

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 1 of 54

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Groton City Water Restrictions](#)
- [3- Prairie Doc: Bring Home Memories, Not Ticks](#)
- [4- Weather Pages](#)
- [9- Daily Devotional](#)
- [10- 2022 Community Events](#)
- [11- Subscription Form](#)
- [12- News from the Associated Press](#)



“Freedom is the open window through which pours the sunlight of the human spirit and human dignity.”

-Herbert Hoover

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

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

July 12
6 p.m.: Legion at Milbank, 1 game
5:30 p.m.: Jr. Legion at Milbank, DH
6 p.m.: U12 SB at Britton, DH
6 p.m.: U8 SB at Clark, DH

July 13
5 p.m.: Legion at Mobridge, 1 game
6:30 p.m.: Jr. Legion at Mobridge, 1 game
5:30 p.m.: U10 vs. Renegades in Watertown, 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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CITY OF GROTON

**ODD NUMBER HOUSES MAY
WATER ON ODD NUMBER DAYS
BETWEEN 5PM AND 10AM**

**EVEN NUMBER HOUSES MAY
WATER ON EVEN NUMBER DAYS
BETWEEN 5PM AND 10AM**

**ABSOLUTELY NO WATERING FROM
10AM-5PM!**



Bring Home Memories, Not Ticks

Recently our family went on a camping trip. Our kids loved how we canoed our supplies across a lake and set up our campsite. My wife and I were reminded how much work it is. Soon our children were experiencing more mosquitos, flies, caterpillars, and ticks than they had ever seen before.

On one of our lovely hikes, nearly every time I looked down, I found another tick crawling on my shoe or leg. Ticks love tall grass, wooded areas, and other moist and humid environments often close to the ground. Although you may find them on your head, they don't normally drop down from above, rather, they start low and crawl up.

Ticks are not insects. They are part of the arachnid family, cousins to scorpions, mites, and spiders with two body parts and eight legs. Ticks commonly enjoy sucking the blood of deer, cats, dogs, mice, squirrels...and humans.

Blacklegged ticks, sometimes called deer ticks, carry borrelia burgdorferi, the bacteria that can cause Lyme disease. These ticks live in the eastern half of the United States.

Symptoms of Lyme disease include fever, headache, fatigue, and the classic target-like rash called erythema migrans. If caught early, this disease is often successfully treated with antibiotics. If not, later stages can affect multiple body systems including the heart, joints, eyes, and nerves.

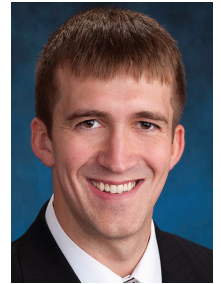
Other types of ticks can cause Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularemia, babesiosis, and ehrlichiosis. Rocky Mountain spotted fever also causes fever, headache, nausea, and rash. Treatment within five days decreases the risk of progression to severe disease.

If you find a tick latched onto your body, it is best to use tweezers and pull it off at its head as close to the point of attachment as possible. Pull upwards with steady, even pressure and avoid squeezing the tick's body. Clean the skin afterwards and dispose of the tick.

When outside in the grass, weeds, garden, or woods, consider wearing long pants and tucking the pant legs into your socks to help prevent ticks from accessing your skin. Apply tick repellent on lower clothing and check for ticks at the end of the day.

Despite checking frequently, my son found a tick on him after we got home, and I found one on me two days later. We enjoyed sharing our love and respect for nature with our children, plus they learned how to safely remove a tick. Next time, we hope to bring home lots of great memories, and no ticks.

Andrew Ellsworth, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show celebrating its twentieth season of truthful, tested, and timely medical information, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

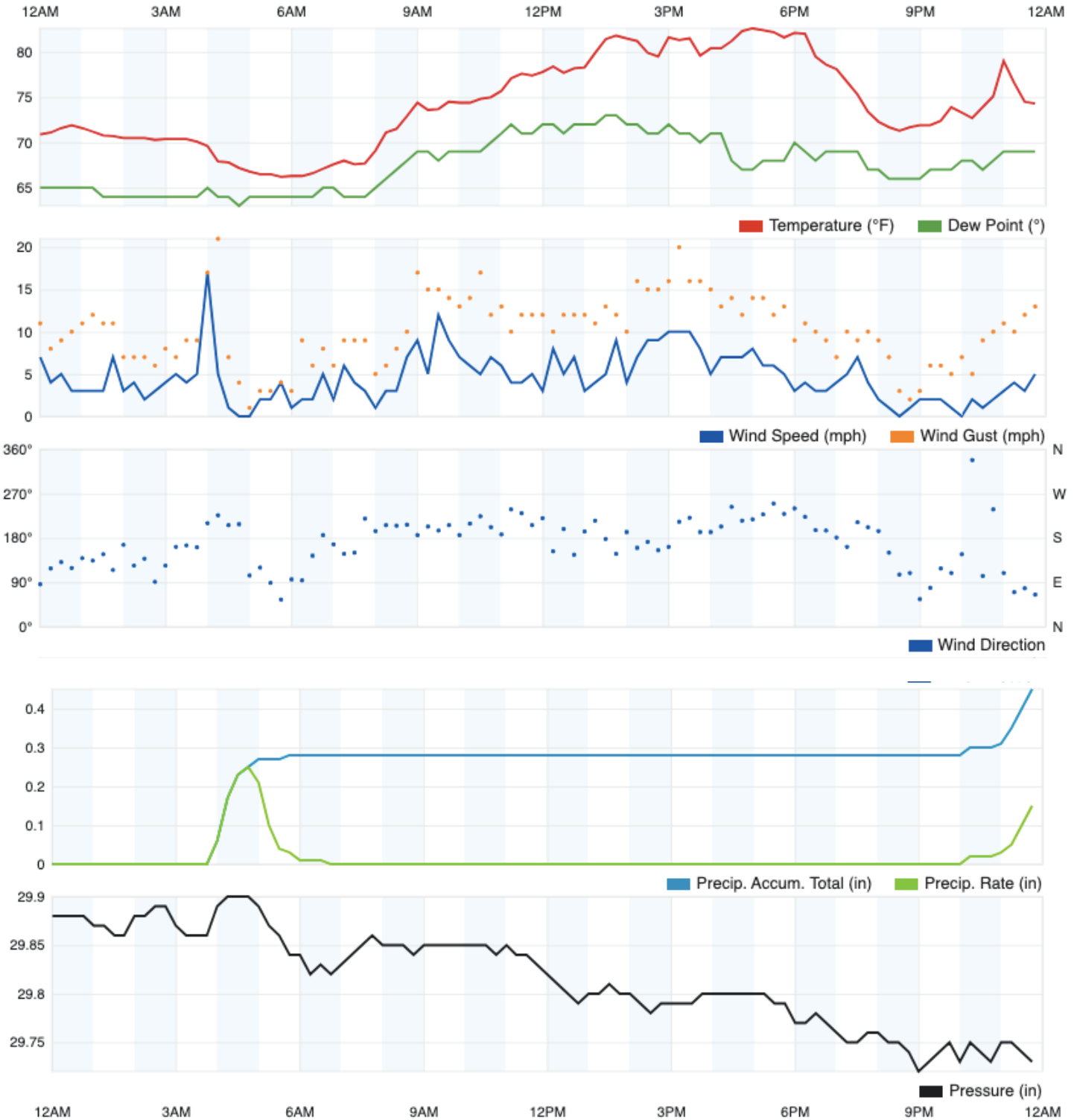


Andrew Ellsworth, MD

Groton Daily Independent






Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 4 of 54

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 5 of 54

Independence Day	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
Chance T-storms then Mostly Sunny	Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms
High: 89 °F	Low: 67 °F	High: 82 °F	Low: 66 °F	High: 85 °F

Warm & Muggy!

Occasional Showers & Thunderstorms



4th of July

Tuesday

Wednesday

87 to 95°

83 to 88°

82 to 87°

95°

90°

85°

80°



Take it easy and enjoy the 4th of July! Given the warm and muggy conditions, drink more water, take breaks from the heat, and remember the sunscreen. Occasional showers and thunderstorms will remain in the forecast, particularly through mid morning today. While mostly dry conditions return this afternoon, a few showers and thunderstorms could return to the area later this evening through tonight. At this point, the highest chance will be over northern portions of South Dakota. Lightning and brief heavy rain will be the main concern with any thunderstorms. A few storms could become strong or severe with damaging winds or hail later this evening or tonight. A higher chance of storms will return Tuesday.

Broton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 6 of 54



Today & Tonight's Severe Weather Outlook

July 4, 2022
4:31 AM

Mainly dry this afternoon!

Overview

Thunderstorms to continue into the mid morning hours over eastern SD and western MN, with mainly dry weather this afternoon.

Additional storms are possible late this evening into the overnight hours. Coverage and intensity of storms expected to be less than the last 2 nights.

Actions



Be weather aware and ready to act. Have multiple ways to receive warning information!

	Probability of Thunder Forecast						
	7/4 Mon						
	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am
Aberdeen	15	12	0	19	26	17	16
Britton	18	12	12	20	28	21	16
Eagle Butte	12	15	12	18	13	0	17
Eureka	13	0	16	25	30	17	27
Gettysburg	12	13	0	19	23	0	18
Kennebec	0	0	0	0	10	10	0
McIntosh	14	17	18	16	13	10	24
Milbank	21	12	0	16	22	25	16
Miller	0	14	0	14	16	0	0
Mobridge	16	14	20	21	16	11	23
Murdo	0	0	0	0	0	10	10
Pierre	0	10	0	0	0	0	10
Redfield	11	12	12	19	24	14	0
Sisseton	21	13	11	16	27	24	17
Watertown	16	0	0	16	16	16	0
Webster	17	0	0	16	19	16	16
Wheaton	21	10	0	16	31	29	16

*Table values in %



Severe Threats Today & Tonight

Color of Hail/Wind Threats matches map



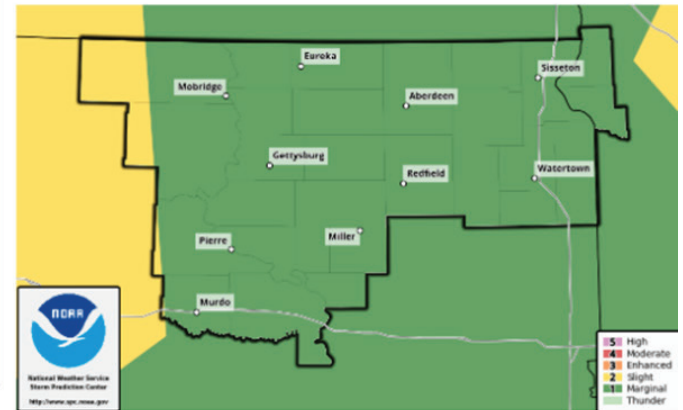
Large Hail

Up to 1.25" Up to 1"



Damaging Wind

Up to 65 mph 50-60 mph



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Thunderstorms to continue into the mid morning hours over eastern SD and western MN, with mainly dry weather this afternoon. Additional storms are possible late this evening into the overnight hours. Coverage and intensity of storms expected to be less than the last 2 nights. Still, a few storms could become strong or severe, with damaging winds or hail.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 7 of 54

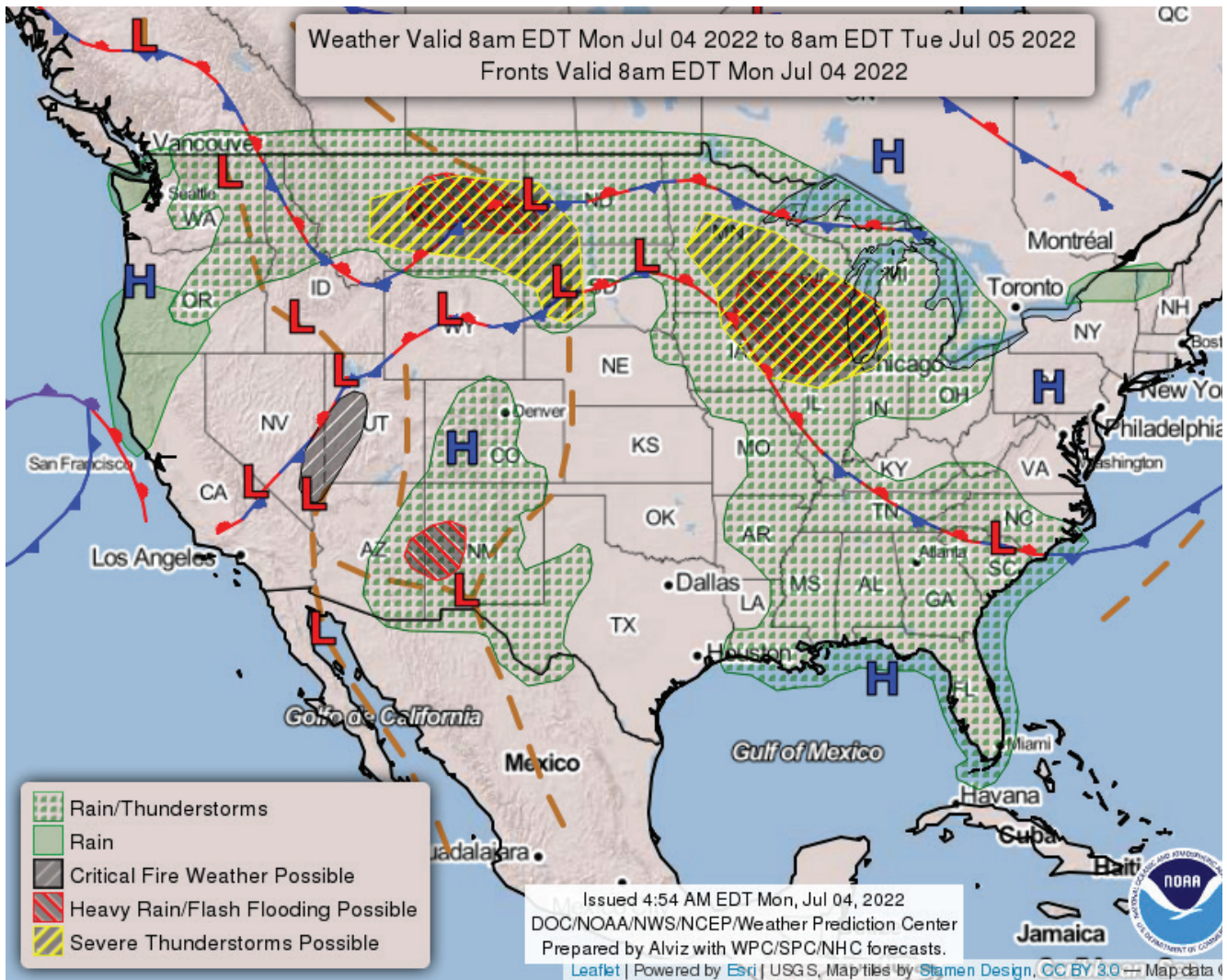
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 83 °F at 4:54 PM
Low Temp: 66 °F at 5:49 AM
Wind: 22 mph at 4:06 AM
Precip: 0.45 (1.35 since midnight)

Day length: 15 hours, 37 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 105 in 1988
Record Low: 40 in 1967
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in July.: 0.47
Precip to date in July.: 0.45
Average Precip to date: 11.48
Precip Year to Date: 12.03
Sunset Tonight: 9:25:40 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:48:47 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 8 of 54

Today in Weather History

July 4, 1936: Several record highs were seen on this day, including; 113 degrees 4NW of Gann Valley; 111 in Murdo; 107 in Castlewood; 106 in Clark and Highmore; 105 near Onida; 104 in Faulkton and Miller; 103 degrees 6SE of McIntosh; 101 in Pollock.

July 4, 1988: Several record highs were set on this day, including; 103 degrees in Ipswich and Britton; 102 in Webster; 101 in Summit and Artichoke Lake, MN; 99 in Leola; 98 degrees in Clear Lake and Waubay.

1776: Thomas Jefferson purchased a thermometer from a local merchant before signing the Declaration of Independence. According to his weather memorandum book, at 1 PM it was cloudy and 76 degrees.

1911 - The northeastern U.S. experienced sweltering 100 degree heat. The temperature soared to 105 degrees at Vernon, VT, and North Bridgton ME, and to 106 degrees at Nashua NH, to establish all-time records for those three states. Afternoon highs of 104 at Boston, MA, 104 at Albany, NY, and 103 at Portland, ME, were all-time records for those three cities. (The Weather Channel)

1956 - A world record for the most rain in one minute was set at Unionville, MD, with a downpour of 1.23 inches. (The Weather Channel) (The National Severe Storms Forecast Center)

1987 - Thunderstorms around the country provided extra fireworks for Independence Day. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 82 mph at Clearwater, KS, eight inches of rain in four hours at Menno SD, and three inches of rain in just fifteen minutes at Austin, KY. Morning thunderstorms drenched Oneonta AL with 8.6 inches of rain, their greatest 24 hour total in thirty years of records. The heavy rain caused mudslides and serious flooding, claiming two lives. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced heavy rain over the Central Gulf Coast Region for the second day in a row. Monroe, LA, was deluged with 3.75 inches in two hours. Aberdeen and Rapid City, SD, reported record high temperatures for the date, with readings of 105 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Independence Day was hot as a firecracker across parts of the country. Nineteen cities, mostly in the north central U.S., reported record high temperatures for the date, including Williston ND with a reading of 107 degrees. In the southwestern U.S., highs of 93 at Alamosa, CO, 114 at Tucson, AZ, and 118 at Phoenix, AZ, equalled all-time records for those locations. (The National Weather Summary)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 9 of 54



Obedience

The Ten Commandments appear to be divided into two sections: four of them teach the importance of honoring God, and six of them teach us to honor mankind. The fifth commandment would logically appear at the bottom of the first tablet. It is the first commandment that contains a promise: "Honor your father and mother so that you may live long (and in peace) in the land the Lord your God is giving you." These words are echoed in Colossians: "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this pleases God."

Perhaps it would be "wise" to clear up the phrase, "My son," in verse eight. If we acknowledge that Proverbs was written for all mankind who acknowledge God as their Lord and follow His teachings, then everyone, no matter their age, would be included in "My son."

Since this is written to "children," it would be good to remind ourselves that the main characteristic of "youth" is vulnerability. The young would disagree with parents who would say that they are ignorant of the ways of the world and have no foresight or insight to see the results or consequences of their behavior. They need stern, loving advice, and warnings from parents who "walk their talk" and have the best interests of their children at heart. No one has more responsibility for the wellbeing and development of their children than their parents.

But there are other "parents" who are also guilty of neglecting "children." Mature Christians are responsible for "the new-born Christian." This verse is an indictment on all of us who have allowed the "young in Christ" to face temptation, unarmed with the Word of God.

Prayer: Lord, forgive us for being negligent in instructing the young at home and in church. We need forgiveness. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Bible Verse: Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Proverbs 1:8

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 10 of 54

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

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 11 of 54

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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News from the Associated Press

Motive likely not terror-related in 'brutal' Danish shooting

By JAN M. OLSEN and KARL RITTER Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — A gunman who killed three people when he opened fire in a crowded shopping mall acted alone and apparently selected his victims at random, Danish police said Monday, all but ruling out that the attack was an "act of terrorism."

Police have not identified a motive for Sunday's attack inside one of Scandinavia's biggest shopping centers. A suspect carrying a rifle and knife was quickly arrested, and Copenhagen chief police inspector Søren Thomassen said the 22-year-old Danish man also had access to another gun.

He said the firearms were obtained illegally and that the suspect was known to mental health services but gave no further details on either.

"It was the worst possible nightmare," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said Monday, calling the attack "unusually brutal."

The three killed were a 17-year-old boy and a 17-year-old girl, both Danes, and a 47-year-old Russian man, according to Thomassen. Four more people were hospitalized with gunshot wounds and were in critical but stable condition. In all 30 people were hurt, most in the panicked stampede after the shots rang out at the Field's shopping center, on the outskirts of the Danish capital.

The last shooting on this scale was in February 2015, when a 22-year-old man was killed in a shootout with police after an attack in the capital that left two people dead and five police officers wounded.

The suspect will be arraigned later Monday on preliminary charges of murder. That's a step short of filing formal charges but allows authorities to keep a suspect in custody during an investigation.

Thomassen said police had no indication that anyone helped the gunman, and his motive remains unclear.

"There is nothing in our investigation, or the documents we have reviewed, or the things we have found, or the witnesses' statements we have gotten, that can substantiate that this is an act of terrorism," said Thomassen, who previously identified the suspect as an "ethnic Dane," a phrase typically used to mean someone is white.

Danish broadcaster TV2 published a grainy photo of the alleged gunman, a man wearing knee-length shorts, a vest or sleeveless shirt, and holding what appeared to be a rifle in his right hand.

"He seemed very violent and angry," eyewitness Mahdi Al-Wazni told TV2. "He spoke to me and said it (the rifle) isn't real as I was filming him. He seemed very proud of what he was doing."

Images from the scene showed people running out of the mall, where people laid flowers on Monday.

Chassandra Stoltz, an 18-year-old student who was on her way to a Harry Styles concert that was scheduled for Sunday night nearby, described a stampede as the shots rang out. At first, she and her sister and father thought it was because someone had spotted Styles — but she soon realized the panic, including a man who grabbed his child from a stroller in the chaos.

"People were guiding us towards the exit sign, and we ran up the roof and we were stuck there for a while and then people were panicking all over the place and people were crying," Stoltz said.

The Styles concert was canceled due to the shooting.

Sunday's attack came about a week after a shooting in neighboring Norway, where police said a Norwegian man of Iranian origin opened fire during a LGBTQ festival, killing two and wounding more than 20.

Searchers rescue 4th person from China ship, 12 bodies found

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Rescue teams searching for missing crew members from a Chinese engineering ship that sank over the weekend saved a fourth person on Monday and recovered 12 bodies, Chinese maritime authorities said.

Officials said the crew member rescued by a Chinese navy ship on Monday was in stable condition. Three

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 13 of 54

other members of the 30-person crew were rescued on Saturday.

The bodies were found about 50 nautical miles (90 kilometers) southwest of the area in which the vessel Fujing 001 sank, authorities in the southeastern province of Guangdong said. Officials were attempting to identify the bodies.

The search for the remaining crew members was continuing.

The China-registered floating crane was involved in building several offshore wind farms. It had been sheltering from tropical storm Chaba, but dragged its anchor and the anchor chain then broke, maritime authorities said.

The vessel then snapped into two and sank Saturday during the storm, which had maximum sustained winds of 110 kilometers (68 miles) an hour and was upgraded to a typhoon before making landfall in Guangdong.

The ship sank about 300 kilometers (180 miles) southwest of Hong Kong. Authorities said the vessel was close to the center of the storm, making rescue operations difficult.

Hong Kong sent two fixed-wing aircraft and four helicopters on Saturday for the rescue effort. The search continued Monday, though Hong Kong authorities said the chances of rescuing the remaining crew members alive were slim.

Elsewhere in China, eight people sheltering from a rainstorm in Shijiazhuang, the capital of the northern province of Hebei, were killed Saturday when a decorative building structure fell from about 12 meters (40 feet), the official Xinhua New Agency said. Another person who was also hit by the structure was hospitalized in stable condition, it said.

'Hell on earth': Ukrainian soldiers describe eastern front

By FRANCESCA EBEL Associated Press

BAKHMUT, Ukraine (AP) — Torched forests and cities burned to the ground. Colleagues with severed limbs. Bombardments so relentless the only option is to lie in a trench, wait and pray.

Ukrainian soldiers returning from the front lines in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region — where Russia is waging a fierce offensive — describe life during what has turned into a grueling war of attrition as apocalyptic.

In interviews with The Associated Press, some complained of chaotic organization, desertions and mental health problems caused by relentless shelling. Others spoke of high morale, their colleagues' heroism, and a commitment to keep fighting, even as the better-equipped Russians control more of the combat zone.

Lt. Volodymyr Nazarenko, 30, second-in-command of the Ukrainian National Guard's Svoboda Battalion, was with troops who retreated from Sievierodonetsk under orders from military leaders. During a month-long battle, Russian tanks obliterated any potential defensive positions and turned a city with a prewar population of 101,000 into "a burnt-down desert," he said.

"They shelled us every day. I do not want to lie about it. But these were barrages of ammunition at every building," Nazarenko said. "The city was methodically leveled out."

At the time, Sievierodonetsk was one of two major cities under Ukrainian control in Luhansk province, where pro-Russia separatists declared an unrecognized republic eight years ago. By the time the order to withdraw came on June 24, the Ukrainians were surrounded on three sides and mounting a defense from a chemical plant also sheltering civilians.

"If there was a hell on Earth somewhere, it was in Sievierodonetsk," Artem Ruban, a soldier in Nazarenko's battalion, said from the comparative safety of Bakhmut, 64 kilometers (40 miles) to the southwest of the since-captured city. "The inner strength of our boys allowed them to hold the city until the last moment."

"Those were not human conditions they had to fight in. It is difficult to explain this to you here, what they feel like now or what it was like there," Ruban said, blinking in the sunlight. "They were fighting until the end there. The task was to destroy the enemy, no matter what."

Nazarenko, who also fought in Kyiv and elsewhere in the east after Russia invaded Ukraine, considers the Ukrainian operation in Sievierodonetsk "a victory" despite the outcome. He said the defenders managed to limit casualties while stalling the Russian advance for much longer than expected, depleting Russia's

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 14 of 54

resources.

"Their army incurred huge losses, and their attack potential was obliterated," he said.

Both the lieutenant and the soldier under his command expressed confidence that Ukraine would take back all occupied territories and defeat Russia. They insisted morale remained high. Other soldiers, most with no combat experience before the invasion, shared more pessimistic accounts while insisting on anonymity or using only their first names to discuss their experiences.

Oleksiy, a member of the Ukrainian army who started fighting against the Moscow-backed separatists in 2016, had just returned from the front with a heavy limp. He said he was wounded on the battlefield in Zolote, a town the Russians also have since occupied.

"On the TV, they are showing beautiful pictures of the front lines, the solidarity, the army, but the reality is very different" he said, adding he does not think the delivery of more Western weapons would change the course of the war.

His battalion started running out of ammunition within a few weeks, Oleksiy said. At one point, the relentless shelling kept the soldiers from standing up in the trenches, he said, exhaustion visible on his lined face.

A senior presidential aide reported last month that 100 to 200 Ukrainian troops were dying every day, but the country has not provided the total number killed in action. Oleksiy claimed his unit lost 150 men during its first three days of fighting, many from a loss of blood.

Due to the relentless bombardments, wounded soldiers were only evacuated at night, and sometimes they had to wait up to two days, he said.

"The commanders don't care if you are psychologically broken. If you have a working heart, if you have arms and legs, you have to go back in," he added.

Mariia, a 41-year-old platoon commander who joined the Ukrainian army in 2018 after working as a lawyer and giving birth to a daughter, explained that the level of danger and discomfort can vary greatly depending on a unit's location and access to supply lines.

Front lines that have existed since the conflict with pro-Russia separatists began in 2014 are more static and predictable, whereas places that became battlegrounds since Russia sent its troops in to invade are "a different world," she said.

Mariia, who refused to share her surname for security reasons, said her husband is currently fighting in such a "hot spot." Everyone misses and worries about their loved ones, and though this causes distress, her subordinates have kept their spirits high, she said.

"We are the descendants of Cossacks, we are free and brave. It is in our blood," she said. "We are going to fight to the end."

Two other soldiers the AP interviewed — former office-workers in Kyiv with no prior battle experience — said they were sent to the front lines in the east as soon as they completed their initial training. They said they observed "terrible organization" and "illogical decision-making," and many people in their battalion refused to fight.

One of the soldiers said he smokes marijuana daily. "Otherwise, I would lose my mind, I would desert. It's the only way I can cope" he said.

A 28-year-old former teacher in Sloviansk who "never imagined" he would fight for his country described Ukraine's battlefields as a completely different life, with a different value system and emotional highs as well as lows.

"There is joy, there is sorrow. Everything is intertwined," he said.

Friendship with his colleagues provide the bright spots. But he also saw fellow soldiers succumbing to extreme fatigue, both physical and mental, and displaying symptoms of PTSD.

"It's hard to live under constant stress, sleep-deprived and malnourished. To see all those horrors with your own eyes — the dead, the torn-off limbs. It is unlikely that someone's psyche can withstand that," he said.

Yet he, too, insisted that the motivation to defend their country remains.

"We are ready to endure and fight with clenched teeth. No matter how hard and difficult it is," the teacher

said, speaking from a fishing store that was converted into a military distribution hub. "Who will defend my home and my family, if it is not me?"

The center in the city of Sloviansk provides local military units with equipment and provisions, and gives soldiers a place to go during brief respites from the physical grind and horrors of battle.

Tetiana Khimion, a 43-year-old dance choreographer, set up the center when the war started. All kinds of soldiers pass through, she says, from skilled special forces and war-hardened veterans to civilians-turned-fighters who signed up only recently.

"It can be like this: For the first time he comes, smiles widely, he can even be shy. The next time he comes, and there is emptiness in his eyes," Khimion said. "He has been through something, and he is different."

Behind her, a group of young Ukrainian soldiers on rotation from the front lines sit sharing jokes and a pizza. The thud of artillery can be heard a few miles away.

"Mostly they hope for the better. Yes, sometimes they come in a little sad, but we hope to raise their spirits here, too," Khimion said. "We hug, we smile at each other and then they go back into the fields."

On Sunday, Russian forces occupied the last Ukrainian stronghold in Luhansk province and stepped up rocket strikes on Donetsk, the Donbas province where the center is located.

Film reveals Macron's diplomatic bids amid war in Ukraine

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — "Vladimir ... tell me what your intentions are."

Four days before President Putin ordered Russia's invasion of Ukraine, French President Emmanuel Macron was making a last-ditch attempt to prevent the war in a key phone call revealed in a French TV documentary.

In the rare public recording of a discussion between two world leaders, Macron tries to convince the Russian president to "calm things down" in the region. But all his suggestions reach a dead end on Putin's side.

The French documentary "A President, Europe and War" offers a unique behind-the-scenes look at months of diplomatic wrangling amid Europe's worst crisis in decades. It was meant to focus on Macron during France's leadership of the rotating EU presidency, but ended up capturing historic moments in Ukraine's war, including following Macron to Moscow and on two trips to Kyiv.

During the call with Putin on Feb. 20, both leaders use the informal version of the word "you" to speak to each other, in a very direct tone.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy "is lying to you," Putin tells Macron, accusing authorities in Kyiv of having come to power through "a bloody coup. People were burned alive, it was a bloodbath." Zelenskyy was democratically elected in 2019; Putin appeared to be referring to his own interpretation of earlier events in Ukraine.

At some point, the French president slightly raises his voice, visibly irritated: "I don't know where your lawyer learned law," he says, openly criticizing Russian views.

Macron can also be heard pushing for a meeting between Putin and U.S. President Joe Biden. Putin agrees in principle, but says he needs his aides to prepare the talks first. The meeting never takes place.

"It was like a really tough conversation between two persons that were totally opposed," said French journalist Guy Lagache, who filmed and directed the film on his own. He was embedded with the Elysee's diplomatic service — exceptional access in a country where the president controls his public image and diplomatic aides are usually kept out of camera sight.

Putin's promise to meet with Biden turned out to be "a lie," Lagache told The Associated Press. "But if you do not try to do that (negotiate a meeting), you can't know whether he's going to lie."

Lagache's comments echo those of Macron's top diplomatic aide, Emmanuel Bonne, who warns in the documentary that Putin "always lies."

The Russian president, who likes to publicize his athletic exploits, closes the discussion in his own way — telling Macron he's talking "from the gym."

"I wanted to go play ice hockey," he says.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 16 of 54

Another phone call allows viewers to feel Zelenskyy's shock and horror and the urgency of the moment on the day the war started.

"The Russians, it's terrible what they do. ... Now they are in Kyiv, we are fighting in Kyiv, Emmanuel," Zelenskyy tells Macron. Macron remains silent for several seconds.

"Yes, it's total war," the Ukrainian leader confirms.

When Bonne, the diplomatic adviser, tries four times to call his Russian counterpart on his mobile phone, it is in vain. "They have the nerve to wage war, but not the courage to speak," he says, seemingly powerless.

Lagache said that being there and filming, he could "feel the drama that is unfolding."

"And you see that politics is also — and first and foremost — about people, (done) by the people trying to find solutions in a very complex situation," he added.

The documentary, released in France last week, offers scenes rarely seen on television.

Macron can be seen holding a meeting in his bunker under the Elysee palace and working with his team in the presidential plane, wearing a blue hoodie.

The film also shows at length the work of diplomatic advisers, from preparing Macron's speech to texting him during his phone calls with world leaders.

In a surreal moment just before the war, Macron's aides manage to save a possible contract worth a billion euros for French rail giant Alstom by sending a last-minute, handwritten note to the French president as he is meeting with Zelenskyy in Kyiv.

Lagache specified that he paid attention not to disclose any classified information. No specific details about France's military support to Ukraine appear in the documentary.

It also doesn't show the discussion between Macron and Zelenskyy after the French president made comments that riled the Ukrainians about not humiliating Russia.

The documentary highlights European leaders' coordination to support Ukraine and impose unprecedented sanctions on Russia.

The camera follows Macron with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Italian Premier Mario Draghi in the train on their way to Kyiv in mid-June, where they pledged arms and backed Ukraine's candidacy to join the European Union. The leaders visited nearby Irpin, a suburb where many civilians were killed, with Macron saying he saw signs of "war crimes."

"What matters to me is to try to be useful, and make sure that the conflict doesn't spread, that Ukraine can stop it and get back in control, and that the Europeans stay united," Macron says on the way back. "Much remains to be done. It's not over."

It's a new era for funding on both sides of abortion debate

By GLENN GAMBOA AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v. Wade has ushered in a new era of funding on both sides of the abortion debate.

With the legality of abortion now up to individual states to determine, an issue long debated by legislators and philanthropists — when it was largely theoretical because only the Supreme Court could change it — suddenly has real-world ramifications for people across the country. And donors on both sides will now be expected to put money behind their words.

"I think we will see funding that's going to be a lot less performative and a lot more realistic," said Leslie Lenkowsky, a professor emeritus in public affairs and philanthropic studies at Indiana University.

Those kind of gifts are already starting to arrive.

Donations are pouring in to nonprofit groups in what experts call an example of "rage giving." Yet few believe the additional funding for their causes will be enough to address the increased demand for help either for women to obtain abortions or to support babies put up for adoption or into the foster care system.

At The Brigid Alliance, a New York nonprofit that provides funding and logistical help for people seeking abortions, the number of donors more than doubled to 6,000-plus after the leak in May of a draft of the Supreme Court ruling, according to Sarah Moeller, the group's director of resource development. Once Roe

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 17 of 54

was overturned last month, their number of donors doubled again within three days, with people contributing anywhere from \$5 to \$50,000. Even so, Moeller said, the donations can't begin to match the need.

"Since September, when Texas implemented their six-week ban, we saw a 900% increase in requests for our services," she said. "We expect that we'll continue to see surging rates as the dominoes fall after this ruling."

The Brigid Alliance helps about 125 people a month with abortion logistics and expenses — about \$1,200 per person. Most requests come from women in the South, Moeller said, and inflation has increased many of the costs.

"I think it's going to be impossible for every individual who needs abortion care to be able to get to their appointments," Moeller said. "We're doing everything that we can to grow in order to meet increasing demand. And every single person who is able to help makes a huge difference. But the volume is just incalculable at this point."

At Americans United for Life, which provides anti-abortion policy expertise to legislators around the country, donations are coming in heavy numbers from Americans of all ages and backgrounds, said Tom Shakely, the group's chief engagement officer. Even so, he said, the group remains "a multimillion-dollar David to abortion's multibillion-dollar Goliath."

"The end of Roe v. Wade unfortunately does not mean the end of Planned Parenthood or the end of abortion," Shakely said. "Abortion will tragically continue to be a multibillion-dollar business in America until we clarify that abortion is incompatible with constitutional justice."

Brandi Collins-Calhoun, a manager at the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, said she hopes donors will regard the next stage in the abortion debate as a reason to redouble contributions to what she sees as reproductive justice.

"There are a lot of gaps and voids that both the states and philanthropy created, because of their practices — the ways that they frame abortion as a rights issue, not a health issue," she said. "I think anybody who has the capital and the access should be paying for people's abortions. Whether that's the state, whether it's philanthropy — I think everybody has a responsibility."

Aaron Dorfman, the committee's president and CEO, suggested that philanthropy's responsibility, in part, is to fund programs that the government can't or won't.

"It's a perfectly appropriate role for donors to step up in this way — to both meet an urgent need and also lay a framework for a better government that more fully meets the needs of its citizenry," he said. "Part of how philanthropy can do that is by investing in power-building work at state and local levels to support community organizing, and advocacy work that really helps change how government functions and who it is responsive to."

Dorfman noted that conservative funders have long supported their work in that way, while liberal funders have tended to be more reticent.

The result, Collins-Calhoun said, is that many abortion rights groups have been overwhelmed.

"We're a few days out from the decision, and state and local leaders are exhausted," she said. "They haven't been sustained. Many of them are trying to figure out what to do next because they weren't funded for this moment."

Leaders on both sides of the issue say they recognize that they'll have to quickly find their way through this new reality.

"We're really at one of these moments in our country that could be very, very important," Lenkowsky said. "Are we going to rise to the challenge here? Or are we going to keep going on business as usual?"

Official: 17 unaccounted for in Italian glacier avalanche

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Some 17 people remain unaccounted for a day after a huge chunk of an Alpine glacier broke off and slammed into hikers in northern Italy, officials said Monday.

At least six people died and 9 were injured by the avalanche of ice, snow and large rocks thundering

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 18 of 54

down the slope of the mountain topped by the Marmolada glacier Sunday afternoon.

Trento Prosecutor Sandro Raimondi said that 17 hikers were believed to be missing, the Italian news agency LaPresse reported.

Veneto regional Gov. Luca Zaia said some of those hiking in the area on Sunday were roped together as they climbed.

Nationalities of the known dead haven't been disclosed, and conditions were too dangerous Monday morning for rescue crews with dogs to resume the search for those missing or to bring down the bodies.

The bodies will be brought to an ice skating rink in the resort town of Canazei in the Dolomite mountain range for identification.

Raimondi was quoted as saying two of the nine injured are Germans. Zaia told reporters that one of the Germans was a 65-year-old man. Of the injured patients, one of those in intensive care has yet to be identified.

The patients suffered chest and cranial injuries, said Zaia.

Drones were being used to look for any of the missing as well as verify safety.

Sixteen cars remained unclaimed in the area's parking lot, and authorities sought to track down occupants through license plates. It was unclear how many of the cars might have belonged to the already identified victims or to the injured, all of whom were flown by helicopters on Sunday to hospitals.

Rescuers said conditions downslope from the glacier, which has been melting for decades, were still too unstable to early Monday to send back teams of people and dogs to dig into tons of debris.

Premier Mario Draghi and the head of the national Civil Protection agency were traveling to the stricken area Monday for briefings.

What caused a pinnacle of the glacier to break off and thunder down the slope at a speed estimated by experts at some 300 kph (nearly 200 mph), wasn't immediately known. But the heat wave gripping Italy since May, bringing temperatures unusually high for the start of summer even up in the normally cooler Alps was being cited as a likely factor.

Jacopo Gabrieli, a polar sciences researcher at Italy's state-run CNR research center, noted that the long heat wave, spanning May and June, was the hottest in northern Italy in that period for nearly 20 years.

"It's absolutely an anomaly," Gabrieli said in an interview on Italian state TV Monday. Like other experts, he said it would have been impossible to predict when or if a serac — a pinnacle from a glacier's overhang — could break off, as it did on Sunday.

Alpine rescuers on Sunday noted that late last week, the temperature on the 3,300-meter (11,000-foot) high peak had topped 10C (50F), far higher than usual. Operators of rustic shelters along the mountainside said temperatures at the 2,000-meter (6,600 foot) level recently reached 24C (75 F), unheard-of heat in a place where excursionists go in summer to keep cool.

The glacier, in the Marmolada range, is the largest in the Dolomite mountains in northeastern Italy. People ski on it in the winter. But the glacier has been rapidly melting away over the past decades, with much of its volume gone. Experts at Italy's state-run CNR research center, which has a polar sciences institute, estimated a couple of years ago that the glacier won't exist anymore within 25-30 years.

The Mediterranean basin, which includes southern European countries like Italy, has been identified by U.N. experts as a "climate change hot spot," likely to suffer heat waves and water shortages, among other consequences.

Jan 6 panel: More people turn up with evidence against Trump

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — More witnesses are coming forward with new details on the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol riot following former White House aide Cassidy Hutchinson's devastating testimony last week against former President Donald Trump, says a member of a House committee investigating the insurrection.

The panel already has subpoenaed former White House counsel Pat Cipollone, who investigators remain hopeful will appear Wednesday for a deposition, and said it would also welcome follow-up details from

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 19 of 54

Secret Service members with Trump that day.

Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., cited Hutchinson's testimony that Trump wanted to join an angry mob of his supporters who marched on Jan. 6, 2021, to the Capitol, where they rioted, as particularly valuable in "inspiring" more people to step forward as the committee gets set for at least two public hearings this month.

"Every day we get new people that come forward and say, 'Hey, I didn't think maybe this piece of the story that I knew was important,'" he said Sunday. "There will be way more information and stay tuned."

The committee has been intensifying its yearlong investigation into the Jan. 6 attack and Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election. The next hearings will aim to show how Trump illegally directed a violent mob toward the Capitol on Jan. 6 and then failed to take quick action to stop the attack once it began. Over the weekend, Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., the committee's vice chair, made clear that criminal referrals to the Justice Department, including against the Republican former president, could follow.

The committee also has been reviewing new documentary film footage of Trump's final months in office, including interviews with Trump and members of his family.

Kinzinger, in a television interview, declined to disclose the new information he referred to and did not say who had provided it. He said nothing had changed the committee's confidence in her credibility.

"There's information I can't say yet," he said. "We certainly would say that Cassidy Hutchinson has testified under oath, we find her credible, and anybody that wants to cast disparagements on that, who were firsthand present, should also testify under oath and not through anonymous sources."

In a separate interview, another committee member, Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., said: "We are following additional leads. I think those leads will lead to new testimony."

In Hutchinson's appearance before the committee, she painted a picture of Trump as an angry, defiant president who was trying to let armed supporters avoid security screenings at a rally on the morning of Jan. 6 to protest his 2020 election defeat to Democrat Joe Biden.

According to Hutchinson, Cipollone was concerned that Trump would face criminal charges if he joined his supporters in marching to the Capitol.

Legal experts have said Cassidy's testimony is potentially problematic for Trump as federal prosecutors investigate potential criminal wrongdoing.

Cheney said in an interview aired Sunday that the committee was still considering whether to issue recommendations to the Justice Department, indicating "there could be more than one criminal referral."

Committee members said they are hopeful Cipollone will come forward.

"He clearly has information about concerns about criminal violations, concerns about the president going to the Capitol that day, concerns about the chief of staff having blood on his hands if they didn't do more to stop that violent attack on the Capitol," Schiff said. "It's hard to imagine someone more at the center of things."

In her testimony, Cassidy recounted a conversation with Tony Ornato, Trump's deputy chief of staff for operations, who, she testified, said Trump later grabbed at the steering wheel of the presidential SUV when the Secret Service refused to let him go to the Capitol after the rally.

That account was disputed, however. Bobby Engel, the Secret Service agent who was driving Trump, and Ornato are willing to testify under oath that no agent was assaulted and Trump never lunged for the steering wheel, a person familiar with the matter said. The person would not discuss the matter publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

"We had interviewed Mr. Ornato several times," said Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., and member of the panel. "His memory does not appear to be as precise as hers. We certainly would welcome them to come back if they wish to do that."

The committee has also been working on setting up an interview with Virginia "Ginni" Thomas, the conservative activist and wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. She was asked to speak to the committee after disclosures of her communications with Trump's team in the run-up to and on the day of the insurrection at the Capitol.

Kinzinger appeared on CNN's "State of the Union," Schiff was on CBS' "Face the Nation," Cheney appeared on ABC's "This Week" and Lofgren spoke on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Russia tries to press its offensive into Ukraine's east

By FRANCESCA EBEL Associated Press

POKROVSK, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces tried Monday to press their offensive deeper into eastern Ukraine after taking control of a key stronghold.

The Ukrainian military confirmed that its forces had withdrawn from the city of Lysychansk, the last bulwark of Ukrainian resistance in the Luhansk province, one of the two regions that make up the country's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas. The Russians also control about half of Donetsk, the second province of Donbas.

Luhansk governor Serhii Haidai said Ukrainian forces retreated from Lysychansk to avoid being surrounded. "There was a risk of Lysychansk encirclement," Haidai told the Associated Press, adding that Ukrainian troops could have held on for a few more weeks but would have potentially paid too high a price.

"We managed to do centralized withdrawal and evacuate all injured," Haidai said. "We took back all the equipment, so from this point withdrawal was organized well."

Then Ukrainian General Staff said Russian forces were now focusing their efforts on pushing toward the line of Siversk, Fedorivka and Bakhmut in the Donetsk region. The Russian army has also intensified its shelling of the key Ukrainian strongholds of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, deeper in Donetsk.

On Sunday, six people, including a 9-year-old girl, were killed in the Russian shelling of Sloviansk and another 19 people were wounded, according to local authorities. Kramatorsk also came under fire on Sunday.

An intelligence briefing Monday from the British Defense Ministry supported the Ukrainian military's assessment, noting that Russian forces will "now almost certainly" switch to capturing Donetsk. The briefing said the conflict in Donbas has been "grinding and attritional," and is unlikely to change in the coming weeks.

While the Russian army has a massive advantage in firepower, military analysts say that it doesn't have any significant superiority in the number of troops. That means Moscow lacks resources for quick land gains and can only advance slowly, relying on heavy artillery and rocket barrages to soften Ukrainian defenses.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has made capturing the entire Donbas a key goal in his war in Ukraine, now in its fifth month. Moscow-backed separatists in Donbas have battled Ukrainian forces since 2014 when they declared independence from Kyiv after the Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimea. Russia formally recognized the self-proclaimed republics days before its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

Putin's defense minister reported to him Sunday that the Russian army and its separatist allies now hold all of the Luhansk region after taking "full control" of Lysychansk.

In his nightly video address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy acknowledged the withdrawal, but vowed that Ukrainian forces will fight their way back.

"If the command of our army withdraws people from certain points of the front where the enemy has the greatest fire superiority, in particular this applies to Lysychansk, it means only one thing: We will return thanks to our tactics, thanks to the increase in the supply of modern weapons," Zelenskyy said.

Since failing to take Kyiv and other areas in Ukraine's northeast early in the war, Russia has focused on Donbas, unleashing fierce shelling and engaging in house-to-house combat that devastated cities in the region.

Russia's invasion has also devastated Ukraine's agricultural sector, disrupting supply chains of seed and fertilizer needed by Ukrainian farmers and blocking the export of grain, a key source of revenue for the country.

In its Monday intelligence report, Britain's defense ministry pointed to the Russian blockade of the key Ukrainian port of Odesa, which has severely restricted grain exports. They predicted that Ukraine's agricultural exports would reach only 35% of the 2021 total this year as a result.

As Moscow pushed its offensive across Ukraine's east, areas in western Russia came under attack Sunday in a revival of sporadic apparent Ukrainian strikes across the border. The governor of the Belgorod region in Western Russia said fragments of an intercepted Ukrainian missile killed four people Sunday. In the

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 21 of 54

Russian city of Kursk, two Ukrainian drones were shot down, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

In other developments:

— Ukrainian soldiers returning from the front lines in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region — where Russia is waging a fierce offensive — describe life during what has turned into a grueling war of attrition as apocalyptic.

— Two Russian airplanes departed Bulgaria on Sunday with scores of Russian diplomatic staff and their families amid a mass expulsion that has sent tensions soaring between the historically close nations, a Russian diplomat said.

US Navy offers cash for tips to seize Mideast drugs, weapons

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.S. Navy's Mideast-based 5th Fleet is starting to offer rewards for information that could help sailors intercept weapons, drugs and other illicit shipments across the region amid tensions over Iran's nuclear program and Tehran's arming of Yemen's Houthi rebels.

While avoiding directly mentioning Iran, the 5th Fleet's decision to offer cash and other goods for actionable intelligence in the Persian Gulf and other strategic waterways may increase pressure on the flow of weapons to the Houthis as a shaky cease-fire still holds in Yemen.

Already, the Houthis have threatened a new allied task force organized by the 5th Fleet in the Red Sea, though there's been no attack by the Iranian-backed forces on the Navy in the time since.

Meanwhile, the 5th Fleet says it and its partners seized \$500 million in drugs alone in 2021 — more than the four prior years combined. The 5th Fleet also intercepted 9,000 weapons in the same period, three times the number seized in 2020.

"Any destabilizing activity has our attention," Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins, a 5th Fleet spokesman, told The Associated Press. "Definitely we have seen in the last year skyrocketing success in seizing both illegal narcotics and illicit weapons. This represents another step in our effort to enhance regional maritime security."

The 5th Fleet's new initiative launches on Tuesday through the Department of Defense Rewards Program, which saw troops offer cash and goods for tips on the battlefields in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere after al-Qaida launched the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Since ground fighting has largely halted across the region, the 5th Fleet decided to try to use the program as it patrols the waterways of the Middle East.

Hawkins said operators fluent in Arabic, English and Farsi would man a hotline, while the Navy also would take tips additionally online, in Dari and Pashto. Payouts can be as high as \$100,000 or the equivalent in vehicles, boats or food for tips that also include information on planned attacks targeting Americans, Hawkins said.

It's unclear if the 5th Fleet's uptick in seizures represents a return to shipping after the coronavirus pandemic or an increase overall in the number of illicit shipments in the region. Traffickers typically use stateless dhows, traditional wooden sailing craft common in the Mideast, to transport drugs and weapons.

One destination for weapons appears to be Yemen. The Houthis seized Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in September 2014 and forced the internationally recognized government into exile. A Saudi-led coalition armed with U.S. weaponry and intelligence entered the war on the side of Yemen's exiled government in March 2015. Years of inconclusive fighting has pushed the Arab world's poorest nation to the brink of famine. A truce that began around the holy Muslim month of Ramadan appears for now to still be holding.

Despite a United Nations Security Council arms embargo on Yemen, Iran long has been transferring rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, missiles and other weaponry to the Houthis. Though Iran denies arming the Houthis, independent experts, Western nations and U.N. experts have traced components back to Iran.

Asked about whether new seizures could increase tensions with Iran, Hawkins listed the weapons and drugs the Navy hoped to intercept under the program.

"That's what we're after," the commander said. "That's not in the interest of regional stability and security."

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not respond to a request for comment. The U.S. Navy and Iran continue to have tense encounters in the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through

which a fifth of all oil traded passes.

The rewards program marks the latest initiative under 5th Fleet Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, who also launched a drone task force last year amid tensions with Iran.

Cooper's other effort, the Red Sea task force, has drawn criticism from the Houthis in the past. The rebel group, which has repeatedly denied being armed by Iran, did not respond to a request for comment on the new Navy program.

However, Ali al-Qahom, a Houthi official, tweeted last week that the rebels are monitoring increased U.S. activity in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf waters.

"Because of this, defense and confrontation options are open," he said. "They and their diabolical projects have no place" in the region.

3 feet of rain sets up 4th round of flood misery for Sydney

SYDNEY (AP) — More than 30,000 residents of Sydney and its surrounds were told to evacuate or prepare to abandon their homes Monday as Australia's largest city faces its fourth, and possibly worst, round of flooding in less than a year and a half.

Days of torrential rain caused dams to overflow and waterways to break their banks, bringing a new flood emergency to parts of the city of 5 million people.

"The latest information we have is that there's a very good chance that the flooding will be worse than any of the other three floods that those areas had in the last 18 months," Emergency Management Minister Murray Watt said.

The current flooding might affect areas that were spared during the previous floods in March last year, March this year and April, Watt added.

New South Wales state Premier Dominic Perrottet said 32,000 people were impacted by evacuation orders and warnings.

"You'd probably expect to see that number increase over the course of the week," Perrottet said.

Emergency services made numerous flood rescues Sunday and early Monday and were getting hundreds more calls for help.

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology manager Jane Golding said some areas between Newcastle, north of Sydney, and Wollongong, south of Sydney had received more than a meter (39 inches) of rain in the previous 24 hours. Some has received more than 1.5 meters (59 inches).

Those totals are near the average annual rainfall for coastal areas of New South Wales.

"The system that has been generating this weather does show signs that it will ease tomorrow, but throughout today, expect more rain," Golding said.

Rain was forecast across New South Wales's coast, including Sydney, all week, she said.

The Bureau of Meteorology says up to 12 centimeters (4.7 inches) of rain could fall in Sydney on Monday.

The flooding danger was highest along the Hawkesbury River, in northwest Sydney, and the Nepean River in Sydney's west.

The bureau Monday afternoon reported major flooding at the Nepean communities of Menangle and Wallacia on Sydney's southwest fringe.

Major flooding also occurred on the Hawkesbury at North Richmond on Sydney's northwest edge. The Hawkesbury communities of Windsor and Lower Portland were expected to be flooded Monday afternoon and Wisemans Ferry on Tuesday, a bureau statement said.

State Emergency Services Commissioner Carlene York said strong winds had toppled trees, damaging rooves and blocking roads. She advised against unnecessary travel.

Off the New South Wales coast, a cargo ship with 21 crew members lost power after leaving port in Wollongong on Monday morning. It was anchored near the coast and tugboats were preparing to tug it into safer, open waters.

The ship has engineers on board capable of repairing the engine, port official John Finch told reporters. "Unfortunately, we just happen to be in some atrocious conditions at the moment," he said, describing

8-meter (26-foot) swells and winds blowing at 30 knots (34 mph).

An earlier plan to airlift the ship's crew to safety was abandoned because of bad weather.

Repeated flooding was taking a toll on members of a riverside community southwest of Sydney, said Mayor Theresa Fedeli of the Camden municipality where homes and businesses were inundated by the Nepean River over Sunday night.

"It's just devastating. They just keep on saying 'devastating, not again,'" Fedeli said.

"I just keep on saying ... 'We've got to be strong, we will get through this.' But you know deep down it's really hitting home hard to a lot of people," she added.

Perrottet said government and communities needed to adapt to major flooding becoming more common across Australia's most populous state.

"To see what we're seeing right across Sydney, there's no doubt these events are becoming more common. And governments need to adjust and make sure that we respond to the changing environment that we find ourselves in," Perrottet said.

Video shows Akron police kill Black man in hail of gunfire

Associated Press undefined

AKRON, Ohio (AP) — A Black man was unarmed when Akron police chased him on foot and killed him in a hail of gunfire, but officers believed he had shot at them earlier from a vehicle and feared he was preparing to fire again, authorities said Sunday at a news conference.

Akron police released video of the shooting of Jayland Walker, 25, who was killed June 27 in a pursuit that had started with an attempted traffic stop. The mayor called the shooting "heartbreaking" while asking for patience from the community.

It's not clear how many shots were fired by the eight officers involved, but Walker sustained more than 60 wounds. An attorney for Walker's family said officers kept firing even after he was on the ground.

Officers attempted to stop Walker's car around 12:30 a.m. for unspecified traffic and equipment violations, but less than a minute into a pursuit, the sound of a shot was heard from the car, and a transportation department camera captured what appeared to be a muzzle flash coming from the vehicle, Akron Police Chief Steve Mylett said. That changed the nature of the case from "a routine traffic stop to now a public safety issue," he said.

Police body camera videos show what unfolded after the roughly six-minute pursuit. Several shouting officers with guns drawn approach the slowing car on foot, as it rolls up over a curb and onto a sidewalk. A person wearing a ski mask exits the passenger door and runs toward a parking lot. Police chase him for about 10 seconds before officers fire from multiple directions, in a burst of shots that lasts 6 or 7 seconds.

At least one officer had tried first to use a stun gun, but that was unsuccessful, police said.

Mylett said Walker's actions are hard to distinguish on the video in real time, but a still photo seems to show him "going down to his waist area" and another appears to show him turning toward an officer. He said a third picture "captures a forward motion of his arm."

In a statement shared Sunday with reporters, the local police union said the officers thought there was an immediate threat of serious harm, and that it believes their actions and the number of shots will be found justified in line with their training and protocols. The union said the officers are cooperating with the investigation.

Police said more than 60 wounds were found on Walker's body but further investigation is needed to determine exactly how many rounds the officers fired and how many times Walker was hit.

The footage released by police ends with the officers' gunfire and doesn't show what happened next. Officers provided aid, and one can be heard saying Walker still had a pulse, but he was later pronounced dead, Mylett said.

The chief said an officer firing at someone has to be "ready to explain why they did what they did, they need to be able to articulate what specific threats they were facing ... and they need to be held to account." But he said he is withholding judgment on their actions until they give their statements.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 24 of 54

A handgun, a loaded magazine and an apparent wedding ring were found on the seat of the car. A casing consistent with the weapon was later found in the area where officers believed a shot had come from the vehicle.

State Attorney General Dave Yost vowed a "complete, fair and expert investigation" by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and cautioned that "body-worn camera footage is just one view of the whole picture."

Akron police are conducting a separate internal investigation about whether the officers violated department rules or policies.

The officers involved in the shooting are on paid administrative leave, which is standard practice in such cases. Seven of them are white, and one is Black, according to the department. Their length of service with Akron police ranges from one-and-a-half to six years, and none of them has a record of discipline, substantiated complaints or fatal shootings, it said.

Demonstrators marched peacefully through the city and gathered in front of the Akron justice center after the video was released. NAACP President Derrick Johnson said in a statement that Walker's death wasn't self-defense, but "was murder. Point blank."

Late Sunday, police in full riot gear fired a dozen tear gas canisters to disperse a handful of protesters outside the justice center, WKYC-TV reported.

Walker's family is calling for accountability but also for peace, their lawyers said. One of the attorneys, Bobby DiCello, called the burst of police gunfire excessive and unreasonable, and said police handcuffed Walker before trying to provide first aid.

"How it got to this with a pursuit is beyond me," DiCello said.

He said Walker's family doesn't know why he fled from police. Walker was grieving the recent death of his fiancée, but his family had no indication of concern beyond that, and he wasn't a criminal, DiCello said.

"I hope we remember that as Jayland ran across that parking lot, he was unarmed," DiCello said.

He said he doesn't know whether the gold ring found near the gun in the car belonged to Walker.

A turbulent US this July 4, but many see cause to celebrate

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

Independence Day arrives at a time when the United States is roiled by hearings over the Jan. 6 insurrection, awash in turmoil over high court rulings on abortion and guns and struggling to maintain the common bonds that keep it together.

Yet many also see cause to celebrate: The pandemic continues to be on the wane and, despite its faults, America's democracy survives.

"I think many of us are feeling conflicted about celebrating 4th of July right now," obstacle race champion and attorney Amelia Boone tweeted as the week gave way to the long holiday weekend.

In her eyes patriotism is also about fighting for change, she said, adding, "I'm not giving up on the US."

That sentiment is no doubt shared by millions who on Monday will be celebrating the nation's 246th birthday and anniversary of independence from English rule.

It's a day for taking off work, flocking to parades, devouring hot dogs and burgers at backyard barbecues and gathering under a canopy of stars and exploding fireworks — in many cases for the first time in three years amid easing coronavirus precautions.

Baltimore, for one, is resuming its Independence Day celebrations after a two-year hiatus, to the delight of residents like Steven Williams.

"I used to actually be up there every year. Then it stopped," Williams told WBAL-TV. "I haven't seen them in a couple of years."

Colorful displays big and small will light up the night sky in cities from New York to Seattle to Chicago to Dallas. However others, particularly in drought-stricken and wildfire-prone regions of the West, will forgo them.

Phoenix is also again going without fireworks — not because of the pandemic or fire concerns but due

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 25 of 54

to supply-chain issues.

In emotional ceremonies across the country, some newer residents will swear oaths of citizenship, qualifying them to vote for the first time in the upcoming midterm elections.

To be sure, these are precarious times: An economic recession lurks, and the national psyche is still raw from mass shootings like those seen recently at a Texas elementary school and a New York supermarket.

Sharp social and political divisions have also been laid bare by recent Supreme Court decisions overturning the constitutional right to abortion and striking down a New York law limiting who may carry a gun in public.

But for many, July 4 is also a chance to set aside political differences and to celebrate unity, reflecting on the revolution that gave rise to history's longest-lived democracy.

Eli Merritt, a political historian at Vanderbilt University whose upcoming book traces the fraught founding of the United States in 1776, said that "there's always something to divide or unite us."

But he sees the Jan. 6 hearings probing last year's storming of the U.S. Capitol as a reason for hope, an opportunity to rally behind democratic institutions. Even though not all Americans or their elected representatives agree with the committee's work, Merritt is heartened by the fact that it's at least somewhat bipartisan with some Republicans joining in.

"Moral courage as a locus for Americans to place hope," he said, "the willingness to stand up for what is right and true in spite of negative consequences to oneself. That is an essential glue of constitutional democracy."

3 dead, 3 critically wounded in shooting at Denmark mall

By JAN M. OLSEN and KARL RITTER Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — A gunman opened fire inside a busy shopping mall in the Danish capital Sunday, killing three people and critically wounding three others, police said.

A 22-year-old Danish man was arrested after the shooting, Copenhagen police inspector Søren Thomassen told reporters, adding there was no indication that anyone else was involved in the attack, though police were still investigating.

Gun violence is relatively rare in Denmark.

Thomassen said it was too early to speculate on the motive for the shooting, which happened in the late afternoon at Field's, one of the biggest shopping malls in Scandinavia and located on the outskirts of the Danish capital. When the shots rang out, some people hid in shops while others fled in a panicked stampede, according to witnesses.

"It is pure terror. This is awful," said Hans Christian Stoltz, a 53-year-old IT consultant, who was bringing his daughters to see Harry Styles perform at concert scheduled for Sunday night near the mall. "You might wonder how a person can do this to another human being, but it's beyond ... beyond anything that's possible."

Thomassen said the victims included a man in his 40s and two "young people," without giving details. Several others were injured, three of them critically, he said.

He said police received the first reports of a shooting at 5.37 p.m., and arrested the suspect 11 minutes later. Thomassen described the suspect as an "ethnic Dane," a phrase typically used to mean someone is white.

Danish broadcaster TV2 published a grainy photo of the alleged gunman, a man wearing knee-length shorts, a vest or sleeveless shirt, and holding what appeared to be a rifle in his right hand. "He seemed very violent and angry," eyewitness Mahdi Al-Wazni told TV2. "He spoke to me and said it (the rifle) isn't real as I was filming him. He seemed very proud of what he was doing."

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said the Scandinavian country had been hit by a "cruel attack."

"It is incomprehensible. Heartbreaking. Pointless," she said. "Our beautiful and usually so safe capital was changed in a split second."

Images from the scene showed people running out of the mall, and TV2 posted a photo of a man being put on a stretcher. After the shooting, an enormous contingent of heavily armed police officers patrolled

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 26 of 54

the area, with several fire department vehicles also parked outside the mall.

Laurits Hermansen told Danish broadcaster DR that he was in a clothing store at the shopping center with his family when he heard “three, four bangs. Really loud bangs. It sounded like the shots were being fired just next to the store.”

The shopping center is on the outskirts of Copenhagen just across from a subway station for a line that connects the city center with the international airport. A major highway also runs adjacent to the mall.

Organizers called off the Harry Styles concert, which had been scheduled at the nearby Royal Arena, by order of police.

On Snapchat, Styles wrote: “My team and I pray for everyone involved in the Copenhagen shopping mall shooting. I am shocked. Love H.”

The royal palace said a reception with Crown Prince Frederik connected to the Tour de France cycling race had been canceled. The first three stages of the race were held in Denmark this year. The reception was due to be held on the royal yacht that is moored in Soenderborg, the town where the third stage ended.

In a joint statement, Queen Margrethe, her son Crown Prince Frederik and his wife, Crown Princess Mary, said: “We do not yet know the full extent of the tragedy, but it is already clear that more people have lost their lives and that even more have been injured.”

“The situation calls for unity and care,” they said in a statement.

The shooting came a week after a mass shooting in neighboring Norway, where police said a Norwegian man of Iranian origin opened fire during a LGBTQ festival, killing two and wounding more than 20.

It was the worst gun attack in Denmark since February 2015, when a 22-year-old man was killed in a shootout with police after going on a shooting spree in the capital that left two people dead and five police officers wounded.

Hope and despair: Kathy Gannon on 35 years in Afghanistan

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Afghan policeman opened fire on us with his AK-47, emptying 26 bullets into the back of the car. Seven slammed into me, and at least as many into my colleague, Associated Press photographer Anja Niedringhaus. She died at my side.

Anja weighed heavy against my shoulder. I tried to look at her but I couldn’t move. I looked down; all I could see was what looked like a stump where my left hand had been. I could barely whisper, “Please help us.”

Our driver raced us to a small local hospital in Khost, siren on. I tried to stay calm, thinking over and over: “Don’t be afraid. Don’t die afraid. Just breathe.”

At the hospital, Dr. Abdul Majid Mangal said he would have to operate and tried to reassure me. His words are forever etched in my heart: “Please know your life is as important to me as it is to you.”

Much later, as I recovered in New York during a process that would turn out to eventually require 18 operations, an Afghan friend called from Kabul. He wanted to apologize for the shooting on behalf of all Afghans.

I said the shooter didn’t represent a nation, a people. My mind returned to Dr. Mangal – for me, it was him who represented Afghanistan and Afghans.

I have reported on Afghanistan for the AP for the past 35 years, during an extraordinary series of events and regime changes that have rocked the world. Through it all, the kindness and resilience of ordinary Afghans have shone through – which is also what has made it so painful to watch the slow erosion of their hope.

I have always been amazed at how Afghans stubbornly hung on to hope against all odds, greeting each of several new regimes with optimism. But by 2018, a Gallup poll showed that the fraction of people in Afghanistan with hope in the future was the lowest ever recorded anywhere.

It didn’t have to be this way.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 27 of 54

I arrived in Afghanistan in 1986, in the middle of the Cold War. It seems a lifetime ago. It is.

Then, the enemy attacking Afghanistan was the communist former Soviet Union, dubbed godless by United States President Ronald Reagan. The defenders were the U.S.-backed religious mujahedeen, defined as those who engage in holy war, championed by Reagan as freedom fighters.

Reagan even welcomed some mujahedeen leaders to the White House. Among his guests was Jalaluddin Haqqani, the father of the current leader of the Haqqani network, who in today's world is a declared terrorist.

At that time, the God versus communism message was strong. The University of Nebraska even crafted an anti-communist curriculum to teach English to the millions of Afghan refugees living in camps in neighboring Pakistan. The university made the alphabet simple: J was for Jihad or holy war against the communists; K was for the Kalashnikov guns used in jihad, and I was for Infidel, which described the communists themselves.

There was even a math program. The questions went something like: If there were 10 communists and you killed five, how many would you have left?

When I covered the mujahedeen, I spent a lot of time and effort on being stronger, walking longer, climbing harder and faster. At one point, I ran out of a dirty mud hut with them and hid under a nearby cluster of trees. Just minutes later, Russian helicopter gunships flew low, strafed the trees and all but destroyed the hut.

The Russians withdrew in 1989 without a win. In 1992, the mujahedeen took power.

Ordinary Afghans hoped fervently that the victory of the mujahedeen would mean the end of war. They also to some degree welcomed a religious ideology that was more in line with their largely conservative country than communism.

But it wasn't long before the mujahedeen turned their guns on each other.

The fighting was brutal, with the mujahedeen pounding the capital, Kabul, from the hills. Thrice the AP lost its equipment to thieving warlords, only to be returned after negotiations with the top warlord. One day I counted as many as 200 incoming and outgoing rockets inside of minutes.

The bloodletting of the mujahedeen-cum government ministers-cum warlords killed upward of 50,000 people. I saw a 5-year-old girl killed by a rocket as she stepped out of her house. Children by the scores lost limbs to booby traps placed by mujahedeen as they departed neighborhoods.

I stayed on the front line with a woman and her two small children in the Macroyan housing complex during the heaviest rocketing. Her husband, a former communist government employee, had fled, and she lived by making and selling bread each day with her children.

She opened her home to me even though she had so little. All night we stayed in the one room without windows. She asked me if I would take her son to Pakistan the next day, but in the end could not bear to see him go.

Only months after my visit, they were killed by warlords who wanted their apartment.

Despite the chaos of the time, Afghans still had hope.

In the waning days of the warring mujahedeen's rule, I attended a wedding in Kabul where both the wedding party and guests were coiffed and downright glamorous. When asked how she managed to look so good with so little amid the relentless rocketing, one young woman replied brightly, "We're not dead yet!"

The wedding was delayed twice because of rockets.

The Taliban had by then emerged. They were former mujahedeen and often Islamic clerics who had returned to their villages and their religious schools after 1992. They came together in response to the relentless killing and thieving of their former comrades-in-arms.

By mid-1996, the Taliban were on Kabul's doorstep, with their promise of burqas for women and beards for men. Yet Afghans welcomed them. They hoped the Taliban would at least bring peace.

When asked about the repressive restrictions of the Taliban, one woman who had worked for an international charity said: "If I know there is peace and my child will be alive, I will wear the burqa."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 28 of 54

Peace did indeed come to Afghanistan, at least of sorts. Afghans could leave their doors unlocked without fear of being robbed. The country was disarmed, and travel anywhere in Afghanistan at any time of the day or night was safe.

But Afghans soon began to see their peace as a prison. The Taliban's rule was repressive. Public punishments such as chopping off hands and rules that denied girls school and women work brought global sanctions and isolation. Afghans got poorer.

The Taliban leader at the time was the reclusive Mullah Mohammad Omar, rumored to have removed his own eye after being wounded in a battle against invading Soviet soldiers. As international sanctions crippled Afghanistan, Omar got closer to al-Qaida, until eventually the terrorist group became the Taliban's only source of income.

By 2001, al-Qaida's influence was complete. Despite a pledge from Omar to safeguard them, Afghanistan's ancient statues of Buddha were destroyed, in an order reportedly from Osama bin Laden himself.

Then came the seismic shock of 9/11.

Many Afghans mourned the American deaths so far away. Few even knew who bin Laden was. But the country was now squarely a target in the eyes of the United States. Amir Shah, AP's longtime correspondent, summed up what most Afghans were thinking at the time: "America will set Afghanistan on fire."

And it did.

After 9/11, the Taliban threw all foreigners out of Afghanistan, including me. The U.S.-led coalition assault began on Oct. 7, 2001.

By Oct. 23, I was back in Kabul, the only Western journalist to see the last weeks of Taliban rule. The powerful B-52 bombers of the U.S. pounded the hills and even landed in the city.

On Nov. 12 that year, a 2,000-pound bomb landed on a house near the AP office. It threw me across the room and blew out window and door frames. Glass shattered and sprayed everywhere.

By sunrise the next day, the Taliban were gone from Kabul.

Afghanistan's next set of rulers marched into the city, brought by the powerful military might of the U.S.-led coalition.

The mujahedeen were back.

The U.S. and U.N. returned them to power even though some among them had brought bin Laden from Sudan to Afghanistan in 1996, promising him a safe haven. The hope of Afghans went through the roof, because they believed the powerful U.S. would help them keep the mujahedeen in check.

With more than 40 countries involved in their homeland, they believed peace and prosperity this time was most certainly theirs. Foreigners were welcome everywhere.

Some Afghans worried about the returning mujahedeen, remembering the corruption and fighting when they last were in power. But America's representative at the time, Zalmay Khalilzad, told me that the mujahedeen had been warned against returning to their old ways.

Yet worrying signs began to emerge. The revenge killings began, and the U.S.-led coalition sometimes participated without knowing the details. The mujahedeen would falsely identify enemies – even those who had worked with the U.S. before – as belonging to al-Qaida or to the Taliban.

One such mistake happened early in December 2001 when a convoy was on its way to meet the new President Hamid Karzai. The U.S.-led coalition bombed it because they were told the convoy bore fighters from the Taliban and al-Qaida. They turned out to be tribal elders.

Secret prisons emerged. Hundreds of Afghan men disappeared. Families became desperate.

Resentment soared especially among the ethnic Pashtuns, who had been the backbone of the Taliban. One former Taliban member proudly displayed his new Afghan identity card and wanted to start a water project in his village. But corrupt government officials extorted him for his money, and he returned to the Taliban.

A deputy police chief in southern Zabul province told me of 2,000 young Pashtun men, some former Taliban, who wanted to join the new government's Afghan National Army. But they were mocked for their ethnicity, and eventually all but four went to the mountains and joined the Taliban.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 29 of 54

In the meantime, corruption seemed to reach epic proportions, with suitcases of money, often from the CIA, handed off to Washington's Afghan allies. Yet schools were built, roads were reconstructed and a new generation of Afghans, at least in the cities, grew up with freedoms their parents had not known and in many cases looked on with suspicion.

Then came the shooting in 2014 that would change my life.

It began as most days do in Afghanistan: Up before 6 a.m. This day we were waiting for a convoy of Afghan police and military to leave the eastern city of Khost for a remote region to distribute the last of the ballot boxes for Afghanistan's 2014 presidential elections.

After 30 minutes navigating past blown-out bridges and craters that pockmarked the road, we arrived at a large police compound. For more than an hour, Anja and I talked with and photographed about a dozen police officials.

We finished our work just as a light drizzle began. We got into the car and waited to leave for a nearby village. That's when the shooting happened.

It was two years before I was able to return to work and to Afghanistan.

By that point, the disappointment and disenchantment with America's longest war had already set in. Despite the U.S. spending over \$148 billion on development alone over 20 years, the percentage of Afghans barely surviving at the poverty level was increasing yearly.

In 2019, Pakistan began accepting visa applications at its consulate in eastern Afghanistan. People were so desperate to leave that nine died in a stampede.

In 2020, the U.S. and the Taliban signed a deal for troops to withdraw within 18 months. The U.S. and NATO began to evacuate their staff, closing down embassies and offering those who worked for them asylum.

The mass closure of embassies was baffling to me because the Taliban had made no threats, and it sparked panic in Kabul. It was the sudden and secret departure of President Ashraf Ghani that finally brought the Taliban back into the city on Aug. 15, 2021.

Their swift entry came as a surprise, along with the thorough collapse of the neglected Afghan army, beset by deep corruption. The Taliban's rapid march toward Kabul fed a rush toward the airport.

For many in the Afghan capital, the only hope left lay in getting out.

Fida Mohammad, a 24-year-old dentist, was desperate to leave for the U.S. so he could earn enough money to repay his father's debt of \$13,000 for his elaborate marriage. He clung to the wheels of the departing US C-17 aircraft on Aug. 16 and died.

Zaki Anwari, a 17-year-old footballer, ran to get on the plane. He dreamed only of football, and believed his dream could not come true in Afghanistan. He was run over by the C-17.

Now the future in Afghanistan is even more uncertain. Scores of people line up outside the banks to try to get their money out. Hospitals are short of medicine. The Taliban hardliners seem to have the upper hand, at least in the short term.

Afghans are left to face the fact that the entire world came to their country in 2001 and spent billions, and still couldn't bring them prosperity or even the beginnings of prosperity. That alone has deeply eroded hope for the future.

I leave Afghanistan with mixed feelings, sad to see how its hope has been destroyed but still deeply moved by its 38 million people. The Afghans I met sincerely loved their country, even if it is now led by elderly men driven by tribal traditions offensive to a world that I am not sure ever really understood Afghanistan.

Most certainly, though, I will be back.

WWII Medal of Honor recipient to lie in honor at US Capitol

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hershel W. "Woody" Williams, the last remaining Medal of Honor recipient from World War II, will lie in honor at the U.S. Capitol, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said Sunday.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 30 of 54

A date and other details will be announced later, Pelosi and Schumer said in a joint statement.

"Woody Williams embodied the best of America: living a life of duty, honor and courage," Pelosi said. Schumer said: "Woody Williams was an American hero who embodied the best of our country and the greatest generation."

Williams, who died on Wednesday at 98, was a legend in his native West Virginia for his heroics under fire over several crucial hours at the battle for Iwo Jima. As a young Marine corporal, Williams went ahead of his unit in February 1945 and eliminated a series of Japanese machine gun positions. Facing small-arms fire, Williams fought for four hours, repeatedly returning to prepare demolition charges and obtain flamethrowers.

Later that year, the 22-year-old Williams received the Medal of Honor from President Harry Truman. The Medal of Honor is the nation's highest award for military valor.

In remarks at a memorial Sunday in Charleston, West Virginia, U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin said Williams "never quit giving back." That included raising money for gold star families — immediate family members of fallen service members — with an annual motorcycle ride.

"It's raised hundreds of thousands of dollars," Manchin said. He joked that "it's not going to be stopping, because Woody would come after me in a heartbeat."

Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat, said he will miss Williams' phone calls, noting how Williams would always give him directions and to-do lists.

"I'll miss him telling me how I'm supposed to vote. And when I didn't, how I made a mistake," Manchin said.

Gen. David H. Berger, commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, said at the memorial that Williams always took exception to the notion that he accomplished that feat alone. He always acknowledged the other men on his team, some of whom never returned home.

"Woody may be the most genuine person I ever met," Berger said, noting his unique combination of humility and humor. "He could make you laugh. He could make you care. That was his gift."

Williams remained in the Marines after the war, serving a total of 20 years, before working for the Veterans Administration for 33 years as a veterans service representative. In 2018, the Huntington VA medical center was renamed in his honor, and the Navy commissioned a mobile base sea vessel in his name in 2020.

"He left an indelible mark on our Marine Corps," Berger said. "As long as there are Marines, his legacy will live on."

Manchin announced during his remarks that Williams would lie in state at the Rotunda, but Pelosi and Schumer said he would lie in honor. The distinction, according to the Architect of the Capitol, which oversees the building, is that government officials and military officers lie in state while private citizens lie in honor.

Wimbledon wild-card entry steals set, not win, from Djokovic

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — Even knowing what an unusual Wimbledon this has been, what with so many unexpected results and new faces popping up, and so few top seeds — and major champions — remaining, surely Novak Djokovic would not lose to a wild-card entry making his Grand Slam debut, would he?

If it did not quite seem plausible, it did at least become vaguely possible a tad past 9:30 p.m. on Sunday night under the closed roof at Centre Court, when 25-year-old Dutchman Tim van Rijthoven — ranking: 104th; lifetime tour-level victories: eight, all in the past month — had the temerity to smack a 133 mph ace past Djokovic and tie their fourth-round match at a set apiece.

All of nine minutes later, the time it took Djokovic to grab 12 of the next 15 points, and the next three games, both plausibility and possibility took a hike. Soon enough, the third set was his, and not much later, so was the fourth, and the match, a 6-2, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2 result that gave the tournament's No. 1 seed a 25th consecutive grass-court victory at the All England Club and a place in his 13th Wimbledon quarterfinal.

"Novak did his Novak thing," van Rijthoven said, "and played very, very well. He had all the answers."

Beforehand, van Rijthoven had said: "I'll go into that match thinking I can win." Might have still had that

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 31 of 54

sense Sunday evening. If only briefly.

Eventually, the only true question was whether Djokovic would wrap this one up in time, because there is an 11 p.m. curfew. Running up against that would have required them to resume Monday.

"Whew. I am lucky," Djokovic said after closing the deal with 20 minutes to spare. "It's never really pleasant if you can't finish the match in the same day. Glad I did."

They did not begin playing until 8 p.m., in part due to a delay of roughly an hour at the start of this special afternoon — the first time in history the tournament's middle Sunday held scheduled play — while a ceremony was held to honor the 100 years of Centre Court.

Djokovic, who questioned after his victory why matches generally begin so late in the main stadium, was among the many past champions who took part, joking to the crowd when it was his turn to speak, "Gosh, I feel more nervous than when I'm playing."

If he was, indeed, jittery at all at a set apiece many hours later against van Rijthoven, it certainly did not show. Didn't matter that van Rijthoven kept cranking out huge serves, to the tune of 20 aces, including a pair on second serves. Didn't matter just how big the cuts were that van Rijthoven took with his forehands. Didn't matter that the spectators, who love an underdog, were getting louder and louder as the second set came to a close. Didn't matter that Djokovic stumbled behind what he called a "slippery" baseline twice, landing first on his backside, later on his left knee and stomach.

"He was on a streak on this surface, and I knew that it wasn't going to be easy. With that serve and a lot of talent, great touch, powerful forehand, he can do a lot of damage," Djokovic said. "It took me a little bit of time to get used to his pace."

Djokovic, a 35-year-old from Serbia, calibrated his best-in-the-game returns, got his groundstrokes in fine form — finishing with just 19 unforced errors, compared to 29 winners — and was in complete control, a step closer to all manner of important numbers. His pursuit of a fourth consecutive, and seventh overall, title at Wimbledon, not to mention a 21st major championship, will continue Tuesday against No. 10 seed Jannik Sinner of Italy.

Sinner reached his first quarterfinal at the All England Club by eliminating No. 5 Carlos Alcaraz 6-1, 6-4, 6-7 (8), 6-3 earlier.

The other quarterfinal on their half of the bracket will be No. 9 Cam Norrie of Britain against unseeded David Goffin of Belgium. They each advanced by beating Americans: Norrie beat No. 30 Tommy Paul 6-4, 7-5, 6-4 to get to his first major quarterfinal, and Goffin edged No. 23 Frances Tiafoe 7-6 (3), 5-7, 5-7, 6-4, 7-5 over more than 4 1/2 hours.

The rest of the fourth round is Monday, and the only men left in the field who ever have participated in a Grand Slam final are Djokovic and 22-time major champion Rafael Nadal. They are also the only men still around ranked in the top 10.

It's a similarly unfamiliar collection of players chasing the women's championship, with just one who has appeared in a Grand Slam final (two-time major title winner Simona Halep, who plays Monday) and just two who were among the top 15 seeds at Wimbledon (No. 3 Ons Jabeur and No. 4 Paula Badosa, who plays Monday).

Jabeur made it to the quarterfinals at the All England Club for the second year in a row with a 7-6 (9), 6-4 victory against No. 24 Elise Mertens of Belgium. The other women moving on Sunday are unseeded and in unfamiliar territory, never having been in any major quarterfinal.

Jabeur next plays Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic, while Tatjana Maria, 34, and Jule Niemeier, 22, will meet in an all-German quarterfinal.

Bouzkova topped Caroline Garcia 7-5, 6-2, Maria defeated 2017 French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko 5-7, 7-5, 7-5 after erasing two match points, and Niemeier beat Heather Watson 6-2, 6-4.

"There's no reason ... not to keep this going," said Bouzkova, who pulled out of the French Open in May after testing positive for COVID-19 before her second-round match. "Kind of believing in myself right now."

There's been a lot of that going around at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament. Djokovic put an end to such thoughts for van Rijthoven

Alpine glacier chunk detaches, killing at least 6 hikers

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — A large chunk of an Alpine glacier broke loose Sunday and roared down a mountain in Italy, sending ice, snow and rock slamming into hikers on a popular trail on the peak and killing at least six and injuring nine, authorities said, warning that the toll might climb.

A local Civil Protection official, Gianpaolo Bottacin, was quoted by the Italian news agency ANSA as providing the toll, but stressing that the situation was "evolving" and that there could be perhaps 15 people missing.

In late evening, the National Alpine and Cave Rescue Corps tweeted a phone number to call for family or friends in case of "failure to return from possible excursions" to the glacier.

Rescuers were checking license plates in the parking lot as part of checks to determine how many people might be unaccounted for, a process that could take hours, Corps spokesman Walter Milan told The Associated Press by telephone.

The glacier, in the Marmolada range, is the largest in the Dolomite mountains in northeastern Italy and people ski there in the winter. But the glacier has been rapidly melting away in recent years.

Experts at Italy's state-run CNR research center, which has a polar sciences institute, says the glacier won't exist anymore in the next 25-30 years and much of its volume is already gone.

The Mediterranean basin, shared by southern Europe, the Middle East and northern Africa, has been identified by U.N. experts as a "climate change hot spot," likely to suffer heat waves and water shortages, among other consequences.

"We saw dead (people) and enormous chunks of ice, rock," exhausted-looking rescuer Luigi Felicetti told Italian state TV.

Nationalities or ages of the dead weren't immediately available, Milan said.

Of the hospitalized survivors, two were in grave condition, authorities said.

The fast-moving avalanche "came down with a roar the could be heard at great distance," local online media site ildolomiti.it said.

Temporarily, the search by helicopter and dogs for any more victims or missing was halted for the night while rescuers evaluated the risk that more of the glacier could break off, Walter Cainelli, after conducting a rescue mission with a search dog, told state television.

Rescuers said blocks of ice were continuing to tumble down. In early evening, a light rain began to fall.

The SUEM dispatch service, which is based in the nearby Veneto region, said 18 people who were above the area where the ice struck would be evacuated by the Alpine rescue corps.

Some of those making the trek in the area where the avalanche barreled through were tied together by rope, according to local emergency services.

But Milan said some of the hikers might be able to get down by themselves, including by using the peak's cable car.

SUEM said the avalanche consisted of a "pouring down of snow, ice and rock." The detached section is know as a serac, or pinnacle of ice.

Dubbed the "queen of the Dolomites," Marmolada rises about 3,300 meters (about 11,000 feet) and is the highest of the 18 peaks in that eastern range of the Italian Alps, offering spectacular views of other Alpine peaks.

The Alpine rescue service said in a tweet that the segment broke off near Punta Rocca (Rock Point), "along the itinerary normally used to reach the peak."

It wasn't immediately clear what caused the section of ice to break away and rush down the peak's slope. But the intense heat wave gripping Italy since late June loomed as a possible factor.

"The temperatures of these days clearly had influence" on the glacier's partial collapse, Maurizio Fugatti, the president of Trento Province, which borders Marmolada, told Sky TG24 news.

But Milan stressed that high heat, which soared unusually above 10 C (50 F) on Marmolada's peak in

recent days, was only one possible factor in Sunday's tragedy.

"There are so many factors that could be involved," Milan said. Avalanches in general aren't predictable, he said, and heat's influence on a glacier "is even more impossible to predict."

In separate comments to Italian state television, Milan called the recent temperatures "extreme heat" for the peak. "Clearly it's something abnormal."

The injured were flown to several hospitals in the regions of Trentino-Alto Adige and Veneto, according to rescue services.

As in other cases of disasters amid nature in Italy, prosecutors opened an investigation to see if there was any indication of possible wrongdoing linked to the avalanche.

Russia claims control of pivotal eastern Ukrainian province

By OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI and FRANCESCA EBEL Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia claimed control Sunday over the last Ukrainian stronghold in an eastern province that is key to achieving a major goal of Moscow's grinding war.

The General Staff of Ukraine's military reported that its forces had withdrawn from Lysychansk in Luhansk province. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy acknowledged the withdrawal but said the fight for the city was still raging on its outskirts.

If confirmed, Russia's complete seizure of Luhansk would provide its troops with a stronger base from which to press their advance in the Donbas, a region of mines and factories that President Vladimir Putin is bent on capturing in a campaign that could determine the course of the entire war.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told Putin that Russia's troops, with a local separatist militia, "have established full control over the city of Lysychansk" and now hold all of Luhansk, according to a ministry statement published Sunday.

As is typical with such descriptions, the Russian statement characterized the victories as "the liberation of the Luhansk People's Republic." Separatists in Luhansk and neighboring Donetsk, which make up the Donbas and are home to significant Russian-speaking populations, declared independence from Kyiv in 2014 and their forces have battled Ukrainian troops there ever since. Russia formally recognized the self-proclaimed republics days before its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

Ukrainian and Russian forces fought fiercely for Lysychansk in recent days after the neighboring city fell last week. On Sunday evening, the General Staff of Ukraine's military confirmed on social media that its forces had withdrawn from Lysychansk "to preserve the lives of Ukrainian defenders."

In his nightly video address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy noted the withdrawal. But he added that "Ukraine does not give anything back" and vowed to return with more modern weapons. Citing his forces' success in recapturing other territory, he promised, "There will be a day when we will say the same about Donbas."

Earlier, Zelenskyy said Kyiv's forces were still battling Russian soldiers on Lysychansk's outskirts "in a very difficult and dangerous situation."

"We cannot give you the final judgment. Lysychansk is still being fought for," Zelenskyy told a news conference in Kyiv given alongside Australia's visiting prime minister. He noted that territory can move quickly from one side to the other.

Russian forces maintain an advantage in the area, he acknowledged, calling it a Ukrainian military "weak spot."

The capture of Lysychansk would give the Russians more territory from which to intensify attacks on Donetsk. In recent weeks, Russian forces were thought to hold about half of Donetsk, but it's not clear where things stand now.

If Russia prevails in the Donbas, Ukraine would lose not only land but perhaps the bulk of its most capable military forces, opening the way for Moscow to grab more territory and strengthen its ability to dictate terms to Kyiv.

Since failing to take Kyiv and other areas in northern and central Ukraine early in the war, Russia has

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 34 of 54

focused on the Donbas, unleashing fierce shelling and engaging in house-to-house combat that devastated Lysychansk, neighboring Sievierodonetsk and nearby villages. Few details emerged from either city during the battles, which decimated their populations as people were killed or fled.

Already Russian forces appeared to be pushing their advance in Donetsk, concentrating rocket attacks on the sizable Ukrainian-held city of Sloviansk, where at least six people were killed, regional government spokeswoman Tatyana Ignatchenko told Ukrainian TV.

Kramatorsk, another major city in the Donetsk region, also came under fire, the regional administration said.

Far from the fighting in the east, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Sunday visited a town near the capital that was severely damaged early in the war. Albanese called the destruction in Irpin "devastating."

"These are homes and these are livelihoods and indeed lives that have been lost here in this town," he said.

Meanwhile, the exiled mayor of the Russia-occupied city of Melitopol said Sunday that Ukrainian rockets destroyed one of four Russian military bases in the city.

Attacks were also reported inside Russia, in a revival of sporadic apparent Ukrainian strikes across the border. The governor of the Belgorod region in Western Russia said fragments of an intercepted Ukrainian missile killed four people Sunday. In the Russian city of Kursk, two Ukrainian drones were shot down, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

Kursk regional governor Roman Starovoit said the town of Tetkino, on the Ukraine border, came under mortar fire.

Zhou involved in frightening 1st-lap crash at British GP

SILVERSTONE, England (AP) — Zhou Guanyu said he was "all clear" Sunday after a frightening first-lap crash that brought the British Grand Prix to an immediate halt as safety crews attended to the only Chinese driver in Formula One.

Zhou's car slid upside-down across the gravel and his Alfa Romeo seemed to be wedged between fencing and a tire barrier at the first corner. The race was red flagged and George Russell, one of the drivers involved in the crash, sprinted from his car to the tire barrier to check on Zhou.

Zhou was taken to the track's medical center for observation and credited the head-protecting "halo" device on the cars for protecting him.

"I'm ok, all clear. Halo saved me today. Thanks everyone for your kind messages!" he wrote on Twitter.

Alex Albon of Williams was also taken to the medical center and then his team said he'd been transferred by helicopter to Coventry Hospital for a precautionary check. Albon had spun into the pit wall after being struck by Sebastian Vettel from behind as drivers tried to avoid the incident involving Zhou. Williams said Sunday evening Albon had been "given the all clear" and discharged from hospital.

Russell appeared to be hit from behind at the start and was knocked into Zhou, whose car went flying across a gravel trap and over a tire wall into the retaining fence. The car was skidding on the halo, then went airborne. It was stuck between the tire wall and the fence, delaying efforts to extricate Zhou.

Russell, who ran from his car to help Zhou, called it "one of the scariest crashes I've ever seen."

Russell was declared out of the race by the FIA because his Mercedes was loaded onto a truck to be taken back to pit lane while he was checking on Zhou. Mercedes protested the call, but the FIA did not budge.

The drivers returned to the pits to await a restart.

After the crash, but while cars were still on the track, protesters from an environmental group called Just Stop Oil ran onto the track and sat down. The group said that five of its activists reached the track. Local police said seven arrests were made and that the actions had put lives at risk.

The Just Stop Oil group also tried to disrupt some Premier League soccer games in England in recent months.

The halo device around the cockpit played a prominent role earlier Sunday in a Formula Two race at Sil-

verstone when Dennis Hauger's car landed on top of rival Roy Nissany's car. The incident was reminiscent of a crash in F1 involving Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton at the Italian Grand Prix last year.

"You see the crash in F2 this morning and what happened with the halo, today they saved probably two lives," race winner Carlos Sainz Jr. said.

'Stay tuned' for new evidence against Trump in July hearings

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — More evidence is emerging in the House's Jan. 6 investigation that lends support to recent testimony that President Donald Trump wanted to join an angry mob that marched to the Capitol where they rioted, a committee member said Sunday.

"There will be way more information and stay tuned," said Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill.

The committee has been intensifying its yearlong investigation into the attack on Jan. 6, 2021, and Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election. Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., the committee's vice chair, is making clear that criminal referrals to the Justice Department, including against Trump, could follow.

At least two more hearings are scheduled this month that aim to show how Trump illegally directed a violent mob toward the Capitol on Jan. 6, and then failed to take quick action to stop the attack once it began.

The committee also has been reviewing new documentary film footage of Trump's final months in office, including interviews with Trump and members of his family.

Kinzinger, in a television interview, declined to disclose the new information he referred to and did not say who had provided it. He said many more details emerged after last week's testimony from former White House aide Cassidy Hutchinson and that nothing had changed the committee's confidence in her credibility.

"There's information I can't say yet," he said. "We certainly would say that Cassidy Hutchinson has testified under oath, we find her credible, and anybody that wants to cast disparagements on that, who were firsthand present, should also testify under oath and not through anonymous sources."

In a separate interview, another committee member, Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., said: "We are following additional leads. I think those leads will lead to new testimony."

In Hutchinson's appearance before the committee last week, Hutchinson painted a picture of Trump as an angry, defiant president who was trying to let armed supporters avoid security screenings at a rally on the morning of Jan. 6 to protest his 2020 election defeat to Democrat Joe Biden.

Legal experts have said Cassidy's testimony is potentially problematic for Trump as federal prosecutors investigate potential criminal wrongdoing.

"There could be more than one criminal referral," said Cheney in an interview that aired Sunday. She said the committee will decide later in the process whether to proceed.

Cassidy also recounted a conversation with Tony Ornato, Trump's deputy chief of staff for operations, who, she testified, said Trump later grabbed at the steering wheel of the presidential SUV when the Secret Service refused to let him go to the Capitol after the rally.

That account was quickly disputed, however. Bobby Engel, the Secret Service agent who was driving Trump, and Ornato are willing to testify under oath that no agent was assaulted and Trump never lunged for the steering wheel, a person familiar with the matter said. The person would not discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

In recent days, the committee has subpoenaed former White House counsel Pat Cipollone and has been seeking more information from Ornato and Engel, who were previously interviewed by investigators.

Committee members hope Cipollone will come forward.

"He clearly has information about concerns about criminal violations, concerns about the president going to the Capitol that day, concerns about the chief of staff having blood on his hands if they didn't do more to stop that violent attack on the Capitol," Schiff said. "It's hard to imagine someone more at the center of things."

The committee has also been working on setting up an interview with Virginia "Ginni" Thomas, the conservative activist and wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. She was asked to speak to

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 36 of 54

the committee after disclosures of her communications with Trump's team in the run-up and day of the insurrection at the Capitol.

Kinzinger appeared on CNN's "State of the Union," Schiff was on CBS' "Face the Nation" and Cheney appeared on ABC's "This Week."

'Minions' set box office on fire with \$108.5 million debut

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Families went bananas for Minions this weekend at the movie theater. "Minions: The Rise of Gru" brought in an estimated \$108.5 million in ticket sales from 4,391 screens in North America, Universal Pictures said Sunday. By the end of the Monday's July Fourth holiday, it will likely have earned over \$127.9 million.

The film is on track to become one of the biggest openings ever for a July Fourth holiday weekend, a record previously held by "Transformers: Dark of the Moon" which made \$115.9 million in its first four days in 2011. Including international showings, where "Minions: The Rise of Gru" is playing in 61 markets, its worldwide gross is sitting at \$202.2 million through Sunday.

"It's a tremendous debut," said Jim Orr, Universal's president of domestic distribution. "It's playing very broadly across North America. Every single market doing extraordinarily well."

This is just the latest in a string of successes for Universal's family releases, including "Sing 2," which has grossed over \$406 million since opening in December, and "The Bad Guys," which has made over \$243 million. "Minions: The Rise of Gru" serves as further proof that family audiences are willing to go back to the movie theater.

"Families feel very comfortable bringing all their kids to the theater," Orr said. "These results speak for themselves."

"Minions 2" attracted all ages to the theater, even the very young. According to PostTrak surveys, 12% were under the age of 10.

"For many months there was this idea that family audiences were not going to come back to the theater. We can put that to rest," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore.

The spinoff of the popular "Despicable Me" series was delayed two years because of the pandemic. The sequel to the 2015 film "Minions" was originally slated for a July 2020 release. While many other animated family films opted for streaming or hybrid releases, "Minions," much like "Top Gun: Maverick," stayed the course and waited for an ideal time to launch in theaters only. And as with "Top Gun" the wait, it seems, was worth it.

"This became an event. It was a holiday weekend, the release date was perfect, the marketing was spot on," Dergarabedian said. "And everyone knew this was going to be in theaters only."

The voice cast features Steve Carell, reprising his role as Gru, Alan Arkin, Michelle Yeoh and Julie Andrews as Gru's mother. Critics were mixed to positive (it currently has a 72% on Rotten Tomatoes) but audiences were more enthusiastic, giving the Gru origin story an A CinemaScore.

Universal and Illumination have had enormous success with the five "Despicable Me" movies and spinoffs, which date back to 2010 and have earned over \$3.7 billion at the global box office.

In second place was "Top Gun: Maverick," which continues to deliver six weeks in, adding another \$25.5 million to its total, which has already surpassed \$1 billion. The Paramount Pictures film is still playing in 3,843 locations.

Warner Bros.' "Elvis" took third place, down only 39% in its second weekend in theaters. The Baz Luhrmann film grossed an estimated \$19 million through Sunday, bringing its domestic total to \$67.3 million.

Fourth and fifth place went to Universal titles as well with "Jurassic World: Dominion" picking up another \$15.7 million and the horror movie "The Black Phone" adding \$12.3 million through Sunday.

Disney's "Lightyear," meanwhile, tumbled further in its third weekend with an estimated \$6.5 million. By Monday, that total should raise to \$8.1 million bringing its cumulative earnings to \$106.9 million.

Bleecker Street released "Mr. Malcolm's List" this weekend on 1,384 screens in the U.S. and Canada. The Regency-era comedy of manners stars Freida Pinto and Zawe Ashton as friends looking to get back at a picky bachelor. The studio estimates that the film will have \$851,853 by end of Sunday and over \$1

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 37 of 54

million by end of Monday.

Audiences are also still catching up with A24's "Everything Everywhere All At Once," which added an estimated \$552,000 from 607 screens, in spite of the fact that it's also available to rent on demand. The studio's newer title, "Marcel the Shell With Shoes On," expanded to 22 screens this weekend and is expected to earn about \$308,000 by the end of Monday.

According to Comscore, the weekend as a whole will go down as one of the biggest of the pandemic era. And the momentum is expected to continue with the release of Marvel's "Thor: Love and Thunder" next week.

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

1. "Minions: The Rise of Gru," \$108.5 million.
2. "Top Gun: Maverick," \$25.5 million.
3. "Elvis," \$19 million.
4. "Jurassic World: Dominion," \$15.7 million.
5. "The Black Phone," \$12.3 million.
6. "Lightyear," \$6.6 million.
7. "Mr. Malcolm's List," \$851,853.
8. "Everything Everywhere All at Once," \$551,974.
9. "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness," \$390,000.
10. "JugJugg Jeeyo," \$318,000.

French soccer tournament celebrates diversity, fights racism

By JADE LE DELEY and JEROME PUGMIRE Associated Press

CRETEIL, France (AP) — An amateur soccer tournament in France aimed at celebrating ethnic diversity is attracting talent scouts, sponsors and increasing public attention, by uniting young players from low-income neighborhoods with high-profile names in the sport.

The National Neighborhoods Cup is intended to shine a positive spotlight on working-class areas with large immigrant populations that some politicians and commentators scapegoat as breeding grounds for crime, riots and Islamic extremism.

Players with Congolese heritage beat a team with Malian roots 5-4 on Saturday in the one-month tournament's final match, held at the home stadium of a third-division French team in the Paris suburb of Creteil. The final was broadcast live on Prime Video.

The event competition grew out of local tournaments modeled after the African Cup of Nations that have been held in recent years in suburbs and towns across France where former immigrants with African backgrounds have lived for years or generations. This tournament, however was broader, and international in scope.

Along with teams from former French colonies in Africa, the participants included teams from European nations like Portugal and Italy. Players from France's former colonies in Asia also competed.

The tournament, which was launched in 2019, challenges the French ideal of a colorblind republic that doesn't count or identify people by race or ethnic background. The ideal was intended to provide equal opportunity by treating everyone as simply French; in practice, people in places like Creteil experience discrimination and ethnic tensions daily.

"We are Afro-descendants, we are claiming our roots and we are proud," said tournament founder Moussa Sow, who works at the Red Cross and grew up in a Creteil neighborhood with a tough reputation. "It's not because we carry this heritage that we are going to erase our French identity."

The France team — like its World Cup-winning national team — is made up of white, Black, Arab and multiracial players that reflects the country's diversity.

"We have players who have two or three nationalities. It is a strength for us, a richness," Sow told The Associated Press.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 38 of 54

Sow witnessed firsthand the growing tensions among young people divided into rival groups according to which quarter of Creteil they were from, and wanted to gather inhabitants around the love of soccer and a celebration of cultural heritage.

Mohamed Diamé, who made 31 appearances for Senegal and played for West Ham and Newcastle in the English Premier League, former Mali and Paris Saint-Germain defender Sammy Traoré and Senegal manager Aliou Cissé all took part. In February, Cissé became a national hero after guiding Senegal to long-awaited victory in the African Cup of Nations.

Traoré and Diamé both made it to the top level in soccer and both grew up in Creteil, providing an example to young people that success is within their reach, too.

"I started my first training here when I was 7. I considered people from this neighborhood as brothers," Diamé told the AP. "This feels like a pro tournament. We have a group chat, we support each other, we are determined."

The amateur cup has grown since Sow started in 2019. Colorful placards of multinationals and local companies sponsoring the event were seen around the field. Young people and families can grab a merguez sandwich — a spicy sausage of North African origin long popular around France's soccer stadiums — or other snacks and sing along to popular French songs, played by a DJ near the field.

"I am happy and proud, despite the anxious climate in France, to see people of different generations gathering," Sow said.

Even though the tournament is strictly amateur, the technical level among players was good. At last weekend's semifinals, high-quality cross-field passes and clever dribbles were cheered by the crowd. Some scouts were on the sidelines, sensing an opportunity to recruit talented young players.

Suburbs and satellite towns around big cities, known in French as "les banlieues," are fertile ground for soccer talents in Europe. Academies in France — notably Lyon, Monaco, Nantes and Rennes — are ranked among the best in the Europe along with Spain for developing young players such as Real Madrid great Karim Benzema and World Cup star Kylian Mbappé.

But these same areas have also carried and been scarred by a rough reputation.

At the end of May, some far-right politicians blamed young people from the suburbs for violence outside the Champions League final at Stade de France in the Paris suburb of Saint-Denis. They were widely accused of vandalism, disruption of public safety and fraud.

Sow stressed that despite many people being suspicious of young people from the suburbs, where poverty and minority populations are concentrated in France, the tournament in Creteil has gone well. Defeats have been accepted with grace, and fans who have run onto the field after wins have been joyous rather than violent.

The mayor of Creteil supports the events, and a newly elected parliament member for the district, Clémence Guetté of the left-wing parliamentary coalition NUPES, came to the semifinals. Guetté called it a "unifying" event that promoted "beautiful values" that sport generates.

Diamé, who made around 240 Premier League appearances, has never let that take him away from his roots.

"No matter if you are Black, white, or Asian, everyone is welcome," he told the AP. "Children, parents, grandparents, uncles or aunts. Everyone is here to enjoy a pure moment of pleasure."

Roger Federer hopes to play 'one more time' at Wimbledon

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — Roger Federer did make his way to Wimbledon this year, after all — not to compete, mind you, but to take part in a ceremony marking the centenary of Centre Court on Sunday — and declared his intention to try to return in 2023 with a racket in hand.

"Just tried to be successful here and represent the sport well. I hope I did that," said Federer, who won a men's-record eight of his 20 Grand Slam titles at the All England Club and was greeted with a standing ovation. "And I hope I can come back ... one more time."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 39 of 54

Instead of the mandatory all-white playing uniform, Federer wore a dark suit and tie, his purple Wimbledon member's badge pinned to a jacket lapel. The Swiss star, who turns 41 on Aug. 8 and has been sidelined for a year by knee problems, was among more than two dozen winners of singles championships at the grass-court tournament who appeared in the main stadium during a 35-minute tribute to a stadium that opened in 1922.

"I've been lucky enough to play a lot of matches on this court. Feels awkward to be here today in a different type of role," said Federer, who had participated in every Wimbledon since his main-draw debut in 1999. "But it's great to be here with ... all the other champions. This court has given me my biggest wins, my biggest losses."

His last match anywhere came on July 7, 2021, when he lost at Centre Court in the quarterfinals to Hubert Hurkacz 6-3, 7-6 (4), 6-0. Soon after, Federer had surgery to repair damage to his meniscus and cartilage in his right knee — his third operation on that knee in a span of 1 1/2 years.

Federer has said he plans to return to tournament action at the Swiss Indoors in October.

"Of course I've missed being here. I would have loved to be here. I knew walking out here last year, it was going to be a tough year ahead. Maybe didn't think it was going to take me this long to come back. But the knee has been rough on me," he told the crowd. "I didn't know if I should make the trip, but I'm happy standing right here, right now."

The whole scene was, in some respects, an infomercial for the Grand Slam event itself.

There were gauzy videos — three in all — quips from co-hosts Sue Barker and John McEnroe, performances by Cliff Richard, who used to help kill time by singing during rain delays (a thing of the past, now that Centre Court and No. 1 Court are outfitted with retractable roofs), and Freya Ridings, who sang the 2017 ballad "Lost Without You" while accompanying herself on a white piano placed on the grass near some front-row seats.

Past champions on hand included some still in the brackets this year, such as Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Simona Halep in singles, and Venus Williams in mixed doubles.

When it was his turn with the microphone, Djokovic joked: "Gosh, I feel more nervous than when I'm playing."

The six-time winner was scheduled to be out there on Centre Court in the fourth round later, which was unusual in its own right: This is the first time in history that the tournament was scheduled as a 14-day event, with play planned for the middle Sunday. Previously, that was set aside as a day off, and only on four occasions — in 1991, 1997, 2004 and 2016 — did a backlog of matches created by too much rain lead organizers to add matches on that Sunday.

Andy Murray, whose 2013 Wimbledon singles trophy was the first for a British man in 77 years, Angelique Kerber and Petra Kvitova were other active players present. And there were big names from yesteryear, too, of course: Billie Jean King, Rod Laver, Chris Evert, Bjorn Borg — he and McEnroe, fierce rivals in the 1980s, hugged each other — Stefan Edberg and Goran Ivanisevic.

Also listed by the club as attending: the son of Leslie Godfree, who delivered the first serve in the first match at Centre Court in 1922, and the grandson of Algernon Kingscote, Godfree's opponent that day.

Absent were three of the winningest players in tournament history: Martina Navratilova (who tested positive for COVID-19 and wrote on Twitter she was "gutted" to miss the occasion), Serena Williams and Pete Sampras. Navratilova's nine singles championships are a Wimbledon record; Williams, who lost in the first round last week, and Sampras, who retired in 2002, each won it seven times.

Boy helps Brown put new spin on 'Let's go, Brandon' chant

By STEVE MEGARGEE AP Sports Writer

ELKHART LAKE, Wis. (AP) — Brandon Brown wanted a way to change the narrative behind the "Let's go, Brandon" message after his first career NASCAR victory inadvertently fostered a chant that has been used to insult President Joe Biden.

Brown found that new message thanks to the family of an 8-year-old boy with autism.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 40 of 54

Brandon Brundidge of Cottage Grove, Minnesota, was on a spring-break trip to Houston in March and saw signs with the "Let's go, Brandon" phrase. He believed the signs were meant to encourage him. He consequently started trying activities he'd never attempted before, such as learning to swim and removing the training wheels from his bicycle.

His mother, Sheletta Brundidge, used that story to write a children's book titled, "Brandon Spots His Sign." Brown had the cover of Brundidge's book on the hood of his Camaro for his Xfinity Series race Saturday at Road America.

"To have this come through was like that breakthrough moment for us," Brown said. "This can be positive. This can be good. It doesn't have to be hateful or divisive."

This divisiveness had started after Brown earned his first career NASCAR victory last October.

The crowd at Talladega Superspeedway in Alabama chanted "F--- Joe Biden" during the winner's post-race interview. NBC Sports reporter Kelli Stavast incorrectly told Brown the fans were chanting, "Let's go, Brandon."

From that point, "Let's go, Brandon," became a rallying cry for Biden critics, with signs bearing that message popping up all over. Brown unintentionally found himself in the middle of the firestorm that surrounded these chants.

"I've just been hopeful that I could make it a positive, I could have my name back and not have it be so divisive and scary, where it wouldn't be a political statement for my friends and family to cheer me on during a race," Brown said.

That's where the Brundidge family stepped in.

Sheletta Brundidge is the mother of four children, and three of them have autism. She has written children's books focusing on each of them. She said Brandon often dealt with social anxiety.

That changed after she saw all the "Let's go, Brandon" signs and assumed people were cheering him on. He suddenly had a whole new attitude and wasn't nearly as shy about trying new things.

"He literally wanted us to put flags in front of the house (saying), 'Let's Go Brandon,'" Sheletta Brundidge recalled. "I'm like: 'That's not going to happen. We're not putting these flags in front of the house.'"

Brown learned about this book from his mother and invited the Brundidge family to Road America. They met in person for the first time this weekend, and the two Brandons became fast friends.

"It feels like I have a twin brother but who's older than me," Brandon Brundidge said.

The Brundidges were giving out copies of "Brandon Spots His Sign" at Road America. The book's cover design decorated Brown's car, though he was knocked out of Saturday's race after getting caught up in a multicar wreck that caused him to get examined and released from the infield care center.

Finally, someone found a way for the "Let's go, Brandon" chant to unite rather than divide.

"I'm sorry for what you went through all of this past year," Sheletta Brundidge told Brown on Saturday. "I know it's been horrible. But I'm so glad it happened because this child would not have this breakthrough (otherwise). He still would be afraid to ride his bike without training wheels. He's literally walking up to kids and passing out this book. He would have never done that (before)."

Ruling could dampen government efforts to rein in Big Tech

By MATT O'BRIEN Associated Press

The Supreme Court's latest climate change ruling could dampen efforts by federal agencies to rein in the tech industry, which went largely unregulated for decades as the government tried to catch up to changes wrought by the internet.

In the 6-3 decision that was narrowly tailored to the Environmental Protection Agency, the court ruled Thursday that the EPA does not have broad authority to reduce power plant emissions that contribute to global warming. The precedent is widely expected to invite challenges of other rules set by government agencies.

"Every agency is going to face new hurdles in the wake of this confusing decision," said Alexandra Givens, the president and CEO of the Center for Democracy and Technology, a Washington-based digital rights

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 41 of 54

nonprofit. "But hopefully the agencies will continue doing their jobs and push forward."

The Federal Trade Commission, in particular, has been pursuing an aggressive agenda in consumer protection, data privacy and tech industry competition under a leader appointed last year by President Joe Biden.

Biden's picks for the five-member Federal Communications Commission have also been pursuing stronger "net neutrality" protections banning internet providers from slowing down or blocking access to websites and applications that don't pay for premium service.

A former chief technologist at the FTC during President Donald Trump's administration said the ruling is likely to instill some fear in lawyers at the FTC and other federal agencies about how far they can go in making new rules affecting businesses.

The court "basically said when it comes to major policy changes that can transform entire sectors of the economy, Congress has to make those choices, not agencies," said Neil Chilson, who is now a fellow at libertarian-leaning Stand Together, founded by the billionaire industrialist Charles Koch.

Givens disagreed, arguing that many agencies, especially the FTC, have clear authority and should be able to withstand lawsuits inspired by the EPA decision. She noted that Chief Justice John Roberts, who wrote the opinion, repeatedly described it as an "extraordinary" situation.

Givens is among the tech advocates calling for Congress to act with urgency to make laws protecting digital privacy and other tech matters. But she said laws typically stay on the books for decades, and it's unrealistic to expect Congress to weigh in on every new technical development that questions an agency's mandate.

"We need a democratic system where Congress can give expert agencies the power to address issues when they arise, even when those issues are unforeseen," she said. "The government literally can't work with Congress legislating every twist and turn."

Empowered by Congress in the 1970s to tackle "unfair or deceptive" business practices, the FTC has been in the vanguard of Biden's government-wide mandate to promote competition in some industries, including Big Tech, health care and agriculture. A panoply of targets include hearing aid prices, airline baggage fees and "product of USA" labels on food.

Under Chair Lina Khan, the FTC also has widened the door to more actively writing new regulations in what critics say is a broader interpretation of the agency's legal authority. That initiative could run into stiff legal challenges in the wake of the high court decision. The ruling could call into question the agency's regulatory agenda — leading it to either tread more cautiously or face tougher and more expensive legal challenges.

Khan "hasn't really been someone who pursues soft measures, so it may be a damn-the-torpedoes approach," Chilson said.

University of Massachusetts internet policy expert Ethan Zuckerman said it would be hard to gauge any potential impact of the court's ruling on existing tech regulation. That's partly because "there's just not that much tech regulation to undo," he said.

He said one target could be the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, "a bête noire for many conservatives." Big companies such as Facebook parent Meta could also potentially appeal tough enforcement actions on the idea that federal agencies weren't explicitly authorized to regulate social media.

"We're in uncharted territory, with a court that's taking a wrecking ball to precedent and seems hell-bent on implementing as many right-wing priorities as possible in the shortest possible time," Zuckerman said.

The ruling could dampen the appetite for agencies like the FTC to act to limit harm from artificial intelligence and other new technologies. It could have less effect on new rules that are more clearly in the realm of the agency imposing them.

Michael Brooks, chief counsel for the nonprofit Center for Auto Safety, said the ruling isn't likely to change the government's ability to regulate auto safety or self-driving vehicles, although it does open the door to court challenges.

For instance, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has clear authority to regulate auto

safety from a 1966 motor vehicle safety law, Brooks said.

"As long as the rules they are issuing pertain to the safety of the vehicle and not anything that's outside of their authority, as long as it's related to safety, I don't see how a court could do an end run around the safety act," he said.

Unlike the EPA, an agency with authority granted by multiple, complex laws, NHTSA's "authority is just so crystal clear," Brooks said.

NHTSA could have problems if it strayed too far from regulating safety. For example, if it enacted regulations aimed to shift buyers away from SUVs to more fuel-efficient cars, that might be struck down, he said. But the agency has historically stuck to its mission of regulating auto safety with some authority on fuel economy, he said.

However, it's possible that a company such as Tesla, which has tested the limits of NHTSA's powers, could sue and win due to an unpredictable Supreme Court, Brooks said.

How a favela in Rio got its clean water back, for \$42,300

By DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Butterflies and waxbills flit through the Enchanted Valley just outside Rio de Janeiro's Tijuca Forest National Park. There are fruit trees, a nearby waterfall and a commanding view out over the Atlantic Ocean. But for decades something was spoiling the idyll: the stench of raw sewage.

Electricity arrived in the late 20th century to the low-income Enchanted Valley community – which drew its name from a nearby residential project – but the utility never connected it to the city's sewage network. Waste was contaminating the local environment and putting residents' health at risk.

So the community set out to solve the problem on its own by building a biodigester and artificial wetland to process all sewage generated by all of its 40 families.

It started full operations in June, and is the first independently built biosystem for an entire Brazilian favela, according to Theresa Williamson, executive director at Catalytic Communities, a nonprofit that supports the underserved communities. And it could serve as an example for rural hamlets across Brazil. According to official data, 45% of Brazilians' sewage isn't collected.

The Enchanted Valley project is years in the making. The president of the local residents' association, Otávio Barros, brought a group of tourists to a waterfall downhill in 2007 and, when they wanted to bathe in its waters, he told them they couldn't; all the community's sewage flowed through that cascade. The seed of an idea was planted, though, and he started drumming up support.

"It was harder back then to make people aware, show that everyone would benefit," he told The Associated Press as he walked through the community.

He found allies among researchers of Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, where he had been working as an administrative assistant. They secured money from Rio state's foundation for the support of research to complete a first phase in 2015, and more recently German and Brazilian nonprofits Viva Con Agua and Instituto Clima e Sociedade to connect every home, with additional funding from Catalytic Communities.

Barros labored alongside five other residents from the neighborhood for months, including some three weeks during which time they were just breaking through rocks to create a pathway for new pipes. They lead to the domed biodigester, where sewage is ingested by anaerobic microorganisms. Remaining fluids then proceed to snake beneath the constructed wetland, getting cleansed by fertilizing the plants above.

The full price of the system was about 220,000 reais (\$42,300). That's one quarter what it would have cost to run pipes through the forest down to the existing sewage network at sea level, according to Leonardo Adler, founding partner of Taboa Engenharia, which oversaw the technical side of works.

The federal government has a plan to improve sewage treatment throughout Brazil, which it is pursuing through private concessions of large urban areas. But that approach doesn't help small, isolated communities like Enchanted Valley, where the smell of sewage is now gone and its nearby waterfall is clean for bathing.

"I'm very happy because it was a very arduous stage to manage to bring in partners, involve the community to capture the sewage and return it to the environment clean," Barros said. "It's part of a dream becoming reality. We have others for the Valley."

Splintered Ukrainian city braces for new battle with Russia

By FRANCESCA EBEL Associated Press

SLOVYANSK, Ukraine (AP) — A group of young off-duty Ukrainian soldiers gathered at a military distribution center to enjoy a rare respite from the fighting that has again engulfed their fractured home in eastern Ukraine.

As they shared jokes and a pizza, artillery explosions could be heard a few kilometers away — a reminder of the looming battle that threatens to unfold here in the city of Slovyansk, which was occupied by Russian proxy fighters in 2014.

"Everyone knows that there will be a huge battle in Slovyansk," said one of the soldiers, who could not be named for security reasons.

Now, eight years after their city was last occupied, the war has returned. Slovyansk could become the next major target in Moscow's campaign to take the Donbas region, Ukraine's predominantly Russian-speaking industrial heartland.

Russia's defense minister said Russian army forces and a separatist militia on Sunday captured the city of Lysychansk and now controlled all of eastern Ukraine's Luhansk province. Slovyansk, located 70 kilometers (43 miles) to the west in Donetsk province, came under rocket attacks Sunday that killed an unspecified number of people, Mayor Vadym Lyakh said.

Another soldier interviewed earlier by The Associated Press, a 23-year-old accountant who joined up when the invasion began, said Ukrainian forces simply do not have the weapons to fight off the superior arsenal of the approaching Russian army.

"We know what's coming" he said with a sad smile.

These soldiers were still teenagers when pro-Russian separatists captured and held the town for three months. The brief occupation in 2014 terrorized Slovyansk, where dozens of officials and journalists were taken hostage, and several killings took place.

Fierce fighting and shelling broke out when the Ukrainian army laid siege to the city to recapture it.

"Actually, the war never left Slovyansk. It didn't leave people's heads" said Tetiana Khimion, a 43-year-old dance choreographer who converted a fishing store into a hub for local military units.

"On the one hand, it is easier for us because we know what it's like. On the other hand, it is more difficult for us since we've been living like this for eight years in a suspended condition."

Slovyansk is a city of splintered loyalties. With a large retired population, it is not uncommon to hear older residents express sympathy towards Russia or nostalgia for their Soviet past. There is also distrust of the Ukrainian army and government.

After a recent shelling of his apartment block, one resident named Sergei said he believed that the strike was launched by Ukraine.

"I'm not pro-Russian, I'm not pro-Ukrainian. I am somewhere in between" he said. "Both Russians and Ukrainians kill civilians — everyone should understand that."

On Thursday, a group of elderly residents couldn't hide their frustration after a bomb blast slashed open their roofs and shattered their windows.

Ukraine "says they are protecting us, but what kind of protection is this?" asked one man, who did not provide his name.

"They kneel to that Biden — may he die!" exclaimed his neighbor, Tatyana, referring to U.S. President Joe Biden.

After 2014, Khimion said, it became easier to know "who is who" in Slovyansk. "Now you can easily see: These people are for Ukraine, and these people are for Russia."

She said not enough was done after 2014 to punish people who collaborated with Russian proxies to

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 44 of 54

prevent a repeat of the situation.

"That is why we cannot negotiate, we need to win. Otherwise it will be a never-ending process. It will keep repeating" she said.

The mayor of Slovyansk reflects the city's new trajectory. Taking his cues from Ukraine's wartime leader, President Volodymyr Zelensky, he has decorated his office with Ukrainian flags, anti-Russian symbols, portraits of national poets — even a biography of Winston Churchill.

But before 2014, Lyakh was part of a political party that sought closer ties with Russia. He said while pro-Moscow sentiment in the city has faded - in part because of the horrors witnessed in 2014 - there are still "people who are waiting for the return of the Russian troops."

As the front line moves closer, attacks on the city intensify. Three-quarters of its pre-war population has fled, but the mayor said too many residents are still in Slovyansk, including many children. He encouraged them to evacuate while he spends his days coordinating humanitarian aid and strengthening the city's defenses.

Lyakh said he cannot allow himself to relax, even for a few minutes.

"It is emotionally difficult. You see how people are dying and being harmed. But nevertheless, I understand that this is my job and that nobody but myself and the people around me can do" it.

More and more, Lyakh is among the first responders at the scene of bombardments. Associated Press journalists following the mayor recently witnessed what authorities described as a cluster bomb attack on a residential area. One person was killed and several others wounded.

The mayor says that shelling now occurs at least four or five times a day, and the use of cluster munitions increased in the last week. Although he remains optimistic that Ukrainian forces can keep the enemy at bay, he is also clear-sighted about his options.

"Nobody wants to be captured. When there is an imminent danger of the enemy troops entering the city, I will have to go" he said.

One morning last week, Lyakh paid a visit to an apartment building that was shelled overnight. Most of the windows were blown out, doors were broken wide open and a power line severed.

The same building was bombed in 2014, leaving a gaping hole on the sixth floor, and many residents suffered broken bones.

Andrey, a 37-year-old factory worker who has lived in the building for 20 years, recalled the bombing and occupation. He said separatist forces "did and took what they liked."

People in his circle have different opinions about Russia.

"Those who have suffered understand what this 'Russia world' means: It means broken houses, stolen cars and violence" he explains. "There are those who miss the Soviet Union, who think we are all one people, and they do not accept what they see with their own eyes."

In the eight years since the separatists retreated, he said, life markedly improved in Slovyansk.

The statue of Vladimir Lenin that once stood in the central square has been removed. Water and power supplies were renovated. New parks, squares and medical facilities were built.

"Civilization was returned to us," Andrey said.

At a military distribution hub where they go to unwind, the young soldiers talk wistfully about their lives before the invasion.

"I had a great car, a good job. I was able to travel abroad three times a year," said the former accountant, who plans to stay in Slovyansk with the others to defend the city. "How can we let someone just come and take our lives away from us?"

Khimion's husband is on the front lines, and she put her teenage daughter on a train to Switzerland as soon as the invasion began.

"I have been deprived of everything — a home, husband, child — what should I do now?" she asks. "We are doing everything we can to stop (the offensive), to keep it to a minimum ... But to be afraid is to abandon this place."

At the entrance to the city, a monument bearing Slovyansk's name is riddled with bullet holes from 2014.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 45 of 54

It has been painted over several times. It now bears the national colors of Ukraine, and a local artist has painted red flowers around each perforation.

Residents of Slovyansk wonder — some with hope, many in fear — if the sign will soon be painted yet again, in the red, white and blue of the Russia flag.

From one July Fourth to the next, a steep slide for Biden

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Last Fourth of July, President Joe Biden gathered hundreds of people outside the White House for an event that would have been unthinkable for many Americans the previous year. With the coronavirus in retreat, they ate hamburgers and watched fireworks over the National Mall.

Although the pandemic wasn't over yet, Biden said, "we're closer than ever to declaring our independence from a deadly virus." Across the country, indoor masking requirements were falling as the number of infections and deaths plummeted.

Within weeks, even some of the president's allies privately admitted that the speech had been premature. Soon the administration would learn that the delta variant could be transmitted by people who had already been vaccinated. Masks went back on, then came polarizing vaccination mandates. The even-more-contagious omicron variant would arrive months later, infecting millions and causing chaos during the holiday season.

"We were hoping to be free of the virus, and the virus had a lot more in store for us," said Joshua Sharfstein, vice dean of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The number of people in the United States who died from COVID-19 nearly doubled, from 605,000 to more than 1 million, over the past year.

That sunny speech one year ago marked a crossroads for Biden's presidency. The pandemic appeared to be waning, the economy was booming, inflation wasn't rising as quickly as today and public approval of his job performance was solid.

As Biden approaches his second Fourth of July in the White House, his standing couldn't be more different. A series of miscalculations and unforeseen challenges have Biden struggling for footing as he faces a potentially damaging verdict from voters in the upcoming midterm elections. Even problems that weren't Biden's fault have been fuel for Republican efforts to retake control of Congress.

The pandemic's resurgence was swiftly followed last summer by the debacle of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, when the Taliban seized control of the country faster than the administration expected as the U.S.-backed regime collapsed. Then, negotiations over Biden's broader domestic agenda stalled, only to collapse altogether in December.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in late February caused a worldwide spike in gas prices, exacerbating inflation that reached a 40-year high. Another blow came last month, when the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion under *Roe v. Wade* and curtailed the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to regulate greenhouse gas emissions.

Suddenly a reactive president, Biden has been left trying to reclaim the initiative at every step, often with mixed results. The coronavirus is less of a threat than before and infections are far less likely to lead to death, but Congress is refusing to supply more money to deal with the pandemic.

He signed new gun restrictions into law after massacres in New York and Texas, and he's leading a reinvestment in European security as the war in Ukraine enters its fifth month. But he has limited tools at his disposal to deal with other challenges, such as rising costs and eroding access to abortion.

"People are grouchy," said Lindsay Chervinsky, a presidential historian.

The latest poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows that his approval rating remains at 39%, the lowest since taking office and a steep slide from 59% one year ago. Only 14% of Americans believe the country is headed in the right direction, down from 44%.

Douglas Brinkley, another historian, said Biden suffered from a case of presidential hubris after a largely successful run in his first five months in office, which included an overseas trip to meet with allies excited

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 46 of 54

about welcoming a friendly face back to the international scene. He compared Biden's Fourth of July speech last year to President George W. Bush's infamous "Mission Accomplished" moment during the second Iraq War.

"He was trying to deliver good news but it didn't pan out for him," Brinkley said. "Suddenly, Biden lost a lot of goodwill."

White House officials reject the comparison, noting that Biden warned about the "powerful" delta variant in his 2021 speech. Chris Meagher, a spokesman, said deaths from the virus are at a record low now, reducing disruptions in workplaces and classrooms.

"Fighting inflation and lowering prices is the president's number one economic priority, and he's laser focused on doing everything he can to make sure the economy is working for the American people," he said. "And we're in a strong position to transition from our historic jobs recovery to stable and steady growth. Because of the work we've done to bring the pandemic under control, COVID is not the disruptive factor it has been for so long."

The promise to competently address the COVID-19 pandemic is what helped put Biden in the Oval Office and send President Donald Trump to defeat. From the start of Biden's tenure, his public pronouncements were sober and cautious, wary of following his predecessor in predictions that went unfulfilled. The nation's vaccination program found its stride under Biden, and by April 19, 2021, all adults were eligible to be vaccinated.

Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, was an adviser to Biden's transition team. But as the Fourth of July approached last year, he was worried and felt that the administration wasn't heeding his warnings.

"Everyone was in this position of wanting to believe it was over with, and not fully understanding or appreciating the potential of the variants," he said.

Even now, a full year later, Osterholm is reluctant to say what the future holds.

"I want answers too," he said. "But I don't know what the variants are going to bring us. I don't know what human immunity is going to look like."

Biden said the virus "has not been vanquished" in his Fourth of July speech, and he held another event two days later to talk about the delta variant.

"It seems to me that it should cause everybody to think twice," he said as he appealed to people who had not yet been vaccinated.

Leana Wen, a public health professor at George Washington University, said there's more reason to be optimistic this year than last. Immunity from vaccines or previous infections is much more widespread, and antiviral treatments are effective at preventing hospitalization and death in vulnerable patients.

"It was premature to declare independence from COVID-19 last year," she said. "But this year the country is in a totally different place, and in a much better place."

But Wen said Biden might be wary, given how things went before.

"The administration is hesitant to make those proclamations now, when actually this is the time to do so," she said.

Biden's early strategy of underpromising and overdelivering on COVID-19 was part of a concerted strategy to rebuild the public's trust in government. The resurgence of the virus eroded some of that trust and diminished confidence in Biden's job performance.

Rebuilding that has proved difficult, especially as the country faces challenges, some, frustratingly for Biden, outside of his control.

"We expect the president to be all powerful and be able to fix every problem," said Chervinsky, the presidential historian. "It's a completely unrealistic expectation and, frankly, a dangerous one."

President Bill Clinton stumbled through his first two years in office, then faced a wave of Republican victories in his first midterm elections. But he later became the first Democratic president to be reelected since Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Chervinsky cautioned that today's political polarization could make such a rebound more difficult for Biden.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 47 of 54

A key question, she said: "Is our partisan system so inflexible that it won't allow for him to go back?"

Long-missing Alexander Hamilton letter put on public display

BOSTON (AP) — A letter written by Alexander Hamilton in 1780 and believed stolen decades ago from the Massachusetts state archives is going back on display — though not exactly in the room where it happened.

The founding father's letter will be the featured piece at the Commonwealth Museum's annual July Fourth exhibit, Secretary of the Commonwealth William Galvin's office says. It's the first time the public is getting a chance to see it since it was returned to the state after a lengthy court battle.

It will be featured alongside Massachusetts' original copy of the Declaration of Independence.

Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury who's been getting renewed attention in recent years because of the hit Broadway musical that bears his name, wrote the letter to the Marquis de Lafayette, the French aristocrat who served as a general in the Continental Army.

Dated July 21, 1780, it details an imminent British threat to French forces in Rhode Island.

"We have just received advice from New York through different channels that the enemy are making an embarkation with which they menace the French fleet and army," Hamilton wrote. "Fifty transports are said to have gone up the Sound to take in troops and proceed directly to Rhode Island."

It's signed "Yr. Most Obedt, A. Hamilton, Aide de Camp."

The letter was forwarded by Massachusetts Gen. William Heath to state leaders, along with a request for troops to support French allies, Galvin's office said.

The letter was believed to have been stolen during World War II by a state archives worker, then sold privately.

It resurfaced several years ago when an auctioneer in Virginia received it from a family that wanted to sell it. The auction house determined it had been stolen and contacted the FBI. A federal appeals court ruled in October that it belonged to the state.

The Commonwealth Museum is open from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Monday.

Abortion ruling puts spotlight on gerrymandered legislatures

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

In overturning a half-century of nationwide legal protection for abortion, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that *Roe v. Wade* had been wrongly decided and that it was time to "return the issue of abortion to the people's elected representatives" in the states.

Whether those elected officials are truly representative of the people is a matter of debate, thanks to another high court decision that has enabled control of state legislatures to be skewed to the right or left.

In June 2019, three years before its momentous abortion ruling, the Supreme Court decided that it has no role in restraining partisan gerrymandering, in which Republicans or Democrats manipulate the boundaries of voting districts to give their candidates an edge.

The result is that many legislatures are more heavily partisan than the state's population as a whole. Gerrymandering again flourished as politicians used the 2020 census data to redraw districts that could benefit their party both for this year's elections and the next decade.

In some swing states with Republican-led legislatures, such as Michigan and Wisconsin, "arguably gerrymandering really is the primary reason that abortion is likely to be illegal," said Chris Warshaw, a political scientist at George Washington University who analyzes redistricting data.

Meanwhile, "in states where Democrats have gerrymandered, it's going to help probably make abortion laws more liberal than people would like," he added.

A majority of Americans support abortion access in general, though many say there should be some restrictions, according to public opinion polls.

States have sometimes been viewed as laboratories for democracy — institutions most closely connected to the people where public policies are tested, take root and potentially spread.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 48 of 54

Writing for the Supreme Court's majority in its June 24 abortion decision, Justice Samuel Alito noted that 30 states had prohibited abortion when the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling "short-circuited the democratic process," usurped lawmakers and imposed abortion rights nationwide.

"Our decision returns the issue of abortion to those legislative bodies, and it allows women on both sides of the abortion issue to seek to affect the legislative process by influencing public opinion, lobbying legislators, voting, and running for office," Alito wrote.

Abortion already is an issue in Wisconsin's gubernatorial and legislative elections. A recent Wisconsin poll showed a majority supported legal abortion in most or all cases. But a fight is brewing over an 1849 state law — which had been unenforceable until *Roe v. Wade* was overruled — that bans abortion except to save the life of the woman.

Democratic Gov. Tony Evers is backing a court challenge to overturn the law, enacted just a year after Wisconsin gained statehood. He also called a special legislative session in June to repeal it. But the Republican-led Assembly and Senate adjourned in a matter of seconds without taking action.

Wisconsin's legislative chambers had one of the nation's strongest Republican advantages during the past decade and are projected to continue to do so under new districts in place for the 2022 elections, according to an analysis by PlanScore, a nonprofit that uses election data to rate the partisan tilt of legislative districts.

"Democracy is distorted in Wisconsin because of these maps," Assembly Minority Leader Greta Neubauer said.

In 2018, Democrats won every major statewide office, including governor and attorney general, races where gerrymandering isn't in play. But they have not been able to overcome heavily gerrymandered state legislative districts since Republicans won control of the statehouse during the midterm elections in 2010.

"If we had a truly democratic system in Wisconsin, we would be in a different situation," she said. "We would be overturning this criminal abortion ban right now"

Republican state Rep. Donna Rozar, a former cardiac nurse who backs abortion restrictions, said gerrymandering shouldn't stop political parties from running good candidates to represent their districts. She expects a robust abortion debate during the campaign to carry into the 2023 legislative session.

"This is an issue that is so critical to come back to the states, because each state then can elect people that will represent their values." Rozar said.

The 2010 midterms, two years after former President Barack Obama was elected, were a pivot point for control of statehouses across the country. Coming into that election, Democrats fully controlled 27 state legislatures and Republicans 14, with the rest split. But sweeping GOP victories put the party in charge of redistricting in many states. By 2015, after two elections under the new maps, Republicans fully controlled 30 legislatures and Democrats just 11.

That Republican legislative advantage largely persisted through the 2020 elections, including in states that otherwise are narrowly divided between Democrats and Republicans, such as Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

In New Mexico, it's Republicans who contend the Democratic-led Legislature has pushed beyond the will of many voters on abortion policies. The New Mexico House and Senate districts had a sizable pro-Democratic edge during the past decade that got even more pronounced after districts were redrawn based on the 2020 census, according to the PlanScore data.

Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed legislation last year repealing a dormant 1969 law that banned most abortions. After *Roe v. Wade* was overruled, she signed an executive order making New Mexico a safe harbor for people seeking abortions. Unlike most states, New Mexico has no restrictions on late-term abortions.

"I don't think that the majority of New Mexicans support New Mexico's abortion policy at this time," Republican state Sen. Gay Kernan said. "New Mexico is the late-term abortion capital of the United States, basically."

The Republican nominee for governor, Mark Ronchetti, has proposed to ban abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy with exceptions for rape, incest and when a woman's life is at risk. But the legislative proposal has been described as dead on arrival by Democratic state Senate Whip Linda Lopez.

Michigan could provide one of the biggest tests of representative government in the nation's new abortion battle.

Republicans drew Michigan legislative districts after the 2010 census and created such a sizable advantage for their party that it may have helped the GOP maintain control of the closely divided House, according to an Associated Press analysis. As in Wisconsin, Democrats in Michigan won the governor's race and every other major statewide office in 2018 but could not overcome legislative districts tilted toward Republicans.

The dynamics have changed for this year's elections. The GOP's edge was cut in half under new legislative districts drawn by a voter-approved citizens' redistricting commission, according to the PlanScore data. That could improve Democrats' chances of winning a chamber and influencing abortion policy.

Michigan's Republican gubernatorial challengers generally support a 1931 state law — temporarily placed on hold by a judge — that bans abortions unless a woman's health is at risk. Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who is running for reelection, wants to repeal that law.

Republican state Rep. Steve Carra said lawmakers are looking to replace it with "something that would be enforceable in the 21st century."

"It's more important to protect life than it is a woman's right to choose to take that life," said Carra, who leads a coalition of 321 lawmakers from 35 states that had urged the Supreme Court to return abortion policy to the states.

Unsure about their legislative prospects, abortion rights advocates are gathering signatures for a November ballot initiative that would create a state constitutional right to abortion, allowing its regulation only "after fetal viability."

"It's the best shot that we have at securing abortion access," Democratic state Rep. Laurie Pohutsky said. "I think if this is put in voters' hands, they will want to see this ballot measure succeed."

Black Jewish leader works to boost community, inclusiveness

By DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Nate Looney is a Black man who grew up in Los Angeles, a descendant of enslaved people from generations ago. He's also an observant, kippah-wearing Jew.

But he doesn't always feel welcome in Jewish spaces — his skin color sometimes elicits questioning glances, suspicions and hurtful assumptions. Once, he walked into a synagogue dressed for Shabbat services in slacks and a buttoned-down shirt and was told to go to the kitchen.

"The last thing you want to happen when you go to a synagogue to attend a service," Looney said, "is to be treated like you don't belong."

Now Looney is in a position to do something about that, after being named to the new role of director of community, safety and belonging for the Jewish Equity Diversity and Inclusion team at the Jewish Federations of North America, or JFNA, in April. He believes he can channel his painful personal experiences into healing divisions and changing perceptions, and help make a trip to the synagogue a spiritual rather than a scarring encounter for Jews of color.

In this new role, Looney has been tackling the delicate task of producing guidelines on how to be more welcoming of Jews of color, even as synagogues and community centers strengthen security in the wake of recent attacks including mass shootings in Pittsburgh and Poway, California. The concern is that such boosted security increases the likelihood of racial profiling incidents affecting congregants of color.

It's a relatively small but growing demographic. A Pew Center survey in 2021 showed just 8% of U.S. Jews identify as Hispanic, Black or Asian, but that nearly doubled to 15% among respondents aged 18 to 29. The poll also found that 17% reported living in a nonwhite or multiracial household.

Looney, 37, has led a life that has taken several turns. He served in the military police as part of the Louisiana National Guard and spent nine months overseas training Iraqi police forces. He has worked in real estate and has even done urban farming, selling microgreens in local markets.

His spiritual journey began at 13 when a friend asked Looney, whose father was Baptist and mother was Episcopalian, about his own religion. Despite his family's Christian faith, Looney said he never felt

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 50 of 54

connected to it.

"I was obstinate that (Christianity) wasn't for me," he said. "When I think about African enslavement in America and how religion was something that was forced, I believed that the religion I was practicing was not true to who my ancestors were."

Looney embraced Judaism while still a teen because he viewed it as a faith that gives believers permission to ask difficult, uncomfortable questions, though he didn't formally convert until age 26.

It was after the police killing of George Floyd and the racial reckoning of summer 2020 that Looney began working with organizations to raise awareness about Jews of color. It was also during that time that JFNA launched its diversity, equity and inclusion initiative.

Looney said Jews of color are often subjected to questions about their Jewish origins. Even when well intentioned, those queries can be painful because they cast doubt on their identity right away and imply they don't belong, he said.

Add to that the increased security at synagogues, and there's even greater potential for people to feel othered or unwelcome.

"How do you strike a balance? You don't want to exclude anyone, and yet you want to be discerning of who is coming in the door," Looney said. "Cultural competency is important. Just the fact that someone who is Black is walking in shouldn't raise alarms."

He knows from personal experience. The morning of the Tree of Life synagogue mass shooting in Pittsburgh on Oct. 27, 2018, Looney was unaware it had taken place because he was not using his phone in observance of Shabbat. When he entered a synagogue, he got more questions and "experienced deeper scrutiny" from security guards, and it was painful.

"If that were my first time entering that community," he said, "I would've never come back."

The guidelines he is working on will be shared with Jewish federations across North America and, Looney hopes, implemented at the local level by synagogues and community centers. Just two months into his job, he says they are a work in progress but will continue to evolve over time.

One goal is to inculcate in security guards a deeper understanding of the diversity of the Jewish community, he said: "We're starting to have these types of conversations and that's a great beginning."

Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein, who founded the diversity, equity and inclusion initiative and serves as JFNA's public affairs advisor, said Looney's professional experience as a military policeman and his lived experience as a Jewish person of color make him uniquely qualified to boost inclusivity while being cognizant of the sensitive relationship between law enforcement and people of color.

"Security and belonging don't have to be mutually exclusive," said Rothstein, who is the son of a white father and a Black mother and has seen his darker-skinned relatives being treated differently in synagogues. "Nate is helping us bring an equity lens to make sure all our institutions are safe and secure while creating a culture of belonging for all Jews and our loved ones."

Sabrina Sojourner, an African American Jewish chaplain at St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington who met Looney at a leadership seminar five years ago, said people of color are "profiled consciously and unconsciously by white people" and Looney's role at the JFNA is crucial to help transform assumptions about "who is the threat and who is not."

"If you look at attacks against Jewish people and synagogues, they are not perpetrated by people of color," Sojourner said. "Nate's work is so important because it tells me JFNA gets that if the most vulnerable people in our communities are not safe, our communities are not safe."

Looney said another challenge is that antisemitism and racism tend to be compartmentalized.

"It's a tough job to make people understand that many of us have multiple identities and fit into both categories and that we are all fighting against white supremacy," he said.

Placing Jews of color in decision-making roles in Jewish spaces can help forge solidarity and bring the realization that "marginalized communities are stronger when they come together," he added.

Rothstein believes Looney will make a big difference because "he is also a healer." As an example, he cited a virtual JFNA event commemorating Martin Luther King Day in 2021 when Looney recited a prayer

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 51 of 54

and sang "Lift Every Voice and Sing," a hymn written by NAACP leader James Weldon Johnson in 1900 and often referred to as the "Black national anthem."

"Those three minutes felt like three hours and they felt like three seconds," Rothstein said. "It's how Nate holds himself. He is so accessible to people because of his heart. That comes through the life he has lived."

Pope, unable to go to Congo, embraces Congolese in Rome

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis greeted members of the Congolese community in Rome, borrowing words from their native languages Sunday to wish them peace and joy during an especially vibrant ceremony at St. Peter's Basilica.

Francis, 85, was supposed to make a July 2-7 pilgrimage to Congo and South Sudan. But the trip was called off last month due to persistent knee pain that has caused the pope to use a wheelchair or a cane in recent weeks.

His itinerary for the since-postponed trip would have had him in Congo on Sunday, celebrating Mass at the airport in the capital, Kinshasa.

Instead, some 2,000 Congolese or descendants of people from Congo joined the pope in Mass at the Vatican. They clapped when Francis began his homily by speaking a few words in Congo's languages.

Prayers by the faithful were recited in Swahili, Lingala, Tshiluba and Kikongo, the country's four official languages.

"A Christian always brings peace," Francis said, reflecting the theme of reconciliation he planned to thread through his Africa pilgrimage.

The colorful clothes and vibrant singing of the congregants made for a sharp contrast with the often somber attire and chants of clergy, nuns and rank-and-file faithful at many basilica ceremonies.

A day earlier, Francis sent a video message to the people and leaders of Congo and South Sudan that exhorted them to forge new paths of reconciliation, peace and development. He expressed disappointment that he couldn't travel this month but promised to visit as soon as possible.

In his Sunday homily, the pontiff renewed his encouragement.

"Today, dear brothers and sisters, let us pray for peace and reconciliation" in Congo, Francis said. He described the country, which is one of the world's poorest despite a wealth of natural resources, as "so wounded and exploited."

The Catholic Church played a role in the establishment of democracy in Congo and has advocated for human rights there. The church deployed about 40,000 election observers to monitor the 2019 vote that brought Felix Tshisekedi to the presidency in what was Congo's first peaceful, democratic transfer of power since independence from Belgium in 1960.

At the end of Mass, a nun, Rita Mboshu Kongo, addressed the pontiff in Italian, thanking him for his concern for Africa, wishing him good health and saying that Congo's people were waiting for him to visit with open arms.

Francis, leaning on his cane, hobbled a few steps to his wheelchair, and an aide wheeled him out of the basilica as the faithful waved and sang joyfully.

After abortion ruling, clinic staff grapple with trauma

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Danielle Maness has squeezed the hands of hundreds of anxious patients lying on tables in the procedure room, now empty. She's recorded countless vital signs and delivered scores of snacks to the recovery area, now silent.

Peering into each darkened room at West Virginia's only abortion clinic, the chief nurse wondered whether she'd ever treat patients here for abortion care again.

"It literally just sickens me, and we don't know what their futures hold for them," Maness said of the residents who rely on the Women's Health Center of West Virginia. "It's the kind of heartbreak that's dif-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 52 of 54

difficult to put into words. There are all these 'what-ifs.'"

The waiting room should have been filling up with patients on two days last week, when the clinic reserves all slots for abortion appointments. But since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* days earlier and ruled that states can ban abortion, the clinic was forced to suspend the procedures because of an 1800s-era state law banning them. The ACLU of West Virginia filed a lawsuit on behalf of the clinic, asking that the law be declared unenforceable so staff can immediately resume abortions. Other states are in various stages of legal limbo.

Nationwide, workers at clinics that shuttered abortion services are feeling fear and stress as they try to pick up the pieces and chart a path forward. At the West Virginia center, the days following the historic court ruling brought on a different kind of grief for staff as their new reality set in, one Maness said will linger long after the initial trauma of the decision.

The conversations with frantic patients that first day play on an inescapable loop in her head.

"I don't think any of us can block it out," she said. "It's constantly on our minds."

Like many clinics that perform abortions, the facility did not offer the procedure daily. Several days of the week are dedicated to routine gynecological care — cervical exams, cancer screenings — mostly for low-income patients on Medicaid with nowhere else to go. The resolve to continue that work has buoyed employees.

Immediately after the decision's release, Maness was one of a few staff members tasked with calling patients to cancel abortion appointments. On the other end of the line, she'd never before heard people speak with such fear.

The entire staff found themselves in crisis mode for days, though they and others across the country expected the ruling for months. "You think you think you're prepared for the moment, but you're never really prepared until it's a reality," executive director Katie Quiñonez said.

She watched her staff break down and sob. Some called patients or answered phones. Workers who had the day off showed up, some still in pajamas, to relieve colleagues and offer support. Quiñonez encouraged all to take breaks, often managing the phones herself.

She'll forever remember that Friday as one of the worst days of her life. Over the weekend, she shut off her phone, lay under a weighted blanket on her couch, ate junk food and watched television. It was the only way she could escape and cope.

When she and her staff returned to work, she held off on filling the vacant slots from canceled abortion appointments. Some patients still needed other services, but she wanted to let workers catch their breath. She told them to come in late if needed. Clinic rooms remained largely empty, dark and quiet.

But still, the phones rang.

Beth Fiddler sat at her desk behind the clinic's glass reception window in the waiting room. She had no patients to check in, no Medicaid data to scan into charts, no informative packets to hand out.

Instead, she found herself answering the same questions again and again, referring callers to a hotline or website to help them find the nearest out-of-state abortion provider.

"You guys are going to close up soon, right?" No, the clinic will be open to provide other services.

"Can I get Plan B - the 'morning after' pill? What about an IUD, or other birth control?" I'll help you make an appointment.

"You're sure I can't make an abortion appointment? Isn't there a loophole, an exception?" There are no abortion services at this clinic.

Some callers were in denial. Some remained stoic, others cried. A few responded with hostility, insisting Fiddler was wrong. She tried to be polite, empathetic — but the conversations take a toll.

"It frustrates me," she said. "I'm already stressed out and upset. I understand wanting to find a way, but there's no way."

As one of the first workers patients see, Fiddler takes pride in making people feel welcome and safe. Having to turn them away and simply refer them to a website is gutting, she said.

"As helpless as I feel about it, I can't imagine how they must be feeling," she said.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 53 of 54

Outside the clinic, it's quiet, too. There's no buzz of patients arriving in the parking lot to be escorted by volunteers in pink vests. The only cars belong to staffers and a security guard. Across the street, a lot owned by an anti-abortion organization is vacant except for a large white cross.

A regular protestor, a pastor with a "Jesus Loves You" sign, prayed outside a few early mornings, but the usual crowd pleading with patients to reconsider is gone. Some cars slow as they pass. Workers recognize some as protestors' vehicles, and they imagine the clinic is being watched — to make sure patients aren't arriving for abortions.

Director Quiñonez said she knows the next steps will be challenging, with a long road for workers to recover from pain.

"Our staff need space and time to process this very traumatic loss," she said. "And all of the secondary trauma that we're experiencing from all of the patients."

Simply being at work is hard, but the employees are dedicated to helping patients.

"We came in Monday and I was kind of like, 'OK, what do I do now?'" said Kaylen Barker, who handles the clinic's public messaging. "It's somber to come back here and realize we're not going to be able to do the lifesaving care that people need and that we're going to have to refer them to websites. That's the best thing we can do right now."

Barker came to the clinic as a patient during a breast cancer scare 12 years ago. She got care when she had no other options. She knew she wanted to work at this place that helped save her, so she applied until she was finally hired. Knowing she can help others like her keeps her going, whether abortions are scheduled or not: "People deserve to receive healthcare in a welcoming space, without bias or judgement."

So Quiñonez and her staff focus on keeping the clinic open. Abortion services account for 40% of clinic revenue, leaving a gap that could mean layoffs — but Quiñonez is determined to avoid that.

She's encouraging residents to transfer their gynecological care to the clinic, and she plans to offer new services. The clinic recently added gender-affirming hormone therapy services, along with HIV prevention and treatment. She hopes more programs will follow.

And donations are flooding into the clinic's abortion fund. Before this year, the fund's balance never exceeded \$50,000. In one weekend after the ruling, they raised \$75,000. Staff will use the money to help send people out of state for abortions.

"Yes, we are tired, we are devastated, we are angry," Quiñonez said. "But this is far from over. I want to reassure people that regardless of how hopeless and dark it feels right now, this isn't the end."

Today in History: July 4, Declaration of Independence

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, July 4, the 185th day of 2022. There are 180 days left in the year. This is Independence Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was adopted by delegates to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

On this date:

In 1802, the United States Military Academy officially opened at West Point, New York.

In 1826, 50 years to the day after the Declaration of Independence was adopted, former presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died.

In 1831, the fifth president of the United States, James Monroe, died in New York City at age 73.

In 1863, the Civil War Siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi, ended as a Confederate garrison surrendered to Union forces.

In 1910, in what was billed as "The Fight of the Century," Black world heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson defeated white former champ James J. Jeffries in Reno, Nevada.

In 1912, the 48-star American flag, recognizing New Mexico statehood, was adopted. A train wreck near

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 04, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 362 ~ 54 of 54

Corning, New York, claimed 39 lives.

In 1939, Lou Gehrig of the New York Yankees delivered his famous farewell speech in which he called himself "the luckiest man on the face of the earth."

In 1976, America celebrated its bicentennial with daylong festivities; President Gerald R. Ford made stops in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, Independence Hall in Philadelphia and New York, where more than 200 ships paraded up the Hudson River in Operation Sail.

In 1987, Klaus Barbie, the former Gestapo chief known as the "Butcher of Lyon," was convicted by a French court of crimes against humanity and sentenced to life in prison (he died in September 1991).

In 1995, the space shuttle Atlantis and the Russian space station Mir parted after spending five days in orbit docked together.

In 2009, Serena Williams beat her big sister, Venus, 7-6 (3), 6-2 for her third Wimbledon title and 11th Grand Slam championship.

In 2016, NASA received a radio signal from the solar-powered Juno spacecraft confirming that it was in orbit around the planet Jupiter after a trip of nearly five years and 1.8 billion miles.

Ten years ago: Scientists at the European Center for Nuclear Research in Geneva, where the world's biggest atom smasher is located, cheered the apparent end of a decades-long quest for a new subatomic particle called the Higgs boson, or "God particle." Joey Chestnut won his sixth straight Fourth of July hot dog-eating contest at New York's Coney Island, downing 68 dogs and buns to tie his personal best.

Five years ago: The United States confirmed that North Korea had launched an intercontinental ballistic missile, as the North had boasted and the U.S. and South Korea had feared. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson called it a "new escalation of the threat" to the U.S.

One year ago: On the second July Fourth holiday of the coronavirus pandemic, service members and first responders were among more than 1,000 guests at a White House event, where President Joe Biden declared that "America is coming back together"; Biden highlighted the success of the vaccination campaign, but warned that the fight against COVID-19 wasn't over. Columbus Blue Jackets goaltender Matiss Kivlenieks died of chest trauma from an errant fireworks mortar blast at a Michigan home.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Eva Marie Saint is 98. Actor Gina Lollobrigida is 95. Country singer Ray Pillow is 85. Actor Ed Bernard is 83. Actor Karolyn Grimes is 82. R&B singer Annette Beard (Martha and the Vandellas) is 79. Broadcast journalist Geraldo Rivera is 79. Vietnam War veteran and peace activist Ron Kovic is 76. R&B musician Ralph Johnson (Earth, Wind and Fire) is 71. Rock musician Domingo Ortiz (Widespread Panic) is 70. Singer John Waite is 70. Rock musician Kirk Pengilly (INXS) is 64. International Tennis Hall of Famer Pam Shriver is 60. Christian rock singer Michael Sweet is 59. Actor-playwright-screenwriter Tracy Letts is 57. Actor Al Madrigal is 51. Actor Jenica Bergere is 48. Actor-singer John Lloyd Young is 47. Singer Stephen "Ste" McNally (BBMak) is 44. Actor Becki Newton is 44. Actor Mo McRae is 40. TV personality Mike "The Situation" Sorrentino is 40. R&B singer Melanie Fiona is 39. Malia Obama is 24.