

Groton Daily Independent

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July 6

- 5:30 p.m.: Jr. Teeners at Redfield, DH
- 7:30 p.m.: U12 at Claremont, 1 game
- 7:30 p.m. U10 at Claremont, 1 game, (R/B)
- 5:30 p.m.: T-Ball Gold at Claremont

July 7

- 5:30 p.m.: Jr. Teeners host Warner, DH
- 6 p.m.: U8 at Webster, DH (R/B)
- 6 p.m.: U8 SB at Mellette, 1 game
- 7 p.m.: U10 SB at Mellette, 1 game
- 8 p.m.: U12 SB at Mellette, DH

July 7-9

Legion at Clark Tourney

July 8

6 p.m.: T-Ball Scrimmage

July 8-11

U12 State Tourney in Parker

July 11

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

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

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

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

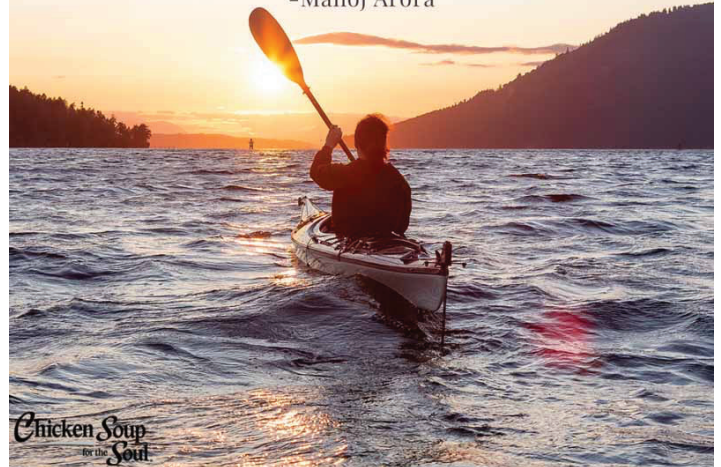
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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

"Coming out of your comfort zone is tough in the beginning, chaotic in the middle, and awesome in the end... because in the end, it shows you a whole new world."

-Manoj Arora



Chicken Soup
by the Soul

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,
(R/B)

July 14

- 5:30 p.m.: Legion hosts Webster, DH
Jr. Teeners just be completed by this date
- 6 p.m.: U12 SB hosts Faulkton, DH
- 6 p.m.: U8 SB at Claremont, 1 game
- 7 p.m.: U10 SB at Claremont, 1 game

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!**



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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

July 6, 2022 – 7:00pm
City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
2. Request for Approval to Purchase Used Bucket Truck
3. Minutes
4. Bills
5. Department Reports
6. Appoint Newspapers and Banks
7. Approval of BDM Rural Water System Hookup at Airport
8. Approval of "Response to Resistance" and "Duty to Intervene" GPD Policy Manual Update
9. Announcement: Water Restrictions – No Outdoor Watering between 10am and 5pm – Effective Immediately and Until Further Notice
10. Reminder: Lions Club is sponsoring the 6th Annual Summer Fest from 9am – 4pm on July 10, 2022 at the Groton City Park!
11. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
12. Adjournment

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"Sunshine, Lollipops and Rainbows"

Wednesday, July 13 at Noon
Ladies Luncheon & Program

Silent Auction
10:30 - 11:30
Door Prizes

Ty Eschenbaum
will be the speaker

Advance tickets
required \$10.00



Call Kay Espeland 492-3507 or
Alice Jean Peterson 216-2835

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Weekly Vikings Recap

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

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

Defensive Line:

Lock to make the 53-man roster: Danielle Hunter, Harrison Phillips, Dalvin Tomlinson, Za'Darius Smith, DJ Wonnum, Armon Watts, and Patrick Jones

The Vikings will make the transition to a 3-4 defense this season, which means that some players will have a different role with the team than they have had in prior seasons. The main player who will experience this change is Danielle Hunter. Hunter, who enters his eighth season at only 27 years of age, will now be allowed to rush the passer from a standing-up position. Hunter's pass-rushing buddy, Za'Darius Smith, will be much more seasoned in this role. Smith, who has played his entire career in a 3-4 defense, comes to the Vikings after a three-year stint with the rival Green Bay Packers that saw him reach two pro bowls. The big concern for both Hunter and Smith will be whether they can remain healthy as they have played only a combined 36% of their games over the last two seasons.

The big guys in the middle will consist of Dalvin Tomlinson and Harrison Phillips, who weigh well over 300 pounds each. Although these two will likely see the most snaps of the interior defensive linemen on the Vikings, some experts feel that Armon Watts has a chance to be a major contributor to the team. Watts, who came in as a no-name sixth-round pick in 2019, has consistently improved each year and now enters the final season of his rookie contract. Perhaps the incentive of a new contract will unleash Watts into an even better player on the defensive line.

The final two likely guarantees for the final roster are DJ Wonnum and Patrick Jones. Both players were drafted in the middle rounds of their respective drafts with the hope that they could become the next Danielle Hunter for the Vikings. However, neither Wonnum nor Jones have quite lived up to the hype. This year, both seem more apt to become role players for the Vikings' defensive line rather than reliable pass rushers.

Players competing for the final spot on the defensive line: James Lynch, Ezezi Otomewo, Jaylen Twyman, and Janarius Robinson

This is a unique crop of players competing for the final spots on the Vikings' defensive line. With Janarius Robinson and Jaylen Twyman, you have two players who missed their entire rookie seasons with injury. Perhaps that provides them a better chance to make the team as there is not much game film on them to determine if they are good or not. However, with the new Vikings' regime, the patience to wait and see with them might just not be there. Just based on the fact that Robinson was drafted in the fourth round and Twyman was drafted in the sixth round might make the difference in one making the team and one not.

Ezezi Otomewo and James Lynch will likely be on the final roster. However, I wouldn't say they are a complete guarantee just off the fact that this defensive line group is large in numbers, and you never know if someone out of nowhere comes in and surprises the coaches to make the final roster. Nevertheless, unless Otomewo or Lynch are derailed by an injury, they should not struggle to make the final roster.

Likely to be cut or placed on the practice squad: TY McGill, TJ Smith, Tyarise Stevenson, Julian Taylor, Zach McCloud, Andre Mintze, and Luiji Vilain

53-man roster predictions:

Jack's prediction

Danielle Hunter, Harrison Phillips, Dalvin Tomlinson, Za'Darius Smith, DJ Wonnum, Patrick Jones, Janarius Robinson, Armon Watts, James Lynch, and Ezezi Otomewo

Dad's prediction

Danielle Hunter, Harrison Phillips, Dalvin Tomlinson, Za'Darius Smith, DJ Wonnum, Patrick Jones, Janarius Robinson, Armon Watts, James Lynch, and Jaylen Twyman

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Independent thoughts after Independence Day

I love my country. Despite many missteps—slavery and Indian genocide being the two main stains on our record—America remains a bastion of freedom. But not necessarily common sense.

This is a space I typically reserve for human-interest columns, the fun, foibles, idiosyncrasies, and beauty of life. If you want my take on current events, that's available in most daily papers in the region. But I have to tell you, friends, that my heart's not in it today. When I started this column more than three decades ago, I resolved to write what I felt, to be true to myself and to my readers. Well, here we are.

Today, women feel less free, and their Constitutional guarantee of equality has been greatly diminished by the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. I know it's an uncomfortable topic, but looking into the eyes of the women in my life including a whip-smart daughter who's on her way to becoming an attorney—and a damn good one, I'll guarantee—I must speak my mind.

My view reflects that of a majority of Americans. Abortion's regrettable and should be rare. But it's sometimes necessary, and a one-size-fits-all solution doesn't work. That's like demanding the same treatment for every health issue. Ivermectin, anyone? Many folks preach personal responsibility, but when it comes to the most personal, life-changing decisions, they hypocritically want to strip others of their rights so they abide by their personal religious beliefs—and that's at the root of this.

Have you ever had doctors tell you that your baby's condition was "not compatible with life?" I have. Have you ever searched for a clinic that would take your case because it was past 20 weeks? I have. That was 24 years ago. It's harder now. Our other option was to let our son suffer and die on the table.

Have you endured protests at a clinic, a fortress that had been bombed—the signs, the shouting, "You can still save your baby," even though there was no hope, three doctors affirmed? We chose euthanasia, an intact delivery, and a baptism by the doctor, an ordained minister. Have you made such a wrenching decision? Have you awoken to national news that your doctor had been assassinated by a "pro lifer" while ushering in church? I have.

This has been and should always be a decision by the woman and her physician. Women shouldn't be compelled to change the entire trajectory of their life because the state's assigned personhood to a fetus. Can you declare a deduction on our taxes for a fetus? Try it.

Women of means will always have the option somewhere in the country—while it lasts—or abroad. Poverty-stricken mothers with too many mouths to feed, rape victims of any age, including those of incest, or mothers carrying babies that are "incompatible with life," will have to give birth, no matter the resulting downward economic and personal spiral. The state can't demand that you surrender a kidney to keep someone alive, but they can demand a woman be an incubator.

Americans agree that fewer abortions should be the goal, but counterintuitively, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas has suggested the availability of contraceptives, which obviously reduce abortions, is in doubt. He also said same sex marriages might be overturned. Excuse me, but gay people are not the cause of abortions, and do we really need bedroom police, driven by religious ideology? Do we want Checkpoint Charlie at every border—your papers, please—to keep women from having abortions where it's legal, as South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem's suggested?

On this Independence Day, I feel less free.

The "baby killer" trope's been effective, but Judaism says life begins at the first breath. Some Christians believe it begins at conception. The Baptist Church once publicly supported abortion. What changed? The merger of religion and politics for political gain, something the founders were steadfast against.

Barry Goldwater said "Mark my word, if and when these preachers get control of the [Republican] party, and they're sure trying to do so, it's going to be a terrible damn problem. Frankly, these people frighten me. Politics and governing demand compromise. But these Christians believe they are acting in the name of God, so they can't and won't compromise. I know, I've tried to deal with them." Yes, we have freedom of religion (of all kinds), but we must also have freedom from religion.

I don't expect to change minds, only to perhaps open some and engender more compassion, less judgement, and personal privacy. Believe what you will. Just don't force it on others.



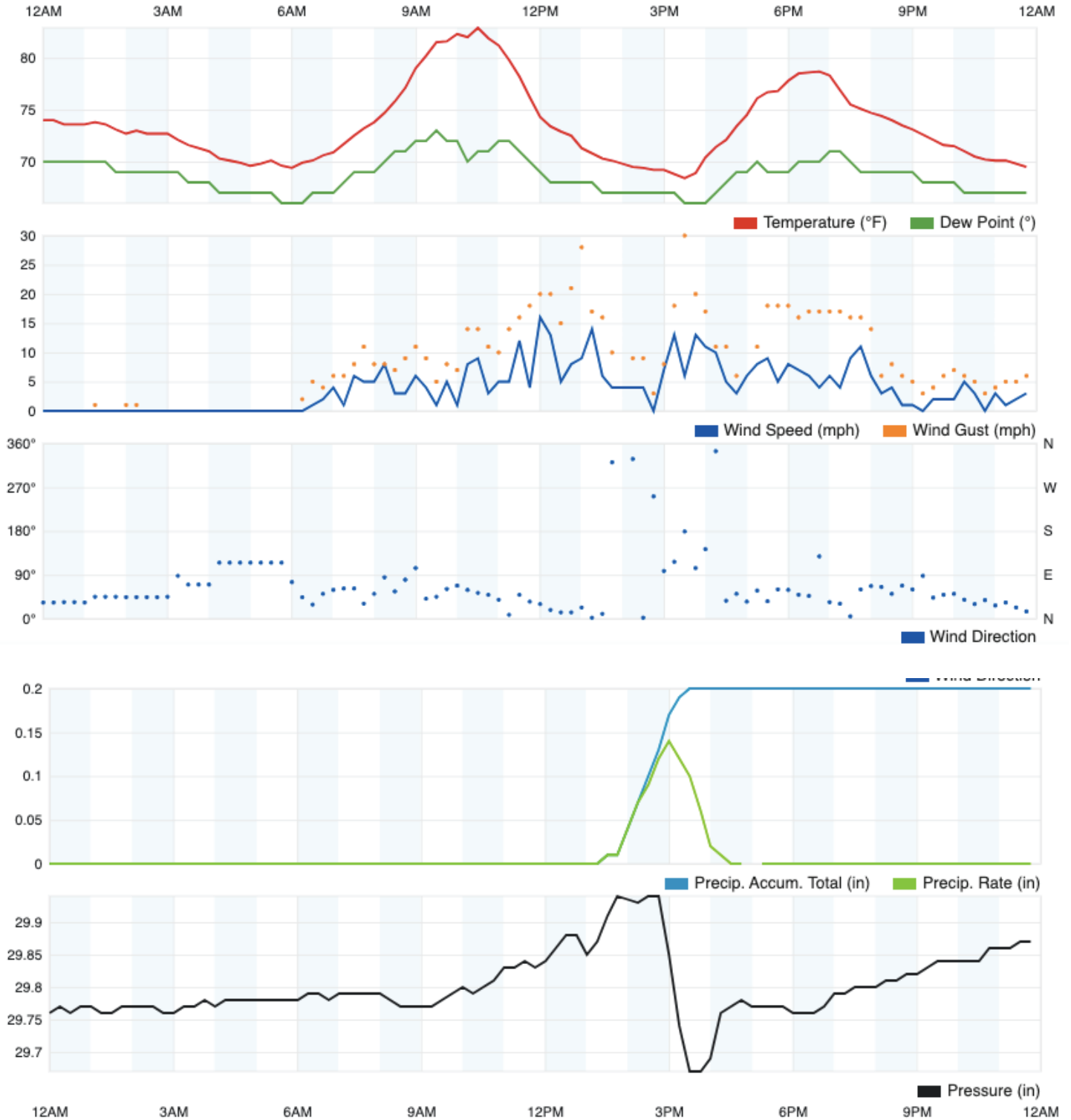
That's Life

by Tony Bender

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Slight Chance
T-storms

High: 84 °F

Tonight



Chance
T-storms

Low: 67 °F

Thursday



Slight Chance
T-storms

High: 83 °F

Thursday
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 63 °F

Friday



Slight Chance
T-storms

High: 85 °F

Patchy morning fog, then partly to mostly cloudy through mid afternoon

Highs in the 80s



Evening thunderstorms – some may be strong to severe, especially west river

An active weather pattern continues into the latter half of the week. After patchy morning fog dissipates, much of the afternoon will be partly to mostly cloudy, though an isolated thunderstorm is still possible. The threat for strong to severe storms develops in the evening, especially west river. Additional thunderstorm chances are forecast through Sunday.

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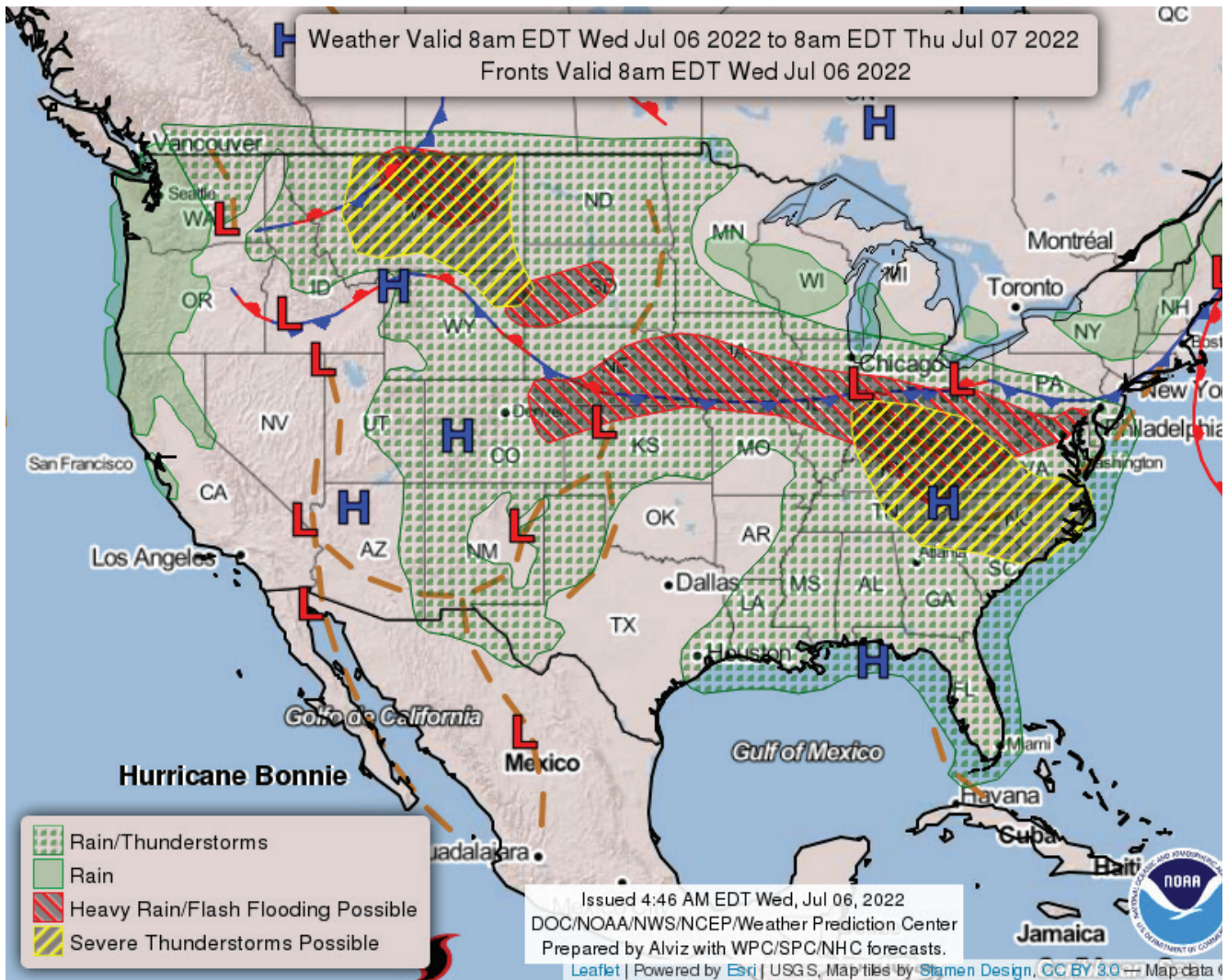
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 83 °F at 10:27 AM
Low Temp: 68 °F at 3:26 PM
Wind: 30 mph at 3:27 PM
Precip: 0.20

Day length: 15 hours, 35 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 115 in 1936
Record Low: 42 in 1942
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in July.: 0.70
Precip to date in July.: 2.00
Average Precip to date: 11.71
Precip Year to Date: 13.58
Sunset Tonight: 9:24:57 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:50:15 AM



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Today in Weather History

July 6, 1963: A farmer died near Waubay, in Day County, when the barn was destroyed while he was inside. Winds of 110 mph were recorded at FAA in Watertown before the roof and wind instruments were blown away.

July 6, 1982: A severe thunderstorm produced a series of five microbursts over Sioux Falls. The microbursts caused extensive damage. Winds were estimated to have reached 125 mph, and the Airport recorded a peak gust of 82 mph. Damage, which was heaviest in the south-central and northeast sections of the city, included thousands of trees uprooted or damaged. Several semi-trailers were blown over, critically injuring one man and slightly injuring two others. Several other minor injuries occurred mainly from flying glass. Five cars were rolled over by the high winds, and several others damaged flying debris. Damage at the airport included a portion of a hangar roof blown off and three light aircraft flipped over.

July 6, 1994: Widespread rainfall of over 6 inches fell in Dewey, Potter, and Faulk Counties, causing damage to roads and flooded basements and fields. A teenage girl escaped injury when her car was washed away by the waters of a swollen creek about 5 miles east of Gettysburg. Some total storm amounts include; 6.80 inches in Orient; 6.70 at Faulkton; 5.80 in Milbank; 5.48 in Big Stone City; 5.02 in Ipswich; 4.50 in Gettysburg; 4.17 in Webster; 4.12 near Onaka; 4.02 in Leola; and 3.97 in Britton.

1893 - A violent tornado killed 71 persons on its forty-mile track across northwestern Iowa. Forty-nine persons were killed around Pomeroy, where eighty percent of the buildings were destroyed, with most leveled to the ground. Photos showed most of the town without a wall or tree left standing. (The Weather Channel)

1928 - A hailstorm at Potter, NE, produced a stone which was 5.5 inches in diameter, and seventeen inches in circumference, weighing a pound and a half. (David Ludlum)

1985 - Lightning struck a large transformer in Salt Lake County sending a 200 foot fireball into the air and blacking out almost the entire state for up to five hours. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - Thunderstorm rains during the mid morning hours, and again during the evening, produced major flash-flooding at Leavenworth, KS. The official rainfall total was 10.37 inches, but unofficial totals exceeded twelve inches. At nearby Kansas City, the rainfall total of 5.08 inches was a daily record for July. (Storm Data)

1987 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in twenty-one states east of the Rockies, with severe weather reported in Kentucky and Indiana for the second day in a row. A thunderstorm produced more than five inches of rain in one hour near Reynolds, IL. Rochester, NY, was soaked with 3.25 inches, a record 24 hour total for the month of July. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty-six cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 98 degrees at International Falls, MN, and 101 degrees at Flint, MI, equalled all-time records. Highs of 96 degrees at Muskegon, MI, and 97 degrees at Buffalo, NY, were records for July. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the southwestern U.S. Ten cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Las Vegas, NV, with a reading of 115 degrees. Hanksville, UT, reached 112 degrees, Bullhead City, AZ, hit 120 degrees, and Death Valley, CA, soared to 126 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

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Warning! Danger Ahead!

Years ago, I was invited by some friends to visit a desert in Arizona. I was fascinated by the many varieties of the cactus plants. They came in almost every size and shape. Some had beautiful flowers, some contained water, some even had fruit - the "cactus pear" - but all of them had "needles."

One of my friends warned me and said, "Please do not touch them or you will have their painful needles piercing your hands." But, like Adam, I decided to "taste" the fruit of a cactus pear, and immediately understood what my friend's warning about "painful needles" meant. Though difficult to see the needles, their sting was extreme painful and seemed to affect every part of my body. I was left with the sting from their needles and never enjoyed the fruit.

Solomon offered "the young" a warning: "My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them." Perhaps he was speaking from personal experience. Or, maybe he saw others "enticed" by sin, fall into its attractiveness, and the damage it did to them and their loved ones. But the importance of his "words of warning" is true for everyone, no matter their age: sin. The results of sin affect the sinner – no matter their age. And, "Young" in this verse applies to any age or sex.

Sin is "enticing" because it offers a fast lane to short-lived pleasure. Those who entice us to sin never say, "Oh, by the way, I want you to know that if you gain things illegally, the gain you get, sooner or later, will one day cost you your life. So, be sure to remember this, my friend, the only 'gains' worth getting come from God."

Falling into temptation is easy. Escaping its consequences is not.

Prayer: Father, these words of wisdom provide a shield of armor that will protect us all the days of our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Bible Verse: My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. Proverbs 1:10

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2022 Community Events

- 01/30/2022 84th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
01/30/2022 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am – 1pm, Groton Community Center, 109 N 3rd St, Groton,
04/07/2022 Groton CDE
04/09/2022 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
04/09/2022 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/23/2022 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/24/2022 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/07/2022 Lions Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
St John's Lutheran Church VBS 9-11am
05/30/2022 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
Transit Fundraiser at the Community Center 4-7pm (Thursday Mid-June)
06/17/2022 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm Start
06/18/2022 Groton Triathlon
06/20/2022 Ladies Invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration 10am Start
06/25/2022 How can we... "Love Groton"? United Methodist Church 9:30am
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)
07/20/2022 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar 11am-1pm at the Groton Legion
07/21/2022 Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/22/2022 Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20
07/27/2022 Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm
08/05/2022 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
08/12/2022 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
United Methodist Church VBS 5-8pm
Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot
09/10/2022 Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm
09/11/2022 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm
Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/01/2022 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/07/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/12/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course
Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm
01/29/2023 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

27-31-50-51-61, Mega Ball: 21, Megaplier: 4

(twenty-seven, thirty-one, fifty, fifty-one, sixty-one; Mega Ball: twenty-one; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$400,000,000

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: 35,000,000

SD colleges to offer American civics certificates

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's six public universities plan to offer undergraduate certificates in an American civics tradition course this fall after Republican Gov. Kristi Noem called on regents to promote patriotism.

The Argus Leader reported Tuesday that Noem called on the Board of Regents during the 2021 legislative session to cultivate a "profound love of our country and a realistic picture of its virtue and challenges" across the six schools. The Legislature handed the state Department of Education \$900,000 for a new civics initiative.

The regents approved the certificate on June 23.

Students must complete two U.S history courses as well as two courses in American and state government to earn the certificate.

Four of the universities — Black Hills State University, Northern State University, South Dakota State University and the University of South Dakota — offer majors in fields related to the certificate. Dakota State University and South Dakota Mines don't offer majors in such fields but their students can complete certificates online.

2021 Black Hills national park visitors spent \$231 million

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A new report shows 3.6 million visitors to Black Hills area national parks in South Dakota spent about \$231 million in 2021.

That had a cumulative benefit to the state economy of \$301 million and resulted in about 3,360 jobs. The analysis was done by economists at the National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey.

"National parks are a vital part of our nation's economy, especially for park gateway communities where millions of visitors each year find a place to sleep and eat, hire outfitters and guides and make use of other local services that help drive a vibrant tourism and outdoor recreation industry," said Mount Rushmore Superintendent Michelle Wheatley. "Visitors to the Black Hills area can find exciting new recreational opportunities and learning experiences in and around our five national parks."

Area national parks include Badlands National Park, Jewel Cave National Monument, Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, Mount Rushmore National Memorial and Wind Cave National Park.

Overall, the report shows \$20.5 billion of direct spending by more than 297 million park visitors in communities within 60 miles of a national park, the Rapid City Journal reported.

The spending supported 322,600 jobs nationally with a cumulative benefit to the U.S. economy of \$42.5 billion.

The lodging sector had the highest direct effects, with \$7 billion spending nationally. The restaurants sector had the second greatest effect, with about \$4 billion spending.

OPEC secretary-general dies, just weeks shy of departure

By CHINEDU ASADU and AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — The Secretary-General of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries has died, Nigerian authorities and the oil cartel announced Wednesday. Only hours before his death, he'd met with Nigeria's president and spoken in defense of the energy industry amid increasing climate change pressure.

Mohammad Barkindo, 63, died late Tuesday in Abuja, a spokesman for Nigeria's petroleum ministry told The Associated Press. The reason for his death was not immediately known. The Vienna-based oil cartel also confirmed his death, saying he was a "much-loved leader" of OPEC.

His death came as a surprise to industry insiders. His second term as head of OPEC was set to end in three weeks on July 31. He'd held the post for six years since 2016.

Barkindo's death was first confirmed in a tweet by the managing director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company, Mele Kyari.

OPEC's statement said Barkindo's last words to friends were that he was happy to have concluded his tenure as secretary-general, he'd served the best he could and that he was proud of those who'd served with him.

Barkindo led the crude oil bloc through some of its most turbulent times in recent memory, including during the COVID-19 pandemic when oil prices plummeted due to declining demand. He helped guide the group, working to keep the positions of its members unified.

OPEC's 13 member-states have 1.24 billion proven crude oil reserves among them, or 80% of the world's share. Of the world's total crude oil production, OPEC producers' share is just under 38%.

His role representing OPEC took on even greater significance in past years amid a global effort to tackle climate change. Barkindo used his platform to advocate in favor of a bigger role for the energy industry in conversations about the energy transition. This positioned him firmly on the side of oil producers who say more investments in oil and gas are needed until the world is able to run on alternative forms of energy.

"Our industry is now facing huge challenges along multiple fronts and these threaten our investment potential now and in the longer term. To put it bluntly, the oil and gas industry is under siege," he said hours before his death at an energy conference in Nigeria.

Scientists and authors of U.N.-backed studies say the world needs to cut by more than half its production of coal, oil and gas in the coming decade to maintain a chance of keeping global warming from reaching dangerous levels. To do this, they say investments in oil and gas must stop and be rerouted to cleaner forms of energy.

Barkindo's legacy, however, is perhaps most tied to his final years steering OPEC as the group entered into an agreement known as OPEC+ with major non-OPEC producer, Russia. That agreement, spearheaded by Saudi Arabia and Russia, has helped steady oil markets as the world emerges from the pandemic, though it has come under criticism amid current high oil prices and as the U.S. and other Western nations try to squeeze Russia's economy over the war in Ukraine. Brent crude has soared past \$100 a barrel this year.

OPEC member-states accounted for around 48% of all world crude oil exports last year. Saudi Arabia is by far the biggest exporter of crude within OPEC, with 6.23 million barrels per day of crude exports last year. Non-OPEC producer, Russia, exported 4.5 million barrels of crude last year.

Barkindo's successor Haitham al-Ghais, a veteran of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, was set to assume the post in August.

Born in Nigeria's eastern city of Yola, Barkindo began his career with the Nigerian Mining Corporation in 1982 before holding multiple roles over more than two decades at the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, including as its CEO. He also served as deputy managing director of Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas.

He'd led Nigeria's technical delegation to the U.N. climate change negotiations for years and served several terms as vice president of the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties.

He attended university in Nigeria before earning a post-graduate degree in petroleum economics from Oxford University in the U.K. and an MBA from Washington University in the U.S.

In his meeting in Abuja on Tuesday, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari told Barkindo: "Welcome

back home!" according to an OPEC readout of the meeting. Buhari also congratulated him on his tenure at OPEC. Nigeria has been a member of OPEC for 50 years.

Barkindo was set to join the Atlantic Council as a distinguished fellow next month, after finishing his term at OPEC. He was a frequent speaker at the Atlantic Council's global energy forum.

EU lawmakers back gas, nuclear energy as sustainable

By RAF CASERT and SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European Union lawmakers voted Wednesday to include natural gas and nuclear in the bloc's list of sustainable activities.

The European Commission earlier this year made the controversial proposal as part of its plans for building a climate-friendly future, dividing member countries and drawing outcry from environmentalists as "greenwashing."

EU legislators rejected an objection to the proposal in a 328-278 vote.

The green labeling system from the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, defines what qualifies as an investment in sustainable energy.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below.

BRUSSELS (AP) — European lawmakers will decide Wednesday whether fossil gas and nuclear energies can be included in the EU's list of sustainable activities, in a cliff-edge vote targeting climate change but heavily influenced by the war in Ukraine.

The executive Commission of the 27-nation bloc wants nuclear energy and natural gas in its green finance plans for building a climate-friendly future, believing that will speed the phasing-out of more polluting fuels like oil and coal.

But this has divided the 27 member countries and even the parliament's political groups, while environmentalists claim it amounts to "greenwashing."

Protests that had started on Tuesday continued Wednesday outside the EU legislature in Strasbourg, France, as lawmakers debated the issue. A vote was planned around midday (1000GMT). Two parliamentary committees objected to the measure last month, but legislators said Wednesday's vote was too close to call.

If an absolute majority — or 353 — of the EU lawmakers vote against the Commission's regulation on the so-called taxonomy, it will need to be withdrawn or amended.

The green labeling system from the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, defines what qualifies as an investment in sustainable energy. Under certain conditions, gas and nuclear energy could be part of the mix, making it easier for private investors to inject money into both.

One argument for rejecting the proposal is that it would boost Russian gas sales at a time when it is invading neighboring Ukraine, but the Commission said it had received a letter from the Ukrainian government backing its stance.

European Commissioner Mairead McGuinness quoted from the letter from Ukraine's energy minister Tuesday: "I strongly believe that the inclusion of gas and nuclear in the taxonomy is an important element of the energy security in Europe, especially with a view to replacing Russian gas."

"I don't think we should second-guess this letter," McGuinness said.

The commission believes that including nuclear and gas as transitional energy sources that would be phased out later does not amount to a free pass, as conditions would still have to be met.

With the EU aiming to reach climate neutrality by 2050 and to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, it says the classification system is crucial to direct investments into sustainable energy. It estimates that about 350 billion euros of investment per year will be needed to meet the 2030 targets.

The 27-nation bloc is trying to wean itself off its dependency on Russian fossil fuels, and member countries have already agreed to ban 90% of Russian oil by year-end. Before the war in Ukraine, it relied on Russia for 25% of its oil and 40% of its natural gas.

G-20 meeting may lead to wider divisions over war in Ukraine

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By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Foreign ministers from the world's largest nations are looking to address Russia's war in Ukraine and its impact on global energy and food security when they meet in Indonesia this week. Yet instead of providing unity, the talks may well exacerbate existing divides over the Ukraine conflict.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi are set to attend the Group of 20 meeting in the Indonesian resort of Bali, which will set the stage for a summit of G-20 leaders at the same venue in November.

It will mark the first time Blinken and Lavrov have been in the same room, let alone the same city, since January. There's no indication the two will meet separately, but even without a one-on-one with Lavrov, Blinken could find himself in some difficult discussions.

The State Department announced Tuesday that Blinken will hold separate talks with Wang at a time when already extremely tense U.S.-China relations have been worsened by Beijing's friendly ties with Moscow.

And, unlike in recent leader-level meetings with NATO partners and other like-minded partners, Blinken will find himself among diplomats from countries wary of the U.S. approach to Ukraine and concerned about its impact on them.

U.S. officials say that aside from Wang, Blinken will have bilateral talks in Bali with counterparts from countries that have not seen eye to eye with the West on the Russian invasion, notably India, which has increased purchases of Russian oil even as the U.S. and Europe have tried to choke off that revenue stream for Moscow.

In announcing that Blinken would meet with Wang in Bali, the State Department had little to say about the possibility of him seeing Lavrov, whom the U.S. has shunned since the Ukraine invasion in February.

The department said there would not be a formal meeting between Blinken and Lavrov, whom U.S. officials accuse of a lack of seriousness before, during and after the invasion of Ukraine.

"We would like to see the Russians be serious about diplomacy," State Department spokesman Ned Price said. "We have not seen that yet. We would like to have the Russians give us a reason to meet on a bilateral basis with them, with Foreign Minister Lavrov, but the only thing we have seen emanate from Moscow is more brutality and aggression against the people and country of Ukraine."

The Biden administration maintains there can be no "business as usual" with Moscow as long as the war continues. But neither Price nor other U.S. officials could rule out the possibility of a chance Blinken-Lavrov encounter in Bali, which would be their first since they last met in Geneva in January. Price declined to discuss what he called the "choreography" of the G-20.

Like almost all recent international diplomatic gatherings, the Bali meeting will be overshadowed by Ukraine. But unlike the Western-dominated G-7 and NATO summits held in Europe last week, the G-20 will have a different flavor.

China and many other participants, including India, South Africa and Brazil, have resisted signing onto U.S. and European full-throated opposition to Russia's invasion. Some have outright refused Western entreaties to join condemnations of the conflict, which the U.S. and its allies see as an attack on the international rules-based order that has prevailed since the end of World War II.

Thus, there may be difficulty in achieving a G-20 consensus on efforts to mitigate the food and energy impacts of the Ukraine conflict, particularly with China and Russia in the room. That will not stop the U.S. from trying, according to American officials.

They want to see the G-20 put its weight behind a U.N.-backed initiative to free up some 20 million tons of Ukrainian grain for export mainly to the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

"We would like the G-20 to hold Russia accountable and insist that it support this initiative," said Ramin Toloui, the assistant secretary of state for Economic and Business Affairs.

While a variety of nations, including G-20 host Indonesia, are pushing for Russia to ease its blockade in the Black Sea to allow grain to enter the global market, they remain wary of antagonizing Moscow and its friends in Beijing.

And that divergence has set the stage for a potentially contentious preparatory meeting ahead of No-

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member's G-20 summit amid questions about whether Russian President Vladimir Putin will attend.

The U.S. has made clear it does not believe Putin should attend but has urged Indonesia to invite Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy should the Russian leader participate.

In the meantime, the U.S. and China are separately at severe odds over numerous issues ranging from trade and human rights to Taiwan and disputes in the South China Sea.

Blinken's meeting with Wang was announced after China's trade envoy with Washington expressed concern about U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports in a call with U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. Neither side gave any indication that progress has been made on the matter and U.S. officials downplayed the chances for any breakthroughs in the short term.

In his meeting with Wang, U.S. officials said Blinken would instead be pressing to keep lines of communications open and creating "guardrails" to guide the world's two largest economies as they navigate increasingly complex and potentially explosive matters.

"It's absolutely critical that we have open lines of communication with our Chinese counterparts, particularly at the senior level ... to ensure that we prevent any miscalculation that could lead inadvertently to conflict and confrontation," said Daniel Kritenbrink, the top U.S. diplomat for Asia.

From Bali, Blinken will travel to Bangkok, Thailand, to make up for a trip to the Thai capital that he was forced to cancel late last year due to COVID-19. In addition to Thai officials, Blinken will meet with refugees who have fled ongoing political violence and repression in Myanmar since a coup toppled a civilian government in February 2021.

Shanghai, Beijing order new round of mass COVID-19 testing

BEIJING (AP) — Residents of parts of Shanghai and Beijing have been ordered to undergo further rounds of COVID-19 testing following the discovery of new cases in the two cities, while tight restrictions remain in place in Hong Kong, Macao and other Chinese cities.

Shanghai has only just emerged from a strict lockdown that confined most of its 24 million residents to their homes for weeks and the new requirements have stirred concerns of a return of such harsh measures.

The latest outbreak in China's largest city, a key international business center, has been linked to a karaoke parlor that reopened without authorization during lockdown and failed to enforce prevention measures among employees and customers, including the tracing of others they came into contact with, according to the city health commission. All such outlets have been ordered to temporarily suspend business, the city's department of culture and tourism said.

"The virus spreads quickly because such entertainment venues are mostly indoor and closed, with frequent movement of people, high concentrations of people and inadequate personal protection measures," said Zhao Dandan, deputy director of Shanghai's municipal health commission.

Apartment blocks where cases are discovered continue to be isolated, while mass testing in the majority of the city's 16 districts has been ordered at least through Thursday. A negative test result obtained within the previous 48 hours is required to enter residential compounds and public venues under the "two tests within three days" program.

Entertainment businesses from water parks to chess clubs and internet cafes have been wanting to reopen but face an uncertain regulatory environment.

Those types of venues will "gradually open in an orderly and strict manner according to the situation of epidemic prevention and control in each district," said Jin Lei, deputy director of the city's culture and tourism department.

Shanghai's lockdown prompted unusual protests both in person and online against the government's harsh enforcement, which left many residents struggling to access food and medical services and sent thousands to quarantine centers.

Beijing has also seen a recent outbreak linked to a nightlife spot. It has been conducting regular testing for weeks and at least one residential compound in the suburb of Shunyi, where many foreign residents live, has been locked down with a steel fence installed over its entrance to prevent residents from leaving.

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Enforcement in China's capital has been far milder than in Shanghai, although officials continue to require regular testing and prevention measures.

In the northern city of Xi'an, whose 13 million residents endured one of China's strictest lockdowns over the winter, restaurants have been restricted to takeout only and public entertainment spots closed for a week starting Wednesday.

A notice on the city government's website said the measures were only temporary and intended to prevent a renewed outbreak. It said supermarkets, offices, public transport and other facilities are continuing to operate as normal, with routine screening including temperature checks and people being required to show an app proving they are free of infection.

The gambling hub of Macao has meanwhile locked down the famed Grand Lisboa Hotel after cases were discovered there. More than a dozen residential and commercial centers in the Chinese special autonomous region of about 650,000 people have been designated as "red zones," with access restricted almost exclusively to emergency workers.

Authorities have ordered most establishments to close with the exception of casinos, which are Macao's main revenue generator and among the city's largest employers.

City residents will have to undergo three citywide COVID-19 tests this week. The local outbreak is Macao's largest since the pandemic began, with more than 900 infections reported since mid-June.

Neighboring Hong Kong has also seen a rising trend of coronavirus infections since mid-June. In the past seven days, daily infections reported averaged about 2,000 a day.

The city's new leader, John Lee, said Wednesday that Hong Kong must not "lie flat" when it comes to COVID-19, rejecting the "living with the coronavirus" mentality that most of the world has adopted.

His comments echo the sentiments of Chinese authorities, who have stuck with their "zero-COVID" policy that has become closely identified with President and head of the ruling Communist Party Xi Jinping.

However, Lee has said that Hong Kong authorities are exploring options, including shortening the duration of mandatory quarantine for incoming travelers. Currently, travelers must test negative for COVID-19 before flying and quarantine for seven days in designated hotels upon arrival.

The city, once known as a bustling business hub and international financial center, has seen tourism and business travel crippled by its tough entry restrictions.

The strict measures have remained in place despite relatively low case numbers and the serious negative effects on China's economy and global supply chains.

The World Health Organization recently called the policy unsustainable, a view Chinese officials rejected outright even while they say they hope to minimize the impact.

While China's borders remain largely closed, cutting off both visitors from abroad and outbound tourism, officials have cautiously increased flights from some foreign countries, most recently Russia.

Mainland China reported 353 cases of domestic transmission on Wednesday, 241 of them asymptomatic.

Shanghai announced just 24 cases over the past 24 hours, and Beijing five. Anhui announced 222 cases in what appears to be the latest cluster, prompting the inland province to order mass testing and travel restrictions in Si county, where the bulk of cases have been reported.

Judges keeping Capitol riot trials in DC amid bias claims

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For some of the Washington, D.C., residents who reported for jury duty last month, a pro-Trump mob's assault on the U.S. Capitol felt like a personal attack.

Ahead of a trial for a Michigan man charged in the riot, one prospective juror said a police officer injured during the melee is a close friend. Another has friends who are congressional staffers or journalists who worked at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. A woman whose boyfriend lived near the Capitol recalled the terror she felt that day.

None of them served on the federal jury that swiftly convicted Anthony Robert Williams of storming the Capitol to obstruct Congress from certifying Joe Biden's 2020 presidential electoral victory.

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But their personal connections to the riot highlight the challenge facing judges and attorneys in choosing impartial jurors in Washington to decide the hundreds of criminal cases stemming from the insurrection — especially as lawmakers hold high-profile public hearings on the insurrection less than a mile from the courthouse.

One of the most serious cases brought by the Justice Department in the Capitol attack has already been delayed after defense attorneys argued that their clients couldn't get a fair trial in the midst of televised hearings by the House committee investigating the riot.

And a growing number of defendants are pushing to have their trials moved out of Washington, saying the outcome of the first trials proves that the odds are unfairly stacked against Jan. 6 defendants in the nation's capital.

"D.C. is a city that, as a whole, feels that it has been the victim of a crime," attorneys in two cases against members and associates of the far-right Oath Keepers extremist group wrote in court papers seeking to have their trials moved to Virginia.

Prosecutors and judges see no evidence that Capitol rioters can't get a fair trial in the district and believe the process of weeding out biased jurors is working. Judges presiding over Jan. 6 cases have consistently rejected requests to move trials, saying the capital has plenty of residents who can serve as fair jurors.

Prosecutors' unblemished record so far in jury trials for Jan. 6 cases may speak to the strength of the evidence against the rioters, many of whom were captured on camera storming the Capitol and even bragged about their actions on social media.

It's the latest in a string of long-shot legal gambits from defendants charged with crimes ranging from low-level misdemeanors to felony seditious conspiracy. Already more than 300 people across the U.S. have pleaded guilty to crimes stemming from the deadly riot. Collectively, 72 jurors have unanimously convicted six Jan. 6 defendants of all 35 counts in their indictments.

The federal court in Washington — where all the Jan. 6 cases are being heard — has seen plenty of politically charged trials, including those for former Mayor Marion Barry, Iran-Contra figure Oliver North and ex-Trump adviser Roger Stone, prosecutors note.

It's exceptionally rare for judges to agree to move trials to a different location, even in the most high-profile cases. Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, for example, was tried in Boston over the objections of his attorneys even though a large number of people in the city were impacted by the attack, which killed three people and wounded more than 260 others.

If Williams, the Jan. 6 defendant, had had his way, his trial would have been held in his native Michigan. His lawyers argued that inflammatory media coverage of the Capitol attack tainted a jury pool that already was predisposed to view him as somebody who victimized them.

Chief Judge Beryl Howell denied Williams' request for a change of trial venue before jury selection started on June 27. One by one, the judge questioned 49 prospective jurors before seating 12 jurors and two alternates.

Howell disqualified several prospective jurors after questioning them about their personal connections or strong feelings about the events of Jan. 6. The judge asked a woman if her friendship with an officer whose ribs were broken during the riot would prevent her from being fair and impartial.

"My Christianity says, 'No,' but my feelings say, 'Yes,'" the woman replied.

A man married to a USA Today reporter said Jan. 6 is a frequent topic of discussion among their friends who work at the Capitol.

"It would be very difficult to separate those," he said before Howell excused him.

Howell also disqualified a woman who described herself as "very left biased" and a former New York City resident who said his "deep-rooted" dislike for former President Donald Trump predates his White House years.

The jurors picked for Williams' trial included a NASA engineer, a moving company employee, a paralegal, a Wall Street regulator and a former State Department employee. None of them expressed any strong opinions about Jan. 6.

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More than three dozen Capitol riot defendants have asked to have their trials moved out of Washington, including at least nine who filed their requests in June. None has succeeded so far.

In denying one such request, U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan said she agreed with prosecutors that there is no reason to believe that Washington's entire population was so affected by the events of Jan. 6 that it can't seat an impartial panel.

"In any U.S. jurisdiction, most prospective jurors will have heard about the events of January 6, and many will have various disqualifying biases," she wrote.

Before a jury convicted retired New York City police officer Thomas Webster of assaulting a Capitol police officer during the riot, Webster's lawyer said a survey of Washington residents found that 84% believe Jan. 6 defendants were trying to overturn the 2020 election results and keep Trump, a Republican, in power. The defense attorney, James Monroe, also noted that 92% of Washington residents voted for Biden, a Democrat.

"Given the lopsided political makeup of the District, it is impossible to panel a jury that is not entirely comprised of people preordained to find Webster — a presumed Trump supporter — guilty," Monroe wrote.

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta rejected the motion, saying the survey shows that nearly half of the Washington residents polled "would keep an open mind in the context of a specific case."

Members of the Oath Keepers also failed to persuade Mehta to move their trial on seditious conspiracy charges from Washington to Alexandria, Virginia. Their lawyers noted that every Jan. 6 case tried before a jury in Washington has resulted in a conviction.

"That is true, but guilty verdicts are hardly unusual in federal criminal prosecutions," Mehta wrote. "The mere existence of other guilty verdicts does not mean that the jury pool is inherently tainted."

Williams' trial was the first for a Jan. 6 case since a House committee began holding hearings on the Capitol riot, which drew millions of TV viewers.

Defense attorney John Kiyonaga, who represents Capitol riot defendant Robert Morss, said the House committee hearings have "poisoned" the jury pool in Washington. Kiyonaga has asked for his client's trial to be moved to another district.

"The Committee has spoon fed to the entire nation a precisely choreographed rendition of January 6th defendants as 'insurrectionists' and murderous orchestrators of an attempted coup," Kiyonaga wrote.

A trial was scheduled to start in August for several members of the far-right Proud Boys extremist group charged with seditious conspiracy and accused of plotting to forcibly oppose the lawful transfer of presidential power on Jan. 6.

But U.S. District Judge Timothy Kelly agreed to move the trial to December after lawyers for some Proud Boys members argued they couldn't pick an impartial jury in the midst of the House committee hearings.

Defense attorney Carmen Hernandez also cited "non-stop prejudicial publicity" from the House committee hearings as grounds for moving the Proud Boys trial to another district, but the judge hasn't ruled on that yet.

EXPLAINER: Factors behind Sydney's recent flood emergencies

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Parts of Australia's largest city have been inundated by four major floods since March last year, leaving weary residents questioning how many times they can rebuild.

The latest disaster follows Sydney's wettest-ever start to a year with dams overflowing and a sodden landscape incapable of absorbing more rain that must instead run into swollen waterways.

Here are the climate, geographic and demographic factors behind Sydney's latest flooding emergency.

LEADERS BLAME CLIMATE CHANGE

New South Wales state Premier Dominic Perrottet said government and communities need 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 com-

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mon," Perrottet said on Monday.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the fourth major flood event across Sydney following devastating wildfires in the same region during the 2019-2020 Southern Hemisphere summer were evidence of the need for climate action.

"What we know is that Australia has always been subject of floods, of bushfires, but we know that the science told us that if we continued to not take action globally on climate change, then ... extreme weather events would be more often and more intense," Albanese said on Wednesday.

"What we're seeing, unfortunately, is that play out," Albanese added.

LA NINA OUT, OTHER WEATHER PATTERNS IN

Two La Niña weather patterns brought above-average rainfall across Australia's east coast in 2021 and this year. The second was declared over last month, but the Bureau of Meteorology forecast a wetter than usual Southern Hemisphere winter for Sydney and a 50-50 chance of La Niña returning this year.

The bureau says two climate drivers led to Sydney's flooding since Saturday.

The flooding was influenced by the Indian Ocean Dipole, which refers to the difference in sea surface temperatures between the western and eastern Indian Ocean. In the negative phase, warmer waters concentrate near Australia, leading to above-average Southern Hemisphere winter-spring rainfall as more moisture is available to weather systems crossing the continent. The IOD has repeatedly dipped into its rain-bearing negative phase in the past month and is expected to stay negative within months.

A second influence was the positive Southern Annular Mode. The SAM refers to the non-seasonal, north-south movement of the strong westerly winds that blow almost continuously in the mid to high latitudes of the Southern Hemisphere. In the positive phase, the SAM directs more moisture-filled air than usual into eastern Australia, driving above-average rainfall and more east coast lows in winter.

During the latest rainfall event, extraordinarily warm waters off the Australian coast, 21 to 23 degrees Celsius (70 to 73 degrees Fahrenheit), provided extra energy and moisture to a deep trough and east coast low, concentrating heavy rainfall to one 24-hour period that started at 9 a.m. Saturday.

Several rain gauges in Sydney and its surrounding area set July or all-time records.

GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHY

Much of Sydney's rain drains into a river system prone to spilling over, but economic interests have largely blocked moves to mitigate flooding.

A 22,000-square-kilometer (8,500-square mile) rain catchment covering the Blue Mountains on Sydney's western fringe and the city of 5 million's western suburbs drain into the Hawkesbury-Nepean river system, which is the epicenter of some of the worst flooding.

The river system faces an extreme flood risk because gorges restrict the rivers' seaward flow, often causing water to rapidly back up and spill across the floodplain after heavy rain, said Jamie Pittock, Australian National University professor of environment and society.

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley was home to 134,000 people and that population was projected to double by 2050 as Sydney's population and real estate prices grow, he said.

"The potential economic returns from property development are a key driver for the lack of effective action to reduce flood risk," Pittock said.

The state government wants to raise the wall of the Warragamba Dam, Sydney's main reservoir, to reduce flooding in the valley.

But some argue that raising the wall would control only half the floodwater and won't prevent major flooding delivered by other rivers in the region, said Dale Dominey-Howes, Sydney University's professor of hazards and disaster risk sciences.

Saudi Arabia expecting 1 million in largest hajj since virus

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MECCA, Saudi Arabia (AP) — One million Muslim pilgrims were converging on Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca on Wednesday for the largest hajj since the coronavirus pandemic severely curtailed access to one of Islam's five pillars.

Saudi Arabia's decision to allow some 850,000 Muslims from abroad to make the annual pilgrimage, which begins on Thursday, marks a major step toward normalcy after two years of a drastically scaled-down hajj restricted to Saudi residents.

The 1 million foreign and domestic pilgrims participating is still far less than the 2.5 million Muslims who traveled in 2019 for the pilgrimage, typically one of the world's largest gatherings. Those performing the ritual this year must be under 65, vaccinated against the coronavirus and have tested negative for COVID-19 within 72 hours of travel. The pilgrims are chosen from millions of applicants through an online lottery system.

Saudi officials inspected the holy site on Wednesday and stressed their "readiness" to receive pilgrims with the goal of "maintaining public health."

After the coronavirus struck in 2020, Saudi authorities allowed just 1,000 pilgrims already residing in the kingdom to attend, prompting historians to compare the disruption to the site's storming by religious extremists and dramatic closure in 1979.

Last year, the hajj was similarly restricted to 60,000 fully vaccinated Muslims living in Saudi Arabia. The unprecedented curbs sent shock waves throughout the Muslim world, devastating many believers who had spent years saving up for the religious rite.

This year, however, Saudi authorities are keen to relax virus curbs. Religious pilgrimages brought in \$12 billion before the pandemic — accounting for the largest percentage of Saudi Arabia's gross domestic product after oil.

Although virus cases have risen steadily to over 500 a day in Saudi Arabia, the government lifted the country's indoor mask mandate and other virus precautions last month. Roughly 70% of the country has been vaccinated against the virus.

The Quran says that all Islam's followers who are physically and financially able should make the pilgrimage once in their lifetime. Pilgrims travel to Mecca from all over the world for five intense days of worship, carrying out a series of rituals.

The hajj follows a route the Prophet Muhammad walked nearly 1,400 years ago and is believed to trace the footsteps of the prophets Ibrahim and Ismail, or Abraham and Ishmael as they are named in the Bible.

North Macedonia: 47 police officers injured in protests

By KONSTANTIN TESTORIDES Associated Press

SKOPJE, North Macedonia (AP) — Police in North Macedonia said 47 officers were injured, two of them seriously, after a group of mostly young people threw stones, metal bars, eggs and Molotov cocktails at the parliament building in the capital late Tuesday.

Thousands of people have protested nightly in Skopje since the weekend over a French proposal for a compromise aimed at lifting objections by neighboring Bulgaria to North Macedonia joining the European Union.

Police said 11 protesters were detained Tuesday night. Prime Minister Dimitar Kovacevski condemned the attacks on the police, saying violence cannot be justified. Another protest was planned for Wednesday evening.

Bulgaria, which as an EU member has veto powers over new members, wants North Macedonia to formally recognize its language has Bulgarian roots, to recognize a Bulgarian minority in the country and to quash "hate speech" against Bulgaria. Many in North Macedonia say acquiescing would undermine their national identity.

North Macedonia's president, Stevo Pendarovski, and the government back the proposed French deal, which calls for the country to acknowledge in its constitution the existence of an ethnic Bulgarian minority. It would also provide for regular reviews on how the bilateral dispute is being addressed, which could

potentially hamper North Macedonia's future course toward EU membership.

Bulgaria has already formally accepted the French proposal, which now requires the backing of North Macedonia's parliament. Lawmakers are set to convene later this week.

The center-right main opposition party VMRO-DPMNE, many international law experts and civic organizations counter that the French proposal favors Bulgarian demands which dispute Macedonian views of regional history, language, identity and heritage.

North Macedonia has been a candidate for EU membership for 17 years. The country received a green light in 2020 to begin accession talks, but no date for the start of the negotiations has been set.

UK's Johnson vows to stay in office after top ministers quit

By DANICA KIRKA and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A defiant British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was battling to stay in power on Wednesday after his government was rocked by the resignation of two top ministers, who said they could no longer serve under his scandal-tarred leadership.

His first challenge is getting through Wednesday, where he faces tough questions at the weekly Prime Minister's Questions session in Parliament, and a long-scheduled grilling by a committee of senior lawmakers.

Months of discontent over Johnson's judgment and ethics within the governing Conservative Party erupted with the resignations of Treasury chief Rishi Sunak and Health Secretary Sajid Javid within minutes of each other on Tuesday evening. In a scathing resignation letter, Sunak said "the public rightly expect government to be conducted properly, competently and seriously. ... I believe these standards are worth fighting for and that is why I am resigning."

Javid said the party needed "humility, grip and a new direction" but "it is clear this situation will not change under your leadership."

Johnson quickly replaced the two ministers, promoting Nadhim Zahawi from the education department to the Treasury and installing his chief of staff, Steve Barclay, as health secretary.

But a string of resignations late Tuesday from more junior ministers — from both the liberal and right-wing branches of the Conservative Party — showed that danger to Johnson was far from over.

In the past few months, Johnson has been fined by police and slammed by an investigator's report over lockdown-breaching parties in government during the pandemic; survived a no-confidence vote by his party in which 41% of Conservative lawmakers voted to oust him; and has seen formerly loyal lieutenants urge him to resign.

Through it all, he has vowed to carry on governing — even suggesting he wanted to stay in office until the 2030s.

The final straw for Sunak and Javid was the prime minister's shifting explanations about his handling of a sexual misconduct scandal.

The latest scandal began last week when lawmaker Chris Pincher resigned as Conservative deputy chief whip amid complaints that he groped two men at a private club. That triggered a series of reports about past allegations leveled against Pincher and questions about why Johnson promoted him to a senior job enforcing party discipline.

Johnson's office initially said he wasn't aware of the previous accusations when he promoted Pincher in February. By Monday, a spokesman said Johnson knew of allegations that were "either resolved or did not progress to a formal complaint."

When a former top civil servant in the Foreign Office said Johnson had been briefed about an allegation against Pincher in 2019, Johnson's office changed its story again, saying the prime minister had forgotten that Pincher was the subject of an official complaint.

It was all too much for ministers who have been sent onto radio and TV to defend the government's position, only to find the position changing by the hour.

Bim Afolami, who quit as Conservative Party vice-chairman on Tuesday, said he had been willing to give Johnson the benefit of the doubt, "but I think that in the last few weeks we've seen that things haven't

improved. They've got a lot worse."

"I think the behavior of Downing Street over the Chris Pincher affair was really appalling. And I, personally, just couldn't think I could defend that sort of behavior any longer," he told the BBC.

Johnson's opponents in the party hope more Cabinet ministers will follow Sunak and Javid, though for now other top officials — including Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, Defense Secretary Ben Wallace and Home Secretary Priti Patel — are staying put.

Opponents are also trying to force another no-confidence vote over the prime minister. The existing rules require 12 months between such votes, but the rules are made by a powerful party committee — and elections for its executive are due in the next few weeks.

The next frontier for drones: letting them fly out of sight

By MATT O'BRIEN and NATHAN ELLGREN Associated Press

REMINGTON, Va. (AP) — For years, there's been a cardinal rule for flying civilian drones: Keep them within your line of sight. Not just because it's a good idea — it's also the law.

But some drones have recently gotten permission to soar out of their pilots' sight. They can now inspect high-voltage power lines across the forested Great Dismal Swamp in Virginia. They're tracking endangered sea turtles off Florida's coast and monitoring seaports in the Netherlands and railroads from New Jersey to the rural West.

Aviation authorities in the U.S. and elsewhere are preparing to relax some of the safeguards they imposed to regulate a boom in off-the-shelf consumer drones over the past decade. Businesses want simpler rules that could open your neighborhood's skies to new commercial applications of these low-flying machines, although privacy advocates and some airplane and balloon pilots remain wary.

For now, a small but growing group of power companies, railways and delivery services like Amazon are leading the way with special permission to fly drones "beyond visual line of sight." As of early July, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration had approved 230 such waivers — one of them to Virginia-based Dominion Energy for inspecting its network of power plants and transmission lines.

"This is the first step of what everybody's expecting with drones," said Adam Lee, Dominion's chief security officer. "The first time in our nation's history where we've now moved out into what I think everyone's expecting is coming."

That expectation — of small drones with little human oversight delivering packages, assessing home insurance claims or buzzing around on nighttime security patrols — has driven the FAA's work this year to craft new safety guidelines meant to further integrate drones into the national airspace.

The FAA said it is still reviewing how it will roll out routine operations enabling some drones to fly beyond visual line of sight, although it has signaled that the permissions will be reserved for commercial applications, not hobbyists.

"Our ultimate goal is you shouldn't need a waiver for this process at all. It becomes an accepted practice," said Adam Bry, CEO of California drone-maker Skydio, which is supplying its drones to Dominion, railroad company BNSF and other customers with permission to fly beyond line of sight.

"The more autonomous the drones become, the more they can just be instantly available anywhere they could possibly be useful," Bry said.

Part of that involves deciding how much to trust that drones won't crash into people or other aircraft when their operators aren't looking. Other new rules will require drones to carry remote identification — like an electronic license plate — to track their whereabouts. And in the aftermath of Russia's war in Ukraine — where both sides have used small consumer drones to target attacks — the White House has been pushing a parallel effort to counter the potential malicious use of drones in the U.S.

At a gas-fired plant in Remington, Virginia, which helps power some of Washington's suburbs, a reporter with The Associated Press watched in June as Dominion Energy drone pilots briefly lost visual line of sight of their inspection drone as it flew around the backside of a large fuel tank and the top of a smoke stack.

That wouldn't have been legally possible without Dominion's recently approved FAA waiver. And it wouldn't

have been technically possible without advancements in collision-avoidance technology that are enabling drones to fly closer to buildings.

Previously, "you would have to erect scaffolding or have people go in with a bucket truck," said Nate Robie, who directs the drone program at Dominion. "Now you can go in on a 20-minute flight."

Not everyone is enthused about the pending rules. Pilots of hot air balloons and other lightweight aircraft warn that crashes will follow if the FAA allows largely autonomous delivery drones the right of way at low altitudes.

"These drones cannot see where they are flying and are blind to us," said a June call to action from the Balloon Federation of America.

Broader concerns come from civil liberties groups that say protecting people's privacy should be a bigger priority.

"There is a greater chance that you'll have drones flying over your house or your backyard as these beyond-visual-line-of-sight drone operations increase," said Jeramie Scott, a senior counsel at the Electronic Privacy Information Center who sat on the FAA's advisory group working to craft new drone rules. "It'll be much harder to know who to complain to."

EPIC and other groups dissented from the advisory group's early recommendations and are calling for stronger privacy and transparency requirements — such as an app that could help people identify the drones above them and what data they are collecting.

"If you want to fly beyond visual line of sight, especially if you are commercial, the public has a right to know what you're flying, what data you are collecting," said Andrés Arrieta, director of consumer privacy engineering at the Electronic Frontier Foundation. "It seems like such a low bar."

Some Russians won't halt war protests, despite arrest fears

By The Associated Press undefined

Ever since Russia invaded Ukraine, Anastasia has started her day by composing an anti-war message and posting it on the wall at the entrance of her apartment block in the industrial city of Perm in the Ural Mountains.

"Do not believe the propaganda you see on the TV, read independent media!" reads one. "Violence and death have been constantly with us for three months now — take care of yourselves" reads another.

The 31-year-old teacher, who asked to be identified only by her first name because she fears for her security, said she wanted "a safe and simple method of getting a message across."

"I couldn't do something huge and public," she told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. "I want to get people to think. And I think we should influence whatever space, in whatever way we can."

Despite a massive government crackdown on such acts of protest, some Russians have persisted in speaking out against the invasion — even in the simplest of ways.

Some have paid a heavy price. In the early, wintry days of the invasion in February, authorities moved quickly to quash demonstrations, arresting people who marched or even held blank signs or other oblique references to the conflict. Critical media outlets were shut down as the government sought to control the narrative. Political opponents were singled out by President Vladimir Putin or commentators on state-run TV.

Lawmakers rubber-stamped measures that outlawed the spread of "false information" about what the Kremlin called a "special military operation" and disparaging the military, using them against anyone who spoke out against the attack or talked about the atrocities Russian troops were alleged to have committed.

As the war has dragged on into the languid days of a Russian summer, some like Anastasia feel guilty that they cannot do more to oppose the invasion, even within the constraints of the new laws.

When Russian troops rolled in Ukraine on Feb. 24, Anastasia said her first thought was to sell all her possessions and move abroad, but she soon changed her mind.

"It's my country, why should I leave?" she told AP. "I understood I needed to stay and create something to help from here."

Sergei Besov, a Moscow-based printer and artist, also felt he couldn't stay silent. Even before the invasion,

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the 45-year-old was making posters reflecting on the political scene and plastering them around the capital.

When Russians voted two years ago on constitutional amendments allowing Putin to seek two more terms after 2024, Besov used his old printing press with hefty wooden Cyrillic type and vintage red ink to print posters that said simply: "Against."

During the 2020 unrest in Belarus over a disputed presidential election and the ensuing crackdown on the protesters, he made posters saying "Freedom" in Belarusian.

After the invasion of Ukraine, his project, Partisan Press, started making posters saying "No to war" – the main anti-war slogan. Video of the poster being printed became popular on Instagram, and demand for copies was so great that they were given away for free.

After some of his posters were used at a demonstration in Red Square and some people displaying them were arrested, it became clear that the police "would inevitably come to us," Besov said.

They showed up when Besov wasn't there, charging two of his employees with participating in an unauthorized rally by printing the poster used in it.

The case has dragged on for over three months, he said, causing all of them lots of stress over whether they will be penalized and to what extent.

Besov has stopped printing the "No to war" posters and went for subtler messages such as "Fear is not an excuse to do nothing."

He considers it important to keep speaking out.

"The problem is we don't know where the lines are drawn," Besov said. "It is known that they can prosecute you for certain things, but some manage to fly under the radar. Where is this line? It is very bad and really difficult."

Sasha Skochilenko, a 31-year-old artist and musician in St. Petersburg, failed to stay under the radar and is facing severe consequences for what she thought was a relatively safe way to spread the word about the horrors of war: She was detained for replacing five price tags in a supermarket with tiny ones containing anti-war slogans.

"The Russian army bombed an arts schools in Mariupol. Some 400 people were hiding in it from the shelling," one read.

"Russian conscripts are being sent to Ukraine. Lives of our children are the price of this war," said another one.

Skochilenko was really affected by the war, said her partner, Sophia Subbotina.

"She had friends in Kyiv who were sheltering in the subway and calling her, talking about the horror that was going on there," Subbotina told AP.

In 2020, Skochilenko taught acting and filmmaking at a children's camp in Ukraine and worried how the conflict would affect her former pupils.

"She was really afraid for these children, that their lives were in danger because of the war, that bombs were falling on them, and she couldn't stay silent," Subbotina said.

Skochilenko faces up to 10 years in prison on charges of spreading false information about the Russian army.

"It was a shock for us that they launched a criminal case, and a case that implies a monstrous prison term of 5 to 10 years," Subbotina said. "In our country, shorter sentences are handed down for murder."

Cairo's historic Nile River houseboats removed in govt push

By AHMED HATEM and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — With verdant gardens on one side and water on the other, they were an anomaly in a city bordered on three sides by desert. For decades, Cairo's houseboats occupied prime waterfront real estate, offering residents a front-row seat to the passing Nile River, with its water taxis, anglers, sport rowers and occasional family of ducks.

But it's coming to an end: A government push to remove the string of floating homes from the city's Nile River banks has dwindled their numbers from several dozen to just a handful. Houseboats have been

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a Cairo tradition dating back to the 1800s and government efforts to remove them have drawn criticism in Egypt, where residents are mourning the loss of not just their homes but a way of life. Critics say the move is part of a series of development decisions by the government of Abdel Fattah el-Sissi that endanger the city's heritage.

"The point is that they really, really don't seem to understand that there is value — intangible values — there is value in history," said Ahdaf Soueif, a prize-winning Egyptian novelist who bought and renovated a her houseboat after moving back to Egypt from the United Kingdom 10 years ago,

The floating homes are being removed or renovated to develop the waterfront commercially, according to officials. They have not released detailed plans of what that entails. In recent years a surge in infrastructure projects by el-Sissi's government has drawn concern about heritage sites, including an ancient cemetery and historic gardens.

In late June, residents of at least 30 houseboats were ordered to evacuate within 20 days. Located on a stretch of the river in the working-class neighborhoods of Imbaba and Kit-Kat, they sat opposite the upscale residential island of Zamalek. The eviction notices came after years of government pressure in the form of increasingly expensive mooring licenses.

Action followed soon after, with most of the dwellings being dismantled by their owners or moved by the government in late June. The evictions are ongoing.

Soueif said her two sons had their wedding parties at her houseboat and it's where she planned to spend the rest of her life. This week, her family watched it float away.

Soueif had been required to pay 72,000 Egyptian pounds (about \$3,800) for a mooring license in 2018, up from 160 pounds in 2013.

Omar Robert Hamilton, Soueif's son, said in a post on social media that Soueif and other residents stopped paying the fees and sued to fight the increases. But the government imposed fines and they are now demanding Soueif's family produce 900,000 pounds, or roughly \$48,000, in back fees.

Soueif hails from a prominent family of anti-government activists in Egypt and her nephew Alaa Abdel-Fattah, perhaps the country's most high-profile activist, was imprisoned under el-Sissi. She said the opacity of the government's decision-making is startling. She learned from an official's recent interview on television that the Engineering Authority of the Armed Forces made the decision to evict the houseboat residents in 2020.

The authority is the force behind the military's many road projects and the country's mega-plans, including construction of a new administrative capital on Cairo's desert outskirts. New building and development is not easy in Cairo, a city with layers upon layers of history. But Soueif says sacrificing history is not the right way to go about it.

"When you're trying to turn Egypt into Dubai, you actually devalue it," Soueif said, referring to the newness of one of the Middle East's most modern capitals. "You are just destroying your assets that nobody has."

Iklas Helmy, an 88-year-old owner of a bright blue houseboat, said she cannot imagine life elsewhere. She was born on a houseboat. She's tried to get a new license for her houseboat — her home of the past 25 years — and was told it couldn't be renewed and that the decision comes from very high up.

"You're going to take my entire life away to build a cafe?" she said. Talking about it reduces her to tears.

Walking with a cane, Helmy greeted two geese who live on the riverbank next to her home.

After being featured in a number of media reports, Helmy's case has caused some outcry. She called on the government to let her live in the boat until she dies. Her plea made it all the way to the president. In a rare televised question from the media, a reporter from the pan-Arab satellite channel Al-Hadath asked him about Helmy's situation specifically.

El-Sissi said he appreciated Helmy's situation but said: "We are bringing order back to the country." He did not elaborate.

It remains unclear what will happen to some of the boats that were towed — where they will be moored or if their owners can afford the fees.

Tariq al-Murri, an Egyptian architect who specializes in issues of heritage, said the wooden houseboats

are most reminiscent of those that floated on the Seine in Paris in the mid 1800s, and where some still exist. At the time, Egypt's ruler Ismail Pasha strived to imitate everything architecturally that he had seen in France.

Al-Murri said houseboats on the Nile captured Egyptians' imaginations and were featured in several of the country's classic films and books. Some became locations for cabarets and bars. But now, the ones in question are largely just homes.

Al-Murri said government officials should have considered other options before forcing demolitions. He said the boats could be preserved, moved to another stretch of waterfront and turned into one of the city's attractions.

"I think a conversation could still happen," he said.

But there are indications that there is no room for discussion on the issue.

The television interview last month in which Soueif and other residents learned of the floating homes' fate was given by Ayman Anwar, a government official who heads the Central Administration for the Protection of the Nile. He said boats that work in the tourism industry will be allowed to stay, but not those that are residences.

"The houseboats are like dilapidated cars from 1978 the licenses of which have been canceled by the traffic authorities," he said.

Parade shooting suspect bought 5 weapons despite threats

By MICHAEL TARM, KATHLEEN FOODY and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

HIGHLAND PARK, Ill. (AP) — A man charged Tuesday with seven counts of murder after firing off more than 70 rounds at an Independence Day parade in suburban Chicago legally bought five weapons, including the high-powered rifle used in the shooting, despite authorities being called to his home twice in 2019 for threats of violence and suicide, police said.

Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart said the suspect, if convicted of the first-degree murder charges, would receive a mandatory life sentence without the possibility of parole. He promised that dozens more charges would be sought.

A spokesman for the Lake County Major Crime Task Force said the suspected shooter, who was arrested late Monday, used a rifle "similar to an AR-15" to spray more than 70 rounds from atop a commercial building into a crowd that had gathered for the parade in Highland Park, an affluent community of about 30,000 on the Lake Michigan shore.

A seventh victim died of their injuries Tuesday. More than three dozen other people were wounded in the attack, which Task force spokesman Christopher Covelli said the suspect had planned for several weeks.

The assault happened less than three years after police went to the suspect's home following a call from a family member who said he was threatening "to kill everyone" there. Covelli said police confiscated 16 knives, a dagger and a sword, but said there was no sign he had any guns at the time, in September 2019.

Police in April 2019 also responded to a reported suicide attempt by the suspect, Covelli said.

The suspect legally purchased the rifle used in the attack in Illinois within the past year, Covelli said. In all, police said, he purchased five firearms, which were recovered by officers at his father's home.

The revelation about his gun purchases is just the latest example of young men who were able to obtain guns and carry out massacres in recent months despite glaring warning signs about their mental health and inclination to violence.

Illinois state police, who issue gun owners' licenses, said the gunman applied for a license in December 2019, when he was 19. His father sponsored his application.

At the time "there was insufficient basis to establish a clear and present danger" and deny the application, state police said in a statement.

Investigators who have interrogated the suspect and reviewed his social media posts have not determined a motive or found any indication that he targeted victims by race, religion or other protected status, Covelli said.

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Earlier in the day, FBI agents peeked into trash cans and under picnic blankets as they searched for more evidence at the scene. The shots were initially mistaken for fireworks before hundreds of revelers fled in terror.

A day later, baby strollers, lawn chairs and other items left behind by panicked parade goers remained inside a wide police perimeter. Outside the police tape, some residents drove up to collect blankets and chairs they abandoned.

David Shapiro, 47, said the gunfire quickly turned the parade into "chaos."

"People didn't know right away where the gunfire was coming from, whether the gunman was in front or behind you chasing you," he said Tuesday as he retrieved a stroller and lawn chairs.

The gunman initially evaded capture by dressing as a woman and blending into the fleeing crowd, Covelli said.

The shooting was just the latest to shatter the rituals of American life. Schools, churches, grocery stores and now community parades have all become killing grounds in recent months. This time, the bloodshed came as the nation tried to celebrate its founding and the bonds that still hold it together.

A police officer pulled over 21-year-old Robert E. Crimo III north of the shooting scene several hours after police released his photo and warned that he was likely armed and dangerous, Highland Park Police Chief Lou Jogmen said.

His father, Bob, a longtime deli owner, ran for mayor in 2019. The candidate who won that race, current Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering, said she knew Crimo as a boy in Cub Scouts.

"And it's one of those things where you step back and you say, 'What happened?'" Rotering told NBC's "Today" show. "How did somebody become this angry, this hateful, to then take it out on innocent people who literally were just having a family day out?"

Crimo's attorney, Thomas A. Durkin, a prominent Chicago-based lawyer, said he intends to enter a not guilty plea to all charges.

Asked about his client's emotional state, Durkin said he has spoken to Crimo only once — for 10 minutes by phone. He declined to comment further.

Steve Greenberg, the lawyer for the parents, told The Associated Press Tuesday evening the parents aren't concerned about being charged with anything related to their son's case.

"There is zero chance they will be charged with anything criminal," he said. "They didn't do anything wrong. They are as stunned and shocked as anyone."

The shooting occurred at a spot on the parade route where many residents had staked out prime viewing points early in the day.

Among them was Nicolas Toledo, who was visiting his family in Illinois from Mexico, and Jacki Sundheim, a lifelong congregant and staff member at nearby North Shore Congregation Israel. The Lake County coroner released the names of four other victims.

Nine people, ranging from 14 to 70, remained hospitalized Tuesday, hospital officials said.

Since the start of the year, the U.S. has seen 15 shootings where four or more people were killed, including the one in Highland Park, according to The Associated Press/USA TODAY/Northeastern University mass killing database.

Scores of smaller-scale shootings in nearby Chicago also left eight people dead and 60 others wounded over the July 4 weekend.

In 2013, Highland Park officials approved a ban on semi-automatic weapons and large-capacity ammunition magazines. A local doctor and the Illinois State Rifle Association quickly challenged the liberal suburb's stance. The legal fight ended at the U.S. Supreme Court's doorstep in 2015 when justices declined to hear the case and let the suburb's restrictions remain in place.

Under Illinois law, gun purchases can be denied to people convicted of felonies, addicted to narcotics or those who are termed "mental defectives" and capable of harming themselves or others. That might have stopped a suicidal Crimo from getting a weapon.

But under the law, just who is a "mental defective" must be decided by "a court, board, commission or other legal authority."

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The state has a so-called red flag law designed to stop dangerous people before they kill, but it requires family members, relatives, roommates or police to ask a judge to order guns seized.

Crimo, who goes by the name Bobby, was an aspiring rapper with the stage name Awake the Rapper, posting on social media dozens videos and songs, some ominous and violent.

In one animated video since taken down by YouTube, Crimo raps about armies "walking in darkness" as a drawing appears of a man pointing a rifle, a body on the ground and another figure with hands up in the distance.

Federal agents were reviewing Crimo's online profiles, and a preliminary examination of his internet history indicated that he had researched mass killings and had downloaded multiple photos depicting violent acts, including a beheading, a law enforcement official said.

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

Vice President Kamala Harris, who had been in Chicago to address the National Education Association's annual meeting Tuesday, visited the site of the shooting to offer condolences to first responders and local officials.

"The whole nation should understand and have a level of empathy, to understand that this can happen anywhere, in any peace loving community," Harris said in brief comments to reporters in Highland Park. "And we should stand together and speak out about why it's got to stop."

Shapiro, the Highland Park resident who fled the parade with his family, said his 4-year-old son woke up screaming later that night.

"He is too young to understand what happened," Shapiro said. "But he knows something bad happened."

Appeals arguments set on immigrants brought to US as kids

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Immigrant advocates head to a federal appeals court in New Orleans on Wednesday in hopes of saving an Obama-era program that prevents the deportation of thousands of people brought into the U.S. as children.

A federal judge in Texas last year declared the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program illegal — although he agreed to leave the program intact for those already benefitting from it while his order is appealed.

DACA proponents planned an early morning vigil ahead of arguments at the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The U.S. Justice Department is defending the program, allied with the state of New Jersey, advocacy organizations such as the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund and a coalition of dozens of powerful corporations — including Amazon, Apple, Google and Microsoft — which argue that DACA recipients are "employees, consumers and job creators."

Texas, the lead plaintiff with eight other Republican-leaning states, argues that DACA was enacted without going through proper legal and administrative procedures, including public notice and comment periods. Additionally, the states argue that they are harmed financially by allowing immigrants to remain in the country illegally.

"DACA imposes classic pocketbook injuries on the States through social services, healthcare, and education costs," Texas attorneys argued in a brief, estimating that the state spends tens of millions of dollars on Medicaid services on those in the country illegally.

DACA proponents argue the state hasn't proven that ending the program would decrease its costs. They argue that DACA is a policy that falls within federal authorities' power to decide how best to spend finite enforcement resources and that Texas diminished its claims of financial injury by waiting six years to challenge the program. They also argue the state ignores evidence that DACA recipients decrease Texas' costs because many of them hold jobs with health insurance benefits and many own homes and pay property taxes that support schools.

"Texas and the other states cannot point to an injury that is traceable to DACA," MALDEF attorney Nina Perales said in a news conference last week. "Without injury, there's no jurisdiction for the federal courts to hear this case."

The damage to DACA recipients would be grave, immigrant advocates argued in one brief, exposing them to removal from the only country many of them have known and disrupting the lives of established families.

"Collectively, they are parents of over a quarter-million U.S. citizens, and 70% of DACA recipients have an immediate family member who is a U.S. citizen," advocates stated in one brief.

DACA has faced numerous court challenges since then-President Barack Obama created it by executive order in 2012. Former President Donald Trump moved to end the program. But a U.S. Supreme Court decision determined that he had not done it properly, bringing it back to life and allowing for new applications. That was followed by the Texas-led lawsuit.

Assigned to hear arguments at the 5th Circuit were Chief Judge Priscilla Richman, an appointee of President George W. Bush; and two Trump appointees, judges James Ho and Kurt Engelhardt.

New evacuations for communities near California forest fire

JACKSON, Calif. (AP) — Evacuation orders were expanded Tuesday for remote California communities near a wildfire that may have been sparked by fireworks or a barbecue on the Fourth of July in a mountainous region that's a top tourism destination.

The Electra Fire in Sierra Nevada Gold Country broke out Monday afternoon and tripled in size to about 6.1 square miles (15.8 square kilometers). It was 5% contained Tuesday night.

The fire was making short, uphill runs, fire officials said.

"The rate of spread isn't what it was like yesterday, but it is still spreading," said Amador County Sheriff Gary Redman. He said firefighters were working to keep flames confined to unpopulated canyon areas.

Mandatory evacuation orders and warnings combined affected up to 700 residents in Amador County and 300 to 400 people in Calaveras County, Redman said. Evacuation centers were set up for people and animals.

The fire started at a recreation area that was packed with people, forcing 85 to 100 celebrating the holiday at a river to take shelter at a Pacific Gas & Electric Co. facility, Redman said. All were later safely evacuated.

"This was the closest I've ever been to a fire. It was literally within feet of us," said Milka Mikula of Valley Springs, who had gone to the river with her husband, her 5-year-old daughter and her 1-year-old son.

They had to wait about six hours before they could finally start for home, she told KCRA-TV.

"I just wanted to get home. I just wanted to get out of there with my babies. I was shaking really, really bad for quite some time," Mikula said.

Redman said the cause of the fire was not known, but that it started in the Vox Beach area of the North Fork Mokelumne River. He said that could suggest fireworks or a barbecue as a potential cause.

More than 100 fire engines, 1,200 firefighters and 14 helicopters were sent to the fire, which was a threat to power infrastructure, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said. The terrain was described as steep and rugged.

Cal Fire activated an incident management team for the fire. The teams "are made up of trained personnel who provide operational management and support to large-scale, expanding incidents," Cal Fire said.

One firefighter from the local fire protection district suffered burn injuries, Redman said.

Vox Beach is about 55 miles (89 kilometers) east of Sacramento in the heart of the Sierra Nevada region that is steeped with the history of the mid-1800s Gold Rush.

Several other small fires were burning in the state.

Gun violence in America: A long list of forgotten victims

By MICHAEL TARM and BRYNN ANDERSON Associated Press

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ATHENS, Ala. (AP) — Amid the stream of mass shootings that have become chillingly commonplace in America, the reality of the nation's staggering murder rate can often be seen more clearly in the deaths that never make national news.

Take this weekend in Chicago. On Monday, a rooftop shooter opened fire into crowds gathered for an Independence Day parade in a Chicago suburb, killing at least seven people and wounding some 30.

Less talked about, Chicago Police say 68 people were shot in the city between Friday at 6 p.m. and just before midnight on Monday. Eight of them died.

Most gun violence in America is related to seemingly ordinary disputes that spin out of control and someone goes for a gun. Often, the victim and the shooter know one another. They are co-workers and acquaintances, siblings and neighbors. They are killed in farming villages, small towns and crowded cities.

They are people like David Guess, a 51-year-old small-town father of four who had struggled with addiction and who police say was shot by an acquaintance and dumped in an Alabama forest near a place called Chicken Foot Mountain.

His killing drew little attention outside the rural stretch of northern Alabama where Guess grew up and later worked as a mechanic and truck driver. But his death shattered many lives.

"It's been absolutely devastating" to the Guess family, said his brother, Daniel Guess. Their 72-year-old father, Larry, now rarely leaves his home and often doesn't get out of bed.

Daniel didn't just lose his brother in the shooting.

"I've lost my dad. too," he said. "It is killing my dad."

Compared to much of the developed world, America is a murderous country. The United Nations estimates the U.S. homicide rate is three times that of Canada, five of France, 26 of Japan. According to some studies, there are more guns in America today than there are people.

But if Americans often see the country's streets as ever more dangerous scenes of public mass killings, the reality is more complicated.

While mass murders soak up the vast majority of the attention, more than half of America's roughly 45,000 annual firearm deaths are from suicide. Mass shootings — defined as the deaths of four or more people, not including the shooter — have killed from 85 to 175 people each year over the past decade.

Plus, while America's gun killings spiked wildly in 2020, recent statistics indicate they are coming down this year in many cities.

Further complicating things: The data on firearm killings is woefully incomplete, with just over 60% of the country's law enforcement agencies reporting crime statistics to the FBI's national database.

"Our lack of shooting data is devastating for understanding gun violence trends," said Jeff Asher, a data analyst and co-founder of the firm AH Datalytics, which creates its own crime database to try to get around some of those shortcomings. "This is a government issue, but citizens are forced to develop workarounds" to create a clearer picture of what is happening.

While the FBI collects nationwide crime data, participation is voluntary on the federal level and thousands of law enforcement agencies send nothing or partial information. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does a careful count of homicides, but its data on each death is limited.

So when politicians debate whether AR-15-style rifles lead to more killings, or if extended magazines that carry more bullets lead to more deaths, no one is really sure. CDC statistics for 2020, for example, shows that authorities know what kind of weapon was used in just 24% of firearm deaths. Both sides on the gun control debate, meanwhile, can frame what facts there are to suit their purposes.

Across America, people are afraid.

Nearly a third said they can't go anywhere without worrying about being the victim of a mass shooting, according to 2019 survey by the American Psychological Association. Nearly a quarter said they have changed how they live to avoid mass shootings, sometimes avoiding public events, malls and movie theaters.

But are they afraid of the wrong things?

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"The coverage has given people the impression that things are different today, that we've never really experienced these (mass killings) before. But we have. It's more common now, but it's still extremely, extremely rare," given the size of the U.S. population, said James Alan Fox, a criminologist at Northeastern University who has been tracking mass killings since 2006 along with The Associated Press and USA Today.

Hyperventilating news coverage has contributed to the fear, he believes, with overwhelming, live coverage of mass shootings and reports that conflate mass shootings — where multiple people are injured — with mass killings. Just 5% of mass shootings end with four or more people dead, he said, "and only a quarter of those are in schools, churches and public places like that."

Fox doesn't downplay the horror of mass killings or the pain they inflict on victims, families and communities. But he worries that America's reactions — active shooter drills, for instance, and bunker-like schools — produce outsized fears and misspent resources.

They also give people the wrong impression of how Americans are dying. Most homicides, he says, are one person killing another.

And one sure thing: You've never heard of most of those shooting victims.

They are people like Oneil Anderson, owner of the Love Cuts barbershop in Miami Gardens, Florida, who police say was killed in front of his shop in March, reportedly by a former customer. There's Leslie Bailor, whose husband allegedly shot her repeatedly inside their central Pennsylvania home in April and then called police. She was dead when they arrived. There's 18-year-old Jailyn Logan-Bledso, who was shot and killed two weeks ago at a gas station just outside Chicago by two men who stole her car and disappeared.

On June 26, Atlanta police say Brittany Macon, a 26-year-old employee at a Subway sandwich shop was shot and killed when a customer grew irate and opened fire. He also injured another employee. The customer, police said, was angry about having too much mayonnaise on his sandwich.

Homicides are often associated with big cities like Chicago, where police say the majority of killings have some tie to gang rivalries, which in recent years often fester on social media before spilling into the streets. But while Chicago's homicide rate is high, with nearly 800 killings in the city of 2.7 million last year, its rate per capita is lower than many smaller cities.

Gun deaths are far from just a big city phenomenon. Nearly 30% of all gun deaths in 2020 were in smaller cities and rural parts of the country, according to the CDC. Half were in large cities and their suburbs, with around 20 percent in medium-sized cities and counties.

Lawrence County, Alabama, where Guess was killed, had two other killings that same week in March. That's more than are killed in an average year in the county of 33,000, Sheriff Max Sanders told reporters in March.

Sanders couldn't explain the surge in homicides. In one, a husband allegedly shot his wife during an argument and then took his own life. In the other, a son is accused of beating his mother to death with an ashtray and other objects from around the house because she got rid of his dog and refused to take him to see his girlfriend.

David Guess' death began with an argument over a car part.

Guess had struggled with addiction but had been clean for more than a month before his death, his brother Daniel said. He had adopted three of his four children and once contemplated becoming a preacher. In recent weeks, he lived in a camper parked next to his father's trailer home.

He would, his brother said, "give you the shirt off his back."

On March 5, court documents say David Guess drove down a dusty county road near the town of Hillsboro to the home of a man he knew. Late that night, another man, Charles Allan Keel, arrived. He insisted Guess owed him \$1,500 for a catalytic converter, which have become valuable as scrap metal because of pricey metals inside them.

Keel, 43, along with his 17-year-old son and other men beat Guess, and someone hit him in the head with a pipe, police say. As Guess tried to escape, police say Keel shot him with a handgun. Five people were charged, but only Keel faces a murder charge.

Two days later, a delivery truck driver found David Guess' remains near the forest road, two miles from

where he'd been killed. Rings of charred black rubber marked where police say Keel and several accomplices had piled tires on top of the body and set it on fire.

Tears well in Larry Guess' eyes as he sits at his battered wooden dining table and recalls the phone call David made to him around midnight on March 5. David implored his father to bring him \$1,500 right away.

"If you don't, he's going to kill me," David said. Larry responded that he couldn't get that much money that quickly.

The last words he ever heard from his son before the line went dead were of David Guess imploring someone nearby: "Don't hit me with that pipe again."

FDA temporarily suspends order banning Juul cigarettes

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Food and Drug Administration issued an administrative stay Tuesday on the order it issued last month for vaping company Juul to pull its electronic cigarettes from the market.

The agency said on Twitter that the stay temporarily suspends the marketing denial order while it conducts further review, but does not rescind it.

The FDA issued the initial order banning Juul sales on June 23. A day later, a federal appeals court temporarily blocked the government ban.

The initial FDA action was part of a sweeping effort by the agency to bring scientific scrutiny to the multibillion-dollar vaping industry after years of regulatory delays.

To stay on the market, companies must show that their e-cigarettes benefit public health. In practice, that means proving that adult smokers who use them are likely to quit or reduce their smoking, while teens are unlikely to get hooked on them.

The FDA originally said Juul's application left regulators with significant questions and didn't include enough information to evaluate any potential health risks. Juul said it submitted enough information and data to address all issues raised.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit granted Juul's request for a hold while the court reviews the case.

On Tuesday, the FDA said it has determined "there are scientific issues unique to the Juul application that warrant additional review."

Still, it said, the stay and the review do not "constitute authorization to market, sell or ship Juul products."

Wisconsin court to rule on immunity in sex trafficking case

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Wisconsin's Supreme Court is set to decide Wednesday whether a sex trafficking victim accused of homicide can argue at trial that she was justified in killing the man who trafficked her, a ruling that could help define the extent of immunity for trafficking victims nationwide.

Prosecutors say Chrystul Kizer traveled to Randall Volar's home in Kenosha in June 2018. She shot him in the head, burned down the house and stole his BMW, according to court documents. She was 17 at the time. She faces multiple charges, including arson and first-degree intentional homicide. That count carries a mandatory life sentence.

Kizer, now 22, contends she met Volar on a sex-trafficking website. She says he sexually assaulted her and sold her to others for sex. She told detectives she shot him after he tried to touch her, according to the criminal complaint.

Her attorneys have argued that she's immune from prosecution under a 2008 state law that absolves sex trafficking victims of any offenses resulting from being trafficked. Nearly 40 states have passed laws that give trafficking victims at least some level of criminal immunity, according to Legal Action of Wisconsin, which provides legal help for low-income people.

They had planned to invoke the immunity law at trial but Kenosha County Circuit Judge David Wilk refused to allow the argument. He ruled that immunity extends only to trafficking-related charges such as restraining someone, extortion, prostitution or slave labor. An appellate court ruled last year, however,

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that Kizer could argue that the law shields her from prosecution.

State attorneys asked the Supreme Court to reverse that decision, maintaining that the immunity statutes can't possibly extend to homicide. Assistant Attorney General Timothy Barber said during oral arguments in March that Kizer's interpretation would create an unprecedented expansion of the self-defense doctrine, eliminating any questions about whether killing someone was reasonable or necessary.

Kizer's attorney, Katie York, told the justices that the law clearly states trafficking victims enjoy immunity from any offense. A jury should be allowed to consider whether the shooting was so closely connected to trafficking that immunity applies, she said.

The court's ruling won't decide Kizer's guilt or innocence. And the decision on whether she can argue immunity won't be binding on other states, but it could inform attorney strategies in similar cases. Anti-violence groups have lined up to support Kizer, arguing in briefs to the Supreme Court that trafficking victims often feel trapped and believe they have to take matters into their own hands.

The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they are sexual assault victims but Kizer discussed her case in an interview from jail with The Washington Post that was published in 2019.

Deadly July 4 parade: Shots, then a frantic rush to escape

By MICHAEL TARM and SARA BURNETT Associated Press

HIGHLAND PARK, Ill. (AP) — David Shapiro and his wife brought their two young kids to enjoy the Independence Day parade in their hometown north of Chicago, snagging a spot in front of a boutique winery.

The children's parade in downtown Highland Park had already gone by, with about 50 school-age children riding bikes, scooters and tricycles. The musicians of the Maxwell Street Klezmer Band, complete with full drum set and brass section, were starting to play atop a flatbed trailer.

Then came the sound that Shapiro knew did not fit: pop pop pop pop pop.

Before he knew what was happening, parade-goers from farther down the route began running toward the 47-year-old and his family, screaming about someone with a gun.

"It was chaos," Shapiro recalled. "People didn't know right away where the gunfire was coming from, whether the gunman was in front or behind you chasing you."

For many people, the mass shooting that killed at least seven people and injured more than 30 others adds to the fear that any place, any event in the U.S. can turn dangerous or deadly, even though most gun violence is personal. Highland Park is one of the country's safest towns, and July 4th parades among the most American of celebrations. Even before Monday's killings, some people already were on edge, questioning whether to venture into large gatherings, looking over their shoulders during even the most run-of-the-mill activities, from grocery shopping to going to school or catching a movie.

But as the shots rang out in Highland Park on Monday, all most people at the July 4 parade knew at first was confusion, then terror as they searched for a safe place to hide or any way to escape.

The atmosphere along the short but crowded parade route was exuberant as the kids stepped along around 9:40 a.m., said Vivian Visconti, a 19-year-old Highland Park District counselor who helped organize and direct the children's parade.

Parents and other attendees smiled and waved at that first group, while Visconti instructed younger kids to keep moving if they slowed or momentarily veered off the designated route.

"It was fun, cheerful, and hot," she recalled about passing through Central Avenue business district, lined with tony boutiques, cafes and restaurants. On either side of the street, attendees sat on blankets and lawn tables, some snacking on potato chips or cookies as they watched.

It took the children on the cycles no more than 20 minutes to traverse the entire parade route, which ended at the bottom of a hill near a park, where a bouncy house was set up for youngsters to play in after they completed the trek.

"We may have been one of the only groups who finished the parade route," Visconti said.

One of the reasons the smaller kids went first was so they could run back up the hill and watch the rest

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of the parade.

Visconti, too, made her way back up the hill, to the other end of Central Avenue, near the Shapiro family. It was around 10:20 a.m. when she heard several slower booming sounds followed immediately by a rapid secession of what seemed 20 loud pops, she said.

"I thought it was blanks, part of the parade at first," she said. "But my friend turned to me and told me, 'No, it's real!'"

After a pause of around five seconds, she heard another rapid series of shots. She and her friend ran.

Like most others who heard shots, they never saw the shooter, who had climbed a fire escape to perch atop a row of specialty stores. As he fired, some parade-goers fell, mortally wounded. Many others lay bleeding or were carried away by family and friends.

Not far from Visconti, 16-year-old Yonatan Garfinkle, of Highland Park, understood he had to get away fast.

A friend's dad happened to be passing by in his Jeep. Fifteen other people were already in the vehicle or holding onto it. He jumped on its side, too, hugging it tightly as the vehicle sped away from the city center.

Staging for the parade was on St. John's Avenue, near a parking garage and train station. Floats, bands and politicians headed north a bit, then turned west down Central.

Greg Gilberg, 45, was on a float with his wife just minutes from making the turn when he saw crowds of frightened parade goers bolt from the avenue. The Highland Park man didn't hear any shots clearly, but he knew they needed to flee. So he and his wife hurried to where he had left his bike nearby; she jumped on the back with him and Gilberg pedaled as fast as he could home.

As he passed the Highland Park library, Gilberg said, he saw dozens of people streaming inside for safety.

The sound of the shots was much louder on Central Avenue — the parade's main thoroughfare — where Richard Isenberg and his wife were watching the parade near a shop that sells outdoor gear. Though they could not see who was firing or where they were, Isenberg could tell from the sound that the shooter was close.

The couple fled, turning around a corner and into a lot full of large dumpsters. They saw a man lift his children into one of the dumpsters. He asked the Isenbergs to keep an eye on them as he ran back to the street for other relatives who had come to the parade with him.

The couple returned to the scene Tuesday to try to retrieve their car, which was still in an area cordoned-off by police investigating the crime. Recalling the thunderous sound of gunfire, Isenberg's wife, who declined to share her name, covered her ears and closed her eyes.

"I can't stop hearing it," she said.

Amid the mayhem, the shooter, dressed as a woman, slipped into the panicked crowds and, for the moment, got away.

For Howard Diamond, 45, of Highland Park, attending the Independence Parade each year was a family tradition.

He was sitting in a lawn chair with his wife, 9-year-old son and other members of his extended family when he heard loud bangs about 500 feet away. Someone said it was fireworks. But he said he knew better, telling everyone they were shots and they needed to move now.

"Let's go, let's go, let's go!" he recalled yelling.

Speaking Tuesday from outside a police cordon on Central Avenue, he pointed to a child's blue miniature car, toppled over amid the pandemonium the day before, saying it belonged to his sister-in-law's son. He had hoped to retrieve his cellphone, but was told he couldn't because it was still a crime scene.

The Shapiro family wasn't sure of the best escape route, so they decided to run all the way to their nearby home. Shapiro grabbed his daughter in his arms and they sprinted away as fast as they could, leaving behind their children's stroller and lawn chairs as they fled. Later that night, his 4-year-old son woke up screaming, Shapiro said as he returned to downtown Tuesday to pick up the items the family abandoned.

"He is too young to understand what happened. But he knows something bad happened," he said.

"That's chilling."

Parents of boy, 2, found alone at parade shooting among dead

By GRANT SCHULTE, CLAIRE SAVAGE and HARM VENHUIZEN Associated Press

Aiden McCarthy's photo was shared across Chicago-area social media groups in the hours after the July 4 parade shooting in Highland Park, accompanied by pleas to help identify the 2-year-old who had been found at the scene bloodied and alone and to reunite him with his family.

On Tuesday, friends and authorities confirmed that the boy's parents, Kevin McCarthy, 37, and Irina McCarthy, 35, were among seven people killed in the tragedy.

"At two years old, Aiden is left in the unthinkable position; to grow up without his parents," wrote Irina Colon on a GoFundMe account she created for the family and Aiden, who was reunited with his grandparents Monday evening.

Friends of the McCarthys said Irina's parents would care for the boy going forward.

Four of other others who were killed were identified Tuesday as Katherine Goldstein, 64; Jacquelyn Sundheim, 63; Stephen Straus, 88; and Nicolas Toledo-Zaragoza, 78. Every victim was from Highland Park except for Toledo-Zaragoza, who was visiting family in the city from Morelos, Mexico.

Officials haven't yet identified the seventh victim.

Portraits of some of those who died began to emerge Tuesday as investigators continued to search for evidence in the shooting that killed at least seven and wounded 30.

Irina McCarthy's childhood friend, Angela Vella, described McCarthy as fun, personable and "somewhat of a tomboy" who still liked to dress up nicely.

"She definitely had her own style, which I always admired," Vella said in a short interview.

Straus, a Chicago financial adviser, was one of the first observers at the parade and attended it every year, his grandchildren said.

Brothers Maxwell and Tobias Straus described their grandfather as a kind and active man who loved walking, biking and attending community events.

"The way he lived life, you'd think he was still middle-aged," Maxwell Straus said in an interview.

The two brothers recalled Sunday night dinners with their grandparents as a favorite tradition. They said they ate with him the night before he was killed.

"America's gun culture is killing grandparents," said Maxwell Straus. "It's very just terrible."

Sundheim, meanwhile, was regaled as a lifelong congregant and "beloved" staff member at North Shore Congregation Israel, where she had worked for decades, the Reform synagogue said on its website. Sundheim taught at the synagogue's preschool and coordinated events including bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies.

"Jacki's work, kindness and warmth touched us all," synagogue leaders wrote in a message on their website. "There are no words sufficient to express the depth of our grief for Jacki's death and sympathy for her family and loved ones."

Toledo-Zaragoza was killed on what his 23-year-old granddaughter, Xochil Toledo, said was supposed to be a "fun family day" that "turned into a horrific nightmare for us all."

On a GoFundMe page to raise money for Toledo's funeral expenses, Xochil Toledo said her grandfather was a "loving man, creative, adventurous and funny."

"As a family we are broken, numb," she said.

Toledo-Zaragoza had come to Illinois to visit his family about two months ago, according to the Chicago Sun-Times. His family wanted him to stay permanently because of injuries he had suffered after being hit by a car a couple years ago during an earlier visit to Highland Park. The newspaper reported that he was hit by three bullets Monday and died at the scene.

He wasn't sure he wanted to attend the parade because of the large crowds and his limited mobility, which required him to use a walker, but Xochil Toledo said the family didn't want to leave him alone.

Katherine Goldstein's husband described her as an easygoing travel companion who was always game to visit far-flung locales.

"She didn't complain," Craig Goldstein told The New York Times. "She was always along for the ride."

Goldstein was a mother of two daughters in their early 20s, Cassie and Alana. She attended the parade with her older daughter so that Cassie could reunite with friends from high school, Craig Goldstein, a hospital physician, told the newspaper.

Dr. Goldstein said his wife had recently lost her mother and had given thought to what kind of arrangements she might want when she dies.

He recalled that Katherine, an avid bird watcher, said she wanted to be cremated and to have her remains scattered in the Montrose Beach area of Chicago, where there is a bird sanctuary.

Georgia subpoenaing Giuliani, Graham in Trump election probe

By KATE BRUMBACK and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The Georgia prosecutor investigating the conduct of former President Donald Trump and his allies after the 2020 election is subpoenaing U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, and other members of Trump's campaign legal team to testify before a special grand jury.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis on Tuesday filed petitions with the judge overseeing the special grand jury as part of her investigation into what she alleges was "a multi-state, coordinated plan by the Trump Campaign to influence the results of the November 2020 election in Georgia and elsewhere."

The move marks a major escalation in a case that could pose a serious legal challenge to the former president as he weighs another White House run. While the special grand jury has already heard from top state officials, Tuesday's filings directly target several of Trump's closest allies and advisers, including Giuliani, who led his campaign's legal efforts to overturn the election results.

"It means the investigation is obviously becoming more intense because those are trusted advisers, those are inner circle people," said Robert James, former district attorney in DeKalb County, which neighbors Fulton.

The special grand jury has been investigating whether Trump and others illegally tried to meddle in the 2020 presidential election in Georgia as he desperately tried to cling to power after Democrat Joe Biden's victory. Trump continues to insist that the election was stolen, despite the fact that numerous federal and local officials, a long list of courts, top former campaign staff and even Trump's own attorney general have all said there is no evidence of the fraud he alleges.

The investigation is separate from that being conducted by a congressional committee that has been examining the events surrounding the deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 as well as the Department of Justice's own sprawling probe. Trump is also facing other legal challenges, including in New York, where he, his namesake son and his daughter Ivanka have agreed to answer questions under oath beginning next week in the New York attorney general's civil investigation into his business practices.

The escalation comes as Trump has been mulling announcing a third presidential run as soon as this summer as he seeks to deflect attention from the ongoing investigations and lock in support before a long list of other potential candidates, such as Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, make their own moves.

Willis, who took this unusual step of requesting a special grand jury earlier this year, has confirmed that she and her team are looking into a January 2021 phone call in which Trump pushed Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to "find" the votes needed for him to win the state. She has said the team is also looking at a November 2020 phone call between Graham and Raffensperger, the abrupt resignation of the U.S. attorney in Atlanta on Jan. 4, 2021, and comments made during December 2020 Georgia legislative committee hearings on the election. Raffensperger and other state officials have already testified before the special grand jury.

Willis also filed petitions for five other potential witnesses: lawyers Kenneth Chesebro, Cleta Mitchell, Jenna Ellis, John Eastman and Jacki Pick Deason. Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney signed off on the requests, which are similar to subpoenas, deeming them necessary to the investigation.

In the petition submitted to the judge, Willis wrote that Graham, a longtime ally of the former president, actually made at least two telephone calls to Raffensperger and members of his staff in the weeks after

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the November 2020 election. During those calls, Graham asked about reexamining certain absentee ballots "in order to explore the possibility of a more favorable outcome for former President Donald Trump," she wrote.

A Graham spokesman did not respond to a request for comment.

In the petition for Giuliani's testimony, Willis identifies him as both a personal attorney for Trump and "a lead attorney for the Trump Campaign's legal efforts seeking to influence the results of the November 2020 election in Georgia and elsewhere."

As part of those efforts, she wrote, he and others presented a Georgia state Senate subcommittee with a video recording of election workers that Giuliani alleged showed them producing "suitcases" of unlawful ballots from unknown sources, outside the view of election poll watchers.

Within 24 hours of the hearing on Dec. 3, 2020, Raffensperger's office had debunked the video and said that it had found that no voter fraud had taken place at the arena. Nevertheless, Giuliani continued to make statements to the public and in subsequent legislative hearings claiming widespread voter fraud using that debunked video, Willis wrote.

"There is evidence that (Giuliani's) appearance and testimony at the hearing was part of a multi-state, coordinated plan by the Trump Campaign to influence the results of the November 2020 election in Georgia and elsewhere," the petition says.

Giuliani's attorney, Bob Costello, said he had no comment and that his client had not been served with any subpoena.

To compel the testimony of an out-of-state witness, a prosecutor in Georgia has to file a petition and then a judge has to sign a certificate approving the petition, said Danny Porter, a former longtime district attorney in Gwinnett County in Atlanta's suburbs.

The next step is to deliver the petition to a prosecutor wherever the witness lives, and serve it to the witness, who is entitled to a hearing. If the person objects to going to Georgia to testify, they have to be able to show that either their testimony isn't needed or that it would be an undue hardship for them, Porter said.

Special grand juries are impaneled in Georgia to investigate complex cases with large numbers of witnesses and potential logistical concerns. They can compel evidence and subpoena witnesses for questioning and, unlike regular grand juries, can also subpoena the target of an investigation to appear before it.

When its investigation is complete, the special grand jury issues a final report and can recommend action. It's then up to the district attorney to decide whether to ask a regular grand jury for an indictment.

It's not clear exactly what charges Willis could ultimately choose to pursue against Trump or anyone else. In a letter she sent to top-ranking state officials last year, she said she was looking into "potential violations of Georgia law prohibiting the solicitation of election fraud, the making of false statements to state and local government bodies, conspiracy, racketeering, violation of oath of office and any involvement in violence or threats related to the election's administration."

Trump has denied that he did anything wrong.

Feds settle suit alleging abuse by men detained after 9/11

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department on Tuesday settled a decades-old lawsuit filed by a group of men who were rounded up by the government in the weeks after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and held in a federal jail in New York in conditions the department's own watchdog called abusive and harsh.

The settlement announced Tuesday calls for a \$98,000 payout to be paid out among the six men who filed the suit and were held without terrorism charges at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn.

The men — Ahmer Iqbal Abbasi, Anser Mehmood, Benamar Benatta, Ahmed Khalifa, Saeed Hammouda, and Purna Raj Bajracharya — said they were detained in restrictive conditions and, in some cases, abused by members of the staff.

The settlement is somewhat unusual because federal courts at nearly every level, including the Supreme

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Court, had thrown out large chunks of the lawsuit. A federal district court judge threw out the remaining part of the suit last year. Though the plaintiffs filed an appeal, there had been little action in the case for months.

Though the Justice Department does not admit guilt as part of the settlement agreement, Bureau of Prisons Director Michael Carvajal wrote a letter to each of the men saying the Justice Department had determined they were "held in excessively restrictive and unduly harsh conditions of confinement and a number of individuals were physically and verbally abused by certain MDC officers."

The letter went on to say: "Under the exceptional circumstances of this unique case and before the facts have been fully litigated or there has been any final judgment by the court in this case the Federal Bureau of Prisons has agreed to provide funds to the former Warden of the MDC, Dennis Hasty, to indemnify him for the settlement of your claims. This will resolve all of your claims in this litigation."

"I don't know that the director of the Bureau of Prisons has ever signed a letter of this nature before to individual clients, so that is unique," said Rachel Meeropol, senior staff attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights, who represents the men.

Meeropol called the court battle a failure of the justice system, pointing to limitations on claims against federal officials.

"Under the court actions, there's no way people for people who have been injured to get justice," Meeropol said in an interview with The Associated Press. "Instead we're seeing this pretty amazing work around with the defendants finding a way to make themselves be held responsible when the court said no. I think it's a unique acknowledgment of this situation and the way that what happened were procedural obstacles to true justice."

The Justice Department declined to comment.

The lawsuit originally sought accountability from high-level members of George W. Bush administration, and a settlement was reached in 2008 with the original five plaintiffs. Others were added.

In 2017 the Supreme Court threw out parts of the suit but tossed one claim, against the former warden of the federal lockup, back to a lower court. A federal judge in Brooklyn dismissed the remaining parts of the suit last year, finding that the men did not have the right to sue for their injuries, though the judge did not address whether there were constitutional violations.

The settlement closes a chapter on a troubling era in federal criminal justice when Muslim, Arab and South Asian men were rounded up in the days and weeks after the Sept. 11 attacks. Soon, more than 1,000 were arrested in sweeps across the New York metropolitan area and nationwide. Most were charged only with overstaying visas and deported back to their home countries. But before that happened, many were held in detention for months, with little outside contact, especially with their families.

They were, according to the 9/11 Commission report, arrested as "special interest" detainees. Immigration hearings were closed, detainee communication was limited, and bond was denied until the detainees were cleared of terrorist connections. Identities were kept secret.

A review conducted by the Justice Department's inspector general said the Justice Department's "hold until cleared" policy meant a significant percentage of the detainees stayed for months despite immigration officials questioning the legality of the prolonged detentions and even though there were no indications they were connected to terrorism. Compounding that, they faced "a pattern of physical and verbal abuse" particularly at the federal jail in Brooklyn. Conditions were, the report said, "unduly harsh."

"I am glad that the case is coming to an end after two decades of litigation. However, it is a bittersweet conclusion for me," Benatta said in a statement released by the Center for Constitutional Rights, one of the plaintiff attorneys, along with Covington & Burling LLP, and attorneys Michael Winger and Alexander Reinert.

"I don't believe justice is properly served, considering the detrimental consequences the defendants' actions have had on my life," he said. "I can't help but feel let down by the whole judicial system – federal courts had the opportunity to remedy the situation but chose not to intervene, and, by doing so, they left the door open for future mistreatment and abuse to take place without any ramifications."

2 sets down, Djokovic wins 26th consecutive Wimbledon match

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — It says a lot about Novak Djokovic that a two-sets-to-none hole at Wimbledon on a day he was hardly at his best never seemed insurmountable. Not to him. Not to anyone watching.

Says a lot about his history of overcoming that sort of deficit. A lot about his ability to adjust, to adapt and to right himself. A lot about his preeminence at the All England Club in recent years.

Djokovic spotted 10th-seeded Jannik Sinner of Italy the huge lead Tuesday, then worked his way back to win 5-7, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 at Centre Court, earning an 11th semifinal berth at Wimbledon with his 26th consecutive victory at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament.

"I always believed," said Djokovic, who faces ninth-seeded Cam Norrie of Britain next, "that I could turn the match around."

Among men, only Roger Federer has made more semifinal appearances at Wimbledon with 13 and won more championships (eight) than the seven Djokovic could reach by lifting the trophy Sunday for what would be a fourth year in a row.

"He makes you play differently — well, not differently, but in a way that he likes," Sinner said.

Djokovic was responsible for just one of Wednesday's comebacks: In all four singles quarterfinals on a sunny day, the player who dropped the first set ended up victorious. Norrie edged David Goffin of Belgium 3-6, 7-5, 2-6, 6-3, 7-5; No. 3 Ons Jabeur of Tunisia beat Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic 3-6, 6-1, 6-1; Tatjana Maria defeated Jule Niemeier 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 in an all-German matchup.

Norrie, Jabeur and Maria all earned the right to make their debuts in a Grand Slam semifinal.

"Can't enjoy it too much now," said Norrie, 26, who was born in South Africa to British parents, grew up in New Zealand and played college tennis at Texas Christian University. "Just get ready for Novak in a couple days."

The 103rd-ranked Maria is, at 34, the oldest first-time women's semifinalist at a major and only the sixth woman at least that old to get this far at Wimbledon in the professional era, which began in 1968. The others? Quite a list: Martina Navratilova, Billie Jean King, Chris Evert, Serena Williams and Venus Williams.

"I always believed that I have something inside," said Maria, who only once before reached as far as the third round. "That I can do this."

Djokovic, a 35-year-old from Serbia, managed his seventh career comeback in a match in which he trailed by two sets — he last did it in the 2021 French Open final against Stefanos Tsitsipas — and improved to 37-10 in five-setters. That includes a 10-1 mark in matches that go the distance at Wimbledon, including nine straight victories; the lone loss came in 2006.

"He's been in this situation many times," the 20-year-old Sinner said. "That definitely helps."

Tuesday's match brought Sinner's major quarterfinal appearance total to three, which is exactly 50 fewer than Djokovic's.

Sinner has shown enormous potential, reaching the quarterfinals at the 2020 French Open before losing to Rafael Nadal and the 2022 Australian Open before losing to Tsitsipas. As for grass? Sinner was 0-4 until last week. But he got win No. 1 at Wimbledon by eliminating three-time major champion Stan Wawrinka and then beat a pair of seeded foes: No. 20 John Isner and No. 5 Carlos Alcaraz.

With his wide wingspan, and a Djokovic-style ability to slide into strokes, the 6-foot-2 (1.88-meter) Sinner gets to balls that appear out of reach and is able to reply with considerable power. That allows him to lengthen exchanges and make even a consummate baseliner like Djokovic put in extra work to earn a point.

On Tuesday, Sinner went up a set and a break when Djokovic sailed a backhand long, then bowed his head. Sinner broke again for 5-2, and soon enough, 1 1/2 hours in, was a set from the biggest triumph of his nascent career.

Before the start of the third, Djokovic headed toward the locker room for a bathroom break, just like he did at Roland Garros against Tsitsipas 13 months ago.

"You approach these particular situations when you're two sets down a bit more calmly, a bit more

confident," Djokovic said, "with more self-belief."

When play resumed, Djokovic was so much better than he had been.

"Two different matches," he said.

After 19 unforced errors over the initial two sets, he made 14 over the final three. After getting broken four times over two sets, he won all 13 of his service games the rest of the way.

He became increasingly animated, too. Djokovic shook a fist and yelled after breaking twice to move out to a 3-0 edge after 20 minutes in the third set.

"He was dictating more," Sinner said.

After landing on his stomach following a slide that turned into the splits on a backhand in the fifth set, Djokovic spread his arms out wide like a child pretending to be an airplane — or a baseball umpire calling a runner safe.

Sinner's play, meanwhile, dipped. His form at the net, so good early, faltered: He was successful on 14 of 17 trips forward over the first two sets but 8 of 18 in the last three. He caught a toe in the grass and turned his left ankle on one push forward, falling and immediately clutching his ankle; Djokovic climbed over the net to help Sinner get up. That did not seem to affect Sinner's footwork, though.

Djokovic was simply a lot to deal with.

Judge throws out Trump-era rollbacks on endangered species

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Tuesday threw out a host of actions by the Trump administration to roll back protections for endangered or threatened species, a year after the Biden administration said it was moving to strengthen such species protections.

U.S. District Judge Jon Tigar in Northern California eliminated the Trump-era rules even as two wildlife agencies under President Joe Biden are reviewing or rescinding the regulations. The decision restores a range of protections under the Endangered Species Act — including some that date to the 1970s — while the reviews are completed. Environmental groups hailed the decision, which they said sped up needed protections and critical habitat designations for threatened species, including salmon in the Pacific Northwest.

Tigar's ruling "spoke for species desperately in need of comprehensive federal protections without compromise," said Kristen Boyles, an attorney for the environmental group Earthjustice. "Threatened and endangered species do not have the luxury of waiting under rules that do not protect them."

The court ruling comes as two federal agencies — the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service — review five Endangered Species Act regulations finalized by President Donald Trump's administration, including critical habitat designations and rules requiring federal agencies to consult with the wildlife or fisheries services before taking actions that could affect threatened or endangered species.

Fish and Wildlife also said it will reinstate the decades-old "blanket rule," which mandates additional protections for species that are newly classified as threatened. Those protections were removed under Trump.

Critical habitat designations for threatened or endangered species can result in limitations on energy development such as mining or oil drilling that could disturb a vulnerable species, while the consultation rule and a separate rule on the scope of proposed federal actions help determine how far the government may go to protect imperiled species.

Under Trump, officials rolled back protections for the northern spotted owl, gray wolves and other species, actions that Biden has vowed to review. The Biden administration previously moved to reverse Trump's decision to weaken enforcement of the century-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which made it harder to prosecute bird deaths caused by the energy industry.

The bird law reversal was among more than 150 business-friendly actions on the environment that Trump took and Biden wants to reconsider, revise or scrap, including withdrawal last month of a 2020 rule that limited which lands and waters could be designated as places where imperiled animals and plants could receive federal protection.

A spokesman for the Interior Department, which oversees the Fish and Wildlife Service, said Tuesday

the agency is reviewing the court ruling.

Fish and Wildlife, along with the marine fisheries service, announced in June 2021 that it was reviewing the Trump-era actions on endangered species. The reviews could take months or years to complete, officials said.

Industry groups and Republicans in Congress have long viewed the Endangered Species Act as an impediment to economic development, and under Trump they successfully lobbied to weaken the law's regulations. Environmental groups and Democratic-controlled states battled the moves in court, but many of those cases remained unresolved.

Ryan Shannon, a lawyer with the Center for Biological Diversity, another environmental group, said he was "incredibly relieved" that "terrible" Trump-era rules on endangered species were thrown out by the Oakland, California-based Tigar, who was appointed to the federal bench by former President Barack Obama.

"I hope the Biden administration takes this opportunity to strengthen this crucial law, rather than weaken it, in the face of the ongoing extinction crisis," Shannon said Tuesday.

Rebecca Riley of the Natural Resources Defense Council said the court ruling "ensures that the previous administration's 'extinction package' will be rolled back."

She and other advocates called on the Biden administration to ensure the Endangered Species Act "can do its job: preventing the extinction of vulnerable species."

Highland Park set tight gun limits long before parade attack

By KATHLEEN FOODY The Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — In a state with some of the country's toughest gun regulations and a city that bans semi-automatic weapons, Dana Gordon still feared a mass shooting could happen here.

Gordon, a Highland Park resident and an anti-gun violence activist, knew the familiar questions from victims of mass shootings across the country — how could such violence come to their school, their supermarket or movie theater, their city.

The latest act of mass violence to hit the U.S. came Monday in the northern Chicago suburb, when police said a gunman climbed to the top of a business along Highland Park's Independence Day parade route and opened fire. Seven people died and more than 30 people were wounded.

The violence has focused attention on Highland Park's 2013 ban on semi-automatic weapons and large-capacity magazines.

Illinois officials have long contended that legal and illegal weapons are easily purchased in surrounding states, hampering even the toughest local laws' effectiveness. Authorities said Tuesday that the suspected gunman, a 21-year-old resident of nearby Highwood, legally purchased the rifle used in the attack in the Chicagoland area but did not say exactly where he bought it.

They also have not specified the type of weapon used, only describing it as high powered and "similar to an AR-15."

Highland Park's clampdown survived a legal challenge from a local pediatrician and the Illinois State Rifle Association that ended at the U.S. Supreme Court's doorstep in 2015 when justices declined to hear the case.

Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering responded to the win, at the time arguing: "Banning assault weapons and large capacity magazines is a common sense step to reducing gun violence and protecting our children, our law enforcement and our communities from potential mass violence and grief."

Two conservative justices — Justice Clarence Thomas, joined by Justice Antonin Scalia — said they would have heard the case and struck Highland Park's limits.

"The overwhelming majority of citizens who own and use such rifles do so for lawful purposes, including self-defense and target shooting," Thomas wrote.

For Gordon and other activists in Highland Park, Monday's violent attack was a push to continue working toward national restrictions on such weapons and ammo.

Highland Park's local and federal elected officials back gun restrictions, showing it by their presence at

anti-gun violence rallies and their votes. Police were also stationed all along the parade route. But that didn't stop the killings on Monday, Gordon said.

"People have to realize, there's nothing that makes any community immune," she said. "The only thing that's going to help any of us is if we vote out legislators who refuse to do anything about guns."

Gordon helped organize an anti-gun violence arts event in town last month following the mass shootings at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, and a school in Uvalde, Texas. Weeks later, she was fielding phone calls from friends who fled their city's holiday parade in terror.

Gordon said since the shooting she's received dozens of emails from friends and neighbors, expressing their shock that such violence could hit their home. She said it gives her hope that influential voices can make a change — tempered by her belief that national change is the only hope of preventing future mass shootings.

"You can't protect people all the time," she said. "This is a gun issue."

The Buffalo and Uvalde killings did prompt Congress to pass the most sweeping gun violence bill in a decade. The package toughens background checks for the youngest gun buyers, keeps firearms from more domestic violence offenders and helps states put in place red flag laws that make it easier for authorities to take weapons from people adjudged to be dangerous.

But it was signed into law just days after the Supreme Court's ruling struck down a New York law that restricted peoples' ability to carry concealed weapons. And it didn't include more sweeping proposals long backed by activists including an assault-style weapons ban and background checks.

"I know there's much more work to do, and I'm never going to give up, but this is a monumental day," President Joe Biden said after signing the bill on June 25.

Warming world creates hazard for Alpine glaciers

By MICHAEL PHILLIS Associated Press

Italy was enduring a prolonged heat wave before a massive piece of Alpine glacier broke off and killed hikers on Sunday and experts say climate change will make those hot, destabilizing conditions more common.

Seven hikers died and several others are unaccounted for after large chunks of ice and rock from the Marmolada glacier sped down the mountain in an avalanche. Higher temperatures coupled with below-average winter snowfall were among the factors that may have triggered the event, experts said.

The exact role of climate change in specific events is complicated and large portions of ice can break off Alpine glaciers naturally. But climate change is fueling hotter temperatures that can lead to more ice and snow melt, said Brian Menounos, a professor at the University of Northern British Columbia who researches climate change and glaciers.

"Glaciers are directly responding to a warmer climate, a warmer planet," said Menounos. "They can respond to long-term changes, but they can also respond to these extreme events," like heat waves.

The Marmolada glacier is in the Dolomite mountains, a range of steep, dramatic peaks in northeast Italy. The region is already being altered by climate change. Between the late 19th and early 21st century, temperatures in the Alps have increased twice as quickly as the global average, according to Copernicus, the European climate modeling group. The U.N. has identified the Mediterranean basin that includes Italy as a climate change hot spot prone to heat waves. Glaciers are in retreat throughout Italy, the Alps and across the world.

The government's National Research Council said the Marmolada glacier has been shrinking for decades and may vanish in 25 to 30 years.

Before the avalanche, daytime temperatures at the glacier's altitude were around 50F (10C) when they normally don't rise much above freezing. The prolonged period of hot weather at high altitudes created a special set of circumstances, said Tobias Bolch who researches glaciers at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

Guglielmina Adele Diolaiuti, a professor at the University of Milan studying glaciers, said pictures of the ice that remains part of the glacier tell a story about what likely happened.

The top two thirds of the ice face appears slightly dirty, indicating it was exposed to air.

"It's clear that this part of the vertical ice cliff was the internal part of a crevasse," she said. A crevasse is a deep opening in a glacier.

The bottom is bluer, indicating it was attached, said Diolaiuti.

Water may have accumulated in the crevasse, adding weight and pressure on the glacier. It may also have loosened the glacier's grip on the steep rock it was sitting on, experts said.

Anyone who has tried to shovel ice off a cold driveway knows that it fastens itself to the pavement, said Richard Alley, a Penn State professor who studies ice sheets. But when the weather warms, the ice loosens its hold.

"All of a sudden, whoosh, you can get it off," Alley said.

A local official said the portion that broke loose is estimated to be 220 yards (200 meters) wide, 85 yards (80 meters) high and 65 yards (60 meters) deep. It rushed down the mountain at nearly 200 miles per hour (300 kph).

The hikers were likely taken completely by surprise.

In addition to the heat, there was below normal snowfall this winter. Northern Italy is struggling through its worst drought in 70 years. When there is less snow, ice is exposed and impurities can collect on the surface of the glacier, turning the surface a darker color that traps more heat. The extra heat melts the ice and snow faster, St. Andrews' Bolch said.

On Tuesday, rescue efforts turned up equipment and body parts. After rain made rescue difficult on Monday, the sun reappeared on Tuesday.

According to Daniel Farinotti, a professor of glaciology at ETH Zurich and WSL Birmensdorf, Switzerland, climate change might reduce the risk of certain avalanches. Glaciers need cold weather and snowfall to grow. If glaciers grow on a steep slope, ice that is pushed over ledges can break and cause avalanches. But with warming temperatures, glaciers retreat, and smaller glaciers create fewer hazards, he said.

In the case of the avalanche on Sunday, melting ice and snow is the likely culprit, experts said.

"The ice, the snow, is very sensitive to increases in temperatures, so we expect that these kinds of events will increase in frequency and intensity in the future," said Roberta Paranuzio who researches climate change at the National Research Council of Italy.

While some avalanches occur in isolated areas, the area around the Marmolada glacier is popular with hikers.

"The really warm weather was one of the reasons why the event occurred, but on the other hand, this really warm weather made it attractive for mountaineers to climb it," Bolch said.

In major blow, 2 key ministers quit Boris Johnson government

By DANICA KIRKA and SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was clinging to power Tuesday after two of his most senior Cabinet ministers quit, saying they had lost confidence in Johnson's leadership amid shifting explanations about his handling of a sexual misconduct scandal.

Treasury chief Rishi Sunak and Health Secretary Sajid Javid resigned within minutes of each other, costing Johnson the support of the men responsible for tackling two of the biggest issues facing Britain — the cost-of-living crisis and surging COVID-19 infections.

Both cited Johnson's credibility after a day in which the prime minister was forced to backtrack on earlier statements about the scandal that has rattled his government for the past six days.

The debacle is only the latest to hit Johnson, who last month narrowly survived a vote of no confidence triggered by similarly shifting stories about lockdown-breaking parties in government offices.

In his letter of resignation, Javid said the confidence vote showed a large number of Conservative Party lawmakers had lost trust in Johnson.

"It was a moment for humility, grip and a new direction," Javid said. "I regret to say, however, that it is clear this situation will not change under your leadership — and you have therefore lost my confidence too."

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A few minutes later, Sunak echoed those sentiments.

"The public rightly expect government to be conducted properly, competently and seriously," Sunak said. "I realize that this may be my last ministerial job, but I believe these standards are worth fighting for and that is why I am resigning."

Both Sunak and Javid are seen as possible contenders to replace Johnson if he is forced out.

While the resignations heaped pressure on the prime minister, Johnson has in the past proven to be an adept politician, fighting off criticism to prolong his career.

Johnson quickly named two loyalists to the positions: Steve Barclay got Javid's old job, while Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi replaces Sunak as Treasury chief, Downing Street said.

At the same time, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss swiftly threw her support behind Johnson. Other Cabinet members, including Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries, Defense Secretary Ben Wallace and Home Secretary Priti Patel, were also in his corner.

But Scott Lucas, an emeritus professor at the University of Birmingham and a longtime political observer, said it would be difficult for Johnson to ultimately survive the departure of two such senior members of his Cabinet.

"He's not going to go without a fight," Lucas said. "I just don't know how many people are left to fight alongside him."

The latest scandal began Thursday, when Chris Pincher resigned as deputy chief whip amid complaints that he groped two men at a private club. That triggered a series of reports about past allegations leveled against Pincher and questions about why Johnson promoted him to a senior job enforcing party discipline.

Pincher denies the allegations.

Johnson's office initially said he wasn't aware of the previous accusations when he promoted Pincher in February. By Monday, a spokesman said Johnson knew of allegations that were "either resolved or did not progress to a formal complaint."

That account didn't sit well with Simon McDonald, the most senior civil servant at the U.K. Foreign Office from 2015 to 2020. In a highly unusual move, McDonald went public with claims that the prime minister's office wasn't telling the truth.

McDonald said in a letter to the parliamentary commissioner for standards that he received complaints about Pincher's behavior in the summer of 2019, shortly after Pincher became a Foreign Office minister. An investigation upheld the complaint, and Pincher apologized for his actions, McDonald said.

"Mr. Johnson was briefed in person about the initiation and outcome of the investigation," McDonald wrote.

Hours after McDonald's comments were published, Johnson's office changed its story again, saying the prime minister had forgotten that Pincher was the subject of an official complaint.

Then minutes before Javid and Sunak announced their resignations, Johnson told reporters that Pincher should have been fired from the government after a previous 2019 incident.

Asked if it was an error to appoint Pincher to the government, Johnson said, "I think it was a mistake, and I apologize for it. In hindsight it was the wrong thing to do."

The shifting explanation from Johnson fueled discontent within the Cabinet after ministers were forced to publicly deliver the prime minister's denials, only to have the explanation shift the next day.

Johnson's authority had already been shaken by last month's confidence vote. Although he survived, 41% of Conservatives voted to remove him from office. But until Tuesday his Cabinet had largely stayed put and loyal.

Concerns about Johnson's leadership were fueled by his responses to months of allegations about lockdown-breaking parties in government offices that ultimately resulted in 126 fines, including one levied against Johnson.

Two weeks later, Conservative candidates were badly beaten in two special elections to fill vacant seats in Parliament, adding to the discontent within Johnson's party and suggesting the ongoing accusations were finding a toehold with the public.

When Pincher resigned last week as deputy chief whip he told Johnson that he "drank far too much" the previous night and had "embarrassed myself and other people."

Johnson initially refused to suspend Pincher from the Conservative Party, but he relented after a formal complaint about the groping allegations was filed with parliamentary authorities.

Critics suggested Johnson was slow to react because he didn't want Pincher forced to resign his Parliament seat, setting up the Conservatives for another potential special election defeat.

Even before the Pincher scandal, suggestions were swirling that Johnson may soon face another no-confidence vote.

The existing rules require 12 months between such votes, but several Conservative lawmakers have suggested they support changing the rules in an upcoming vote on the issue.

Senior Conservative lawmaker Roger Gale, a long-standing critic of Johnson, said he would support a change of the rules.

"Mr. Johnson has for three days now been sending ministers — in one case a Cabinet minister — out to defend the indefensible, effectively to lie on his behalf. That cannot be allowed to continue," Gale told the BBC. "This prime minister has trashed the reputation of a proud and honorable party for honesty and decency, and that is not acceptable."

Ukrainian governor urges evacuation of 350,000 residents

By FRANCESCA EBEL Associated Press

KRAMATORSK, Ukraine (AP) — The governor of the last remaining eastern province partly under Ukraine's control urged his more than 350,000 residents to flee as Russia escalated its offensive and air alerts were issued across nearly the entire country.

Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said that getting people out of Donetsk province is necessary to save lives and enable the Ukrainian army better to defend towns from the Russian advance.

"The destiny of the whole country will be decided by the Donetsk region," Kyrylenko told reporters in Kramatorsk, the province's administrative center and home to the Ukrainian military's regional headquarters.

"Once there are less people, we will be able to concentrate more on our enemy and perform our main tasks," Kyrylenko said.

The governor's call for residents to leave appeared to represent one of the biggest suggested evacuations of the war, although it's unclear whether people will be willing and safely able to flee. According to the U.N. refugee agency, more than 7.1 million Ukrainians are estimated to be displaced within Ukraine, and more than 4.8 million refugees left the country since Russia's invasion started Feb. 24.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said air alerts were issued Tuesday night in nearly all of the country, in many places after a long period of relative calm during which people searched for an explanation.

"You should not look for logic in the actions of terrorists," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address. "The Russian army does not take any breaks. It has one task — to take people's lives, to intimidate people — so that even a few days without an air alarm already feel like part of the terror."

Much of the military activity appeared concentrated in Ukraine's east. The Kramatorsk governor said that because they house critical infrastructure such as water filtration plants, Russia's main targets are now his city and a city 16 kilometers (10 miles) to the north, Sloviansk. Kyrylenko described the shelling as "very chaotic" without "a specific target ... only to destroy civilian infrastructure and residential areas."

Sloviansk also came under sustained bombardment Tuesday. Mayor Vadim Lyakh said on Facebook that "massive shelling" pummeled Sloviansk, which had a population of about 107,000 before Russian invaded Ukraine more than four months ago. The mayor, who urged residents hours earlier to evacuate, advised them to take cover in shelters.

At least one person was killed and seven were wounded Tuesday, Lyakh said. He said the city's central market and several districts came under attack, adding that authorities were assessing the extent of the damage.

The barrage targeting Sloviansk indicated Russian forces were advancing farther into Ukraine's Donbas region, a mostly Russian-speaking industrial area where the country's most experienced soldiers are concentrated.

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Sloviansk has previously taken rocket and artillery fire during Russia's war in Ukraine, but the bombardment picked up in recent days after Moscow took the last major city in neighboring Luhansk province, Lyakh said.

"It's important to evacuate as many people as possible," he warned Tuesday morning, adding that shelling damaged 40 houses on Monday.

The Ukrainian military withdrew its troops Sunday from the city of Lysychansk to keep them from being surrounded. Russia's defense minister and Putin said the city's subsequent capture put Moscow in control of all of Luhansk, one of two provinces that make up the Donbas, but the regional governor said Tuesday that fighting was continuing on Lysychansk's outskirts. He said Russian forces were moving weaponry to Donetsk.

The question now is whether Russia can muster enough strength to complete its seizure of the Donbas by taking Donetsk province, too. Putin acknowledged Monday that Russian troops who fought in Luhansk need to "take some rest and beef up their combat capability."

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Tuesday that Moscow's main priorities are "preserving the lives and health" of its troops and "excluding the threat to the security of civilians."

When Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine more than four months ago, his stated goals were defending the people of the Donbas against Kyiv's alleged aggression, and the "demilitarization" and "denazification" of Ukraine.

Pro-Russia separatists have fought Ukrainian forces and controlled much of the Donbas for eight years. Before the invasion this year, Putin recognized the independence of the two self-proclaimed separatist republics in the region. He also sought to portray the tactics of Ukrainian forces and the government as akin to Nazi Germany's, claims for which no evidence has emerged.

The General Staff of the Ukrainian military said Russian forces also shelled several Donetsk towns and villages around Sloviansk in the past day but were repelled as they tried to advance toward a town about 20 kilometers (12 miles) to the city's north. South of the city, Russian forces were trying to push toward two more towns and shelling areas near Kramatorsk.

Meanwhile, Moscow-installed officials in Ukraine's southern Kherson region on Tuesday announced the formation of a new regional government, with a former Russian official at the helm.

Sergei Yeliseyev, the head of the new Moscow-backed government in Kherson, is a former deputy prime minister of Russia's western exclave of Kaliningrad and also used to work at Russia's Federal Security Service, or the FSB, according to media reports.

It wasn't immediately clear what would become of the "military-civic administration" the Kremlin installed earlier. The administration's head, Vladimir Saldo, said in a Telegram statement that the new government was "not a temporary, not a military, not some kind of interim administration, but a proper governing body."

"The fact that not just Kherson residents, but Russian officials, too, are part of this government speaks clearly about the direction the Kherson region is headed in the future," he said. "This direction is to Russia."

Kherson's Russia-installed administration previously stated plans for the region to become part of Russia, either through a referendum or other means.

There was no immediate comment from Ukrainian officials.

In other developments:

— The 30 NATO allies signed off on the accession protocols for Sweden and Finland, sending the two nations' membership bids to the alliance capitals for legislative approvals. The move further increases Russia's strategic isolation. Alliance Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg hailed the signing as a "truly a historic moment for Finland, for Sweden and for NATO."

— The war in Ukraine has drawn millions of dollars away from countries facing other crises. Somalia, suffering a food shortage largely driven by the war, may be the most vulnerable. Its aid funding is less than half of last year's level while overwhelmingly Western donors have sent more than \$1.7 billion to respond to the war in Europe. Yemen, Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Congo and the Palestinian territories are similarly affected.

— Spain boosted military spending in an attempt to reach its commitment to NATO to dedicate 2% of

gross domestic product to defense. Spain's Cabinet approved a one-off Defense Ministry expenditure of almost 1 billion euros (\$1 billion) that the government said was necessary to pay for unexpected expenses from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Spain has sent military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine and deployed more troops and aircraft to NATO missions in Eastern Europe.

As 'Run 3' begins, CERN touts discovery of exotic particles

GENEVA (AP) — The physics lab that's home to the world's largest atom smasher announced on Tuesday the observation of three new "exotic particles" that could provide clues about the force that binds subatomic particles together.

The observation of a new type of pentaquark and the first duo of tetraquarks at CERN, the Geneva-area home to the Large Hadron Collider, offers a new angle to assess the "strong force" that holds together the nuclei of atoms.

Most exotic hadrons, which are subatomic particles, are made up of two or three elemental particles known as quarks. The strong force is one of four forces known in the universe, along with the "weak force" — which applies to the decay of particles — as well as the electromagnetic force and gravity.

The announcement comes amid a flurry of activity this week at CERN: Also Tuesday, the LHC's underground ring of superconducting magnets that propel infinitesimal particles along a 27-kilometer (about 17-mile) circuit and at near light speed, began smashing them together again. Data from the collisions is snapped up by high-tech detectors along the circular path.

The so-called "Run 3" of collisions, ending a three-year pause for maintenance and other checks, is operating at an unprecedented energy of 13.6 trillion electronvolts, which will offer the prospect of new discoveries in particle physics.

CERN scientists hailed a smooth start to what is expected to be nearly four years of operation in "Run 3" — the third time the LHC has carried out collisions since its debut in 2008.

A day earlier, CERN celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the confirmation of the Higgs boson, the subatomic particle that has a central place in the so-called Standard Model that explains the basics of particle physics.

High cost of Russian gains in Ukraine may limit new advance

By The Associated Press undefined

After more than four months of ferocious fighting, Russia claimed a key victory: full control over one of the two provinces in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland.

But Moscow's seizure of the last major stronghold of Ukrainian resistance in Luhansk province came at a steep price. The critical question now is whether Russia can muster enough strength for a new offensive to complete its capture of the Donbas and make gains elsewhere in Ukraine.

"Yes, the Russians have seized the Luhansk region, but at what price?" asked Oleh Zhdanov, a military analyst in Ukraine, noting that some Russian units involved in the battle lost up to a half their soldiers.

Even President Vladimir Putin acknowledged Monday that Russian troops involved in action in Luhansk need to "take some rest and beef up their combat capability."

That raises doubts about whether Moscow's forces and their separatist allies are ready to quickly thrust deeper into Donetsk, the other province that makes up the Donbas. Observers estimated in recent weeks that Russia controlled about half of Donetsk, and battle lines have changed little since then.

Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko urged 350,000 people to evacuate the province to save lives and to enable the Ukrainian army to better defend towns from the Russian advance.

"The destiny of the whole country will be decided by the Donetsk region," he said in Kramatrosk, the province's administrative center and home to the Ukrainian military's regional headquarters. "Once there are less people, we will be able to concentrate more on our enemy and perform our main tasks."

The governor's call appeared to represent one of the biggest suggested evacuations of the war. According to the U.N. refugee agency, more than 7.1 million Ukrainians are estimated to be displaced within Ukraine, and more than 4.8 million refugees left the country since Russia's invasion started on Feb. 24

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If Russia succeeds in the Donbas, it could free up its forces to grab even more land and dictate the terms of any peace agreement. If Ukraine, on the other hand, manages to pin the Russians down for a protracted period, it could build up the resources for a counteroffensive.

Exhausting the Russians has long been part of the plan for the Ukrainians, who began the conflict out-gunned — but hoped Western weapons could eventually tip the scales in their favor.

They are already effectively using heavy howitzers and advanced rocket systems sent by the U.S. and other Western allies, and more is on the way. But Ukrainian forces have said they remain badly outmatched.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Hanna Malyar said recently that Russian forces were firing 10 times more ammunition than the Ukrainian military.

After a failed attempt at a lightning advance on the capital of Kyiv in the opening weeks of the war, Russian forces withdrew from many parts of northern and central Ukraine and turned their attention to the Donbas, a region of mines and factories where Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting the Ukrainians since 2014.

Since then, Russia has adopted a slow-and-steady approach that allowed it to seize several remaining Ukrainian strongholds in Luhansk over the course of recent weeks.

While Ukrainian officials have acknowledged that their troops have withdrawn from the city of Lysychansk, the last bulwark of their resistance in Luhansk, the presidential office said Tuesday the military was still defending small areas in the province.

Zhdanov, the analyst, predicted that the Russians would likely rely on their edge in firepower to “apply the same scorched earth tactics and blast entire cities away” in Donetsk. The same day that Russia claimed it had taken Lysychansk, new artillery attacks were reported in Donetsk.

But Russia’s approach is not without drawbacks. Moscow has not given a casualty count since it said some 1,300 troops were killed in the first month of fighting, but Western officials have said that was just a fraction of real losses. Since then, Western observers have noted that the number of Russian troops involved in combat in Ukraine has dwindled, reflecting both heavy attrition and the Kremlin’s failure to fill up the ranks.

The limited manpower has forced Russian commanders to avoid ambitious attempts to encircle large areas in the Donbas, opting for smaller maneuvers and relying on heavy artillery barrages to slowly force the Ukrainians to retreat.

The military has also relied heavily on separatists, who have conducted several rounds of mobilization, and Western officials and analysts have said Moscow has increasingly engaged private military contractors. It has also tried to encourage Russian men who have done their tour of duty to sign up again, though it’s unclear how successful that has been.

While Putin so far has refrained from declaring a broad mobilization that might foment social discontent, recently proposed legislation suggested that Moscow was looking for other ways to replenish the ranks. The bill would have allowed young conscripts, who are drafted into the army for a year and barred from fighting, to immediately switch their status and sign contracts to become full professional soldiers. The draft was shelved amid strong criticism.

Some Western officials and analysts have argued that attrition is so heavy that it could force Moscow to suspend its offensive at some point later in the summer, but the Pentagon has cautioned that even though Russia has been churning through troops and supplies at rapid rates it still has abundant resources.

U.S. director of national intelligence Avril Haines said Putin appeared to accept the slow pace of the advance in the Donbas and now hoped to win by crushing Ukraine’s most battle-hardened forces.

“We believe that Russia thinks that if they are able to crush really one of the most capable and well-equipped forces in the east of Ukraine ... that will lead to a slump basically in the Ukrainian resistance and that that may give them greater opportunities,” Haines said.

If Russia wins in the Donbas, it could build on its seizure of the southern Kherson region and part of neighboring Zaporizhzhia to try to eventually cut Ukraine off from its Black Sea coast all the way to the Romanian border. If that succeeded, it would deal a crushing blow to the Ukrainian economy and also

create a corridor to Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria that hosts a Russian military base.

But that is far from assured. Mykola Sunhurovsky, of the Razumkov Center, a Kyiv-based think tank, predicted that growing supplies of heavy Western weapons, including HIMARS multiple rocket launchers, will help Ukraine turn the tide of the war.

"The supplies of weapons will allow Ukraine to start a counteroffensive in the south and fight for Kherson and other cities," Sunhurovsky said.

But Ukraine has also faced massive personnel losses: up to 200 soldiers a day in recent weeks of ferocious fighting in the east, according to officials.

"Overall, local military balance in Donbas favors Russia, but long term trends still favor Ukraine," wrote Michael Kofman, an expert on the Russian military and program director at the Virginia-based CNA think tank. "However, that estimate is conditional on sustained Western military assistance, and is not necessarily predictive of outcomes. This is likely to be a protracted war."

76 million-year-old dinosaur skeleton to be auctioned in NYC

NEW YORK (AP) — The fossilized skeleton of a T. rex relative that roamed the earth about 76 million years ago will be auctioned in New York this month, Sotheby's announced Tuesday.

The Gorgosaurus skeleton will highlight Sotheby's natural history auction on July 28, the auction house said.

The Gorgosaurus was an apex carnivore that lived in what is now the western United States and Canada during the late Cretaceous Period. It predated its relative the Tyrannosaurus rex by 10 million years.

The specimen being sold was discovered in 2018 in the Judith River Formation near Havre, Montana, Sotheby's said. It measures nearly 10 feet (3 meters) tall and 22 (6.7 meters) feet long.

All of the other known Gorgosaurus skeletons are in museum collections, making this one the only specimen available for private ownership, the auction house said.

"In my career, I have had the privilege of handling and selling many exceptional and unique objects, but few have the capacity to inspire wonder and capture imaginations quite like this unbelievable Gorgosaurus skeleton," Cassandra Hatton, Sotheby's global head of science and popular culture, said.

Sotheby's presale estimate for the fossil is \$5 million to \$8 million.

NATO nations sign accession protocols for Sweden, Finland

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The 30 NATO allies signed off on the accession protocols for Sweden and Finland on Tuesday, sending the membership bids of the two nations to the alliance capitals for legislative approvals — and possible political trouble in Turkey.

The move further increases Russia's strategic isolation in the wake of its invasion of neighboring Ukraine in February and military struggles there since.

"This is truly a historic moment for Finland, for Sweden and for NATO," the head of the alliance, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, said.

The 30 ambassadors and permanent representatives formally approved decisions made at a NATO summit in Madrid last week, when the leaders of member nations invited Russia's neighbor Finland and Scandinavian partner Sweden to join the military club.

Securing parliamentary approval for the new members in Turkey, however, could still pose a problem even though Sweden, Finland and Turkey reached a memorandum of understanding at the Madrid summit.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned that Ankara could block the process if the two countries failed to grant Turkey's demands for the extradition of people it views as terror suspects. The people wanted in Turkey have links to outlawed Kurdish groups or the network of an exiled cleric accused of a failed 2016 coup in Turkey.

He said Turkey's Parliament could refuse to ratify the deal. It is a potent threat since NATO accession

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must be formally approved by all 30 member states, which gives each a blocking right.

Stoltenberg said he expected no change of heart. "There were security concerns that needed to be addressed. And we did what we always do at NATO. We found common ground," he said.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has given the process added urgency. It will ensconce the two nations in the Western military alliance and give NATO more clout, especially in the face of Moscow's military threat.

"We will be even stronger and our people will be even safer as we face the biggest security crisis in decades," Stoltenberg said.

At a news conference, the foreign ministers of Sweden and Finland were asked whether the memorandum specified people who would have to be extradited to Turkey. Both ministers said no such list was part of the agreement.

"We will honor the memorandum fully. There is, of course, no lists or anything like that in the memorandum, but what we will do is to have better cooperation when it comes to terrorists," Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde said.

Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto was equally adamant.

"Everything that was agreed in Madrid is stated in the document. There are no hidden documents behind that or any agreements behind that," Haavisto said.

Every alliance nation has different legislative challenges and procedures to deal with, and it could take several more months for the two Nordic nations to take their place as official NATO members.

Denmark and Canada were quickest out of the blocks. They handed over their ratification documents in Washington as the first NATO countries just hours after the accession protocols were signed in Brussels, Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod told The Associated Press by phone.

"It was a good signal not only to Sweden and Finland, but to other NATO countries that the speed of ratification is important," he said. "We hope this inspires other countries to react fast."

The documents need to be handed over in Washington because NATO's founding treaty was signed there in 1949.

Germany's parliament is set to ratify the membership bids Friday, according to the Free Democrats, a partner party in the country's coalition government. Other parliaments might only get to the approval process after long summer breaks.

"I look forward to a swift ratification process," Haavisto said.

In the meantime, the protocols approved Tuesday bring both nations deeper into NATO's fold already. As close partners, they already attended some meetings that involved issues that immediately affected them. As official invitees, they can attend all meetings of the ambassadors even if they do not yet have any voting rights.

Many won't rely on virtual options after COVID: AP-NORC poll

By HANNAH FINGERHUT and R.J. RICO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Many Americans don't expect to rely on the digital services that became commonplace during the pandemic after COVID-19 subsides, according to a new poll, even as many think it's a good thing if those options remain available in the future.

Close to half or more of U.S. adults say they are not likely to attend virtual activities, receive virtual health care, have groceries delivered or use curbside pickup after the coronavirus pandemic is over, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Less than 3 in 10 say they're very likely to use any of those options at least some of the time.

Still, close to half also say it would be a good thing if virtual options for health care, for community events and for activities like fitness classes or religious services continue after the pandemic.

"Rather than this either-or, I think we're more likely to be facing a hybrid future," said Donna Hoffman, director of the Center for the Connected Consumer at the George Washington School of Business. "People have found convenience in some of these virtual options that just makes sense, and they don't necessarily have anything to do with like keeping you safe or the pandemic even though they came of age during

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the pandemic.”

Digital daily routines became the default in 2020 as the nation reacted to the rapidly spreading virus, which prompted lockdowns, closed schools and shuttered businesses. Some substitutions, like online shopping and video conference calling, already existed. Others were reimagined or popularized during the pandemic.

Either way, Hoffman said, there was “rapid” deployment and adoption of virtual services. It was a question of “how are we going to make this work?” she said.

Cornelius Hairston said his family took precautions throughout the pandemic because his wife is a first responder in the health care field.

“We tried to stay in as much as we could and only come out for essentials,” said Hairston, 40, who recently moved to Roanoke, Virginia.

Hairston joked that his twin 4-year-old boys are “COVID babies” who didn’t even go to a grocery store for much of their young lives. The family used delivery services almost exclusively to avoid venturing out to crowded stores. But going forward, he only expects to use them “from time to time.”

For Angie Lowe, the convenience of telemedicine and time saved was reason enough to do it again even though she and her husband returned to doing things in public more than a year ago.

Lowe had her first telemedicine appointment early in the pandemic when feeling “lonely” and “stuck at home” kept her from sleeping well. She was able to talk with the doctor without having to take extra time off of work to drive to and wait in a medical center.

“It was my first telemedicine appointment, but it won’t be my last,” said Lowe, 48, of Sterling, Illinois. “If I can do it, I’m going to do it.”

For many, though, drawbacks outweigh the benefits of relying on digital services in the future. Adults age 50 or older are especially likely to say they are not planning to use the virtual options asked about on the poll going forward, even though many were introduced during the pandemic to protect the at-risk population.

Despite feeling antsy about COVID-19 and infection rates in Phoenix, Tony DiGiovane, 71, said he found curbside pickup at grocery stores and restaurants to be more hassle than they’re worth.

“By the time I picked up the stuff, I needed more stuff,” he said of his grocery orders, and “something’s always missing or wrong” on takeout orders.

Karen Stewart, 63, recognizes the benefits of video calls, but she’s also found them to be limiting. That’s the case in her job organizing after school programming for kids. She also now sees some of her doctors online, one who provides virtual care almost exclusively and another who uses virtual care in between office visits.

She likes that she doesn’t have to drive, but it means a doctor or nurse can’t take her vitals or be “hands on” in her care. It was “scary,” for example, when all of her appointments in the lead-up to a surgery were online, she said.

“When I do that they they can’t take my blood pressure, my pulse. There’s things that a doctor might pick up on that they can’t see online,” said Stewart of Perris, California.

The pandemic created an opportunity to balance in-person and virtual services to support the physical and mental health of older adults, said Alycia Bayne, a principal research scientist at NORC. That “could be particularly beneficial to older adults with different health issues, mobility limitations, people who lack transportation options, people who do not have or live near a robust social networks like family and friends to lean on,” she said.

Still, there remain limitations with technology access, broadband access and digital literacy, which Bayne said may help explain why the poll finds older adults less likely to use digital services after the pandemic.

Despite the age gap on use of services, similar percentages of adults across ages say it’s a good thing for virtual options for health care, for community events and meetings and for activities to continue after the pandemic.

“They recognize the benefits of virtual services, but they’re also ready to start getting back to their pre-pandemic routines,” she said. “The silver lining, of course, is that these services are now available.”

A survivor of the migrant trailer: 'They couldn't breathe'

By SONIA PÉREZ D. Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — Simple advice from a friend to stay near the door may have saved Yenifer Yulisa Cardona Tomás from the deadly fate that befell 53 other migrants when they were abandoned trapped in a sweltering semi-trailer last week on the edge of San Antonio.

Speaking by phone from her hospital bed Monday, the 20-year-old from Guatemala's capital said it was already hot on June 27 when she stepped out of the warehouse on the Texas side of the Mexico border where she had been waiting and climbed into the back of the trailer.

She said the smugglers confiscated their cellphones and covered the trailer's floor with what she believes was powdered chicken bouillon, apparently to throw off any dogs at checkpoints. As she sat stuffed inside the stifling trailer with dozens of others, the powder stung her skin.

Remembering her friend's caution to stay near the door where it would be cooler, Cardona Tomás shared the advice with another friend she had made during the journey.

"I told a friend that we shouldn't go to the back and should stay near (the entrance), in the same place without moving," said Cardona Tomás, who is being treated at Methodist Hospital Metropolitan in San Antonio. That friend survived, too.

As the truck moved on, making additional stops to pick up more migrants, people began to cluster near the door like Cardona Tomás. She had no way to track the time.

"The people were yelling, some cried. Mostly women were calling for it to stop and to open the doors because it was hot, that they couldn't breathe," she said, still laboring a bit to speak after being intubated at the hospital.

She said the driver or someone else in the cab yelled back that "we were about to arrive, that there were 20 minutes left, six minutes."

"People asked for water, some had run out, others carried some," she said.

The truck would continue stopping occasionally, but just before she lost consciousness it was moving slowly. She woke up in the hospital.

The driver and three others were arrested and charged by U.S. prosecutors.

Guatemala's Foreign Ministry has said that 20 Guatemalans died in the incident, 16 of whom have been positively identified. Foreign Minister Mario Búcaro said he hoped the first bodies would be repatriated this week.

Cardona Tomás said the truck's destination that day was Houston, though she was ultimately headed to North Carolina.

"She didn't have a job and asked me if I would support her" in migrating to the U.S., her father, Mynor Cardona, said Monday in Guatemala City, where the family lives. He said he knew of other cases of children who just left without telling their families and ended up disappearing or dying so he decided to back her.

He paid \$4,000 for a smuggler — less than half the total cost — to take her to the U.S. She left Guatemala on May 30, traveling in cars, buses and finally the semi-trailer in Texas.

"I didn't know that she would travel in a trailer," he said. "She told us it would be by foot. It seems like at the last moment the smugglers decided to put (her) in the trailer, along with two more friends, who survived. One of them is still in critical condition."

Cardona had stayed in touch with his daughter up until the morning of June 27. Her last message to him that Monday was at 10:28 a.m. in Guatemala, or 11:28 a.m. in Texas. "We're going to go in an hour," she wrote.

It was not until late that night that Cardona Tomás' family learned of the abandoned trailer. It was two more days before relatives in the United States confirmed that she was alive and hospitalized.

"We cried so much," Cardona said. "I even was thinking where we were going to have the wake and bury her. She is a miracle."

Review: 'Thor: Love and Thunder' is pure bonkers filmmaking

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

The last full Thor movie was the overstuffed 2017 "Thor: Ragnarok," with the God of Thunder dealing with dueling brother and sister issues, the imminent destruction of his planet, a boozy sidekick, a huge dog, pal Hulk having a panic attack and the death of his father.

It was Taika Waititi filmmaking at its most intense, with slo-mo sauntering, stupid antlered headdresses, slicing swords and laser cannons, capes and undead soldiers, a hair-cropped Thor, a typically unbalanced Jeff Goldblum character, a prophecy, alien spacecrafts and lots of Led Zeppelin.

If you thought that was bananas filmmaking, its sequel is the whole fruit basket.

"Thor: Love and Thunder" — a rare Marvel fourth installment for one character — has giant bleating goats, a horrible Zeus, children in cages, space dolphins, Jodie Foster jokes, teddy bears with laser eyes, an Old Spice commercial parody, Natalie Portman headbutting a villain, blue aliens and lots of Guns N' Roses.

Waititi is back as the co-writer, director and the voice for the stony Korg, with Chris Hemsworth as our space Viking, a man who really needs to get more credit for taking Thor over the years from glum to hysterical. His ability to pronounce superhero things dramatically and then become a goofball is endlessly endearing. Also back are Tessa Thompson as Valkyrie and Jaimie Alexander's Sif.

One problematic character back is Jane Foster, Thor's ex whom he still pines for eight years after they broke up and she skipped the third film. But now Foster — played by Portman — has his old magical hammer, Mjolnir, and has become a superhero of her own, the Mighty Thor. She's working on a catchphrase, like "Eat this hammer!"

Thor, of course, has moved on — not with his romantic feelings, but with his favored weaponry. He wields the enchanted axe Stormbreaker now. He has no eyes for Mjolnir — or does he? "We good? I know it's a little weird having my ex-weapon around," he asks his axe in a deliciously loony scene, basically reflecting a love triangle between a Norse god and two metal armaments.

Our villain this time is superb: Christian Bale plays the deliciously named Gorr the God Butcher. A once-pious man who prayed in vain to the deities, he has now decided to wipe them out after having a personal setback. Bale is so creepy and so committed that you can feel his hatred melt your popcorn. "The gods will use you but they will not help you," he snarls.

Another punch of the bizarre comes from Russell Crowe, who plays Zeus as a vainglorious tyrant with a Roman outfit (a riff off "Gladiator"?) and an atrocious Mediterranean accent. He is surrounded by lackeys — some called Zeusettes — and frustrates Thor, even stripping him of his clothes, to the delight of many in the audience. "You know what they say: Never meet your heroes," says the Viking.

The whipsaw from death and suffering to idiocy is staggering, with Jennifer Kaytin Robinson credited alongside Waititi for a script that seems like it was pasted together after gerbils ripped up a bag of words. You go from a hospital room on Earth dealing with a terminal illness to Thor dressed as a hot dog to a shadow realm in low gravity where the film goes completely black and white. There is very little logic and the connections between scenes are tenuous, giving the film a feeling of not building to anything clear.

Peak lunacy is reached at the Omnipotence City, where the universe's gods hang out. There is the Aztec God, various Maori Goddesses, the Mayan God and a round dough called Bao, God of Dumplings. It's a gag that seems out of a Mel Brooks film but the way the Marvel Cinematic Universe is going, don't be surprised to see the 47th installment called "Bao: Steam and Sauce."

The film is stacked with cameos — many of which critics aren't permitted to reveal — but look for Hemsworth's real-life wife and one of his sons, a bunch of fed-up Guardians of the Galaxy and a pretty famous comedienne playing Cate Blanchett's role from "Ragnarok."

What to make of this glorious, intergalactic mess? There is no better answer than to swipe one of our hero's catchphrases: "What a classic Thor adventure, Hurrah!"

"Thor: Love and Thunder," a Walt Disney Studios release that opens in theaters on July 8, is rated PG-13 for "intense sci-fi violence, action, language, partial nudity and some suggestive material." Running time: 119 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Ukraine's shadow: Deadly crises like Somalia starved of aid

By CARA ANNA and OMAR FARUK Associated Press

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) — More than two dozen children have died of hunger in the past two months in a single hospital in Somalia. Dr. Yahye Abdi Garun has watched their emaciated parents stumble in from rural areas gripped by the driest drought in decades. And yet no humanitarian aid arrives.

Shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine, a donor who was preparing to give a half-million dollars to a Somali aid group told its executive director Hussein Kulmiye it was redirecting the money to help Ukrainians instead.

And now, as Somalis fleeing the drought fill more than 500 camps in the city of Baidoa, aid workers make "horrific" choices to help one camp and ignore 10 others, Norwegian Refugee Council Secretary General Jan Egeland said, telling The Associated Press he is "angry and ashamed." His group's Ukraine appeal was fully funded within 48 hours, but its Somalia appeal is perhaps a quarter funded as thousands of people die.

The war in Ukraine has abruptly drawn millions of dollars away from other crises. Somalia, facing a food shortage largely driven by the war, might be the most vulnerable. Its aid funding is less than half of last year's level while overwhelmingly Western donors have sent more than \$1.7 billion to respond to the war in Europe. Yemen, Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Congo and the Palestinian territories are similarly affected.

The \$2.2 billion appeal for Ukraine is almost 80% funded, according to United Nations data, an "exceptional" level for any crisis at the midway point of the year, said Angus Urquhart, humanitarian and crisis lead for the Development Initiatives consultancy. The smaller appeal for Somalia is just 30% funded.

This year's global shift in money and attention is perhaps most urgently felt in the Horn of Africa, including Ethiopia and Kenya, where some areas could be declared in famine within weeks. The United States Agency for International Development says regional authorities haven't seen anything on this scale in well over 100 years. Millions of livestock, families' source of wealth and nutrition, have died.

People are next.

To the shock of some exhausted Somalis who walk for days through parched landscapes to places like Mogadishu in search of aid, there is often little or none.

Hawa Osman Bilal sat outside her makeshift tent holding the clothes of her daughter Ifrah, who like many vulnerable Somalis died after the difficult journey to seek help.

"She was skinny and emaciated, and she died in front of me," Bilal said. The girl was buried nearby, one in a growing number of tiny graves.

The crowded camp's caretaker, Fadumo Abdulkadir Warsame, told the AP that about 100 families had arrived in the past week alone, swelling the population to 1,700 families. There is no food to give them. "The only thing we can afford for them is bread and black tea," he said. "There is no aid from the donors yet."

At a nearby storeroom run by the local organization Peace and Development Action, supported by the U.N. World Food Program, the stock has shriveled. "The world has turned its back on Somalia to focus on Ukraine," manager Shafici Ali Ahmed said.

The White House acknowledged the problem in a June 28 statement on global food security, saying that "while the entire globe will continue to be affected by Russia's actions, the most immediate needs will present in the Horn of Africa," where Somalia once sourced 90% of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine but now struggles to find supplies amid soaring prices.

"We're really trying to stave off mass deaths at this point," Sarah Charles, assistant to the administrator for USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, told the AP, adding that "unfortunately, the nature of these crises is such that they go slow and then go very fast."

Nimo Hassan, director of the Somalia NGO Consortium, and several others said they believe donor countries' representatives on the ground understand the urgency, but decision-makers in capitals like Brussels and London appear distracted by the war in Europe.

"They're not saying openly, 'We're focused on Ukraine,' but you can see what they're doing in Ukraine," Hassan said. "It should be based on need, not a political decision, you know?"

Less than 30% of the new arrivals at camps for those fleeing drought in Somalia were receiving immediate food or other assistance as of April, the U.N. humanitarian agency has said.

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"Not all emergencies are born equal," said Victor Aguayo, the UNICEF director of nutrition and child development, speaking from the Somali region of Ethiopia, where he reported a "very significant increase" in the number of children under 2 with severe wasting.

"Some emergencies all of a sudden grab the attention," Aguayo said, adding that UNICEF is not receiving enough money to contain the Horn of Africa crisis as 1.8 million children need urgent treatment.

The World Food Program, like UNICEF, must shift limited resources from preventing acute hunger to focusing on the desperately hungry. That means more than a quarter-million children under 2 in Somalia have lost prevention help "at the peak of famine prevention efforts," WFP spokesman Altan Butt said.

Across Somalia, where a weak humanitarian response to the 2010-12 drought was in part to blame as a quarter-million people died, humanitarian workers watch this one with fear as a fifth straight rainy season might fail for the first time in memory.

The southern district of Dollow near Ethiopia is "overwhelmed" by new arrivals, and at least 40 people died from April through June, district commissioner Mohamed Hussein Abdi said. Displaced people now outnumber residents.

At mother-child health centers in Somalia's northern Puntland region, nearly every other patient was severely malnourished, said Justus Liku, a food security adviser with the aid group CARE.

"We can see places where there's not a drop of water," said Ahmed Nasir, deputy director of Save Somali Women and Children, speaking to the AP from the field. "If those people in decision-making offices could see what we see now, they would just release the funds immediately."

Today in History: July 6, Richard III is crowned

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, July 6, the 187th day of 2022. There are 178 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 6, 1944, an estimated 168 people died in a fire that broke out during a performance in the main tent of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in Hartford, Connecticut.

On this date:

In 1483, England's King Richard III was crowned in Westminster Abbey.

In 1777, during the American Revolution, British forces captured Fort Ticonderoga (ty-kahn-dur-OH'-gah).

In 1854, the first official meeting of the Republican Party took place in Jackson, Michigan.

In 1885, French scientist Louis Pasteur tested an anti-rabies vaccine on 9-year-old Joseph Meister, who had been bitten by an infected dog; the boy did not develop rabies.

In 1933, the first All-Star baseball game was played at Chicago's Comiskey Park; the American League defeated the National League, 4-2.

In 1942, Anne Frank, her parents and sister entered a "secret annex" in an Amsterdam building where they were later joined by four other people; they hid from Nazi occupiers for two years before being discovered and arrested.

In 1945, President Harry S. Truman signed an executive order establishing the Medal of Freedom.

In 1957, Althea Gibson became the first Black tennis player to win a Wimbledon singles title as she defeated fellow American Darlene Hard 6-3, 6-2.

In 1988, 167 North Sea oil workers were killed when explosions and fires destroyed a drilling platform.

In 2015, Pope Francis received a hero's welcome in Guayaquil, Ecuador's biggest city, as he celebrated the first public Mass of his South American tour.

In 2016, Philando Castile, a Black elementary school cafeteria worker, was killed during a traffic stop in the St. Paul suburb of Falcon Heights by Officer Jeronimo Yanez. (Yanez was later acquitted on a charge of second-degree manslaughter.)

In 2020, the Trump administration formally notified the United Nations of its withdrawal from the World Health Organization; President Donald Trump had criticized the WHO's response to the coronavirus pandemic. (The pullout was halted by President Joe Biden's administration.) Amy Cooper, the white woman

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who called police during a videotaped dispute with a Black man in New York's Central Park, was charged with filing a false report. (The case would be dismissed after Cooper completed a counseling program.)

Ten years ago: At a 100-nation conference in Paris, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton hailed an accelerating wave of defections in President Bashar Assad's inner circle as the United States and its international allies pleaded once again for global sanctions against the Syrian regime. Former neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman was released from jail in Florida for a second time while he awaited his second-degree murder trial for fatally shooting Trayvon Martin. (Zimmerman was acquitted.)

Five years ago: The maker of opioid painkiller Opana ER said it would stop selling the drug at the request of the Food and Drug Administration in an effort to curb abuse.

One year ago: Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams won the Democratic primary for mayor of New York City, defeating a large field in New York's first major race to use ranked choice voting. (Adams would be elected mayor in November.) Filmmaker and actor Robert Downey Sr. died at 85; he was the father of film star Robert Downey Jr.

Today's Birthdays: The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is 87. Singer Gene Chandler is 82. Country singer Jeannie Seely is 82. Actor Burt Ward is 77. Former President George W. Bush is 76. Actor-director Sylvester Stallone is 76. Actor Fred Dryer is 76. Actor Shelley Hack is 75. Actor Nathalie Baye is 74. Actor Geoffrey Rush is 71. Actor Allyce Beasley is 71. Rock musician John Bazz (The Blasters) is 70. Actor Grant Goodeve is 70. Retired MLB All-Star Willie Randolph is 68. Jazz musician Rick Braun is 67. Actor Casey Sander is 67. Country musician John Jorgenson is 66. Former first daughter Susan Ford Bales is 65. Hockey player and coach Ron Duguay (doo-GAY') is 65. Actor-writer Jennifer Saunders is 64. Rock musician John Keeble (Spandau Ballet) is 63. Actor Pip Torrens is 62. Actor Brian Posehn is 56. Actor Robb Derringer is 55. Political reporter/moderator John Dickerson is 54. Actor Brian Van Holt is 53. Rapper Inspectah Deck (Wu-Tang Clan) is 52. TV host Josh Elliott is 51. Rapper 50 Cent is 47. Actors Tia and Tamera Mowry are 44. Comedian-actor Kevin Hart is 43. Actor Eva (EH'-vuh) Green is 42. Actor Gregory Smith is 39. Rock musician Chris "Woody" Wood (Bastille) is 37. Rock singer Kate Nash is 35. Actor Jeremy Suarez is 32. San Diego Padres infielder Manny Machado is 30. NBA star Zion Williamson is 22.