till to the men who later killed him. The arrest warrant against Donham was publicized at the time, but the Leflore County sheriff told reporters he did not want to "bother" the woman since she had two young children to care for.

Now in her 80s and most recently living in North Carolina, Donham has not commented publicly on calls for her prosecution. But Teri Watts said the Till family believes the warrant accusing Donham of kidnapping amounts to new evidence.

"This is what the state of Mississippi needs to go ahead," she said.

District Attorney Dewayne Richardson, whose office would prosecute a case, declined comment on the warrant but cited a December report about the Till case from the Justice Department, which said no prosecution was possible.

Contacted by the AP on Wednesday, Leflore County Sheriff Ricky Banks said: "This is the first time I've known about a warrant."

Banks, who was 7 years old when Till was killed, said "nothing was said about a warrant" when a former district attorney investigated the case five or six years ago.

"I will see if I can get a copy of the warrant and get with the DA and get their opinion on it," Banks said. If the warrant can still be served, Banks said, he would have to talk to law enforcement officers in the state where Donham resides.

Arrest warrants can "go stale" due to the passage of time and changing circumstances, and one from 1955 almost certainly wouldn't pass muster before a court, even if a sheriff agreed to serve it, said Ronald J. Rychlak, a law professor at the University of Mississippi.

But combined with any new evidence, the original arrest warrant "absolutely" could be an important stepping stone toward establishing probable cause for a new prosecution, he said.

"If you went in front of a judge you could say, 'Once upon a time a judge determined there was probable cause, and much more information is available today,'" Rychlak said.

Till, who was from Chicago, was visiting relatives in Mississippi when he entered the store where Donham, then 21, was working on Aug. 24, 1955. A Till relative who was there, Wheeler Parker, told AP that Till whistled at the woman. Donham testified in court that Till also grabbed her and made a lewd comment.

Two nights later, Donham's then-husband, Roy Bryant, and his half-brother, J.W. Milam, showed up armed at the rural Leflore County home of Till's great-uncle, Mose Wright, looking for the youth. Till's brutalized body, weighted down by a fan, was pulled from a river days later in another county. His mother's decision to open the casket so mourners in Chicago could see what had happened helped galvanize the building civil rights movement of the time.

Bryant and Milam were acquitted of murder but later admitted the killing in a magazine interview. While

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 60 of 82

both men were named in the same warrant that accused Donham of kidnapping, authorities did not pursue the case following their acquittal.

Wright testified during the murder trial that a person with a voice "lighter" than a man's identified Till from inside a pickup truck and the abductors took him away. Other evidence in FBI files indicates that earlier that same night, Donham told her husband at least two other Black men were not the right person.

## Most say nation on wrong track, including Dems: AP-NORC poll

By JOSH BOAK and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An overwhelming and growing majority of Americans say the U.S. is heading in the wrong direction, including nearly 8 in 10 Democrats, according to a new poll that finds deep pessimism about the economy plaguing President Joe Biden.

Eighty-five percent of U.S. adults say the country is on the wrong track, and 79% describe the economy as poor, according to a new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The findings suggest Biden faces fundamental challenges as he tries to motivate voters to cast ballots for Democrats in November's midterm elections.

Inflation has consistently eclipsed the healthy 3.6% unemployment rate as a focal point for Americans, who are dealing with high gasoline and food prices. Even among Democrats, 67% call economic conditions poor.

"He's doing the best he can — I can't say he's doing a good job," said Chuck McClain, 74. "But his opposition is so bad. I just don't feel the Democratic Congress is doing enough."

The Las Vegas resident is a loyal Democrat who said he doesn't miss an election, but he said the price of gas and groceries, Russia's war in Ukraine and the country's deep political divides have led more Americans to feel as though Washington is unresponsive to their needs.

"My wife and I are very frustrated with where the country is headed, and we don't have a lot of hope for the political end of it to get any better," he said.

The poll shows only 39% of Americans approve of Biden's leadership overall, while 60% disapprove. His approval rating fell to its lowest point of his presidency last month and remains at that level. The Democratic president gets hit even harder on the economy, with 69% saying they disapprove of him on the issue. Among Democrats, 43% disapprove of Biden's handling of the economy.

Just 14% say things are going in the right direction, down slightly from 21% in May and 29% in April. Through the first half of 2021, about half of Americans said the country was headed in the right direction, a number that has steadily eroded in the past year.

Dorothy Vaudo, 66, said she voted for Biden in 2020 but plans to switch allegiance this year.

"I'm a Democrat so I had to vote Democrat, but that's going to change," said the Martin County, North Carolina resident.

In recent weeks, Americans have endured even more bad economic news, with inflation continuing to rise, interest rates increasing dramatically and the S&P 500 entering a bear market as many serious economists predict a recession. Yet consumer spending has largely kept pace and hiring remains brisk in a sign that families and businesses have been able to withstand some of the economic pain.

In an interview this month with the AP, Biden traced the decline in his popularity to increases in gas prices that began a year ago. He said that prices shot up further with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February. But he rejected claims by Republican lawmakers and some major economists that his \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package from last year contributed to inflation, noting that price increases were a global phenomenon.

"We're in a stronger position than any nation in the world to overcome this inflation," Biden said. "If it's my fault, why is it the case in every other major industrial country in the world that inflation is higher?"

Douglass Gavilan, a 26-year-old in Miami, is concerned about the "skyrocketing" prices and rent that he sees in his community. Shelter costs are roughly a third of the U.S. consumer price index, so the run-up in rents and home values has started to strain the budgets even of many people living where there are

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 61 of 82

strong job opportunities.

"I don't even know if I'm going to be able to live here in a few years," Gavilan said. "I definitely don't feel confident in the economy."

Though he doesn't identify with a political party, Gavilan voted for Biden in 2020. He doesn't think Biden has proposed anything to make a meaningful difference in his life, but he does think the president's in a tough spot.

"There's very little he can do without everyone blaming him for everything," Gavilan said.

The poll was conducted from Thursday to Monday, with many interviews conducted after the Supreme Court on Friday struck down *Roe v. Wade* and allowed states to ban abortion -- a decision opposed by a majority of the American people in earlier polls, which could also have contributed to the continued slump in the national mood.

The national dissatisfaction is bipartisan, the poll shows. Ninety-two percent of Republicans and 78% of Democrats say the country is headed in the wrong direction. Since last month, the percentage of Democrats saying the country is headed in the wrong direction rose from 66%.

Biden's handling of the coronavirus pandemic remains a relative bright spot, with 53% of Americans saying they approve of his handling of that issue. On the other hand, only 36% say they approve of Biden's handling of gun policy; 62% disapprove.

But the economy is what weighs on many Americans as their top priority.

Curtis Musser, 57, a chemistry teacher from Clermont, Florida, said he expects a recession is coming, though he believes it will be mild.

Musser said many Americans simply feel as though they're at the mercy of events beyond their control, whether that's the pandemic, rate hikes by the Federal Reserve, war in Europe or political hostilities within the U.S.

"I feel as an individual somewhat helpless," he said. "I don't have control of the markets, and you can't really guess what markets are going to do because you don't know what the Fed is going to do. You don't know what Congress is going to do. You don't know what Vladimir Putin is going to do."

## **EXPLAINER: Abortion landscape under state 'heartbeat' laws**

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Laws banning most abortions at the point of the "first detectable heartbeat" are beginning to take effect across the country, following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision Friday to overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized the procedure in 1973.

Such laws, often referred to as "fetal heartbeat bills," ban abortions once cardiac activity is detected, which can happen around six weeks into pregnancy, although a timeframe typically isn't specified in the measures.

Swift court actions in states including Ohio, South Carolina and Tennessee revived laws stalled under *Roe* in the decision's wake. That has left some people who were planning abortions — and the clinics lined up to provide them — scrambling.

Here's a look at what has happened following the ruling, where that leaves residents of affected states, and what may come next:

### **WHERE ARE THE LAWS IN EFFECT?**

Stalled laws were reimposed in Ohio, South Carolina and Tennessee within days of the Supreme Court ruling. In September, Texas became the first state to successfully impose such a law, with the dozen or so other states seeing theirs placed on hold under *Roe*. Similar laws are the subject of court action in at least four other states.

Ohio was able to reimpose its "fetal heartbeat" law, which had twice been vetoed because of constitutional considerations under *Roe*, within hours of that case's reversal. At the request of Republican Attorney General Dave Yost, a federal judge lifted the stay that had prevented enforcement since the law was signed in 2019. The American Civil Liberties Union and Planned Parenthood sued in the Ohio Supreme Court on

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 62 of 82

behalf of a group of abortion providers Wednesday, arguing the law also violates the state constitution. South Carolina's "heartbeat" law went into effect Monday, after an injunction blocking the law was removed. Tennessee's took effect Wednesday. In Georgia, where a federal judge declared the "heartbeat restriction" unconstitutional in 2020, a federal appeals court Friday has given parties three weeks to file briefs addressing the effect the Supreme Court ruling on the state's appeal of the lower court ruling.

**Q: IS ABORTION STILL LEGAL IN THESE STATES?**

**A:** Yes, but only until cardiac activity is detected. That can happen around six weeks of gestational age, which is before many women even know they are pregnant.

Further, abortion rights groups, clinics and some faith groups are making available resources to people who still want abortions, including financial help and transportation to other states.

Meanwhile, abortion opponents, including Ohio's governor, are ramping up resources for families, in hopes that the new restrictions prompt more people to carry their pregnancies to term. Republican legislative leaders in Ohio and South Carolina have raised the possibility of further tightening their states' abortion restrictions to full bans later this year.

Tennessee's other abortion ban, known as the so-called trigger ban, is set to restrict abortion in that state almost entirely in less than a month.

**WHAT DO THE LAWS PROHIBIT, EXACTLY?**

The laws generally prohibit abortions of "an unborn human individual whose fetal heartbeat has been detected." That terminology — used widely in anti-abortion legislation across the country — does not easily translate to medical science.

That's because at the point where advanced technology can detect that first visual flutter, as early as six weeks into pregnancy, the embryo isn't yet a fetus, and it doesn't have a heart. An embryo is termed a fetus eight weeks after fertilization, according to medical experts.

Abortion rights advocates, civil rights attorneys and some abortion foes favor calling the laws "six-week abortion bans." That, too, is misleading. Most "heartbeat" laws make no mention of a particular gestational age after which abortion is illegal.

What they ban are most abortions after the point when a state-sanctioned detection method administered in good faith by a medical professional can detect cardiac activity.

If no cardiac activity is found, an abortion can go forward. Under Ohio's law, women must wait 24 hours, then get a second ultrasound to again assure no flutter is present before the procedure can move forward.

**ARE THERE ANY EXCEPTIONS?**

Yes, but it depends on the state. The Ohio and Tennessee laws make exceptions for the life of the mother or for risk of "substantial and irreversible impairment of a major bodily function." This could include pre-eclampsia, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, premature rupture of membranes or inevitable miscarriage. Neither makes exceptions for incest or rape, including rape of a child. Both laws also specify that a woman's mental health does not qualify for an exemption.

South Carolina's law requires an attempt to detect a "fetal heartbeat" once a doctor thinks a pregnant woman is at least eight weeks along. The state allows exceptions for when the woman's life is in danger, or if the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.

Georgia's law makes exceptions in the case of rape and incest, if the woman files a police report first. It also allows for abortions when the life of the mother is at risk or when a pregnancy is deemed "medically futile," generally due to a serious medical condition in the fetus.

**WHAT ARE THE PENALTIES FOR VIOLATORS?**

A person who performs an abortion in violation of the ban in Ohio could be charged with a fifth-degree felony, which carries a penalty of probation or six to 12 months in prison and a fine of up to \$2,500.

Under the law, a doctor invoking one of the law's exceptions also must specify in writing the medical condition invoked, place a record of that decision in the patient's file and maintain it for seven years. Failing to keep proper paperwork is subject to a penalty of up to \$20,000 for each instance.

Under Tennessee's law, performing an abortion when cardiac activity is present is a felony, subjecting doctors to up to 15 years in prison. A doctor guilty of violating South Carolina's abortion law faces a felony

conviction carrying a penalty of \$20,000 and up to two years in prison, or both.

Pregnant people are not held liable under any of the laws, and they are given the option to bring civil action for wrongful death if their pregnancy is terminated without an attempt to detect a "fetal heartbeat."

## **EXPLAINER: Abortion ruling sparks wave of new legal issues**

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and AMY FORLITI Associated Press

The Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade* has set off a frenzy of activity in courthouses around the country, with judges asked to decide when or if state-imposed bans or other far-reaching restrictions on abortion can go into effect.

Some of the disputes involve bans that have been on the books, unenforced, for generations. Some involve "trigger laws" that were specifically designed to take effect if *Roe* were to fall. Some entail prohibitions on abortion that were held up while the ruling on *Roe's* fate was awaited and are now moving forward.

To complicate matters, some states have multiple abortion bans in play, and the measures conflict, overlap or are set to take effect at different times.

Here's a look at some of the key legal issues.

### **WHAT HAPPENED?**

The Supreme Court last week struck down the landmark 1973 ruling that legalized abortion nationwide, ruling that the decision to terminate a pregnancy is no longer protected under the U.S. Constitution. The high court left it up to the states to decide whether abortion is now legal within their boundaries.

In anticipation of a ruling like this, several Republican-controlled states passed strict abortion bans in recent years. Some of these "trigger laws" are now going into effect, while some are being blocked, at least temporarily. In some states, older laws that became null and void because of *Roe* are now resurfacing.

### **WHAT THIS MEANS ON THE GROUND**

The upshot is that many conservative states now have bans or deep restrictions on abortions, while the most liberal states are seeking to add more protections.

Ultimately, roughly half the states are expected to outlaw or severely limit abortion.

But the situation has been highly fluid in recent days, as courts weighed in on disputes between abortion foes and abortion rights advocates.

As of Wednesday afternoon, because of bans, tight restrictions or fear of prosecution at some clinics, abortions were available in only the rarest circumstances, if at all, in Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

Patients could get abortions in Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas only up to the point where cardiac activity in the fetus can be detected. That is normally around six weeks, before many women realize they are pregnant.

Near-total bans are also expected to go into effect in the coming weeks in Idaho, Mississippi, North Dakota and Tennessee as their trigger laws kick in.

In Louisiana and Utah, virtually complete bans are on hold because of court rulings.

### **COMPETING BANS**

In some states, multiple bans are on the books, creating confusion that has left clinics and patients scrambling.

Texas is one example of that. The state already bans most abortions after cardiac activity is detected. That law took effect in September and makes no exception in cases of rape or incest.

On Tuesday, however, a judge in Houston temporarily blocked enforcement of an even stricter state law that would ban virtually all abortions. That law has been on the books for decades but was nullified while *Roe* was in place.

But even with that older law on hold, Texas is still set to ban virtually all abortions before long: The state has a separate trigger law that will take effect in the coming months.

Amid the whirlwind of rulings, all of the state's clinics initially stopped providing abortions last week. But the four Texas clinics run by Whole Woman's Health began offering them again this week, though only in

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 64 of 82

the first six weeks or so of pregnancy.

In a statement, Planned Parenthood, which has not resumed abortions in Texas, said the organization's affiliates in states that are "extremely hostile" to abortion access "are being forced to make difficult operational decisions."

## THE LEGAL ARGUMENTS

Because the Supreme Court said abortion is not protected by the U.S. Constitution, abortion rights advocates are challenging many of these bans by arguing that they violate their state's constitution — say, the rights to privacy, liberty or equal protection.

Such an argument is the heart of a challenge in Florida. Opponents say a ban on abortion after 15 weeks, which is to take effect Friday, would violate the Florida Constitution's guarantee of the right to privacy.

Some of the legal challenges, however, are more about process: They will address whether the bans were enacted properly or conflict with other laws.

"What the litigation is designed to do is to preserve in as many places as we can, as much abortion access as we can, for as long as we can," said Jennifer Dalven, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Reproductive Freedom Project.

But she said that ultimately, the courts will not be the solution, and politicians will need to take action.

James Bopp Jr., a lawyer for the National Right to Life Committee, said lawmakers took steps to make sure the trigger laws withstand legal scrutiny, including by having provisions that say the state attorney general or another official will declare the conditions have been met for the law to take effect.

He said those measures will ensure due process has been followed in implementing the laws.

"It's hard to imagine any valid claims against those laws," he said.

When it comes to laws that have been on the books for generations, there has been some mixed activity. Top Democratic officials in Michigan and Wisconsin are asking state courts to rule that the older bans there can't take effect.

In Arizona, the governor said a new law that takes effect later this year — which outlaws abortion after 15 weeks — takes precedence over a total ban adopted before Arizona became a state more than a century ago. Still, providers stopped performing abortions there last week, fearing prosecution under the old law.

## LOOMING LEGAL BATTLES

Some states that are seeking to outlaw abortion may essentially try to reach across state lines to enforce their bans.

In Missouri, a measure that was proposed but failed to pass last year would have made it illegal to abort a fetus conceived in the state — even if the procedure is done in a state where abortion is legal.

Abortion rights advocates warn that similar proposals could be brought forth again there or elsewhere, along with other attempts to restrict travel out of state for abortions.

On the other side, Connecticut has a law going into effect Friday to protect its abortion providers from being sued in other states. Several governors have made or planned similar moves through laws or executive action.

The permissibility of such measures could become the next legal frontier in the abortion debate.

But even within states, prosecutions are being challenged. The city councils in New Orleans and Austin, Texas — both liberal cities in conservative states — are considering measures that would require law enforcement officials to make abortion investigations their lowest priority.

And whenever policies change on abortion, lawsuits follow.

"It will move to different frontiers," Dalven said. "The current wave of litigation will go forward. It will morph over time."

## Clinics scramble to divert patients as states ban abortion

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and LINDSEY TANNER Associated Press

They call her, desperate, scared and often broke. Some are rape and domestic violence victims. Others are new mothers, still breastfeeding infants. Another pregnancy so soon, they say, is something they just can't handle.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 65 of 82

"Heart wrenching," said Angela Huntington, an abortion navigator for Planned Parenthood in Missouri, who is helping callers reschedule canceled abortion appointments — sometimes hundreds of miles away from their homes — after the fall of *Roe v. Wade*.

The ruling has set off a travel scramble across the country, with a growing number of states mostly banning the procedure. Clinics operators are moving, doctors are counseling crying patients, donations are pouring into nonprofits and one group is dispatching vans to administer abortion pills. Some cities — including Kansas City and St. Louis — also are drafting plans to help with the travel logistics.

Huntington has been preparing for this moment for months. Even before the U.S. Supreme Court's decision last week to end constitutional protection for abortion, the procedure had become difficult to nearly impossible to obtain in states such as Texas, Oklahoma and Missouri.

"Basically," she said, they were "living in a post *Roe* era."

Now a fresh round of laws are taking effect. Staff at a clinic in Nashville were flooded with calls from patients trying to understand the new legal landscape, after a federal court on Tuesday allowed the state's ban on abortion as early as six weeks into pregnancy to take effect.

In Arkansas, some patients already were headed to a Planned Parenthood clinic in Little Rock to obtain medication-induced abortions when the decision came down last week. Upon arriving, they were sent home.

"I cannot believe this is happening today," they told Huntington. Or alternatively, they muttered, their voices oozing with sarcasm: "Of course it's happening today."

Huntington and others try to help move their appointments to clinics in Kansas, Illinois and even Colorado. If a patient is broke but has access to a reliable car, Huntington can offer gas cards. She works with nonprofits to arrange commercial flights and lodging. In recent weeks, she said, a group called Elevated Access has enlisted volunteer light aircraft pilots to transport patients to abortion appointments, sometimes departing from small rural airstrips.

"It's been hell," said Dr. Jeanne Corwin, a gynecologist who works at a clinic in Dayton, Ohio, where most patients are being turned away after new state rules took effect banning abortions when a heartbeat can be detected. Many are being sent over the border to Indiana and the clinic's sister site in Indianapolis, where Corwin also works.

She said they are desperate, including a patient in her 30s, recently diagnosed with advanced melanoma and in her first trimester.

"She has to end her pregnancy" so she can begin chemotherapy, and is going to Indiana, Corwin said, adding that patients who are beyond Indiana's 14-week cutoff are being sent to Illinois or Michigan.

Time also may be short for women diverted to Indiana because lawmakers there are expected to reconsider the state's abortion laws at a special session starting July 6.

The situation is particularly difficult for immigrants, some of whom lack the documentation to take a commercial flight, said Lupe Rodríguez, executive director of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice.

"They're simply not able to go anywhere to get this care," she said, adding that the ruling has also created widespread confusion, with pregnant women fearful they could face criminal prosecution. "There's a lot of misinformation."

In Missouri, where abortions were already severely restricted, a new ban took effect Friday that only allows the procedure in "cases of medical emergency." Kansas City leaders are weighing a \$300 stipend to help employees travel for an abortion. And across the state, in St. Louis, elected officials are considering another measure that would use \$1 million in federal coronavirus relief funds to pay for transportation, lodging and other logistical support for abortion seekers.

"It's kind of an American nightmare that we're scrambling to find health care like this," said St. Louis Alderwoman Annie Rice, adding that she anticipated the measure would pass by mid-July. If that happens, abortion opponents have vowed to ask the state's attorney general to sue.

Just the Pill, a nonprofit health organization that helps patients obtain abortion pills, is hitting the road. It has purchased two vans — one medication van and another where surgical abortions will be done — with plans to begin operating those vans by mid- to late-July in Colorado. The idea is to be close to the

borders of states that have restricted or outlawed abortion.

Mississippi's only abortion clinic, which is nicknamed the Pink House because of its bright pink paint job, is facing closure if it loses its lawsuit that seeks to block a state law that makes most abortions illegal as of July 7.

"We're not giving up," said the clinic's owner, Diane Derzis, who plans to open a new abortion clinic called the Pink House West early next month in Las Cruces, New Mexico. "Women have always had abortions, no matter what it took."

Following the ruling, donations have been pouring in to abortion funds like South Dakota Access for Every Woman. Normally the group would get seven to 10 donations per month. Now they are getting 10 to 20 a day, said Evelyn Griesse, a co-founder of the group. The money goes straight to the abortion providers.

"If the woman says she's using some of her own personal money to pay for the abortion, we say use that money to do your travel expenses," Griesse said.

Some states are rolling out the welcome mat. Connecticut's governor has a new campaign ad that touts the state's laws protecting abortion rights for women. They include a soon-to-take-effect law that protects medical providers and patients from out-of-state legal actions.

"Women deserve the right to make their own decisions about their health care," Gov. Ned Lamont, a Democrat running for reelection in November, said in the 30-second commercial released over the weekend.

In Pennsylvania, where state law still allows abortions in the first 24 weeks of pregnancy, call volume has increased by tenfold and the number of patients has tripled at Allegheny Reproductive Health Center in Pittsburgh.

"Patients are desperate and scared," said the clinic's CEO, Dr. Sheila Ramgopal, adding that it is plunging money into travel costs to help out-of-state patients — most of whom come from Ohio — afford the trip.

Pennsylvania abortion seekers also could be forced to travel, said Susan Frietsche, a staff attorney for the Women's Law Project, which represents abortion clinics in the state.

"Not because the law here has changed, but you won't be able to find an appointment soon," she said. "This is such a time-sensitive service."

## Giuliani's former Ukraine fixer gets 20 months in prison

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Lev Parnas, an associate of Rudy Giuliani who was a figure in former President Donald Trump's first impeachment investigation, was sentenced Wednesday to a year and eight months in prison for fraud and campaign finance crimes by a judge who said fraud had become "a way of life" for Parnas.

Parnas, 50, had sought leniency on grounds that he'd cooperated with the Congressional probe of Trump and his efforts to get Ukrainian leaders to investigate President Joe Biden's son.

U.S. District Judge J. Paul Oetken didn't give Parnas credit for that assistance, which came only after the Soviet-born businessman was facing criminal charges. But the judge still imposed a sentence lighter than the six years sought by prosecutors.

The judge also ordered Parnas to pay \$2.3 million in restitution.

The various schemes Parnas deployed to get money that prosecutors claim say fueled a lavish lifestyle led Oetken to say that for Parnas, fraud "was essentially a way of life, a way of doing business."

Addressing the court before the sentence was announced, Parnas sobbed and apologized to those who had lost money investing in his business ventures.

"A lot that you heard is true, your honor. I have not been a good person my whole life. I've made mistakes. And I admit it," Parnas said. "I want to apologize to all the victims that I hurt. These are all people who are my friends, all people who trusted me, and I lied to them to further my personal agenda."

The criminal case against Parnas was not directly related to his work acting as a fixer for Giuliani as the former New York City mayor lobbied Ukrainian officials to launch an investigation of Biden's son, Hunter.

Instead, it zeroed in on donations Parnas had illegally made to a number of U.S. politicians using the riches of a wealthy Russian to jump-start a legal recreational-marijuana business.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 67 of 82

In March, Parnas also pleaded guilty to a wire fraud conspiracy, admitting that he and a partner had given investors false information about a Florida-based business, Fraud Guarantee, that promised it could protect people against fraud.

That new company hired Giuliani as a consultant at a time when some Ukrainian figures were trying to curry favor with the Trump administration, agreeing to pay him \$500,000.

Charles Gucciardo, a Long Island attorney who put up the cash to pay Giuliani, told the judge during the sentencing hearing that he hoped the former Manhattan federal prosecutor would return the money, since Fraud Guarantee turned out to be a fraud.

"My bet is he's going to give me that money back," he said, adding that he didn't blame Giuliani, who has not been charged with any crimes in connection with the scheme.

Outside of court, Parnas said that he didn't believe Giuliani would return the money.

"I don't think he'll pay him back because, as you can see, he's gone down the path of no return. He's just an evil man, unfortunately, and somebody that I'm very, very sad that I had to meet," he said.

Giuliani, who was working at the time as a personal lawyer for Trump, has said he knew nothing about the crimes of Parnas and others.

Federal prosecutors are investigating whether Giuliani's interactions with Ukrainian figures violated a federal law that governs lobbying on behalf of foreign countries or entities.

Parnas and a business associate, Igor Fruman, attracted attention from reporters after arranging big donations to Republican politicians, including a \$325,000 donation to a political action committee supporting Trump.

An October conviction also supported a finding that he made illegal donations in 2018 to promote a new energy company.

During Parnas' sentencing hearing, the judge also heard from others who had lost money with him in failed business deals.

Dianne Pues said the businessman "destroyed my life" when he failed to repay money she and her husband had loaned him to produce a movie called "Anatomy of an Assassin."

Parnas promised he would become a new person, sometimes turning around in court to look for victims as he expressed contrition.

"I'd like to apologize to Mr. Gucciardo. Even though I never spent a dollar of his money. I lied to him and used our friendship. Charles, I am sorry," he said.

## Crews battle Maryland summer camp fire, no injuries reported

THURMONT, Md. (AP) — Crews battled a fire at an overnight summer camp in western Maryland on Wednesday morning, but no injuries were reported, officials said.

Firefighters were initially dispatched about 7:30 a.m. for a report of a fire in a building at Camp Airy for Boys in Thurmont, Frederick County Division of Fire & Rescue Services spokesperson Sarah Campbell said.

When units arrived on scene, no one was in the building, but they found smoke showing through the roof and a second alarm was initiated, Campbell said. It took about 100 firefighters from Maryland and Pennsylvania three hours to bring the fire under control, but crews were still extinguishing hot spots in the building in the afternoon, she said.

Without fire hydrants near the camp, firefighters drew water from a large pond and two pools to battle the flames, Deputy Chief Kenny Poole said at a news conference.

Firefighters contained the blaze to the dining hall and no other buildings were involved, Campbell said. Investigators won't be able to enter the building to determine the origin and cause of the blaze until the fire is out completely, she said.

In a Facebook post, the camp said it was too soon to know the extent of the damage to the dining hall, but everyone is safe and accounted for. The dining hall is a hub of activity, so they are relocating many activities, the camp said. The Jewish overnight camp for boys and nearby Camp Louise for girls in Cascade were founded in the 1920s, according to their website.

Breakfast prep had begun when the smoke was noticed and people got out quickly, Marty Rochlin, director of the camp said at a news conference. They are planning to carry on camp as regularly as possible, he said.

"It's a building most of us grew up in, had all our meals in as campers and as staff," Rochlin said. "Thankfully, it's just a building. Camp can continue because camp is the people."

## Israeli PM Bennett won't run in upcoming election

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who led a broad but fragile coalition government that came unraveled barely a year after taking office, announced Wednesday that he will not run in upcoming elections.

His government announced last week that it would dissolve the Knesset ahead of elections expected this fall, but the voting required for dissolution has been bogged down by disputes with the opposition.

"I strived as prime minister to care for all citizens, regardless of who they voted for," he said in a brief prime-time address. "We proved this year that people with all different opinions can work together."

Bennett's office said he will continue to serve as alternate prime minister in a caretaker government to be led by Yair Lapid, the architect of the coalition who is currently foreign minister. Elections are expected in October or November.

Bennett embodies many of the contradictions that animate his small country. He's a religious Jew who made millions in the mostly secular hi-tech sector; a champion of the settlement movement who lives in a Tel Aviv suburb, and a former ally of Benjamin Netanyahu who partnered with centrist and left-wing parties to end his 12-year rule.

He was once the leader of the main settler council for the occupied West Bank, and remained opposed to Palestinian statehood, even after becoming prime minister at the head of a coalition that included left-wing parties. His government took steps to improve economic conditions in the West Bank and Gaza but ruled out any return to the long-stalled peace process.

Bennett sought to unite the country after a prolonged period of political gridlock that brought four elections in less than two years, but in the end his own small party largely crumbled, as members rebelled against his coalition.

Netanyahu whipped up their right-wing base against Bennett, accusing him of betraying them by forging an alliance with left-wing parties and even an Arab faction. Bennett's speeches in the Knesset were regularly met with shouting and heckling from Netanyahu allies. His family received death threats.

Many expected Bennett to step away from politics once the government fell.

In his address, he said Yamina would be led by Ayelet Shaked, a close ally who is the interior minister in the outgoing government.

It's unclear whether the disarray in Yamina will help or hurt their natural allies on the right. If the party runs but fails to clear the electoral threshold, it could deprive Netanyahu and his allies of a potentially crucial partner. Or Shaked could emerge as a kingmaker, just as Bennett did.

## Justices limit 2020 ruling on tribal lands in Oklahoma

By MARK SHERMAN and KEN MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court ruled on Wednesday that Oklahoma can prosecute non-Native Americans for crimes committed on tribal land when the victim is Native American.

The 5-4 decision cut back on the high court's ruling from 2020 that said a large chunk of eastern Oklahoma remains an American Indian reservation. The first decision left the state unable to prosecute Native Americans accused of crimes on tribal lands that include most of Tulsa, the state's second-largest city with a population of about 413,000.

A state court later ruled that the Supreme Court decision also stripped the state of its ability to prosecute

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 69 of 82

anyone for crimes committed on tribal land if either the victim or perpetrator is Native American.

That would have left the federal government with sole authority to prosecute such cases, and federal officials had acknowledged that they lack the resources to prosecute all the crimes that have fallen to them.

But the high court's new ruling said the state also can step in when only the victims are tribal members.

"The State's interest in protecting crime victims includes both Indian and non-Indian victims," Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote for the court.

After the 2020 decision, about 43% of Oklahoma is now considered Indian Country, and the issue of the state's ability to prosecute those crimes "has suddenly assumed immense importance," Kavanaugh wrote.

In a dissent joined by the court's three liberal members, Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote that the decision "allows Oklahoma to intrude on a feature of tribal sovereignty recognized since the founding."

The case highlighted the already strained relationship between Native tribes in Oklahoma and Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt, who has fought to return legal jurisdiction over tribal lands to the state.

Stitt himself is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, which is the country's largest Native American tribe by population with about 400,000 citizens, about 261,000 of whom live in Oklahoma.

Native Americans make up just under 10% of Oklahoma's nearly 4 million people, according to the Census Bureau.

"One can only hope the political branches and future courts will do their duty to honor this Nation's promises even as we have failed today to do our own," Gorsuch wrote.

Stitt said he was "heartened" by the Supreme Court's ruling that he said "upheld that Indian Country is part of a state, not separate from it." Mayor G.T. Bynum of Tulsa, which backed the state in the case, said the ruling helps clarify Tulsa's legal jurisdiction. He pledged to work with the state and the tribal nations "who are our partners in building a safe city."

To Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr., the court "ruled against legal precedent and the basic principles of congressional authority and Indian law." He said the court "failed in its duty to honor this nation's promises, defied Congress's statutes and accepted the lawless disregard of the Cherokee's sovereignty," quoting in part from Gorsuch's dissent.

The case stemmed from a state court decision to throw out the conviction against Victor Castro-Huerta, who is not Native American. Castro-Huerta was charged by Oklahoma prosecutors with malnourishment of his disabled 5-year-old stepdaughter, a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Castro-Huerta has since pleaded guilty to a federal child neglect charge in exchange for a seven-year prison term, though he has not been formally sentenced yet.

The Supreme Court case involved the Muscogee reservation, but later rulings upheld the historic reservations of other Native American tribes in Oklahoma, including the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Quapaw and Seminole nations.

The ruling is "an alarming step backward for justice on our reservation," the Muscogee Nation said in a statement. "Tribal governments in collaboration with the federal government are best suited to protect our people and administer justice on our reservations."

The U.S. attorneys in Oklahoma — Christopher Wilson, Clinton Johnson and Robert Troester — pledged in a joint statement to continue to work with tribal, state and local prosecutors.

Stitt has previously clashed with tribal leaders over his desire to renegotiate tribal gambling compacts that he claimed were expiring. Federal and state courts ruled against Stitt in lawsuits over the gambling question.

Last year, Stitt decided to not renew hunting and fishing license compacts with the Cherokee and Choctaw nations as part of a dispute with the tribes.

## **NATO deems Russia its 'most significant and direct threat'**

By JILL LAWLESS, JOSEPH WILSON and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — NATO declared Russia the "most significant and direct threat" to its members' peace and security on Wednesday and vowed to strengthen support for Ukraine, even as that country's leader

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 70 of 82

chided the alliance for not doing more to help it defeat Moscow.

The military organization's condemnation was not wholly surprising: Its chief earlier said Russia's war in Ukraine had created Europe's biggest security crisis since World War II. But it was a sobering about-face for an alliance that a decade ago called Moscow a strategic partner.

NATO also issued a warning about China, accusing it of bullying its neighbors and forming a "strategic partnership" with Moscow that poses a challenge to the West.

Set up some 70 years ago to counter the Soviet Union, NATO held its summit in Madrid in a world transformed by Russia's invasion of its neighbor. The war drove the alliance to pour troops and weapons into eastern Europe on a scale unseen in decades and pushed Sweden and Finland to seek the safety of NATO membership.

The two formerly nonaligned nations were formally invited to join on Wednesday, as Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the war had brought "the biggest overhaul of our collective defense since the end of the Cold War."

But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy lamented that NATO's open-door policy to new members did not appear to apply to his country.

"The open-door policy of NATO shouldn't resemble the old turnstiles on Kyiv's subway, which stay open but close when you approach them until you pay," Zelenskyy said by video link. "Hasn't Ukraine paid enough?"

He also asked for more modern artillery systems and other weapons and warned the leaders they either had to provide Kyiv with the help it needed or "face a delayed war between Russia and yourself."

"The question is, who's next? Moldova? Or the Baltics? Or Poland? The answer is: all of them," he said.

Zelenskyy has acknowledged that NATO membership is a distant prospect. Under NATO treaties, an attack on any of the 30 members would trigger a military response by the entire alliance, so it is trying to strike a delicate balance, letting its nations arm Ukraine without sparking a direct confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia.

At the same time NATO has moved quickly to ensure that its members are protected, dramatically scaling up military force along its eastern flank, where countries from Romania to the Baltic states worry about Russia's future plans.

It plans to increase almost eightfold the size of the alliance's rapid reaction force, from 40,000 to 300,000 troops, by next year. The troops will be based in their home nations but dedicated to specific countries in the east, where the alliance plans to build up stocks of equipment and ammunition.

U.S. President Joe Biden, whose country provides the bulk of NATO's military power, vowed the summit would send "an unmistakable message ... that NATO is strong and united."

"We're stepping up. We're proving that NATO is more needed now than it ever has been," said Biden. He announced a hefty boost in America's military presence in Europe, including a permanent U.S. base in Poland, two more Navy destroyers based in Rota, Spain, and two more F35 squadrons to the U.K.

Still, strains among NATO allies have also emerged as the cost of energy and other essential goods has skyrocketed, partly because of the the war and tough Western sanctions on Russia. There also are tensions over how the war will end and what, if any, concessions Ukraine should make.

Money remains a sensitive issue — just nine of NATO's 30 members currently meet the organization's target of spending 2% of gross domestic product on defense.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, whose country does hit the target, urged NATO allies "to dig deep to restore deterrence and ensure defense in the decade ahead."

At the summit, the leaders published NATO's new Strategic Concept, its once-a-decade set of priorities and goals.

The last such document, in 2010, called Russia a "strategic partner." At the time, the idea of Russia waging a land war on NATO's borders would have sounded far-fetched.

Now, NATO accused Russia of using "coercion, subversion, aggression and annexation" to extend its reach.

The document also set out NATO's approach on issues from cybersecurity to climate change — and the growing economic and military reach of China. For the first time, the leaders of Japan, Australia, South

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 71 of 82

Korea and New Zealand attended the summit as guests, a reflection of the growing importance of Asia and the Pacific region and NATO's desire to counterbalance China.

"China is not our adversary, but we must be clear-eyed about the serious challenges it represents," Stoltenberg said.

"We see a deepening strategic partnership between Moscow and Beijing, and China's growing assertiveness and its coercive policies have consequences for the security of our allies and our partners," he added.

The alliance said, however, that it remained "open to constructive engagement" with Beijing.

NATO also stressed the need to address political instability in Africa's Sahel region and the Middle East — aggravated by "climate change, fragile institutions, health emergencies and food insecurity" — that is driving large numbers of migrants toward Europe. Host Spain and other European countries pushed for this new focus.

The summit, which ends Thursday, opened with one problem solved, after Turkey agreed Tuesday to lift its opposition to Sweden and Finland joining NATO.

NATO operates by consensus, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had threatened to block the Nordic pair, insisting they change their stance on Kurdish rebel groups that Turkey considers terrorists.

After talks with leaders of the three countries, Stoltenberg said the impasse had been cleared.

The two countries' accession has to be ratified by all nations, but Stoltenberg said he was "absolutely confident" Finland and Sweden would become members quickly.

Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto said his country was eager to get out of the "gray zone" of having applied for membership but not yet fully covered by NATO's collective defense guarantee.

"Our aim is that that period should be as short as possible," he said.

## Enviros train drone pilots to find and pursue pollution

By MICHAEL PHILLIS and JULIO CORTEZ Associated Press

POOLESVILLE, Md. (AP) — When environmentalist Brent Walls saw a milky-white substance in a stream flowing through a rural stretch of central Pennsylvania, he suspected the nearby rock mine was violating the law.

Recent rains had filled the ponds at the mine that allow sediment to settle out of the water, but Walls couldn't easily take a look because they were surrounded by private property. To quickly investigate and avoid trespassing, Walls captured images of the area with his drone.

"That's when I found the illicit discharge," he said. The photo of cloudy liquid flowing into the creek provided evidence Walls used to accuse Specialty Granules LLC of violating the Clean Water Act.

Fifty years after that landmark legislation was signed into law, drones are giving environmentalists a new tool to capture wrongdoing where it is hard to see or expensive to find, though their use to investigate polluters is still pretty rare, Walls said.

He would like them used more often. With the help of a grant, he trains drone pilots for the Waterkeeper Alliance, a global network of clean water groups. The nonprofit wants activists from around the country to know how to use the technology for storytelling and to collect evidence that companies are polluting rivers and streams.

The Clean Water Act allows individuals — not just federal officials — to enforce the law. But citizens who want to use drones to collect evidence must have a federally-issued pilot's certificate and navigate layers of federal, state and local rules.

Walls is the Upper Potomac Riverkeeper and part of a riverkeeper network that has used drones in a handful of other instances to collect evidence of pollution and threaten lawsuits if they aren't satisfied with how companies respond to allegations. Drones were used, for example, to investigate a West Virginia coal operation that allegedly discharged coal residue into a nearby river. Walls said drone footage helped push the company to clean up the site.

On a pleasant, lightly windy day in June, Walls held an in-person training near the fourth hole of Bretton Woods Golf Course just off the Potomac River in Maryland.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 72 of 82

Waccamaw Riverkeeper Cara Schildtknecht from the Carolinas coast said it was awesome to be able to finally pilot the drone. "We've been training to do this for months," she said at the in-person training with three other clean water advocates.

Schildtknecht had been through Walls' online courses and passed the test for her pilot's certificate. After she arrived, she peeled the stickers off her drone. It was her first time flying one.

Walls helped the group ensure their controllers connected properly with their drones before they each had a chance to pilot a practice flight for about 10 minutes.

Schildtknecht said a drone will help her see areas in her watershed that are hard to reach by boat, record floods and find polluters. The view from above she said "is a gamechanger," one that previously required paying a pilot for a manned flight.

"We have certain areas that we know could be of concern that we want to check out," she said.

Technological advances have helped grow the drone market. Miriam McNabb, editor-in-chief of the trade publication Dronelife, said drones are now easier to fly, capture better images and can be programmed to automatically conduct surveys and track changes over time.

While drone prices can vary widely, the grant-purchased drones for the newly-trained activists cost around \$2,000, Walls said.

After Walls presented Specialty Granules with his allegations in 2019, the company stopped discharges through the pipe the drone had identified and installed a filtration system that improved water quality.

Matthew McClure, vice president of operations at Specialty Granules, said in a statement that the drone images helped identify the discharge of non-toxic stormwater and that the company uses drones in its own operations. But McClure didn't welcome the surprise inspection.

"Unscheduled drone overflights can present a distraction and potential accidents to employees who operate heavy machinery," McClure said.

The ubiquity of drones that shoot video has also triggered privacy concerns. Cam Ward, a former Alabama state senator who is now director of the Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles, sponsored a bill in 2020 to curtail drone use over "critical infrastructure," a term that included mines, refineries, pipelines and natural gas plants.

"There has to be some expectation of privacy," he said.

A local environmental group that used a drone in Alabama to record discharges from an abandoned mine site argued the 2020 bill would prevent activists from keeping an eye on misbehaving companies.

Ward said he was concerned about environmentalists sabotaging important facilities. To keep sites safe, and to protect the privacy of business owners, he said there should be limits on drone use, although finding the right balance is "incredibly complex." His bill did not pass.

Scientists and industry already widely deploy drones to monitor whales, count trees and inspect cell towers. But even some environmental groups are skeptical of their widespread use to investigate water pollution. Not only do pilots need to be federally-certified, but rules for drone use differ by location – the Federal Aviation Administration isn't the only agency setting the rules.

"It is a patchwork of uneven, inconsistent, local, state and federal regulations across our region," said DJ Gerken, program director at the Southern Environmental Law Center that works with partners who use drones. Navigating that patchwork of rules matters for ensuring that evidence is admissible in court.

Walls said his training is meant to help people navigate the rules and pass the FAA test. He teaches how to identify restricted airspace, avoid structures and operate safely. To protect privacy, for example, pilots are told to make flight plans that avoid residential properties.

Anastasia Telesetsky, an environmental law professor at California Polytechnic State University, called drones a convenient tool for finding pollution that has been out of sight.

"There's a lot of groups that know there is a problem but have been limited in the tools they can use to compel regulators to do their jobs," she said.

Martin Lively is the Grand Riverkeeper in northeastern Oklahoma. A former mining site that's bad enough to make the federal Superfund list is in his area.



"It is extremely polluted with lead, zinc, arsenic, cadmium, manganese," he said. "And all of that flows into my watershed."

Because of the pollution, the river is already regularly tested. But a drone goes a step further, helping determine, for example, whether cleaned up properties might be recontaminated when it floods.

He says a drone is a storytelling tool that can capture powerful images.

"That is a tool never to be underestimated in litigation," he said.

## **Powell: 'No guarantee' Fed can tame inflation, spare jobs**

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said there's "no guarantee" the central bank can tame runaway inflation without hurting the job market.

Speaking Wednesday at a European Central Bank forum in Sintra, Portugal, Powell repeated his hope that the Fed can achieve a so-called soft landing — raising interest rates just enough to slow the economy and rein in surging consumer prices without causing a recession and sharply raising the unemployment rate.

"We believe we can do that. That is our aim," he said. But the Russian invasion of Ukraine, he said, had made the job more difficult by disrupting commerce and driving up the price of food, energy and chemicals.

"It's gotten harder," Powell said. "The pathways have gotten narrower."

ECB President Christine Lagarde echoed the "major impact" of energy shocks, which are rippling worldwide but felt acutely in Europe because of its reliance on Russian oil and natural gas. She also pointed to Europe's proximity to the war in Ukraine and said how "energy was vastly underestimated" in the bank's assessment of inflation.

The ECB and the Fed were slow to recognize the inflation threat that emerged just over a year ago. They believed that rising prices were the temporary result of supply chain snags as the economy bounced back with unexpected speed from 2020's brief but devastating coronavirus recession.

But inflation kept accelerating. The Fed raised its short-term benchmark rate in March and May and appeared to be ready for another half-percentage-point increase at its meeting June 14-15.

Then, the Labor Department reported that consumer prices had shot up 8.6% in May from a year earlier — biggest jump since 1981. The Fed responded by pushing the rate up by three-quarters of a percentage point — biggest hike since 1994.

Europe's central bank is behind the Fed but said it will raise rates in July for the first time in 11 years and again in September to target inflation running at a record 8.1% in the 19 countries using the euro. In a speech Tuesday opening the ECB forum, Lagarde said the bank will go gradually with hikes but keep its options open to "stamp out" inflation if it surges faster than expected.

Increasingly, economists worry that higher rates could push the economy into a recession.

Powell, however, pointed to a strong labor market — unemployment is near a half century low at 3.6% — and noted that most households and businesses had healthy savings.

"Overall," he said, "the U.S. economy is well-positioned to withstand tighter monetary policy."

Lagarde noted similar was true of Europe.

## **Hard-line conservative Reps. Boebert, Miller win primaries**

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two of Congress' staunchest conservatives repelled more centrist alternatives to lock up Republican nominations on Tuesday, even as the party's voters chose to turn out a six-term incumbent in Mississippi.

Illinois Republican Rep. Mary Miller won her primary over fellow incumbent Rep. Rodney Davis just days after she called the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade a "historic victory for white life" during a weekend rally with former President Donald Trump. Her spokesperson said she misspoke.

Another Trump ally, Colorado Rep. Lauren Boebert, one of Congress' most polarizing members, easily

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 74 of 82

beat back a challenge from a more mainstream Republican.

Mississippi Republican Rep. Steven Palazzo lost in a rare runoff to Sheriff Mike Ezell. But his Republican House colleague, Michael Guest, won a runoff race in the state, despite defying Trump and voting to create an independent commission to investigate last year's insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

In Illinois, Democratic Rep. Sean Casten beat progressive Rep. Marie Newman for a seat in suburban Chicago after a declining population cost the state a House seat.

In all, six states held congressional primary elections, primary runoffs or special elections. In addition to testing Trump's national influence, they provided hints of how voters are reacting to the high court's decision on abortion.

Some of the top elections:

## BOEBERT'S STAYING POWER

Boebert, a first-term firebrand, saw her GOP-leaning 3rd Congressional District in western Colorado become even more Republican after redistricting. She had little trouble with moderate state Rep. Don Coram, a rancher and hemp farmer, who slammed what he calls Boebert's extremism.

Boebert trumpeted her gun-toting Second Amendment credentials and opposition to COVID-19 restrictions that briefly shuttered her "Shooters" restaurant.

Long known for controversial statements, Boebert said Sunday, "I'm tired of this separation of church and state junk that's not in the Constitution."

The phrase doesn't expressly appear in the Constitution, though the First Amendment says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Thomas Jefferson was president when he wrote in an 1802 letter that such phrasing should amount to a "wall of separation" between church and state.

Boebert referred to Jefferson's writing as a "stinking letter."

In Colorado's deeply conservative El Paso County, meanwhile, eight-term Republican Rep. Doug Lamborn staved off a challenge from the right from state Rep. Dave Williams for his 5th Congressional District seat. Williams failed to get the phrase "Let's Go Brandon," code for an obscenity against President Joe Biden, added to his name on the ballot.

Lamborn faces an ongoing House ethics investigation over whether he misused official resources for personal purposes. He is an ardent opponent of abortion and backs the significant U.S. military presence in Colorado Springs.

## TWO INCUMBENTS LOSE IN ILLINOIS

Miller bested Davis for the GOP nomination in a sprawling, heavily red district in central Illinois that was redrawn after the state's shrinking population cost it a congressional seat.

Miller, first elected in 2020, is no stranger to controversy. She quoted Adolf Hitler shortly after winning her seat, saying during a rally that "Hitler was right on one thing. He said, 'Whoever has the youth has the future.'" She later apologized after Democrats in Illinois called for her resignation. She also voted against certifying Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election and is a member of the far-right House Freedom Caucus.

On Saturday night, she made the "white life" comment as Trump stood behind her at a rally in Mendon, drawing cheers from the crowd. Miller has since said she's not racist, and her spokesperson said she had intended to say the ruling was a victory for the "right to life."

Davis was a co-chair of Trump's 2020 Illinois campaign but voted to certify the 2020 presidential election results. He had the backing of almost all of the district's 35 county party chairs and vowed to "reimplement" Trump policies, including walling off the U.S.-Mexico border.

In the state's 6th Congressional District, Casten defeated his fellow Democratic colleague Newman, who was first elected to the House in 2020. She faces an ongoing House Ethics Committee investigation over whether she promised federal employment to a political opponent.

Casten is a two-term congressman who flipped a suburban seat in 2018 that Republicans had held for decades.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 75 of 82

## JESSE JACKSON'S SON WINS DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY

Jonathan Jackson, the son of civil rights leader the Rev. Jesse Jackson, emerged from a crowded field vying to replace 15-term Democratic Rep. Bobby Rush, the only lawmaker who has ever beaten Barack Obama in a race. Obama challenged Rush in a 2000 U.S. House primary and lost.

The heavily Democratic 1st Congressional District that Jackson will now run in November to represent was redrawn after the 2020 census and now stretches from Chicago's South Side to Kankakee.

In Illinois' open 17th Congressional District, Esther Joy King won the GOP nomination, while Eric Sorensen, a former meteorologist, won the Democratic nomination. They are vying to replace five-term Democratic Rep. Cheri Bustos, who decided against seeking reelection in the largely rural swath of northwestern Illinois.

In Illinois' heavily Democratic 7th District, longtime Democratic Rep. Danny Davis of Chicago beat progressive and gun violence prevention activist Kina Collins on Tuesday — though the margin was far narrower than his commanding primary win over her in 2020.

## MISSISSIPPI RUNOFFS: ONE INCUMBENT WINS, ONE LOSSES

One of two Mississippi congressmen facing a rare primary runoff election lost his seat.

Palazzo blamed the coronavirus pandemic and the Biden administration for his defeat to Ezell, the sheriff of a coastal county. But the congressman had also been accused in a 2021 congressional ethics report of abusing his office by mispending campaign funds.

He said that Mississippi voters "hired me to fight the woke, liberal agenda and to push back against government overreach, and I've done that for 12 years."

But Palazzo also added: "With COVID and because of what the Biden administration is doing to this country, they took their anger out on me."

Ezell said he won because of connections he forged during more than 40 years in law enforcement. "When people call and need something, I've been accessible to them."

Meanwhile, Guest won a GOP runoff against former Navy fighter pilot Michael Cassidy. Guest will face Democrat Shuwaski Young in November.

## NEBRASKA SPECIAL ELECTION OVERLAPS WITH SENTENCING

Former Republican Rep. Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska was sentenced to probation on Tuesday for lying to federal agents just as voters picked a replacement for the rest of his term.

State Republican Rep. Mike Flood defeated Democrat Patty Pansing Brooks in a special election to succeed Fortenberry, who served nine terms in the Republican-heavy district that includes Lincoln and dozens of smaller, rural communities. They'll compete again in November to determine who serves a new term, beginning in January.

Fortenberry resigned in March after being convicted of intentionally misleading FBI agents about his knowledge of an illegal, \$30,000 campaign contribution from a Nigerian billionaire at a 2016 fundraiser in Los Angeles.

A judge sentenced him to two years of probation, a \$25,000 fine and community service.

## A viral reprise: When COVID-19 strikes again and again

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

For New York musician Erica Mancini, COVID-19 made repeat performances.

March 2020. Last December. And again this May.

"I'm bummed to know that I might forever just get infected," said the 31-year-old singer, who is vaccinated and boosted. "I don't want to be getting sick every month or every two months."

But medical experts warn that repeat infections are getting more likely as the pandemic drags on and the virus evolves — and some people are bound to get hit more than twice. Emerging research suggests that could put them at higher risk for health problems.

There's no comprehensive data on people getting COVID-19 more than twice, although some states collect information on reinfections in general. New York, for example, reports around 277,000 reinfections out of 5.8 million total infections during the pandemic. Experts say actual numbers are much higher because

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 76 of 82

so many home COVID-19 tests go unreported.

Several public figures have recently been reinfected. U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said they got COVID-19 for the second time, and U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi said he tested positive a third time. All reported being fully vaccinated, and Trudeau and Becerra said they'd gotten booster shots.

"Until recently, it was almost unheard of, but now it's becoming more commonplace" to have COVID-19 two, three or even four times, said Dr. Eric Topol, head of Scripps Research Translational Institute. "If we don't come up with better defenses, we'll see much more of this."

Why? Immunity from past infections and vaccination wanes over time, experts say, leaving people vulnerable.

Also, the virus has evolved to be more contagious. The risk of reinfection has been about seven times higher with omicron variants compared with when delta was most common, research out of the United Kingdom shows. Scientists believe the omicron mutants now causing the vast majority of U.S. cases are particularly adept at getting around immunity from vaccination or past infection, especially infection during the original omicron wave. U.S. health officials are mulling whether to modify boosters to better match recent changes in the coronavirus.

The first time Mancini got COVID-19, she and her fiancé spiked fevers and were sick for two weeks. She couldn't get tested at the time but had an antibody test a couple months later that showed she had been infected.

"It was really scary because it was so new and we just knew that people were dying from it," said Mancini. "We were really sick. I hadn't been sick like that in a long time."

She got vaccinated with Pfizer in the spring of 2021 and thought she was protected from another infection, especially since she was sick before. But though such "hybrid immunity" can provide strong protection, it doesn't guarantee someone won't get COVID-19 again.

Mancini's second bout, which happened during the huge omicron wave, started with a sore throat. She tested negative at first, but still felt sick driving to a gig four hours away. So she ducked into a Walgreens and did a rapid test in her car. It was positive, she said, "so I just turned the car around and drove back to Manhattan."

This bout proved milder, with "the worst sore throat of my life," a stuffy nose, sneezing and coughing.

The most recent illness was milder still, causing sinus pressure, brain fog, a woozy feeling and fatigue. That one, positive on a home test and confirmed with a PCR test, hit despite her Moderna booster shot.

Mancini doesn't have any known health conditions that could put her at risk for COVID-19. She takes precautions like masking in the grocery store and on the subway. But she usually doesn't wear a mask on stage.

"I'm a singer, and I'm in these crowded bars and I'm in these little clubs, some of which don't have a lot of ventilation, and I'm just around a lot of people," said Mancini, who also plays accordion and percussion. "That's the price that I've paid for doing a lot throughout these past few years. It's how I make my living."

Scientists don't know exactly why some people get reinfected and others don't, but believe several things may be at play: health and biology, exposure to particular variants, how much virus is spreading in a community, vaccination status and behavior. British researchers found people were more likely to be reinfected if they were unvaccinated, younger or had a mild infection the first time.

Scientists also aren't sure how soon someone can get infected after a previous bout. And there's no guarantee each infection will be milder than the last.

"I've seen it go both ways," said Dr. Wesley Long, a pathologist at Houston Methodist. In general, though, breakthrough infections that happen after vaccination tend to be milder, he said.

Doctors said getting vaccinated and boosted is the best protection against severe COVID-19 and death, and there's some evidence it also lessens the odds of reinfection.

At this point, there haven't been enough documented cases of multiple reinfections "to really know what the long-term consequences are," said Dr. Peter Hotez, dean of Baylor University's tropical medicine school.

But a large, new study using data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which hasn't yet been

reviewed by scientific peers, provides some insight, finding that reinfection increases the risk for serious outcomes and health problems such as lung issues, heart disorders and diabetes compared with a first infection. The risks were most pronounced when someone was ill with COVID-19, but persisted past the acute illness as well.

After Mancini's last bout, she dealt with dizziness, headaches, insomnia and sinus issues, though she wondered if that was more due to her busy schedule. In a recent week, she had 16 shows and rehearsals — and has no room for another COVID-19 reprise.

"It was not fun," she said. "I don't want to have it again."

## Jan. 6 takeaways: 'Heated' Trump, Pence's near miss with mob

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, ERIC TUCKER and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee investigating the Capitol insurrection used its latest public hearing on Thursday to focus on the pressure that then-President Donald Trump put on his vice president, Mike Pence, to delay or reject the certification of Joe Biden's election victory on Jan. 6, 2021. The committee is trying to show how that pressure incited a violent mob to lay siege to the Capitol that day.

Pence, presiding over the certification in the vice president's traditional ceremonial role, did not give in. He declared Biden the next president early the next morning, after the congressional session resumed and the rioters were cleared.

Lawmakers on the nine-member panel, and the witnesses who testified at the hearing, described Pence's decision as having averted a constitutional crisis.

Takeaways from the committee's third public hearing this month:

A VICE PRESIDENT UNDER PRESSURE ...

Greg Jacob, a counsel to Pence who fended off pressure to carry out the plan, said in live testimony at the hearing that the vice president first summoned him to his West Wing office in early December 2020 to seek clarity about his role in the certification of the election results.

Jacob said it was clear to the vice president that the founding fathers did not intend to empower any one person to affect the election results.

"And our review of text, history — and frankly, just common sense — all confirm the vice president's first instinct on that point, there is no justifiable basis to conclude that the vice president has that kind of authority," Jacob said.

But in the coming weeks, the committee laid out, Pence would come under pressure from Trump to invalidate Biden's win and find a way to keep the president in power. While many White House aides made clear that they didn't agree with the scheme, a conservative law professor named John Eastman increasingly had the ear of Trump. He wrote multiple memos suggesting Pence could reject electors or simply declare Trump the winner.

... AND IN DANGER

In video testimony, Pence's former chief of staff, Marc Short, said that the vice president told Trump "many times" that Pence did not agree with the idea. But Trump kept up the pressure anyway.

On the morning of Jan. 6, as Pence issued a public statement making clear that he would certify the legitimate results of the election, Trump told thousands of his supporters in front of the White House that he hoped Pence would reconsider. The committee showed video from that rally in which Trump said that if Pence doesn't come through, "I won't like him as much."

Trump's continued pressure, the committee asserts, put Pence in immediate danger after rioters marched down to the Capitol and chanted for his death.

In one video played by the committee, a Trump supporter said he had heard reports that Pence had "caved," and if he did they were going to drag "politicians through the streets." As Pence evacuated the Senate and hid in the Capitol, rioters in front of the building chanted "bring him out!" A fake gallows was constructed on the National Mall, and people breaking into the building chanted "Hang Mike Pence! Hang Mike Pence!"

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 78 of 82

Trump continued to pressure Pence even as his supporters stormed the building, tweeting that Pence "lacked courage."

"Donald Trump turned the mob on him," said Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, the chairman of the panel.

## A CLOSE CALL IN THE CAPITOL

As the rioters broke in, Pence hastily evacuated his post presiding over the Senate. California Rep. Pete Aguilar, a Democrat on the committee who led Thursday's hearing, told Jacob that the group was at one point only 40 feet from the rioters.

Jacob, who was with Pence at the time, said they had "heard the din" of the violent mob as they evacuated but that he didn't know they were that close.

The committee also showed never-before-seen photos of Pence after he had evacuated to a secure location in the Capitol, including one photo in which he was reading one of Trump's tweets.

Jacob said that Secret Service agents wanted them to leave the building but Pence refused to get in the car.

"The vice president didn't want to take any chance" that the world would see him leaving the Capitol, Jacob said.

## A 'HEATED' PHONE CALL AND A PRESIDENT'S THREATS

The committee shed some new light on a phone call between Trump and Pence the morning of Jan 6. In videotaped testimony, Trump's daughter, Ivanka Trump, said the conversation was "pretty heated" and had "a different tone than I had heard him take with the vice president before."

In other taped interviews, aides described snippets of the conversation. Trump's personal aide, Nicholas Luna, said he heard the word "wimp." Ivanka Trump's chief of staff, Julie Radford, said she was told the president called Pence "the p-word."

Jacob said he was there when Pence returned from taking Trump's call. The vice president was "steely, determined, grim," Jacob said.

In the following hours, Trump went to the rally stage and criticized the vice president to his thousands of supporters. Aguilar said the committee found that Trump had revised the speech to include criticism of Pence.

## AN ILLEGAL SCHEME

Aguilar called Eastman's scheme, which was amplified by lawyer Rudy Giuliani and others, "a legally and morally bankrupt idea."

After writing memos challenging the nation's election laws in December, and convening state electors on a call, Jacob said that Eastman laid out his theory at a Jan. 4 meeting with Trump, Pence and a small group of aides.

Eastman said Pence, as the presiding officer, could reject the votes outright. Alternately, he could "suspend the proceedings and declare essentially a 10-day recess" during which the results would be sent back to certain state legislatures. Eastman said he preferred the second option, Jacob said.

The next morning, on Jan. 5, Eastman had changed his mind, Jacob said. He walked into a meeting and said, "I'm here to request that you reject the electors."

Pence never wavered, Jacob said.

Retired federal judge Michael Luttig, who had spoken to Pence's staff ahead of the insurrection, also testified at the hearing. He said that if Pence had declared Trump president, it would have "plunged America into what I believe would have been tantamount to a revolution within a constitutional crisis."

## DISTRUST OF EASTMAN

As Eastman gained the president's favor, several White House aides grew increasingly concerned about the possible ramifications of what he was proposing. But Trump did not listen to their advice.

The committee played videotaped testimony from Eric Herschmann, a White House lawyer, expressing incredulity at Eastman's legal theory that a vice president could overturn an election. "Are you out of your effing mind?" Herschmann said he told the professor, adding that he should get a good lawyer.

Trump campaign aide Jason Miller said colleagues had told him they thought Eastman "was crazy."

Eastman was subpoenaed by the committee, but he repeatedly invoked his Fifth Amendment rights during his closed-door interview with the panel last year. He has also sued to block the panel from obtaining many of his communications from the time.

## TURNING TO THEIR FAITH

Pence is a deeply religious man, and Jacob's testimony recounted the vice president's faith — and his own — as the events unfolded.

In one discussion, Jacob said, Pence told him: "I can't wait to go to heaven and meet the framers, and tell them the work that you did in putting together our Constitution is a work of genius."

Pence and his aides started Jan. 6 at the vice president's house, saying a prayer together. And as they hunkered in the undisclosed location later in the day, Jacob said he pulled out a Bible, reading a verse about a second in command who defied an order he could not follow. He said he "took great comfort" in the passage.

Short said in his videotaped interview that he texted Pence a Bible verse at the end of the day.

"I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I've kept the faith," the passage read.

## FBI opens sweeping probe of clergy sex abuse in New Orleans

By JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The FBI has opened a widening investigation into sex abuse in the Roman Catholic Church in New Orleans going back decades, a rare federal foray into such cases looking specifically at whether priests took children across state lines to molest them, officials and others familiar with the inquiry told The Associated Press.

More than a dozen alleged abuse victims have been interviewed this year as part of the probe that's exploring among other charges whether predator priests can be prosecuted under the Mann Act, a more than century-old, anti-sex trafficking law that prohibits taking anyone across state lines for illicit sex.

Some of the New Orleans cases under review allege abuse by clergy during trips to Mississippi camps or amusement parks in Texas and Florida. And while some claims are decades old, Mann Act violations notably have no statute of limitations.

"It's been a long road and just the fact that someone this high up believes us means the world to us," said a former altar boy who alleged his assailant took him on trips to Colorado and Florida and abused him beginning in the 1970s when he was in the fifth grade. The AP generally does not identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted.

The FBI declined to comment, as did the Louisiana State Police, which is assisting in the inquiry. The Archdiocese of New Orleans declined to discuss the federal investigation.

"I'd prefer not to pursue this conversation," Archbishop Gregory Aymond told the AP.

The probe could deepen the legal peril for the archdiocese as it reels from a bankruptcy brought on by a flood of sex abuse lawsuits and allegations that church leaders turned a blind eye to generations of predator priests.

Federal investigators are now considering whether to seek access to thousands of secret church documents produced by lawsuits and shielded by a sweeping confidentiality order in the bankruptcy, according to those familiar with the probe who weren't authorized to discuss it and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity. Those records are said to document years of abuse claims, interviews with accused clergy and a pattern of church leaders transferring problem priests without reporting their crimes to law enforcement.

"This is actually a big deal, and it should be heartening to victims," said Marci Hamilton, a University of Pennsylvania professor and chief executive of Child USA, a think tank focused on preventing child abuse. "The FBI has rarely become involved in the clergy sex abuse scandals. They've dragged their feet around the country with respect to the Catholic Church."

The U.S. Justice Department has struggled to find a federal nexus to prosecuting clergy abuse, hitting dead ends in cases as explosive as the ones outlined in the 2018 Pennsylvania grand jury report that disclosed a systematic cover-up by church leaders. Federal prosecutors subpoenaed church records in

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 80 of 82

Buffalo, New York, the same year in an inquiry that similarly went quiet.

"The issue has always been determining what is the federal crime," said Peter G. Strasser, the former U.S. attorney in New Orleans who declined to bring charges in 2018 after the archdiocese published a list of 57 "credibly accused" clergy, a roster an AP analysis found had been undercounted by at least 20 names.

Strasser said he "naively" believed a federal case might be possible only to encounter a host of roadblocks, including the complexities of "putting the church on trial" for charges like conspiracy.

But federal prosecutors have in recent years employed the more narrowly focused Mann Act to win convictions in a variety of abuse cases, including against R&B star R. Kelly for using his fame to sexually exploit girls, and Ghislaine Maxwell for helping financier Jeffrey Epstein sexually abuse teenage girls. In 2013, a federal judge in Indiana sentenced a Baptist pastor to 12 years in prison for taking a 16-year-old girl across state lines for sex.

Among the priests under federal scrutiny in New Orleans is Lawrence Hecker, a 90-year-old removed from the ministry in 2002 following accusations he abused "countless children." Hecker is accused of abusing children decades ago on out-of-state trips, and other claims against him range from fondling to rape.

Hundreds of records currently under the confidentiality order "will reveal in no uncertain terms that the last four archbishops of New Orleans knew that Lawrence Hecker was a serial child predator," Richard Trahan, an attorney for Hecker's alleged victims, wrote in a court filing.

"Hecker is still very much alive, vibrant, lives alone and is a danger to young boys until he draws his final breath," Trahan wrote.

Asked by telephone this week whether he ever abused children, Hecker said, "I'm going to have to hang up."

More recent allegations are also drawing federal attention, including the case of Patrick Wattigny, a priest charged last year by state prosecutors after he admitted molesting a teenager in 2013. His attorney declined to comment.

Wattigny's 2020 removal from the ministry came amid a disciplinary investigation into inappropriate text messages he sent a student. The case sent shockwaves through the Catholic community because church leaders had frequently characterized clergy abuse as a sin from the past.

"It was happening while the church was saying, 'It's no longer happening,'" said Bill Arata, an attorney who has attended three of the FBI interviews.

"These victims could stay home and not do anything," he added, "but that's not the kind of people they are."

Clergy abuse is particularly fraught in Louisiana, a heavily Catholic state that endured some of the earliest scandals dating to the 1980s. Last year, it joined two-dozen states that have enacted "lookback windows" intended to allow unresolved claims of child sex abuse, no matter how old, to be brought in civil court.

But with few exceptions, most notably a former deacon charged with rape, the accused clergy have escaped criminal consequences. Even at the local level, cases have been hamstrung by statutes of limitation and the political sensitivity of prosecuting the church.

The archdiocese's 2020 bankruptcy case has also frozen a separate court battle over a cache of confidential emails describing the behind-the-scenes public relations work that executives for the NFL's New Orleans Saints did for the archdiocese in 2018 and 2019 to contain fallout from clergy abuse scandals.

While the Saints say they only assisted in messaging, attorneys for those suing the church have alleged in court records that Saints officials joined in the church's "pattern and practice of concealing its crimes." That included taking an active role in helping to shape the archdiocese's list of credibly accused clergy, the attorneys contend.

Attorneys for those suing the church have attacked the bankruptcy bid as a veiled attempt to keep church records secret — and deny victims a public reckoning.

"Those victims were on the path to the truth," Soren Gisleson, an attorney who represents several of the victims, wrote in a court filing. "The rape of children is a thief that keeps on stealing."



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 81 of 82

## Today in History: June 30, ERA expires

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, June 30, the 181st day of 2022. There are 184 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 30, 1982, the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution expired, having failed to receive the required number of ratifications for its adoption, despite having its seven-year deadline extended by three years.

On this date:

In 1918, labor activist and socialist Eugene V. Debs was arrested in Cleveland, charged under the Espionage Act of 1917 for a speech he'd made two weeks earlier denouncing U.S. involvement in World War I. (Debs was sentenced to prison and disenfranchised for life.)

In 1921, President Warren G. Harding nominated former President William Howard Taft to be chief justice of the United States, succeeding the late Edward Douglass White.

In 1934, Adolf Hitler launched his "blood purge" of political and military rivals in Germany in what came to be known as "The Night of the Long Knives."

In 1958, the U.S. Senate passed the Alaska statehood bill by a vote of 64-20.

In 1971, the Supreme Court ruled, 6-3, that the government could not prevent The New York Times or The Washington Post from publishing the Pentagon Papers. A Soviet space mission ended in tragedy when three cosmonauts aboard Soyuz 11 were found dead of asphyxiation inside their capsule after it had returned to Earth.

In 1985, 39 American hostages from a hijacked TWA jetliner were freed in Beirut after being held 17 days.

In 1986, the Supreme Court, in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, ruled 5-4 that states could outlaw homosexual acts between consenting adults (however, the nation's highest court effectively reversed this decision in 2003 in *Lawrence v. Texas*).

In 1994, the U.S. Figure Skating Association stripped Tonya Harding of the national championship and banned her for life for her role in the attack on rival Nancy Kerrigan.

In 2009, American soldier Pfc. Bowe R. Bergdahl went missing from his base in eastern Afghanistan, and was later confirmed to have been captured by insurgents after walking away from his post. (Bergdahl was released on May 31, 2014 in exchange for five Taliban detainees; he pleaded guilty to desertion and misbehavior before the enemy, but was spared a prison sentence by a military judge.)

In 2013, 19 elite firefighters known as members of the Granite Mountain Hotshots were killed battling a wildfire northwest of Phoenix after a change in wind direction pushed the flames back toward their position.

In 2016, saying it was the right thing to do, Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced that transgender people would be allowed to serve openly in the U.S. military, ending one of the last bans on service in the armed forces.

In 2020, Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves signed a landmark bill retiring the last state flag bearing the Confederate battle emblem. Boston's arts commission voted unanimously to remove a statue depicting a freed slave kneeling at Abraham Lincoln's feet.

Ten years ago: Islamist Mohammed Morsi became Egypt's first freely elected president as he was sworn in during a pair of ceremonies. An international conference in Geneva accepted a U.N.-brokered peace plan calling for creation of a transitional government in Syria, but at Russia's insistence the compromise left the door open to Syria's president being a part of it. Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir died at age 96.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump and South Korea's new leader, Moon Jae-in, concluding two days of talks at the White House, showed joint resolve on North Korea despite their divergent philosophies for addressing the nuclear threat.

One year ago: Pennsylvania's highest court threw out Bill Cosby's sexual assault conviction and released him from prison, ruling that the prosecutor who brought the case was bound by his predecessor's agree-

# Groton Daily Independent

**Thursday, June 30, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 358 ~ 82 of 82**

ment not to charge Cosby; the comedian had served nearly three years of a three- to 10-year sentence. Sharply split along party lines, the House launched a new investigation of the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, approving a special committee to probe the violent attack. TV actor Allison Mack was sentenced to three years in prison for manipulating women into becoming sex slaves for the spiritual leader of the cult-like group NXIVM (NEHK'-see-um).

Today's Birthdays: Actor Lea Massari is 89. Actor Nancy Dussault (doo-SOH') is 86. Songwriter Tony Hatch is 83. Singer Glenn Shorrock is 78. Actor Leonard Whiting is 72. Jazz musician Stanley Clarke is 71. Actor David Garrison is 70. Rock musician Hal Lindes (Dire Straits) is 69. Actor-comedian David Alan Grier is 66. Actor Vincent D'Onofrio is 63. Actor Deirdre Lovejoy is 60. Actor Rupert Graves is 59. Former boxer Mike Tyson is 56. Actor Peter Outerbridge is 56. Rock musician Tom Drummond (Better Than Ezra) is 53. Actor-comedian Tony Rock (TV: "Living Biblically") is 53. Actor Brian Bloom is 52. Actor Monica Potter is 51. Actor Molly Parker is 50. Actor Rick Gonzalez is 43. Actor Tom Burke is 41. Actor Lizzy Caplan is 40. Actor Susannah Flood is 40. Rock musician James Adam Shelley (American Authors) is 39. Country singer Cole Swindell is 39. R&B singer Fantasia is 38. Olympic gold medal swimmer Michael Phelps is 37. Actor Sean Marquette (TV: "The Goldbergs") is 34.