

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 1 of 57

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [1- Help Wanted ad](#)
- [2- Highway Patrol Sturgis Rally Daily Information](#)
- [3- Prairie Doc: Health promotion and personal safety](#)
- [4- Weather Pages](#)
- [9- Daily Devotional](#)
- [10- 2022 Community Events](#)
- [11- Subscription Form](#)
- [12- News from the Associated Press](#)



“Simple pleasures
are the last healthy
refuge in a
complex world.”

-Oscar Wilde



Help Wanted

Want a fun job with flexible hours? We're looking for 16 year olds and older with smiling faces! Free meals and we'll work around your schedule. Are you a mom wanting some hours while your kids are in school or a teenager wanting to earn some money or an adult looking for work? Daytime – evening – week-end hours are available and we'll make the hours work for you! Stop in for an application. Dairy Queen, 11 East Hwy 12 in Groton.

CLEANER WANTED

SATURDAY CLEANER NEEDED IN FERNEY, SD, 830 am to 130 pm. \$15 an hour. Must be dependable and be willing to work around customers coming into the family owned business. Please call Stephanie at 605-381-1758.

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

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

CARD OF THANKS

I WOULD LIKE to say a big thank you to everyone who called, sent cards, gave gifts or visited me for my 80th birthday. I would also like to thank my daughter, Deb, for putting on a wonderful supper for me. It was a very special time. Blessings to all of you!

Sharon Busch

SABER SHRED HELP WANTED

Now hiring full or part-time positions. Tire handler, responsible for assisting in unloading tires from semi trailers, feeding the tire shredder and general cleanup tasks. Must be able to lift 50 lbs. Starting pay \$16/hr. Contact Robert Wegner at 605-397-7579. Saber Shred Solutions (formerly New Deal Tire Groton, SD)

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

© 2022 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 2 of 57

Highway Patrol Sturgis Rally Daily Information

Compiled from 6 a.m. Saturday August 06, 2022, to 6 a.m. Sunday August 14, 2022

FINAL NUMBERS

Item	Sturgis	Rapid City District	District Total	Last Year to Date
DUI Arrests	116	32	148	122
Misd Drug Arrests	101	47	148	151
Felony Drug Arrests	89	14	103	112
Total Citations	823	607	1430	1572
Total Warnings	3044	2244	5288	4319
Cash Seized	\$4335.00	\$0.00	\$4335.00	\$3658.00
Vehicles Seized	4	0	4	0
For Drug Poss.	4	0	4	0
For Serial No.	0	0	0	0
Non-Injury Crashes	19	26	45	50
Injury Crashes	34	16	50	62
Fatal Crashes	1	2	3	4
# of Fatalities	1	2	3	4

Fatal Crashes:

No fatal crashes reported Saturday.

Injury Crashes:

At 8:53 a.m., Saturday, Crook City Road, 12 miles west of Sturgis: A 2006 Harley-Davidson FLXHS Street Glide motorcycle was southbound on Crook City Road when the driver lost control while negotiating a curve. The motorcycle crossed the centerline and into the east ditch. The 67-year-old female driver sustained minor injuries and was taken to the Spearfish hospital. She was wearing a helmet.

At 11:24 a.m., Saturday, U.S. Highway 85, mile marker 89, 43 miles north of Belle Fourche: A 2003 Harley-Davidson Touring motorcycle was northbound on U.S. Highway 85 when the rear tire blew, causing the driver to lose control. The 68-year-old male was thrown from the motorcycle and suffered serious non-life threatening injuries. He was airlifted to the Rapid City hospital. He was not wearing a helmet.

At 12:33 p.m., Saturday, Vanocker Canyon Road, mile marker 12, six miles southeast of Sturgis: A 2016 Indian Chieftain motorcycle was traveling on Vanocker Canyon Road when the driver failed to negotiate a curve. The motorcycle went into the ditch. The 62-year-old male driver suffered minor injuries and was taken to the Sturgis hospital. He was wearing a helmet.

At 1:39 p.m., Saturday, eastbound off ramp of exit 30, Interstate 90: A 2000 Chevrolet Silverado pickup rear-ended a Jeep Wrangler, which had been stopped at the red light. The 38-year-old male driver of the

Groton Daily Independent

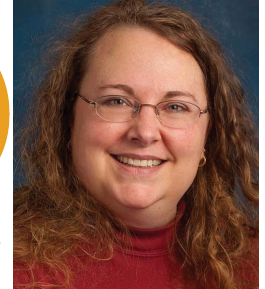
Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 3 of 57

pickup and the 36-year-old female passenger were not injured. The 20-year-old male driver of the Jeep and the 21-year-old female passenger both received minor injuries and were transported to the Sturgis hospital.

At 2:15 p.m., Saturday, South Dakota Highway 79, mile marker 62, near Hermosa: A 2009 Ford F-150 pickup was northbound on South Dakota Highway 79 when it collided with the rear passenger door of a northbound 2002 Chevrolet Van. The pickup rolled onto its passenger side and the van was pushed to the southbound shoulder. The 70-year-old male driver of the pickup received minor injuries and was not transported. The 78-year-old female driver of the van sustained serious non-life threatening injuries and was transported to the Rapid City hospital. Both were wearing seatbelts.

At 7:55 p.m., near intersection of Junction Avenue and Anna Street, within Sturgis city limits: A 2005 Yamaha motorcycle struck a 2008 Dodge Ram pickup. Both occupants of the motorcycle were thrown from the motorcycle. Both the 42-year-old male driver and the 41-year-old female passenger received serious non-life threatening injuries and were taken to the Sturgis hospital. Neither wore a helmet. The 18-year-old female driver of the pickup was not injured. She was wearing a seatbelt.

Health promotion and personal safety



Debra Johnston, MD

The annual wellness exam is one of my favorite things to do as a doctor. It's a chance to talk about one of my passions: health promotion.

As most patients expect, our health promotion discussion includes smoking cessation, diet, and exercise. Perhaps more surprising is our conversation regarding personal safety. We talk about sunscreen, seatbelts, helmets, distracted driving or driving under the influence. And I ask if their guns are locked up.

I grew up in Iowa and I live in South Dakota. Both are states where hunting and guns are such a part of the culture, we don't think twice about people having guns in their homes. The same can be said about many states in our region.

So why do I ask if guns are locked up?

Guns are a popular target of thieves. Anyone can have a break in, and you don't want to make it easy for the thieves to profit from the act, or worse still, hurt someone. More importantly, however, is the safety of people in the home.

Sometimes parents tell me confidently their guns are well hidden from their children. They usually reconsider when I ask, "Did you know where your parents hid the Christmas presents when you were young?"

Sometimes parents tell me their children have been taught not to touch guns. However, those same children, when asked at their well child visits, often tell me they would pick up an unattended gun to bring it to an adult. Research bears this out.

Protecting children in the home from unintentional injury is only part of the story. I also hope to prevent intentional injury. Although guns are used in only about five percent of suicide attempts, they are involved in more than half of suicide deaths. In fact, nationwide, over 50 percent of gun deaths are suicides.

The underlying causes for suicide are complex and many, but once a person decides to do it, there is often a very brief period before acting on that decision. For many individuals, if they are unable to carry out their plan in those first few minutes, or if that plan involves a less lethal means, the moment of crisis passes. People are far more likely to survive a suicide attempt that does not involve a gun, while more than 80 percent of people who attempt suicide using a gun die.

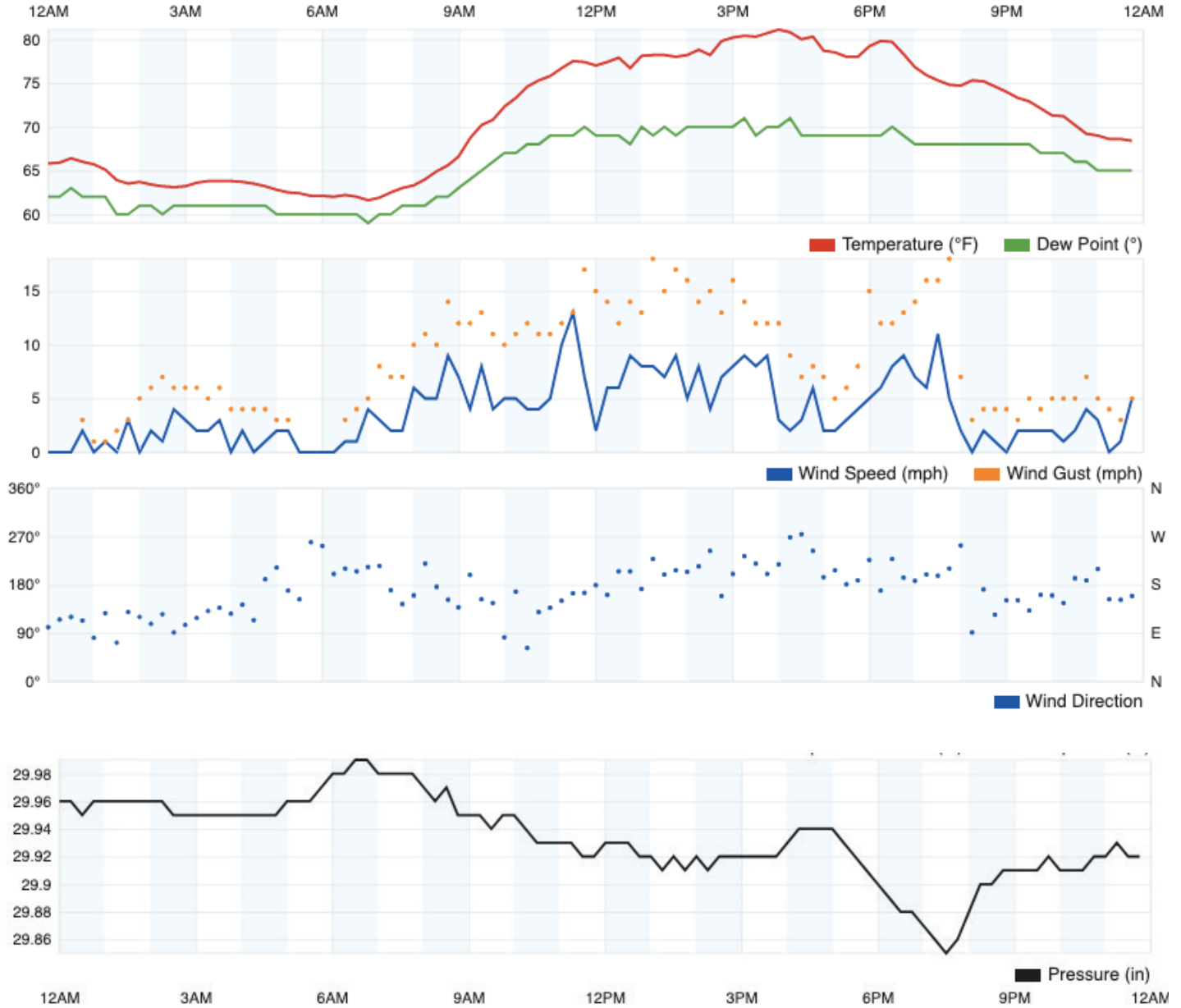
Keeping guns unloaded and locked up, keeping ammunition somewhere separate, removing the guns from the home if someone is struggling: these are actions that can save the life of someone you love. It could even be your life. This topic is indeed integral to health promotion.

Debra Johnston, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc®...based on science, built on trust, at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

Groton Daily Independent






Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 5 of 57

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 6 of 57

Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms	Sunny
High: 76 °F	Low: 60 °F	High: 78 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 81 °F



This Morning – Mid Afternoon

Rain showers and a few embedded thunderstorms are expected to move through south central and southeast SD

The rain will exit this afternoon

*Cloudy Today (Aug 15th),
with Below Normal Temperatures*



Late This Afternoon & Evening

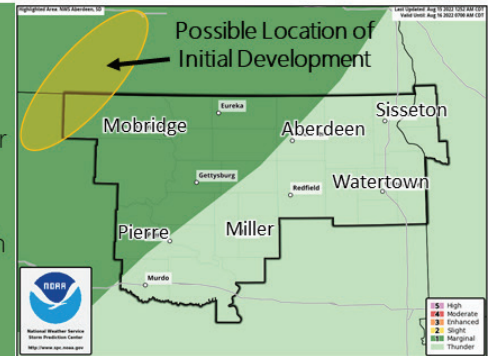
Thunderstorms may develop (20-40% chance) in central ND and north central SD and then slowly drop to the southeast through the evening before diminishing.

Severe Threats

Hail
Up to 1" in diameter

Wind
Gusts up to 60 mph

Localized Heavy Rain



A cloudy day is expected today, with a couple different areas having opportunities for rain through this evening. Through mid-afternoon, rain showers with a few embedded thunderstorms are expected over south central and southeastern South Dakota. Then this afternoon and evening, thunderstorms may develop in north central South Dakota and move southeast before diminish during the late evening.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 7 of 57

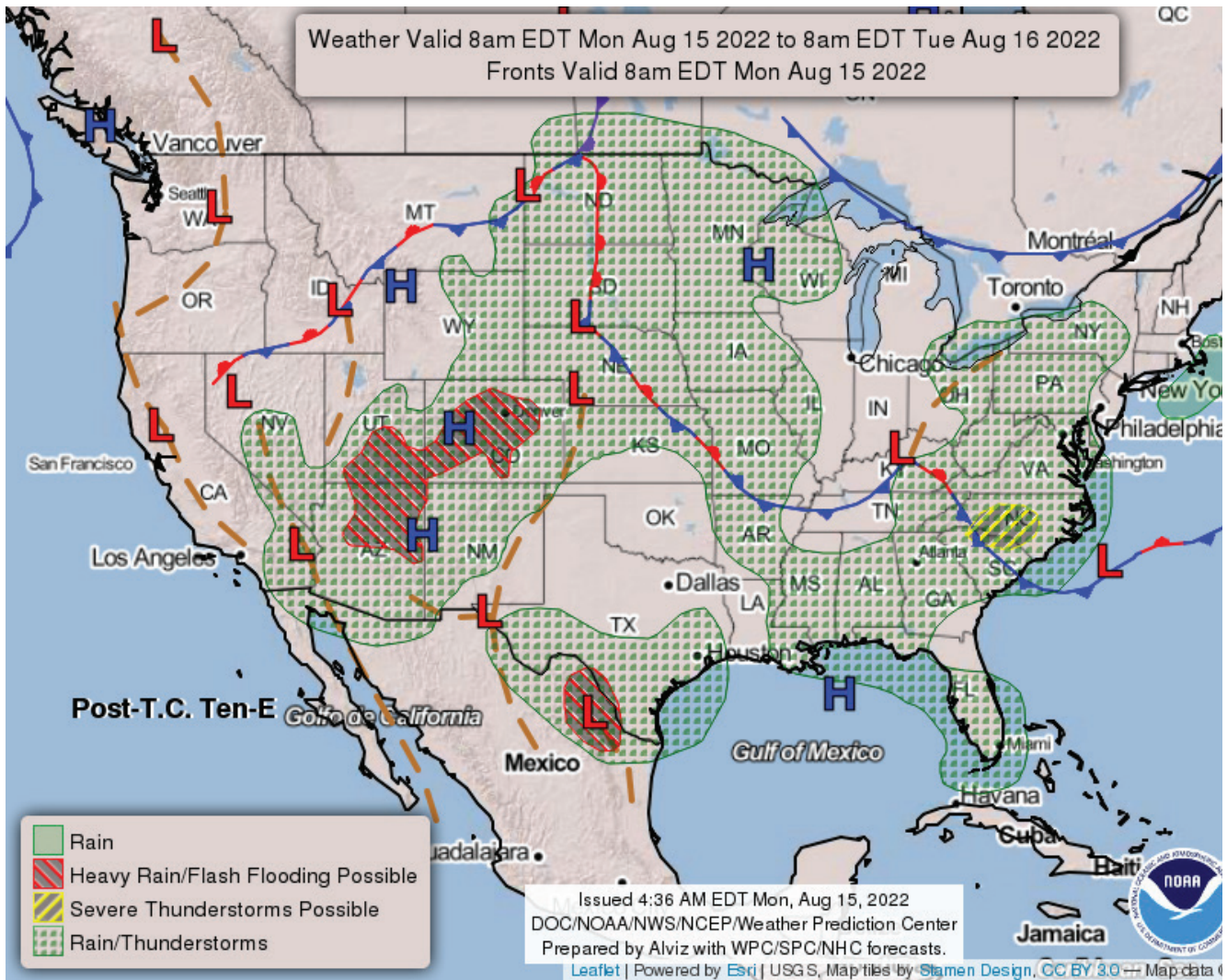
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 81 °F at 4:02 PM
Low Temp: 62 °F at 7:01 AM
Wind: 18 mph at 1:04 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 9 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 111 in 1937
Record Low: 42 in 1895
Average High: 83°F
Average Low: 57°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 1.08
Precip to date in Aug.: 0.65
Average Precip to date: 15.18
Precip Year to Date: 15.19
Sunset Tonight: 8:41:38 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:33:15 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 8 of 57

Today in Weather History

August 15, 1886: A tornado moved northeast from 5 miles southwest of Newark in Marshall County, through town and into North Dakota. Only three buildings were reportedly undamaged at Newark, and a bartender at a saloon was killed. Three people died in two homes on adjoining farms 2 miles southwest of town. A saddle from a Newark stable was carried for a half mile. In North Dakota, houses and barns were damaged along the Wild River. This tornado was estimated as an F3.

August 15, 1987: On this day the largest hailstone was reported in Brown County. The size of the hailstone was 4.5 inches in diameter, and fell on the southwest corner of Warner. This storm also produced F1 tornado that touchdown about 2 miles southwest of Warner. An estimated wind gust of 60 mph was also reported about 2 miles NNW of Stratford.

August 15, 2011: Slow moving thunderstorms across parts of northern Roberts County produced anywhere from 4 to 8 inches of rainfall resulting in flash flooding. The town of New Effington was affected with many roads along with several homes flooded. Sandbagging took place to keep the water from the school. Highway 127 from New Effington to Hammer was flooded in several spots. The floodwaters remained for several days afterward with several roads flooded.

1787: Tornadoes were reported in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. Wethersfield, Connecticut was hard hit by the tornado outbreak. There, a woman and her family were caught in the open. She and her son were killed. Clothes from the family farm were carried three miles away. This event is regarded to be the most significant tornado outbreak in early New England history.

1946 - Saint Louis, MO, was deluged with a record 8.78 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1967 - The sundance fire in northern Idaho was started by lightning. Winds of 50 mph carried firebrands as much as ten miles in advance to ignite new fires, and as a result, the forest fire spread twenty miles across the Selkirk Mountains in just twelve hours, burning 56,000 acres. The heat of the fire produced whirlwinds of flame with winds up to 300 mph which flung giant trees about like matchsticks. (David Ludlum)

1983: Hurricane Alicia formed on this day and was the costliest tropical cyclone in the Atlantic since Hurricane Agnes in 1972. It struck Galveston and Houston, Texas directly, causing \$2.6 billion (1983 USD) in damage and killing 21 people. This storm was the worst Texas hurricane since Hurricane Carla in 1961. Also, Alicia was the first billion-dollar tropical cyclone in Texas history.

1987 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a sharp cold front produced severe weather in the Upper Midwest during the afternoon and evening hours, with Minnesota and eastern South Dakota hardest hit. A thunderstorm in west central Minnesota spawned a tornado at Eagle Lake which killed one person and injured eight others. A thunderstorm in eastern South Dakota produced softball size hail at Warner. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty five cities in twenty states in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Lamoni IA and Baltimore MD, where the mercury hit 105 degrees. Temperatures 100 degrees or above were reported in twenty-two states. Pierre SD was the hot spot in the nation with a high of 114 degrees. Bluefield WV reported eight straight days of record heat. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms in eastern New Mexico produced wind gusts to 66 mph at Clovis. Evening thunderstorms in West Texas produced baseball size hail around Hereford, Dimmitt, Ware and Dalhart. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



The Marriage Metaphor

Scripture: Ephesians 4:2-13 (NIV)

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people."

9 (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions[c]? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ..

Insight By: K. T. Sim

In Ephesians 4:2, the apostle Paul urged believers in Jesus to "be completely humble and gentle." He spoke about gentleness in his other letters as well. He was the founding pastor of the church at Corinth (Acts 18:1-11), yet soon after he left, the believers rejected him as a true apostle. Instead of coming down hard on them, however, he appealed to them "by the humility and gentleness of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:1). In his letter to another church, Paul urged two feuding sisters to reconcile and asked that their "gentleness be evident to all" (Philippians 4:5). The Scriptures show us that we're to be kind, gracious, respectful, and gentle to everyone..

Comment By: Sheridan Voysey

After twenty-two years together, I sometimes wonder how my marriage to Merryn works. I'm a writer; Merryn is a statistician. I work with words; she works with numbers. I want beauty; she wants function. We come from different worlds.

Merryn arrives to appointments early; I'm occasionally late. I try new things on the menu; she orders the same. After twenty minutes at an art gallery, I'm just getting started, while Merryn is already in the cafe downstairs wondering how much longer I'll be. We give each other many opportunities to learn patience!

We do have things in common—a shared sense of humor, a love of travel, and a common faith that helps us pray through options and compromise as needed. With this shared base, our differences even work to our advantage. Merryn has helped me learn to relax, while I've helped her grow in discipline. Working with our differences has made us better people.

Paul uses marriage as a metaphor for the church (Ephesians 5:21-33), and with good reason. Like marriage, church brings very different people together, requiring them to develop humility and patience and to "[bear] with one another in love" (4:2). And, as in marriage, a shared base of faith and mutual service helps a church become unified and mature (vv. 11-13).

Differences in relationships can cause great frustration—in the church and in marriage. But managed well, they can help us become more Christlike..

Reflect and Prayer: How have differences between you and those close to you helped you both to grow? How can differences between church members help to develop godliness?

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 10 of 57

2022-23 Community Events

- 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
07/24/2022: 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)
09/11/2022: 6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3-5pm
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
12/10/2022: Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm
01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
07/04/2023 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start (4th of July)
07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 11 of 57

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$48.99/year
- Colored \$79.88/year
- Colored \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$31.95/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$15.98
- 3 Months \$26.63
- 6 Months \$31.95
- 9 Months \$42.60
- 12 Months \$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul



News from the Associated Press

China announces new drills as US delegation visits Taiwan

By JOHNSON LAI Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — China announced more military drills around Taiwan as the self-governing island's president met with members of a new U.S. congressional delegation on Monday, threatening to renew tensions between Beijing and Washington just days after a similar visit by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi angered China.

Pelosi was the highest-level member of the U.S. government to visit Taiwan in 25 years, and her trip prompted nearly two weeks of threatening military exercises by China, which claims the island as its own. In those previous drills, Beijing fired missiles over the island and into the Taiwan Strait and sent warplanes and navy ships across the waterway's midline, which has long been a buffer between the sides that split amid civil war in 1949.

China accuses the U.S. of encouraging the island's independence through the sale of weapons and engagement between U.S. politicians and the island's government. Washington says it does not support independence, has no formal diplomatic ties with the island and maintains that the two sides should settle their dispute peacefully — but it is legally bound to ensure the island can defend itself against any attack.

"China will take resolute and strong measures to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at a daily briefing Monday, after Beijing announced new drills in the seas and skies surrounding Taiwan. "A handful of U.S. politicians, in collusion with the separatist forces of Taiwan independence, are trying to challenge the one-China principle, which is out of their depth and doomed to failure."

The new exercises were intended to be "resolute response and solemn deterrent against collusion and provocation between the U.S. and Taiwan," the Defense Ministry said earlier.

It was not clear if the new drills had already started since the ministry gave no details about where and when they would be conducted, in contrast to previous rounds.

The U.S. lawmakers, led by Democratic Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts, met with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, Foreign Minister Joseph Wu and legislators, according to the American Institute in Taiwan, Washington's de-facto embassy on the island. The delegation "had an opportunity to exchange views with Taiwan counterparts on a wide range of issues of importance to both the United States and Taiwan," the institute said in a statement.

China says it wants to use peaceful means to bring Taiwan under its control, but its recent saber rattling has emphasized its threat to take the island by military force. The earlier drills appeared to be a rehearsal of a blockade or attack on Taiwan that would force the cancellation of commercial flights and disrupt shipping to Taiwan's main ports as well as cargo passing through the Taiwan Strait, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

The exercises prompted Taiwan to put its military on alert, but were met largely with defiance or apathy among the public used to living in China's shadow.

The American "visit at this time is of great significance, because the Chinese military exercise is (intended) to deter U.S. congressmen from visiting Taiwan," Lo Chih-cheng, the chair of the Taiwan legislature's Foreign and National Defense Committee, said after meeting with the U.S. lawmakers.

"Their visit this time proves that China cannot stop politicians from any country to visit Taiwan, and it also conveys an important message that the American people stand with the Taiwanese people," Lo said.

A senior White House official on Asia policy said last week that China had used Pelosi's visit as a pretext to launch an intensified pressure campaign against Taiwan, jeopardizing peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and in the broader region.

"China has overreacted, and its actions continue to be provocative, destabilizing, and unprecedented," Kurt Campbell, a deputy assistant to U.S. President Joe Biden, said on a call with reporters on Friday.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 13 of 57

Campbell said the U.S. would send warships and planes through the Taiwan Strait in the next few weeks and is developing a roadmap for trade talks with Taiwan that he said the U.S. intends to announce in the coming days.

Beyond the geopolitical risks of rising tensions between two world powers, an extended crisis in the Taiwan Strait could have major implications for international supply chains at a time when the world is already facing disruptions and uncertainty in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine. In particular, Taiwan is a crucial provider of computer chips for the global economy, including China's high-tech sectors.

This week's five-member congressional delegation planned to meet with both government and private sector representatives. Investment in Taiwan's crucial semiconductor industry and reducing tensions in the Taiwan Strait were expected to be key topics of discussion.

The other members of the delegation are Republican Rep. Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen, a delegate from American Samoa, and Democrats John Garamendi and Alan Lowenthal from California and Don Beyer from Virginia.

Myanmar court convicts Suu Kyi on more corruption charges

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A court in military-ruled Myanmar convicted the country's ousted leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, on more corruption charges on Monday, adding six years to her earlier 11-year prison sentence, a legal official said.

The trial was held behind closed doors, with no access for media or the public, and her lawyers were forbidden by a gag order from revealing information about the proceedings.

In the four corruption cases decided Monday, Suu Kyi was alleged to have abused her position to rent public land at below market prices and to have built a residence with donations meant for charitable purposes. She received sentences of three years for each of the four counts, but the sentences for three of them will be served concurrently, giving her a total of six more years in prison.

She denied all the charges, and her lawyers are expected to appeal.

She already had been sentenced to 11 years in prison on sedition, corruption and other charges at earlier trials after the military ousted her elected government and detained her in February 2021.

Analysts say the numerous charges against her and her allies are an attempt to legitimize the military's seizure of power while eliminating her from politics before the military holds an election it has promised for next year.

Suu Kyi and her co-defendants have denied all the allegations and their lawyers are expected to file appeals in the coming days, said the legal official, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to release information and feared punishment by the authorities.

Other top members of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party and her government have also been arrested and imprisoned, and the authorities have suggested they might dissolve the party before the next election.

The army seized power and detained Suu Kyi on Feb. 1, 2021, the day when her party would have started a second-five year term in office after it won a landslide victory in a November 2020 general election. The army said it acted because there had been massive voting fraud, but independent election observers did not find any major irregularities.

The army's takeover sparked peaceful nationwide street protests that security forces quashed with lethal force, triggering armed resistance that some U.N. experts now characterize as civil war. The military government has been accused of human rights abuses including arbitrary arrests and killings, torture, and military sweeps that include air attacks on civilians and the burning of entire villages.

Suu Kyi, 77, has been the face of opposition to military rule in Myanmar for more than three decades. She won the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize while under house arrest.

Her five years as its civilian government leader were marked by repression and military dominance even

though it was Myanmar's most democratic period since a 1962 coup.

Suu Kyi has been charged with a total of 11 counts under the Anti-Corruption Act, with each count punishable by up to 15 years in prison and a fine.

In Monday's verdicts, the legal official said Suu Kyi received a three-year prison sentence for building a residence for herself in Naypyitaw, allegedly with money donated for a charitable foundation named after her mother that she chaired.

She received a three-year sentence for allegedly taking advantage of her position to rent property in Yangon, the country's biggest city, for the same foundation, the official said.

The two other cases decided Monday involved parcels of land in Naypyitaw for which she allegedly abused her authority to rent at below market prices for the foundation. She received a sentence of three years for each of those cases.

The three cases pertaining to offenses in Naypyitaw are to be served concurrently.

The former mayor of Naypyitaw, Myo Aung, was a co-defendant in both cases relating to granting permits to rent the land. Ye Min Oo, the former vice mayor, is a co-defendant in one case and Min Thu, a former member of the Naypyitaw Development Committee, in the other. Each received sentences of three years.

The government Anti-Corruption Commission, which filed the case, had alleged that the rental fees agreed upon by the Naypyitaw Development Committee were lower than the rate fixed by the Ministry of Planning and Finance, so that the rental agreement deprived the state of revenue it should have received.

Lawyers appeal Griner's Russian prison sentence

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Lawyers for American basketball star Brittney Griner on Monday filed an appeal against her nine-year Russian prison sentence for drug possession, Russian news agencies reported Monday.

Griner, a center for the Phoenix Mercury and a two-time Olympic gold medalist, was convicted on Aug. 4. She was arrested in February at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport after vape canisters containing cannabis oil were found in her luggage.

Griner played for a women's basketball team in Yekaterinburg during the WNBA offseason.

Lawyer Maria Blagovolina was quoted by Russian news agencies on Monday as saying the appeal was filed, but the grounds of the appeal weren't immediately clear.

Blagovolina and co-counsel Alexander Boykov said after the conviction that the sentence was excessive and that in similar cases defendants have received an average sentence of about five years, with about a third of them granted parole.

Griner admitted that she had the canisters in her luggage, but said she had inadvertently packed them in haste and that she had no criminal intent. Her defense team presented written statements that she had been prescribed cannabis to treat pain.

Before her conviction, the U.S. State Department declared Griner to be "wrongfully detained."

Secretary of State Antony Blinken took the unusual step of revealing publicly in July that the U.S. had made a "substantial proposal" to get Griner home, along with Paul Whelan, an American serving a 16-year sentence in Russia for espionage.

Blinken didn't elaborate, but The Associated Press and other news organizations have reported that Washington has offered to free Viktor Bout, a Russian arms dealer who is serving a 25-year sentence in the U.S. and once earned the nickname the "Merchant of Death."

On Sunday, a senior Russian diplomat said exchange talks have been conducted.

"This quite sensitive issue of the swap of convicted Russian and U.S. citizens is being discussed through the channels defined by our presidents," Alexander Darchiev, head of the Foreign Ministry's North America department, told state news agency Tass. "These individuals are, indeed, being discussed. The Russian side has long been seeking the release of Viktor Bout. The details should be left to professionals, proceeding from the 'do not harm' principle."

Afghanistan marks 1 year since Taliban seizure as woes mount

By RAHIM FAIEZ and EBRAHIM NOROOZI Associated Press

KABUL (AP) — The Taliban on Monday marked a year since they seized the Afghan capital of Kabul, a rapid takeover that triggered a hasty escape of the nation's Western-backed leaders, sent the economy into a tailspin and fundamentally transformed the country.

Bearded Taliban fighters, some hoisting rifles or the white banners of their movement, staged small victory parades on foot, bicycles and motor cycles in the streets of the capital. One small group marched past the former U.S. Embassy, chanting "Long live Islam" and "Death to America."

A year after the dramatic day, much has changed in Afghanistan. The former insurgents struggle to govern and remain internationally isolated. The economic downturn has driven millions more Afghans into poverty and even hunger, as the flow of foreign aid slowed to a trickle.

Meanwhile, hard-liners appear to hold sway in the Taliban-led government, which imposed severe restrictions on access to education and jobs for girls and women, despite initial promises to the contrary. A year on, teenage girls are still barred from school and women are required to cover themselves head-to-toe in public, with only the eyes showing.

Some are trying to find ways to keep education from stalling for a generation of young women and underground schools in homes have spring up.

A year ago, thousands of Afghans had rushed to Kabul International Airport to flee the Taliban amid the U.S. military's chaotic withdrawal from Kabul after 20 years of war — America's longest conflict.

Some flights resumed relatively quickly after those chaotic days. On Monday, a handful of commercial flights were scheduled to land and take off from a runway that last summer saw Afghan men clinging to the wheels of planes taking off, some falling to their death.

Schoolyards stood empty Monday as the Taliban announced a public holiday to mark the day, which they refer to as "The Proud Day of Aug. 15" and the "First Anniversary of the Return to Power."

"Reliance on God and the support of the people brought this great victory and freedom to the country," wrote Abdul Wahid Rayan, the head of the Taliban-run Bakhtar News Agency. "Today, Aug. 15, marks the victory of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan against America and its allies occupation of Afghanistan."

On the eve of the anniversary, former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani defended what he said was a split-second decision to flee, saying he wanted to avoid the humiliation of surrender to the insurgents. He told CNN that on the morning of Aug. 15, 2021, with the Taliban at the gates of Kabul, he was the last one at the presidential palace after his guards had disappeared.

Tomas Niklasson, the European Union's special envoy to Afghanistan, said the bloc of nations remains committed to the Afghan people and to "stability, prosperity and sustainable peace in Afghanistan and the region."

"This will require an inclusive political process with full, equal and meaningful participation of all Afghan men and women and respect for human rights," Niklasson wrote.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said an international responsibility toward Afghanistan remains after the NATO withdrawal.

"A regime that tramples on human rights cannot under any circumstances be recognized," she said in a statement. "But we must not forget the people in Afghanistan, even a year after the Taliban takeover."

Iran denies involvement but justifies Salman Rushdie attack

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — An Iranian government official denied on Monday that Tehran was involved in the assault on author Salman Rushdie, though he justified the stabbing in remarks that represented the Islamic Republic's first public comments on the attack.

The comments by Nasser Kanaani, the spokesman of Iran's Foreign Ministry, came more than two days after the attack on Rushdie in New York. The writer has now been taken off a ventilator and is "on the road to recovery," according to his agent.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 16 of 57

However, Iran has denied carrying out other operations abroad targeting dissidents in the years since the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution, despite prosecutors and Western governments attributing such attacks back to Tehran. And while Iran hasn't focused on the writer in recent years, a decades-old fatwa demanding his killing still stands.

"Regarding the attack against Salman Rushdie in America, we don't consider anyone deserving reproach, blame or even condemnation, except for (Rushdie) himself and his supporters," Kanaani said.

"In this regard, no one can blame the Islamic Republic of Iran," he added. "We believe that the insults made and the support he received was an insult against followers of all religions."

Rushdie, 75, was stabbed Friday while attending an event in western New York. He suffered a damaged liver and severed nerves in an arm and an eye, his agent Andrew Wylie said. Rushdie was likely to lose the injured eye.

His assailant, 24-year-old Hadi Matar, has pleaded not guilty to charges stemming from the attack through his lawyer.

Rushdie has for more than 30 years faced death threats for "The Satanic Verses." Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini had issued a fatwa, or Islamic edict, demanding his death. A semi-official Iranian foundation had put up a bounty of over \$3 million for the author, though it has yet to offer any comment on the attack.

Police in New York have offered no motive yet for the attack, though District Attorney Jason Schmidt alluded to the bounty on Rushdie in arguing against bail during a hearing Saturday.

"Even if this court were to set a million dollars bail, we stand a risk that bail could be met," Schmidt said.

Matar was born in the United States to parents who emigrated from Yaroun in southern Lebanon near the Israeli border, according to the village's mayor. Flags of the Iranian-backed Shiite militant group Hezbollah, along with portraits of Hezbollah and Iranian leaders, hang across the village. Israel also has bombarded Hezbollah positions near there in the past.

In Yaroun, village records show Matar holds Lebanese citizenship and is identified as a Shiite, an official there said. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of security concerns, said Matar's father still lives there but has been in seclusion since the attack.

In his remarks Monday, Kanaani added that Iran did not "have any other information more than what the American media has reported." He also implied that Rushdie brought the attack on himself.

"Salman Rushdie exposed himself to popular anger and fury through insulting the sacredness of Islam and crossing the red lines of over 1.5 billion Muslims and also red lines of followers of all divine religions," Kanaani said.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, while not directly blaming Tehran for the attack on Rushdie, made a point to mention Iran in a statement early Monday praising the writer's efforts in supporting freedom of expression and religion.

"Iranian state institutions have incited violence against Rushdie for generations, and state-affiliated media recently gloated about the attempt on his life," Blinken said. "This is despicable."

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul condemned the attack on Rushdie at a lecture Sunday, saying that "a man with a knife cannot silence a man with a pen."

Khomeini, in poor health in the last year of his life after the grinding, stalemated 1980s Iran-Iraq war had decimated the country's economy, issued the fatwa on Rushdie in 1989. The Islamic edict came amid a violent uproar in the Muslim world over the novel, which some viewed as blasphemously making suggestions about the Prophet Muhammad's life.

While fatwas can be revised or revoked, Iran's current Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei — who took over after Khomeini — has never done so. As recently as February 2017, Khamenei said: "The decree is as Imam Khomeini issued."

Since 1979, Iran has targeted dissidents abroad in attacks. Tensions with the West — particularly the United States — have spiked since then-President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled America out of Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 17 of 57

A Trump-ordered drone strike killed a top Iranian Revolutionary Guard general in 2020, further fueling those tensions.

Last week, the U.S. charged a Guard member in absentia for allegedly plotting to kill one-time Trump adviser and Iran hawk John Bolton. Former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and an aide are under 24-hour security over alleged threats from Iran.

Meanwhile, U.S. prosecutors say Iran tried to kidnap in 2021 an Iranian opposition activist and writer living in New York. In recent days, a man with an assault rifle was arrested near her home.

Other denials from the Foreign Ministry have included Tehran's transfer of weapons to Yemen's Houthi rebels amid that country's long civil war. Independent experts, Western nations and U.N. experts have traced weapon components back to Iran.

PM Modi pledges to make India developed country in 25 years

By ASHOK SHARMA Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Prime Minister Narendra Modi pledged to raise millions out of poverty and turn India into a developed country in the next quarter-century as he marked 75 years since independence from British rule.

Wearing a flowing, cream-colored turban printed with small stripes of orange, white and green, Modi addressed the country Monday from New Delhi's 17th-century Mughal-era Red Fort, saying the world was looking toward India to help resolve global issues.

Modi said the journey of the past 75 years had seen ups and downs with India battling against all odds with resilience and perseverance. He asked people to remove any trace of colonial mindset.

U.S. President Joe Biden, in a statement celebrating Indian Independence Day, said the two countries are indispensable partners grounded in a shared commitment to the rule of law and the promotion of human freedom and dignity.

Biden said he was confident that "the two countries will continue to stand together to defend the rules-based order; foster greater peace, prosperity and security for our people; advance a free and open Indo-Pacific; and together address the challenges we face around the world."

Modi said India will be guided by the ideals of self-reliance and the spirit of international partnership to attain excellence in science and technology, set up industries, and attain food and energy security. He said billions of dollars in investment were flowing into the country turning it into a manufacturing hub.

India's efforts have already launched the country of 1.4 billion people into the ranks of leading countries in information technology, pharmacy, space science and civil nuclear energy.

Modi said millions of people across the country were commemorating the 75th anniversary of independence by hoisting orange, white and green national flags at their homes and businesses for three days as part of a government campaign "of awakening the spirit of patriotism in every heart." India's Parliament House, the presidential palace, national monuments and other government offices blazed with multi-colored lighting.

The main opposition Congress party accused the Modi government of leaving opposition parties out of celebrations.

"There were special functions in Parliament's historic Central Hall to mark the 25th, 50th and 60th anniversary of India's independence," said Jairam Ramesh, an India National Congress party spokesperson. "Sadly, nothing like that has been organized for the 75th anniversary, which has been reduced to an occasion to glorify the Sarvagyaani," using a term meaning "a person who knows all" in reference to Modi.

In his 80-minute speech, Modi made no reference to India's tense ties with immediate neighbors Pakistan and China, nor any steps to improve relations.

He called for unity to move forward but didn't respond to experts and critics who say the country has been gradually departing from some commitments and argue the backsliding has accelerated since Modi came to power in 2014. They accuse his populist government of using unbridled political power to undermine democratic freedoms and preoccupying itself with pursuing a Hindu nationalist agenda.

Modi pledged to fight corruption and nepotism in the country's politics, which he said were acting as termites eating away the gains of development.

AP-NORC poll: Many in US doubt their own impact on climate

By HANNAH FINGERHUT and NUHA DOLBY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans are less concerned now about how climate change might impact them personally — and about how their personal choices affect the climate — than they were three years ago, a new poll shows, even as a wide majority still believe climate change is happening.

The June Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll, which was conducted before Congress passed the Inflation Reduction Act on Friday, shows majorities of U.S. adults think the government and corporations have a significant responsibility to address climate change. The new law will invest nearly \$375 billion in climate strategies over the next decade.

Overall, 35% of U.S. adults say they are "extremely" or "very" concerned about the impact of climate change on them personally, down from 44% in August 2019. Another third say they are somewhat concerned. Only about half say their actions have an effect on climate change, compared with two-thirds in 2019.

Black and Hispanic Americans, women and Democrats are especially likely to be strongly concerned about the impact of climate change on them personally and about how their personal choices affect the climate.

Many climate scientists told The Associated Press that the shifts are concerning but not surprising given that individuals are feeling overwhelmed by a range of issues, now including an economy plagued by inflation after more than two years of a pandemic. In addition to being outpaced by other issues, climate change or the environment are mentioned as priorities by fewer Americans now than just a few years ago, according to the poll.

Diane Panicucci in West Warwick, Rhode Island, believes climate change is happening and that it needs to be addressed. But for her, it's a lower priority compared with other issues, including inflation and food and drug costs.

"There's so much unrest in this country right now," the 62-year-old said. "People are suffering."

Panicucci added solar panels to her house, and she's cut back on driving. She thinks individuals should do what they're told will help, but "it doesn't start with little ol' me. It has to be larger scale," she said.

While the climate crisis will require an "all of the above approach," it's "reasonable" that individuals don't feel they have the bandwidth to tackle climate action "on top of everything else," said Kim Cobb, director of the Institute at Brown University for Environment and Society.

Roughly two-thirds of Americans say the U.S. federal government, developed countries abroad and corporations and industries have a large responsibility to address climate change. Fewer — 45% — say that of individual people.

Jack Hermanson, a 23-year-old software engineer, feels strongly that corporations are the "major culprits" of emissions and that the government is complicit in that behavior.

"I don't know if that makes sense to say that individuals should have to work and fix the climate," the Denver resident said. "I would say my individual actions hardly mean anything at all."

U.S. household greenhouse gas emissions are not as much as those from cars, trucks and other transportation, electrical power generating and industry. A 2020 University of Michigan study of 93 million U.S. homes estimates that 20% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions comes from home energy use, with wealthier Americans' per capita footprints about 25% higher than low-income residents.

But like many others that spoke to the AP, that difference hasn't stopped Hermanson from trying. He's been a vegetarian for four years, and he tries to bike or take public transportation, buy products with less packaging and recycle.

Among Americans who believe in climate change, 70% say it will be necessary for individuals to make major lifestyle changes to combat the issue. Most think individuals have at least some responsibility.

Individuals can believe they personally don't have a direct impact while also recognizing that collective

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 19 of 57

action is essential to combatting climate change, said Shahzeen Attari, who studies human behavior and climate change at Indiana University.

The poll shows about 6 in 10 Americans say they have reduced their driving, reduced their use of heat or air conditioning and bought used products instead of new ones. Nearly three-quarters are using energy efficient appliances. Among those who are taking those steps, most say the main reason is to save money, rather than to help the environment.

Fewer — roughly a quarter — say they use an electricity supplier that gets power from renewable sources, and only about 1 in 10 live in a home with solar panels or drive a hybrid or electric car.

Brad Machincia, a 38-year-old welder, said he wouldn't switch from his gas car to an electric vehicle. While he said he grew up in a West Virginia household that used renewable energy sources, he hasn't adopted those practices for his family in Christiansburg, Virginia. Climate change used to be a concern for him, but at this point, he feels like it's "beating a dead horse."

"There's nothing we can do to fix it," he said.

Individuals should feel empowered to make climate-driven decisions that not only help reduce emissions but also improve their lives, said Jonathan Foley, executive director at climate nonprofit Project Drawdown. Foley thinks the findings show that efforts to engage Americans need to shift away from doomsday scenarios, include diverse messengers and focus on the ways climate solutions can intersect with Americans' other priorities.

Julio Carmona, a 37-year-old financial clerk, said he recently transitioned his home in Bridgeport, Connecticut, to solar energy because the switch will help reduce his carbon footprint and his expenses, even if modestly.

"I thought that it was just something smart for us to do long term," he said. "I just kind of wanted to do my part, whether or not it's gonna make a difference."

Boredom, loneliness plague Ukrainian youth near front line

By JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

SLOVIANSK, Ukraine (AP) — Anastasiia Aleksandrova doesn't even look up from her phone when the thunder of nearby artillery booms through the modest home the 12-year-old shares with her grandparents on the outskirts of Sloviansk in eastern Ukraine.

With no one her age left in her neighborhood and classes only online since Russia's invasion, video games and social media have taken the place of the walks and bike rides she once enjoyed with friends who have since fled.

"She communicates less and goes out walking less. She usually stays at home playing games on her phone," Anastasiia's grandmother, Olena Aleksandrova, 57, said of the shy, lanky girl who likes to paint and has a picture of a Siberian tiger hanging on the wall of her bedroom.

Anastasiia's retreat into digital technology to cope with the isolation and stress of war that rages on the front line just seven miles (12 kilometers) away is increasingly common among young people in Ukraine's embattled Donetsk region.

With cities largely emptied after hundreds of thousands have evacuated to safety, the young people who remain face loneliness and boredom as painful counterpoints to the fear and violence Moscow has unleashed on Ukraine.

"I don't have anyone to hang out with. I sit with the phone all day," Anastasiia said from the bank of a lake where she sometimes swims with her grandparents. "My friends left and my life has changed. It became worse due to this war."

More than 6 million Ukrainians, overwhelmingly women and children, have fled the country and millions more are internally displaced, according to the U.N. refugee agency.

The mass displacement has upended countless childhoods, not only for those having to start a new life after seeking safety elsewhere, but also for the thousands who stayed behind.

In the industrial city of Kramatorsk, seven miles (12 kilometers) south of Sloviansk, the friendship be-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 20 of 57

tween 19-year-old Roman Kovalenko and 18-year-old Oleksandr Pruzhyna has become closer as all of their other friends have left the city.

The two teenagers walk together through the mostly deserted city, sitting to talk on park benches. Both described being cut off from the social lives they enjoyed before the war.

"It's a completely different feeling when you go outside. There is almost no one on the streets, I have the feeling of being in an apocalypse," said Pruzhyna, who lost his job at a barber shop after the invasion and now spends most of his time at home playing computer games.

"I feel like everything I was going to do became impossible, everything collapsed in an instant."

Of the roughly 275,000 children age 17 or younger in the Donetsk region before Russia's invasion, just 40,000 remain, the province's regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko told The Associated Press last week.

According to official figures, 361 children have been killed in Ukraine since Russia launched its war on Feb. 24, and 711 others have been injured.

Authorities are urging all remaining families in Donetsk, but especially those with children, to evacuate immediately as Russian forces continue to bombard civilian areas as they press for control of the region.

A special police force has been tasked with individually contacting households with children and urging them to flee to safer areas, Kyrylenko said.

"As a father, I feel that children should not be in the Donetsk region," he said. "This is an active war zone."

In Kramatorsk, 16-year-old Sofia Mariia Bondar spends most days sitting in the shoe section of a clothing shop where her mother works.

A pianist and singer who wants to study art at university after she finishes her final year of high school, Sofia Mariia said there is "nowhere to go and nothing to do" now that her friends have left.

"I wish I could go back in time and make everything like it was before. I understand that most of my friends who left will never come back, no matter what happens in the future," she said. "Of course it's very sad that I can't have all the fun like other teenagers do, but I can't do anything about it, only cope with it."

Her mother, Viktoriia, said that since the city has mostly emptied out, she manages to sell only one or two items per week.

But with the danger of shelling and soldiers plying the streets, her daughter is no longer allowed to go out alone and spends most of her time by her mother's side in the store or at their home on the outskirts of Kramatorsk where the threat of rocket strikes is lower.

"I keep her near me all the time so that in case something happens, at least we will be together," she said.

Of the roughly 18,000 school-age children in Kramatorsk before Russia's invasion, only around 3,200 remain, including 600 preschoolers, said the city's head of military administration, Oleksandr Goncharenko.

While officials continue to push residents to evacuate and provide information on transportation and accommodation, "parents cannot be forced to leave with their children," Goncharenko said. When the school semester begins on Sept. 1, he said lessons will be offered online for those who stay.

In Kramatorsk's verdant but nearly empty Pushkin Park, Rodion Kucherian, 14, performed tricks on his scooter on an otherwise deserted set of ramps, quarter pipes and grind rails.

Before the war, he said, he and his friends would do tricks in the bustling park alongside many other children. But now his only connection to his friends — who have fled to countries like Poland and Germany — is on social media.

He's taken up other solitary activities just to keep himself busy, he said.

"It's very sad not to see my friends. I haven't seen my best friend for more than four months," he said. "I started cycling at home so I don't miss them as much."

In Sloviansk, 12-year-old Anastasiia said she can't remember the last time she played with someone her own age, but she's made some new friends through the games she plays online.

"It's not the same. It's way better to go outside to play with your friends than just talking online," she said.

Her best friend, Yeva, used to live on her street, but has evacuated with her family to Lviv in western Ukraine.

Anastasiia wears a silver pendant around her neck — half of a broken heart with the word "Love" en-

graved on the front — and Yeva, she said, wears the other half.

"I never take it off, and Yeva doesn't either," she said.

Whanganui River 'always makes things better for me'

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WHANGANUI, New Zealand (AP) — Five years ago, the Whanganui River was recognized as a living person in a groundbreaking New Zealand law. For many who live along its banks, the official recognition validated the deep spiritual connection they feel with the river. They continue to feel the draw of its waters each day, whether it's to fish, canoe or refresh their lives.

Ngahua Twomey-Waitai, 28, walks into the Whanganui River and reaches down to splash water over her head in an action reminiscent of a baptism. She says the river has been a big part of her life since she was born.

"I tend to come down here quite often to cleanse myself, especially when I'm going through some big, huge changes in my life, regardless of them being good or bad," she says. "The river always makes things better for me."

"Just being down here gives me a huge smile and brings me at peace with myself and my life."

Glenn Martin grew up in the little village of Piriaka and still lives there. These days he runs a business called Blazing Paddles, renting canoes to tourists.

The river is navigable for most — it's grade one or two along this section. Martin's customers paddle downstream and typically camp or stay in huts for one to five nights before he tows the canoes back by road.

"When you're down here on the river, it just takes you to another place," he says. "It's relaxing. It's soothing. It's reinvigorating."

Martin, 65, loves all the activities the river has to offer, especially the world-class trout fishing, and approves of it gaining personhood.

"I think people take more pride in it and definitely look after it a lot better because it's just got that much more respect," he says.

Fantail birds tumble about Aunty Sugar's feet as she walks across the small Māori marae, or meeting grounds, that she runs on the banks of the river in the town of Koriniti.

The 73-year-old's real name is Jula Teki but locals know her as Aunty Sugar.

"They call us the river rats. And we are the river people, the people of the river," she says. "When the river is flowing good, everything is okay. When it's flooded, we just all hunker down and we know how the river's going to react. The road's probably going to close down, but that doesn't mean anything to us."

She says all the power schemes and farms along the banks have effectively turned the river upside-down. She says the river gaining personhood would make her ancestors proud.

"They would be astonished now, if they were alive," she says. "They would be saying, 'Wow. You did what we couldn't do.'"

Geoff Hipango says it's going to take time — perhaps a generation or more — for the river's health to be fully restored but it's now on the right track.

Hipango, 55, grew up at the Te Ao Hou marae on the banks of the river in Whanganui. These days, he manages mental health and addiction services for a tribal provider.

He says the river's status is a win not only for his tribe but for the wider community, which also want to see its health improved for future generations.

He says it has been a privilege to see the river gain personhood after all the hard work of his elders, who never surrendered their beliefs.

"Really it was only embodying what our people have always acknowledged and lived by," he says. "It's just that the law caught up."

Northeastern farmers face new challenges with severe drought

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — Vermont farmer Brian Kemp is used to seeing the pastures at Mountain Meadows Farm grow slower in the hot, late summer, but this year the grass is at a standstill.

That's "very nerve-wracking" when you're grazing 600 to 700 cattle, said Kemp, who manages an organic beef farm in Sudbury. He describes the weather lately as inconsistent and impactful, which he attributes to a changing climate.

"I don't think there is any normal anymore," Kemp said.

The impacts of climate change have been felt throughout the Northeastern U.S. with rising sea levels, heavy precipitation and storm surges causing flooding and coastal erosion. But this summer has brought another extreme: a severe drought that is making lawns crispy and has farmers begging for steady rain. The heavy, short rainfall brought by the occasional thunderstorm tends to run off, not soak into the ground.

Water supplies are low or dry, and many communities are restricting nonessential outdoor water use. Fire departments are combatting more brush fires and crops are growing poorly.

Providence, Rhode Island had less than half an inch of rainfall in the third driest July on record, and Boston had six-tenths of an inch in the fourth driest July on record, according to the National Weather Service office in Norton, Massachusetts. Rhode Island's governor issued a statewide drought advisory Tuesday with recommendations to reduce water use. The north end of the Hoppin Hill Reservoir in Massachusetts is dry, forcing local water restrictions.

Officials in Maine said drought conditions really began there in 2020, with occasional improvements in areas since. In Auburn, Maine, local firefighters helped a dairy farmer fill a water tank for his cows when his well went too low in late July and temperatures hit 90. About 50 dry wells have been reported to the state since 2021, according to the state's dry well survey.

The continuing trend toward drier summers in the Northeast can certainly be attributed to the impact of climate change, since warmer temperatures lead to greater evaporation and drying of soils, climate scientist Michael Mann said. But, he said, the dry weather can be punctuated by extreme rainfall events since a warmer atmosphere holds more moisture — when conditions are conducive to rainfall, there's more of it in short bursts.

Mann said there's evidence shown by his research at Penn State University that climate change is leading to a "stuck jet stream" pattern. That means huge meanders of the jet stream, or air current, get stuck in place, locking in extreme weather events that can alternately be associated with extreme heat and drought in one location and extreme rainfall in another, a pattern that has played out this summer with the heat and drought in the Northeast and extreme flooding in parts of the Midwest, Mann added.

Most of New England is experiencing drought. The U.S. Drought Monitor issued a new map Thursday that shows areas of eastern Massachusetts outside Cape Cod and much of southern and eastern Rhode Island now in extreme, instead of severe, drought.

New England has experienced severe summer droughts before, but experts say it is unusual to have droughts in fairly quick succession since 2016. Massachusetts experienced droughts in 2016, 2017, 2020, 2021 and 2022, which is very likely due to climate change, said Vandana Rao, director of water policy in Massachusetts.

"We hope this is maybe one period of peaking of drought and we get back to many more years of normal precipitation," she said. "But it could just be the beginning of a longer trend."

Rao and other water experts in New England expect the current drought to last for several more months.

"I think we're probably going to be in this for a while and it's going to take a lot," said Ted Diers, assistant director of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services water division. "What we really are hoping for is a wet fall followed by a very snowy winter to really recharge the aquifers and the

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 23 of 57

groundwater.”

Rhode Island’s principal forest ranger, Ben Arnold, is worried about the drought extending into the fall. That’s when people do more yardwork, burn brush, use fireplaces and spend time in the woods, increasing the risk of forest fires. The fires this summer have been relatively small, but it takes a lot of time and effort to extinguish them because they are burning into the dry ground, Arnold said.

Hay farmer Milan Adams said one of the fields he’s tilling in Exeter, Rhode Island, is powder a foot down. In prior years it rained in the spring. This year, he said, the dryness started in March, and April was so dry he was nervous about his first cut of hay.

“The height of the hay was there, but there was no volume to it. From there, we got a little bit of rain in the beginning of May that kind of shot it up,” he said. “We haven’t seen anything since.”

Farmers are fighting more than the drought — inflation is driving up the cost of everything, from diesel and equipment parts to fertilizer and pesticides, Adams added.

“It’s all through the roof right now,” he said. “This is just throwing salt on a wound.”

The yield and quality of hay is down in Vermont too, which means there won’t be as much for cows in the winter, said Vermont Agriculture Secretary Anson Tebbetts. The state has roughly 600 dairy farms, a \$2 billion per year industry. Like Adams, Tebbetts said inflation is driving up prices, which will hurt the farmers who will have to buy feed.

Kemp, the president of the Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition, is thankful to have supplemental feed from last year, but he knows other farmers who don’t have land to put together a reserve and aren’t well-stocked. The coalition is trying to help farmers evolve and learn new practices. They added “climate-smart farming” to their mission statement in the spring.

“Farming is challenging,” Kemp said, “and it’s becoming even more challenging as climate change takes place.”

What to watch: Cheney in trouble while Palin eyes comeback

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Elections in Wyoming and Alaska on Tuesday could relaunch the political career of a former Republican star and effectively end the career of another — at least for now.

Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney is the vice chair of a U.S. House committee seeking to expose the truth behind former President Donald Trump’s relentless efforts to stay in power after losing the 2020 election, and his role in fomenting the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Cheney’s determination to prevent Trump from ever again serving in the White House has left her fighting to hold on to the House seat she has held for three terms. Trump has made Cheney’s ouster a top priority, endorsing a challenger and traveling to Wyoming to try to seal the deal.

In Alaska, Sarah Palin jumped on a vacancy in the state’s congressional delegation as a potential springboard back into elected office. A victory in Tuesday’s special election to fill the remaining months of the late U.S. Rep. Don Young’s term could send her to Washington as soon as next month.

Palin, a former Alaska governor and the 2008 Republican vice presidential nominee, has been out of elected office for more than a decade but is betting her insurgent brand of conservatism can make her a hit again in the age of Trumpism.

What to watch:

WYOMING

Cheney’s work as vice chair of the Jan. 6 committee has won her bipartisan praise from those who see Trump as a threat to American democracy. But it has severely threatened her chances of prevailing in the Republican primary in deeply red Wyoming, where Trump notched one of his most lopsided 2020 victories, capturing 70% of the vote compared to Joe Biden’s 27%.

Set to deny Cheney a fourth term as Wyoming’s lone member of the House is Harriet Hageman, a Cheyenne ranching industry attorney who was little known outside the state before winning Trump’s endorsement last year.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 24 of 57

Hageman finished in the middle of a five-way, 2018 Republican gubernatorial primary. She's campaigned aggressively for Cheney's House seat, appearing at county fairs, parades and rodeos. Making his first public political appearance in Wyoming, Trump drew a crowd of at least 10,000 to a Casper rally supporting Hageman in May.

A defeat for Cheney would cap a swift, once unthinkable political collapse in a state where her name recognition is nearly universal and her family's political roots run deep. Her father, former Vice President Dick Cheney, held the state's House seat for 10 years until 1989.

Still, the primary comes after Republicans booted Cheney as the party's No. 3 House leader and the Wyoming GOP censured her. Security threats have mostly prevented the congresswoman from attending public events and rallies as she campaigns.

Cheney has instead opted for private gatherings and endorsements from well-known, traditional Republicans like Wyoming Sen. Alan Simpson. She also released an ad in which her father declares: "In our nation's 246-year history, there has never been an individual who was a greater threat to our republic than Donald Trump."

Cheney's best hope is that enough Wyoming Democrats will switch parties to vote for her instead of their own party's three candidates — none of whom stands a chance in November's general election. Even Cheney's close allies say she might be putting principle above success in this race.

That has fueled speculation that Cheney is hoping for something bigger, and she's refused to rule out a 2024 presidential run.

ALASKA

Palin is on the ballot twice in Alaska: once in a special election to complete Young's term and another full a full two-year House term starting in January.

Voters approved an elections overhaul in 2020 ending party primaries and instituting ranked voting in general elections. Endorsed by Trump, Palin finished first among 48 candidates to qualify for a special election. They were seeking to replace Young, who died in March at age 88, after 49 years as Alaska's lone House member.

Palin is now trying to secure the win against the No. 2 and 4 finishers, Republican Nick Begich and Democrat Mary Peltola. The third-place vote-getter pulled out of the race after the special primary.

In a recent address to the Conservative Political Action Conference, Palin decried the new voting system, saying, "It is bizarre, it's convoluted, it's complicated. And it results in voter suppression."

Tuesday's ballot also features a House primary race and one for the U.S. Senate in which Trump's influence may not prove decisive. Alaskans pick one candidate in each race, with the top four vote-getters advancing to the general election, regardless of party affiliation.

Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski is seeking reelection to a seat she has held for nearly 20 years. She faces 18 opponents — the most prominent of which is Republican Kelly Tshibaka, who has been endorsed by Trump.

Murkowski, the state's senior senator, is a Trump critic who voted to convict him at his impeachment trial following the Jan. 6 Capitol attack. The former president has railed against Murkowski, including at a rally with Tshibaka and Palin last month in Anchorage.

The House primary, meanwhile, has 22 candidates, including Palin, Begich and Peltola.

Begich has tried to cast Palin as a quitter because she resigned as governor partway through her term in 2009. Palin has referred to Begich, nephew of former Democratic Alaska Sen. Mark Begich and grandson of former Democratic Rep. Nick Begich, as her "fellow 'Republican'" in the race. Begich counters that he's always been a Republican, despite coming from a family of prominent Democrats.

R Kelly trial on whether he fixed 2008 trial set to start

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Jury selection begins Monday at R. Kelly's federal trial in his hometown of Chicago, where the R&B singer faces charges that he rigged his 2008 state child pornography trial by threatening

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 25 of 57

and paying off a girl who he allegedly filmed himself having sex with when he was around 30 and she was no older than 14.

Jurors acquitted Kelly on all charges in that 2008 trial, some explaining later that they felt they had no choice because the girl did not testify. The woman, now in her 30s and referred to in filings only as "Minor 1," will be the government's star witness in the upcoming federal trial.

Kelly, 55, goes into Chicago federal court Monday already sentenced by a New York federal judge to a 30-year prison term for a 2021 conviction on charges he used his fame to sexually abuse other young fans.

Kelly, who rose from poverty on Chicago's South Side to become a star singer, songwriter and producer, faces multiple charges at the federal trial. They include four counts of enticement of minors for sex — one each for four other accusers. They, too, are slated to testify.

Convictions in Chicago could add decades to Kelly's New York sentence, which he is appealing. With the New York sentence alone, Kelly will be around 80 before qualifying for early release.

Two Kelly associates, Derrel McDavid and Milton Brown, are co-defendants at the Chicago trial. McDavid is accused of helping Kelly fix the 2008 trial, while Brown is charged with receiving child pornography. Like Kelly, they have also denied any wrongdoing.

Two state cases are also still pending. One is a multiple count sex-abuse case out of Cook County Circuit Court in Chicago. The other is a solicitation case in Minnesota. No trial dates are set for either.

Minor 1 is expected to testify that she was on video having sex with Kelly. The recording was at the heart of the monthlong 2008 trial and was played for jurors almost every day.

Minor 1 first met Kelly in the late 1990s when she was in junior high school. She had tagged along to Kelly's Chicago recording studio with her aunt, a professional singer working with Kelly. Soon after, Minor 1 told her parents Kelly was going to become her godfather.

Prosecutors say Kelly later threatened and sought to pay off Minor 1 and her parents so they wouldn't testify at the 2008 trial. None of them did.

Double jeopardy rules bar the prosecution of someone for the same crimes they were acquitted of earlier. That doesn't apply to the Chicago federal trial because prosecutors are alleging different crimes related to Minor 1, including obstruction of justice.

Cheney and Murkowski: Trump critics facing divergent futures

By BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — They hail from their states' most prominent Republican families. They have been among the GOP's sharpest critics of former President Donald Trump. And after the Jan. 6 insurrection, they supported his impeachment.

But for all their similarities, the political fortunes of U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming are poised to diverge on Tuesday when they're each on the ballot in closely watched primary elections.

Cheney faces daunting prospects in her effort to fend off the Trump-backed Harriet Hageman, increasingly looking at a life beyond Capitol Hill that could include a possible presidential campaign. Murkowski, however, is expected to advance from her primary and is already planning to compete in the November general election.

The anticipated outcomes at least partially stem from the nuanced politics of each state. Wyoming is a Republican stronghold, delivering Trump his strongest victory of any state in the 2020 campaign. Alaska, meanwhile, has a history of rewarding candidates with an independent streak.

But Murkowski enjoys an additional advantage in the way elections are being conducted in Alaska this year. Winner-take-all party primaries, like the one Cheney is facing, have been replaced by a voter-approved process in which all candidates are listed together. The four who get the most votes, regardless of party affiliation, advance to the general election in which ranked voting will be used.

Murkowski benefits from avoiding a Republican primary, "which she would have had a zero percent — I mean zero percent — chance of winning," said Alaska pollster Ivan Moore.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 26 of 57

Murkowski has 18 challengers in her primary, the most prominent being Republican Kelly Tshibaka, whom Trump has endorsed. The Alaska Democratic Party, meanwhile, has endorsed Pat Chesbro, a retired educator.

In an interview, Murkowski insisted she would be among the candidates advancing from the primary and said her success requires, in part, coalition building.

"That's kind of my strong suit, that's what I do," she said.

For his part, Trump has been harsh in his assessment of Murkowski. At a rally in Anchorage last month with Tshibaka and Sarah Palin, whom he's endorsed for Alaska's only House seat, he called Murkowski "the worst. I rate her No. 1 bad."

Trump participated in a telerally for Tshibaka on Thursday while Murkowski mingled with supporters at a campaign office opening in Juneau, which boasted a spread that included moose chili and smoked salmon dip. Murkowski said Trump isn't a factor in the campaign she's running.

"He is going to do what he's going to do," she said. But she told supporters the campaign will be challenging.

Murkowski was censured by Alaska Republican Party leaders last year over numerous grievances, including the impeachment vote and speaking critically of Trump and her support of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland's nomination.

Tuckerman Babcock, a former state Republican Party chair who is running for state Senate, said Murkowski has lost the support of many Alaska Republicans, which he called a "political reality over a record of many years."

Republicans in Alaska are "almost unanimous in their opposition to Lisa Murkowski," he said. "Are they divided on other issues? Of course."

Babcock said the new elections system lets candidates "self-identify" with a party and is not an improvement over the old party primary process.

Chuck Kopp, a Republican former state legislator, is hopeful about the new system. Kopp lost his 2020 Republican primary after being part of a bipartisan state House majority composed largely of Democrats.

"It's only the fringe that is clinging like a death grip on a failed paradigm, and that paradigm is extreme partisanship at all costs," he said. "I think Alaska is going to take a leadership role in moving away from that. That's what I'm hoping for."

Kopp said that while he has not always supported Murkowski, she has been "fearless when it counts for this country."

"I think she has shown that personality cults aren't conservative, conspiracy theories aren't conservative and treating politics like a religion is not conservative," Kopp said. He said he thinks Murkowski has more support throughout Alaska than party activists give her credit for.

The Senate seat has been held by a Murkowski since 1981; before Lisa Murkowski, it was her father, Republican Frank Murkowski. He appointed his daughter to succeed him in 2002 after he became governor. Murkowski won the seat in her own right in 2004.

Murkowski has not cracked 50% of the vote in a Senate general election, and needing to build a coalition of support is nothing new to her. She won a write-in campaign in 2010 after losing that year's Republican primary to tea party favorite Joe Miller.

Murkowski overwhelmingly won her Republican primary against little-known opponents in 2016, the year Trump was elected.

Rosita Worl, an Alaska Native leader, referred to the 2010 primary as "the debacle" and said Alaska Natives rallied around Murkowski and her write-in bid. Worl, who attended Murkowski's Juneau campaign event, said she is not a Republican herself but sees Murkowski as an Alaskan and said the senator has "always supported our issues."

State Rep. Zack Fields, a Democrat seeking reelection to an Anchorage legislative seat, said there are yards in his district with signs for him and Murkowski. He said he doesn't agree with Murkowski on the "majority of votes that she's cast over her career."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 27 of 57

"But she has shown that she believes in democracy and will work with people to accomplish things that are the right thing for citizens. That actually is at risk right now," he said.

Fields called the insurrection "horrifying."

"But what was even frankly more terrifying than that is that so many elected officials and high-ranking so-called leaders would excuse it, justify it and otherwise embolden those who threaten democracy," he said.

Cheney is the vice chair of the House select committee investigating the Capitol riot. The insurrection was a big issue during a June debate between Cheney and Republican challengers, including Hageman. Hageman said the committee was "not focused on things that are important to the people of Wyoming."

Entering the final stretch of her primary campaign, Cheney hasn't backed down. She released a video on Thursday with a closing message reinforcing her criticism of Trump.

"The lie that the 2020 presidential election was stolen is insidious," Cheney said. "It preys on those who love their country. It is a door Donald Trump opened to manipulate Americans to abandon their principles, to sacrifice their freedom, to justify violence, to ignore the rulings of our courts and the rule of law."

She added, "This is Donald Trump's legacy, but it cannot be the future of our nation."

In the interview, Murkowski said Cheney has shown courage.

"I think she has looked at this and said, this is not about Liz Cheney," Murkowski said. "This is about ... the difference between right and wrong. And she is doing her job under very challenging circumstances. But I think she's doing it because she believes she has to."

Strike four: Facebook misses election misinfo in Brazil ads

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

Facebook failed to detect blatant election-related misinformation in ads ahead of Brazil's 2022 election, a new report from Global Witness has found, continuing a pattern of not catching material that violates its policies the group describes as "alarming."

The advertisements contained false information about the country's upcoming election, such as promoting the wrong election date, incorrect voting methods and questioning the integrity of the election — including Brazil's electronic voting system.

This is the fourth time that the London-based nonprofit has tested Meta's ability to catch blatant violations of the rules of its most popular social media platform— and the fourth such test Facebook has flubbed. In the three prior instances, Global Witness submitted advertisements containing violent hate speech to see if Facebook's controls — either human reviewers or artificial intelligence — would catch them. They did not.

"Facebook has identified Brazil as one of its priority countries where it's investing special resources specifically to tackle election related disinformation," said Jon Lloyd, senior advisor at Global Witness. "So we wanted to really test out their systems with enough time for them to act. And with the U.S. midterms around the corner, Meta simply has to get this right — and right now."

Brazil's national elections will be held on Oct. 2 amid high tensions and disinformation threatening to discredit the electoral process. Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the country. In a statement, Meta said it has "prepared extensively for the 2022 election in Brazil."

"We've launched tools that promote reliable information and label election-related posts, established a direct channel for the Superior Electoral Court (Brazil's electoral authority) to send us potentially-harmful content for review, and continue closely collaborating with Brazilian authorities and researchers," the company said.

In 2020 Facebook began requiring advertisers who wish to run ads about elections or politics to complete an authorization process and include "paid for by" disclaimers on them, similar to what it does in the U.S. The increased safeguards follow the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, when Russia used rubles to pay for political ads designed to stoke divisions and unrest among Americans.

Global Witness said it broke these rules when it submitted the test ads (which were approved for publication but were never actually published). The group placed the ads from outside Brazil, from Nairobi and

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 28 of 57

London, which should have raised red flags.

It was also not required to put a “paid for by” disclaimer on the ads and did not use a Brazilian payment method — all safeguards Facebook says it had put in place to prevent misuse of its platform by malicious actors trying to intervene in elections around the world.

“What’s quite clear from the results of this investigation and others is that their content moderation capabilities and the integrity systems that they deploy in order to mitigate some of the risk during election periods, it’s just not working,” Lloyd said.

The group is using ads as a test and not regular posts because Meta claims to hold advertisements to an “even stricter” standard than regular, unpaid posts, according to its help center page for paid advertisements.

But judging from the four investigations, Lloyd said that’s not actually clear.

“We we are constantly having to take Facebook at their word. And without a verified independent third party audit, we just can’t hold Meta or any other tech company accountable for what they say they’re doing,” he said.

Global Witness submitted ten ads to Meta that obviously violated its policies around election-related advertising. They included false information about when and where to vote, for instance and called into question the integrity of Brazil’s voting machines — echoing disinformation used by malicious actors to destabilize democracies around the world.

In another study carried out by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, researchers identified more than two dozen ads on Facebook and Instagram, for the month of July, that promoted misleading information or attacked the country’s electronic voting machines.

The university’s internet and social media department, NetLab, which also participated in the Global Witness study, found that many of those had been financed by candidates running for a seat at a federal or state legislature.

This will be Brazil’s first election since far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who is seeking reelection, came to power. Bolsonaro has repeatedly attacked the integrity of the country’s electronic voting system.

“Disinformation featured heavily in its 2018 election, and this year’s election is already marred by reports of widespread disinformation, spread from the very top: Bolsonaro is already seeding doubt about the legitimacy of the election result, leading to fears of a United States-inspired January 6 ‘stop the steal’ style coup attempt,” Global Witness said.

In its previous investigations, the group found that Facebook did not catch hate speech in Myanmar, where ads used a slur to refer to people of East Indian or Muslim origin and call for their deaths; in Ethiopia, where the ads used dehumanizing hate speech to call for the murder of people belonging to each of Ethiopia’s three main ethnic groups; and in Kenya, where the ads spoke of beheadings, rape and bloodshed.

New Zealand river’s personhood status offers hope to Māori

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WHANGANUI, New Zealand (AP) — The Whanganui River is surging into the ocean, fattened from days of winter rain and yellowed from the earth and clay that has collapsed into its sides. Logs and debris hurtle past as dusk looms.

Sixty-one-year-old Tahi Nepia is calmly paddling his outrigger canoe, called a waka ama in his Indigenous Māori language, as it is buffeted from side to side.

Before venturing out, he makes sure to first ask permission from his ancestors in a prayer, or karakia. It’s the top item on his safety list. He says his ancestors inhabit the river and each time he dips his paddle into the water he touches them.

“You are giving them a mihimihi, you are giving them a massage,” Nepia says. “That’s how we see that river. It’s a part of us.”

In 2017, New Zealand passed a groundbreaking law granting personhood status to the Whanganui River.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 29 of 57

The law declares that the river is a living whole, from the mountains to the sea, incorporating all its physical and metaphysical elements.

The law was part of a settlement with the Whanganui Iwi, comprising Māori from a number of tribes who have long viewed the river as a living force. The novel legal approach set a precedent that has been followed by some other countries including Bangladesh, which in 2019 granted all its rivers the same rights as people.

In June, five years after the New Zealand law was passed, The Associated Press followed the 290-kilometer (180-mile) river upstream to find out what its status means to those whose lives are entwined with its waters. For many, its enhanced standing has come to reflect a wider rebirth of Māori culture and a chance to reverse generations of discrimination against Māori and degradation of the river.

Whanganui Māori have a saying: Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au: I am the river, and the river is me.

Nepia, a caretaker at a Māori immersion school, is among a group of expert waka ama paddlers who have been training for the World Sprint Champs that are currently taking place in Britain. He was due to compete in the over-60 age group both solo and as part of a crew of six.

Nepia learned how to swim on the river when his uncle threw him in at age 8. Roll on your back and float with the current, his uncle told him, and Nepia did, grinding to a stop where the water ran shallow over the stones beneath.

"You get back up, jump off the bank and float down again. That's how it was," he says.

He first paddled on the river in a traditional Māori long canoe in 1979, when he and about 20 of his buddies at the slaughterhouse where they worked got together for a regatta celebrating Waitangi Day, which commemorates the 1840 treaty signed between the British and Māori.

Considered the nation's founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi has long been a source of contention. For the past 30 years, New Zealand's government has been negotiating with tribes that have brought grievances under the treaty, which guaranteed sovereignty over their traditional lands and fisheries. The Whanganui River deal is among dozens of settlements forged in recent years.

At its mouth in the town of Whanganui, the river is permanently discolored these days from the erosion that has come from turning what was once forest along the banks into farmland. The excessive sediment suffocates fish and plant life. The remains of weirs that Māori once built to fish for eel-like lamprey can still be seen, but the lamprey are gone.

"It's the raping of the land. It's simple. We need a reality check. We need to grow trees instead of chopping them down," Nepia says. "The water shouldn't be like that."

A half-hour drive inland from the mouth, Gerrard Albert points to the bucolic riverbank spot where his people live, an ancestral settlement that was never sold and is home to about 120.

He says the river and the surrounding lands have their own authority, or mana.

"They dictate the terms for human use and occupation," he says. "And for too long, we've assumed it's been the other way around."

Albert, 54, was the lead negotiator for Whanganui Māori in getting the river's personhood recognized by lawmakers after his tribe battled for the river's rights for over 140 years.

Albert says the status is a legal fiction, a construct more commonly used to give something like a corporation legal standing.

While the law states that the river enjoys the same rights, powers, duties and liabilities of any other person, there are limitations. For instance, Albert points out, the river can't be sued if somebody drowns in its waters in the way a homeowner might be sued for not fencing a pool.

But Albert also sees it as an opportunity for a permanent shift in thinking.

"This is a political rearrangement of values," he says. "This is Indigenous rights. Indigenous people leading toward better change for everybody."

So what has personhood, or Te Awa Tupua, meant in practical terms? Albert points to one example.

After the law passed, he says, the local council assumed it was business as usual when they tried to

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 30 of 57

build a bridge across the river for cyclists and pedestrians. They hadn't considered they now needed to consult first with the tribe and the community.

As a result the bridge structure ended up sitting in a field during two years of delays before it was finally dropped into place and opened in 2020. Albert says the hapū — the affected tribal clan — and the community pushed for improvements like protected fishing areas, speed limits on nearby roads and the addition of restrooms.

"These are small things, and the hapū didn't really have a problem with the bridge going across. They had a problem with the process in the lead-up," Albert says. "Now the expectation is that the process will never happen in that way again."

Albert has been involved in another, much bigger river project, a refurbishment of two wharves and other improvements at the Whanganui Port costing about 50 million New Zealand dollars, or \$31 million.

This time the tribe is leading the project with the Whanganui District Council and others working with them. The council has said all decision-making will be guided by the river's legally enshrined value system, and has pledged "to work collaboratively for the river's benefit."

Before personhood, Albert says, the tribe constantly had to make the case for protecting the river before an ever-changing cast of local councilors and politicians in the capital, Wellington. The people who made the rules, he says, were the planners, the lawyers and the businessfolk.

Now, he says, the tribe is more able to act like the native New Zealand pigeon, or kererū, which likes to perch contentedly after gorging on berries instead of scratching around for crumbs. Now it's the rule-makers who are legally obliged to come to the tribe and the community with their plans and to prioritize the health of the river.

Such treaty settlements have generally been supported by both conservative and liberal lawmakers, seen as a way to redress colonial wrongdoings and improve outcomes for Māori, who long have lagged behind in economic, social and health statistics.

The Whanganui River settlement, which also included about NZ\$80 million (\$50 million) in financial redress and millions more for the river's future health, was championed by conservative lawmaker Chris Finlayson and passed in a voice vote without objection.

But more recently, some voices are saying change risks going too far. Many conservative lawmakers oppose proposals like renaming New Zealand with its Māori name, Aotearoa, or granting Māori co-governance over the nation's water infrastructure.

Albert says national politics is by nature adversarial, but that's just another construct and it doesn't need to be that way on the river. His latest project is working as part of a group of 17 stakeholder organizations to chart the river's future.

"This is truly about giving power back to the community," he says.

To follow the river as it wends inland, motorists turn off State Highway 4 and take the hilly and narrow Whanganui River Road. Nothing much seems to have changed here since 75 years ago, when rural towns and farms were ascendant in New Zealand.

At the Rivertime Lodge, where cyclists and walkers stay in simple cabins or pitch tents on the riverbank during the summer, manager Frances Marshall is pattering about in fluffy orange slippers. She prefers the feel of the soil beneath her bare feet most of the time but makes concessions on colder winter days.

On her chin, Marshall wears a traditional Māori tattoo, a moko kauae. She considers it an integral part of her spiritual being and her connection to the river. Although her nephew did the tattooing just a few months ago, on Marshall's 61st birthday, she feels like it has been a part of her for much longer.

"It's hard to describe. It's like this person inside you wanting to get out," says Marshall.

Marshall has been around the river all her life. Her father and grandfather were of British descent and were one of the last families to venture into the relatively difficult terrain to clear brush for farming and breeding sheep.

She remembers horseback riding along the river at age 5. Some days she'd help her mother take lunch

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 31 of 57

to the sheep shearers and would watch in fascination as the men deftly threw a whole fleece across a table and plucked out the rough wool before rolling it and putting it into a press.

Marshall says that in addition to the erosion, there have been problems in the past with people dumping stolen cars and trash into the river. Now, with an increased focus on the river's health, landowners and tribes are replanting the hills to reduce further erosion and restore the natural habitat her own family once cleared.

Around the lodge, Marshall has been planting flax bushes and native trees like the distinctive, yellow-blossomed kōwhai. Across the road, her brother planted 10,000 native manuka trees, which he plans to turn into a honey farm.

Marshall was elated when the river, or awa, was recognized.

"Over the years, our awa, she's been sick," Marshall says. "And so that happening, for a lot of us, means that things can be done now to help heal her."

Grant Cooper is land and partnerships manager at Horizons Regional Council, which has worked for 18 years with farmers along the river on reversing erosion and other improvements. They include fencing off streams to contain cattle and sheep waste, which increases the levels of unwanted nitrates and bacteria.

It's a balance, Cooper acknowledges, because farmers still need to make money. One solution has been to convert dairy and sheep farms into forests for harvesting, usually pine, redwood or manuka trees.

Planting trees can reduce soil erosion into the river by 90%, Cooper says, although it does leave land vulnerable for several years between the time a stand of trees is felled and when new seedlings take hold.

Council figures show about 51% of the land around the river is currently native forest. About 31% is used for grazing livestock, 8% for commercial forestry and the rest for other uses.

The council's water-quality monitoring shows that suspended sediment is the river's single biggest problem, followed by nitrate toxicity.

Mike Cranstone, president of the local chapter of the lobby group Federated Farmers, acknowledges that decades-ago clearing led to erosion and silting. But he says blaming multigenerational farming families for all the river's problems is not overly helpful.

"Most farmers' ambition is to improve the land and leave the land in a better state for their next generation," Cranstone says.

Farther inland, through the Whanganui National Park, the river winds through forest. Gone are the farms, and the water runs cleaner.

Tourists ride jetboats or paddle canoes to the famed "Bridge to Nowhere," built across the river in 1936 to provide access to farmland given to soldiers after World War I. But the soil wasn't suitable and the last farmers walked away in 1942, and the concrete arched span stands eerily alone today after decades of forest regrowth.

As the river loops toward Tongariro National Park, it becomes all but inaccessible due to dense forest and ravines — but not for Adam Daniel, a scientist and adventurer, a kind of Indiana Jones of the river.

At the end of a remote road, he straps into the four-seater off-road buggy he's been towing and speeds off along an impossibly narrow track, careening over downed trees, up banks and through streams.

Originally from Washington state, where he studied Columbia River dams' impact on salmon, Daniel now monitors the Whanganui and dozens of other rivers for Fish & Game New Zealand, which collects license fees from hunters and anglers to safeguard the habitat.

Work often merges with play for Daniel, 48, who likes nothing more than to bring along fly-fishing gear and cast a line.

"It's our best backcountry river, and it has amazing trout fishing, great scenery, and I personally come here and do a lot of hunting as well," he says.

But go downstream just 40 kilometers (25 miles), and the trout and other fish can't survive because it's too muddied and too warm in the summer, he says.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 32 of 57

Daniel's monitoring has found more sediment even in the river's upper reaches than in nearby waterways. Forestry, four-wheel-drive trails and other human impacts are factors, but there's something else as well.

Near the Whanganui's source, Daniel points out where a power company is sucking out water as part of the Tongariro Power Scheme. Built about 50 years ago, the scheme draws from some 36 area rivers and streams to generate electricity and deposits most of it into a lake.

The water from this particular intake isn't always used directly for generation but sometimes to cool a manmade lake that's part of the scheme, Daniel says. When the water is returned to the river, it can come back warmer and muddier.

Last year 81% of New Zealand's electricity came from renewable sources, thanks in large part to this and other big hydro schemes. It's a positive story the government likes to tout, but today such projects would be unlikely to get regulatory approval because of their environmental toll.

Genesis Energy, which owns the Tongariro Power Scheme, says it draws on average 20% of the Whanganui's flow from several intakes to power over 30,000 households.

Chief operations officer Rebecca Larkin says Genesis tries to mitigate the environmental impact, avoiding taking water from certain areas and implementing weekslong "zero water-take periods" each year when the river is low and warmer. She notes the company is among the groups working alongside Albert on stewardship of the river.

But Daniel says water is taken for cooling even when Genesis pauses removal for electricity generation. He and others hope the company will be forced to make major improvements — or leave the river entirely — when its regulatory license for the power scheme expires in 2039.

Daniel had mixed feelings at first about the river being declared a living being.

"As a scientist I always try to rely on rules and regulations to protect a river. So the personhood status was a real foreign concept to me," Daniel says. "But what it has done is attract a lot of attention to the river, which has been really helpful in highlighting the issues."

"I'm certainly coming around to it," he adds. "I'm hoping that it really will turn the tide and help save the river."

Police: Man drives into fundraiser crowd, then kills mother

BERWICK, Pa. (AP) — Pennsylvania state police say a man upset about an argument with his mother drove into a crowd of people at a fundraiser for victims of a recent deadly house fire, killing one person at the event and injuring 17 others, then returned home and beat his mother to death.

Police identified the driver as 24-year-old Adrian Oswaldo Sura Reyes of Nescopeck, who was arraigned early Sunday on two counts of criminal homicide.

Police allege in a criminal complaint that Sura Reyes said he argued with his mother at their Nescopeck home Saturday evening and while driving through nearby Berwick was "extremely frustrated" and was "tired of fighting with his mother, including about money, and wanted to be done with it."

At the time, police said, a crowd of about 75 people, including adults and small children, had gathered in a blocked-off parking lot in Berwick outside the Intoxicology Department bar, which was holding an all-day fundraising event to benefit victims of the Aug. 5 blaze in Nescopeck that killed seven adults and three children.

Police say Sura Reyes told them he drove past the gathering, then turned around and headed back to the bar "to drive through the crowd of people." Investigators asked how fast he drove into the crowd and Sura Reyes replied "speeding up."

"Video surveillance gathered by the Pennsylvania State Police corroborates Sura Reyes's statement that he sped up into the crowd purposefully," according to the criminal complaint.

Geisinger Medical Center said it received 15 patients after the crash, and five remained in critical condition while three were listed in fair condition, a hospital spokesperson said Sunday morning. Seven patients had been treated at hospitals and released.

Trooper Anthony Petroski III told reporters late Saturday that Sura Reyes was not currently a suspect

in the fire — the cause of which remains under investigation.

"This is a complete tragedy in a community where there's already been tragedy," Petroski said.

Shortly after the crash was reported, troopers were called about a man "physically assaulting" a woman less than two miles away in Nescopeck. Troopers arrived to find local police had arrested Sura Reyes and that a woman was dead.

Luzerne County Coroner Francis Hacken confirmed Sunday that the victim, Rosa D. Reyes, 56, of Nescopeck, was the mother of Sura Reyes and had died of multiple traumatic injuries after being hit by a vehicle and assaulted with a hammer.

In the criminal complaint, police say Sura Reyes told investigators he saw his mother in the street upon returning home and hit her with his vehicle, then struck her with a hammer several times.

Sura Reyes was denied bail and remained in Columbia County prison pending an Aug. 29 preliminary hearing. News outlets reported he said "Sorry" in response to reporters' questions as he was taken from the Shickshinny police station. It wasn't immediately clear whether he had a lawyer to comment on his behalf.

The first funerals for victims of the fire were held Friday, and more were scheduled for Sunday and Monday.

The bar called the events an "absolute tragedy" and said on its Facebook page that they will be closed until further notice and would like privacy "while we grieve and try to process the events that occurred."

Fire at Cairo Coptic church kills 41, including 15 children

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — A fire ripped through a packed Coptic Orthodox church during morning services in Egypt's capital on Sunday, quickly filling it with thick black smoke and killing 41 worshippers, including at least 15 children.

Several trapped congregants jumped from upper floors of the Martyr Abu Sefein church to try to escape the intense flames, witnesses said. "Suffocation, suffocation, all of them dead," said a distraught witness, who only gave a partial name, Abu Bishoy.

Sixteen people were injured, including four policemen involved in the rescue effort.

The cause of the blaze at the church in the working-class neighborhood of Imbaba was not immediately known. An initial investigation pointed to an electrical short-circuit, according to a police statement.

Weeping families waited outside for word about relatives who were inside the church and at nearby hospitals where the victims were taken. Footage from the scene circulated online showed burned furniture, including wooden tables and chairs. Firefighters were seen putting out the blaze while others carried victims to ambulances.

Witnesses said there were many children inside the four-story building, which had two day care facilities.

"There are children, we didn't know how to get to them," said Abu Bishoy. "And we don't know whose son this is, or whose daughter that is. Is this possible?"

A total of 15 children were killed in the fire, according to Copts United, a news website focusing on Christian news.

A list of victims obtained by The Associated Press said 20 bodies, including 10 children, were taken to the Imbaba public hospital. Three were siblings, twins aged 5 and a 3-year-old, it said. The church bishop, Abdul Masih Bakhit, was also among the dead at the hospital morgue.

Twenty-one bodies were taken to other hospitals.

Mousa Ibrahim, a spokesman for the Coptic Orthodox Church, told the AP that 5-year-old triplets, their mother, grandmother and an aunt were among those killed.

Witness Emad Hanna said a church worker managed to get some children out of the church day care facilities.

"We went upstairs and found people dead. And we started to see from outside that the smoke was getting bigger, and people want to jump from the upper floor," Hanna said.

"We found the children," some dead, some alive, he added.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 34 of 57

The country's health minister blamed the smoke and a stampede as people attempted to flee the fire for causing the fatalities. It was one of the worst fire tragedies in Egypt in recent years.

The church is located in a narrow street in one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in Cairo. Sunday is the first working day of the week, and traffic jams clog the streets in Imbama and surrounding areas in the morning.

Some relatives criticized what they said were delays in the arrival of ambulances and firefighters. "They came after people died. ... They came after the church burned down," shouted one woman standing outside the smoldering church.

Health Minister Khaled Abdel-Ghafar countered that the first ambulance arrived at the site two minutes after the fire was reported.

Fifteen firefighting vehicles were dispatched to the scene to put out the flames while ambulances ferried casualties to nearby hospitals, officials said.

President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi spoke by phone with Coptic Christian Pope Tawadros II to offer his condolences, the president's office said. Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, Al-Azhar's Grand Imam, also offered condolences to the head of the Coptic church.

"I am closely following the developments of the tragic accident," el-Sissi wrote on Facebook. "I directed all concerned state agencies and institutions to take all necessary measures, and immediately to deal with this accident and its effects."

Abdel-Ghafar, the health minister, said in a statement that two of the injured were discharged from a hospital while the others were still being treated.

The Interior Ministry said it received a report of the fire at 9 a.m. local time, and first responders found that the blaze had broken out in an air conditioner on the building's second floor.

The ministry, which oversees police and firefighters, blamed an electrical short-circuit for the fire, which produced huge amounts of smoke. Meanwhile, the country's chief prosecutor, Hamada el-Sawy, ordered an investigation and a team of prosecutors were dispatched to the church. He said most victims died of smoke inhalation.

By Sunday afternoon, emergency services said they managed to put out the blaze and the prime minister and other senior government officials arrived to inspect the site. Premier Mustafa Madbouly said surviving victims and families of the dead would receive payments as compensation and that the government would rebuild the church.

By late afternoon, caskets carrying the dead were transferred in ambulances for pre-burial prayers at two churches in the nearby Waraq neighborhood, as weeping women lined their path. Hundreds of mourners gathered at the churches for the funerals, before taking the bodies for burial in nearby cemeteries.

Egypt's Christians account for some 10% of the nation's more than 103 million people and have long complained of discrimination by the nation's Muslim majority.

Sunday's blaze was one of the worst fire tragedies in recent years in Egypt, where safety standards and fire regulations are poorly enforced. In March last year, a fire at a garment factory near Cairo killed at least 20 people and injured 24.

Dodgers' 12-game win streak ends; Singer, Royals blank LA

By CODY FRIESEN Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Brady Singer pitched six dominant innings and the Kansas City Royals ended the Dodgers' 12-game winning streak, blanking Los Angeles 4-0 Sunday.

A day after hitting six home runs in a romp, the Dodgers were held to just two hits.

The Dodgers were trying to match their longest winning streak since moving to Los Angeles, having won 13 straight in both 1962 and 1965. The franchise record is 15 in a row set in 1924 while the team played in Brooklyn — the club moved to West Coast for the 1958 season.

"I mean, we knew we weren't going to win every game," star first baseman Freddie Freeman said.

"We don't like getting shut out as an offense, just plain and simple. We still won the series, so you have

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 35 of 57

to look at it like that sometimes," he said.

Singer (6-4) pitched one-hit ball against the team with the best record in the majors. He struck out seven and walked three.

"Singer thrives on these opportunities and we do need that stopper to step up and so something special," Royals manager Mike Matheny said. "I don't think you can imagine that Brady was going to execute the way he did today. It was a thing of beauty and couldn't have been at a better time."

The 26-year old right-hander felt all his pitches were working.

"It was a good outing, I think I stayed on the attack all day and all three pitches had good life," Singer said. "The fastball had good life, the changeups that I threw really helped me throughout the whole entire time."

Royals relievers Amir Garrett and Dylan Coleman kept the Dodgers scoreless and Scott Barlow got four outs for his 19th save.

Vinnie Pasquantino homered among his three hits and drove in two runs. He connected in the eighth inning for his fourth home run and seventh RBI of an 11-game homestand.

"It is just constant adjustments," Pasquantino said. "I'm not going to say anything clicked this week, but it is one of those things where you just keep going, pushing forward and it worked out today."

Tyler Anderson (12-2) gave up three runs in six innings.

Chris Taylor singled in the Dodgers fifth and Mookie Betts doubled in the eighth. It was the fewest hits for Los Angeles since April 19 and the first time being shut out since June 27.

UP NEXT

Los Angeles will continue its Midwest stretch with a three-game set with Milwaukee. LHP Julio Urías (12-6, 2.49 ERA) will open the series for the Dodgers.

LHP Kris Bubic (2-6, 5.02 ERA) is slated to take the mound for Kansas City against Minnesota to begin a seven-game road trip.

German minister decries ecological catastrophe in Oder River

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Germany's environment minister said the mass die-off of fish in the Oder River is an ecological catastrophe and it isn't clear yet how long it will take the river to recover.

Steffi Lemke spoke Sunday at a news conference alongside her Polish counterpart, Anna Moskwa, after a meeting in Szczecin, a Polish city on the Oder River.

The Oder runs from Czechia to the border between Poland and Germany before flowing into the Baltic Sea. Ten tons of dead fish were removed from it last week, but Moskwa said the cause of the mass die-off still has not yet been determined.

"So far, at least 150 samples of water from the Oder River have been tested. None of the studies have confirmed the presence of toxic substances. At the same time, we are testing fish. No mercury or other heavy metals have been found in them," she said.

She said some Oder water samples were being sent to foreign laboratories to be tested for about 300 substances.

Both ministers said they were focused now on doing what they can to limit the damage to the river's ecosystem.

Lemke suggested that German authorities were not alerted quickly enough after dead fish were detected in Poland and said communications between the two countries should be improved.

80 years later, Navajo Code Talker marks group's early days

PHOENIX (AP) — It's been 80 years since the first Navajo Code Talkers joined the Marines, transmitting messages using a code based on their then-unwritten native language to confound Japanese military cryptologists during World War II — and Thomas H. Begay, one of the last living members of the group, still remembers the struggle.

"It was the hardest thing to learn," the 98-year-old Begay said Sunday at a Phoenix ceremony marking

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 36 of 57

the anniversary. "But we were able to develop a code that couldn't be broken by the enemy of the United States of America."

Hundreds of Navajos were recruited by the U.S. Marines to serve as Code Talkers during the war. Begay is one of three who is still alive to talk about it.

The Code Talkers participated in all assaults the Marines led in the Pacific from 1942 to 1945 including Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Peleliu and Iwo Jima.

They sent thousands of messages without error on Japanese troop movements, battlefield tactics and other communications crucial to the war's ultimate outcome.

President Ronald Reagan established Navajo Code Talkers Day in 1982 and the Aug. 14 holiday honors all the tribes associated with the war effort.

It's also an Arizona state holiday and Navajo Nation holiday on the vast reservation that occupies portions of northeastern Arizona, northwestern New Mexico and southeastern Utah.

Begay and his family came from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Phoenix for Sunday's event at the Wesley Bolin Plaza where a Navajo Code Talker statue is displayed.

Mexico president to bypass congress to keep army in streets

By MARIA VERZA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's president has begun exploring plans to sidestep congress to hand formal control of the National Guard to the army, a move that could extend the military's control over policing in a country with high levels of violence.

That has raised concerns because President Andrés Manuel López Obrador won approval for creating the force in 2019 by pledging in the constitution that it would be under nominal civilian control and that the army would be off the streets by 2024.

Neither the National Guard nor the military have been able to lower the insecurity in the country, however. This past week, drug cartels staged widespread arson and shooting attacks, terrifying civilians in three main northwest cities in a bold challenge to the state. On Saturday, authorities sent 300 army special forces and 50 National Guard members to the border city of Tijuana.

Still, López Obrador wants to keep soldiers involved in policing, and remove civilian control over the National Guard, whose officers and commanders are mostly soldiers, with military training and pay grades.

But the president no longer has the votes in congress to amend the constitution and has suggested he may try to do it as a regulatory change with a simple majority in congress or by an executive order and see if the courts will uphold that.

López Obrador warned Friday against politicizing the issue, saying the military is needed to fight Mexico's violent drug cartels. But then he immediately politicized it himself.

"A constitutional reform would be ideal, but we have to look for ways, because they (the opposition) instead of helping us, are blocking us, there is an intent to prevent us from doing anything," López Obrador said.

The two main opposition parties also had a different positions when they were in power. They supported the army in public safety roles during their respective administrations beginning in 2006 and 2012.

When López Obrador was running for president, he called for taking the army off the streets. But being in power — and seeing homicides running at their highest sustained levels ever — apparently changed his mind.

He has relied heavily on the military not just for crime-fighting. He sees the army and navy as heroic, patriotic and less corruptible, and has entrusted them with building major infrastructure projects, running airports and trains, stopping migrants and overseeing customs at seaports.

Mexico's army has been deeply involved in policing since the start of the 2006 drug war. But its presence was always understood as temporary, a stop-gap until Mexico could build trustworthy police forces.

López Obrador appears to have abandoned that plan, instead making the military and quasi-military force like the National Guard the main solution. "Their mandate has to be prolonged," he said.

"I think the best thing is for the National Guard to be a branch of the Defense Department to give it stability over time and prevent it from being corrupted," he said. He also wants the army and the navy to

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 37 of 57

help in public safety roles beyond 2024, the current dateline established in a 2020 executive order.

The force has grown to 115,000, but almost 80% of its personnel were drawn from the ranks of the military.

The United Nations and human rights groups have long expressed reservations about having the military do police work. and Mexico's Supreme Court has yet to decide on several appeals against what critics say are unconstitutional tasks given to the National Guard.

The U.N. Human Rights High Commissioner's office said last week that militarizing civil institutions, such as policing, weakens democracy. Soldiers aren't trained for that, the military by nature isn't very open to scrutiny, it has been implicated in human rights abuses, and the presence of troops hasn't resolved the pressing question of how to reform police, prosecutors and courts.

While López Obrador claims human rights abuses are no longer tolerated, the governmental National Human Rights Commission has received more than a thousand complaints alleging abuses by the National Guard. The agency has issued five recommendations in cases where there was evidence of excessive use of force, torture or abuse of migrants.

"The problem with using the military in civilian roles is that we don't have any control of what goes on inside" the forces, said Ana Lorena Delgadillo, director of the civic group Foundation For Justice.

Delgadillo said that placing the National Guard under the Defense Department, despite constitutional language defining it as a civilian-commanded force, is "authoritarian," will be challenged in court and will not help to pacify the country.

The Mexican Employers' Association, Coparmex, said in a statement that the capabilities of state police should instead be strengthened. "It is them and the (state prosecutors' offices) that are authorized to interact with the civilian population," the group said.

Perhaps more to the point, the quasi-military National Guard has not been able to bring down Mexico's stubbornly high homicide rate.

Sofía de Robina, a lawyer for the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center, said the National Guard "has not been able to decrease violence," in part because of its military-style strategy of "occupying territory."

While that strategy — of building barracks and conducting regular patrols — may be helpful in remote or rural areas, it has proved less useful and even drawn opposition in urban areas.

Police, who are from the towns they serve and live among the inhabitants, would be more effective, experts say. Yet widespread corruption, poor pay and threats by cartels against police officers have weakened local and state police forces.

Over 15 years of experience with the military in policing roles has shown "the falseness of the paradigm that the army was going to solve the problems," Delgadillo said.

De Robina added that López Obrador's latest move means trying to keep the military in policing indefinitely, "completely defying the obligation that public safety be civil" with no limits on time or strategy.

Hit-and-run on Chicago street leaves 3 dead, 1 injured

CHICAGO (AP) — Three people were killed and another injured when they were struck by a car during a hit-and-run on a Chicago street early Sunday, police said.

A sedan hit the four males around 5 a.m. on the city's South Side and then drove away, Chicago police said. No one was in custody, police said.

Video circulating online purported to show them being struck by a fast-moving car, but police declined to release further information.

Three victims were pronounced dead at a Chicago hospital. The fourth was taken to a different Chicago hospital. Their names and ages were unknown Sunday.

Police: Man killed himself after ramming US Capitol barrier

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 38 of 57

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A man drove his car into a barricade near the U.S. Capitol early Sunday and then began firing gunshots in the air before fatally shooting himself, according to police, who said he did not seem to be targeting any member of Congress.

The incident happened just before 4 a.m. at a vehicle barricade set at East Capitol Street NE and 2nd Street SE in Washington.

It comes at a time when law enforcement authorities across the country are facing an increasing number of threats and federal officials have warned about the potential of violent attacks on government buildings in the days since the FBI's search of former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

The attack is reminiscent of an incident when a man drove a vehicle into two Capitol Police officers at a checkpoint in April 2021, killing an 18-year veteran of the force. And many on Capitol Hill remain on edge after supporters of the then-president stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Authorities said the man, identified as Richard A. York III, 29, of Delaware, crashed into the barricade and that as he was getting out of the car, the vehicle became engulfed in flames. The man then opened fire, firing several shots into the air as police approached.

Capitol Police said the man shot himself as the officers neared. He was later pronounced dead.

Capitol Police Chief Tom Manger said officers did not hear the man say anything before he opened fire "indiscriminately" in the street with a handgun and walked toward the Capitol building. Authorities are investigating whether the man may have set his car on fire, the chief said, because the collision did not appear to cause the blaze.

Police officers at the scene saw the man fatally shoot himself as they approached, Manger said.

The chief said investigators located addresses for the man in Delaware and Pennsylvania and learned he had a criminal history in the past decade, though his motive remained unclear and he had no links to the Capitol.

"We don't have any information that would indicate his motivation at this point," Manger said.

Police said "it does not appear the man was targeting any member of Congress" and that investigators are examining the man's background as they work to try to discern a motive. Both the House and Senate are in recess and very few staff members work in the Capitol complex at that hour.

Authorities said no other injuries were reported and police do not believe any officers returned fire.

Palestinian gunman wounds 8 in late-night Jerusalem shooting

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A Palestinian gunman opened fire at a bus near Jerusalem's Old City early Sunday, wounding eight Israelis in an attack that came a week after violence flared up between Israel and militants in Gaza, police and medics said.

Two of the victims were in serious condition, including a pregnant woman with abdominal injuries and a man with gunshot wounds to the head and neck, according to Israeli hospitals treating them.

The U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Tom Nides, tweeted that there were American citizens among the wounded. An embassy spokesperson disclosed no other information or details.

The shooting happened as the bus waited in a parking lot near David's Tomb on Mount Zion, just outside the Old City walls. Israeli media identified the suspected attacker as a 26-year-old Palestinian from east Jerusalem.

Israeli police said forces were dispatched to the scene to investigate. Israeli security forces also pushed into the nearby Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan pursuing the suspected attacker.

Later on Sunday, police said the suspected attacker turned himself in. Speaking at a meeting of his Cabinet on Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid said the suspected attacker was a resident of Jerusalem who was operating alone during the shooting and who had previously been arrested by Israel.

In New York, friends and family of a father and son were relieved that their loved ones were recovering, even as worry surrounded the fate of a pregnant Brooklyn woman who was shot in the abdomen.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 39 of 57

"It's very devastating and painful to see what's happening," said Rabbi Moishe Indig, a leader of the Satmar Jewish community in Brooklyn, who counted the father and son as members.

The focus is on prayer and healing, said Isaac Abraham, a relative of the two.

The attack in Jerusalem followed a tense week between Israel and Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

Last weekend, Israeli aircraft unleashed an offensive in the Gaza Strip targeting the militant group Islamic Jihad and setting off three days of fierce cross-border fighting. Islamic Jihad fired hundreds of rockets during the flare-up to avenge the airstrikes, which killed two of its commanders and other militants. Israel said the attack was meant to thwart threats from the group to respond to the arrest of one of its officials in the occupied West Bank.

Forty-nine Palestinians, including 17 children and 14 militants, were killed, and several hundred were injured in the fighting, which ended with an Egyptian-brokered cease-fire. No Israeli was killed or seriously injured.

The Islamic militant group Hamas, which controls Gaza, stayed on the sidelines.

A day after the cease-fire halted the worst round of Gaza fighting in more than a year, Israeli troops killed three Palestinian militants and wounded dozens in a shootout that erupted during an arrest raid in the West Bank city of Nablus.

Salman Rushdie 'on the road to recovery,' agent says

By HILLEL ITALIE and CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

MAYVILLE, N.Y. (AP) — Salman Rushdie is "on the road to recovery," his agent confirmed Sunday, two days after the author of "The Satanic Verses" suffered serious injuries in a stabbing at a lecture in New York.

The announcement followed news that the lauded writer was removed from a ventilator Saturday and able to talk. Literary agent Andrew Wylie cautioned that although Rushdie's "condition is headed in the right direction," his recovery would be long. Rushdie, 75, suffered a damaged liver and severed nerves in an arm and in an eye that he was likely to lose, Wylie had previously said.

"Though his life changing injuries are severe, his usual feisty & defiant sense of humour remains intact," Rushdie's son Zafar Rushdie said in a Sunday statement that stressed the author remained in critical condition. The family statement also expressed gratitude for the "audience members who bravely leapt to his defence," as well as police, doctors and "the outpouring of love and support."

Hadi Matar, 24, of Fairview, New Jersey, pleaded not guilty Saturday to attempted murder and assault charges in what a prosecutor called "a targeted, unprovoked, preplanned attack" at western New York's Chautauqua Institution, a nonprofit education and retreat center.

The attack was met with global shock and outrage, along with praise for the man who, for more than three decades — including nine years in hiding under the protection of the British government — has weathered death threats and a \$3 million bounty on his head over "The Satanic Verses."

"It's an attack against his body, his life and against every value that he stood for," Henry Reese, 73, told The Associated Press. The cofounder of Pittsburgh's City of Asylum was on stage with Rushdie and suffered a gash to his forehead, bruising and other minor injuries. They had planned to discuss the need for writers' safety and freedom of expression.

Authors, activists and government officials cited Rushdie's bravery and longtime championing of free speech in the face of intimidation. Writer and longtime friend Ian McEwan labeled Rushdie "an inspirational defender of persecuted writers and journalists" and actor-author Kal Penn called him a role model, "especially many of us in the South Asian diaspora."

"Salman Rushdie — with his insight into humanity, with his unmatched sense for story, with his refusal to be intimidated or silenced — stands for essential, universal ideals," U.S. President Joe Biden said in a Saturday statement. "Truth. Courage. Resilience. The ability to share ideas without fear."

Rushdie, who was born in India to a Muslim family and has lived in Britain and the U.S., is known for his surreal and satirical prose, beginning with his Booker Prize-winning 1981 novel "Midnight's Children,"

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 40 of 57

in which he sharply criticized then-Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Infused with magical realism, 1988's "The Satanic Verses" drew ire from some Muslims who regarded elements of the novel as blasphemy.

They believed Rushdie insulted the Prophet Muhammad by naming a character Mahound, a medieval corruption of "Muhammad." The character was a prophet in a city called Jahilia, which in Arabic refers to the time before the advent of Islam on the Arabian Peninsula. Another sequence includes prostitutes that share names with some of Muhammad's nine wives. The novel also implies that Muhammad, not Allah, may have been the Quran's real author.

The book had already been banned and burned in India, Pakistan and elsewhere when Iran's Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a fatwa, or edict, calling for Rushdie's death in 1989. Khomeini died that same year, but the fatwa remains in effect — though Iran, in recent years, hadn't focused on Rushdie.

Iran's state-run newspaper, Iran Daily, praised the attack as an "implementation of divine decree" Sunday. Another hardline newspaper, Kayhan, termed it "divine revenge" that would partially calm the anger of Muslims.

Investigators were trying to determine whether the suspect, born nearly a decade after the novel's publication, acted alone. A prosecutor alluded to the standing fatwa as a potential motive in arguing against bail.

"His resources don't matter to me. We understand that the agenda that was carried out yesterday is something that was adopted and it's sanctioned by larger groups and organizations well beyond the jurisdictional borders of Chautauqua County," District Attorney Jason Schmidt said.

Schmidt said Matar got an advance pass to the event where the author was speaking and arrived a day early bearing a fake ID. The judge ordered Matar held without bail.

Public defender Nathaniel Barone complained that authorities had taken too long to get Matar in front of a judge, leaving him "hooked up to a bench at the state police barracks," and stressed that Matar had the right to presumed innocence.

Barone said after the hearing that Matar has been communicating openly with him and that he would try to learn whether his client has psychological or addiction issues.

Matar was born in the United States to parents who emigrated from Yaroun in southern Lebanon, village mayor Ali Tehfe told the AP. Flags of the Iran-backed Shia militant group Hezbollah, along with portraits of Hezbollah and Iranian leaders, were visible across Yaroun before journalists visiting Saturday were asked to leave.

Hezbollah spokespeople did not respond to requests for comment. Lebanon's top Shiite Mufti Sheikh Ahmad Kabalan vilified Rushdie in a speech Sunday without directly endorsing the attack, saying the author was "the cheapest and worst personality to deal with history and heritage by fabricating lies and hypocrisies."

In Tehran, some Iranians interviewed by the AP praised the attack on an author they believe tarnished the Islamic faith, while others worried it would further isolate their country.

A state trooper and a county sheriff's deputy were assigned to Rushdie's lecture, and police said the trooper made the arrest. But afterward, some longtime visitors to the bucolic vacation colony questioned why there wasn't tighter security given the history of threats against Rushdie.

On Friday, an AP reporter witnessed the attacker stab or punch Rushdie about 10 or 15 times. Reese, the moderator, told CNN he initially thought the attack was a prank.

News about the stabbing has led to renewed interest in "The Satanic Verses," which topped bestseller lists after the fatwa was issued in 1989. As of Sunday morning, the novel ranked No. 11 on Amazon.com's list.

One of Rushdie's ex-wives, the author and television host Padma Lakshmi, tweeted Sunday that she was "relieved" by Rushdie's prognosis.

"Worried and wordless, can finally exhale," she wrote. "Now hoping for swift healing."

A year on, ex-Afghan leader defends role in Taliban takeover

By RAHIM FAIEZ Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 41 of 57

ISLAMABAD (AP) — On the eve of the anniversary of the Taliban takeover of Kabul, Afghanistan's former president on Sunday defended what he said was a split-second decision to flee, saying he wanted to avoid the humiliation of surrender to the insurgents.

Ashraf Ghani also told CNN that on the morning of Aug. 15, 2021, with the Taliban at the gates of the Afghan capital, he was the last one at the presidential palace after his guards had disappeared. He said the defense minister told him earlier that day that Kabul could not be defended.

Ghani had previously sought to justify his actions on the day Kabul fell, but offered more details Sunday. He alleged that one of the cooks in the palace had been offered \$100,000 to poison him and that he felt his immediate environment was no longer safe.

"The reason I left was because I did not want to give the Taliban and their supporters the pleasure of yet again humiliating an Afghan president and making him sign over the legitimacy of the government," he said. "I have never been afraid."

Critics say Ghani's sudden and secret departure Aug. 15 left the city rudderless as U.S. and NATO forces were in the final stages of their chaotic withdrawal from the country after 20 years.

Ghani also denied persistent allegations that he took tens of millions of dollars in cash with him as he and other officials fled in helicopters.

In a report issued last week, a Congressional watchdog said it's unlikely Ghani and his senior advisers transported that much cash on the escape helicopters.

"The hurried nature of their departure, the emphasis on passengers over cargo, the payload and performance limitations of the helicopters, and the consistent alignment in detailed accounts from witnesses on the ground and in the air all suggest that there was little more than \$500,000 in cash on board the helicopters," wrote the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, which has tried to monitor the massive U.S. spending in the country over the years.

The agency added that "it remains a strong possibility that significant amounts of U.S. currency disappeared from Afghan government property in the chaos of the Taliban takeover, including millions from the presidential palace" and the vault of the National Directorate of Security. However, the report said the watchdog was unable to determine how much money was stolen and by whom.

In the end, the Taliban seized the capital without significant fighting last August, capping a weeks-long military blitz in which they rapidly captured provincial capitals without much resistance from the increasingly demoralized Afghan security forces.

In the year since the takeover, the former insurgents have imposed significant restrictions on girls and women, limiting their access to education and work, despite initial promises to the contrary. The Taliban have remained internationally isolated and largely cut off from the flow of international aid enjoyed by the Ghani government. The Taliban have struggled to govern and halt the sharp economic decline that has pushed millions more Afghans into poverty and even hunger.

Despite those challenges, the Taliban-led government planned several events Monday to mark the anniversary, including speeches by Taliban officials and several sports events.

Ship carrying grain for hungry Ethiopia leaves Ukraine

By DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A United Nations-chartered ship loaded with 23,000 metric tons of Ukrainian grain destined for Ethiopia set sail Sunday from a Black Sea port, the first shipment of its kind in a program to assist countries facing famine.

The Liberia-flagged Brave Commander departed from the Ukrainian port of Yuzhne, east of Odesa, according to regional governor Maksym Marchenko. It plans to sail to Djibouti, where the grain will be unloaded and transferred to Ethiopia under the World Food Program initiative.

Ukraine and Russia reached a deal with Turkey on July 22 to restart Black Sea grain deliveries, addressing the major export disruption that has occurred since Russia invaded Ukraine in February.

Ethiopia is one of five countries that the U.N. considers at risk of starvation.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 42 of 57

"The capacity is there. The grain is there. The demand is there across the world and in particular, these countries," WFP Ukraine coordinator Denise Brown told The Associated Press. "So if the stars are aligned, we are very, very hopeful that all the actors around this agreement will come together on what is really an issue for humanity. So today was very positive."

On the front line, Russian forces fired rockets Sunday on the Mykolaiv region in southern Ukraine, killing at least one person. That region is just north of the Russian-occupied city of Kherson, which Ukrainian forces have vowed to retake. The Ukrainian emergency service said one person was killed in shelling early Sunday of the village of Bereznehuvate in Mykolaiv.

A Russian diplomat, meanwhile, called on Ukraine to offer security assurances so international inspectors could visit a nuclear power station in Ukraine that has come under fire.

As fighting steps up in southern Ukraine, concerns have grown sharply about the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is held by Russian forces and has been hit by sporadic shelling. Both Ukraine and Russia blame each other for the shelling, which officials say has damaged monitoring equipment and could lead to a nuclear catastrophe.

Ukraine's nuclear energy operator said Sunday that one person was killed in a Russian rocket attack on the city of Enerhodar where the plant is located. The Russia-controlled local government also reported the attack and the death, but blamed it on Ukrainian forces.

The Zaporizhzhia facility is Europe's largest nuclear power plant.

Russia's envoy to international organizations based in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, called on Ukraine to stop attacking the plant in order to allow an inspection team in from the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"It is important that the Ukrainians stop their shelling of the station and provide security guarantees to members of the mission. An international team cannot be sent to work under continuous artillery shelling," he was quoted as saying Sunday by Russian state news agency Tass.

Ukraine says Russia is shelling nearby regions from the plant and is storing weapons there.

'China threat' emerges in elections from UK to Australia

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — It's not just the economy. While inflation and recession fears weigh heavily on the minds of voters, another issue is popping up in political campaigns from the U.K. and Australia to the U.S. and beyond: the "China threat."

The two finalists vying to become Britain's next prime minister, Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak, clashed in a televised debate last month over who would be toughest on China.

It's a stark departure from outgoing Prime Minister Boris Johnson's business-focused "Sinophile" approach and part of a hardening of anti-China rhetoric in many Western countries and other democracies, like Japan, that is coming out in election campaigns.

Nations for years have sought to balance promoting trade and investment with the world's second-largest economy with concerns about China's projection of military power, espionage and its human rights record.

The pendulum is swinging toward the latter, as evidenced in U.S., European, Japanese and Australian opposition to the threatening Chinese military drills that followed U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan last week, and growing warnings from Western intelligence agencies about Beijing's snooping and interference.

A delegation of U.S. lawmakers arrived Sunday in Taiwan to discuss reducing tensions in the Taiwan Strait and investments in semiconductors, among other topics.

That shift has made China a target for vote-seeking politicians as opinion polls show public sentiment in many democracies turning against China. Some candidates blame China for economic woes at home in addition to posing a security threat to its neighbors and the wider world.

China loomed large in Australia's election in May in which the conservatives, who ultimately lost, tried to paint the opposition as being unwilling to stand up to Beijing.

America's growing rival on the global stage is also expected to figure in this fall's U.S. congressional

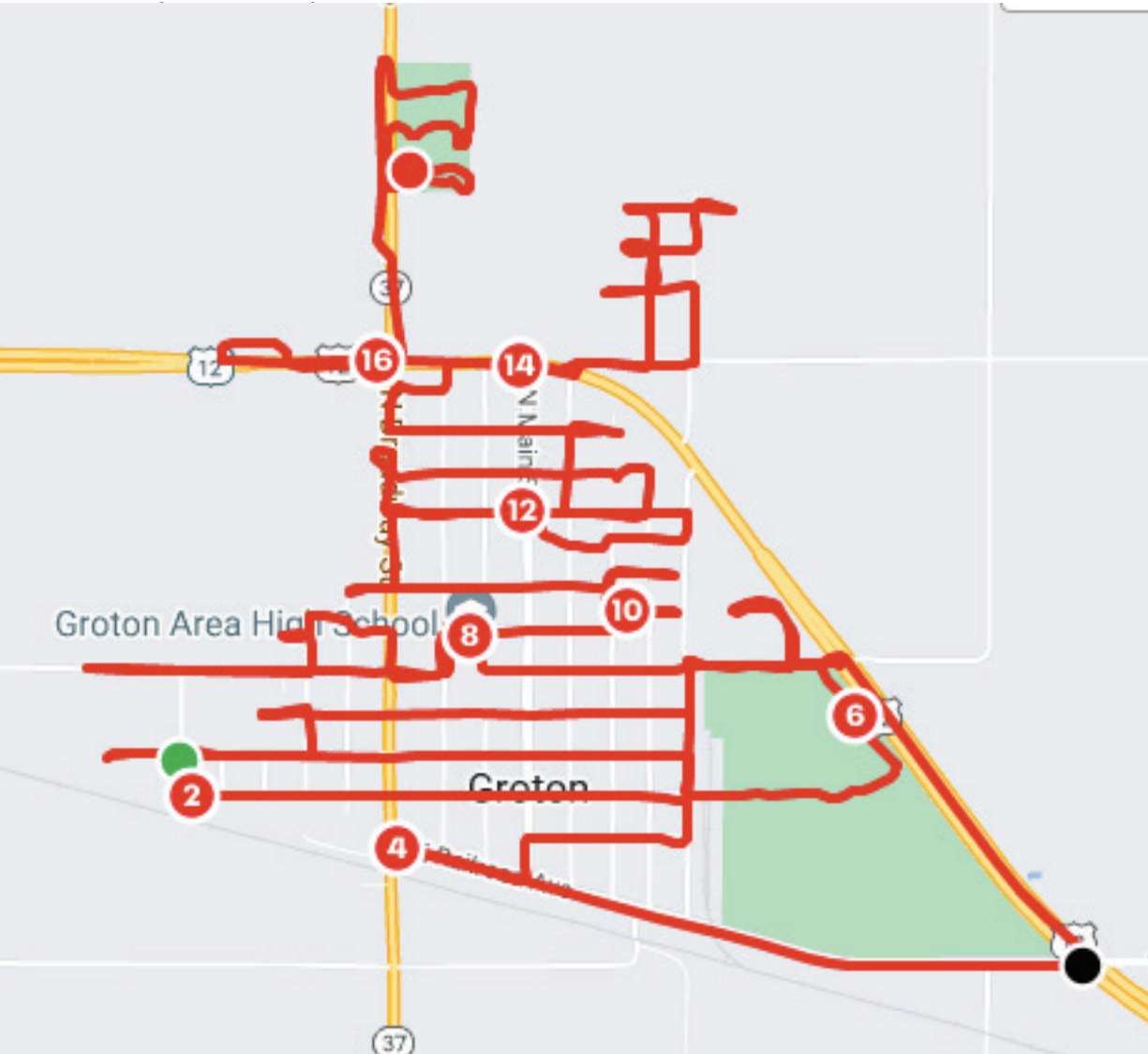
Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 43 of 57

City Conducts Adult Mosquito Control Saturday Night

Many in Europe are also rebalancing their approach to China, though that did not figure significantly in election

Andre
"are mo
"The l
is well a
Truss,
spoken
more ef
the sho
In her
Taiwan
stability
Sunak
Institute
against
"I hac
Pacific
Sydney.
political
Bland
focus of
security
In the
issues t
The g
shift its
"This
adding
A Low
largest
become
A Pew



politicians
te here
nce, has
Russia
TikTok,
Pelosi's
ace and
Confucius
alliance
J.
ne Asia-
tute in
omestic
from a
national
security
t would
oilizing."
ng said,
nation's
a would
ic highs

in many of the 19 countries surveyed in North America, Europe and Asia.
Relations between London and Beijing have soured since President Xi Jinping was granted a 2015 state visit the U.K. government hoped would cement deals to give Britain a vast pool of investment and China greater access to European markets.

Johnson, who took power in 2019, always stressed that he was not a "knee-jerk Sinophobe" — but under pressure from the U.S., his government excluded Chinese firms from the U.K.'s 5G communications network. Britain also has welcomed thousands of people from Hong Kong as Beijing squeezes the freedoms in the former British colony.

The head of the MI6 intelligence agency, Richard Moore, said last month that China had overtaken terrorism as its top priority, as British spies try to understand the threats Beijing's growing assertiveness might pose.

"That feels like a very big moment, post-9/11," Moore said.
The U.S. also is shifting intelligence resources to China.
Yet China experts say much of the rhetoric from Western politicians is just political grandstanding.

16.73 miles
South Wind 15-20 mph
5 gallons of Evolver 4x4
Temperature: 75 to 80 degrees

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 44 of 57

Steve Tsang, director of the China Institute at the London University School of Oriental and African Studies, said neither candidate seeking to be Britain's next prime minister has articulated a coherent policy on China. The winner is to be announced Sept. 5 after a Conservative Party vote.

"The indications are that (Sunak's) words on China policy are not based on any kind of a strategy," Tsang said. "Nor has Truss articulated a proper China strategy, despite being the current foreign secretary."

China has pushed back against the growing hostility.

"I would like to make it clear to certain British politicians that making irresponsible remarks about China, including hyping the so-called 'China threat,' cannot solve one's own problems," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said after the Sunak-Truss debate.

In the United States, both major political parties have railed against China on the campaign trail, particularly in the Midwest, where Chinese imports are blamed for a loss of manufacturing jobs.

Pennsylvania Republican Senate nominee Mehmet Oz ran thousands of TV ads this spring that mentioned China. In Ohio, Democratic Senate contender Tim Ryan declared in one ad: "It's us vs. China."

Polling suggests neither China, nor foreign policy in general, is a top-of-mind issue for most U.S. voters. But political strategists believe China is likely to remain a potent political issue in the November U.S. congressional election, as candidates seek to link China to America's economic challenges.

In Asia, it has been more nuanced.

Japanese voters have become more supportive of a stronger military following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the heightening tensions over Taiwan.

In the presidential vote in South Korea in March, the candidates differed on how to manage the intensifying rivalry between two important partners, China and the U.S.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, who narrowly won, vowed to build a stronger alliance with the U.S., while his liberal opponent argued for a balancing act. But since taking office in May, Yoon has avoided upsetting China, an important export market.

He did not meet Pelosi when she came to South Korea from Taiwan, though he spoke to her by phone, and his government has refrained from criticizing the Chinese military moves around the self-governing island.

Norway puts down Freya the walrus that drew Oslo crowds

BERLIN (AP) — Authorities in Norway have euthanized a walrus that had drawn crowds of spectators in the Oslo Fjord after concluding that it posed a risk to humans.

The 600-kilogram (1,320-pound) female walrus, known affectionately as Freya, became a popular attraction in Norway in recent weeks, despite warnings from officials that people should refrain from getting close and posing for pictures with the massive marine mammal. Freya liked to clamber on small boats, causing damage to them.

Walrus are protected and as recently as last month officials said they hoped Freya would leave of her own accord and that euthanasia would be a last resort.

Norway's Directorate of Fisheries said Freya was put down early Sunday "based on an overall assessment of the continued threat to human safety."

"Through on-site observations the past week, it was made clear that the public has disregarded the current recommendation to keep a clear distance to the walrus," it said. "Therefore, the Directorate has concluded, the possibility for potential harm to people was high and animal welfare was not being maintained."

The head of the directorate, Frank Bakke-Jensen, said other options — including moving the animal elsewhere — were considered. But authorities concluded it wasn't a viable option.

"We have sympathies for the fact that the decision can cause a reaction from the public, but I am firm that this was the right call," Bakke-Jensen said. "We have great regard for animal welfare, but human life and safety must take precedence."

Atlantic walrus normally live in the Arctic. It is unusual but not unheard of for them to travel into the North and Baltic Seas. Another walrus, nicknamed Wally, was seen last year on beaches and even a lifeboat

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 45 of 57

dock in Wales and elsewhere.

Major wildfire in Spain forces the evacuation of 1,500

MADRID (AP) — A large wildfire in northeast Spain grew rapidly overnight and was burning out of control Sunday, forcing the evacuation of eight villages and 1,500 people in Zaragoza province, firefighters said.

The head of the local Aragon government, Javier Lamban, said Sunday that the situation was critical in the town of Añon de Moncayo and the priority for the 300 firefighters fighting the blaze was to protect human lives and villages.

The wildfire, which began Saturday, developed a 50-kilometer (31-mile) perimeter in less than 24 hours, the local forest chief said. It's estimated burned surface could be up to 8,000 hectares (20,000 acres), state news agency EFE reported.

Those who fled took shelter in three different sports centers in nearby towns.

Firefighters said the outlook for taming the blaze depends on the weather, but gusty winds up to 60 kilometers (37 mph) were predicted.

Drought and extremely high temperatures in the Mediterranean country are turning 2022 into the worst year of the century in terms of fires.

So far this year, the Spanish Ministry for Ecological Transition has registered 43 large wildfires, which are those that have burned at least 500 hectares (1,250 acres). That is four times the amount of the previous year and a record for the last decade.

The European Forest Fire Information System says 248,674 hectares (615,000 acres) have burned in wildfires so far this year in Spain. That's almost four times the country's full-year average of 66,965 hectares (165,000 acres) since 2006, when records began.

More US lawmakers visit Taiwan 12 days after Pelosi trip

By JOHNSON LAI and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — A delegation of American lawmakers arrived in Taiwan on Sunday, just 12 days after a visit by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that prompted China to launch days of threatening military drills around the self-governing island that Beijing says must come under its control.

The five-member delegation, led by Democratic Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts, will meet President Tsai Ing-wen and other officials, as well as members of the private sector, to discuss shared interests including reducing tensions in the Taiwan Strait and investments in semiconductors.

China responded to Pelosi's Aug. 2 visit by sending missiles, warships and warplanes into the seas and skies around Taiwan for several days afterward. The Chinese government objects to Taiwan having any official contact with foreign governments, particularly with a high-ranking congressional leader like Pelosi.

A Taiwanese broadcaster showed video of a U.S. government plane landing about 7 p.m. Sunday at Songshan Airport in Taipei, the Taiwanese capital. Four members of the delegation were on the plane.

Markey met with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol earlier Sunday in South Korea before arriving in Taiwan on a separate flight at Taoyuan International Airport, which also serves Taipei. Markey, who chairs the Senate Foreign Relations East Asia, Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Subcommittee, and members of the delegation will reaffirm the United States' support for Taiwan.

The other members of the delegation are Republican Rep. Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen, a delegate from American Samoa, and Democratic House members John Garamendi and Alan Lowenthal from California and Don Beyer from Virginia.

Chinese warplanes have continued crossing the midpoint of the Taiwan Strait on a daily basis even after the conclusion of the military exercises last Wednesday, with at least 10 doing so on Sunday, Taiwan's Defense Ministry said.

The 10 fighter jets were among 22 Chinese military aircraft and six naval ships detected in the area around Taiwan by 5 p.m. on Sunday, the ministry said on its Twitter account.

A senior White House official on Asia policy said late last week that China had used Pelosi's visit as a

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 46 of 57

pretext to launch an intensified pressure campaign against Taiwan, jeopardizing peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and in the broader region.

"China has overreacted, and its actions continue to be provocative, destabilizing, and unprecedented," Kurt Campbell, a deputy assistant to President Joe Biden, said on a call with reporters.

"It has sought to disregard the centerline between the P.R.C. and Taiwan, which has been respected by both sides for more than 60 years as a stabilizing feature," he said, using the acronym for the country's full name, the People's Republic of China.

China accuses the U.S. of encouraging independence forces in Taiwan through its sale of military equipment to the island and engaging with its officials. The U.S. says it does not support independence for Taiwan but that its differences with China should be resolved by peaceful means.

China's ruling Communist Party has long said that it favors Taiwan joining China peacefully but that it will not rule out force if necessary. The two split in 1949 during a civil war in which the Communists took control of China and the losing Nationalists retreated to the island of Taiwan.

Campbell, speaking on Friday, said the U.S. would send warships and planes through the Taiwan Strait in the next few weeks and is developing a roadmap for trade talks with Taiwan that he said the U.S. intends to announce in the coming days.

High oil prices help Saudi Aramco earn \$88B in first half

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi energy company Aramco said Sunday its profits jumped 90% in the second quarter compared to the same time last year, helping its half-year earnings reach nearly \$88 billion. The increase is a boon for the kingdom and the crown prince's spending power as people around the world pay higher gas prices at the pump while energy companies rake in top earnings.

Major oil companies had a strong quarter with Exxon Mobil booking an unprecedented \$17.85 billion profit while Chevron made a record \$11.62 billion. The U.K.'s Shell shattered its own profit record.

Aramco's net profits were helped by second-quarter earnings ending in June that hit \$48.4 billion — a figure higher than all of the first six months of 2021, when profits reached just \$47 billion. It sets a new quarterly earnings record for Aramco since it first floated around 5% of the company on the Saudi stock market in late 2019.

Its earnings for just this past quarter are almost what Aramco's full-year profits were in 2020, when demand for oil crashed during pandemic lockdowns. Its half-year earnings of \$87.9 billion put Aramco on track to far surpass the full-year earnings of 2019, prior to the pandemic, when profits hit \$88 billion.

The company credited the jump to higher crude oil prices and volumes sold, as well as higher refining margins. Saudi Arabia's vast oil reserves are among the cheapest to produce in the world.

Aramco's finances are crucial to the kingdom's stability; when its margins are high, Saudi Arabia's economic growth reflects that. As countries around the world grapple with inflation and recession, the International Monetary Fund projects the Saudi economy will grow by more than 7.6% this year, the highest globally.

Despite years of efforts by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to diversify the economy, and some success in increasing non-oil revenue, Saudi Arabia continues to rely heavily on crude exports that pay for public sector salaries, generous benefits to citizens and defense spending. Aramco's earnings also help the prince carry out his Vision 2030 infrastructure goals.

The company will pay a dividend of \$18.8 billion for the second quarter to shareholders, as it has promised to do since its debut on the stock market. The higher profits bode well for the Saudi government, which is the main shareholder of Aramco.

Aramco is seen as the key to overhauling the Saudi economy. Its proceeds from the IPO were transferred to the country's sovereign wealth fund to invest in projects to spur new sectors and generate new jobs for Saudi youth.

Brent crude has been trading at around \$100 a barrel, even as OPEC, led by Saudi Arabia, and non-OPEC producers, led by Russia, have been steadily increasing production levels that had been cut during the

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 47 of 57

height of the pandemic. The price of oil rose sharply after Russia invaded Ukraine in February. Prices have dipped below the \$100 mark in past weeks amid slowed-down economic growth in China and the U.S.

Aramco President CEO Amin Nasser said he expects oil demand to continue to grow for the rest of the decade, despite current downward economic pressures. OPEC has said it expects world oil demand to rise by around 3 million barrels per day this year with total oil demand to average 100 million barrels a day.

Nasser said Aramco's financial results so far this year reflect this increased demand for oil, even as countries around the world, including Saudi Arabia, pledge to cut their carbon emissions to avert catastrophic global warming levels.

"The world is calling out for affordable, reliable energy and we are answering that call," he said, urging greater investments in oil and gas.

"At a time when the world is worrying about energy security, you are investing in the future of our business. Our customers know that whatever happens, Aramco will always deliver," Nasser said in a short video released with the financial results.

Saudi Arabia is currently producing around 10.5 million barrels per day, with much of that exported to Asia and its largest customer, China. The crown prince has said the kingdom's maximum production capacity is 13 million barrels per day. Aramco says it is working to one day reach that ceiling.

Aramco produces all of Saudi Arabia's oil and gas with its production limits dictated by the energy ministry.

School shooter's brain exams to be subject of court hearing

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — A defense mental health expert in the penalty trial of Florida school shooter Nikolas Cruz can pinpoint when he realized the 23-year-old mass murderer still has "irrational thoughts" — the two were making small talk when Cruz began describing plans for an eventual life outside prison.

Wesley Center, a Texas counselor, said that happened last year at the Broward County jail as he fitted Cruz's scalp with probes for a scan to map his brain. The defense at hearings this week will try to convince Circuit Judge Elizabeth Scherer that Center and other experts should be allowed to testify at Cruz's ongoing trial about what their tests showed, something the prosecution wants barred.

"He had some sort of epiphany while he was in (jail) that would focus his thoughts on being able to help people," transcripts show Center told prosecutors during a pretrial interview this year. "His life's purpose was to be helping others."

Cruz, of course, will never be free. Since his arrest about an hour after he murdered 14 students and three staff members at Parkland's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Feb. 14, 2018, there has never been any doubt his remaining years would be behind bars, sentenced to death or life without parole. Surveillance video shows him mowing down his victims with an AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle and he confessed, eventually pleading guilty in October.

Prosecutors made their argument for death to the seven-man, five-woman jury and 10 alternates over three weeks, resting their case Aug. 4 after the panel toured the still-bloodstained, bullet-pocked classroom building where the massacre happened.

The jurors also watched graphic surveillance videos; saw gruesome crime scene and autopsy photos; received emotional testimony from teachers and students who witnessed others die; and heard from tearful and angry parents, spouses and other family members about the victims and how their loved one's death impacted their lives. They watched video of the former Stoneman Douglas student calmly ordering an Iced tea minutes after the shooting and, nine months later, attacking a jail guard.

Soon, it will be Cruz's attorneys arguing why he should be spared, hoping to convince at least one juror their mitigating factors outweigh the prosecution's aggravating circumstances — a death sentence must be unanimous.

But first, the trial took last week off to accommodate some jurors' requests to deal with personal matters. The jury will also be absent this week as the sides argue before Scherer, who will decide whether

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 48 of 57

brain scans, tests and other evidence the defense wants to present starting Aug. 22 is scientifically valid or junk, as the prosecution contends.

Center's test and its findings will be subject to contentious debate. Called a "quantitative electroencephalogram" or "qEEG," its backers say it provides useful support to such diagnoses as fetal alcohol syndrome, which Cruz's attorneys contend created his lifelong mental and emotional problems.

EEGs have been common in medicine for a century, measuring brainwaves to help doctors diagnose epilepsy and other brain ailments. But the qEEG analysis, which has been around since the 1970s, goes a step farther — a patient's EEG results are compared to a database of brainwaves taken from normal or "neurotypical" people. While qEEG findings cannot be used to make a diagnosis, they can support findings based on the patient's history, examination, behavior and other tests, supporters contend.

A "qEEG can confirm what you already know, but you can't create new knowledge," Center told prosecutors in his interview.

Dr. Charles Epstein, an Emory University neurology professor, reviewed Center's findings for the prosecution. In a written statement to Scherer, he said EEGs using only external scalp probes like the one given Cruz are imprecise, making Center's qEEG results worthless.

"Garbage in, garbage out," he wrote.

Florida judges have given mixed rulings about allowing qEEGs since 2010, when the test helped a Miami-area man escape a death sentence for fatally stabbing his wife and severely wounding her mentally disabled 11-year-old daughter. Some judges have since allowed their admission, while others barred them. Scherer, who is overseeing her first death penalty trial, has never had a case where the defense tried to present a qEEG report.

Even if Scherer bars the test, lead defense attorney Melisa McNeill and her team still have evidence that Cruz's brain likely suffered damage in the womb, including statements by his late birth mother that she abused alcohol and cocaine during pregnancy.

They also have reports giving circumstantial evidence of his mental illness. Cruz got kicked out of preschool for hurting other children. During his years in public school, he spent significant time at a center for students with emotional issues. He also received years of mental health treatment.

Then there are his life circumstances. Cruz's adoptive father died in front of him when he was 5; he was bullied by his younger brother and his brother's friends; he was allegedly abused sexually by a "trusted peer;" he cut himself and abused animals; and his adoptive mother died less than four months before the shooting.

His youth will also be an issue — he was 19 when the shooting happened.

Attorneys not involved in the case say if Scherer wants to avoid having a possible death sentence overturned on appeal, she should give the defense wide latitude on what it presents so jurors can fully assess his life and mental health.

"If it's a close call, I think she is going to bend to the defense — and the prosecution is not going to be happy," said David S. Weinstein, a Miami criminal defense lawyer and former prosecutor.

Some Capitol rioters try to profit from their Jan. 6 crimes

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

Facing prison time and dire personal consequences for storming the U.S. Capitol, some Jan. 6 defendants are trying to profit from their participation in the deadly riot, using it as a platform to drum up cash, promote business endeavors and boost social media profiles.

A Nevada man jailed on riot charges asked his mother to contact publishers for a book he was writing about "the Capitol incident." A rioter from Washington state helped his father hawk clothes and other merchandise bearing slogans such as "Our House" and images of the Capitol building. A Virginia man released a rap album with riot-themed songs and a cover photograph of him sitting on a police vehicle outside the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Those actions are sometimes complicating matters for defendants when they face judges at sentencing as prosecutors point to the profit-chasing activities in seeking tougher punishments. The Justice Depart-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 49 of 57

ment, in some instances, is trying to claw back money that rioters have made off the insurrection.

In one case, federal authorities have seized tens of thousands of dollars from a defendant who sold his footage from Jan. 6. In another case, a Florida man's plea deal allows the U.S. government to collect profits from any book he gets published over the next five years. And prosecutors want a Maine man who raised more than \$20,000 from supporters to surrender some of the money because a taxpayer-funded public defender is representing him.

Many rioters have paid a steep personal price for their actions on Jan. 6. At sentencing, rioters often ask for leniency on the grounds that they already have experienced severe consequences for their crimes.

They lost jobs or entire careers. Marriages fell apart. Friends and relatives shunned them or even reported them to the FBI. Strangers have sent them hate mail and online threats. And they have racked up expensive legal bills to defend themselves against federal charges ranging from misdemeanors to serious felonies.

Websites and crowdfunding platforms set up to collect donations for Capitol riot defendants try to portray them as mistreated patriots or even political prisoners.

An anti-vaccine medical doctor who pleaded guilty to illegally entering the Capitol founded a nonprofit that raised more than \$430,000 for her legal expenses. The fundraising appeal by Dr. Simone Gold's group, America's Frontline Doctors, didn't mention her guilty plea, prosecutors noted.

Before sentencing Gold to two months behind bars, U.S. District Judge Christopher Cooper called it "unseemly" that her nonprofit invoked the Capitol riot to raise money that also paid for her salary. Prosecutors said in court papers that it "beggars belief" that she incurred anywhere close to \$430,000 in legal costs for her misdemeanor case.

Another rioter, a New Jersey gym owner who punched a police officer during the siege, raised more than \$30,000 in online donations for a "Patriot Relief Fund" to cover his mortgage payments and other monthly bills. Prosecutors cited the fund in recommending a fine for Scott Fairlamb, who is serving a prison sentence of more than three years.

"Fairlamb should not be able to 'capitalize' on his participation in the Capitol breach in this way," Justice Department lawyers wrote.

Robert Palmer, a Florida man who attacked police officers at the Capitol, asked a friend to create a crowdfunding campaign for him online after he pleaded guilty. After seeing the campaign to "Help Patriot Rob," a probation officer calculating a sentencing recommendation for Palmer didn't give him credit for accepting responsibility for his conduct. Palmer conceded that a post for the campaign falsely portrayed his conduct on Jan. 6. Acceptance of responsibility can help shave months or even years off a sentence.

"When you threw the fire extinguisher and the plank at the police officers, were you acting in self-defense?" asked U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan.

"No, ma'am, I was not," Palmer said before the judge sentenced him to more than five years in prison.

A group calling itself the Patriot Freedom Project says it has raised more than \$1 million in contributions and paid more than \$665,000 in grants and legal fees for families of Capitol riot defendants.

In April, a New Jersey-based foundation associated with the group filed an IRS application for tax-exempt status. As of early August, an IRS database doesn't list the foundation as a tax-exempt organization. The Hughes Foundation's IRS application says its funds "principally" will benefit families of Jan. 6 defendants, with about 60% of the donated money going to foundation activities. The rest will cover management and fundraising expenses, including salaries, it adds.

Rioters have found other ways to enrich or promote themselves.

Jeremy Grace, who was sentenced to three weeks in jail for entering the Capitol, tried to profit off his participation by helping his dad sell T-shirts, baseball caps, water bottles, decals and other gear with phrases such as "Our House" and "Back the Blue" and images of the Capitol, prosecutors said.

Prosecutors said Grace's "audacity" to sell "Back the Blue" paraphernalia is "especially disturbing" because he watched other rioters confront police officers on Jan. 6. A defense lawyer, however, said Grace didn't break any laws or earn any profits by helping his father sell the merchandise.

Federal authorities seized more than \$62,000 from a bank account belonging to riot defendant John Earle

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 50 of 57

Sullivan, a Utah man who earned more than \$90,000 from selling his Jan. 6 video footage to at least six companies. Sullivan's lawyer argued authorities had no right to seize the money.

Richard "Bigo" Barnett, an Arkansas man photographed propping his feet up on a desk in the office of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has charged donors \$100 for photos of him with his feet on a desk while under house arrest. Defense lawyer Joseph McBride said prosecutors have "zero grounds" to prevent Barnett from raising money for his defense before a December trial date.

"Unlike the government, Mr. Barnett does not have the American Taxpayer footing the bill for his legal case," McBride wrote in a court filing.

Texas real estate agent Jennifer Leigh Ryan promoted her business on social media during and after the riot, boasting that she was "becoming famous." In messages sent after Jan. 6, Ryan "contemplated the business she needed to prepare for as a result of the publicity she received from joining the mob at the Capitol," prosecutors said in court documents.

Prosecutors cited the social media activity of Treniss Evans III in recommending a two-month jail term for the Texas man, who drank a shot of whiskey in a congressional conference room on Jan. 6. Evans has "aggressively exploited" his presence at the Capitol to expand his social media following on Gettr, a social media site founded by a former Trump adviser, prosecutors wrote before Evans' sentencing, scheduled for this coming Tuesday,

A few rioters are writing books about the mob's attack or have marketed videos that they shot during the riot.

A unique provision in Adam Johnson's plea agreement allows the U.S. government to collect profits from any book he gets published over the next five years. Images of Johnson posing for photographs with Pelosi's podium went viral after the riot. Prosecutors said they insisted on the provision after learning that Johnson intends to write a memoir "of some sort."

Ronald Sandlin, a Nevada man charged with assaulting officers near doors to the Senate gallery, posted on Facebook that he was "working out a Netflix deal" to sell riot video footage. Later, in a call from jail, Sandlin told his mother that he had met with right-wing author and filmmaker Dinesh D'Souza and was in contact with podcaster Joe Rogan. He also asked his mom to contact publishers for the book he was writing about the "Capitol incident," prosecutors said.

"I hope to turn it into movie," Sandlin wrote in a March 2021 text message. "I plan on having Leonardo DiCaprio play me," he wrote, adding a smiley face emoji.

Top lawyers hired by those linked to Georgia election probe

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — In the state investigation spurred by then-President Donald Trump's call to Georgia's top election official, people who have been called to testify — or who might be — about potential interference in the 2020 presidential contest are turning to high-profile lawyers.

Trump has hired Drew Findling, one of Atlanta's most prominent criminal defense attorneys who is perhaps best known for representing rap stars. U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., has brought on Trump's former White House counsel Don McGahn, who was in federal court in Atlanta last week as part of a legal team fighting a subpoena for Graham.

No one has been charged with a crime in the investigation and both Trump and Graham have denied any wrongdoing, but the moves come at a particularly precarious legal moment for Trump.

FBI agents conducted an unprecedented search of his Florida estate on Monday in an unrelated investigation into whether Trump removed sensitive information from the White House. He also invoked his Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination on Wednesday as he testified under oath in the New York attorney general's long-running civil investigation into his business dealings.

But the attorney hires in Atlanta suggest Trump and his allies are paying especially close attention to the investigation led by Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis.

"You're not going to go and hire an expensive lawyer unless either you want to send a message that,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 51 of 57

"You guys better come correct or my fancy lawyer will blow you out of the water," or you actually are worried," said Caren Morrison, a Georgia State University law professor and former federal prosecutor.

Legal experts nonetheless warn that the hires alone don't suggest that someone is the subject or target of an investigation.

"I don't think that's any indication that anybody's about to be charged or these folks necessarily are concerned that they're going to jail. It's just what a smart person would do," said Page Pate, an Atlanta defense lawyer who is not involved in the case.

Willis began the investigation early last year. A special grand jury with subpoena power was seated in May at her request and began hearing from witnesses in June. Though the panel's proceedings are secret, related public court filings have given some insight into where the investigation might be headed.

Willis last month filed paperwork seeking to compel testimony from seven Trump advisers and associates, including Graham and former New York City mayor and Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani. Graham is awaiting a federal judge's ruling on his challenge to his subpoena, while Giuliani has been instructed to appear before the special grand jury on Wednesday.

Willis has confirmed since the beginning that she's interested in the Jan. 2, 2021, phone call between Trump and Raffensperger, which came four days before the congressional certification of Democrat Joe Biden's White House victory that was interrupted by the riot at the U.S. Capitol. During that conversation, Trump suggested the secretary of state could "find" the votes needed to overturn his narrow loss in the state.

Recent court filings have made clear that Willis is also interested in other calls made by Trump and his associates to officials in Georgia, false statements about the election made during Georgia legislative committee hearings and the submission of a fake slate of Republican electors to Congress and the National Archives. In several filings, she specifically alleged that there was "a multi-state, coordinated plan by the Trump Campaign to influence the results of the November 2020 election in Georgia and elsewhere."

Willis has said that she is considering subpoenaing Trump, a step that would surely kick off a legal battle.

Trump has hired Findling and former prosecutor Jennifer Little, with attorney Dwight Thomas serving as a consultant on matters related to special grand jury proceedings.

A lot has been made of past social media postings by Findling that suggest he's no fan of the former president, whom he called "racist" and "pathetic" in one August 2018 tweet.

Andrew Fleischman, an appellate attorney in Atlanta who's not connected to the case, said being a defense attorney "doesn't necessarily mean believing your client is innocent or likeable, but it does mean taking a close look at the law and making sure the state has checked all the boxes."

"We defend the process," Fleischman said. "And if they're convicting the president, you want the process to be damn near perfect."

Findling is a well-respected and media savvy lawyer. That second point is crucial when there's so much attention on a case and can present challenges with a client like Trump who's so accustomed to speaking for himself without a filter, Pate said.

"You want to respect the fact that (the client) needs in many cases to make statements to the media, but at the same time, you don't want to jeopardize your case," he said.

Perhaps the most important reason to have a lawyer at this stage of the investigation is to have a channel of communication with prosecutors, Pate said.

"They have a way of getting you to make admissions about something you think may be completely harmless which actually fills a piece of their case," he said of prosecutors. "So you don't want to be on a call or a meeting with the government yourself when your statements can be used against you."

A lawyer can also negotiate dates for an eventual appearance if a subpoena is issued and review any documents that may be requested before they're handed over. And a lawyer can reach out to other witnesses who have appeared before the special grand jury to see if they're willing to talk about what was asked.

Steven Frey has worked with Findling on several cases, including the successful defense of a sheriff who was facing 27 felony charges in an indictment that accused him of using his office for personal gain. He

called Findling "one of the finest lawyers I've ever dealt with."

McGahn also garners high praise. When he left that post in 2018, then-Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said, "I've known every White House Counsel since I arrived in Washington. Even in such impressive company, Don is a cut above."

New York restricts families from sending packages to inmates

By MAYSOON KHAN Associated Press/Report for America

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — As part of an effort to keep illegal drugs and other contraband out of state prisons, New York is taking away one of the few pleasures of life behind bars: It will no longer let people send inmates care packages from home.

Under the new policy, which the state began phasing in last month, friends and family aren't allowed to deliver packages in person during prison visits. They also won't be allowed to mail boxes of goodies unless those come directly from third-party vendors.

While the rule won't stop prisoners from getting items that can be ordered online, like a Snickers bar or a bag of Doritos, they will lose access to foods like home-cooked meals or grandma's cookies.

That's a letdown for people like Caroline Hansen, who for 10 years hand-delivered packages filled with fresh vegetables, fruits, and meats to her husband, who is serving a life sentence.

"When I first started bringing him packages, he said he loved avocados. He hadn't had them in about 20 years," said Hansen, a single mother of two who works as a waitress in Long Island.

"What breaks my heart is, I take for granted having a banana with my yogurt. Imagine never being able to eat a banana?" she added, saying her husband's prison cafeteria serves bananas once a month, at most.

New York had been one of the few states in the nation that still allowed families to send packages to inmates from home. The rule is already in effect in a majority of state prisons.

Starting this month, the state prison system is also testing a program where inmates will be blocked from getting most letters sent on paper. Instead, incoming letters will be scanned by computer, and prisoners will get copies.

The change is being made to try and head off a trend of people soaking letters in drugs to smuggle them past authorities. Multiple states including Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, Nebraska and Pennsylvania, already photocopy incoming mail to prevent drugs from being delivered to inmates. The federal Bureau of Prisons began a similar practice in 2019.

New York's Department of Corrections and Community Supervision said in a statement that the two new policies are necessary to stop contraband.

Contraband has been smuggled into prisons in a number of ways: books laced with heroin, weapons and unauthorized electronics like phones hidden in packages, and letter mail soaked in drugs like methamphetamine or a synthetic cannabinoid, also known as K2.

When packages are received by a prison, officers remove the items from the box to inspect the items visually or through an X-ray machine. If there is reason for suspicion, officers are allowed to open sealed packages for further inspection.

Those checks, though, aren't perfect, and authorities believe items slip through.

Critics of the package ban questioned its effectiveness, noting that prohibited items are sometimes brought in by corrupt prison staff.

California stopped allowing people to send packages directly to inmates in 2003. Instead, inmates and families can order items through an approved vendor list provided by the state. In Florida, families also aren't allowed to send packages from home.

Prisoner advocates and families of inmates say the package policy is too restrictive — and an added financial burden.

Wanda Bertram, a communications strategist at the Prison Policy Initiative, called prison food a "nutritional nightmare," and said some incarcerated people rely on care packages to keep a healthy diet.

Relatives of inmates often rely on private vendors like Walkenhorst and Jack L. Marcus Company, which

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 53 of 57

specialize in sending allowed goods to prisoners, but items bought from third-party vendors can be more expensive.

Before his release from Sing Sing Correctional Facility in New York, former prisoner Wilfredo Laracuenta said he was able to order a 35-pound (16-kilogram) package for himself containing packaged cakes, cookies, chips, soaps, shampoo, and some toiletries.

It cost \$230 — the kind of money most prisoners don't have.

"This is going to be the beginning of the end, where they stop everything under the guise of security and contraband," said Laracuenta, who served two decades in prison for murder and now facilitates workshops that help recently released inmates reintegrate into society. "What they're doing is removing the human component that's very vital and necessary for the reentry process."

Even before the ban, families often complained that sending packages was unreliable.

Angelica Watson, whose husband and brother are both incarcerated, said she tried to send packages to them monthly, but food items didn't always make it through before they spoiled.

"Most of it was nonperishable items," said Watson, who lives in Buffalo. "I tried to do fresh, but it wasn't a good idea because they'd hold it in their storage rooms and it would go bad."

Hansen, whose husband is serving time for killing a cab driver, said having to order goods through vendors that charge "ridiculous prices," was no solution to the contraband problem.

"My husband basically thinks this is one more way to deprive him of his basic necessities," Hansen said.

More than 60 families of inmates sent grievance letters to New York Assemblymember David Weprin, the Democratic chair of the Assembly's Committee on Correction. Weprin criticized the new policy.

The package restriction was first introduced in 2018 through a pilot program at three state prisons, where families could only send packages through a list of six preapproved online vendors. It was quickly rescinded by then-New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, because of public backlash and criticism.

EXPLAINER: Tension between Nicaragua and the Catholic Church

By GABRIELA SELSER and MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Earlier this month Nicaragua shuttered seven radio stations belonging to the Catholic Church and launched an investigation into the bishop of Matagalpa, Monsignor Rolando Álvarez, accusing him of inciting violent actors "to carry out acts of hate against the population."

This is not the first time President Daniel Ortega has moved aggressively to silence critics of his administration. In 2018 the government raided the headquarters of the newspaper Confidencial, led by journalist Carlos Fernando Chamorro, who is considered one of the most prominent critics of Ortega. Then, throughout 2021, authorities arrested seven potential presidential candidates for that year's November elections.

Here's a look at the fraught relationship between the church and the government amid a political standoff that's now in its fifth year, with no end in sight.

WHO IS DANIEL ORTEGA?

Ortega, 76, is a former guerrilla with the leftist Sandinista National Liberation Front who helped overthrow dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979 and first served as president from 1985 until he left office in 1990 after being voted out.

He lost three more elections after that before returning to power in 2007. He won a fourth consecutive term in the 2021 ballot, which is widely discredited since he faced no real opposition.

Ortega's opponents regularly compare him to Somoza for his authoritarian tendencies, and also accuse him of dynastic ambitions. His wife, Rosario Murillo, is his powerful vice president.

Under Ortega, Nicaragua has cultivated strong ties to allies Cuba and Venezuela, two staunch foes of the U.S. government.

HOW DID THE UNREST BEGIN?

A social security reform in 2018 triggered massive protests backed by businesspeople, Catholic leaders and other sectors. The government's response was a crackdown by security forces and allied civilian militias in which at least 355 people were killed, about 2,000 hurt and 1,600 jailed, according to the Inter-American

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 54 of 57

Commission on Human Rights.

Political stability has never fully returned.

Months before last year's vote, a poll found that support for five opposition candidates put Ortega's re-election in real doubt. Within weeks all five were arrested, along with two other potential candidates. Authorities accused them of responsibility for the 2018 unrest, saying it was tantamount to a "terrorist coup" attempt purportedly backed by Washington.

"Ortega decided to suppress any possibility of losing. ... And that meant arresting everyone," political analyst Oscar Rene Vargas told The Associated Press back then.

WHAT ROLE HAS THE CHURCH PLAYED?

Nicaragua is predominantly Catholic, and the church was close to the Somozas from the 1930s until the 1970s, when it distanced itself from politics after many abuses were attributed to the dictatorship. The church initially supported the Sandinistas after Somoza's ouster, but that relationship frayed over time due to ideological differences. Under Ortega, Catholic leaders have often backed the country's conservative elite.

When the protests first erupted, Ortega asked the church to serve as mediator in peace talks, though they ultimately failed.

The Nicaraguan church has been notably sympathetic toward the protesters and their cause. In April 2018, Managua's cathedral sheltered student demonstrators and was a place for collecting food and money to support them.

Figures such as Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes and Managua Auxiliary Bishop Silvio Báez have been outspoken in rejecting violence. Brenes called the demonstrations justified, and Báez rejected any political decision that would harm the people. Báez left the country in 2019 at the Vatican's request, a transfer that was lamented by the opposition and celebrated by the ruling Sandinistas.

Ortega has responded by accusing some bishops of being part of a plot to overthrow him and calling them "terrorists."

In March the papal nuncio in Managua, Monsignor Waldemar Stanislaw Sommertag, who participated as a mediator and lobbied for the release of jailed government opponents, was forced by Ortega's administration to leave the country in what the Vatican called an "unjustified decision."

WHAT ABOUT THE LATEST CHURCH-STATE CONFLICT?

The church radio stations were shuttered by the government Aug. 1, and police investigating Álvarez, the Matagalpa bishop, accused him of "organizing violent groups."

Álvarez has called for profound electoral reform to "effectively achieve the democratization of the country" and also demanded the release of some 190 people he considers political prisoners. Last month he staged a fast in protest of what he called persecution against him.

Since Aug. 3, authorities have confined Álvarez to the episcopal complex where he lives. After six days without making public statements, he reappeared Thursday in a live social media broadcast at a Mass, accompanied by six priests and four lay people who are also unable to leave the complex.

The Archdiocese of Managua has expressed support for Álvarez. The conference of Latin American Catholic bishops decried what it called a "siege" of priests and bishops, the expulsion of members of religious communities and "constant harassment" targeting the Nicaraguan people and church.

On Saturday, hundreds of Nicaraguans attended a Mass under a heavy police presence after the government prohibited a religious procession in Managua.

Church leaders announced a day earlier that the National Police had banned the planned procession for Our Lady of Fatima for reasons of "internal security." Instead, the church called the faithful to come peacefully to the cathedral.

HAS THERE BEEN ANY RESPONSE FROM THE VATICAN?

For almost two weeks, the Vatican was publicly silent about the investigation of Álvarez. The silence drew criticism from some Latin American human rights activists and intellectuals.

On Friday, Monsignor Juan Antonio Cruz, the Vatican's permanent observer to the Organization of American States, expressed concern about the situation and asked both parties to "seek ways of understanding."

Cruz's remarks came during a special session of OAS in which its Permanent Council approved a resolu-

tion condemning Ortega's government for the "harassment" and "arbitrary restrictions imposed on religious organizations and those that criticize the government."

Cruz said the Holy See wishes to "collaborate with those who are committed to dialogue as an indispensable instrument of democracy and guarantor of a more humane and fraternal civilization."

Despite public anger, no progress in Iraq political deadlock

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Weeks after followers of an influential cleric stormed parliament, Iraq's political crisis shows no signs of abating, despite rising public anger over a debilitating gridlock that has further weakened the country's caretaker government and its ability to provide basic services.

Iraq's two rival Shiite political camps remain locked in a zero-sum competition, and the lone voice potentially able to end the rift — the revered Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani — has been conspicuously silent.

For now, hundreds of supporters of Muqtada al-Sadr, a firebrand Shiite cleric, are still camped outside the legislative building in Baghdad, ready to escalate if their demands are not met.

Al-Sadr has called for early elections, the dissolution of parliament and constitutional amendments. He has given the judiciary an end-of-the-week deadline to dissolve the legislature.

His Shiite rivals in the Iran-backed camp have conditions of their own. They accused him of violating the constitution, prompting counter-protests that have spurred fears of bloodshed.

On Sunday, Iraq's top judicial body said it doesn't have the authority to dissolve the country's parliament. The Supreme Judicial Council said in a statement after a meeting that political groups in the country should not get the judiciary involved in their "rivalries and political competition."

Neither faction seems willing to compromise to end the 10-month-old political crisis, the longest since the 2003 U.S. invasion reset the political order. The caretaker Cabinet — unable to pass laws or issue a budget — grows more feeble by the day, while the public lashes out in protest against poor services, including power cuts during the scorching summer heat.

UNITING THE WARRING FACTIONS

When al-Sadr commanded thousands of followers to storm Baghdad's heavily fortified government zone on July 30, he paralyzed state institutions and prevented his political rivals from proceeding with the formation of a government.

Al-Sadr might have felt emboldened by the silence of the 92-year-old al-Sistani, a revered spiritual figure whose word holds enormous sway among leaders and ordinary Iraqis.

Three officials at al-Sistani's seminary in the holy city of Najaf said he has not used his influence because he did not want to appear to take sides in the most acute internal Shiite crisis since 2003. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

"The Marjaiya is watching the situation with concern," said one of the officials, referring to the ayatollah. He said al-Sistani "will not interfere at the present time. His entry may be perceived as benefiting one party over another."

Al-Sistani has seldom intervened in political matters, but when he has, it has altered the course of Iraqi politics.

In 2019, his sermon led to the resignation of then-Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi amid mass anti-government protests, the largest in Iraq's modern history. Mustafa al-Kadhimi's administration was sworn in with the goal of holding early elections, which took place in October.

The ayatollah has grown weary of current Iraqi political dynamics, the official in Najaf said. He has not resumed his usual Friday sermons, which were suspended during the pandemic. His doors remain closed to Iraq's political elites, a sign that he disapproves of them.

The seminary in Najaf is also divided over al-Sadr. Some fear his audacity is deepening the Shiite divide, while others agree with his anti-corruption and reformist rhetoric. Dozens of students from the seminary recently joined the protests.

Al-Sistani does have red lines that, if crossed, would compel him to intervene, the officials said. They

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 56 of 57

include bloodshed and attempts to erode what are seen as Iraq's democratic foundations.

"Muqtada knows these red lines and will not cross them," one official said.

SEARCHING FOR A WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS

Even if the Shiite rivals were to agree to hold elections, fundamental differences remain about electoral rules. There's no legal precedent to guide decision-makers.

Al-Sadr has hinted he will escalate protests if the judiciary does not dissolve parliament by the end of the week. The judiciary reiterated on Sunday it does not have the power to disband the legislature.

His rivals in the Coordination Framework alliance, made up of largely Iran-backed Shiite parties, claim al-Sadr's pressure on the judiciary is unconstitutional. They don't object to new elections, provided there is a national consensus on how the vote will be conducted.

Such a consensus seems unattainable.

Al-Sadr wants to use the same rules as in the October election, when Iraq was divided into 83 electoral districts. The current law benefits parties with a strong grassroots base like al-Sadr's, who grew his seat tally from 54 to 73, while the Iran-backed parties saw a decrease from 48 to 16.

The Framework wants the law to be amended. However, the parliament building is closed, with hundreds of al-Sadr's followers camped outside preventing MPs from entering.

WHAT THE REST OF IRAQ THINKS

Ordinary Iraqis are increasingly frustrated because the caretaker government is struggling to provide basic services, such as electricity and water.

The political crisis comes at a time of growing unemployment, particularly among young Iraqis. The country has endured consecutive droughts that severely damage agriculture and fisheries industries, further diminishing prospects for jobs.

Protests in southern Iraq turned violent last week after stone-throwing demonstrators clashed with security forces outside oil fields in the provinces of Missan and Dhi Qar. More than a dozen protesters were detained, and more than a dozen members of the security forces were injured.

In Missan, Mustafa Hashem protested against severe water shortages that damaged livelihoods in Iraq's marshes. He said the security forces engaged in "brutal and unjustified repression" against peaceful protesters.

More protests were held in the southern province of Basra after three straight days of power cuts during the peak summer heat. Protests are common during the summer in Iraq, when rising temperatures overwhelm the national grid, causing outages. This year, many demonstrators called for al-Sadr to champion their rights.

Salinity levels in Basra this summer are nearly the same as four years ago when tens of thousands of people were hospitalized because of poor water quality, said environmentalist Shukri al-Hassan. The 2018 health crisis spurred violent protests that served as the harbinger for mass anti-government rallies the following year.

Unable to pass a budget law, the caretaker government has resorted to stop-gap measures to fund urgent expenses such as food and electricity payments to neighboring countries. Meanwhile, crucial investments, including in water infrastructure, have been stalled.

Today in History: August 15, Woodstock opens

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Aug. 15, the 227th day of 2022. There are 138 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Aug. 15, 1969, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair opened in upstate New York.

On this date:

In 1057, Macbeth, King of Scots, was killed in battle by Malcolm, the eldest son of King Duncan, whom Macbeth had slain.

In 1769, Napoleon Bonaparte was born on the island of Corsica.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Aug. 15, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 039 ~ 57 of 57

In 1914, the Panama Canal officially opened as the SS Ancon crossed the just-completed waterway between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

In 1935, humorist Will Rogers and aviator Wiley Post were killed when their airplane crashed near Point Barrow in the Alaska Territory.

In 1944, during World War II, Allied forces landed in southern France in Operation Dragoon.

In 1945, in a pre-recorded radio address, Japan's Emperor Hirohito announced that his country had accepted terms of surrender for ending World War II.

In 1947, India became independent after some 200 years of British rule.

In 1961, as workers began constructing a Berlin Wall made of concrete, East German soldier Conrad Schumann leapt to freedom over a tangle of barbed wire.

In 1971, President Richard Nixon announced a 90-day freeze on wages, prices and rents.

In 1989, F.W. de Klerk was sworn in as acting president of South Africa, one day after P.W. Botha resigned as the result of a power struggle within the National Party.

In 1998, 29 people were killed by a car bomb that tore apart the center of Omagh (OH'-mah), Northern Ireland; a splinter group calling itself the Real IRA claimed responsibility.

In 2003, bouncing back from the largest blackout in U.S. history, cities from the Midwest to Manhattan restored power to millions of people.

Ten years ago: Felix Hernandez pitched the Seattle Mariners' first perfect game and the 23rd in baseball history, overpowering the Tampa Bay Rays 1-0; it was the third perfect game and sixth no-hitter of the season.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump, who'd faced harsh criticism for initially blaming the deadly weekend violence in Charlottesville, Virginia on "many sides," told reporters that there were "very fine people on both sides" of the confrontation and that groups protesting against the white supremacists were "also very violent." (In between those statements, at the urging of aides, Trump had offered a more direct condemnation of white supremacists.)

One year ago: The Taliban swept into Afghanistan's capital after the country's government collapsed and the embattled Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, joined fellow citizens and foreigners in fleeing the country; the collapse marked the end of a two-decade U.S. campaign to remake the country. As U.S. military helicopters whisked American diplomats to the airport in Kabul, the U.S. military said it was taking charge of air traffic control at the airport, where thousands of foreigners and Afghans were desperately trying to leave. The American flag was lowered at the embassy, where smoke rose as staff destroyed important documents. Afghans rushing to leave the country lined up at cash machines to withdraw their life savings. Rescuers raced to find survivors from a 7.2-magnitude earthquake in Haiti, searching the rubble ahead of a potential deluge from the approaching Tropical Storm Grace.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Jim Dale is 87. Actor Pat Priest is 86. Retired Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer is 84. U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., is 84. Musician Pete York (Spencer Davis Group) is 80. Author-journalist Linda Ellerbee is 78. Songwriter Jimmy Webb is 76. Rock singer-musician Tom Johnston (The Doobie Brothers) is 74. Actor Phyllis Smith is 73. Britain's Princess Anne is 72. Actor Tess Harper is 72. Actor Larry Mathews is 67. Actor Zeljko Ivanek (ZEHL'-koh eh-VAHN'-ehk) is 65. Actor-comedian Rondell Sheridan is 64. Rock singer-musician Matt Johnson (The The) is 61. Movie director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu (ihn-YAH'-ee-tu) is 59. Philanthropist Melinda Gates is 58. Country singer Angela Rae (Wild Horses) is 56. Actor Peter Hermann is 55. Actor Debra Messing is 54. Actor Anthony Anderson is 52. Actor Ben Affleck is 50. Singer Mikey Graham (Boyzone) is 50. Actor Natasha Henstridge is 48. Actor Nicole Paggi is 45. Christian rock musician Tim Foreman (Switchfoot) is 44. Actor Emily Kinney is 38. Figure skater Jennifer Kirk is 38. Latin pop singer Belinda is 33. Actor Courtney Hope is 33. Rock singer Joe Jonas (The Jonas Brothers) is 33. Actor-singer Carlos PenaVega is 33. Actor Jennifer Lawrence is 32.