

Groton Daily Independent

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July 18
6 p.m.: Jr. Legion hosts Frederick, DH

July 19-21
Legion Regions at Redfield

July 22-24
Jr. Teeners State Tourney at Hayti

July 23-24
Jr. Legion Region

July 29-Aug. 2
State Legion at Gregory

August 5-7: State Jr. Legion at Clark

Thursday, Aug. 4
First allowable day of football practice

Monday, Aug. 8
First allowable day of boys golf practice

Thursday, Aug. 11
First allowable day of volleyball and cross country practice

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

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

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The Life of Arlys Kluess



A Celebration of Life for Arlys Kluess will be 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, July 20th at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Burial will follow in Lorinda Cemetery, Henry with Pastor Kari Foss officiating.

Arlys passed away July 16, 2022 at Avera St. Lukes Hospital, Aberdeen.

Arlys Marlene was born on March 16, 1952 in Watertown to Roy and Marian (Pearson) Sharp. She was raised in the Henry area and graduated from Henry High School in 1970. Arlys attended Lake Area Technical School where she earned a degree in Dental Assisting. On August 28, 1971, she was united in marriage with Rodney Kluess and together they were blessed with two children. In 1973, the couple moved to Groton and Arlys returned to college. She graduated in 1977 with her Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from Presentation College. For over 40 years, she worked as an RN for Dakota Midland, Avera St. Lukes, Dakota House and New Beginnings. Arlys retired completely in January of 2022,

Outside of her career, Arlys was an active member of Emmanuel Lutheran Church. She sang in the choir for 49 years and helped serve in WELCA. In younger years, she enjoyed playing softball. More recently, her hobbies included golfing, decorating for holidays and of course taking care of her flowers, as well as her yard.

Arlys is survived by her children, Wade Kluess (Ashley Allbee) of Sioux Falls, Cassie (Steve) Monson of Bath, her grandchildren, Colton (Mackenzie) Monson, Clayton Stippich, Becca Monson and fiancé Nick Buum, great-grandchildren, Rayce Monson, Holden Buum and her sister Dianne (Howard) Easthouse of Henry.

Preceding her in death were her parents, her husband of 49 years and her brother, Dennis.

Casketbearers will be Ryan Easthouse, Robbie Easthouse, Colton Monson and Becca Monson.

The student doctor; a complement to patient care

As a clinical professor at my state's medical school, I frequently have medical students seeing patients with me in clinic. While the majority of patients are happy to allow student involvement, some decline. This makes me wonder what misconceptions lead patients to be averse to trainees participating at their clinic visits or hospital bedsides. In my experience, the presence of learners has a positive influence on our work in the clinic and hospital.

Medical education is a complex, highly intensive program that requires years of education and practice. Most medical students are college graduates who performed well in their undergraduate studies and went above and beyond their peers in volunteering, extracurricular activities, and other achievements. After college, some go directly to medical school, and some have variable years of other experiences.

Traditionally the first two years of medical school take place in the classroom, learning about anatomy, physiology, disease processes, microbiology, and pharmacology. The third and fourth years are spent almost entirely in the clinical setting, seeing patients, and learning how to apply their hard-earned knowledge.

After medical school, new doctors go on to their residencies to receive further training in their chosen specialty; and after that, some continue to fellowship. This postgraduate training is rigorous. After at least three but sometimes many more years, those physicians will be ready to practice independently in their specialty.

Recently a student and I saw a patient with leg pain and swelling. After the student's evaluation, we discussed in the patient's presence what features of this patient's pain concerned me for an urgent condition, how we should proceed with diagnostics, and why. The patient was able to observe how much thought went into our assessment, and hopefully the patient appreciated serving as teacher.

When I as an attending physician have a student or resident in my clinic, I am at my best. Students are caring and thorough with our patients. Teaching often requires me to talk about a new diagnosis or treatment in greater detail, and the patient reaps the benefit of hearing that discussion. It is not uncommon for a student to ask me a question to which I don't know the answer, and ultimately both of us learn something new.

I would encourage patients, when they encounter trainees in their medical care, to view these compassionate and hardworking people as I do: a true complement to patient care. All physicians are life-long learners and are exceedingly grateful for our patients, who are our greatest teachers.

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



Kelly Evans-Hullinger, MD

Locke Electric Takes a Tough Blow From Outlaws

Locke Electric had a tough time generating runs on Monday, dropping their game with Outlaws 16-5.

Outlaws fired up the offense in the first inning, when Harvey singled on a 2-0 count, scoring one run.

Locke Electric knotted the game up at five in the bottom of the third inning. Ryan Groeblichhoff drove in one when Groeblichhoff singled.

Outlaws pulled away for good with one run in the fourth inning. In the fourth Winter singled on a 2-1 count, scoring one run.

Locke Electric notched three runs in the third inning. The offensive firepower by Locke Electric was led by Spencer Locke, Austin Jones, and Groeblichhoff, who all drove in runs.

Outlaws scored four runs in the eighth inning. Outlaws big bats were led by Clemente, Winter, and Casey Schlechter, who each had RBIs in the inning.

Heyd got the win for Outlaws. The ace went three innings, allowing zero runs on five hits, striking out four and walking zero. Josh Koeck and Harvey entered the game out of the bullpen and helped to close out the game in relief.

Aaron Severson took the loss for Locke Electric. The righthander went three innings, allowing five runs on eight hits and striking out two.

Knox started the game for Outlaws. The hurler allowed five hits and five runs over two innings, striking out six

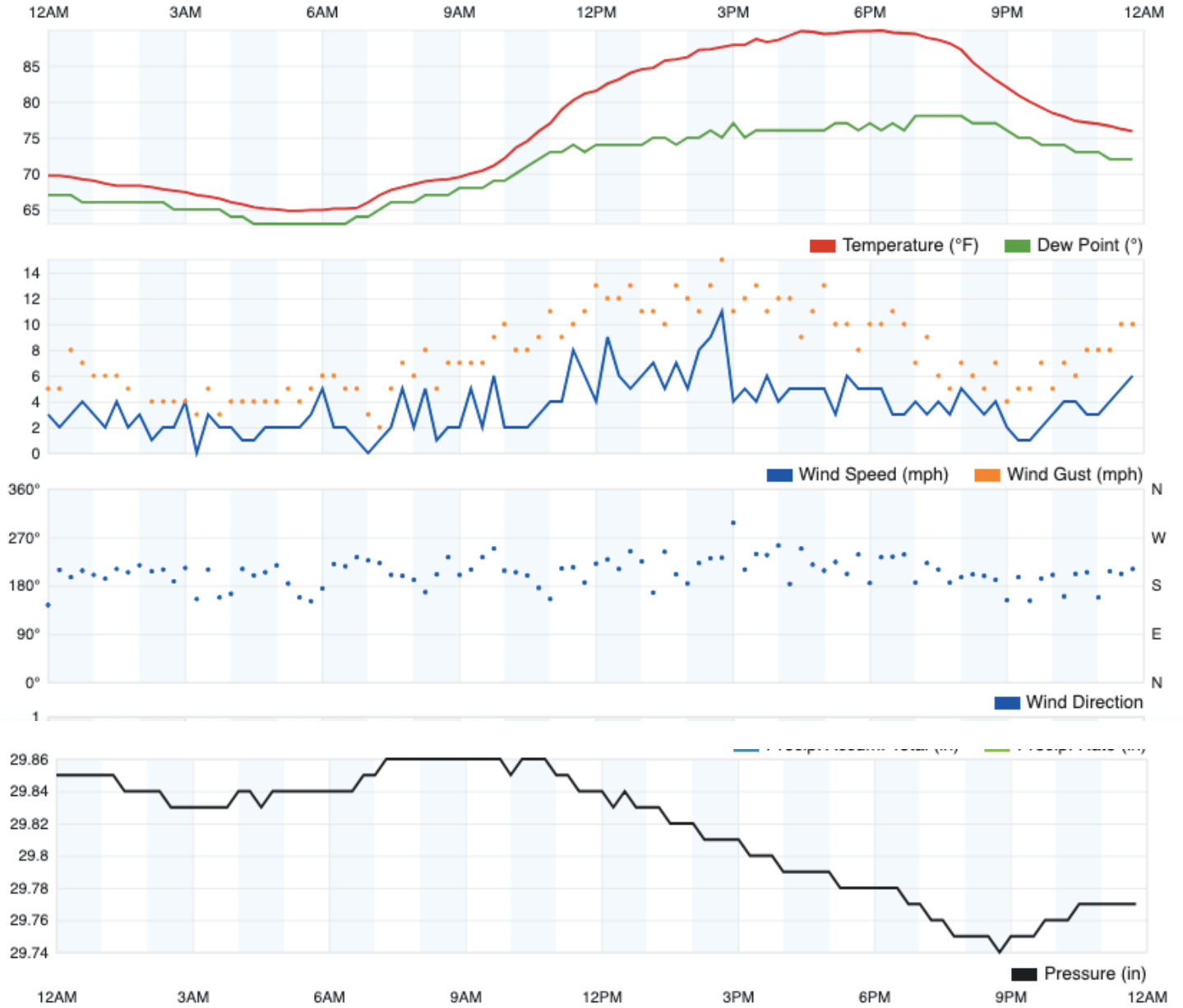
Locke Electric collected 12 hits. Evan Erickson, Dylan Frey, and Wilson Bonet each had multiple hits for Locke Electric. Frey and Erickson all had three hits to lead Locke Electric.

Outlaws tallied 19 hits. Winter, Clemente, Schlechter, Heyd, and Perez all managed multiple hits for Outlaws. Winter went 4-for-6 at the plate to lead Outlaws in hits. Outlaws was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Winter had the most chances in the field with 12.

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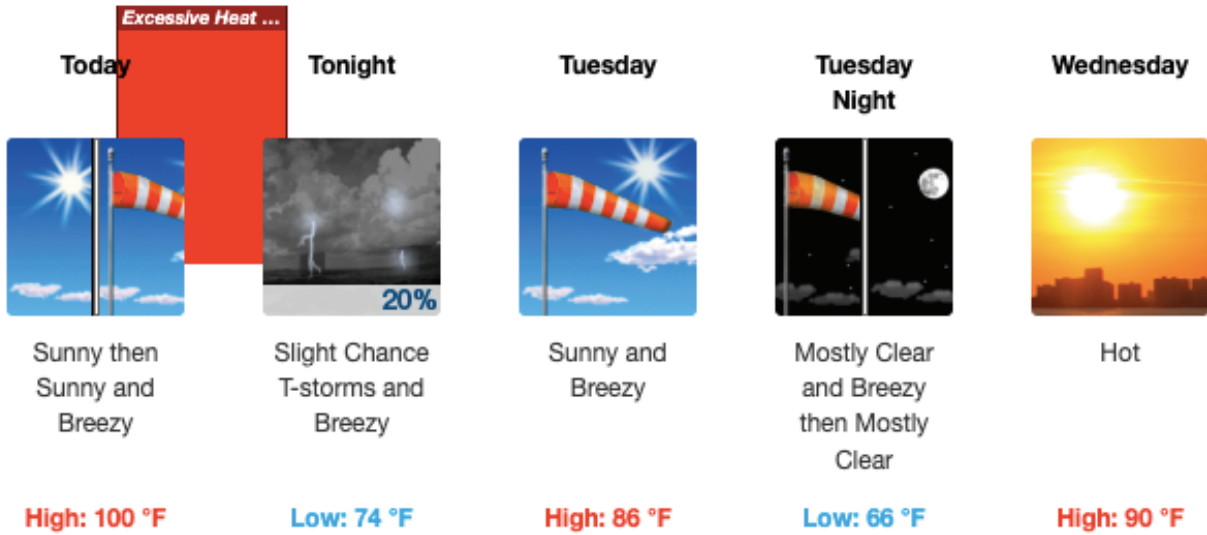
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Hot Today, "Cooler" Tuesday

July 18, 2022
2:03 AM

Heat Index Forecast for Today

	7/18 Mon					7/19 Tue			
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am
Aberdeen	76	94	105	108	107	95	86	79	76
Britton	76	92	101	103	102	90	84	78	75
Eagle Butte	77	92	102	105	105	93	83	74	69
Eureka	76	93	104	108	106	89	83	75	72
Gettysburg	74	90	103	106	105	92	86	78	71
Kennebec	79	97	109	111	109	96	87	82	75
McIntosh	75	89	101	104	102	90	79	73	68
Milbank	79	94	100	101	100	90	85	83	78
Miller	76	93	103	104	106	93	86	81	76
Mobridge	77	93	105	109	107	94	83	76	71
Murdo	77	93	106	108	107	93	85	80	74
Pierre	79	95	109	112	110	99	88	81	74
Redfield	75	93	104	106	106	94	88	79	76
Sisseton	83	93	103	105	103	93	87	83	79
Watertown	74	90	98	99	99	90	84	78	77
Webster	76	88	96	99	98	88	83	78	75
Wheaton	77	93	100	102	101	89	83	76	76

*Table values in °F
**Created: 1 am CDT Mon 7/18/2022
***Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.

Today's High Temperature

Valid Mon 9:00AM through Mon 9:00PM CDT
Issued Jul 18, 2022 1:50 AM CDT

High Temperature (F)

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Jul 18, 2022 1:50 AM CDT

**National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD**

It will be downright HOT today ahead of any advancing frontal boundary, with high temperatures and heat indices jumping up above 100°. There is a slight chance of storms tonight, but most locations will remain dry. Gusty winds can be expected both today and Tuesday. #sdwx #mnwx

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 90 °F at 5:48 PM

Low Temp: 65 °F at 5:08 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 2:39 PM

Precip: 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 17 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1936

Record Low: 40 in 1915

Average High: 85°F

Average Low: 60°F

Average Precip in July.: 1.99

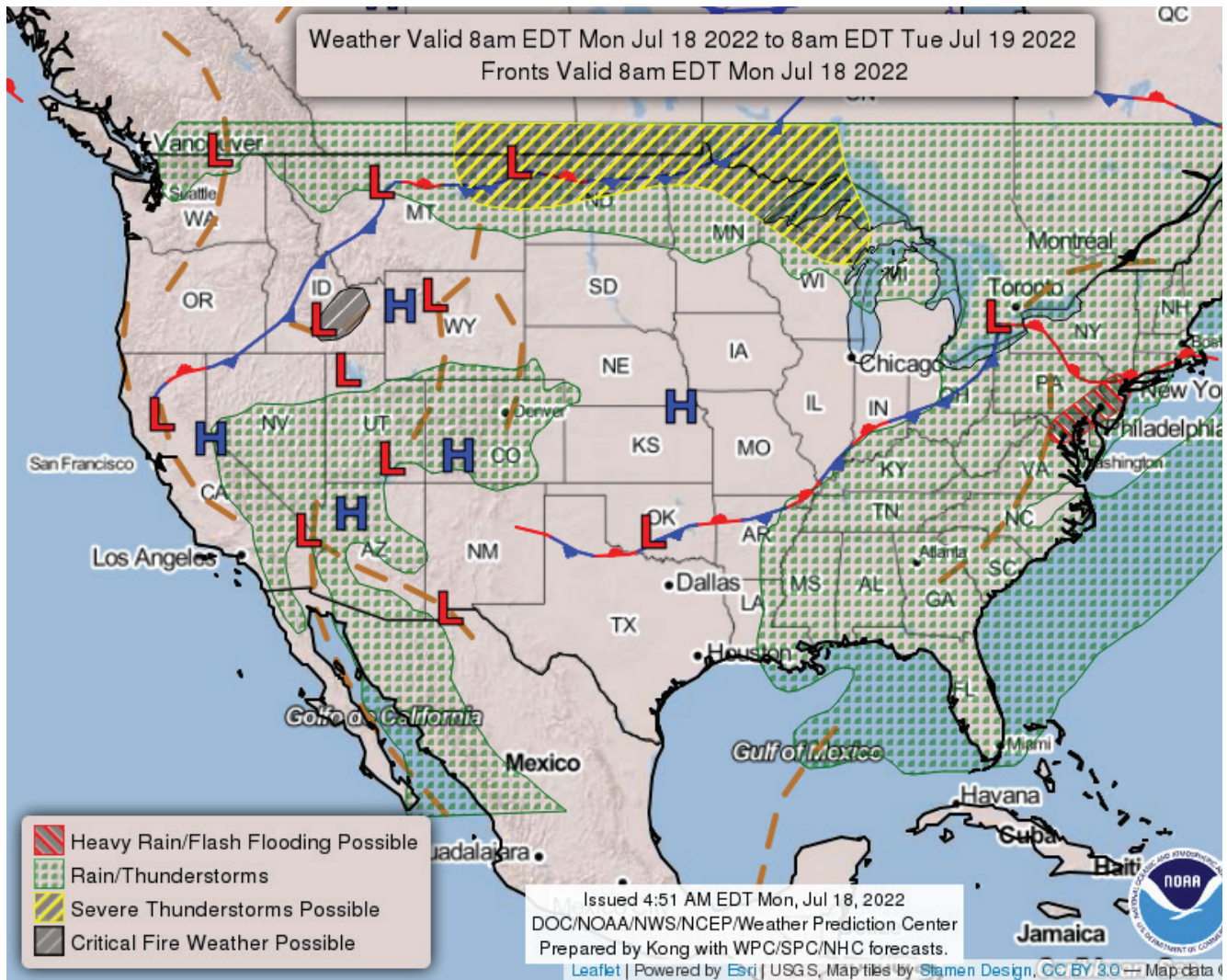
Precip to date in July.: 2.25

Average Precip to date: 13.00

Precip Year to Date: 13.83

Sunset Tonight: 9:17:23 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:00:58 AM



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Today in Weather History

July 18, 1883: An estimated F3 tornado moved southeast from south of Redfield to north of Hitchcock, to 6 miles southeast of Crandon in Spink County. At least one farm house was destroyed and swept away. Three people were killed on one farm.

July 18, 1986: In the afternoon, an F2 tornado that touched down in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis became one of the most observed and photographed tornadoes ever. The detailed coverage included video from a Minnesota DOT traffic camera and a remarkable aerial video taken from a helicopter by a television camera crew. The tornado began in Brooklyn Park and moved slowly northeast, causing light to moderate damage. It then turned east and slowed as it crossed the Mississippi River. Also on this day, an F2 tornado touched down two miles southeast of Bryant, in Hamlin County. This tornado traveled near Dolph Creek and moved east along the creek to the Lake Norden area. The tornado damaged many trees and destroyed a barn. A second F2 tornado touched down three miles west of Toronto and moved southeast. The tornado destroyed a barn, silo, and six other buildings and caused extensive damage to farm equipment on a farm one mile south and a half mile west Astoria.

July 18, 2008: Severe thunderstorms developed across parts of central and north-central South Dakota bringing large hail up to the size of golf balls and damaging winds to near 80 mph. Some tree, vehicle, and building damage occurred with some of the storms. Eighty mph winds or higher brought down many branches along with some trees in Fort Pierre. Power was cut off for parts of Fort Pierre when branches fell on power lines. Several truck trailers and feed silos were tipped onto their sides by the high winds. Also, some buildings were damaged. A loaded train was pushed down the tracks almost a quarter of a mile by the strong winds. Seventy mph winds or greater brought down many tree branches along with some trees in Pierre. There were power outages in Pierre along with some buildings receiving damage. Damaging thunderstorm winds also downed six power poles between Sully Buttes and Onida knocking power out to over 800 homes in and around Onida.

64: The great fire of Rome breaks out and destroys much of the city on this day. Despite the well-known stories, there is no evidence that the Roman emperor, Nero, either started the fire or played the fiddle while it burned. The fire began in the slums of a district south of the legendary Palatine Hill. The area's homes burned very quickly, and the fire spread north, fueled by high winds. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the History Channel.

1889 - A cloudburst in West Virginia along the small creeks in Wirt County, Jackson County and Wood County claimed twenty lives. Rockport, WV, reported nineteen inches of rain in two hours and ten minutes that Thursday evening. Tygart Creek rose 22 feet in one hour, and villages were swept away on Tygart, Slate, Tucker, and Sandy Creeks. (The Weather Channel)

1942 - A record deluge occurred at Smethport in northern Pennsylvania, with 30.7 inches in just six hours. The downpours and resultant flooding in Pennsylvania were devastating. (David Ludlum)

1986 - One of the most photo-genic tornadoes touched down in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis, MN, during the late afternoon. The very slow moving tornado actually appeared live on the evening news by way of an aerial video taken by the KARE-TV helicopter crew. The tornado, unlike most, was quite the prima donna, staying visible to tens of thousands of persons for thirty minutes. It was moderate in intensity, with winds of 113-157 mph, and caused 650 thousand dollars damage. (Storm Data)

1988 - Sweltering heat continued in California, with record highs of 111 degrees at Redding and 112 degrees at Sacramento. Death Valley, CA, hit 127 degrees. Late afternoon and evening thunderstorms in the Central Plains Region produced baseball size hail at Kimball, NE, wind gusts to 79 mph at Colby, KS, and six inches of rain near Lexington, NE. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1996: A massive rainstorm in north central and northeast Illinois led to widespread flooding. Aurora reported 16.94 inches of rain, establishing a state record for the most rain in a single day. Other heavy totals included 13.60 inches at Joliet, 9.24 inches in Wheaton, 8.09 inches in DeKalb, and 7.82 inches at Elgin. This event is often called "the second most damaging weather disaster in Illinois History."

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A HEART THAT DOES KIND THINGS

It was the final set in a tennis match. One of the players had demonstrated his strength and skill as his opponent struggled to stay competitive. Suddenly the player who had been doing so well began to hit the ball out of the lines, into the net and even missed the ball. It seemed as though he lost his focus.

His father approached him during a break and asked, "Keller, what's going on? You were doing so good. Now, you may lose the match and not go to the state finals. What's going on?" he demanded.

"It's O.K., Dad. Leave me alone. I know I can win. I've been missing the balls on purpose. I don't want him to feel bad about losing. I want to encourage him."

Keller did go on to win. But in the process, he not only thought of "doing a kind thing" but showed what kindness "looked like" to someone who was struggling to defeat him and win the match.

Life gives us many opportunities to "do kindness." In fact, God "makes doing kind things available" to us each day. For example, we can open a door for a senior citizen; or be gracious and express our gratitude to a cashier during the rush hour at a grocery store; give a smile to someone who looks like they need encouragement; give a compliment to one who is guiding us when we place an order on the phone; or take care to explain something that is unfamiliar to us.

"Doing kindness" is one of the most important things we Christians can do. It represents what God's grace is all about. If an opportunity to "do kindness" appears, seize it!

Prayer: Help us to be alert, Lord, for opportunities to show Your grace through acts of kindness and love. Help us to show a strong contrast when compared to "the wicked" so people turn to you. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: – In return for my friendship they accuse me, but I am a man of prayer. Psalm 109:4

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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
No Date Set: 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)
No Date Set: 6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm
09/11/2022 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10 a.m.
09/02-04: 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
No Date Set: 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

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News from the Associated Press

Extreme heat warning goes into effect in UK

By DANICA KIRKA and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's first-ever extreme heat warning is in effect for large parts of England as hot, dry weather that has scorched mainland Europe for the past week moves north, disrupting travel, health care and schools.

The "red" alert will last throughout Monday and Tuesday when temperatures may reach 40 C (104 F) for the first time, posing a risk of serious illness and even death among healthy people, according to the U.K. Met Office, the country's weather service. The highest temperature ever recorded in Britain is 38.7 C (101.7 F), a record set in 2019.

While Monday is likely to bring record highs to southeastern England, temperatures are expected to rise further as the warm air moves north on Tuesday, Met Office CEO Penelope Endersby said. The extreme heat warning stretches from London in the south to Manchester and Leeds in the north.

"So it's tomorrow that we're really seeing the higher chance of 40 degrees and temperatures above that," Endersby told the BBC. "Forty-one isn't off the cards. We've even got some 43s in the model, but we're hoping it won't be as high as that."

Hot weather has gripped southern Europe since last week, triggering wildfires in Spain, Portugal and France. Almost 600 heat-related deaths have been reported in Spain and Portugal, where temperatures reached 47 C (117 F) last week.

Climate experts warn that global warming has increased the frequency of extreme weather events, with studies showing that the likelihood of temperatures in the U.K. reaching 40C is now 10 times higher than in the pre-industrial era. Drought and heat waves tied to climate change have also made wildfires harder to fight.

Officials in southern France's Gironde region announced plans to evacuate an additional 3,500 people from towns threatened by the raging flames. More than 1,500 firefighters and water-bombing planes are trying to douse the flames in the region's tinder-dry pine forests.

In Britain, train operators are asking customers not to travel unless absolutely necessary because the heat is likely to warp rails and disrupt power supplies, leading to severe delays. Some medical appointments have been canceled to relieve strain on the health service. While some schools have closed, others are setting up wading pools and water sprays to help children cool off.

Britain is unaccustomed to the temperatures forecast this week, and few homes, schools or small businesses have air conditioning. Across the U.K., average July temperatures range from a daily high of 21 C (70 F) to a low of 12 C (53 F).

Nightfall will bring little relief from the heat, with the Met Office forecasting temperatures of 29 C (84 F) at midnight in London.

Monday night will be "very oppressive" and it will be difficult to sleep, Chief Meteorologist Paul Davies said.

"Tomorrow is the day where we are really concerned about a good chance now of hitting 40 or 41C, and with that all the health conditions that come with those higher temperatures," he said.

Damning report, new footage show chaos of Uvalde response

By JAKE BLEIBERG and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas (AP) — A damning report and hours of body camera footage further laid bare the chaotic response to a mass shooting at a Uvalde elementary school, where hundreds of law enforcement officers massed but then waited to confront the gunman even after a child trapped with the shooter called 911.

The findings of an investigative committee released Sunday were the first to criticize both state and federal law enforcement, and not just local authorities in the South Texas city for the bewildering inaction by heavily armed officers as a gunman fired inside two adjoining fourth-grade classrooms at Robb

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Elementary School, killing 19 students and two teachers.

Footage from city police officers' body cameras made public hours later only further emphasized the failures — and fueled the anger and frustration of relatives of the victims.

"It's disgusting. Disgusting," said Michael Brown, whose 9-year-old son was in the school's cafeteria on the day of the shooting and survived. "They're cowards."

Nearly 400 law enforcement officials rushed to the school, but "egregiously poor decision making" resulted in more than an hour of chaos before the gunman was finally confronted and killed, according to the report written by an investigative committee from the Texas House of Representatives.

Together, the report and more than three hours of newly released body camera footage from the May 24 tragedy amounted to the fullest account to date of one of the worst school shootings in U.S. history.

"At Robb Elementary, law enforcement responders failed to adhere to their active shooter training, and they failed to prioritize saving innocent lives over their own safety," the report said.

The gunman fired approximately 142 rounds inside the building — and it is "almost certain" that at least 100 shots came before any officer entered, according to the report, which laid out numerous failures. Among them:

- No one assumed command despite scores of officers being on the scene.
- The commander of a Border Patrol tactical team waited for a bulletproof shield and working master key for a door to the classrooms that may have not even been needed, before entering.
- A Uvalde Police Department officer said he heard about 911 calls that had come from inside the rooms, and that his understanding was the officers on one side of the building knew there were victims trapped inside. Still, no one tried to breach the classroom.

The committee didn't "receive medical evidence" to show that police storming the classrooms sooner would have saved lives, but it concluded that "it is plausible that some victims could have survived if they had not had to wait 73 additional minutes for rescue."

The findings had at least one immediate effect: Lt. Mariano Pargas, a Uvalde Police Department officer who was the city's acting police chief during the massacre, was placed on administrative leave.

Uvalde Mayor Don McLaughlin said an investigation would be launched to determine whether Pargas should have taken command of the scene. He also disclosed for the first time that some officers had left the force since the shooting but did not provide an exact number, saying it was as many as three.

Hours after the report was released, Uvalde officials separately made public for the first time hours of body camera footage from the city's police officers who responded to the attack. It included video of several officers reacting to word from a dispatcher, roughly 30 minutes after the shooting began, that a child in the room had called 911.

"The room is full of victims. Child 911 call," an officer said.

Other body camera video from Uvalde Staff Sgt. Eduardo Canales, the head of the city's SWAT team, showed the officer approaching the classrooms when gunfire rang out at 11:37 a.m.

A minute later, Canales said: "Dude, we've got to get in there. We've got to get in there, he just keeps shooting. We've got to get in there." Another officer could be heard saying "DPS is sending their people."

It was 72 minutes later, at 12:50 p.m., when officers finally breached the classrooms and kill the shooter. Calls for police accountability have grown in Uvalde since the shooting.

"It's a joke. They're a joke. They've got no business wearing a badge. None of them do," Vincent Salazar, grandfather of 11-year-old Layla Salazar, who was among those killed, said Sunday.

Anger flashed in Uvalde even over how the report was rolled out: Tina Quintanilla-Taylor, whose daughter survived the shooting, shouted at the three-member Texas House committee as they left a news conference after the findings were released.

Committee members had invited families of the victims to discuss the report privately, but Quintanilla-Taylor said the committee should have taken questions from the community, not just the media.

"I'm pissed. They need to come back and give us their undivided attention," she said later. "These leaders are not leaders," she said.

According to the report, 376 law enforcement officers massed at the school. The overwhelming majority

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of those who responded were federal and state law enforcement. That included nearly 150 U.S. Border Patrol agents and 91 state police officials.

"Other than the attacker, the Committee did not find any 'villains' in the course of its investigation," the report said. "There is no one to whom we can attribute malice or ill motives. Instead, we found systemic failures and egregiously poor decision making."

The report noted that many of the hundreds of law enforcement responders who rushed to the school were better trained and equipped than the school district police — which the head of the Texas Department of Public Safety, the state police force, previously faulted for not going into the room sooner.

Investigators said it was not their job to determine whether officers should be held accountable, saying that decisions rested with each law enforcement agency. Prior to Sunday, only one of the hundreds of officers on the scene — Pete Arredondo, the Uvalde school district police chief — was known to have been on leave.

"Everyone who came on the scene talked about this being chaotic," said Texas state Rep. Dustin Burrows, a Republican who led the investigation.

Officials with the Texas Department of Public Safety and U.S. Border Patrol did not immediately return requests for comment Sunday.

The report followed weeks of closed-door interviews with more than 40 people, including witnesses and law enforcement who were on the scene of the shooting.

No single officer has received as much scrutiny since the shooting as Arredondo, who also resigned from his newly appointed seat on the City Council after the shooting. Arredondo told the committee he treated the shooter as a "barricaded subject," according to the report, and defended never treating the scene as an active-shooter situation because he did not have visual contact with the gunman.

Arredondo also tried to find a key for the classrooms, but no one ever checked to see if the doors were locked, according to the report.

The report criticized as "lackadaisical" the approach of the hundreds of officers who surrounded the school and said that they should have recognized that Arredondo remaining in the school without reliable communication was "inconsistent" with him being the scene commander. The report concluded that some officers waited because they relied on bad information while others "had enough information to know better."

The report was the result of one of several investigations into the shooting, including one led by the Justice Department.

Brown, the father of the 9-year-old who was in the cafeteria the day of the shooting, came to the committee's news conference Sunday carrying signs saying, "We Want Accountability" and "Prosecute Pete Arredondo."

Brown said he has not yet read the report but already knew enough to say that police "have blood on their hands."

The AP Interview: GM's Barra stands by ambitious EV pledge

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The economy is a bit wobbly, but General Motors CEO Mary Barra isn't backing off of an audacious prediction: By the middle of this decade, her company will sell more electric vehicles in the U.S. than Tesla, the global sales leader.

To fulfill that pledge in as little as 2 1/2 years, she faces some long odds against immense economic forces that are working against auto sales. Inflation has spiked, interest rates are rising, material costs have soared and a global shortage of computer chips is still braking assembly lines at GM and other companies.

But in an interview with The Associated Press, Barra said she's confident GM can unseat Tesla with higher-priced specialty vehicles, and it will beat Elon Musk to high-range EVs at prices that people can afford.

Last year GM sold just 25,000 electric vehicles in the U.S., less than one-tenth of the estimated 352,000 sold by Tesla. Although EV sales are rising dramatically, they're still only about 5% of the U.S. new vehicle market, with many Americans still reluctant to change.

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"To really get to 30, 40, 50% EVs being sold, you have to appeal to people that are in that \$30,000 to \$35,000 price range," Barra said.

Already the company has pledged to cut the starting price of the Chevrolet Bolt small SUV to around \$26,000 later this year. GM is planning to roll out a Chevy Equinox small SUV with 300 miles of range for around \$30,000 in fall 2023. And on Monday night in California, it will unveil a larger (and more expensive) Chevy Blazer SUV that goes on sale next summer.

They'll join a couple of gargantuan Hummer EVs, an upcoming electric Silverado pickup and a Cadillac luxury SUV in taking on Tesla. And Barra said there's more to come on the way to offering 30 battery-powered vehicles globally by 2025. "What we have coming, it's in the heart of the market," she said, without giving details.

The mainstream vehicle is something Tesla has yet to master. The Model 3 sedan, its lowest-priced vehicle, starts at close to \$60,000.

Barra is hoping to keep prices relatively low, banking on chemistry breakthroughs to cut battery costs, offsetting huge price increases for Lithium and other key elements that make batteries work.

Part of the strategy is convincing buyers that an electric vehicle can meet all their transportation needs. Many EV owners, she said, also have a gas-powered auto for longer trips.

That's why the company announced a partnership to place 2,000 charging stations at up to 500 Pilot Travel centers, spaced 50 miles apart along interstate travel corridors. "If the only vehicle you own is going to be an EV, you have to feel confident of charging," Barra said.

GM has a goal of making only electric passenger vehicles by 2035.

The switch to EVs would be monumental on its own for GM, a company that has made a living largely on the internal combustion engine for more than 113 years.

But Barra also has to manage the finances, keeping the profits flowing from gasoline vehicles to pay for battery development — even though GM currently can't run its factories flat-out due to the chip shortage. And at some point, money from gas vehicles will decline, so the EVs have to be profitable almost from the start.

Also, auto prices have risen to an average of around \$45,000, boosting carmakers' bottom lines but pushing new vehicles out of reach of the middle class. Economists are predicting the Federal Reserve could add up to a full point to interest rates, raising the cost of auto loans. And there's talk about the U.S. heading back into recession.

"It's pretty volatile right now," Barra conceded. "We're looking at many different scenarios as any prudent business leader would to make sure we're ready for whatever, however the situation evolves."

She said she expects parts and chip shortages will last into next year, with coronavirus outbreaks continuing to crimp the flow.

To deal with the semiconductor shortage, GM is throwing out its old model of letting parts supply companies acquire the chips with GM knowing little about them. Instead, by 2025, it will move toward three families of chips that Barra said the company will buy and control itself. They will be able to do multiple tasks, eliminating the need for dozens of chips in every vehicle.

That standardization will give GM the scale to buy in bulk and make sure supplies don't get interrupted in the future, Barra said: "We're also working with a select group of strategic companies to source these for the volumes. We'll have much better control and a stable supply."

Barra said new car prices are skewed right now because automakers are allocating scarce chips to higher-margin vehicles, and prices should come down as more chips become available.

Still, she knows affordability will be a problem. With that in mind, she said GM offers the Chevrolet Trail Blazer starting at just below \$20,000. The company also is linking used vehicle buyers to dealer inventories nationwide. And GM's Cruise autonomous vehicle unit is starting a driverless ride-hailing service in San Francisco that will spread to more cities, offering another affordable transportation mode, she said.

GM exited Europe in 2017 by selling its Opel brand after years of losses, but Barra said plans are being formed to re-enter the huge market with electric vehicles. "All I can tell you is I think it's a huge growth

opportunity for the company, and we're excited to be back," Barra said.

She has no plans to change GM's joint venture in China with state-owned automaker SAIC, even though Beijing has stopped requiring that foreign automakers enter such partnerships with Chinese companies. But Barra said there may be a chance for GM to bring in iconic and luxury vehicles.

GM's transition to EVs comes amid growing calls for corporations to take stands on political and social issues such as race relations and abortion. Yet opportunities for missteps are many as companies like GM walk a fine line of doing so without alienating sectors of a customer base that spans the political spectrum.

Most electric vehicles, for instance, are sold on the coasts, where people tend to have more liberal views. But most of GM's income comes from pickup and SUV sales in the country's more conservative midsection.

Regarding abortion, Barra said she didn't want to speak broadly about the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe vs. Wade, but she noted that GM does pay for employees to travel to get medical services.

"We're going to continue with that practice, really not a lot of change in what we're doing from what we've done in the past, other than we will make sure we comply with all state laws," she said.

In 2020, after George Floyd was killed by a Minneapolis police officer, Barra issued a strong public statement and committed to several changes at the company, including creating an internal inclusion board and evaluating employees on inclusionary action.

Throughout her career, Barra, who was GM's product planning chief before becoming CEO in January 2014, has had to make difficult decisions. To manage the complexities of her job, she'll need to draw on that experience.

"I'm an engineer, so I'm a problem solver," she said.

Prosecutor: US judge reneged on promise in Polanski sex case

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A Los Angeles judge privately told lawyers he would renege on a promise and imprison Roman Polanski for having sex with a teenage girl in 1977, a former prosecutor testified, setting the stage for the renowned director to flee the U.S. as a fugitive.

A previously sealed transcript obtained by The Associated Press late Sunday of testimony by retired Deputy District Attorney Roger Gunson supports Polanski's claim that he fled on the eve of sentencing in 1978 because he didn't think he was getting a fair deal.

Gunson said during closed-door testimony in 2010 that the judge broke a promise to let Polanski go free after state prison officials had determined he shouldn't serve hard time.

"The judge had promised him on two occasions ... something that he reneged on," Gunson said. "So it wasn't surprising to me that, when he was told he was going to be sent off to state prison ... that he could not or would not trust the judge."

Defense lawyer Harland Braun said Friday — in expectation of the transcript's release — that the development would renew his effort to have Polanski sentenced in absentia, which would end his status as a fugitive from justice.

Braun has unsuccessfully tried that before with prosecutors asserting and judges agreeing that Polanski needs to show up in Los Angeles Superior Court to resolve the matter.

Release of the transcript, which was ordered by a California appeals court Wednesday after Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón dropped longstanding objections his predecessors made to its release, may support Polanski's claims that he was going to be railroaded by a corrupt judge.

The legal saga has played on both sides of the Atlantic as a recurring scene over four decades of a life marred by tragedy and also triumph.

As a child, Polanski escaped the Krakow Ghetto during the Holocaust. His wife, Sharon Tate, was among the seven people murdered in 1969 by followers of Charles Manson.

Polanski, 88, who was nominated for Oscars for 1974's "Chinatown" and 1979's "Tess," won the best director statuette for "The Pianist" in 2003. But he wasn't able to accept it because he faces arrest in the U.S.

France, Switzerland and Poland rejected bids to extradite him back to the United States and he continues

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to be feted in Europe, winning praise and working with major actors. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, however, expelled him from its membership in 2018 after the "MeToo" movement spurred a reckoning about sexual misconduct.

Polanski's 13-year-old victim testified before a grand jury that during a photo shoot at Jack Nicholson's house in March 1977 when the actor wasn't home, Polanski gave her champagne and part of a sedative, then forced her to have sex. The girl said she didn't fight him because she was afraid of him but her mother later called police.

When the girl refused to testify in court, Polanski pleaded guilty to unlawful sex with a minor in exchange for prosecutors dropping drug, rape and sodomy charges.

Polanski has argued that there was judicial misconduct in his case. In 2010, a Los Angeles court took sealed testimony from Gunson about his recollections of promises made to the director by the judge in 1977.

Polanski's lawyers, who were in the room during Gunson's testimony but couldn't use it in court, have long sought to unseal that transcript to help their case.

Judge Laurence Rittenband, now deceased, had been swayed by publicity in the case and changed his mind several times about the punishment Polanski should face, Braun said.

After a report by probation officials that Polanski should serve no time behind bars, Rittenband sent the director to state prison for a 90-day diagnostic evaluation to help determine what punishment he should face.

The judge said that as long as Polanski received a favorable report from the prison, he would serve no additional time, Gunson said.

After six weeks of evaluation in prison, Polanski was released with a recommendation he only serve probation, Braun said.

But Rittenband thought the probation and prison reports were superficial and a "whitewash," said Gunson, who agreed they downplayed or misstated Polanski's crimes.

The judge privately told Gunson and Polanski's lawyer that he had to be tougher because of criticism in the news media.

He said he would send Polanski to prison for a longer term but would then get him released within 120 days, which was possible under sentencing rules at the time.

"Roman says, 'How can I trust the judge that's lied twice?' So he takes off to Europe," Braun said.

Gunson acknowledged during his testimony that the judge had discretion to sentence Polanski up to 50 years because there had been no agreed-upon sentence. But Gunson objected to the "sham" proceedings the judge was orchestrating and felt he had broken promises to Polanski.

The victim, Samantha Geimer, has long advocated that the case be dismissed or that Polanski be sentenced in absentia. She went so far as to travel from her home in Hawaii to Los Angeles five years ago to urge a judge to end "a 40-year sentence which has been imposed on the victim of a crime as well as the perpetrator."

"I implore you to consider taking action to finally bring this matter to a close as an act of mercy to myself and my family," Geimer said.

The Associated Press does not typically name victims of sex abuse, but Geimer went public years ago and wrote a memoir titled "The Girl: A Life in the Shadow of Roman Polanski." The cover features a photo shot by Polanski.

Polanski agreed to pay Geimer over \$600,000 to settle a lawsuit in 1993.

Geimer, who has pressed for investigation of judicial misconduct, asked that the transcript be unsealed and in a letter last month and urged the DA's office to take a fresh look at the case.

Prosecutors have consistently objected to releasing the material but relented earlier this week to honor Geimer's wishes and be transparent with the public.

"This case has been described by the courts as 'one of the longest-running sagas in California criminal justice history,'" Gascón said in a statement. "For years, this office has fought the release of information that the victim and public have a right to know."

However, the DA did not indicate that Polanski would be able to avoid a court appearance. The press

release said Polanski remains a fugitive and should surrender to the court for sentencing.

Trial expected to begin for ex-Trump adviser Steve Bannon

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Jury selection is scheduled to begin Monday in the trial of Steve Bannon, a one-time adviser to former President Donald Trump who faces criminal contempt of Congress charges after refusing for months to cooperate with the House committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection.

Bannon is charged in Washington's federal court with defying a subpoena from the Jan. 6 committee that sought his records and testimony. He was indicted in November on two counts of criminal contempt of Congress, one month after the Justice Department received a congressional referral. Each count carries a minimum of 30 days of jail and as long as a year behind bars.

The trial follows a flurry of activity in the case since July 9. Over a week ago, the former White House strategist notified the committee that he is now willing to testify. His lawyer, Robert Costello, said the change was because Trump has waived his executive privilege claim from preventing the testimony.

Bannon, 68, had been one of the most prominent of the Trump-allied holdouts in refusing to testify before the committee. He has argued that his testimony is protected by Trump's claim of executive privilege.

Trump has repeatedly asserted executive privilege — even as a former president — to try to block witness testimony and the release of White House documents. The Supreme Court in January ruled against Trump's efforts to stop the National Archives from cooperating with the committee after a lower court judge noted, in part, "Presidents are not kings."

The committee has also noted that Trump fired Bannon from the White House in 2017 and Bannon was thus a private citizen when he was consulting with the then-president in the run-up to the riot.

U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols declined motions to delay the trial in separate hearings last week, including Thursday when Bannon's lawyers raised concerns about a CNN report that has since aired about their client and what they said were prejudicial comments made during a hearing last week held by the House committee investigating the riot.

"I am cognizant of current concerns about publicity and bias and whether we can seat a jury that is going to be appropriate and fair, but as I said before, I believe the appropriate course is to go through the voir dire process," Nichols said Thursday, referring to the questioning of individual jurors before they are selected. The judge said he intended to get a jury that "is going to be appropriate, fair and unbiased."

While the judge allowed the trial to move forward, Nichols left open the possibility that the letters about Trump waiving his privilege and Bannon's offer to cooperate with the committee could be referenced at trial, saying the information was "at least potentially relevant" to Bannon's defense.

Roscoe Howard Jr., the former U.S. attorney in Washington, D.C., said the best case for Bannon is if the information on his cooperation offer gets to the jury. Even if it does, claiming that executive privilege stopped him from cooperating earlier will be a hard argument to make because Bannon refused to answer the subpoena, Howard said.

"You have to show up to invoke the privilege claim. You can't phone it in," he said.

France, Spain fight spreading wildfires as Europe swelters

By ROBERT EDME and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

LA TESTE-DE-BUCH, France (AP) — France scrambled more water-bombing planes and hundreds more firefighters to combat spreading wildfires that were being fed Monday by hot swirling winds from a searing heat wave broiling much of Europe. In Spain, two people have been killed in blazes there.

With winds changing direction, authorities in southwestern France announced plans to evacuate more towns and move out 3,500 people at risk of finding themselves in the path of the raging flames.

Three additional water-dropping planes were joining six others already making repeated runs over the flames and dense clouds of smoke, the Interior Ministry said Sunday night.

It said more than 200 reinforcements were also being added to the 1,500-strong force of firefighters

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battling night and day to contain the blazes through the Gironde region's tinder-dry pine forests that are also sending burning embers into the air, further spreading the flames.

Spain reported a second fatality in two days as it battled wildfires. The body of a 69-year-old sheep farmer was found Monday in the same hilly area where a 62-year-old firefighter died a day earlier when he was trapped by flames in the northwestern Zamora province. More than 30 forest fires around Spain have forced the evacuation of thousands of people and blackened 220 square kilometers (85 square miles) of forest and scrub.

In both France and Spain, fierce heat is fueling blazes. Forecasters warned of temperatures above 40 C (104 F) for Monday. Climate change is making such life-threatening extremes less of a rarity.

"I left my country under fire, literally under fire," Teresa Ribera, Spain's minister for ecological transition, said as she attended talks on climate change in Berlin on Monday.

She warned of "terrifying prospects still for the days to come" — after more than 10 days of temperatures over 40 C (104 F), cooling only moderately at night.

Heat waves and drought tied to climate change have made wildfires harder to fight. Scientists say climate change will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

According to Spain's Carlos III Institute, which records daily temperature-related fatalities, 237 deaths were attributed to high temperatures from July 10-14. That was compared to 25 temperature-related deaths the previous week.

The heat wave in Spain is forecast to ease on Tuesday, but the respite will be brief as temperatures rise again on Wednesday, especially in the tinder-dry western Extremadura region.

In Portugal, much cooler weather Monday helped fire crews make progress against blazes. More than 600 firefighters were attending four major fires in northern Portugal.

Sri Lanka acting president declares emergency amid protests

By BHARATHA MALLAWARACHI Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lanka's acting president on Monday declared a state of emergency giving him broad authority amid growing protests demanding his resignation two days before the country's lawmakers are set to elect a new president.

Ranil Wickremesinghe became acting president on Friday after his predecessor, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, fled abroad on Wednesday and resigned after months-long mass protests over the country's economic collapse.

Wickremesinghe's move to impose a state of emergency comes as protests demanding his resignation too have continued in most parts of the country, with some protesters burning his effigy.

Lawmakers who met on Saturday began the process of electing a new leader to serve the rest of the term abandoned by Rajapaksa. Nominations for the election of the new president will be heard on Tuesday, and if there is more than one candidate the lawmakers will vote on Wednesday.

The emergency decree issued by Wickremesinghe invokes sections of the Public Security Ordinance that allow him to make regulations in the interests of public security, the preservation of public order, the suppression of mutiny, riot or civil commotion, or for the maintenance of essential supplies.

Under the emergency regulations, Wickremesinghe can authorize detentions, take possession of any property and search any premises. He can also change or suspend any law.

The Indian Ocean island nation is engulfed in an unprecedented economic crisis that has triggered political uncertainty.

Sri Lanka has run short of money to pay for imports of basic necessities such as food, fertilizer, medicine and fuel for its 22 million people. Its rapid economic decline has been all the more shocking because before the crisis the economy had been expanding, with a growing, comfortable middle class.

Sri Lanka is seeking help from the International Monetary Fund and other creditors, but top officials say its finances are so poor that even obtaining a bailout has proven difficult.

The economic hardships led to political upheaval and widespread protests demanding the government led by Rajapaksa step down. Although many ministers resigned in April, Rajapaksa had remained in power

until last week.

The main protests have occurred in the capital, Colombo, where protesters occupied the front of the president's office for more than 100 days.

The protesters accuse Rajapaksa and his powerful political family of siphoning money from government coffers and of hastening the country's collapse by mismanaging the economy. The family has denied the corruption allegations, but Rajapaksa acknowledged that some of his policies contributed to Sri Lanka's meltdown.

Rajapaksa flew first to the Maldives on Wednesday and then to Singapore.

Berlin hosts envoys for heart-to-heart talks on climate

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — With the world reeling from the economic fallout of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, senior officials from 40 countries met Monday in Berlin for heart-to-heart talks on how to stay focused on fighting climate change and addressing its impact.

Organizers have billed the two-day gathering as an opportunity to rebuild trust between rich and poor nations ahead of this year's U.N. climate summit in Egypt, after technical talks last month achieved little progress on key issues such as climate aid for developing countries.

"Many of the poorest and most vulnerable countries in the world are experiencing severe climate impacts now," Germany climate envoy Jennifer Morgan told The Associated Press. "The question is how to support them in both adapting to those impacts and when they experience real losses and damages. We must also show more solidarity."

Developing countries are still waiting for rich nations to provide \$100 billion in climate aid each year, a target they were meant to reach by 2020.

Big polluters, however, have also long resisted the idea that they should pay for the destruction their greenhouse gas emissions are causing around the world.

The closed-doors talks in Berlin kicks off with experts delivering a presentation on the issue of "loss and damage" to ministers, who will then break into small groups to discuss and listen to each other in the hope of building trust ahead of November's U.N. summit in Sharm el-Sheikh.

The meeting in Berlin comes as scientists say the extreme heat slamming large parts of the northern hemisphere in the past few weeks could become the new normal in summer if global warming continues.

"As this meeting is taking place, parts of Europe are baking, indeed they're burning; and sadly, it's an experience that is all too familiar to many millions across the globe already," said Alok Sharma, the British official who led last year's climate talks in Glasgow. He told delegates as the meeting opened: "My plea to you all is, please, let's speed up our work."

"It is incumbent upon us in these uncertain times to act swiftly to ensure that climate action remains at the top of the international agenda, and that the current state of affairs is not taken as a pretext to back-track or renege on previous commitments — especially those related to supporting developing countries," said Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, who will chair the Sharm el-Sheikh summit.

China was taking part in the Berlin meeting. Russia was not invited.

The question of energy sources endangered by Russia's war in Ukraine looms over the talks.

Environmental activists warn that recent efforts by countries such as Germany to tap new sources of fossil fuels could undermine countries' already fragile climate actions. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is expected to discuss buying liquefied natural gas from Egypt with the country's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Berlin on Monday, just a few miles from where the climate talks are being held.

"The Russian war of aggression is forcing us to take short-term decisions we don't like, including the increased use of coal for a very limited period of time," said Morgan, who was previously the head of Greenpeace International.

"But we are not only sticking rock-solidly to our climate goals — we are accelerating the energy transi-

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tion and will phase-out the use of fossil energy even faster," she added, citing a newly approved plan to ramp up solar and wind power generation in Germany.

U.S. climate envoy John Kerry, likewise, comes to the talks following setbacks suffered in the U.S. by President Joe Biden in his efforts to regulate pollution and boost renewable energy such as wind and solar power.

Economics of war: Pain for Europe now, later for Russia

By The Associated Press undefined

Across Europe, signs of distress are multiplying as Russia's war in Ukraine drags on. Food banks in Italy are feeding more people. German officials are turning down the air conditioning as they prepare plans to ration natural gas and restart coal plants.

A giant utility is asking for a taxpayer bailout, and more may be coming. Dairies wonder how they will pasteurize milk. The euro has sagged to a 20-year low against the dollar, and recession predictions are on the rise.

Those pressure points are signs of how the conflict — and the Kremlin gradually choking off natural gas that keeps industry humming — provoked an energy crisis in Europe and raised the likelihood of a plunge back into recession just as the economy was rebounding from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, high energy costs fueled by the war are benefiting Russia, a major oil and natural gas exporter whose agile central bank and years of experience living with sanctions have stabilized the ruble and inflation despite economic isolation.

In the long run, however, economists say Russia, while avoiding complete collapse, will pay a heavy price for the war: deepening economic stagnation through lost investment and lower incomes for its people.

Europe's most pressing challenge is shorter term: battle record inflation of 8.6% and get through the winter without crippling energy shortages. The continent relies on Russian natural gas, and higher energy prices are flowing through to factories, food costs and fuel tanks.

Uncertainty weighs on energy-intensive industries like steel and agriculture, which could face natural gas rationing to protect homes if the crisis worsens.

Molkerei Berchtesgadener Land, a large dairy cooperative in the German town of Piding outside Munich, has stockpiled 200,000 liters (44,000 gallons) of fuel oil so it can keep producing power and steam for pasteurizing milk and keeping it cold if electricity or natural gas to its turbine generator is cut off.

It's a critical safeguard for 1,800 member farmers whose 50,000 cows produce a million liters of milk a day. Dairy cows have to be milked daily, and a shutdown would leave that ocean of milk with nowhere to go.

"If the dairy doesn't function, then the farmers can't either," managing director Bernhard Pointner said. "Then the farmers would have to discard their milk."

In one hour, the dairy uses the equivalent of a year's worth of electricity for a home to keep up to 20,000 pallets of milk cold.

The dairy also has stockpiled packaging and other supplies to guard against suppliers being hit by an energy shortage: "We have a lot stored ... but that will only last a few weeks."

The economic woes also appear at the dinner table. Consumer groups estimate a typical Italian family is spending 681 euros (dollars) more this year to feed themselves.

"We're really concerned about the situation and the continuous increase in the number of families we're supporting," said Dario Boggio Marzet, president of the Food Bank of Lombardy, which groups dozens of charities that run soup kitchens and provide staples to the needy. Their monthly costs are up 5,000 euros this year.

Jessica Lobli, a single mother of two from the Paris suburb of Gennevilliers, pays close attention to surging grocery prices. She's reduced her consumption of milk and yogurt and renounced Nutella or branded cookies.

"The situation will worsen, but we need to eat in order to survive," said Lobli, who earns between 1,300 and 2,000 euros per month working in a school kitchen.

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Her monthly food budget of 150 to 200 euros dropped to 100 euros in June. She said her family doesn't eat as much in summer, but she's concerned about September, when she will have to buy school supplies for her 15-year-old daughter and 8-year-old son, further whittling her budget.

French President Emmanuel Macron says the government aims to conserve energy by switching off public lights at night and taking other steps. Similarly, German officials are begging people and businesses to save energy and ordering lower heat and air-conditioning settings in public buildings.

It follows Russia cutting off or reducing natural gas to a dozen European countries. A major gas pipeline also shut down for scheduled maintenance last week, and there are fears that flows through Nord Stream 1 between Russia and Germany will not restart.

Germany's biggest importer of Russian gas, Uniper, has asked for government help after it was squeezed between skyrocketing gas prices and what it was allowed to charge customers.

Carsten Brzeski, chief eurozone economist at ING bank, foresees a recession at the end of the year as high prices sap purchasing power. Europe's longer-term economic growth will depend on whether governments tackle the massive investments needed for the transition to an economy based on renewable energy.

"Without investment, without structural change, the only thing left is to hope that everything will work as before — but it won't," Brzeski said.

While Europe is suffering, Russia has stabilized its ruble exchange rate, stock market and inflation through extensive government intervention. Russian oil is finding more buyers in Asia, albeit at discounted prices, as Western customers back off.

After being hit with sanctions over the 2014 seizure of Ukraine's Crimea region, the Kremlin built a fortress economy by keeping debt low and pushing companies to source parts and food within Russia.

Though foreign-owned businesses like IKEA have shuttered and Russia has defaulted on its foreign debt for the first time in over a century, there's no sense of imminent crisis in downtown Moscow. Well-heeled young people still go to restaurants, even if Uniqlo, Victoria's Secret and Zara stores are closed in the seven-story Evropeisky mall.

The successor to McDonald's, Vkusno-i Tochka, is serving more or less identical food, while the former Krispy Kreme in the mall has rebranded but sells basically the same offerings.

In less well-off provinces, Sofya Suvorova, who lives in Nizhny Novgorod, 440 kilometers (273 miles) from Moscow, has felt the squeeze on the family budget.

"We practically do not order takeaway food anymore," she said while shopping at a supermarket. "It used to be very convenient when you have small children. We go to cafes less often. We had to reduce some entertainment, like concerts and theaters; we try to keep this for children, but adults had to cut it."

Economists say the ruble's exchange rate — stronger against the dollar than before the war — and declining inflation present a misleading picture.

Rules preventing money from leaving the country and forcing exporters to exchange most of their foreign earnings from oil and gas into rubles have rigged the exchange rate.

And the inflation rate "has partially lost its meaning," Janis Kluge, an expert on the Russian economy at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, wrote in a recent analysis. That's because it does not account for disappearing Western goods, and lower inflation probably reflects sagging demand.

Some 2.8 million Russians were employed by foreign or mixed ownership firms in 2020, according to political scientist Ilya Matveev. If suppliers are taken into account, as many as 5 million jobs, or 12% of the workforce, depend on foreign investment.

Foreign companies may find Russian owners, and protectionism and a glut of government jobs will prevent mass unemployment.

But the economy will be far less productive, Kluge said, "leading to a significant decline in average real incomes."

Explosion of violence in South Sudan threatens peace pact

By DENG MACHOL Associated Press

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JUBA, South Sudan (AP) — An explosion of violence in South Sudan is raising fears that the country's fragile peace agreement will unravel before elections the international community hopes can be held next year.

The wave of near-daily killings across this East African country is often blamed on marauding militias whose attacks threaten the 2018 truce between President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar.

While the two leaders work in the same government in relative peace in the capital Juba, elsewhere South Sudan appears at war with itself: Hundreds of people have been killed since the start of the year in violence ranging from cattle raids to ethnically motivated revenge killings.

The violence appeared to worsen in June after Pope Francis canceled his visit this month, citing his knee problem. The pope's visit was meant to encourage faith in a country damaged by years of war, including a long conflict for independence from Sudan and then a civil war.

At least 209 people were killed and 33 others wounded across the country in June alone, according to a violence tracker by the Juba-based civic group known by its initials as CEPO.

Both Kiir and Machar are under pressure to release a timetable for presidential elections in 2023. While Kiir expresses hope that a vote can be held next year, Machar has said that elections are impossible amid such widespread insecurity.

In recent days the violence has been worst in the president's home state of Warrap, where victims include a military intelligence chief and a former government commissioner.

"We have lost many lives in communal violence," Kiir said in a speech in early July, noting the killings in Warrap's Tonj North county, where gunmen killed 30 soldiers on June 25.

The Tonj North clashes erupted after authorities there sent security forces to recover cattle stolen by raiders from another county. In other cases, deadly skirmishes have been triggered by efforts to disarm youths.

"I deeply regretted their death," Kiir said of the people killed in Warrap. "We cannot allow this senseless killing of both security personnel and civilians to continue."

Killings also have been reported in the Western Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria and Central Equatoria states, the president said, acknowledging that peace gains since 2018 have been eroded by what officials describe as inter-communal violence.

Following the killings in Warrap, Kiir's army chief, Gen. Santino Deng Wol, vowed to defeat ethnic militias in comments to state broadcaster SSBC. "We are responsible for the security of the country," he said. "We will not allow chaos to happen, and we would not allow anyone to disturb the security."

But some analysts say government troops and police — often outnumbered by civilian attackers in areas awash with small weapons — can't be relied on to protect civilians. They also charge that the attackers have powerful political backers in Juba.

"The armed youth in Tonj North are more powerful than our army and other security institutions," said Edmund Yakani, head of the CEPO group tracking violence. The violence is "undermining the genuine implementation" of the peace agreement, he said.

It also is hindering humanitarian efforts among communities in urgent need of food, medicine and other supplies.

"The scale of sub-national conflict — which now spreads from north to south, from east to west — is alarming," Nicholas Haysom, the U.N. representative to South Sudan, told the Security Council last month.

More than 80% of civilian casualties this year are "attributed to intercommunal violence and community-based militias," he said. "This violence divides communities and hampers reconciliation."

There were high hopes when oil-rich South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011 after a long conflict. But the country slid into civil war in December 2013 largely based on ethnic divisions when forces loyal to Kiir battled those supporting Machar. Tens of thousands of people were killed in the war, which ended with the 2018 peace agreement. But the terms of that accord have not been fully implemented, and persistent violence is weakening it even more.

A panel of U.N. experts in May said the 2018 agreement is faltering. The deal "is now hostage to the

political calculations of the country's military and security elites, who use a combination of violence, misappropriated public resources and patronage to pursue their own narrow interests," said the report.

Others in South Sudan express similar alarm.

"The country is breaking into pieces," said James Akot, a political science scholar in Juba. "The country is breaking into community defense forces that can actually overpower our army soon."

Researchers say Thai pro-democracy activists hit by spyware

By ELAINE KURTENBACH and ZEN SOO AP Business Writers

BANGKOK (AP) — Cybersecurity researchers reported details Monday of cases where Thai activists involved in the country's pro-democracy protests had their cell phones or other devices infected and attacked with government-sponsored spyware.

Investigators of the internet watchdog groups Citizen Lab, Thailand's Internet Law Reform Dialogue, or iLaw, and Digital Reach said at least 30 individuals — including activists, scholars and people working with civil society groups — were targeted by an unnamed government entity or entities for surveillance with Pegasus, a spyware produced by the Israeli-based cybersecurity company NSO Group.

The reports from the two groups named many of those targeted, confirming earlier reports of the surveillance, which John Scott-Railton of Citizen Lab said shows that governments are exploiting their ability to buy technologies designed to fight crime and terrorism to spy on critics and other private citizens.

"Citizen Lab believes there is a fundamental challenge for civil society," John Scott-Railton of Citizen Lab said in an online presentation at a briefing in Bangkok.

The attacks on the individuals' devices spanned from Oct. 2020 to Nov. 2021, a timing "highly relevant to specific Thai political events" since they took place over the period of time when pro-democracy protests erupted across the country.

But Scott-Railton said Citizen Lab, which exposes digital espionage campaigns and insecure software, believed there was still an active Pegasus operator in Thailand.

Those whose devices were attacked were either involved in the protests in 2020-2021, or were publicly critical of the Thai monarchy. Lawyers who defended the activists also were under such digital surveillance, the researchers said.

The Pegasus spyware is known for "zero-click exploits," which means it can be installed remotely onto a target's phone without the target having to click any links or download software.

The spyware can obtain any data on the devices, including contact lists and group chats, making it highly effective against political groups and movements, Scott-Railton said.

NSO Group's products, including the Pegasus software, are typically licensed only to government intelligence and law enforcement agencies to investigate terrorism and serious crime, according to the company's website. Citizen Lab and other cyber security researchers have tracked the spyware to 45 countries.

In a separate report Monday, the human rights group Amnesty International reiterated its call for a global moratorium on the sale of spyware.

"The unlawful targeted surveillance of human rights defenders and civil society is a tool of repression. It is time to clamp down on this industry that continues to operate in the shadows," Amnesty Tech's deputy director Danna Ingleton said in a statement.

The company has rejected accusations that its snooping software helped lead to the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, perhaps the highest-profile case so far. It maintains that its sales undergo a rigorous ethical vetting process and that Pegasus spyware is sold to governments only for security purposes.

In November, the U.S. government blacklisted NSO Group and Apple sued it and notified Pegasus victims. Facebook has sued NSO Group over the use of a somewhat similar exploit that allegedly intruded via its globally popular encrypted WhatsApp messaging app.

The reports by Citizen Lab and iLaw do not accuse any specific government actor but say the use of Pegasus indicates the presence of a government operator. When news that dissidents had been targeted first surfaced in November 2021, the government denied the allegations.

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Apple said it sought a permanent injunction to ban NSO Group from using any Apple software, services or devices to "to prevent further abuse and harm to its users."

Apple's notifications to customers of spyware infections are a crucial part of a defense strategy against such digital surveillance, Scott-Railton said.

"Apple did something remarkable by notifying the recipients of this suspected targeting. If you look at the infection online, it stopped after Apple's notification," he said. "It was a very consequential thing."

The cybersecurity experts said that turning off and restarting a device can break the spyware's digital connection. Security updates also have helped to close the loopholes such attackers exploit.

"Layering up defenses on devices is very important," Scott-Railton said. "Anything is better than nothing."

But the spyware is constantly being updated and it is designed to be difficult to spot, facilitating surveillance by governments that have found it a useful tool for suppressing dissent.

Thailand's student-led pro-democracy movement ramped up activities in 2020, largely in reaction to the continuing influence of the military in government and hyper-royalist sentiment.

The movement was able to attract crowds of as many as 20,000-30,000 people in Bangkok in 2020 and had followings in major cities and universities.

"There is longstanding evidence showing Pegasus presence in Thailand, indicating that the government would likely have had access to Pegasus during the period in question," researchers said in the report. The over 30 individuals targeted were also "of intense interest to the Thai government."

The army in 2014 overthrew an elected government, and Prayuth Chan-ocha, the coup leader, was named prime minister after a 2019 general election put in power a military-backed political party. Protesters have campaigned for Prayuth and his government to step down and demanded reforms to make the monarchy more accountable and to amend the constitution to make it more democratic.

Lebanon LGBTQ community suffers setback amid wider clampdown

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Nour never felt entirely safe as a queer person in Lebanon. But in the past few years, the 25-year-old pharmacist had begun letting his guard down, meeting with friends in LGBTQ-friendly spaces in Beirut and even performing in drag shows.

He now opts to stay at home, fearing for his safety more than ever after a wave of anti-LGBTQ hate speech that followed last month's decision by the Lebanese Interior Ministry to shut down any events aimed at promoting "sexual perversion."

The setback is part of a broader clampdown on marginalized groups and freedoms that activists say aims to distract the public from Lebanon's spiraling economic and financial crisis, which has pulled over three-quarters of the population into poverty.

Millions in the once middle-income country continue to struggle with soaring inflation, rampant power cuts, and medicine shortages, while tens of thousands have left the country in search of opportunities abroad.

"It really felt like they wanted to just distract the masses from everything going on and focus on this hot topic," Nour, who asked to use a pseudonym because he has not come out to family, told The Associated Press.

Security forces have since cracked down on several events catered to the LGBTQ community, forcing their organizers to eventually shut them down. They also visited the offices of Helem, the country's first registered LGBTQ advocacy group, asking for their registration papers and other documents.

The move followed loud complaints from religious officials who publicly described them as ungodly and said they were not in line with Lebanese customs.

In a statement on June 24, the Interior Ministry said that LGBTQ-friendly events "violate our society's customs and traditions, and contradict with the principles of the Abrahamic religions."

Helem's Executive Director Tarek Zeidan blasted the statement, saying it "pits Lebanese people against each other."

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"It was very clear that it was a deliberate decision to manufacture moral panic in order to divert attention from the general political and economic disaster that is Lebanon today," Zeidan said.

Lebanon since late 2019 has been reeling from a crippling economic crisis that the World Bank says is among the world's worst since the mid-1800s. The Lebanese pound has lost over 90% of its value against the dollar, while much of the population has struggled to cope with soaring diesel fuel, gasoline, medicine and food prices.

Citizens and experts blame decades of financial mismanagement and corruption at the hands of Lebanon's entrenched ruling elite for the crisis.

Human rights organizations say the recent setback for the LGBTQ community is part of a broader clamp-down on civil rights and freedoms, coupled with the economic crisis.

In May, religious clerics were up in arms after recently elected lawmakers and advocacy groups promoted civil marriage and state-mandated personal status laws independent from religious courts.

Last month, comedian and rights activist Shaden Fakih stood before the Military Court, accused of harming the reputation and insulting the country's Internal Security Forces in a prank call during the country's COVID-19 lockdown, in which she asked for permission to leave the house in order to buy sanitary pads.

And earlier this month, the Lebanese government announced that it has been in talks with Syria over a forced refugee returns plan for over a million Syrians in the country.

Some activists and human rights advocates say Lebanese authorities are trying to find scapegoats, as they stall probes linked to a host of financial crimes, the 2020 Beirut port explosion and soaring cases of domestic violence and sexual assault.

"The state seems either completely unwilling or unable to crack down on violations of grave rights like corruption, torture, hate speech, but on the flip side acts very quickly under pressure from religious and other powerful institutions in the country to crack down on the rights of marginalized groups," Aya Majzoub, a Lebanon researcher at Human Rights Watch, told the AP.

In some cases, residents have responded to religious leaders by taking matters into their own hands.

In the predominantly Christian Achrafieh district, partisans dubbed the Soldiers of God — a protest group that advocates for socially conservative values and laws — tore down a billboard promoting events for Pride month. Elsewhere, residents in the Sunni Tarik Jdideh neighborhood gathered to condemn the LGBTQ community's events and their supporters, calling them an "infiltration" into their community.

The Rev. Abdo Abou Kassm, director of the Catholic Center for Information, a media arm of the Maronite church, sympathized with the angry protesters, though he opposes any violence and bullying.

"You have your freedom at home, but you cannot promote this in the community as it is in fact against nature. The law says so and almost all Lebanese abide by this," Abou Kassm said, adding that the angry protests were a reaction. "Our society is not ready for this."

Despite a constant battle fighting discrimination and abuse, Lebanon's LGBTQ community is the most vibrant and open in the Arab world and has made significant gains in the past few years. Although homosexuality is still considered a crime, the country boasts at least half a dozen active LGBTQ advocacy groups, as well as bars and clubs that openly cater to the community.

Now, Nour and his friends avoid meeting in their usual spots, fearing raids and harassment.

"We do have a WhatsApp group so whenever someone is going out, we just notify the others and when we expect to be back home," he explained.

As Lebanon's dire economy continues to unravel, activists fear authorities will continue to target marginalized groups to distract from real issues.

"We are witnessing the beginnings of a full-blown attack, because this ruling regime is beginning to fear it's losing control," Zeidan said. "What we're saying loudly and clearly is that they're coming for all of us. First they came for the refugees, and no one cared. Then they came for the queers and no one gave a damn either."

Louisiana abortion ban case heard before judge

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Associated Press undefined

BATON ROUGE (AP) — With access to abortion flickering in Louisiana, the legal battle over the statewide ban continues with a court hearing scheduled to begin Monday morning.

State District Judge Donald Johnson issued a temporary order last week blocking enforcement pending the hearing in a lawsuit that claims the state law is unconstitutionally vague.

Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry's office will argue that the state ban is constitutional and should no longer be blocked. Attorneys for a north Louisiana abortion clinic and other supporters of legal abortion want Johnson to keep blocking enforcement as their lawsuit plays out.

"The courts are an extremely important avenue for this fight," Joanna Wright, an attorney for the north Louisiana clinic that is the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit, said last week. "I think that this is a national moment and a national dialogue and the courts are one way that we are having that dialogue."

Johnson's order last week freed Louisiana's three abortion clinics, in Shreveport, Baton Rouge and New Orleans, to resume operations. One, Hope Medical Group for Women clinic in Shreveport, said it would continue abortion procedures. A spokeswoman for the two others said the clinics are open but would not schedule new patients until after Monday's hearing.

The statewide abortion ban, which does not have exceptions for victims of rape and incest, has taken effect twice and been blocked twice since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned its historic Roe v. Wade ruling on June 24. Louisiana's law includes "trigger language" designed to make it effective when the Supreme Court reversed abortion rights.

In the suit, which originated in New Orleans, plaintiffs don't deny that the state can now ban abortion. But they contend that Louisiana now has multiple, conflicting trigger mechanisms in the law. They also argue that the state law is unclear on whether it bans an abortion prior to a fertilized egg implanting in the uterus.

And while the law provides an exception for "medically futile" pregnancies in cases of fetuses with fatal abnormalities, the plaintiffs note it gives no definition of the term and that state health officials haven't yet provided a list of conditions that would qualify.

Landry, in a filing last week, argued that the law "needs only to delineate what is illegal — not define what is legal."

"The rule of law must be followed, and I will not rest until it is," Landry recently tweeted.

A New Orleans judge issued a temporary order blocking enforcement of the ban on June 27, but nearly two weeks later a second New Orleans judge sent the case to Baton Rouge, saying state law required that it be heard in the capital.

Johnson issued a second temporary restraining order on July 11.

2022 midterms: What to watch in Maryland's primary elections

By BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — The Republican race for Maryland governor in Tuesday's primary election pits a candidate backed by outgoing Gov. Larry Hogan against a rival endorsed by Donald Trump.

It's an early showdown on Hogan's home turf as he weighs a 2024 White House bid, potentially against the former president.

On the Democratic side, the crowded candidate field includes the former head of the national Democratic Party, a bestselling author, the current state comptroller and a former U.S. education secretary.

U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen is facing a primary challenge as he seeks a second term following a stroke. In the U.S. House, Maryland has one open seat after the incumbent decided to seek a different office.

What to watch:

GOVERNOR

Democrats are eager to win back the governor's office. Hogan is a rare two-term Republican governor in a state where Democrats outnumber Republicans 2-1.

The Democratic primary for governor is shaping up as a competitive three-way race among former U.S.

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Labor Secretary Tom Perez, who previously served as chair of the Democratic National Committee; author Wes Moore, who held a virtual fundraiser with Oprah Winfrey; and state Comptroller Peter Franchot, who had wide margins of victory in his four terms as state tax collector.

Voters are casting ballots with the potential for history to be made in November: Moore or former U.S. Education Secretary John King could become the state's first Black governor, and Perez could become the first Latino chief executive in the state.

For the GOP, Kelly Schulz is running as Hogan's hand-picked successor to carry on his legacy. Schulz served as a labor secretary in Hogan's administration and later as the head of the state's commerce department. She is a former state legislator from Frederick County.

Schulz, the only woman in the field, would be Maryland's first female governor if she were to win in November. She contends she is the only Republican in the primary who could tap into Hogan's unusual political success in a heavily Democratic state.

She is running against Dan Cox, a state legislator who has been endorsed by Trump. Early in the pandemic, Cox sued over Hogan's stay-at-home orders and regulations, saying they were unconstitutional. The lawsuit was later dismissed by a judge, who said that Hogan had a duty as governor to protect public health.

Cox also filed a resolution of impeachment against Hogan, accusing him of violating the rights of residents by issuing orders that were "restrictive and protracted" during the pandemic. Lawmakers rejected the effort.

He helped organize busloads of protesters to go to Washington for the "Stop the Steal" rally that preceded the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection. Cox has said he didn't march to the Capitol afterward, and he condemned the violence.

U.S. SENATE

Sen. Chris Van Hollen, a Democrat, is seeking his second term. He first won election to the chamber in 2016, replacing retiring Sen. Barbara Mikulski, who was then the longest-serving woman in congressional history.

Van Hollen suffered a minor stroke in May but said doctors had told him there would be no long-term effects or damage. He said he experienced lightheadedness and acute neck pain while delivering a speech and sought medical care once he returned home.

Van Hollen has just one challenger in his Democratic primary: Michelle Smith, a Freedom of Information Act policy analyst with the U.S. Agency for International Development. Van Hollen previously served seven terms in the U.S. House.

Ten Republicans are seeking the GOP nomination, including Chris Chaffee, who ran unsuccessfully against U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer in 2014.

Van Hollen, who is expected to win his primary, would be a strong favorite in November. Maryland has not had a Republican U.S. senator in the last 35 years.

U.S. HOUSE

The state has eight congressional districts but only one open seat this cycle.

Democratic Rep. Anthony Brown, who has represented Maryland's 4th Congressional District, is stepping down after three terms to run for attorney general. Former Rep. Donna Edwards, who held the seat from 2008 to 2017, is running to get her job back representing the Black-majority district in the suburbs of the nation's capital. She will face former county prosecutor Glenn Ivey.

GOP establishment steps up push to block Trump ally in Ariz.

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey has already helped block one of former President Donald Trump's allies from winning the Republican nomination for governor in a crucial battleground state. Now he's hoping for a repeat in his own backyard.

Ducey is part of a burgeoning effort among establishment Republicans to lift up little-known housing developer Karrin Taylor Robson against former television news anchor Kari Lake, who is backed by Trump.

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Other prominent Republicans, including former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, have also lined up behind Robson in recent days.

The push is reminiscent of how many leading Republicans rallied around Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp in the final stretch of his ultimately successful bid to fend off a Trump-endorsed primary challenger.

Few states have been as central to Trump's election lies as Georgia and Arizona, the two closest 2020 battlegrounds where he pushed aggressively to overturn the results and fumed when Kemp and Ducey refused to go along. Trump has already faced a setback in Georgia, and the Aug. 2 race in Arizona is among his last opportunities to settle scores and install allies to lead states that may prove decisive if he decides to run again in 2024.

"In Arizona, people are independent minded, much like they are in Georgia, and they pick the person that they think will be best for the responsibility," Ducey told The Associated Press. "In Georgia, the voters said Brian Kemp, and I'm hopeful in Arizona, they'll say Karen Taylor Robson."

As an incumbent seeking reelection, Kemp had an advantage over his primary rival, David Perdue, and ultimately defeated him by nearly 52 percentage points. Without an incumbent on the ballot — Ducey faces term limits — the GOP contest in Arizona will likely be much closer.

But what once looked like an insurmountable lead for Lake could end in a more competitive finish. With early voting already underway, Robson is drawing on her family's vast fortune to drown out Lake who, despite Trump's endorsement, has lagged in fundraising. Robson had outspent Lake more than 5 to 1 as of the end of June.

The final maneuvering by some leading GOP figures could prove significant in a close race. Beyond Ducey and Christie, Robson has lined up support from former U.S. Rep. Matt Salmon, who dropped out of the governor's race and endorsed her. The Border Patrol union, meanwhile, broke with Trump and backed Robson, citing in part Lake's prior statements supporting a pathway to citizenship for people living in the country illegally.

Former Vice President Mike Pence, who notably split with Trump in Georgia and campaigned alongside Kemp, has yet to pick a side in Arizona.

For her part, Lake is an unlikely MAGA champion.

A well-known former local news anchor who donated to Barack Obama and for years hung around with drag queens at a gay bar near the television station, Lake once was the antithesis of Trump's brand of politics.

Yet she rocketed to the top of the field since she walked away from her three-decade television career, declared "journalism is dead" and took a sledgehammer to a pile of TVs.

She built on the powerful connection she'd formed with viewers in the Phoenix media market over 27 years with the local Fox affiliate and created a uniquely strong bond with the base that propelled Trump to the White House in 2016 and still doesn't believe he lost in 2020.

Even Trump seemed impressed by the ovation her name inspired when he mentioned it during a rally in Phoenix last year. He endorsed her a short time later.

She, in turn, has adopted his combative style, his narrative about the 2020 election — she falsely says it was corrupt and stolen — and his get-tough approach to border security. She's walked away from her close ties with John McCain's family and now feuds with the late U.S. senator's children.

"We're either gonna go the way of the past, which is the McCain mafia running the show, or we're gonna go with America first," Lake told a crowd of hundreds at a country western bar in Tucson last week. Many arrived well over an hour early and waited in the Southern Arizona heat for a chance to get inside.

Lake, 52, routinely berates journalists trying to question her and releases the footage on social media.

Last year, she said she wants to put cameras in classrooms to monitor teachers, nodding to the backlash on the right to teachings on race and history in public schools.

If elected, she says, she'd immediately invoke an untested legal theory that illegal immigration constitutes an "invasion" of the United States and gives the governor war powers to remove people from the country without proceedings in immigration courts.

Since Robson and her allies began their full-court press, Lake has claimed without evidence that "they

might be trying to set the stage for another steal.”

“They have been such RINOs for so long, and I don’t trust that they have our country as a priority,” said Rosa Alfonso, a 60-year-old speech language pathologist in Tucson. “That’s a big deal.”

Robson, 57, is making her first run for office, though she has lifelong ties to GOP politics. Her father and brother both held elected office as Republicans.

An attorney for real estate developers, she has been at the center of the suburban sprawl that has propelled the Phoenix area’s prodigious growth. Ducey appointed her to the board overseeing Arizona’s three public universities, her most high-profile public role before she quit to run for governor.

“These are serious times,” Robson said during a recent debate. “We need a serious candidate with a record of accomplishment.”

Her husband, housing developer Ed Robson, 91, is one of the state’s richest residents, amassing a fortune building master planned retirement communities. She says the 2020 election was “unfair” but has stopped short of calling it fraudulent. Like Lake, she’s running as a border hawk.

She brands her rival “Fake Lake,” highlighting a \$350 donation she gave to Obama’s 2008 campaign, though Robson has herself contributed large sums to Democrats.

“It’s all an act,” Ducey said of Lake. “The campaign she’s been running bears no resemblance to the life she’s lived for the past three decades, nor to the interactions that she’s had with me. She’s putting on a show. We’ll see how many people buy it.”

Uvalde report: 376 officers but ‘egregiously poor’ decisions

By JAKE BLEIBERG and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas (AP) — Nearly 400 law enforcement officials rushed to a mass shooting at a Uvalde elementary school, but “egregiously poor decision-making” resulted in more than an hour of chaos before the gunman who took 21 lives was finally confronted and killed, according to a damning investigative report released Sunday.

The nearly 80-page report was the first to criticize both state and federal law enforcement, and not just local authorities in the South Texas town for the bewildering inaction by heavily armed officers as a gunman fired inside two fourth-grade classrooms at Robb Elementary School, killing 19 students and two teachers.

Altogether, the report and more than three hours of newly released body camera footage from the May 24 tragedy amounted to the fullest account to date of one of the worst school shootings in U.S. history. Some families blasted police as cowards and demanded resignations.

“At Robb Elementary, law enforcement responders failed to adhere to their active shooter training, and they failed to prioritize saving innocent lives over their own safety,” the report said.

The gunman fired approximately 142 rounds inside the building — and it is “almost certain” that at least 100 shots came before any officer entered, according to the report, which laid out in detail numerous failures. Among them:

- No one assumed command despite scores of officers being on the scene.
- The commander of a Border Patrol tactical team waited for a bullet-proof shield and working master key for the classroom, which may have not even been needed, before entering the classroom.
- A Uvalde Police Department officer said he heard about 911 calls that had come from inside the classroom, and that his understanding was the officers on one side of the building knew there were victims trapped inside. Still, no one tried to breach the classroom.

The report — the most complete account yet of the hesitant and haphazard response to the May 24 massacre — was written by an investigative committee from the Texas House of Representatives. Swiftly, the findings set in motion at least one fallout: Lt. Mariano Pargas, a Uvalde Police Department officer who was the city’s acting police chief during the massacre, was placed on administrative leave.

Uvalde Mayor Don McLaughlin said an investigation would be launched to determine whether Pargas should have taken command of the scene. He also disclosed for the first time that some officers had left the force since the shooting but did not provide an exact number, saying it was as many as three.

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"It's a joke. They're a joke. They've got no business wearing a badge. None of them do," Vincent Salazar, grandfather of 11-year-old Layla Salazar, who was among those killed, said Sunday.

Anger flashed in Uvalde even over how the report was rolled out: Tina Quintanilla-Taylor, whose daughter survived the shooting, shouted at the three-member Texas House committee as they left a news conference after the findings were released.

Committee members had invited families of the victims to discuss the report privately, but Quintanilla-Taylor said the committee should have taken questions from the community, not just the media. "I'm pissed. They need to come back and give us their undivided attention," she said later.

"These leaders are not leaders," she said.

According to the report, 376 law enforcement officers massed at the school. The overwhelming majority of those who responded were federal and state law enforcement. That included nearly 150 U.S. Border Patrol agents and 91 state police officials.

"Other than the attacker, the Committee did not find any 'villains' in the course of its investigation," the report said. "There is no one to whom we can attribute malice or ill motives. Instead, we found systemic failures and egregiously poor decision making."

The report noted that many of the hundreds of law enforcement responders who rushed to the school were better trained and equipped than the school district police — which the head of the Texas Department of Public Safety, the state police force, previously faulted for not going into the room sooner.

Investigators said it was not their job to determine whether officers should be held accountable, saying that decisions rests with each law enforcement agency. Prior to Sunday, only one of the hundreds of officers on the scene — Pete Arredondo, the Uvalde school district police chief — was known to have been on leave.

"Everyone who came on the scene talked about this being chaotic," said Texas state Rep. Dustin Burrows, a Republican who led the investigation.

Officials with the Texas Department of Public Safety and U.S. Border Patrol did not immediately return requests for comment Sunday.

The report followed weeks of closed-door interviews with more than 40 people, including witnesses and law enforcement who were on the scene of the shooting.

No single officer has received as much scrutiny since the shooting as Arredondo, who also resigned from his newly appointed seat on the City Council after the shooting. Arredondo told the committee he treated the shooter as "barricaded subject," according to the report, and defended never treating the scene as an active-shooter situation because he did not have visual contact with the gunman.

Arredondo also tried to find a key for the classrooms, but no one ever bothered to see if the doors were locked, according to the report.

"Arredondo's search for a key consumed his attention and wasted precious time, delaying the breach of the classrooms," the report read.

The report criticized as "lackadaisical" the approach of the hundreds of officers who surrounded the school and said that they should have recognized that Arredondo remaining in the school without reliable communication was "inconsistent" with him being the scene commander. The report concluded that some officers waited because they relied on bad information while others "had enough information to know better."

Hours after the report was released, Uvalde officials separately made public for the first time hours of body camera footage from the city's police officers who responded to the attack. It includes video of several officers reacting to word from a dispatcher, roughly 30 minutes after the shooting began, that a child in the room had called 911.

"The room is full of victims. Child 911 call," an officer says.

Other body camera video from Uvalde Staff Sgt. Eduardo Canales, the head of the city's SWAT team, shows the officer approaching the classrooms when gunfire rings out at 11:37 a.m. Canales asks if he's bleeding, and later says he's bleeding from his ear.

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A minute later, Canales says: "Dude, we've got to get in there. We've got to get in there, he just keeps shooting. We've got to get in there." Another officer can be heard saying "DPS is sending their people."

It is 72 minutes later, at 12:50 p.m., when officers finally breach the classrooms and kill the shooter.

Calls for police accountability have grown in Uvalde since the shooting.

The report is the result of one of several investigations into the shooting, including another led by the Justice Department. A report earlier this month by tactical experts at Texas State University alleged that a Uvalde police officer had a chance to stop the gunman before he went inside the school armed with an AR-15.

But in an example of the conflicting statements and disputed accounts since the shooting, McLaughlin has said that never happened. Officers told the committee that the person they thought was the gunman was actually a school coach.

The earlier report had been done at the request of the Texas Department of Public Safety, which McLaughlin has increasingly criticized and accused of trying to minimize the role of its troopers during the massacre. Steve McCraw, the head of Texas DPS, has called the police response an abject failure.

The committee didn't "receive medical evidence" to show that police breaching the classroom sooner would have saved lives, but it concluded that "it is plausible that some victims could have survived if they had not had to wait 73 additional minutes for rescue."

Michael Brown, whose 9-year-old son was in the cafeteria at Robb Elementary on the day of the shooting and survived, came to the committee's news conference Sunday carrying signs saying "We Want Accountability" and "Prosecute Pete Arredondo."

Brown said he has not yet read the report but already knows enough to say that police "have blood on their hands."

"It's disgusting. Disgusting," he said. "They're cowards."

July 4 parade funerals to conclude with tribute to slain dad

HIGHLAND PARK, Ill. (AP) — Funeral services for the seven people killed by a gunman at an Independence Day parade will conclude Monday as family and friends gather in suburban Chicago to remember Kevin McCarthy.

McCarthy's funeral service is scheduled for Monday afternoon in Skokie, Illinois. In an obituary, he is described as a father, husband, brother, uncle and son who "brought the fun to every situation."

The 37-year-old father and his wife, Irina, were both killed in the attack on the Highland Park parade. They left behind a 2-year-old son, Aiden, whose story prompted thousands of people to donate money for the orphaned boy.

"Kevin's irrepressible zest for life and his family and friends will remain with us always," his family wrote in the obituary. "We love you."

Irina McCarthy was buried on Tuesday.

Services for the five other victims have been held in recent weeks. They have been identified as: 64-year-old Katherine Goldstein, 63-year-old Jacquelyn Sundheim, 88-year-old Stephen Straus and 78-year-old Nicolas Toledo-Zaragoza and 69-year-old Eduardo Uvaldo.

Prosecutors have charged 21-year-old Robert E. Crimo III with seven counts of murder and said they expect to present attempted murder charges representing the people wounded in the attack.

Chief: 3 dead in Indiana mall shooting; witness kills gunman

Associated Press undefined

GREENWOOD, Ind. (AP) — Three people were fatally shot and two were injured Sunday evening at an Indiana mall after a man with a rifle opened fire in a food court and an armed civilian shot and killed him, police said.

The man entered the Greenwood Park Mall with a rifle and several magazines of ammunition and began firing in the food court, Greenwood Police Department Chief Jim Ison said.

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A 22-year-old from nearby Bartholomew County who was legally carrying a firearm at the mall shot and killed the gunman, Ison said at a news conference.

Four of those hit by gunfire were females and one was a male, Ison said. He didn't immediately know the specific gender or age of those who were killed.

He said a 12-year-old girl was among the two injured, both of whom are in stable condition.

Police confiscated a suspicious backpack that was in a bathroom near the food court, Ison said.

Officers went to the mall at about 6 p.m. for reports of the shooting.

"The real hero of the day is the citizen that was lawfully carrying a firearm in that food court and was able to stop the shooter almost as soon as he began," Ison said.

The mass shooting was just the latest to unnerve Americans in 2022. Schools, churches, grocery stores and a July Fourth parade in Highland Park, Illinois, have all become killing grounds in recent months. Still, the reality of America's staggering murder rate can often be seen more clearly in individual deaths that rarely make the news.

Indianapolis Metropolitan Police and multiple other agencies are assisting in the investigation.

"We are sickened by yet another type of incident like this in our country," Indianapolis Assistant Chief of Police Chris Bailey said.

There was no threat to the area Sunday night, authorities said.

Greenwood is a south suburb of Indianapolis with a population of about 60,000. Mayor Mark Myers asked for "prayers to the victims and our first responders."

"This tragedy hits at the core of our community," Myers said in a statement.

Authorities said they would provide more details Monday.

4 dead after small planes collide at North Las Vegas Airport

NORTH LAS VEGAS, Nev. (AP) — Four people died Sunday after two small planes collided at North Las Vegas Airport, authorities said.

The Federal Aviation Administration said a single-engine Piper PA-46 and a single-engine Cessna 172 collided around noon Sunday.

"Preliminary information indicates that the Piper PA-46 was preparing to land when it collided with the Cessna 172," the FAA said in a statement. "The Piper crashed into ... a field east of Runway 30-Right and the Cessna fell into a water retention pond."

Two people were in each plane and all four died, according to city fire department officials.

The names, ages and hometowns of the victims weren't immediately released.

The National Transportation Safety Board and FAA will investigate the cause of the crash.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy fires top security chief and prosecutor

By HANNA ARHIROVA and CARA ANNA Associated Press

VINNYTSIA, Ukraine (AP) — As Russian troops pressed their offensive in Ukraine's east, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy fired his state security chief and prosecutor general on Sunday, citing hundreds of criminal proceedings into treason and collaboration by people within their departments and other law enforcement agencies.

"In particular, more than 60 employees of the prosecutor's office and the SBU (state security service) have remained in the occupied territory and work against our state," Zelenskyy said.

"Such an array of crimes against the foundations of the state's national security, and the links recorded between Ukrainian security forces and Russian special services raise very serious questions about their respective leaders," he said in his nightly video address to the nation.

Zelenskyy dismissed Ivan Bakanov, a childhood friend and former business partner whom he had appointed to head the SBU. Bakanov had come under growing criticism over security breaches since the war began; Politico last month cited several unidentified Ukrainian and Western sources saying Zelenskyy was looking to replace him.

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He also dismissed Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova, and replaced her with her deputy Oleksiy Symonenko. Venediktova has helped lead war crime investigations.

Meanwhile, Russian missiles hit industrial facilities earlier Sunday at Mykolaiv, a key shipbuilding center in southern Ukraine. Mayor Oleksandr Senkevych said the missiles struck an industrial and infrastructure facility. Mykolaiv has faced regular Russian missile strikes in recent weeks as the Russians have sought to soften Ukrainian defenses.

The Russian military has declared a goal to cut off Ukraine's entire Black Sea coast all the way to the Romanian border. If successful, such an effort would deal a crushing blow to the Ukrainian economy and trade, and allow Moscow to secure a land bridge to Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria, which hosts a Russian military base.

Early in the campaign, Ukrainian forces fended off Russian attempts to capture Mykolaiv, which sits near the Black Sea coast between Russia-occupied Crimea and the main Ukrainian port of Odesa. Since then, Russian troops have halted their attempts to advance in the city but have continued to pummel both Mykolaiv and Odesa with regular missile strikes.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Sunday that Russian missiles destroyed a depot for anti-ship Harpoon missiles delivered to Ukraine by NATO allies, a claim that couldn't be independently confirmed.

The Russians, fearing a Ukrainian counteroffensive, also sought to reinforce their positions in the Kherson region near Crimea and in part of the northern Zaporizhzhia region that they seized in the opening stage of the war.

"Given the pressures on Russian manpower, the reinforcement of the south whilst the fight for the Donbas continues indicates the seriousness with which Russian commanders view the threat," the British Defense Ministry said Sunday.

For now, the Russian military has focused on trying to take control of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of the Donbas, where the most capable and well-equipped Ukrainian forces are located.

Ukraine says its forces still retain control of two small villages in the Luhansk region, one of two provinces that make up the Donbas, and are fending off Russian attempts to advance deeper into the second one, the Donetsk region.

The Ukrainian military's General Staff said Sunday that Ukrainian troops thwarted Russian attempts to advance toward Sloviansk, the key Ukrainian stronghold in Donetsk, and attacks elsewhere in the region.

Yet Russian officials are urging their troops to produce even more territorial gains. During a visit to the front lines Saturday, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu issued an order "to further intensify the actions of units in all operational areas."

The Russian military said it has struck Ukrainian troops and artillery positions in Donbas in the latest series of strikes, including a U.S.-supplied HIMARS multiple rocket launcher. The Russian claims couldn't be independently verified.

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, responded to Ukrainian officials' statements that Kyiv may strike the bridge linking Crimea and Russia, warning that would trigger devastating consequences for the Ukrainian leadership.

"They will momentarily face Doomsday," Medvedev said Sunday. "It would be very hard for them to hide."

Medvedev, once touted by the West as more liberal compared to Putin, said Russia will press its offensive until fulfilling its stated goal of "denazifying" and "demilitarizing" Ukraine. He predicted the fighting will "undoubtedly lead to the collapse of the existing regime" in Kyiv.

Zelenskyy condemned Medvedev's Doomsday comment as "intimidation" and said it was Russia that would eventually face a "Day of Judgment."

"And not in a figurative sense, not as loud talk, but literally," he said Sunday.

While focusing on the Donbas, the Russians have hit areas all across the country with missile strikes.

In central Ukraine, relatives and friends attended a funeral Sunday for Liza Dmytrieva, a 4-year-old girl killed Thursday in a Russian missile strike. The girl with Down syndrome was en route to see a speech

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therapist with her mother when the missiles struck the city of Vinnytsia. At least 24 people were killed, including Liza and two boys, ages 7 and 8. More than 200 others were wounded, including Liza's mother, who remains in an intensive care unit.

"I didn't know Liza, but no person can go through this with calm," priest Vitalii Holoskevych said, bursting into tears as Liza's body lay in a coffin with flowers and teddy bears in the 18th-century Transfiguration Cathedral in Vinnytsia.

"We know that evil cannot win," he added.

In the Kharkiv region, at least three civilians were killed and three more were injured Saturday in a pre-dawn Russian strike on the city of Chuhuiv, just 120 kilometers (75 miles) from the Russian border, police said.

One resident of the apartment building that was hit said she was lucky to have survived.

"I was going to run and hide in the bathroom. I didn't make it and that's what saved me," said Valentina Bushuyeva. Pointing to her destroyed apartment, she said: "There's the bathroom — explosion. Kitchen — half a room. And I survived because I stayed put."

Biden's realism approach runs head-on into liberal pressure

By SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — On restoring access to abortion, President Joe Biden says his hands are tied without more Democratic senators. Declaring a public health emergency on the matter has downsides, his aides say. And as for gun violence, Biden has been clear about the limits of what he can do on his own.

"There's a Constitution," Biden said from the South Lawn in late May. "I can't dictate this stuff."

Throughout this century, presidents have often pushed aggressively to extend the boundaries of executive power. Biden talks more about its limits.

When it comes to the thorniest issues confronting his administration, the instinct from Biden and his White House is often to speak about what he cannot do, citing constraints imposed by the courts or insufficient support in a Congress controlled by his own party — though barely.

He injects a heavy dose of reality in speaking to an increasingly restive Democratic base, which has demanded action on issues such as abortion and voting rights before the November elections.

White House officials and the president's allies say that approach typifies a leader who has always promised to be honest with Americans, including about how expansive his powers really are.

But Biden's realpolitik tendencies are colliding with an activist base agitating for a more aggressive party leader — both in tone and substance. Although candidate Biden sold himself as the person who best knew the ways of Washington, he nonetheless is hamstrung by the same obstacles that have bedeviled his predecessors.

"I think that if you hesitate from important actions like this just because of a legal challenge, then you would do nothing," said Rep. Judy Chu, D-Calif., who has been pressing for more administrative actions on abortion. "People all across the country are expecting us — the leaders — to do something."

Biden's cautionary approach could be to protect himself if the White House falls short — like Democrats did in negotiating a party-line spending package centered on the social safety net and climate provisions. That sweeping effort had been steadily thwarted due to resistance from two moderate Democrats, one of them West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, who on Thursday scuttled for the time being a scaled-back effort that focused on climate and taxes.

That development prompted calls from Democratic senators for Biden to unilaterally declare a climate emergency. In a statement Friday while in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Biden pledged to take "strong executive action to meet this moment" on climate. But in recent weeks, that gap between "yes, we can" and "no, we can't" has been most glaring on abortion.

Since the Supreme Court last month overturned the landmark Roe v. Wade ruling from 1973 with its constitutional protections for abortion, the White House has come under considerable pressure to try to maintain access to abortion in conservative states that are set to outlaw the procedure.

For instance, advocates have implored Biden to look into establishing abortion clinics on federal lands.

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They have asked the administration to help transport women seeking abortions to a state that offers the procedure. And Democratic lawmakers are pressing the White House to declare a public health emergency.

Without rejecting the ideas completely, White House aides have expressed skepticism about such requests. And even as he signed an executive order last week to begin addressing the issue, Biden had one clear, consistent message: that he could not do this on his own, shifting attention to the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

"The only way we can secure a woman's right to choose and the balance that existed is for Congress to restore the protections of *Roe v. Wade* as federal law," Biden said shortly after the court struck down *Roe*. "No executive action from the president can do that."

Shortly after declaring that the filibuster — a Senate rule that requires 60 votes for most legislation to advance — should not apply for abortion and privacy measures, Biden acknowledged during a meeting with Democratic governors that his newfound position would not make a difference, at least not right away.

"The filibuster should not stand in the way of us being able to do that," Biden said of writing the protections of *Roe* into federal law. "But right now, we don't have the votes in the Senate to change the filibuster."

Biden, who served for 36 years in the Senate, is an institutionalist to his core and has tried to operate under the constraints of those institutions — unlike his predecessor, Donald Trump, who repeatedly pushed the boundaries of executive power.

But some advocates don't want to hear from Biden about what he can't do.

Renee Bracey Sherman, founder and executive director of the group We Testify, which advocates for women who have had abortions, said the administration should proceed with a public health emergency even if it's eventually blocked by the courts.

"It tells those people who need abortions that the president is trying to help them, and that the thing that's stopping him is the court, not himself, or his own projections on what could possibly happen," she said, later adding: "The fact that he's an institutionalist and cannot look around and see the institutions around him are crumbling is the problem."

Democratic lawmakers have also continued to prod senior administration officials behind the scenes. In a virtual meeting this past week, Chu urged Xavier Becerra, the health and human services secretary, to have the administration enact a public health emergency. Proponents of the idea say it would unlock certain powers and resources to not only expand access to abortion but to protect doctors who provide them.

Though Becerra did not rule out the idea, he told Chu and other members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus that the administration had two main questions: How would the administration replenish money for the public health emergency fund and what would this move actually accomplish?

The skepticism has not deterred Democratic lawmakers. But some of the most ardent proponents of expansive executive actions on abortion have similarly cautioned their voters and activists to be realistic.

"It's unrealistic to think that they have the power and the authority to protect access to abortion services in every part of this country because of what the Supreme Court has done," said Sen. Tina Smith, D-Minn.

In one sense, the recent success on gun s was a validation of Biden's art-of-the-possible approach, advocates say. Rather than promising what he could not achieve, Biden instead spoke of his limitations and cautioned that any substantive changes would require the support of at least 10 Senate Republicans — a goal that seemed implausible at the start.

That culminated this past week with a ceremony marking the signing of the first substantial gun restrictions into law in roughly three decades.

"I think that the president has struck the absolute right balance," said John Feinblatt, the president of Everytown for Gun Safety.

Concerns about the limitations on Biden's executive powers aren't mere hypotheticals. His administration's efforts to tame the coronavirus pandemic, for example, were repeatedly foiled by the courts, including a requirement to wear masks on mass transit and a vaccination mandate for companies with at least 100 workers.

Then-President Barack Obama sounded similar warnings when confronted by immigration activists urging him to use his power to issue a deportation reprieve for millions of young immigrants who did not

have legal status in the U.S.

Obama in 2012 unilaterally enacted the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which is still standing today. Two years later, Obama more fully embraced the pen-and-phone strategy, signaling to Congress that he would not hesitate to use executive orders if lawmakers continued to imperil his domestic agenda.

"Nobody thinks he's got a magic wand here. Folks understand there are limitations," said Leah Greenberg, co-founder and co-executive director of the Indivisible Project. "What they want to see is him treating this like the crisis it is for folks in red states losing access to abortion."

Extradition process begins for Mexico drug lord wanted in US

By MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero, captured by Mexican forces, was notified this weekend that a process to extradite him to the United States for crimes including the murder of a DEA agent in 1985 has begun.

A Mexican federal official who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to make statements confirmed Sunday to The Associated Press that the notification was made Saturday and took place virtually.

A judge based in a Mexico City informed Caro Quintero, wanted in the United States for the torture and killing of DEA agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena in 1985, of the accusations against him. He is being held in a high-security prison 50 miles (80 kilometers) west of the capital.

Caro Quintero was one of the FBI's most wanted fugitives since he was released from a Mexican jail in 2013 on a technicality after being imprisoned for nearly three decades for the murder of Camarena and a Mexican pilot.

Saturday's notification was the first step in the legal process to extradite him to the United States. Attorney General Merrick Garland said Friday that "immediate extradition" would be sought.

Now the U.S. government has 60 days to file a formal extradition request and provide evidence to support it. Then the judge handling the case will determine whether or not it proceeds.

During this period, Caro Quintero's lawyers will probably file appeals to try to delay the extradition process.

Extradition processes tend to be lengthy, although their speed depends a lot on the political will of the countries.

Caro Quintero, 69, was captured on Friday in the mountains of his home state of Sinaloa in a joint operation by the Mexican Navy and the Federal Prosecutor's Office. Fourteen marines who were involved in the operation died when the Black Hawk helicopter they were in crashed. Causes of the incident are still under investigation.

The drug trafficker was one of the founders of the Guadalajara Cartel and, according to the DEA, one of the main suppliers of heroin, cocaine and marijuana to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s.

He blamed Camarena for a raid on a marijuana plantation in 1984. In 1985, Camarena was kidnapped in Guadalajara, allegedly on orders from Caro Quintero. His tortured body was found a month later. Caro Quintero was first captured in Costa Rica in 1985.

Smith rallies to beat McIlroy at British Open for 1st major

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

ST. ANDREWS, Scotland (AP) — The stage at St. Andrews was all set for Rory McIlroy.

The show belonged to Cameron Smith, and so did that silver claret jug he won in a Sunday stunner at the British Open with the best closing round the Old Course had ever seen.

Smith was four shots behind at the start as a record crowd was eager to see McIlroy cap off a week of celebrations at the 150th Open in style. He was three behind when he made the turn.

And then the plucky Australian with his magical putter ran off five straight birdies to take the lead, stared down a nervy putt around the edge of the nefarious Road Hole bunker to save par and finished with two putts from 80 feet for birdie for an 8-under 64.

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"To win an Open Championship in itself is probably going to be a golfer's highlight in their career," Smith said. "To do it around St. Andrews I think is just unbelievable."

So was his golf.

In the 29 previous times golf's oldest championship was held at St. Andrews, no winner had ever closed with a 64. Smith finished at 20-under 268, a record score for the Old Course and matching the lowest score to par in any major.

"I got beaten by the better player this week. To go out and shoot 64 to win the Open Championship at St. Andrews is a hell of a showing. Hats off to Cam," McIlroy said.

McIlroy hit every green in regulation and two-putted all of them — two were birdies, the rest were pars — for a 70 that left him in third place and having to wait nearly nine months before he can try to end his drought in the majors that now is at eight full years.

Smith won by one shot over Cameron Young, who holed a 15-foot eagle putt on the final hole to ever-so-briefly tie for the lead.

It wasn't enough, and neither was anything McIlroy could muster.

McIlroy couldn't make a putt early. He couldn't hit it close enough late. His last good chance was a 15-foot birdie attempt on the dangerous Road Hole at No. 17, and it narrowly missed to the left. McIlroy needed eagle to tie him, and his chip through the Valley of Sin had no chance.

Smith won for the third time this year, all on entirely different courses — the generous fairways of Kapalua, the visual intimidation of water on the TPC Sawgrass and the oldest links in the world with its double greens and pot bunkers.

He beat the No. 1 player in the world (Jon Rahm) at Kapalua. He beat the best field in golf at The Players Championship. And he had to overcome a four-shot deficit against a heavy crowd favorite to capture his first major.

Even with the silver claret jug in his hands, it was hard to believe.

"All the names on there, every player that's been at the top of their game has won this championship," Smith said. "It's pretty cool to be on there. It really hasn't sunk in yet. I don't think it will for a few weeks. Yeah, it's just unreal."

Smith is the first Australian to win at St. Andrews since Kel Nagle in 1960, when he topped a rising American star named Arnold Palmer, the people's choice.

That's what McIlroy is now. He moved into the void left when Tiger Woods missed the cut in what might be his final Open at St. Andrews. He had support that carried him to the cusp of winning at the home of golf. "The Holy Grail," McIlroy had called it earlier in the week.

All day there was an energy along the humps and hollows of the Old Course, all of them waiting to celebrate McIlroy as an Open champion at St. Andrews.

He gave them little to cheer.

"The putter went cold on me," McIlroy said. "When both Camerons — especially Smith — went on that run on the back nine, I had to dig deep to make birdies. And I just couldn't."

That left Smith, the 28-year-old Aussie known for his grit and his putting stroke, on the 18th green to be introduced as the "champion golfer of the year."

Smith is the first Australian to win the Open since Greg Norman in 1993 at Royal St. George's. Norman was asked not to return this year — there was no indication he was coming — because of his Saudi-funded LIV Golf that has offered millions to attract players like Dustin Johnson and Bryson DeChambeau, major champions who finished in the top 10.

But this day belonged to Smith and that putter that answered every test.

McIlroy was playing controlled golf, his only birdie a two-putt from 18 feet on the par-5 fifth. Viktor Hovland, who started the final round tied with McIlroy, was never a factor. He didn't make his first birdie until the 12th hole and closed with a 74.

That run by Smith on the back nine is now part of Open lore.

He hit a nifty pitch to 5 feet for birdie on the short 10th. He was bold to a back pin on the par-3 11th

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and holed a 15-foot birdie, and he birdied the next two holes from about that length. His fifth in a row was a putt from 90 feet on the par-5 14th, over a huge mound and down the slope to tap-in range that gave him the lead for the first time.

McIlroy couldn't catch up. His lag putting was terrific. That wasn't what he needed. And he got no help from Smith, whose one missed shot set up his biggest challenge.

The Road Hole bunker was between him and the flag on the 17th. He used his putter to ride over the right edge of the bunker and onto the green, 10 feet away, and he poured in another putt, this one for par to stay in front.

Young had his chances in his Open debut. He left short a 6-foot putt with about a foot of break on the 15th. He came up short with a wedge on the next hole. He drilled his drive and approach to the 17th, only to leave another birdie chance short.

He finally delivered, but all that got him was a 65 and the silver medal. In two majors this year, the PGA Tour rookie missed a playoff by one shot at the PGA Championship and made his best putt too late at St. Andrews.

Smith made his last birdie and the engraver went to work on the claret jug, a prize first awarded to the 1873 champion at St. Andrews. There's a lot of history around this gray, old town, and Smith became part of it in a big way.

As AI language skills grow, so do scientists' concerns

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

The tech industry's latest artificial intelligence constructs can be pretty convincing if you ask them what it feels like to be a sentient computer, or maybe just a dinosaur or squirrel. But they're not so good — and sometimes dangerously bad — at handling other seemingly straightforward tasks.

Take, for instance, GPT-3, a Microsoft-controlled system that can generate paragraphs of human-like text based on what it's learned from a vast database of digital books and online writings. It's considered one of the most advanced of a new generation of AI algorithms that can converse, generate readable text on demand and even produce novel images and video.

Among other things, GPT-3 can write up most any text you ask for — a cover letter for a zookeeping job, say, or a Shakespearean-style sonnet set on Mars. But when Pomona College professor Gary Smith asked it a simple but nonsensical question about walking upstairs, GPT-3 muffed it.

"Yes, it is safe to walk upstairs on your hands if you wash them first," the AI replied.

These powerful and power-chugging AI systems, technically known as "large language models" because they've been trained on a huge body of text and other media, are already getting baked into customer service chatbots, Google searches and "auto-complete" email features that finish your sentences for you. But most of the tech companies that built them have been secretive about their inner workings, making it hard for outsiders to understand the flaws that can make them a source of misinformation, racism and other harms.

"They're very good at writing text with the proficiency of human beings," said Teven Le Scao, a research engineer at the AI startup Hugging Face. "Something they're not very good at is being factual. It looks very coherent. It's almost true. But it's often wrong."

That's one reason a coalition of AI researchers co-led by Le Scao — with help from the French government — launched a new large language model Tuesday that's supposed to serve as an antidote to closed systems such as GPT-3. The group is called BigScience and their model is BLOOM, for the BigScience Large Open-science Open-access Multilingual Language Model. Its main breakthrough is that it works across 46 languages, including Arabic, Spanish and French — unlike most systems that are focused on English or Chinese.

It's not just Le Scao's group aiming to open up the black box of AI language models. Big Tech company Meta, the parent of Facebook and Instagram, is also calling for a more open approach as it tries to catch up to the systems built by Google and OpenAI, the company that runs GPT-3.

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"We've seen announcement after announcement after announcement of people doing this kind of work, but with very little transparency, very little ability for people to really look under the hood and peek into how these models work," said Joelle Pineau, managing director of Meta AI.

Competitive pressure to build the most eloquent or informative system — and profit from its applications — is one of the reasons that most tech companies keep a tight lid on them and don't collaborate on community norms, said Percy Liang, an associate computer science professor at Stanford who directs its Center for Research on Foundation Models.

"For some companies this is their secret sauce," Liang said. But they are often also worried that losing control could lead to irresponsible uses. As AI systems are increasingly able to write health advice websites, high school term papers or political screeds, misinformation can proliferate and it will get harder to know what's coming from a human or a computer.

Meta recently launched a new language model called OPT-175B that uses publicly available data — from heated commentary on Reddit forums to the archive of U.S. patent records and a trove of emails from the Enron corporate scandal. Meta says its openness about the data, code and research logbooks makes it easier for outside researchers to help identify and mitigate the bias and toxicity that it picks up by ingesting how real people write and communicate.

"It is hard to do this. We are opening ourselves for huge criticism. We know the model will say things we won't be proud of," Pineau said.

While most companies have set their own internal AI safeguards, Liang said what's needed are broader community standards to guide research and decisions such as when to release a new model into the wild.

It doesn't help that these models require so much computing power that only giant corporations and governments can afford them. BigScience, for instance, was able to train its models because it was offered access to France's powerful Jean Zay supercomputer near Paris.

The trend for ever-bigger, ever-smarter AI language models that could be "pre-trained" on a wide body of writings took a big leap in 2018 when Google introduced a system known as BERT that uses a so-called "transformer" technique that compares words across a sentence to predict meaning and context. But what really impressed the AI world was GPT-3, released by San Francisco-based startup OpenAI in 2020 and soon after exclusively licensed by Microsoft.

GPT-3 led to a boom in creative experimentation as AI researchers with paid access used it as a sandbox to gauge its performance — though without important information about the data it was trained on.

OpenAI has broadly described its training sources in a research paper, and has also publicly reported its efforts to grapple with potential abuses of the technology. But BigScience co-leader Thomas Wolf said it doesn't provide details about how it filters that data, or give access to the processed version to outside researchers.

"So we can't actually examine the data that went into the GPT-3 training," said Wolf, who is also a chief science officer at Hugging Face. "The core of this recent wave of AI tech is much more in the dataset than the models. The most important ingredient is data and OpenAI is very, very secretive about the data they use."

Wolf said that opening up the datasets used for language models helps humans better understand their biases. A multilingual model trained in Arabic is far less likely to spit out offensive remarks or misunderstandings about Islam than one that's only trained on English-language text in the U.S., he said.

One of the newest AI experimental models on the scene is Google's LaMDA, which also incorporates speech and is so impressive at responding to conversational questions that one Google engineer argued it was approaching consciousness — a claim that got him suspended from his job last month.

Colorado-based researcher Janelle Shane, author of the AI Weirdness blog, has spent the past few years creatively testing these models, especially GPT-3 — often to humorous effect. But to point out the absurdity of thinking these systems are self-aware, she recently instructed it to be an advanced AI but one which is secretly a Tyrannosaurus rex or a squirrel.

"It is very exciting being a squirrel. I get to run and jump and play all day. I also get to eat a lot of food,

which is great," GPT-3 said, after Shane asked it for a transcript of an interview and posed some questions.

Shane has learned more about its strengths, such as its ease at summarizing what's been said around the internet about a topic, and its weaknesses, including its lack of reasoning skills, the difficulty of sticking with an idea across multiple sentences and a propensity for being offensive.

"I wouldn't want a text model dispensing medical advice or acting as a companion," she said. "It's good at that surface appearance of meaning if you are not reading closely. It's like listening to a lecture as you're falling asleep."

Experts comb cargo plane crash site in north Greece; 8 dead

By COSTAS KANTOURIS, DEMETRIS NELLAS and JOVANA GEC Associated Press

PALATIOCHORI, Greece (AP) — Experts investigated a cargo plane crash in northern Greece on Sunday, finding no evidence of dangerous substances but saying there's a lot of ordnance that the plane was carrying spread around the crash site. Serbia's defense minister confirmed that all eight crew members died in the crash.

The An-12 cargo plane from Serbia was being flown by a Ukrainian aviation crew before it smashed into fields between two Greek villages late Saturday. The plane crashed shortly before 11 p.m. about 40 kilometers (25 miles) west of Kavala International Airport.

Minutes before, the pilot had told air traffic controllers he had a problem with one engine and he had to make an emergency landing, officials said. He was directed to Kavala Airport but never made it there.

The fuselage of the Soviet-era four-engine turboprop dragged on the ground for 170 meters (nearly 190 yards) before it disintegrated. Locals reported seeing a fireball and hearing explosions for two hours after the crash. Drone footage showed that small fragments were all that is left of the plane.

Serbian Defense Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic told a news conference Sunday that the plane's eight crew members were dead. He said the plane was carrying 11.5 tons of Serbian-made mortar ammunition to Bangladesh, which was the buyer. It had taken off from the Serbian city of Nis and had been due to make a stopover in Amman, Jordan.

"These were illuminating mortar mines and training (mines). ... This flight had all necessary permissions in accordance with international regulations," Stefanovic said.

The plane was operated by Ukrainian cargo carrier Meridian. The Ukrainian consul in Thessaloniki, who arrived at the crash site, told local officials that the crew were all Ukrainian.

The Greek army's Special Joint Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defense Unit cleared two paths Sunday for Fire Service forensics experts to move in before leaving. By sunset, that second team had retrieved all the bodies, the commander of the army's Landmine Field Clearing Battalion told reporters.

Explosives disposal experts were also working at the site. It is only when their work is done that Civil Aviation Authority experts will try to retrieve the plane's black boxes.

The fire service and police created an extended security perimeter because of the widespread ordnance. Nearby dirt roads were closed to vehicles. Firefighters who rushed to the scene Saturday night were prevented from reaching the crash site by smoke and an intense smell that they feared might be toxic.

Residents were allowed to leave their homes Sunday after being told to stay inside and keep their windows closed Saturday night. But officials told locals their fields may not be safe to work in because of the likely presence of explosives.

Panel: Hearing to show Trump's Jan. 6 'dereliction of duty'

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A House committee's prime-time hearing Thursday will offer the most compelling evidence yet of then-President Donald Trump's "dereliction of duty" on the day of the Jan. 6 insurrection, with new witnesses detailing his failure to stem an angry mob storming the Capitol, committee members said Sunday.

"This is going to open people's eyes in a big way," said Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., a member of the

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House committee investigating the riot who will help lead Thursday's session with Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Va. "The president didn't do anything."

After a year-long investigation, the House Jan. 6 panel is seeking to wrap up what may be its last hearing, even as its probe continues to heat up.

The committee says it continues to receive fresh evidence each day and isn't ruling out additional hearings or interviews with a bevy of additional people close to the president. One such figure is Steve Bannon, whose trial begins this week on criminal contempt of Congress charges for refusing to comply with the House committee's subpoena.

The committee also issued an extraordinary subpoena last week to the Secret Service to produce texts by Tuesday from Jan. 5 and Jan. 6, 2021, following conflicting reports about whether they were deleted.

But panel members say Thursday's hearing will be the most specific to date in laying out and weaving together previously known details on how Trump's actions were at odds with his constitutional legal duty to stop the Jan. 6 riot. Unlike members of the public who generally have no duty to take action to prevent a crime, the Constitution requires a president to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed."

"The commander in chief is the only person in the Constitution whose duty is explicitly laid out to ensure that the laws are faithfully executed," Luria said. "I look at it as a dereliction of duty. (Trump) didn't act. He had a duty to act."

Thursday's hearing will be the first in the prime-time slot since the June 9 debut that was viewed by an estimated 20 million people.

Luria said the hearing will highlight additional testimony from White House counsel Pat Cipollone and other witnesses, not yet seen before, "who will add a lot of value and information to the events of that critical time on January 6." She cited Trump's inaction that day for more than three hours, along with a tweet that afternoon criticizing Vice President Mike Pence for lacking courage to contest Democrat Joe Biden's win in the 2020 presidential election that may have served to egg on the mob.

"We will go through pretty much minute by minute during that time frame, from the time he left the stage at the Ellipse, came back to the White House, and really sat in the White House, in the dining room, with his advisers urging him continuously to take action, to take more action," Luria said.

The hearing comes at a critical juncture point for the panel, which is racing to wrap up findings for a final report this fall. The committee had originally expected at this point to be concluding much of its investigation with a final hearing but is now considering possible options for additional interviews and hearings, panel members said.

"This investigation is very much ongoing," said Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif. "The fact that a series of hearings is going to be concluded this Thursday doesn't mean that our investigation is over. It's very active, new witnesses are coming forward, additional information is coming forward."

For instance, the committee took a rare step last week in issuing a subpoena to the Secret Service, an executive branch department. That came after it received a closed briefing from the Homeland Security Department watchdog that the Secret Service had deleted texts from around Jan. 6, according to two people familiar with the matter.

The finding raised the startling prospect of lost evidence that could shed further light on Trump's actions during the insurrection, particularly after earlier testimony about his confrontation with security as he tried to join supporters at the Capitol.

"That's what we have to get to the bottom of," said Luria, regarding possibly missing texts. "Where are these text messages? Can they be recovered? And we have subpoenaed them because they're legal records that we need to see for the committee."

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

'Evil cannot win': Killed by Russian missile, Liza is buried

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

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VINNYTSIA, Ukraine (AP) — Beautiful and serene in a crown of white flowers, 4-year-old Liza Dmytrieva, who was killed by a Russian missile strike, was buried Sunday in central Ukraine as an Orthodox priest burst into tears and told weeping relatives that “evil cannot win.”

Liza, who had Down syndrome, was en route to see a speech therapist with her mother when Russian missiles struck the city of Vinnytsia on Thursday, far from the front lines. At least 24 people were killed, including Liza and two boys ages 7 and 8, and more than 200 were wounded, including Liza’s mother.

“Look, my flower! Look how many people came to you,” Liza’s grandmother, Larysa Dmytryshyna, said, caressing Liza as she lay in an open coffin with flowers and teddy bears in Vinnytsia’s 18th-century Transfiguration Cathedral.

Liza’s father, Artem Dmytriev, stood silent, tears flowing down his face.

Liza’s mother, 33-year-old Iryna Dmytrieva, remained in an intensive care unit in grave condition. The family didn’t tell her that Liza was being buried Sunday, fearing it could affect her condition.

“Your mommy didn’t even see how beautiful you are today,” Dmytryshyna said, weeping.

Helena Sydorenko, a longtime family friend, said Liza’s mother “invested a lot of effort in socializing Liza.”

“She wanted her kid to have a full life,” Sydorenko added.

When the war started, Dmytrieva and her family fled Kyiv, the capital, for Vinnytsia, a city 270 kilometers (167 miles) to the southwest, which until Thursday was considered relatively safe.

Shortly before the explosion, Dmytrieva had posted a video on social media showing her daughter straining to reach the handlebars to push her own stroller, happily walking through Vinnytsia, wearing a denim jacket and white pants, her hair decorated with a barrette.

After the Russian missile strike, Ukraine’s emergency services shared photos showing her lifeless body on the ground next to her blood-stained stroller. Ukraine’s first lady remembered how cheerful and happy the little girl was when she met her. The videos and photos have gone viral, the latest images from the brutal war in Ukraine to horrify the world.

Liza’s closest relatives sat on both sides of the coffin, and many more crowded Vinnytsia’s Orthodox cathedral to pay their last tributes to the girl.

“I didn’t know Liza, but no person can go through this with calm,” Orthodox priest Vitalii Holoskevych said, bursting into tears. “Because every burial is grief for each of us. We are losing our brothers and sisters.”

He paused and continued in a trembling voice: “We know that evil cannot win.”

Later, at a windswept cemetery, relatives and friends bid farewell to Liza under gray skies.

“You loved this song very much, you danced every day. This song sounds for you now,” Dmytryshyna, Liza’s grandmother, said. The song was “Oh, the Red Viburnum in the Meadow,” which has become a symbol of resistance in Ukraine after Russia’s invasion.

“It’s suffering and despair. There is no forgiveness for them,” said Ilona, another family friend.

A 7-year-old boy killed in the same Russian airstrike was also buried Sunday along with his mother in a village near Vinnytsia. They were at a medical center when the missiles hit the building. Another young boy slain in the same airstrike is to be buried in Vinnytsia on Monday.

Fires scorch Spain and France, where flames reach the beach

By ANGELA CHARLTON and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Firefighters battled wildfires raging out of control in Spain and France, including one whose flames reached two popular Atlantic beaches on Sunday, as Europe wilted under an unusually extreme heat wave.

So far, there have been no fire-related deaths in France or Spain, but authorities in Madrid have blamed soaring temperatures for hundreds of deaths. And two huge blazes, which have consumed pine forests for six days in southwestern France, have forced the evacuation of some 16,200 people.

In dramatic images posted online, a wall of black smoke could be seen rolling toward the Atlantic on a stretch of Bordeaux’s coast that is prized by surfers from around the world. Flames raced across trees abutting a broad sandy beach, as planes flew low to suck up water from the ocean. Elsewhere, smoke

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blanketed the skyline above a mass of singed trees in images shared by French firefighters.

In Spain, firefighters supported by military brigades tried to stamp out over 30 fires consuming forests spread across the country. Spain's National Defense Department said that "the majority" of its fire-fighting aircraft have been deployed to reach the blazes, many of which are in rugged, hilly terrain that is difficult for ground crews to access.

Fire season has hit parts of Europe earlier than usual this year after a dry, hot spring that the European Union has attributed to climate change. Some countries are also experiencing extended droughts, while many are sweltering in heat waves.

In Spain's second heat wave of the summer, many areas have repeatedly seen peaks of 43 degrees Celsius (109 degrees Fahrenheit). According to Spain's Carlos III Institute, which records temperature-related fatalities daily, 360 deaths were attributed to high temperatures from July 10 to 15. That was compared with 27 temperature-related deaths the previous six days.

Almost all of Spain was under alert for high temperatures for another day Sunday, while there were heat wave warnings for about half of France, where scorching temperatures were expected to climb higher on Monday. The French government has stepped up efforts to protect people in nursing homes, the homeless and other vulnerable populations after a vicious heat wave and poor planning led to nearly 15,000 deaths in 2003, especially among the elderly.

The fire in La Teste-de-Buch has forced more than 10,000 people to flee at a time when many typically flock to the nearby Atlantic coast area for vacation. French authorities have closed several spots to the public along that coast because of the fire, including La Lagune and Petit Nice beaches that the fire reached on Sunday, and Europe's tallest sand dune, the Dune du Pilat.

The Gironde regional government said Sunday afternoon that "the situation remains very unfavorable" due to gusting winds that helped fan more flare-ups overnight.

A second fire near the town of Landiras has forced authorities to evacuate 4,100 people this week. Authorities said that one flank has been brought under control by the dumping of white sand along a two-kilometer (1.2-mile) stretch. Another flank, however, remains unchecked.

People who were forced to flee shared worries about their abandoned homes with local media, and local officials organized special trips for some to fetch pets they had left behind in the rush to get to safety.

Overall, more than 100 square kilometers (40 square miles) of land have burned in the two fires.

Emergency officials warned that high temperatures and winds Sunday and Monday would complicate efforts to stop the fires from spreading further.

"We have to stay very prudent and very humble, because the day will be very hot. We have no favorable weather window," regional fire official Eric Florensan said Sunday on radio France-Bleu.

Some of the most worrisome blazes in Spain are concentrated in the western regions of Extremadura and Castilla y León. Images of plumes of dark smoke rising above wooded hills that have been baked under the sun have become common in several scarcely populated rural areas.

Drought conditions in the Iberian Peninsula have made it particularly susceptible to wildfires. Since last October, Spain has accumulated 25% less rainfall than is considered normal — and some areas have received as much as 75% less than normal, the National Security Department said.

While some fires have been caused by lightning strikes and others the result of human negligence, a blaze that broke out in a nature reserve in Extremadura called La Garganta de los Infiernos, or "The Throat of Hell," was suspected to be the result of arson, regional authorities said.

Firefighters have been unable to stop the advance of a fire that broke out near the city of Cáceres that is threatening the Monfragüe National Park and has kept 200 people from returning to their homes. Another fire in southern Spain near the city of Malaga has forced the evacuation of a further 2,500 people.

The office of Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez announced that he will travel to Extremadura to visit some of the hardest-hit areas on Monday.

Hungary, Croatia and the Greek island of Crete have also fought wildfires this week, as have Morocco and California. Italy is in the midst of an early summer heat wave, coupled with the worst drought in its

north in 70 years — conditions linked to a recent disaster, when a huge chunk of the Marmolada glacier broke loose, killing several hikers.

Scorching temperatures have even reached northern Europe. An annual four-day walking event in the Dutch city of Nijmegen announced Sunday that it would cancel the first day, scheduled for Tuesday, when temperatures are expected to peak at around 39 degrees Celsius (102 degrees Fahrenheit).

Britain's weather agency has issued its first-ever "red warning" of extreme heat for Monday and Tuesday, when temperatures in southern England may reach 40 C (104 F) for the first time.

College of Paramedics Chief Executive Tracy Nicholls warned Sunday that the "ferocious heat" could "ultimately, end in people's deaths."

Holocaust survivors mark 80 years since mass Paris roundup

By ANGELA CHARLTON and JADE LE DELEY undefined

PARIS (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron decried his Nazi-collaborator predecessors and rising antisemitism, vigorously vowing to stamp out Holocaust denial as he paid homage Sunday to thousands of French children sent to death camps 80 years ago for one reason alone: because they were Jewish.

Family by family, house by house, French police rounded up 13,000 people on two terrifying days in July 1942, wresting children from their mothers' arms and dispatching everyone to Nazi death camps. France honored those victims this weekend, as it tries to keep their memory alive.

For the dwindling number of survivors of France's wartime crimes, a series of commemoration ceremonies Sunday were especially important. At a time of rising antisemitism and far-right discourse sugarcoating France's role in the Holocaust, they worry that history's lessons are being forgotten.

A week of ceremonies marking 80 years since the Vel d'Hiv police roundup on July 16-17, 1942 culminated Sunday with an event led by Macron, who pledged that wouldn't happen ever again.

"We will continue to teach against ignorance. We will continue to cry out against indifference," Macron said. "And we will fight, I promise you, at every dawn, because France's story is written by a combat of resistance and justice that will never be extinguished."

He denounced former French leaders for their roles in the Holocaust and the Vel d'Hiv raids, among the most shameful acts undertaken by France during World War II.

Over those two days, police herded 13,152 people — including 4,115 children — into the Winter Velodrome of Paris, known as the Vel d'Hiv, before they were sent on to Nazi camps. It was the biggest such roundup in Western Europe. The children were separated from their families; very few survived.

In public testimonies over the past week, survivor Rachel Jedinak described a middle-of-the-night knock on the door, and being marched through the streets of Paris and herded into the velodrome in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower.

She recalled her desperate mother shouting at police. Some French neighbors informed on Jews, others wept as they watched them being corralled like livestock.

Chantal Blaszkas' aunts and uncle were among the children rounded up: 6-year-old Simon, 9-year-old Berthe, 15-year-old Suzanne. Their names are now engraved on a monument at a garden where the velodrome once stood, along with some 4,000 other children targeted in the raids. Photos of the children hang from tree trunks, the result of years of painstaking research to identify and honor the long-anonymous victims.

Of the children deported from the Vel d'Hiv 80 years ago, only six survived.

"Can you imagine?" Blaszkas asked, pointing at the names and shaking her head. "Can you imagine?"

Serge Klarsfeld, a renowned Nazi hunter whose father was deported to Auschwitz, spoke Saturday in the garden, calling it an "earth-shaking testimony to the horrors lived by Jewish families." Klarsfeld, 86, stressed the urgency of passing on memories as more of the war's witnesses pass on.

On Sunday, Macron visited a site in Pithiviers south of Paris where police sent families after the Vel d'Hiv roundup, before sending them onto the Nazi camps. A new memorial site honoring the deportees was inaugurated, including a plaque that reads: "Let us never forget."

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The president urged vigilance: "We are not finished with antisemitism, and we must lucidly face that fact." "It is showing itself on the walls of our cities" when they are vandalized with swastikas, he continued. "It is infiltrating social networks ... it inserts itself into debates on some TV shows. It shows itself in the complacency of certain political forces. It is prospering also through a new form of historic revisionism, even negationism."

Another ceremony was held at the Shoah Memorial in the Paris suburb of Drancy, home to a transit center that was central to French Jews' deadly journey to Nazi camps. Most of the 76,000 Jews deported from France under the collaborationist Vichy government passed through the Drancy camp.

The Drancy Shoah memorial actively documents the Holocaust, especially for younger generations. This work is especially important at a time when Jewish communities are increasingly worried about rising antisemitism in Europe. France's Interior Ministry has reported a rise in antisemitic acts in France over recent years, and said that while racist and anti-religious acts overall are increasing, Jews are disproportionately targeted.

Anxiety has worsened for some since the far-right National Rally party made a surprising electoral breakthrough last month, winning a record 89 seats in France's National Assembly. Party co-founder Jean-Marie Le Pen has been convicted of racism and downplaying the Holocaust. His daughter Marine, who now leads the party, has distanced herself from her father's positions, but the party's past still raises concerns for many Jews.

During the campaign for this year's French presidential election, far-right candidate and pundit Eric Zemmour propagated the false claim that Adolf Hitler's Vichy collaborators safeguarded France's Jews.

It took France's leadership 50 years after World War II to officially acknowledge the state's involvement in the Holocaust, when then-President Jacques Chirac apologized for the French authorities' role in the Vel d'Hiv raids.

"The policy, from 1942 onward, was to organize the murder of the Jews of Europe and therefore to organize the deportation of the Jews of France," said Jacques Fredj, director of the Paris Shoah Memorial. "Most of the time, the decisions were made by the Nazis ... but the management was French."

Macro spelled it out clearly Sunday: "Let us repeat here with force, whether self-styled revisionist commentators like it or not."

None of France's Vichy wartime leaders, he said, "wanted to save Jews."

Prosecutors try to prove 1996 killing with body missing

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The smiling face of Kristin Smart still looks out from a billboard in front of attorney James Murphy Jr.'s law office more than 25 years after the college freshman vanished from a campus on California's picturesque central coast.

It once offered a \$75,000 reward to help find the college student, but these days the billboard simply says: "Justice For Kristin."

Smart is still missing, but the man last seen with her at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo in 1996 is on trial more than a year after he was arrested on a murder charge along with his father, who is accused of helping hide her body.

Opening statements are scheduled Monday in Monterey County Superior Court in Salinas in the trial of Paul Flores and his father, Ruben Flores, who is charged as an accessory. Both men have pleaded not guilty.

The younger Flores, now 45, killed the 19-year-old during an attempted rape on May 25, 1996 in his dorm room at Cal Poly, where both were first-year students, prosecutors said. His father, now 81, allegedly helped bury the slain student behind his home in the nearby community of Arroyo Grande and later dug up the remains and moved them.

Paul Flores had long been considered a suspect in the killing, but prosecutors only arrested him and his father in 2021 after the investigation was revived.

San Luis Obispo Sheriff Ian Parkinson acknowledged missteps by detectives over the years and he

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credited a popular podcast about Smart's disappearance called "Your Own Backyard" for helping unearth new information and inspiring witnesses to speak with investigators.

Smart's remains have never been found and the mystery of how she vanished from the scenic campus tucked against a verdant coastal mountain range is likely to be central to the trial.

Investigators have conducted dozens of searches over two decades, but turned their attention in the past two years to Ruben Flores' home about 12 miles (20 kilometers) south of Cal Poly in the community of Arroyo Grande.

Behind lattice work beneath the deck of his large house on a dead end street off Tally Ho Road, archaeologists working for police in March 2021 found a soil disturbance about the size of a casket and the presence of human blood, prosecutors said.

The blood was too degraded to extract a DNA sample. While a blood expert said it was human blood, the test used did not rule out the possibility it was from a ferret or ape, though court records said no remains of such an animal were found there.

Murphy, who has sued the father and son on behalf of Smart's parents, scoffed at the idea that it was anything other than human blood.

"The size of the area in which the blood was found would make it a prehistoric ferret that would be in Jurassic Park," Murphy said. "When was the last time you drove down Tally Ho Road in Arroyo Grande and saw a primate?"

The lawsuit Murphy filed against Ruben Flores alleged that "under cover of darkness," the father and unnamed accomplices moved the body four days after investigators searched his house in February 2020. Investigators didn't conduct their dig beneath the deck until more than a year later.

San Luis Obispo Superior Court Judge Craig Van Rooyen ordered the pair to trial after a 22-day preliminary hearing in which he found a "strong suspicion" the father and son committed the crimes they were charged with, that a grave existed under Ruben Flores' deck and it once held Smart's remains.

Prosecutors, defense lawyers and San Luis Obispo sheriff's deputies are constrained by a court order prohibiting them from discussing the case.

Attorney Harold Mesick, who represents Ruben Flores, previously said the evidence unearthed was ambiguous. He said that soil under the deck had been dumped there after being excavated to lay a foundation nearby.

"It was a hot mess because it's been previously excavated," Mesick said. "If we even call it evidence, it is so minimal as to shock the conscience."

Paul Flores was the last person seen with Smart on May 25, 1996 as he walked her home from an off-campus party where she got intoxicated.

He downplayed his interactions with her when he first spoke with police three days later, saying she walked to her dorm under her own power, though other witnesses said that she had passed out earlier in the night and Flores helped hold her up as they walked back to campus.

Flores had a black eye when investigators interviewed him. He told them he got it playing basketball with friends, who denied his account, according to court records. He later changed his story to say he bumped his head while working on his car.

At a preliminary hearing last year, prosecutors presented evidence that four cadaver dogs stopped at Flores' room and alerted to the scent of death near his bed.

Van Rooyen prohibited prosecutors from presenting evidence alleging Paul Flores had a history of stalking, inappropriate touching and aggressive sexual behavior toward women, including allegations he drugged and raped four women in the Los Angeles area years after Smart disappeared. Over the years, women called him "Chester the molester" and "psycho Paul," according to a court document.

Van Rooyen ruled in favor of a defense request to move the trial out of San Luis Obispo County because it was unlikely the Flores' could receive a fair trial with so much much notoriety in the city of about 47,000 people.

The case was moved 110 miles (177 kilometers) north to Salinas, a small city in the agricultural region where John Steinbeck set some of his best-known novels.

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Defense lawyer Robert Sanger previously said the evidence remained the same as it did in the 1990s when Paul Flores was the prime suspect but never charged with a crime.

"The evidence then and now is based on speculation and not proof of facts," Sanger said in court documents.

Sanger has tried to pin the killing on someone else — noting that Scott Peterson, who was later convicted at a sensational trial of killing his pregnant wife and the fetus she was carrying — was also a Cal Poly student at the time.

Trial Judge Jennifer O'Keefe — who is a year younger than Kristin Smart would be today — however, has barred suggestions of alternate suspects unless Sanger can provide evidence of their direct involvement.

Separate juries were selected to weigh the evidence against each defendant. The trial is expected to last about four months.

Pleas pile up in Italy for PM Draghi to rethink exit

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pleas were piling up Sunday in Italy aimed at persuading Premier Mario Draghi to stay in office instead of resigning as he tried to do last week after being let down by a populist coalition partner.

Hundreds of mayors have signed an open letter. Union leaders and industrialists, who often have opposing agendas, have been united in pressing Draghi to keep on governing. Italy and other European nations are facing soaring energy costs, steep inflation, surging COVID-19 cases and the war in Ukraine. In addition, a severe drought is parching Italy.

By Sunday afternoon — three days after populist 5-Star Movement senators boycotted a confidence vote tied to an government energy relief bill — more than 80,000 citizens had signed a "Draghi stay" online petition, launched by former Premier Matteo Renzi, who heads a small centrist party in Draghi's 17-month-old government.

"Let's mobilize ourselves in every way to bring back Draghi to Chigi Palace (the premier's office)," Renzi tweeted.

The letter originally grouped 11 mayors, including from Rome and Milan, but soon gained support from several hundred mayors of cities and towns, state TV said Sunday. The mayors cited the problems of everyday citizens as some of the "good reasons" Draghi should stay put. Financial markets consider the former European Central Bank chief as a pillar of solid fiscal governance for Italy, which is receiving billions in European Union pandemic recovery funds.

If Draghi has been moved by the entreaties, he wasn't saying.

The premier has been holed up in a countryside home mulling over what he'll tell Parliament on Wednesday. President Sergio Mattarella, who last week rebuffed Draghi's resignation, told him to lay out the political situation before lawmakers.

Clearly not budging was Giuseppe Conte, Draghi's predecessor, who triggered the crisis by having his 5-Star lawmakers walk out of the Senate vote because it contained a provision to build an incinerator in trash-choked Rome that the populists oppose.

Depending on support from his coalition partners ranging from the left to the right, Draghi had been forging ahead with economic and other reforms that are a requirement for Italy to receive 200 billion euros (\$200 billion) in EU pandemic recovery funds.

His steadfast support for Ukraine, including sending military aid despite grumbling by the populists, has earned him statesman status in Europe.

Conte, whose left-leaning ruling coalition crumbled in 2021 amid pandemic struggles, over the weekend refused to pledge unwavering support for Draghi's national unity government. After huddling for hours with his squabbling Movement, Conte demanded that Draghi give the 5-Stars "guaranteed conditions of respect" and said his lawmakers could vote "from time to time" in favor of government measures.

Five-Star Sen. Gianmauro Dell'Olio insisted Sunday that if Draghi "wants to offer us peanuts, I don't believe that it's opportune for us to carry on with this government."

Ultimately, Mattarella must decide what to do if Draghi on Wednesday insists on resigning.

Mattarella could dissolve Parliament, triggering an early election as soon as late September. He could also see if there is political support for a limited-agenda government to stay in place until Italian lawmakers pass the national budget, necessary by year's end.

Florida amusement park pauses new sniper-like laser game

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The Orlando amusement park where a teenager fell from a ride and died earlier this year has paused a new sniper-like laser shooting game amid criticism following a recent spate of mass shootings.

The Bullseye Blast game let riders of the 400-foot (122-meter) Wheel at ICON Park pay an extra \$5.95 to shoot laser blasters at 50 targets strategically placed along rooftops throughout the park.

In a statement issued Saturday, park officials said that while the ride had been "well-received" by customers, some had questioned whether it was appropriate following mass shootings at a July 4 parade in a Chicago suburb, an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, and a grocery store in Buffalo, New York.

"Some non-guests and community members expressed that they considered the toy shooting device used to be insensitive," the statement said.

"The attractions industry has many similar games which use similar shooting devices, so that is what we were limited to when exploring the game. However, we believe that a device can and should be designed which does not offend anyone in the community."

Park officials said they "look forward to leading this new innovation."

While the park has removed the game from its website, earlier this week it offered the following description of Bullseye Blaster: "To get the highest score possible, players need to hit as many of these as possible with their laser blaster during the 18-minute ride."

The promos featured photos of riders pointing laser guns from the ride, FOX-35 reported.

Critics and supporters of the ride weighed in on social media over the past few days.

"This is in poor taste!" Florida state Sen. Linda Stewart, a Democrat from Orlando, said in a tweet responding to a news story about the ride. Others on social media scoffed at the park for pausing the game.

Controversy has surrounded the park, which is located along Orlando's International Drive, since 14-year-old Tyre Sampson of Missouri fell from the Free Fall tower and died earlier this year.

An investigation later found the teen was nearly 100 pounds over the ride's weight limit. His family has filed a lawsuit.

The park announced the Bullseye Blast in a news release on Thursday.

"The Wheel at ICON Park is the only observation wheel in the world to provide this amazing, new infrared technology, and effectively gamify and reinvigorate the experience to an entirely new audience of gamers," the release said,

The blasters featured a scope and infrared beams that help players aim at targets on roofs.

Dennis Spiegel, who is founder and CEO of International Theme Park Services Inc., told the Orlando Sentinel on Friday that he was surprised ICON Park executives, the creators of the blaster game — Amusements LLC and Steradian Technologies — didn't consider the negative.

"Seeing these simulated guns pointed down at you from these heights, from all these cars, just doesn't seem like the right decision," Spiegel told the Sentinel. "It's a little bizarre."

Drought in northern Mexico threatening livelihoods

By FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Mexico (AP) — Restaurant owner Leticia Rodríguez celebrated the construction late last year of a new lakeside boulevard in this northern Mexico town that she hoped would draw more people to her business. But now with La Boca reservoir nearly empty, tourists have stopped coming to boat, water ski or just eat a meal.

Rodríguez had to let go most of her staff in April and now runs the restaurant with her husband and

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children.

A deepening drought in northern Mexico is not only making everyday life challenging for residents, but also in some cases is threatening their livelihoods.

"The only hope is that it rains," Rodríguez said. "That even the tail of a hurricane arrives so that the reservoir can recover, because that is what is killing us the most."

Last week, Mexico's National Water Commission declared a drought emergency allowing the government to take steps to guarantee the water supply. The country's Drought Monitor placed almost half the country -- nearly all of the north and central regions -- in drought conditions.

The drought is related to the weather event known as La Niña, whose effects have intensified with climate change. La Niña is a natural and cyclical cooling of parts of the equatorial Pacific that changes weather patterns worldwide. In some areas like northern Mexico and the U.S. southwest, that has meant increased drought.

The drying up of Santiago's reservoir is not the only problem for the industrial hub of Monterrey, about 22 miles (35 kilometers) to the north.

Another reservoir that feeds the city, Cerro Prieto is at less than half of 1% of its capacity - basically empty - leaving a third reservoir called El Cuchillo, which is 46% full, said Juan Ignacio Barragán, director general of the Monterrey Water and Sewer Services.

In normal conditions, 60% of the city's water comes from the reservoirs and the remainder from deep and shallow wells and subterranean water capturing tunnels.

In the next two weeks, Barragán said the city plans to expand the use of tankers to deliver water to more outlying neighborhoods.

To mitigate the worsening situation, Nuevo Leon state's industrial and agricultural sectors agreed to cede a significant amount of their water rights to the state. Even so, experts say the next few weeks will be critical. If the usual arrival of rains in late August are delayed, water restrictions in the city will have to be extended.

Aldo Iván Ramírez, a professor in Monterrey Technological University's engineering school, said that while Monterrey's situation is worrisome - it accounts for 12% of Mexico's GDP - "it is much worse in other localities of the country."

The city faced serious drought in 1998 and 2013, but it's more complicated now because only El Cuchillo still has water, he said.

This year's water crisis still caught many in the city by surprise. Few homes had tanks to store water. Many people have now adopted measures to conserve water.

"I think this crisis has made the people think a lot," Ramírez said. "I wouldn't want to see a hurricane come and alleviate this crisis and everyone forget about it because that would be the worst thing that could happen to us."

Back in Santiago, Rodríguez, the restaurant owner, said that before it dried up hundreds of tourists came to the reservoir every weekend.

On a recent day, she pointed across the muddy lake bottom to an abandoned restaurant well into the lake where diners used to arrive by boat. It closed earlier this year when the water receded and the tourists stopped coming.

"For me this is worse than the pandemic, because at least in the pandemic there were people," the 54-year-old Santiago native said.

Now ducks walk in the shallow water around the end of the dock where tourists used to board boats for lake cruises.

Sitting on one of the seats of the formerly floating dock, 65-year-old Juan Pérez said he lost his job along with 60 others when the company that gave boat tours went under earlier this year. Now he survives working as a janitor for the town.

"It's sad to see it like this ... it's worse than a cemetery," Pérez said, remembering the festive atmosphere that used to reign on weekends here.

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Authorities are trying to get as much of the remaining water out of La Boca as possible.

They installed a floating pump that they hope will extract some 105 gallons (400 liters) of water per second that will be piped to Monterrey, said engineer Raúl Ramírez, whose company installed the pump. They planned to leave enough water to keep alive the remaining aquatic life.

Standing on a dry lake bed that months ago was covered with water, Ramírez said: "We were warned of the possibility that this could occur since last year and unfortunately as a society we didn't listen, we didn't want to understand."

No major problems with ballot drop boxes in 2020, AP finds

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE and CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The expanded use of drop boxes for mailed ballots during the 2020 election did not lead to any widespread problems, according to an Associated Press survey of state election officials across the U.S. that revealed no cases of fraud, vandalism or theft that could have affected the results.

The findings from both Republican- and Democratic-controlled states run contrary to claims made by former President Donald Trump and his allies who have intensely criticized their use and falsely claimed they were a target for fraud.

Drop boxes are considered by many election officials to be safe and secure, and have been used to varying degrees by states across the political spectrum. Yet conspiracy theories and efforts by Republicans to eliminate or restrict them since the 2020 election persist. This month, the conservative majority on the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that drop boxes are not allowed under state law and can no longer be widely used.

Drop boxes also are a focal point of the film "2,000 Mules," which used a flawed analysis of cellphone location data and ballot drop box surveillance footage to cast doubt on the results of the 2020 presidential election.

In response to the legislation and conspiracy theories surrounding drop boxes, the AP sent a survey in May to the top elections office in each state seeking information about whether the boxes were tied to fraudulent votes or stolen ballots, or whether the boxes and the ballots they contained were damaged.

All but five states responded to the questions.

None of the election offices in states that allowed the use of drop boxes in 2020 reported any instances in which the boxes were connected to voter fraud or stolen ballots. Likewise, none reported incidents in which the boxes or ballots were damaged to the extent that election results would have been affected.

Several states said they do not allow the use of drop boxes while some had not allowed them before the 2020 election, when the coronavirus pandemic prompted wider use of mailed ballots. In states where they are used, secretaries of state or election commissioners may not be aware of every incident involving a drop box if it was not reported to their office by a county or other local jurisdiction.

Drop boxes have been a mainstay in states with extensive mail voting for years and had not raised any alarms. They were used widely in 2020 as election officials sought to provide alternative ways to cast ballots with the COVID-19 outbreak creating concerns about in-person voting and U.S. Postal Service delays.

Starting months before the 2020 presidential election, Trump and his allies have made a series of unfounded claims suggesting that drop boxes open the door to voter fraud. Republican state lawmakers, as part of their push to add new voting restrictions, have in turn placed rules around when and where the boxes could be accessed.

Arizona Assistant Secretary of State Allie Bones said drop boxes are "safe and secure" and might even be considered more secure than Postal Service mailboxes. She said bipartisan teams in the state collect ballots from the drop boxes and take them directly to secure election facilities, following so-called chain-of-custody protocols.

"Not to say that there's anything wrong with USPS, and I think they do a great job as well, but the hysteria around ballot drop boxes I think is just a made-up thing to create doubt and fear," Bones said.

Arizona has had robust mail-in voting for years that includes the use of drop boxes, and in the AP sur-

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vey, the state reported no damage, stolen ballots or fraud associated with them in 2020. Nevertheless, Trump-aligned lawmakers in the state pushed for legislation that would ban drop boxes, but were stymied by Democrats and several Republicans who disagreed with the strategy.

Of the states responding to the survey, 15 indicated that drop boxes were in use before 2020 and 22 have no limits on how many can be used in this fall's election.

Republican-led Florida and North Dakota and Democratic-led New York did not respond. Montana and Virginia did, but did not answer the survey questions related to the 2020 election.

Last year, five states added new restrictions to ballot drop boxes, according to research by the Voting Rights Lab. That included Georgia, where President Joe Biden won a narrow victory and where drop boxes were allowed under an emergency rule prompted by the pandemic.

Georgia Republicans say their changes have resulted in drop boxes being a permanent option for voters, requiring all counties to have at least one. But the legislation, which includes a formula of one box per 100,000 registered voters, means fewer will be available in the state's most populous communities compared with 2020.

Along with incidents recorded in news reports, the AP found a handful of cases in 2020 in which drop boxes were damaged.

Officials in Washington state said there were instances when drop boxes were hit by vehicles, but that no ballot tampering had been reported. Massachusetts election officials said one box was damaged by arson in October 2020 but that most of the ballots inside were still legible enough for voters to be identified, notified and sent replacements.

A drop box was set on fire in Los Angeles County in 2020, but a local election official said the vast majority of the ballots that were damaged were able to be recovered and voters provided new ballots.

"The irony is they were put in place to respond to a problem with the post office and make sure people had a secure way of returning their ballots," said Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, a Democrat. "And so there's no actual legitimate concern except for, again, potential external threats or people who have been radicalized through misinformation to try to tamper with drop boxes to make a point."

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Drop boxes are considered by many election officials to be safe and secure, and have been used to varying degrees by states across the political spectrum. Yet conspiracy theories and efforts by Republicans to eliminate or restrict them since the 2020 election persist. This month, the Wisconsin Supreme Court's conservative majority ruled that drop boxes are not allowed under state law and can no longer be widely used.

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which the boxes or ballots were damaged to the extent that election results would have been affected. A previous AP investigation found far too few cases of potential voter fraud in the six battleground states where Trump disputed his loss to President Joe Biden to affect the outcome.

A number of states — including Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas — said they do not allow the use of drop boxes. Some had not allowed them before the 2020 election, when the coronavirus pandemic prompted wider use of mailed ballots. In states where they are used, secretaries of state or election commissioners may not be aware of every incident involving a drop box if it was not reported to their office by a county or other local jurisdiction.

Drop boxes have been a mainstay in states with extensive mail voting for years and had not raised any alarms. They were used widely in 2020 as election officials sought to provide alternative ways to cast ballots with the COVID-19 outbreak creating concerns about in-person voting. The boxes also gave voters a direct method for submitting their ballots, rather than sending them through the U.S. Postal Service and worrying about delivery delays.

Starting months before the 2020 presidential election, Trump and his allies have made a series of unfounded claims suggesting that drop boxes open the door to voter fraud. Republican state lawmakers, as part of their push to add new voting restrictions, have in turn placed rules around when and where the boxes could be accessed.

Arizona Assistant Secretary of State Allie Bones said drop boxes are “safe and secure” and might even be considered more secure than Postal Service mailboxes. She said bipartisan teams in the state collect ballots from the drop boxes and take them directly to secure election facilities, following so-called chain-of-custody protocols.

“Not to say that there’s anything wrong with USPS, and I think they do a great job as well, but the hysteria around ballot drop boxes I think is just a made-up thing to create doubt and fear,” Bones said.

Arizona has had robust mail-in voting for years that includes the use of drop boxes, and in the AP survey, the state reported no damage, stolen ballots or fraud associated with them in 2020. Nevertheless, Trump-aligned lawmakers in the state pushed for legislation that would ban drop boxes, but were stymied by Democrats and several Republicans who disagreed with the strategy.

Utah is a state controlled by Republicans that also has widespread use of mailed ballots and no limits on the number of drop boxes a county can deploy. Jackson Murphy, spokesman for Lt. Gov. Deidre Henderson, a Republican who is the state’s top election official, said in the AP survey that Henderson encourages counties to make secure drop boxes accessible to voters.

Of the states responding to the survey, 15 indicated that drop boxes were in use before 2020 and 22 have no limits on how many can be used in this fall’s election. At least five states take the extra step of setting a minimum number of drop boxes required.

Republican-led Florida and North Dakota and Democratic-led New York did not respond. Montana and Virginia did, but did not answer the survey questions related to the 2020 election.

Last year, five states added new restrictions to ballot drop boxes, according to research by the Voting Rights Lab. That included Georgia, where President Joe Biden won a narrow victory and where drop boxes were allowed under an emergency rule prompted by the pandemic.

Georgia Republicans say their changes have resulted in drop boxes being a permanent option for voters, requiring all counties to have at least one. But the legislation, which includes a formula of one box per 100,000 registered voters, means fewer will be available in the state’s most populous communities compared with 2020.

Iowa lawmakers last year approved legislation to limit drop boxes to one per county. Previously, state law did not say how many drop boxes counties could use. This year, Louisiana, Missouri and South Carolina have passed laws effectively prohibiting drop boxes, according to the Voting Rights Lab, which researches state election law changes.

Along with incidents recorded in news reports, the AP survey found a handful of cases in 2020 in which drop boxes were damaged.

Officials in Washington state said there were instances when drop boxes were hit by vehicles, but that

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A drop box also was set on fire in Los Angeles County in 2020, but a local election official said the vast majority of the ballots that were damaged were able to be recovered and voters provided new ballots. Another drop box in California was temporarily closed because of a wildfire.

"The irony is they were put in place to respond to a problem with the post office and make sure people had a secure way of returning their ballots," said Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, a Democrat. "And so there's no actual legitimate concern except for, again, potential external threats or people who have been radicalized through misinformation to try to tamper with drop boxes to make a point."

North Carolina provides an example of how deep-seated the misinformation has become. The state does not allow drop boxes and did not use them during the 2020 election.

"And despite that fact, people are still claiming drop box fraud must have occurred in North Carolina," said Patrick Gannon, public information director for the State Board of Elections. "You can't make this up. Oh wait. Yes, you can."

In Wisconsin, Republicans had supported the use of drop boxes before Trump seized on mailed ballots as part of his unsubstantiated claim that the 2020 election was stolen from him. The Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling that found ballot drop boxes were not allowed under state law also said no one other than the voter can return their ballot in person to a local clerk's office or alternate site.

Some voters said they were frustrated by the ruling.

Kelly O'Keefe Boettcher of Milwaukee said she cast her ballot in a drop box in 2020 because of safety concerns during the pandemic and is upset that they'll no longer be an option for her or for voters who are less able to get to the polls.

"Drop boxes are accessible; they are egalitarian," she said. "To watch them go, I feel, people can say it's not voter suppression. But it is."

Wisconsin state Rep. Tim Ramthun, a Republican candidate for governor, reintroduced a resolution this past week for the GOP-controlled Legislature to decertify Biden's victory there, adding the state Supreme Court ruling on drop boxes as one reason to do so. Trump also renewed his calls for decertification in Wisconsin, citing the ruling.

According to the AP survey, the Wisconsin Elections Commission said it is not aware of any cases in 2020 in which drop boxes were damaged, had submitted ballots stolen or destroyed, or were used for fraudulent ballots.

"Isn't a mailbox a secure place to put a letter?" asked Dave Wanninger, who with his wife used a ballot drop box in a Milwaukee public library in 2020. "Why would a drop box be any different?"

U.S. houses of worship increase security after shootings

By DEEPA BHARATH and LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Rev. Steven Marsh never thought he would see the day his church in Laguna Woods, California — a town of 16,500 populated largely by retirees — would be spending \$20,000 a month for security.

Then a gunman opened fire on May 15 during a luncheon at Geneva Presbyterian Church, where Marsh is senior pastor, killing one and injuring five other members of a Taiwanese congregation that met there. Officials said the man, who was motivated by political hatred against Taiwan, chained the church's doors shut and hid firebombs inside before shooting at the gathering of elderly church members.

Houses of worship are meant to be places of shelter, reflection and peace, where strangers are welcome. But the recent string of high-profile mass shootings in the U.S. is a reminder violence can happen anywhere, prompting some faith leaders to ramp up security.

At Geneva Presbyterian, armed security guards now stand watch every weekday and during Sunday services. The church also is adding more security cameras, developing an active shooter plan and apply-

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ing for Department of Homeland Security funding.

"We're not trying to militarize the church," Marsh said. "We prayed about it and made a decision to have armed security as an act of faith."

Without the new security measures, Marsh predicted that a mass exodus by the congregation and the schools on the church's campus would have followed the shooting.

Creating a space that is both safe and welcoming is possible, said Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker, the former spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas.

In January, he and three others were taken hostage by a pistol-wielding man during a Shabbat service. Cytron-Walker threw a chair at the gunman — a courageous act that helped them safely escape — after a nearly 11-hour standoff. He credits the several rounds of active shooter training he has taken.

"When you are unable to run away or find a hiding place, you need to find a way to act and to fight back," Cytron-Walker said. "When we were most afraid he was going to kill us, I saw a moment I had been looking for all day long."

Cytron-Walker now leads Temple Emanuel in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. As he works on a security plan with his new congregation, he is being mindful of how a welcoming synagogue can enhance safety "because someone who wants to do harm can see that they are not going to be able to walk in anonymous."

Historically, sanctuaries have been vulnerable to violent attacks — from bombings at Black churches during the Civil Rights era to more recent shootings in the U.S. at mosques and Sikh gurdwaras. In the U.S., FBI hate crime statistics show that incidents in churches, synagogues, temples and mosques increased 34.8% between 2014 and 2018.

"All faiths are under attack in America by radicals and extremists," said Alon Stivi, a security consultant for synagogues, Jewish community centers and day schools. Some congregants are reticent to show up.

"They're asking a lot more questions: 'Should I come to the weekly services or just come for the holidays? And if I come, should I bring my kids?'"

Religious leaders who once preferred to leave security in the hands of the divine are taking precautions that seemed unthinkable years prior, Stivi said. More congregants are carrying concealed handguns to services, too, he said.

From \$25 million in 2016 to \$180 million last year, the federal government has steadily increased the amount of funding it sets aside to help the faith community with security costs, Stivi said. But not all faith leaders are aware they can apply for it, he said.

Past attacks on houses of worship and other public spaces have prompted faith leaders to evaluate — sometimes for the first time — if there is more that can be done to keep their flocks safe.

Today an armed police officer watches over Sunday services at Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, said the Rev. Kylon Middleton, who leads the congregation. When an officer is unable to be on campus for church events, members carrying concealed weapons keep watch.

"It is sad, but we are in such times where we must have armed security to protect our people," he said.

The church is two blocks away from Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. In 2015, a self-proclaimed white supremacist opened fire during Bible study and killed nine worshippers, including the senior pastor. Middleton said the late pastor was like a brother to him.

In the wake of the massacre, security discussions at Mt. Zion factor worship style into the equation, including the need for some to always keep their eyes open, especially when most have theirs closed in prayer, Middleton said.

"No one ever thought mass shootings would happen in churches, which are sacred sanctuaries where you can escape the world and seek spiritual refuge," he said. "When that space has been violated, it creates a restlessness of spirit."

After the 2018 massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Rabbi Jon Leener met with local New York police to discuss safety for Base BKLYN, his home-based ministry that has welcomed thousands.

For years, he and his wife, Faith, would unlock their front door right before Shabbat dinners, believing in a Judaism where no door is shut or locked. That changed after Tree of Life — the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history. Leener also installed a security camera and a buzz-in system for visitors. He hired

an armed guard after this year's hostage situation in Texas.

"It's terribly unfortunate that we live in an age when we need to compromise our value of openness for the threat of violence, but that is just the reality at the moment," Leener said.

It is a balancing act for many. Marsh said the shooting in his church happened because members of the Taiwanese congregation were welcoming to the shooter — a person they didn't know.

"The church needs to be welcoming to all people, and we cannot lose that," he said.

"Are there ways an active shooter could get on our campus again? Yes. But we have to be willing to have this happen again. Otherwise, we would all have to go through metal detectors. It would no longer be a church."

High-flying experiment: Do stem cells grow better in space?

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

Researcher Dhruv Sareen's own stem cells are now orbiting the Earth. The mission? To test whether they'll grow better in zero gravity.

Scientists at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles are trying to find new ways to produce huge batches of a type of stem cell that can generate nearly any other type of cell in the body — and potentially be used to make treatments for many diseases. The cells arrived over the weekend at the International Space Station on a supply ship.

"I don't think I would be able to pay whatever it costs now" to take a private ride to space, Sareen said. "At least a part of me in cells can go up!"

The experiment is the latest research project that involves shooting stem cells into space. Some, like this one, aim to overcome the terrestrial difficulty of mass producing the cells. Others explore how space travel impacts the cells in the body. And some help better understand diseases such as cancer.

"By pushing the boundaries like this, it's knowledge and it's science and it's learning," said Clive Svendsen, executive director of Cedars-Sinai's Regenerative Medicine Institute.

Six earlier projects from the U.S., China and Italy sent up various types of stem cells — including his team's study of the effects of microgravity on cell-level heart function, said Dr. Joseph Wu of Stanford University, who directs the Stanford Cardiovascular Institute. Wu helped coordinate a series of programs on space-based stem cell research last year.

Earthly applications of much of this research may be a little ways off.

At this point, the only stem cell-based products approved by the Food and Drug Administration contain blood-forming stem cells from umbilical cord blood for patients with blood disorders such as certain cases of lymphoma. There are no approved therapies using the kind of stem cells being sent to space or others derived from them, said Jeffrey Millman, a biomedical engineering expert at Washington University in St. Louis.

But clinical trials underway involving stem cells target conditions such as macular degeneration, Parkinson's disease and heart attack damage. And Millman is involved in research that could lead to a new approach for treating Type 1 diabetes.

Scientists see great promise in stem cells.

THE GRAVITY DILEMMA

That promise is tempered by a frustrating earthly problem: The planet's gravity makes it tough to grow the vast quantities of cells necessary for future therapies that may require more than a billion per patient.

"With current technology right now, even if the FDA instantly approved any of these therapies, we don't have the capacity to manufacture" what's needed, Millman said.

The issue? In large bioreactors, the cells need to be stirred vigorously or they clump or fall to the bottom of the tank, Millman said. The stress can cause most cells to die.

"In zero G, there's no force on the cells, so they can just grow in a different way," Svendsen said.

The Cedars-Sinai team has sent up what are called induced pluripotent stem cells. Many scientists consider them the perfect starting materials for all sorts of personalized, cell-based treatments. They carry a patient's own DNA, and their versatility makes them similar to embryonic stem cells, only they are repro-

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grammed from adults' skin or blood cells.

For their experiment, which is being funded by NASA, a shoebox-sized container holds bags filled with spheres of cells and all of the pumps and solutions needed to keep them alive for four weeks. The cargo will also include neural stem cells originating from Svendsen. The scientists used stem cells derived from their own white blood cells because it was easy for them to give consent.

They will run the experiment remotely with a box of cells on Earth for comparison. They'll get the space experiment back in five weeks or so, when it returns in the same SpaceX capsule.

The work is designed to pave the way for more NASA-funded research. If they are able to figure out how to make billions of cells in orbit, Svendsen said, "the impact could be huge."

A HIGH-FLYING FUTURE

During the same cargo launch, researchers from the University of California, San Diego, sent blood stem cells to the space station, a repeat of an experiment they did last year. They want to find out if low Earth orbit induces faster aging in the cells, leading to problems that set the stage for precancerous changes. One goal is to protect astronauts' health.

Afshin Beheshti, a researcher at NASA Ames Research Center, said scientists are just beginning to understand some of the risks of space travel.

"There's more unknowns in space than there are knowns," he said. "Any new type of experiment is going to shed light on how the body responds to the space environment."

Ultimately, Beheshti said, the research should yield more than practical, earthly solutions like new medicines. It will also help with far-off human aspirations, like living on other planets.

'Those people': French minister's LGBTQ remarks spark anger

By ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Pressure is mounting on a French government minister to quit over comments stigmatizing homosexuality and LGBTQ people, in the latest challenge to President Emmanuel Macron's leadership.

Caroline Cayeux' remarks have hurt and angered many — including her colleagues — and prompted broader discussion around persistent discriminatory attitudes by people in power.

More than 100 prominent figures published an appeal Sunday in the newspaper Journal du dimanche questioning why she's still in government. Signatories included parliament members, senior officials, an Olympic medalist, doctors, artists, an ex-prime minister, a former top Macron adviser and others from within Macron's centrist political camp.

Cayeux was asked in an interview this week about her opposition to France's 2013 law authorizing gay marriage and adoption, and comments at the time saying they were "against nature." Speaking Tuesday to broadcaster Public Senat, she said she was being wrongly painted as prejudiced.

"I maintain my remarks. I always said that if the law were voted, I would apply it," she said. "I have a lot of friends among all those people, and I'm being targeted by an unfair trial. This upsets me."

The remarks set off shockwaves among LGBTQ people and those who fight against discrimination and abuse, and provoked calls for her resignation. A legal complaint was filed against her for public insult.

Cayeux then tweeted her regrets, saying her words were "inappropriate," and sent a letter to anti-discrimination groups to apologize. She told newspaper Le Parisien that the comments "do not at all reflect my views."

Many question the sincerity of her change of heart, and say the damage has been done.

"How can we believe that the government will respect equality among everyone, will commit to fighting discrimination and guarantee gender freedom?" asks an online petition by LGBTQ groups calling for the resignation of Cayeux and two other government members who opposed the gay marriage law. The petition calls them "spokespersons for hate and rejection."

But her bosses appear to be sticking by Cayeux. Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne said Friday that Cayeux's remarks were "clumsy" but welcomed her apology, and said Cayeux would be "vigilant" going forward to support the fight against anti-LGBTQ discrimination.

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The issue has divided the government at a time when Macron is politically weakened after losing his majority in parliament.

Transport Minister Clément Beaune, who is gay, called Cayeux's comments "extremely hurtful." Government spokesman Olivier Veran called them out of touch with the times.

In Sunday's published appeal, the signatories called on the government to set a better example and defend France's values of equality.

They celebrated "those people" that Cayeux referred to, noting that LGBTQ soldiers were among those marching in Thursday's Bastille Day parade in Paris, and LGBTQ people work in local and national government and France's security forces.

"We are proud of all those people who, through their dignified and discreet behavior, know how to serve the Republic better than she does," it concluded.

Indiana doctor's lawyer tells AG to halt false statements

By ARLEIGH RODGERS Associated Press/Report for America

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — A lawyer on Friday emailed the Indiana state's attorney general asking him to stop spreading false or misleading information about an Indianapolis doctor who performed an abortion in June on a 10-year-old rape victim from Ohio.

Attorney Kathleen DeLaney sent the "cease and desist" letter to Indiana Republican Attorney General Todd Rokita on behalf of obstetrician-gynecologist Caitlin Bernard, who performed a medical abortion on the girl.

The letter says Rokita's statements Wednesday on Fox News "cast Dr. Bernard in a false light and allege misconduct in her profession." DeLaney said the doctor could file a defamation claim against Rokita if he does not comply.

Rokita told Fox that he would investigate whether Bernard violated child abuse notification or abortion reporting laws. He also said his office would look into whether anything Bernard said to the Indianapolis Star about the case violated federal medical privacy laws. He offered no specific allegations of wrongdoing.

Records obtained by The Associated Press and other local media show Bernard submitted the report July 2, which is within the state's required three-day reporting period for an abortion performed on a girl younger than 16.

"We are especially concerned that, given the controversial political context of the statements, such inflammatory accusations have the potential to incite harassment or violence from the public which could prevent Dr. Bernard, an Indiana licensed physician, from providing care to her patients safely," the letter states.

A 27-year-old man has been charged in the girl's rape, confirming the case that was scrutinized by Republican politicians and some media outlets. Those reactions grew in intensity after Democratic President Joe Biden expressed sympathy for the girl when signing an executive order protecting some abortion access last week.

"Like any correspondence, it will be reviewed if and when it arrives. Regardless, no false or misleading statements have been made," Kelly Stevenson, a spokesperson in Rokita's office, said via email.

Bernard tweeted Friday that she hopes "to be able to share my story soon."

"It has been a difficult week, but my colleagues and I will continue to provide healthcare ethically, lovingly, and bravely each and every day," she wrote.

Dr. Diana Contreras, chief health care officer at Planned Parenthood Federation of America, issued a statement saying, "No medical provider should be harassed, intimidated, or criminalized for doing their job. It is unconscionable and unacceptable, and we condemn it in the strongest possible terms."

Maryland Dems eager to break GOP's hold on governor's office

By BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — One of the best opportunities for Democrats to regain a governor's office this year is in Maryland, and the race to succeed term-limited Republican Larry Hogan has drawn a crowd of

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candidates. Winning back the seat shouldn't seem so tough for Democrats in a state where they outnumber Republicans by a 2-1 ratio, but the GOP has won three of the past five elections.

Nationwide, Republicans hold a 28-22 edge in governor's seats. Of the 36 governor's races this year, Maryland and Massachusetts represent the best chances for Democrats to narrow the gap.

Maryland Democrats see an opening now because the popular Hogan, only the second Republican governor to win reelection in the state history, cannot seek a third term.

That's attracted prominent Democrats to Tuesday's primary, including members of former President Barack Obama's Cabinet: onetime Labor Secretary Tom Perez, who also was chairman of the Democratic Party, and ex-Education Secretary John King.

Also in the race are Wes Moore, a bestselling author supported by Oprah Winfrey; Comptroller Peter Franchot, the state's tax collector, who has name recognition in Maryland from four successful statewide races; and former state Attorney General Doug Gansler.

The primary winner will probably face either Kelly Schulz, a Republican endorsed by Hogan, or Dan Cox, who is backed by Donald Trump.

Given some of the GOP successes over the past two decades, Democratic voters are thinking more carefully about who can win in November.

Nancy Duden, 61, voted early in Annapolis, for Perez. It was a decision she struggled over during the drive to the voting center.

"Sometimes there aren't very good choices, and this time there were so many good choices that I think people really need to pay attention to the qualifications of each candidate," she said. "But I also think you have to give thought to who can actually win."

Democrats once held the governor's mansion for more than three straight decades. When Republican Robert Ehrlich won in 2002, he was the first in his party to be governor in 36 years — since Spiro Agnew in 1966.

A poll last month by the Sarah T. Hughes Center for Politics at Goucher, The Baltimore Banner and WYPR found no clear front-runner among the Democrats, with Franchot at 16% and Moore and Perez each at 14%.

The primary comes less than a month after a new Maryland law approved by the Democratic-controlled legislature took effect to expand abortion access. It was passed in anticipation of the Supreme Court striking down *Roe v. Wade*, which the justices did in June.

Less than a week later, Hogan directed the Maryland State Police to suspend the state's "good and substantial reason" standard for permits to carry handguns after the Supreme Court struck down a similar New York law.

The Supreme Court also limited the reach of the nation's main air pollution law that's used to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power plants — a blow to environmentally conscious Maryland, home to the Chesapeake Bay, the nation's largest estuary.

"We've got to keep Republicans away from the Statehouse," said Doug McLaine, 78, who voted early in Annapolis for Moore and expressed concern about the gun ruling as the nation confronts a wave of mass shootings.

Moore, a former Army combat veteran who served in Afghanistan and former CEO of a national anti-poverty group, said the high court's rulings have illustrated how "massively important" it is for Democrats to regain the governor's office.

"Governors matter in this moment, now more than ever before, because governors are really a last line of defense that many constituents are going to have against just barbaric rulings that we're seeing from this Supreme Court," Moore told The Associated Press.

Perez, who also served as assistant attorney general for civil rights during the Obama administration and was a county council member in Maryland's most populous jurisdiction in the suburbs of the nation's capital, said it's more important than ever for states to set the tone on crucial issues such as job creation, clean energy, health care and reproductive health.

"There are so many ways that we can set example for the rest of the country, and I think Maryland is one of the top opportunities to flip a seat from red to blue," Perez said.

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While Democrats who control Maryland's legislature have been able to override many of Hogan's vetoes over the years, the governor has had impact. For example, he recently blocked a request to accelerate \$3.5 million in annual spending for training to expand the number of people who can provide abortions in the state.

Franchot, who has kept an amiable working relationship with Hogan on a powerful state spending panel with three voting members, had urged Hogan to release the money.

"I think that should have been done immediately," Franchot said.

Gansler, who lost the Democratic primary in 2014 to then-Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown, who went on to lose to Hogan, said the past two elections have illustrated the dangers of choosing a Democrat who is too liberal.

"In order to truly fight climate change and bring back the Chesapeake Bay, we need to have a Democrat in office, and we cannot commit political suicide again by electing a Democrat in the primary who cannot win in the general election," Gansler said.

King, a progressive Democrat, said he believes the party has a great opportunity to flip the governor's office.

"In order to do that we need a candidate who's going to inspire folks across the Democratic Party, and particularly inspire young people, people of color and people who are outraged by the Supreme Court decisions on abortion access and gun safety, and I think I'm the best positioned to do that," King said.

Jon Baron, a former nonprofit executive, and Ashwani Jain, a former official in Obama's administration, also are running. Rushern Baker, a former Prince George's County executive, announced he has suspended his campaign, though he is still appearing on the ballot. Jerome Segal, an activist, and Ralph Jaffe, a retired teacher, also are on the ballot.

Today in History: July 18, Eric Rudolph sentenced to life

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, July 18, the 199th day of 2022. There are 166 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 18, 1969, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., left a party on Chappaquiddick (chap-uh-KWIH'-dihk) Island near Martha's Vineyard with Mary Jo Kopechne (koh-PEHK'-nee), 28; Kennedy's car later went off a bridge into the water. Kennedy was able to escape, but Kopechne drowned.

On this date:

In 1536, the English Parliament passed an act declaring the authority of the pope void in England.

In 1863, during the Civil War, Union troops spearheaded by the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, made up of Black soldiers, charged Confederate-held Fort Wagner on Morris Island, S.C. The Confederates were able to repel the Northerners, who suffered heavy losses; the 54th's commander, Col. Robert Gould Shaw, was among those who were killed.

In 1918, South African anti-apartheid leader and president Nelson Mandela was born in the village of Mvezo.

In 1925, Adolf Hitler published the first volume of his autobiographical screed, "Mein Kampf (My Struggle)."

In 1944, Hideki Tojo was removed as Japanese premier and war minister because of setbacks suffered by his country in World War II. American forces in France captured the Normandy town of St. Lo.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman signed a Presidential Succession Act which placed the speaker of the House and the Senate president pro tempore next in the line of succession after the vice president.

In 1964, nearly a week of rioting erupted in New York's Harlem neighborhood following the fatal police shooting of a Black teenager, James Powell, two days earlier.

In 1984, gunman James Huberty opened fire at a McDonald's in San Ysidro (ee-SEE'-droh), California, killing 21 people before being shot dead by police. Walter F. Mondale won the Democratic presidential nomination in San Francisco.

In 1994, a bomb hidden in a van destroyed a Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing

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85. Tutsi rebels declared an end to Rwanda's 14-week-old civil war.

In 2005, an unrepentant Eric Rudolph was sentenced in Birmingham, Alabama, to life in prison for an abortion clinic bombing that killed an off-duty police officer and maimed a nurse.

In 2013, Detroit, which was once the very symbol of American industrial might, became the biggest U.S. city to file for bankruptcy, its finances ravaged and its neighborhoods hollowed out by a long, slow decline in population and auto manufacturing.

In 2020, Canadian officials said the Toronto Blue Jays baseball team would not be able to play its home games in Toronto during the shortened 2020 season because it wasn't safe for players to travel back and forth from the United States. (The Blue Jays would play "home" games in the ballpark of their minor league affiliate in Buffalo, N.Y.)

Ten years ago: Rebels penetrated the heart of Syria's power elite, detonating a bomb inside a high-level crisis meeting in Damascus that killed three leaders of the regime, including President Bashar Assad's brother-in-law and the defense minister.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump declared that it was time to "let Obamacare fail" after the latest Republican effort to repeal President Barack Obama's health care law was blocked in the Senate. Trump announced that he would nominate former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman to be U.S. ambassador to Russia. The Trump administration slapped new sanctions on 18 Iranian individuals, groups and networks, a day after certifying to Congress that Iran was technically complying with the nuclear deal and could continue enjoying nuclear sanctions relief.

One year ago: Collin Morikawa, a 24-year-old from California, won the British Open to become the first golfer to capture two different majors on his first attempt; he'd won the 2020 PGA Championship 11 months earlier. Tadej Pogacar of Slovenia won cycling's Tour de France for a second straight year.

Today's Birthdays: Skating champion and commentator Dick Button is 93. Olympic gold medal figure skater Tenley Albright is 87. Movie director Paul Verhoeven is 84. Musician Brian Auger is 83. Singer Dion DiMucci is 83. Actor James Brolin is 82. Baseball Hall of Famer Joe Torre is 82. Singer Martha Reeves is 81. Country-rock singer Craig Fuller (Pure Prairie League) is 73. Business mogul Richard Branson is 72. Actor Margo Martindale is 71. Singer Ricky Skaggs is 68. Actor Audrey Landers is 66. World Golf Hall of Famer Nick Faldo is 65. Actor Anne-Marie Johnson is 62. Actor Elizabeth McGovern is 61. Rock musician John Hermann (Widespread Panic) is 60. Rock musician Jack Irons is 60. Broadcaster Wendy Williams is 58. Actor Vin Diesel is 55. Actor Grant Bowler is 54. Retired NBA All-Star Penny Hardaway is 51. Bluegrass musician Jesse Brock (The Gibson Brothers) is 50. Alt-country singer Elizabeth Cook is 50. Actor Eddie Matos is 50. Dance music singer-songwriter M.I.A. is 47. Rock musician Daron Malakian (System of a Down; Scars on Broadway) is 47. Actor Elsa Pataky ("The Fast and the Furious" films) is 46. Rock musician Tony Fagenson (formerly with Eve 6) is 44. Movie director Jared Hess is 43. Actor Jason Weaver is 43. Actor Kristen Bell is 42. Actor Michiel Huisman (MIHK'-heel HOWS'-man) is 41. Rock singer Ryan Cabrera is 40. Actor Priyanka Chopra is 40. Christian-rock musician Aaron Gillespie (Underoath) is 39. Actor Chace Crawford is 37. Actor James Norton is 37. Musician Paul Kowert (Punch Brothers) is 36. Actor Travis Milne is 36.