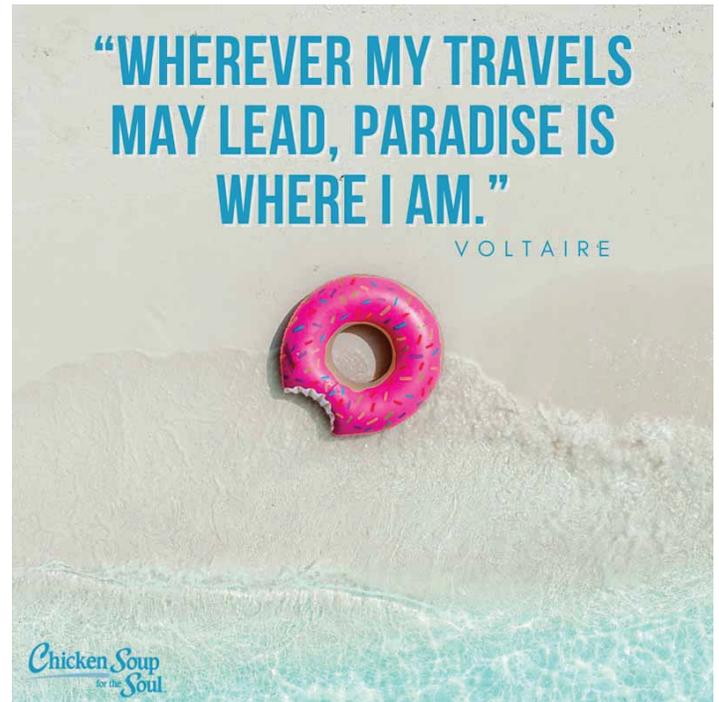


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CARD OF THANKS

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

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



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

Tigers to put work ethics on the field

The 2021 Northeast Conference Champions will be challenged this year after losing a number of players to graduation and finding and training new players to fill those roles. Coach Shaun Wanner, starting his 22nd year at Groton Area, returns six starters offensively and defensively with 16 returning letterwinners.

Andrew Marzahn, now a senior, is a three-year returning starter. He had 300 yards rushing last year and is on the roster at 6' and 185 pounds. He doubles on the field as a running back on offense and a defensive back on defense.

Ethan Gengerke is a senior at 6-4, 190 pounds. The wide receiver had 120 yards receiving and he also plays defensive end.

The other returning seniors are Kaleb Antonsen, 6-0, 215 lbs., playing center offensively; and Caleb Hanten, 6-2, 225, playing tackle offensively.

The returning juniors are Logan Ringgenberg, 6-3, 235, playing guard offensively and defensive tackle; Holden Sippel, 6-0, 200, playing guard offensively and also defensive end; Ethan Gengerke, 6-4, 190, defensive end; and Colby Dunker, 6-1, 205 pounds, linebacker; and sophomore Christian Ehresmann, 5-10, 165, linebacker.

"We lost most of our skilled positions," Wanner said. "We have some good young skilled kids that will get better as the season goes on. We should be able to run and pass the ball, which will be beneficial.

Lane Tietz will be filling the quarterback shoes again. He lettered his freshman year. Tietz was quarterback when Kaden Kurtz was injured two years ago and he returns to the starting position this year. He had passed 800 yards as a freshman. Tietz is a junior, 6-0, 180 pounds.

"I feel if we stay healthy and continue to develop our young, skilled kids, we should be pretty competitive by the end of the season," Wanner said. "We have a good work ethic!"

Others coming in to fill some shoes are letterwinners and sophomores Kaden Kampa, 6-0, 185 pounds at offensive line; Teylor Diegel, 5-10, 165 pounds; and Korbin Kucker, linebacker, 5-10, 175 pounds. Another senior is Tate Larson (lettered his sophomore year), wide receiver and defensive end, will see a lot of action, 6-4, 190 pounds. Other letterwinners are senior Cole Bisbee, 6-0, 185 pounds, offensive guard and linebacker; and sophomores Caden McInerney, 6-0, 175 pounds, wide receiver and defensive end; and Payton Mitchell, 5-10, 170 pounds, center and linebacker.

Others filling out the roster are junior Bradin Althoff, kicker-punter, 6-2, 220 pounds; sophomores Kellen Antonsen, WR/DB, 5-9, 125; Brevin Flihs, RB/LB, 5-9, 165; Nick Morris, WR/DB, 6-0, 165; Karsten Jeschke, RB/DE, 5-10, 175; Easten Ekern, WR/DE, 6-0, 170; Aiden Heath-cote, OG/OT, 5-9, 175; and Drew Thurston, OG/DT, 5-9, 200; and freshmen Keegen Tracy, WR/DB, 5-10, 155; Ryder Johnson, QB/S, 6-2, 165; Lincoln Krause, WR/DB, 5-8, 145; Logan Warrington, WR/DE, 5-10, 170; Tristin McGannon, RB/DB, 5-10, 160; Ben Hoelt, OG/LB, 5-10, 180; Charlie Frost, OT/DT, 5-10, 185; Gavin Englund, OT/DT, 5-10, 190; and Karter Moody, OG/DT, 6-2, 220.



Logan Ringgenberg, Lane Tietz and Ben Hoelt were putting the stickers on their helmets at uniform handout on Tuesday. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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2022 Groton Area Football Team

Keegen Tracy, Easten Ekern, Karsten Jeschke, Payton Mitchell, Karter Moody, Ryder Johnson, Bradin Althoff, Christian Ehresmann, Kaden Kampa, Gavin Englund and Tristin McGannon; in the middle row, left to right, are Assistant Coaches Travis Kurth and Seth Erickson, Lincoln Krause, Ben Hoeft, Nick Morris, Caden McInerney, Korbin Kucker, Lane Tietz, Kellen Antonsen, Aiden Heathcote, Logan Warrington, Drew Thurston, Brevin Flihs and Head Coach Shaun

Wanner; in front, left to right, are Charlie Frost, Holden Sippel, Logan Ringgenberg, Cole Bisbee, Caleb Hanten, Kaleb Antonsen, Ethan Gengerke, Tate Larson, Andrew Marzahn, Colby Dunker, Teylor Diegel and Brynlee Dunker; on the ground are Brooke Gengerke, and cheer-leaders Anna Bisbee, Hannah Monson, Shea Jandel, Camryn Kurtz, Abby Jensen, Shaylee Pe-terson, Nia Garcia and Cadence Feist. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

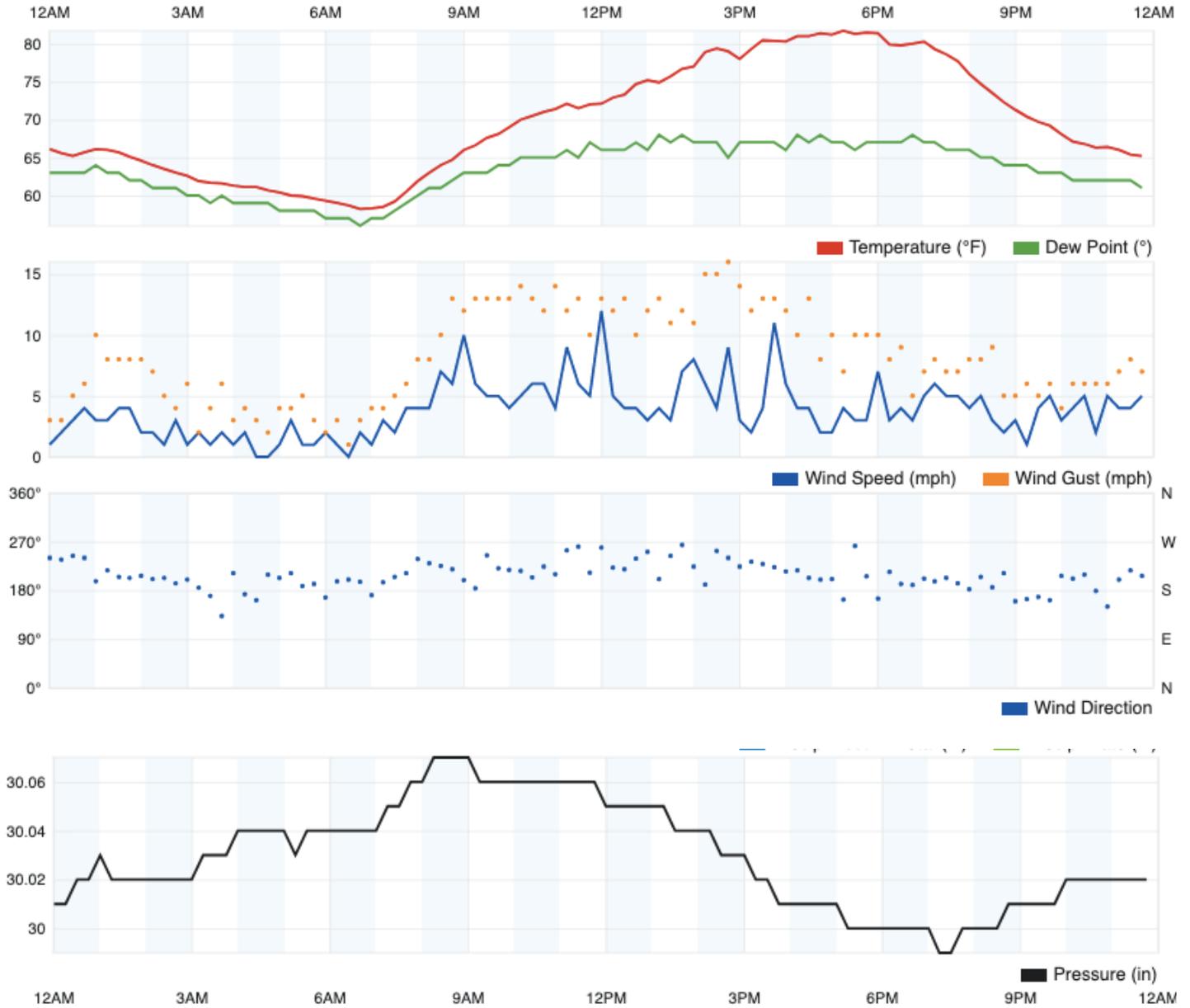
Football

Fri., Aug. 19	Roncalli @ DacotahSta.	7:00
Fri., Aug. 26	Redfield	7:00
Fri., Sept. 2	Dakota Hills Coop	7:00
Fri., Sept. 9	at Clark/Willow Lake	7:00
Fri., Sept. 16	at Deuel	7:00
Fri., Sept. 23	Sisseton (HC)	7:00
Fri., Sept. 30	Webster	7:00
Fri., Oct. 14	at Mobridge-Pollock	7:00
Thurs., Oct. 20	First Round Playoffs	
Thurs., Oct. 27	Second Round Playoffs	
Fri., Nov. 4	Quarterfinals	
Nov. 11	State at Dakota Dome	2:30

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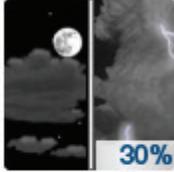
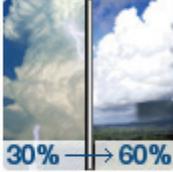
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms then Showers Likely	Showers Likely then Chance T-storms	Showers Likely
High: 85 °F	Low: 62 °F	High: 80 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 71 °F

Dry Today, Rain Chances Tonight Through The End Of The Week



Today: 
Highs: 80-92°

Tonight: 
Lows: 60-65°

	8/17	8/18				8/19				Maximum
	Wed 6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	
Aberdeen	12	31	29	60	60	45	56	69	69	69
Britton	6	32	38	72	72	66	72	84	84	84
Eagle Butte	32	33	33	14	14	14	17	20	20	33
Eureka	22	47	47	46	46	42	48	54	54	54
Gettysburg	15	35	35	31	31	27	35	42	42	42
Kennebec	6	20	19	22	21	15	18	27	27	27
McIntosh	46	46	33	19	19	19	25	27	27	46
Milbank	5	22	38	56	69	69	64	85	85	85
Miller	2	21	21	37	37	32	47	57	57	57
Mobridge	33	46	46	30	30	27	32	38	38	46
Murdo	15	19	17	15	9	9	10	16	16	19
Pierre	11	27	27	20	20	18	24	30	30	30
Redfield	3	25	25	48	48	46	50	68	68	68
Sisseton	7	26	31	70	71	71	68	86	86	86
Watertown	4	17	22	58	64	64	65	83	83	83
Webster	5	26	27	65	65	65	65	82	82	82
Wheaton	10	25	32	72	75	75	68	89	89	89



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

 NWSAberdeen

 @NWSAberdeen



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Today in Weather History

August 17, 1961: Intensive rainfall occurred during the overnight hours on the 17th through the early morning hours on the 18th. Some rainfall amounts include 4.13 inches in Clark, 2.52 inches 1 W of Summit, 2.50 in Andover, 2.20 in Waubay, 2.15 in Wilmot, 2.12 in Wheaton, and 2.10 in Clear Lake.

August 17, 2007: An estimated four to six inches of rain and hail to the size of baseballs caused localized flooding between Piedmont and Tilford in Meade County, especially near poor drainage areas and at a barricade along a frontage road. The water washed over several roads and was several inches deep on Interstate 90, forcing law enforcement officials to close it for a couple of hours. Torrential rains estimated at four to six inches fell west of Hermosa in Custer County between 6 pm and 8 pm MST. Battle and Grace Coolidge Creeks overflowed their banks and several dry canyons filled with water and drained into the creeks. State highways 40 and 36 were flooded in numerous spots. A river gauge on Battle Creek just east of Hermosa crested at 14.91 feet at 9 pm, rising from 2.63 ft at 7:30 pm and above the flood stage of 8.0 feet. About six inches of water covered Highway 79 at the Battle Creek bridge. A railroad bridge about 3/4 mile downstream became clogged with debris and water rose behind the embankment and flooded six homes. At about 8:30 pm MST, a section of the embankment failed, flooding a new subdivision on the other side. All of the approximately 20 houses were damaged; three homes were washed off their foundations, and one of those houses was carried a half a mile east of the subdivision by the flowing water. There were no injuries.

1899: Hurricane San Ciriaco set many records on its path. Killing nearly 3,500 people in Puerto Rico, it was the deadliest hurricane to hit the island and the strongest at the time, until 30 years later when the island was affected by the Hurricane San Felipe Segundo, a Category 5 hurricane, in 1928. It was also the tenth deadliest Atlantic hurricane ever recorded. San Ciriaco is also the longest lasting Atlantic hurricane in recorded history, continuing for 28 days. On August 17, the hurricane turned back to the northwest and made landfall near Hatteras, North Carolina on the following day. San Ciriaco remains the strongest hurricane to make landfall on the Outer Banks since 1899.

1915 - A hurricane hit Galveston, TX, with wind gusts to 120 mph and a twelve foot storm surge. The storm claimed 275 lives, including forty-two on Galveston Island, with most deaths due to drowning. Of 250 homes built outside the seawall (which was constructed after the catastrophic hurricane of 1900), just ten percent were left standing. (The Weather Channel)

1946: An estimated F-4 tornado killed 11 people and injured 100 others in the Mankato, Minnesota area around 6:52 PM. The deaths and most of the injuries occurred in the complete destruction of the 26 cabins at the Green Gables tourist camp, 3 miles southwest of Mankato. A 27-ton road grader was reportedly hurled about 100 feet. Another tornado an hour later destroys downtown Wells, Minnesota.

1969: The music festival, known as Woodstock, should have ended on this day. Jimi Hendrix, the last act to perform, was delayed due to rain on Sunday evening. Jimi Hendrix took the stage at 8:30 am Monday morning.

1987 - Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Northern and Central Plains Region. One thunderstorm spawned a tornado near Fairbury NE, along with baseball size hail and wind gusts to 100 mph, causing severe crop damage west of town. Ten cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Syracuse NY hit 97 degrees for the first time in twenty-two years. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Fifty-five cities, from the Middle Mississippi Valley to the Middle Atlantic Coast Region, reported record high temperatures for the date. Beckley WV reported an all-time record high of 96 degrees, and Baltimore MD hit 104 degrees, marking their thirteenth day of the year with 100 degree heat. Chicago IL equalled a record with 46 days of 90 degree weather for the year. Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Wisconsin to New Jersey. Thunderstorms in New Jersey produced high winds which gusted to 92 mph at Wrightstown, and blew down a circus tent at Lavallette injuring fourteen persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



The Making of Me

Scripture: Acts 15:36-40 (NIV)

Paul and Barnabas Separate

36 And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." 37 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord..

Insight By: Bill Crowder

Learning is one of the most important aspects of living—even for great thinkers and leaders like the apostle Paul. We see this learning in process when we consider his attitude toward John Mark in Acts 15 compared to his attitude in 2 Timothy 4. In Acts 15:38, when Paul and Barnabas agreed to visit the churches they'd planted, Paul refused to allow John Mark to accompany them because on the previous trip the young man had "deserted" them. In 2 Timothy 4:10–16, Paul wrote that when he needed support from his friends, they also had "deserted" him. Here, however, instead of throwing them away for their desertion (as he had John Mark), he pleaded that this not be held against them. An astonishing change of attitude—which is reinforced by Paul's words of respect and appreciation for Mark in 2 Timothy 4:11..

Comment

Seven-year-old Thomas Edison didn't like or do well in school. One day, he was even called "addled" (mentally confused) by a teacher. He stormed home. After speaking with the teacher the next day, his mom, a teacher by training, decided to teach Thomas at home. Helped along by her love and encouragement (and his God-given genius), Thomas went on to become a great inventor. He later wrote, "My mother was the making of me. She was so true, so sure of me, and I felt I had someone to live for, someone I must not disappoint."

In Acts 15, we read that Barnabas and the apostle Paul served together as missionaries until they had a major disagreement about whether or not to bring along John Mark. Paul was opposed because Mark had earlier "deserted them in Pamphylia" (vv. 36–38). As a result, Paul and Barnabas split. Paul took Silas and Barnabas took Mark. Barnabas was willing to give Mark a second chance, and his encouragement contributed to Mark's ability to serve and succeed as a missionary. He went on to write the gospel of Mark and was even a comfort to Paul while he was in prison (2 Timothy 4:11).

Many of us can look back and point to someone in our life who encouraged and helped us along our way. God may be calling you to do the same for someone in your life. Whom might you encourage?.

Reflect and Prayer: Who had faith in you and helped you succeed? What did that person do to encourage you?

Dear God, thank You for walking alongside me and placing people in my life who helped to make me who I am today.

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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)

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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- Colored \$42.60/6 months
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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

33-35-41-45-51, Mega Ball: 1, Megaplier: 2

(thirty-three, thirty-five, forty-one, forty-five, fifty-one; Mega Ball: one; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$99,000,000

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: 66,000,000

U.S. midterms bring few changes from social media companies

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and AMANDA SEITZ The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Social media companies are offering few specifics as they share their plans for safeguarding the U.S. midterm elections.

Platforms like Facebook and Twitter are generally staying the course from the 2020 voting season, which was marred by conspiracies and culminated in the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Video app TikTok, which has soared in popularity since the last election cycle while also cementing its place as a problem spot for misinformation, announced Wednesday it is launching an election center that will help people find voting locations and candidate information.

The center will show up in the feeds of users who search election-related hashtags. TikTok is also partnering with voting advocacy groups to provide specialized voting information for college students, people who are deaf, military members living overseas and those with past criminal convictions.

TikTok, like other platforms, would not provide details on the number of full-time employees or how much money it is dedicating to U.S. midterm efforts, which aim to push accurate voting information and counter misinformation.

The company said it is working with over a dozen fact-checking organizations, including U.S.-based PolitiFact and Lead Stories, on debunking misinformation. TikTok declined to say how many videos have been fact-checked on its site. The company will use a combination of humans and artificial intelligence to detect and remove threats against election workers as well as voting misinformation.

TikTok said it's also watching for influencers who break its rules by accepting money off platform to promote political issues or candidates, a problem that came to light during the 2020 election, said TikTok's head of safety Eric Han. The company is trying to educate creators and agencies about its rules, which include bans on political advertising.

"With the work we do, there is no finish line," Han said.

Meta Platforms Inc., which owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, announced Tuesday that its approach to this election cycle is "largely consistent with the policies and safeguards" from 2020.

"As we did in 2020, we have a dedicated team in place to combat election and voter interference while also helping people get reliable information about when and how to vote," Nick Clegg, Meta's president of global affairs, wrote in a blog post Tuesday.

Meta declined to say how many people it has dedicated to its election team responsible for monitoring the midterms, only that it has "hundreds of people across more than 40 teams."

As in 2020, Clegg wrote, the company will remove misinformation about election dates, voting locations, voter registration and election outcomes. For the first time, Meta said it will also show U.S. election-related notifications in languages other than English.

Meta also said it will reduce how often it uses labels on election-related posts directing people toward reliable information. The company said its users found the labels over-used. Some critics have also said

the labels were often too generic and repetitive.

Compared with previous years, though, Meta's public communication about its response to election misinformation has gone decidedly quiet, The Associated Press reported earlier this month.

Between 2018 and 2020, the company released more than 30 statements that laid out specifics about how it would stifle U.S. election misinformation, prevent foreign adversaries from running ads or posts around the vote and subdue divisive hate speech. Until Tuesday's blog post, Meta had only released a one-page document outlining plans for the fall elections, even as potential threats to the vote persist.

Twitter, meanwhile, is sticking with its own misinformation labels, though it has redesigned them since 2020 based in part on user feedback. The company activated its "civic integrity policy" last week, which means tweets containing harmful misinformation about the election are labeled with links to credible information. The tweets themselves won't be promoted or amplified by the platform.

The company, which like TikTok does not allow political advertisements, is focusing on putting verified, reliable information before its users. That can include links to state-specific hubs for local election information as well as nonpartisan public service announcements for voters.

Crimea 'sabotage' highlights Russia's woes in Ukraine war

By PAUL BYRNE Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Fires burned and ammunition exploded at a depot in Crimea on Wednesday, a day after the latest suspected Ukrainian attack on a military site in the Russia-annexed peninsula, highlighting the challenges facing Moscow.

The peninsula, which Russia seized in 2014, was once a secure base that Moscow's forces have used to launch attacks — and it was a staging ground for the start of the Feb. 24 invasion. But in recent days, explosions have destroyed several Russian planes at an air base in Crimea, and munitions blew up Tuesday.

Ukrainian authorities have stopped short of publicly claiming responsibility, but President Volodymyr Zelenskyy alluded to Ukrainian attacks behind enemy lines after the most recent blasts Tuesday while Russia blamed "sabotage."

The spate of attacks represented the latest setback for Moscow, which began its invasion with hopes of taking the capital of Kyiv and much of the country in a lightning blitz but soon became bogged down in the face of fiercer than expected resistance from Ukrainian forces.

As the war nears the half-year mark, the sides are now engaged in a war of attrition, fighting village to village, largely in the country's east. The attacks in Crimea could open a new front that would represent a significant escalation in the war and further stretch Russia's military resources.

"Russian commanders will highly likely be increasingly concerned with the apparent deterioration in security across Crimea, which functions as rear base area for the occupation," Britain's Defense ministry wrote on Twitter.

But it was not clear whether the attacks in Crimea would unblock the stalemate, as Ukrainian and Russian forces grind each other down in a war that has driven millions from their homes, disrupted food supplies worldwide and occasionally raised concerns about a nuclear accident.

On Thursday, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres plans to travel to Ukraine for a meeting with Zelenskyy and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss getting out grain shipments that are critical to feeding the world's hungry. They are also expected to talk about a possible fact-finding mission to the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which Moscow and Kyiv have accused each other of shelling.

Tuesday's explosions and fires ripped through an ammunition depot near Dzhankoi in Crimea, leading to chaotic scenes when around 3,000 people had to be evacuated.

As a vivid reminder of Russia's vulnerability in Crimea, the peninsula's regional leader, Sergei Aksyonov, said that authorities were still fighting the fires Wednesday with a helicopter, as minutes continued to detonate. He said that a search for perpetrators of the attack was underway.

The Kommersant business paper also reported explosions Tuesday at a base in Gvardeyskoye. By

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Wednesday, there still was no comment from the Russian authorities.

The British intelligence report noted that Gvardeyskoye and Dzhankoi "are home to two of the most important Russian military airfields in Crimea."

A week earlier, Russia's military came under pressure on the peninsula when Ukraine said nine Russian warplanes were destroyed following explosions at Crimea's Saki air base. The massive explosions sent plumes of smoke rising over nearby beaches and caused sunbathers to flee.

At the time, Moscow suggested that the blasts were accidental, perhaps caused by a careless smoker, an explanation that drew mockery from Ukrainian authorities who hinted at their involvement in the attack but didn't directly claim responsibility.

On the eastern front, the stalemate continued, with the shelling causing ever more death and destruction.

In the Donetsk region that is the current focus of the Russian offensive, two civilians were killed and seven others were wounded by recent Russian shelling of several towns and villages.

Meanwhile, in the south, Russian long-range bombers fired cruise missiles at the Odesa region overnight, leaving four people injured, according to regional administration spokesman Oleh Bratchuk.

In Mykolaiv, also in the south, two Russian missiles damaged a university building early Wednesday but injured no one.

The Russian forces also shelled Kharkiv in the northeast and various parts of the surrounding region overnight, damaging residential buildings and civilian infrastructure but inflicting no casualties.

China and US spar over climate on Twitter

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The world's two biggest emitters of greenhouse gases are sparring on Twitter over climate policy, with China questioning whether the U.S. can deliver on the landmark climate legislation signed into law by President Joe Biden this week.

"You can bet America will meet our commitments," U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns tweeted in response on Wednesday, using a national flag emoticon for "America." He called on China to resume suspended climate talks, writing: "We're ready."

The punchy exchange, part of a longer back and forth on Twitter, is emblematic of a broader worry: U.S.-China cooperation is widely considered vital to the success of global efforts to curb rising temperatures. With the breakdown in relations over Taiwan and other issues, some question whether the two sides can cooperate.

After Congress passed the climate bill last Friday, Burns took to Twitter over the weekend to say the U.S. was acting on climate change with its largest investment ever — and that China should follow.

On Tuesday night, China's Foreign Ministry responded with its own tweet: "Good to hear. But what matters is: Can the U.S. deliver?"

The verbal skirmish grew out of China's suspension of talks with the U.S. on climate and several other issues earlier this month as part of its protest over a visit to Taiwan by a senior American lawmaker, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Climate has been one of the few areas of cooperation between the feuding countries. U.S. officials criticized China's move, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken saying it "doesn't punish the United States — it punishes the world."

Asked to respond, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian called on the U.S. last week to "deliver on its historical responsibilities and due obligations on climate change and stop looking around for excuses for its inaction."

The ministry later tweeted some of his answer, and Burns responded four days later with his tweet on the U.S. climate bill. Using the acronym for the People's Republic of China, he ended with: "The PRC should follow+reconsider its suspension of climate cooperation with the U.S."

China elaborated on its "Can the U.S. deliver?" message with a second tweet that suggested U.S. actions, including lifting sanctions imposed last year on solar industry exports from China's Xinjiang region

because of allegations of forced labor.

The Twitter battle highlights a perception divide between the longstanding superpower that wants to lead and the rising power that no longer wants to feel bound to follow anyone else's direction.

The decision by former President Donald Trump to pull the U.S. out of the Paris climate accord — reversed by Biden after he took office last year — dealt a blow to American credibility on the issue.

A Chinese expert praised parts of the U.S. legislation but said it is overdue and not enough.

"Although there are some breakthrough achievements in the bill, I am afraid it can't re-establish U.S. leadership on climate change," said Teng Fei, a professor at Tsinghua University's Institute of Energy Environment and Economy.

U.S. climate envoy John Kerry has been pressing China to set more ambitious climate goals. China has responded that its goals are realistic, given its development needs as a middle-income country, while the U.S. sets ambitious goals that it fails to achieve.

China's ruling Communist Party generally sets conservative targets at a national level, because it doesn't want its performance to fall short. Those targets are sometimes exceeded, though, in the eager pursuit of those goals by local officials.

"China should be able to do better than its national targets indicate," said Cory Combs, a senior analyst with the Trivium China consultancy. "But of course, those local plans are all subject to failure and delays, so it's impossible to tell quite what they'll add up to."

Syria denies it is holding American journalist Austin Tice

By ALBERT AJI and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Syria denied on Wednesday it is holding U.S. journalist Austin Tice or other Americans after President Joe Biden accused the Syrian government of detaining him.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Damascus "denies it had kidnapped or is holding any American citizen on its territories."

"The U.S. issued last week misleading and illogical statements by the American president and secretary of state that included baseless accusations against Syria that it had kidnapped or detained American citizens including former U.S. Marine Austin Tice," the statement said.

Biden's comments last week came in a statement released by the White House to mark the 10th anniversary of Tice's abduction, which took place when he was in Syria covering its lengthy conflict. Biden's remarks were the clearest indication so far that the U.S. is certain Tice is being held by the government of President Bashar Assad.

"We know with certainty that he has been held by the Government of Syria," Biden said in his statement last week. "We have repeatedly asked the government of Syria to work with us so that we can bring Austin home."

State Department Spokesman Ned Price told reporters on Tuesday that the U.S. government has pushed Syria to return every American. On Tice's case specifically, he said, the Biden administration has "engaged extensively — and that includes directly — with Syrian officials and through third parties."

"Syria has never acknowledged holding him," Price said of Tice, adding that "we are not going to be deterred in our efforts. We are going to pursue every avenue for securing Austin's safe return."

The Syrian Foreign Ministry denied in its statement having any secret contacts with U.S. officials on the missing Americans, adding that "any official dialogue with the American government will only be public based on the respect of Syria's sovereignty."

In May, top Lebanese security official Maj. Gen. Abbas Ibrahim met with U.S. officials in Washington as part of mediation efforts between the U.S. and Syria for Tice's release. Ibrahim, the chief of Lebanon's General Security Directorate, has mediated complicated hostage releases in the past.

In May, Biden met Tice's parents and reiterated his commitment to working toward "Austin's long overdue return to his family."

In the final months of the Trump administration, two U.S. officials — including the government's top hos-

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tage negotiator, Roger Carstens, a former Army Special Forces officer — made a secret visit to Damascus to seek information on Tice and other Americans who have disappeared in Syria. It was the highest-level talks in years between the U.S. and Assad's government, though Syrian officials offered no meaningful information on Tice.

Tice went missing shortly after his 31st birthday on Aug. 14, 2012 at a checkpoint in a contested area west of the capital of Damascus. A video released a month later showed him blindfolded and held by armed men, saying, "Oh, Jesus." He has not been heard from since.

Tice is one of two Americans who went missing in Syria. The other is Majd Kamalmaz, a psychologist from Virginia, who vanished in Syria in 2017.

Tice is from Houston and his work had been published by The Washington Post, McClatchy newspapers and other outlets. He went to Syria to cover the conflict that started in 2011. The war has left hundreds of thousands dead and displaced nearly half of the pre-conflict population of 23 million. More than 5 million of those are outside the country.

R. Kelly jury to hear opening statements at trial in Chicago

By MICHAEL TARM and DON BABWIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Opening statements set for Wednesday give prosecutors and R. Kelly's attorneys their first chance to address jurors directly about charges that accuse the R&B singer of enticing of minors for sex, producing child pornography and rigging his 2008 pornography trial.

Both the prosecution and Kelly's legal team told the judge earlier in the week that they would like about an hour each to tell jurors about the kind evidence they can expect to see and hear. The evidentiary stage of the federal trial is expected to last about a month.

Lawyers for two Kelly co-defendants will also address jurors before the government begins calling witnesses later Wednesday. Prosecutors haven't said who they will call first.

The jury was impaneled Tuesday night with prosecutors and defense attorneys arguing toward the end of the process about whether the government was improperly attempting to keep some Black people off the jury.

Kelly, who is Black, is accused of enticing minors for sex, of producing child pornography and of fixing his 2008 state child pornography trial at which he was acquitted.

As the sides began exercising peremptory challenges — in which they can remove a fixed number of potential jurors from the pool — Kelly attorney Jennifer Bonjean accused prosecutors of seeking to strike Black people from the jury "to deny Mr. Kelly a jury of his peers."

Prosecutors noted multiple African American people had already made it onto the jury before the defense objected, and they argued their reasons for wanting to strike some had nothing to do with race. In one case, they said an older man appeared to have a hard time staying awake.

Judge Harry Leinenweber partially agreed with the defense, disallowing prosecutors from striking three Black people from the jury, and restoring them. About half the 12 jurors impaneled were identified as Black by the judge, prosecutor and defense attorneys. Six alternates were also selected.

Some of the jurors selected had watched at least part of a six-part documentary series, "Surviving R. Kelly," about sex abuse allegations against the Grammy award-winning singer. Watching it wasn't an automatic disqualification as long as a would-be juror could assure Leinenweber they could still be impartial.

Among the 12 jurors selected was a retired real estate agent who had one son who was a prosecutor and another son who was a defense attorney. Another juror was a librarian.

Among those dismissed was a woman who said she had unfavorable views of police and judges and a man who said he didn't think the IRS should exist.

One central focus of the trial will be on whether Kelly threatened and paid off a girl with whom he allegedly videotaped himself having sex when he was about 30 and she was no older than 14. That's the allegation underpinning another of the charges against Kelly, conspiracy to obstruct justice.

Jurors in the 2008 child pornography trial acquitted Kelly, with some later explaining that they felt they

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had no choice because the girl did not testify. The woman, now in her 30s and referred to in court filings only as "Minor 1," will be the government's star witness.

When she testifies, prosecutors explained in court Monday that they won't use her real name and won't refer to her as Minor 1. Instead, they will call her by a single pseudonym, "Jane."

Kelly, 55, already has already been sentenced by a New York federal judge to a 30-year prison term for a 2021 conviction on charges that 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, will be around 80 before qualifying for early release based on his sentence imposed in New York, which he is appealing.

Kelly faces four counts of enticement of minors for sex — one each for four other accusers. They, too, are expected to testify.

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 also have denied wrongdoing.

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

EXPLAINER: Dueling views remain a year after Afghan pullout

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A year after America's tumultuous and deadly withdrawal from Afghanistan, assessments of its impact are divided — and largely along partisan lines.

Critics slam the August 2021 evacuation of more than 120,000 American citizens, Afghans and others as poorly planned and badly executed. They say the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces opened the door to a resurgence of al-Qaida and Islamic State militants in the country. And the exit, they say, signaled the United States' lack of commitment to the broader Middle East and its unwillingness to stand by a partner in need.

Supporters counter that it was time to end America's longest war and that leaving forces in the country would risk their lives and gain little. It was time, they said, for the Afghan people to take charge of their own country and its security so that the U.S. could focus on threats from China and Russia, and on other critical issues such as climate change and the pandemic.

What is certain is that the government of Afghanistan collapsed at the hands of the Taliban, hundreds of Afghans who supported the U.S. during the war were left behind fearful of retribution, and the leader of al-Qaida found sanctuary in Kabul.

On the political front, the withdrawal marked a turning point for President Joe Biden. His high approval ratings started falling as Americans saw horrifying images of desperate Afghans swarming the airport, U.S. troops and Afghan civilians being killed in a suicide attack, and an innocent Afghan family mistakenly targeted and killed by an American drone strike.

Now, one year after the last troops left Afghanistan — and with midterm elections approaching — the White House, congressional Republicans, and outside analysts are offering their views of the withdrawal and its impact.

A look at what they are saying:

WHAT THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION SAYS

When Biden took office, the U.S. was already committed to a withdrawal agreement that had been reached between the Taliban and his predecessor Donald Trump. Many GOP leaders — such as House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy — praised the deal, while others — including then-Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell — slammed it as shortsighted.

Biden favored the withdrawal then and continues to defend it. He says the U.S. had accomplished its goal in Afghanistan — to prevent al-Qaida from planning and launching attacks against the U.S. from within the

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country again. He said it was not in America's national interest to fight the war indefinitely, and instead the U.S. would develop an "over-the-horizon" capability to keep an eye on the terror threat and take it out if needed. The U.S., he said, must fight the battles of the next 20 years, not the last.

Today, the administration and its Defense Department praise the execution of the withdrawal — the largest air evacuation in U.S. history — as largely successful under extraordinarily dangerous and dynamic conditions. But the U.S. has also called the drone strike on Afghan civilians a tragic mistake.

The White House released portions of an unclassified intelligence assessment summary on Sunday that concluded that al-Qaida hasn't rebuilt and doesn't have the ability to launch an attack against the U.S. from Afghanistan. And it argues that the successful airstrike last month that killed al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahri in a Kabul safe house is proof the U.S. can monitor and eliminate terror threats in Afghanistan.

WHAT THE REPUBLICANS SAY

The Republican minority on the House Foreign Affairs Committee released an interim report this week that blasted the evacuation, saying it was poorly planned, poorly operated and plagued with delays. It said poor organization left many would-be evacuees unable to get into the airport and onto the swiftly departing planes.

It noted that outside groups, including former military troops who had worked with Afghan interpreters and others, began coordinating their own networks to get people out. And, it said that some Afghan commandos who couldn't get on U.S. flights fled into Iran, where they may pose a security threat to the U.S. if they are captured.

The report had few new findings, but it underscored the chaos of the withdrawal and complaints that the State Department waited too long to request military assistance for the exit process. It also charged that Biden's assurance that al-Qaida would not be allowed to regroup was clearly wrong, since Zawahri was discovered living in a tony Kabul neighborhood.

Critics also question the decision to fully withdraw from Afghanistan, noting that initially the military argued to keep about 2,500 forces on the ground, along with several thousand NATO troops. Ultimately, as conditions in Afghanistan deteriorated, Pentagon leaders concluded that clearing the Taliban out of Kabul and reclaiming land could require up to 20,000 troops, and could cost many lives. So they endorsed the full withdrawal by Aug. 31.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Retired Gen. Frank McKenzie, who as the top military officer for the Middle East oversaw the withdrawal, said he regrets "very bitterly" the people the U.S. couldn't get out, including Afghans who worked with troops there.

"I believe we got out all the Americans that wanted to come out," he said. "If someone stayed, there was a reason why they wanted to stay."

But his biggest concern, he said, is that al-Qaida, Islamic State militants or other affiliated insurgents will be able to generate an attack against the U.S. from a haven in Afghanistan. The CIA strike that killed Zawahri shows the U.S. can and will detect and go after threats, but also underscores that it is a very rare and difficult task. He also said that efforts to set up terrorist training camps in Afghanistan has already begun.

Ryan Crocker, a former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, said Tuesday that he and others warned "right from the beginning that if the Taliban could ever get back in power, they would bring al-Qaida with them." So, despite Taliban promises to not harbor terrorists again "they have brought al-Qaida back."

Crocker, McKenzie and others also point to what they said was a predictable erosion of women's rights, widespread hunger and other Taliban problems running the government.

Military leaders are also working to shore up allies in the Middle East who now question America's commitment to the region. They see persistent reports about America's increased focus on threats from a rising China and an aggressive Russia and watch as military ships and assets are pulled away. And they worry that the U.S. won't be there if threats from Iran spike again.

"We have given populations and nations all around the world a significant reason to no longer trust us,"

retired Army Lt. Gen. Michael Nagata said during a Monday event at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "In order to rise to the occasion in the competition we have underway with actors like Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, this is a particularly awful time for people not to trust us."

South Korean leader: Seoul won't seek own nuclear deterrent

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's president said Wednesday his government has no plans to pursue its own nuclear deterrent and called instead for more diplomacy in the face of growing North Korean nuclear weapons capabilities, even as the North test-fired two suspected cruise missiles.

The launches were detected from North Korea's western coast hours before South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol used a news conference to urge Pyongyang to return to diplomacy aimed at exchanging denuclearization steps for economic benefits.

South Korea's military, which didn't reveal the launches until after Yoon's remarks, provided no immediate flight details about the North's weapons, including how they moved or how far they traveled.

Yoon's office said his national security director, Kim Sung-han, discussed the launch with other senior officials before Yoon addressed reporters and that they reviewed the South's military readiness. Tensions could further rise as the United States and South Korea kick off their biggest combined training in years next week to counter the North Korean threat. The North describes such drills as invasion rehearsals and has often responded to them with missile tests or other provocations.

Yoon during the news conference maintained a reserved tone on Pyongyang, saying Seoul doesn't desire political change in North Korea that's brought by force and that the rivals should aim at building sustainable peace.

Yoon's comments followed his proposal on Monday for an "audacious" economic assistance package to North Korea if it abandons its nuclear weapons program. He has avoided harsh criticism of the North after it threatened "deadly" retaliation last week over a COVID-19 outbreak it blames on the South.

Yoon's proposal for large-scale aid in food and healthcare and modernizing power and port infrastructure resembled previous South Korean offers that were rejected by North Korea, which is speeding its development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, seen by leader Kim Jong Un as his strongest guarantee of survival.

Still, Yoon expressed hope for "meaningful dialogue" with North Korea over his plan and stressed that Seoul is willing to provide corresponding economic rewards at each step of a phased denuclearization process if the North commits to a genuine "roadmap" toward fully abandoning its weapons program.

"We are not telling them to 'denuclearize entirely first and then we will provide,'" Yoon said. "What we are saying is that we will provide the things we can in correspondence to their steps if they only show a firm determination (toward denuclearization)."

Inter-Korean ties have worsened amid a stalemate in larger nuclear negotiations between North Korea and the U.S. that derailed in early 2019 because of disagreements over a relaxation of crippling U.S.-led sanctions on the North in exchange for disarmament steps.

North Korea has ramped up its missile testing to a record pace in 2022, launching more than 30 ballistic weapons so far, including its first intercontinental ballistic missiles in nearly five years.

The heightened testing activity underscores North Korea's dual intent to advance its arsenal and force the United States to accept the idea of the North as a nuclear power so it can negotiate economic and security concessions from a position of strength, experts say. Kim could up the ante soon as there are indications that the North is preparing to conduct its first nuclear test since September 2017, when it claimed to have developed a thermonuclear weapon to fit on its ICBMs.

While Kim's ICBMs get much of the international attention, North Korea is also expanding its range of nuclear-capable, short-range missiles that can target South Korea. Kim has punctuated his weapons development with threats to proactively use his nuclear weapons in conflicts against the South or the U.S., which experts say communicate an escalating nuclear doctrine that could increase concerns for its neighbors.

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Yoon has vowed to strengthen the South's defenses through its alliance with the United States by resuming large-scale military training that was canceled or downsized during the Trump years and boosting the South's missile defenses. The Biden administration has also reaffirmed U.S. commitments to defending South Korea and Japan, including "extended deterrence," referring to an assurance to defend its allies with its full military capabilities, including nuclear.

But some experts say it's becoming clear South Korea has no clear way to counter the leverage North Korea has with its nukes, expressing concerns that Washington might hesitate to defend its ally in the event of war when Kim's ICBMs would pose a potential threat to mainland American cities.

Some South Koreans have called for the reintroduction of tactical U.S. nuclear weapons that were removed from the South in the 1990s, or for Seoul to pursue its own deterrent.

Yoon dismissed the possibility of the latter during the news conference, saying that Seoul will stay committed to an international treaty aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

"I believe the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) regime is a very important and necessary premise for permanent world peace," Yoon said, expressing hope that the U.S. deterrence strategy for its allies could evolve to counter the North's growing threat.

Yoon's comments came after North Korea last week claimed a widely disputed victory over COVID-19 but also blamed South Korea for the outbreak. North Korea insists leaflets and other objects flown across the border by activists spread the virus, an unscientific claim Seoul describes as "ridiculous."

North Korea has a history of dialing up pressure on South Korea when it doesn't get what it wants from the United States, and there are concerns that North Korea's threat portends a provocation, which could include a nuclear or missile test or even border skirmishes. Some experts say North Korea may stir up tensions around joint military exercises between the allies.

Rudy Giuliani set to testify in Georgia 2020 election probe

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Rudy Giuliani is scheduled to appear in an Atlanta courthouse to testify before a special grand jury that is investigating attempts by former President Donald Trump and others to overturn his 2020 election defeat in Georgia.

It's unclear how much the former New York mayor and attorney for Trump will be willing to say now that his lawyers have been informed he's a target of the investigation. Questioning will take place behind closed doors Wednesday because the special grand jury proceedings are secret.

Yet Giuliani's appearance is another high-profile step in a rapidly escalating investigation that has ensnared several Trump allies and brought heightened scrutiny to the desperate and ultimately failed efforts to overturn Democrat Joe Biden's 2020 election win. It's one of several investigations into Trump's actions in office as he lays the groundwork for another run at the White House in 2024.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis opened her investigation after the disclosure of a remarkable Jan. 2, 2021, phone call between Trump and Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger. On the call, Trump suggested that Raffensperger could "find" the exact number of votes that would be needed to flip the election results in Georgia.

Trump has denied any wrongdoing. He has described the call as "perfect."

Willis last month filed petitions to compel testimony from seven Trump associates and advisers. She has also said she's considering calling Trump himself to testify, and the former president has hired a legal team in Atlanta that includes a prominent criminal defense attorney.

In seeking Giuliani's testimony, Willis noted that he was both a personal attorney for Trump and a lead attorney for his 2020 campaign.

She recalled in a petition how Giuliani and others appeared at a state Senate committee meeting in late 2020 and presented a video that Giuliani said showed election workers producing "suitcases" of unlawful ballots from unknown sources, outside the view of election poll watchers. The claims of fraud were

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debunked by Georgia election officials within 24 hours. Yet Giuliani continued to make statements to the public and in subsequent legislative hearings claiming widespread election fraud using the debunked video, Willis noted in her filing.

Two of the election workers seen in the video, Ruby Freeman and Wandrea "Shaye" Moss, said they faced relentless harassment online and in person after it was shown at the Dec. 3 Georgia legislative hearing in which Giuliani appeared. At another hearing a week later, Giuliani said the footage showed the women "surreptitiously passing around USB ports as if they are vials of heroin or cocaine." They actually were passing a piece of candy.

Willis wrote in the court filing that Giuliani's hearing appearance and testimony were "part of a multi-state, coordinated plan by the Trump Campaign to influence the results of the November 2020 election in Georgia and elsewhere."

Willis also wrote in a petition seeking the testimony of attorney Kenneth Chesebro that he worked with Giuliani to coordinate and carry out a plan to have Georgia Republicans serve as fake electors. Those 16 people signed a certificate declaring falsely that Trump had won the 2020 presidential election and declaring themselves the state's "duly elected and qualified" electors even though Biden had won the state and a slate of Democratic electors was certified.

Giuliani's attorneys tried to delay his appearance before the special grand jury, saying he was unable to fly due to heart stent surgery in early July.

But Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney, who's overseeing the special grand jury, said during a hearing last week that Giuliani needed to be in Atlanta on Wednesday and could travel by bus, car or train if necessary.

Other Trump allies have also been swept up in the probe. Sen. Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican, received a subpoena ordering him to appear for testimony on Aug. 23. Graham has challenged that subpoena, citing his protections as a member of Congress. A judge on Monday rejected that argument and said he must testify. Graham has said he'll appeal.

Willis has indicated she is interested in calls between Graham and Raffensberger about the results in Georgia in the weeks after the election.

Youth mental health is in crisis. Are schools doing enough?

By JOCELYN GECKER and DYLAN LOVAN undefined

CECILIA, Ky. (AP) — For fourth-grader Leah Rainey, the school day now begins with what her teacher calls an "emotional check-in."

"It's great to see you. How are you feeling?" chirps a cheery voice on her laptop screen. It asks her to click an emoji matching her state of mind: Happy. Sad. Worried. Angry. Frustrated. Calm. Silly. Tired.

Depending on the answer, Leah, 9, gets advice from a cartoon avatar on managing her mood and a few more questions: Have you eaten breakfast? Are you hurt or sick? Is everything OK at home? Is someone at school being unkind? Today, Leah chooses "silly," but says she struggled with sadness during online learning.

At Lakewood Elementary School, all 420 students will start their days the same way this year. The rural Kentucky school is one of thousands across the country using the technology to screen students' state of mind and alert teachers to anyone struggling.

In some ways, this year's back-to-school season will restore a degree of pre-pandemic normalcy: Most districts have lifted mask mandates, dropped COVID vaccine requirements and ended rules on social distancing and quarantines.

But many of the pandemic's longer-lasting impacts remain a troubling reality for schools. Among them: the harmful effects of isolation and remote learning on children's emotional well-being.

Student mental health reached crisis levels last year, and the pressure on schools to figure out solutions has never been greater. Districts across the country are using federal pandemic money to hire more mental health specialists, rolling out new coping tools and expanding curriculum that prioritizes emotional health.

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Still, some parents don't believe schools should be involved in mental health at all. So-called social-emotional learning, or SEL, has become the latest political flashpoint, with conservatives saying schools use it to promote progressive ideas about race, gender and sexuality, or that a focus on well-being takes attention from academics.

But at schools like Lakewood, educators say helping students manage emotions and stress will benefit them in the classroom and throughout life.

The school, in a farming community an hour's drive south of Louisville, has used federal money to create "take-a-break" corners in each classroom. Students can rifle through a "self-regulation kit" with tips on deep breathing, squishy stress balls and acupuncture rings, said school counselor Shelly Kerr. The school plans to build a "Reset Room" this fall, part of an emerging national trend to create campus sanctuaries where students can go to decompress and speak with a counselor.

The online student screener Lakewood uses, called Closegap, helps teachers identify shy, quiet kids who might need to talk and would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Closegap founder Rachel Miller launched the online platform in 2019 with a few schools and saw interest explode after the pandemic hit. This year, she said, more than 3,600 U.S. schools will be using the technology, which has free and premium versions.

"We are finally beginning to recognize that school is more than just teaching the kids reading, writing and arithmetic," said Dan Domenech, executive director of the national School Superintendents Association. Just as free lunch programs are based on the idea that a hungry child can't learn, more and more schools are embracing the idea that a cluttered or troubled mind cannot focus on schoolwork, he said.

The pandemic magnified the fragility of mental health among American youth, who had been experiencing a rise in depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts for years, experts say. A recent report issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found 44% of high school students said they experienced "persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness" during the pandemic, with girls and LGBTQ youth reporting the highest levels of poor mental health and suicide attempts.

If a silver lining exists, the pandemic raised awareness of the crisis and helped de-stigmatize talking about mental health, while also bringing attention to schools' shortcomings in handling it. President Joe Biden's administration recently announced over \$500 million to expand mental health services in the country's schools, adding to federal and state money that has poured into schools to cope with pandemic-era needs.

Still, many are skeptical schools' responses are enough.

"All of these opportunities and resources are temporary," said junior Claire Chi, who attends State College Area High School in central Pennsylvania. Last year, her school added emergency counseling and therapy dogs, among other supports, but most of that help lasted a day or two, Chi said. And that's "not really a mental health investment for students." This year, the school says it has added more counselors and plans mental health training for all 10th graders.

Some critics, including many conservative parents, don't want to see mental health support in schools in the first place. Asra Nomani, a mom from Fairfax County, Virginia, says schools are using the mental health crisis as a "Trojan horse" to introduce liberal ideas about sexual and racial identity. She also worries schools lack the expertise to deal with student mental illness.

"Social-emotional well-being has become an excuse to intervene in the lives of children in the most intimate of ways that are both dangerous and irresponsible," Nomani said, "because they're in the hands of people who are not trained professionals."

Despite the unprecedented funding, schools are having trouble hiring counselors, mirroring the shortages in other American industries.

Goshen Junior High School in northwest Indiana has been struggling to fill a vacancy of a counselor who left last year, when student anxiety and other behavioral problems were "off the charts," said Jan Desmarais-Morse, one of two counselors left at the school, with caseloads of 500 students each.

"One person trying to meet the needs of 500 students?" said Desmarais-Morse said. "It's impossible."

The American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 250 students per school counselor,

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which few states come close to meeting.

For the 2020-21 school year only two states — New Hampshire and Vermont — achieved that goal, according to an Associated Press analysis of data from the National Center for Education Statistics. Some states face staggeringly high ratios: Arizona averages one counselor to 716 students; in Michigan, 1 to 638; and in Minnesota, 1 to 592.

Also in Indiana, the School City of Hammond won a grant to hire clinical therapists at all 17 of its schools but has not been able to fill most of the new jobs, said Superintendent Scott Miller. "Schools are stealing from other schools. There just aren't enough workers to go around." And despite more funding, school salaries can't compete with private counseling practices, which are also overwhelmed and trying to hire more staff.

Another challenge for schools: identifying struggling children before they're in emotional crisis. At the Houston Independent School District, one of the largest in the country with 277 schools and nearly 200,000 students, students are asked each morning to hold up fingers showing how they feel. One finger means a child is hurting deeply; five means she or he feels great.

"It's identifying your brush fires early in the day," said Sean Ricks, the district's senior manager of crisis intervention.

Houston teachers now give mindfulness lessons, with ocean sounds played via YouTube, and a Chihuahua named Luci and a cockapoo named Omi have joined the district's crisis team.

Grant-funding helped Houston build relaxation rooms, known as Thinkeries, at 10 schools last year, costing about \$5,000 each. District data show campuses with Thinkeries, which sport bean bag chairs and warmly colored walls, saw a 62% decrease in calls to a crisis line last year, Ricks said. The district is building more this year.

But the rooms themselves are not a panacea. For the calming rooms to work, schools must teach students to recognize they feel angry or frustrated. Then they can use the space to decompress before their emotions erupt, said Kevin Dahill-Fuchel, executive director of Counseling in Schools, a nonprofit that helps schools bolster mental health services.

In the last days of summer vacation, a "Well Space" at University High School in Irvine, California, was getting finishing touches from an artist who painted a mural of a giant moon over mountains. Potted succulents, jute rugs, Buddha-like statuettes and a hanging egg chair brought an un-school-like feel. When school starts this week, the room is to be staffed full-time with a counselor or mental health specialist.

The goal is to normalize the idea of asking for help and give students a place to reset. "If they can re-center and refocus," Blakely said, "they can then, after a short break, go back into their classrooms and be prepared for deeper learning."

Ukrainians flee grim life in Russian-occupied Kherson

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — It was early one morning when life under Russian occupation became too much for Volodymyr Zhdanov: Rocket fire aimed at Ukrainian forces struck near his home in the city of Kherson, terrifying one of his two children.

His 8-year-old daughter "ran in panic to the basement. It was 2 o'clock in the morning and (she) was really scared," said Zhdanov, who later fled the city on the Black Sea and has been living in Kyiv, the capital, for the past three weeks.

Kherson, located north of the Crimean Peninsula that was annexed by Moscow in 2014, was the first city to fall after Russia's invasion on Feb. 24. The port remains at the heart of the conflict and Ukraine's efforts to preserve its vital access to the sea. For Russia, Kherson is a key point along the land corridor from its border to the peninsula.

Zhdanov and others who made the hazardous journey to escape from the region describe increasingly grim conditions there, part of a heavy-handed effort by Russia to establish permanent control.

The streets in the city, which had a prewar population of about 300,000, are mostly deserted. Rumors

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swirl about acts of armed resistance and the sudden disappearance of officials who refuse to cooperate with the Russian authorities.

Occupation forces patrol in markets to warn those trying to use the Ukrainian currency, the hryvnia, in transactions. Pro-Moscow officials have been installed in local and regional governments, as well as on the police force. Workers at various municipal services face pressure to cooperate with Russian managers. Most schools have closed.

Supplies of essential goods are uneven, halting most commercial activity. There are shortages of medicines and spikes in the price of other commodities.

Many residents had been determined to hold out as long as possible for a promised Ukrainian counterattack that hasn't materialized.

"There was physical danger in the city, because there were many soldiers," Zhdanov said.

A referendum on the region becoming a part of Russia has been announced by Moscow-installed officials, although no date has been set. Meanwhile, officials are pressuring those remaining to take Russian citizenship.

Income from Zhdanov's family flower business dried up after the currency change, although he kept growing plants anyway.

"It's difficult to survive with no money and no food," he said. "Who would want a Russian government if your life, business, and kids' education are taken away from you? They've all gone."

When he left Kherson with his family, Zhdanov risked arrest by hiding a Ukrainian flag in the bottom of his pack. He had kept the flag from a public protest of the Russian troop presence.

Journalist Yevhenia Virlych also stayed for five months and kept working, writing about officials who had allegedly cooperated with the Russians. But she worked while in hiding and feared for her safety, frequently changing apartments and posting photos of Poland on social media to give the impression she had already fled.

"They have tied a knot around Kherson and it's getting tighter," Virlych said, adding that locals are being pressured to accept Russian passports. "Russia, which came under the banner of liberation, but came to torture and take us captive. How can anyone live that way?"

Last month, Virlych finally fled to Kyiv with her husband.

Those wanting to leave Kherson must pass a series of Russian military checkpoints. Soldiers search belongings, identity papers and mobile phones, with anyone suspected of supporting the resistance facing interrogation at so-called filtration camps.

As Kherson sinks into poverty, it's getting harder to leave. A bus ticket to Zaporizhzhia, a city 300 kilometers (185 miles) to the northeast, now costs the equivalent of \$160. Before the war, it was \$10.

Virlych said she admired the bravery of those who are staying behind as well as of those who risked their lives to join anti-Russian protests in the early stages of the occupation.

She recalled a major demonstration on March 5 attended by more than 7,000 people.

"In all my life, I've never seen people take such action," she said.

By April, the protests had stopped as occupying troops began responding to them with lethal force, Virlych added, saying, "The Russians were opening fire (at crowds) and people were getting wounded."

Moscow wants to maintain its hold on Kherson, which is strategically located near the North Crimean Canal that provides water to the Russian-occupied peninsula. Ukraine had shut down the canal after the annexation eight years ago, but the Russians reopened it after they took control of the region.

Like Zhdanov, Virlych is still holding out hope for a Ukrainian counteroffensive to wrest the region away from Russia.

"I believe only in God and the Ukrainian armed forces," she said. "I no longer have faith in anything else."

Murkowski advances in Alaska Senate race, Palin in House

By BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — Alaska Republican U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski advanced from her primary along

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with Kelly Tshibaka, her GOP rival endorsed by former President Donald Trump, while another Trump-backed candidate, Republican Sarah Palin, was among the candidates bound for the November general election in the race for Alaska's only House seat.

Murkowski had expressed confidence that she would advance and earlier in the day told reporters that "what matters is winning in November." Tshibaka called the results "the first step in breaking the Murkowski monarchy's grip on Alaska." Tshibaka also said she was thankful "for the strong and unwavering support President Trump has shown Alaska."

A Murkowski has held the Senate seat since 1981. Before Lisa Murkowski, who has been in the Senate since late 2002, it was her father, Frank Murkowski.

Under a voter-approved elections process being used for the first time in Alaska elections this year, party primaries have been scrapped and ranked choice voting is being used in general elections. The top four vote-getters in a primary race, regardless of party affiliation, are to advance to the general election.

The other two places in the Senate race were too early to call.

Murkowski voted to convict Trump in his second impeachment trial after the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection. Trump was acquitted. But he has had strong words for Murkowski, calling her "the worst" during a rally last month in Anchorage.

Murkowski said that if Tshibaka derives her sole strength from Trump's endorsement, "what does that really say about her as a candidate with what she has to offer Alaska? Is it just that she will be a rubber stamp for Donald Trump? I don't think that all Alaskans are really seeking that. Not the ones that I'm talking to."

Kevin Durling, a co-chair of Tshibaka's campaign, said Trump's endorsement of Tshibaka was an added bonus for him. He said Tshibaka's commitment to business and family and her values were important to him. He expressed frustration with Murkowski for the impeachment vote and for her support of the nomination of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland.

In the House primary, Democrat Mary Peltola, Palin and Republican Nick Begich advanced to the November election. It was too early to call the fourth spot. The winner of the November race will be elected to a two-year term.

Peltola, Begich and Palin were also competing in a special election to serve the remainder of the late-Rep. Don Young 's term, which ends early next year. Young died in March.

The special election was voters' first shot at ranked voting in a statewide race. The winner of the special election may not be known until at least Aug. 31. If successful, Peltola would be the first Alaska Native woman elected to the House.

There also were several write-in candidates in the special election, including Republican Tara Sweeney, who was also competing in the House primary. Sweeney was an assistant secretary for Indian Affairs in the U.S. Interior Department during the Trump administration.

The special election was on one side of the ballot; the other side contained primary races for U.S. Senate, U.S. House, governor and lieutenant governor and legislative seats.

Palin, in a statement Tuesday evening, called this "the first test case of the crazy, convoluted, undesirable ranked-choice voting system."

Supporters of ranked voting have said it encourages positive campaigning but the House race has at times taken on harsh tones.

Begich, a businessman from a family of prominent Democrats, has come out hard against Palin, seeking to cast her as someone chasing fame and as a quitter; Palin resigned during her term as governor in 2009.

In one Begich ad, the narrator says Alaska has faced "years of disasters," including fires and COVID-19. "Sarah Palin is one disaster we can actually avoid," the narrator says.

A narrator in one of Palin's ads refers to Begich as "negative Nick" and says Palin wants to serve in Congress "to carry Don Young's torch."

Peltola, a former lawmaker who most recently worked at a commission whose goal is to rebuild salmon resources on the Kuskokwim River, has cast herself as a consensus builder.

She said one thing that would help her be a good representative is that she is "not a millionaire. I am just like every other regular Alaskan, and I understand the economic struggles that Alaskans face first-

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hand. My priorities are the priorities of everyday Alaskans.”

In a statement early Wednesday, she said while the results of the special election won't be known for some time, "we are moving forward into the general election. We are going to build on this momentum and build a coalition of Alaskans that can win in November."

In the race for Alaska governor, Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy advanced, as did former Gov. Bill Walker, an independent, and Democrat Les Gara. It was too early to call the fourth spot.

Dunleavy and his running mate, Nancy Dahlstrom, in a statement said this "is only the start of the race. We'll dig into all the numbers as they come in over the next few days to find out where we need to shore up our campaign, and we're looking forward to reaching every Alaskan and earning their vote between now and November."

Walker is running with Heidi Drygas and Gara with Jessica Cook.

China cuts power to factories, homes as reservoirs fall

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Factories in China's southwest have shut down and a city imposed rolling blackouts after reservoirs to generate hydropower ran low in a worsening drought, adding to economic strains at a time when President Xi Jinping is trying to extend his hold on power.

Companies in Sichuan province including makers of solar panels, cement and urea closed or reduced production after they were ordered to ration power for up to five days, according to news reports Wednesday. That came after reservoir levels fell and power demand for air conditioning surged in scorching temperatures.

"Leave power for the people," said an order from the provincial government dated Tuesday.

In Sichuan, which has 94 million people, water levels at hydropower reservoirs are down by as much as half this month, according to the Sichuan Provincial Department of Economics and Information Technology.

The power company in Dazhou, a city in Sichuan with 3.4 million people, imposed 2 1/2-hour power cuts this week and expanded that Wednesday to three hours, according to the Shanghai news outlet The Paper. The newspaper Securities Times said office buildings in Chengdu, the provincial capital, were told to shut off air conditioning.

The shutdowns add to challenges for the ruling Communist Party as Xi, the country's most powerful leader in decades, prepares to try to break with tradition and award himself a third five-year term as leader at a meeting in October or November.

Growth in factory output and retail sales weakened in July, setting back China's economic recovery after Shanghai and other industrial centers were shut down starting in late March to fight virus outbreaks.

The economy grew by just 2.5% over a year earlier in the first half of 2022, less than half the official annual goal of 5.5%.

Areas across central and northern China ordered emergency measures to ensure drinking water supplies after summer rain was as little as half normal levels. The official Xinhua News Agency said firetrucks carried water to two dry villages near Chongqing in the southwest.

Hundreds of thousands of hectares (acres) of crops across central and northern China wilted due to lack of water and high temperatures, according to the government. Some areas reported the summer growing season a failure.

The weather agency has warned temperatures in some areas could spike to 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit).

A subsidiary of Guoguang Co., Ltd. that makes pesticide and fertilizer closed from Monday through at least Saturday, according to a company announcement through the Shenzhen Stock Exchange.

Makers of solar power equipment in Sichuan including Tongwei Solar Co. Ltd. and GCL-Poly Energy Holdings Ltd. said they received notices to ration power.

Tongwei said the "power cut and production shutdown have not had much impact," the business news outlet East Money reported.

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China faced similar strains last year when Guangdong province in the southeast, one of the world's most important manufacturing centers, ordered factories to shut down after hydropower reservoirs ran low due to sparse rain.

The government has allocated 280 million yuan (\$41 million) for drought relief in Hebei and Shanxi provinces and the Inner Mongolia region in the north and Liaoning province in the northeast, according to Xinhua.

"Some small- and medium-size rivers are so dry that they have stopped flowing," the report said.

Meanwhile, authorities warned some parts of the country face possible flooding from heavy rains forecast in areas from the northwest across Inner Mongolia to the northeast.

Scientists warn of dire effects as Mediterranean heats up

By CIARÁN GILES and ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — While vacationers might enjoy the Mediterranean Sea's summer warmth, climate scientists are warning of dire consequences for its marine life as it burns up in a series of severe heat waves.

From Barcelona to Tel Aviv, scientists say they are witnessing exceptional temperature hikes ranging from 3 degrees Celsius (5.4 Fahrenheit) to 5 degrees Celsius (9 Fahrenheit) above the norm for this time of year. Water temperatures have regularly exceeded 30 C (86 F) on some days.

Extreme heat in Europe and other countries around the Mediterranean has grabbed headlines this summer, but the rising sea temperature is largely out of sight and out of mind.

Marine heat waves are caused by ocean currents building up areas of warm water. Weather systems and heat in the atmosphere can also pile on degrees to the water's temperature. And just like their on-land counterparts, marine heat waves are longer, more frequent and more intense because of human-induced climate change.

The situation is "very worrying," says Joaquim Garrabou, a researcher at the Institute of Marine Sciences in Barcelona. "We are pushing the system too far. We have to take action on the climate issues as soon as possible."

Garrabou is part of a team that recently published the report on heat waves in the Mediterranean Sea between 2015 and 2019. The report says these phenomena have led to "massive mortality" of marine species.

About 50 species, including corals, sponges and seaweed, were affected along thousands of kilometers of Mediterranean coasts, according to the study, which was published in the *Global Change Biology* journal.

The situation in the eastern Mediterranean basin is particularly dire.

The waters off Israel, Cyprus, Lebanon and Syria are "the hottest hot spot in the Mediterranean, for sure," said Gil Rilov, a marine biologist at Israel's Oceanographic and Limnological Research institute, and one of the paper's co-authors. Average sea temperatures in the summer are now consistently over 31 C (88 F).

These warming seas are driving many native species to the brink, "because every summer their optimum temperature is being exceeded," he said.

What he and his colleagues are witnessing in terms of biodiversity loss is what is projected to happen further west in the Mediterranean toward Greece, Italy and Spain in the coming years.

Garrabou points out that seas have been serving the planet by absorbing 90% of the earth's excess heat and 30% of carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere by coal, oil and gas production. This carbon-sink effect shields the planet from even harsher climate effects.

This was possible because oceans and seas were in a healthy condition, Garrabou said.

"But now we have driven the ocean to an unhealthy and dysfunctional state," he said.

While the earth's greenhouse gas emissions will have to be drastically reduced if sea warming is to be curtailed, ocean scientists are specifically looking for authorities to guarantee that 30% of sea areas are protected from human activities such as fishing, which would give species a chance to recover and thrive.

About 8% of the Mediterranean Sea area is currently protected.

Garrabou and Rilov said that policymakers are largely unaware of the warming Mediterranean and its

impact.

"It's our job as scientists to bring this to their attention so they can think about it," Rilov said.

Heat waves occur when especially hot weather continues over a set number of days, with no rain or little wind. Land heat waves help cause marine heat waves and the two tend to feed each other in a vicious, warming circle.

Land heat waves have become commonplace in many countries around the Mediterranean, with dramatic side effects like wildfires, droughts, crop losses and excruciatingly high temperatures.

But marine heat waves could also have serious consequences for the countries bordering the Mediterranean and the more than 500 million people who live there if it's not dealt with soon, scientists say. Fish stocks will be depleted and tourism will be adversely affected, as destructive storms could become more common on land.

Despite representing less than 1% of the global ocean surface area, the Mediterranean is one of the main reservoirs of marine biodiversity, containing between 4% and 18% of the world's known marine species.

Some of the most affected species are key to maintaining the functioning and diversity of the sea's habitats. Species like the *Posidonia oceanica* seagrass meadows, which can absorb vast amounts of carbon dioxide and shelters marine life, or coral reefs, which are also home to wildlife, would be at risk.

Garrabou says the mortality impacts on species were observed between the surface and 45 meters (around 150 feet) deep, where the recorded marine heat waves were exceptional. Heat waves affected more than 90% of the Mediterranean Sea's surface.

According to the most recent scientific papers, the sea surface temperature in the Mediterranean has increased by 0.4 C (0.72 F) each decade between 1982 and 2018. On a yearly basis, it has been rising by some 0.05 C (0.09 F) over the past decade without any sign of letting up.

Even fractions of degrees can have disastrous effects on ocean health, experts say.

The affected areas have also grown since the 1980s and now covers most of the Mediterranean, the study suggests.

"The question is not about the survival of nature, because biodiversity will find way to a survive on the planet," Garrabou said. "The question is if we keep going in this direction maybe our society, humans, will not have a place to live."

Nepal's holy Bagmati River choked with black sewage, trash

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — High on a mountain in the Himalayas, pristine drops fall from the mouth of a tiger statue installed at a stream thought to form the headwaters of the Bagmati River, long revered as having the power to purify souls. From there it wends its way downhill past verdant forests and merges with other waterways, irrigating fields of rice, vegetables and other crops that are a livelihood for many Nepalese.

But as the Bagmati reaches the valley of Kathmandu, the capital, its color changes from clear to brown and then to black, choked with debris, its contents undrinkable and unsuitable even for cleaning. During the dry season, an overwhelming stench pervades the area by its banks.

Tainted by garbage and raw sewage that is dumped directly into the waterway, Nepal's holiest river has deteriorated so greatly that today it is also the country's most polluted, dramatically altering how the city of about 3 million interacts with the Bagmati on daily, cultural and spiritual levels.

In the capital, the Bagmati's sludge oozes past several sacred sites, including the Pashupatinath Temple, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1979. The sprawling complex comprises a golden-roofed main temple dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, surrounded by hundreds of smaller ones.

Hindus flock to the riverbanks in Kathmandu to worship at shrines and celebrate festivals. Women dip in the river to wash away sins during Rishipanchami, a day for worship of the seven sages revered as enlightened beings guiding humanity through the ages. Visitors also wade in during the festival of Chhath, praying to the sun god Surya. During Teej, married women come to pray for the health and prosperity of

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their husbands, and single women, to find a good one.

Families have long carried the bodies of deceased loved ones to these banks to wash the feet of the dead on a stone slab and sprinkle their faces with river water. Beliefs hold that that washes away a person's sins and sends their soul to heaven before their physical remains are cremated atop heaps of wood, also alongside the river, and their ashes scattered into the waters.

People still bring departed loved ones to the Bagmati, but many no longer dare to have any contact with its contents. While the bodies are still cremated here, they're cleansed with purified water bought in nearby stores.

"That is no more now. The water is so dirty and stinks. People are forced to bring bottled water and do the rituals," 59-year-old Mithu Lama, who has been working with her husband at the Teku ghat cremation grounds since she married him at age 15, said on a recent day as she stacked wood for a funeral pyre.

Grieving families who resort to bottled water typically are loath to discuss it openly, for having failed to follow the sacred funeral tradition.

People have also traditionally collected river water to sprinkle on their homes to purify them. The river is significant to Buddhists, too, many of whom cremate bodies on the Bagmati's banks.

Born and raised next to the Bagmati, Lama recalled using its waters for cooking, bathing, washing and even drinking. Today that feels like a long-ago dream dashed by decades of dumping human waste and refuse, and one she doesn't expect to see again anytime soon.

"I now have serious doubt that it will be cleaned in my lifetime," Lama said. "Not that there has not been any efforts, there have been several cleaning campaigns, but there are more people dirtying it. People are the problem."

Indeed, there have been efforts by both private volunteers and the government to clean up the river. Among those initiatives, every Saturday for the past seven years hundreds of volunteers have gathered in Kathmandu to pick up garbage and remove trash from the Bagmati.

There almost every weekend is Mala Kharel, an executive member of the governmental High Powered Committee for Integrated Development of the Bagmati Civilization, which was set up to help clean up the river. She volunteers her time not only for cleanup duty but to raise awareness among the population about avoiding pollution.

Kharel said that over the years the campaign has succeeded in collecting about 80% of garbage along the riverbank, recovering all sorts of refuse from decaying animals to even, shockingly, the bodies of dead babies dumped there. But the pickup efforts admittedly fall short of perfection, in part since frequent disruptions to trash collection services encourage more dumping than they can keep up with.

In addition, many thousands of people have built huts, shacks and brick homes illegally along the river and refuse to leave.

As for the sewage, according to Kharel, the committee is working on several projects including the construction of canals and pipes, built parallel to the river, to connect to sewer lines and prevent their waste from reaching the Bagmati. It also is considering a treatment plant, and working on upstream dams where rainwater can be captured and stored during the monsoon season and released during the dry months to flush the river, moving the waste downstream from Kathmandu.

Work on the pipe and canal system began around 2013, but no completion date has been announced. Construction on two dams is ongoing — but said to be near done — while another remains in the process of getting started. But campaigners have high hopes for the near term.

"In the next 10 years, I am hoping the river will be flowing clear and the banks will be clean and lined with trees," Kharel said. "We are working hard with this target."

That optimism isn't shared by everyone. Some environmentalists aren't sure the dams, for instance, will be of much help.

"There is too much expectations from these dams. Bagmati is a natural river and not a canal that can be cleaned so easily," said Madhukar Upadhyaya, a watershed expert who studies the river closely and said its bed no longer has any sand left.

Instead, today it's lined with clay and mixed with chemicals dumped by industrial activity such as hand-

woven carpet makers, popular in the 1990s but now banned from the capital.

"So much damage has already been done to it," Upadhyaya said, "that it can perhaps be cleaned to some degree but not restored to its past glory."

Hindu priest Pandit Shivahari Subedi, who has spent three decades on the stone steps between the Bagmati and the Pashupatinath Temple performing rituals for devotees, takes a similarly dim view of the various cleanup campaigns he has seen. Divine intervention, he believes, is needed.

"There have been too many assurances from political leaders and top people, but they have all not been fulfilled. ... It looks like unless the gods create some kind of miracle, the Bagmati will not return to its glory," Subedi said. "To clean the water naturally, by the grace of god, there needs to be huge flooding of water flushing the dirt."

Trump foe Liz Cheney defeated in Wyoming GOP primary

By STEVE PEOPLES and MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, Donald Trump's fiercest Republican adversary in Congress, was defeated in a GOP primary Tuesday, falling to a rival backed by the former president in a rout that reinforced his grip on the party's base.

The third-term congresswoman and her allies entered the day downbeat about her prospects, aware that Trump's backing gave Harriet Hageman considerable lift in the state where he won by the largest margin during the 2020 campaign. Cheney was already looking ahead to a political future beyond Capitol Hill that could include a 2024 presidential run, potentially putting her on another collision course with Trump.

Cheney described her loss as the beginning of a new chapter in her political career as she addressed a small collection of supporters, including her father, former Vice President Dick Cheney, on the edge of a vast field flanked by mountains and bales of hay.

"Our work is far from over," she said Tuesday evening, evoking Abraham Lincoln, who also lost congressional elections before ascending to the presidency and preserving the union.

The results — and the roughly 30-point margin — were a powerful reminder of the GOP's rapid shift to the right. A party once dominated by national security-oriented, business-friendly conservatives like her father now belongs to Trump, animated by his populist appeal and, above all, his denial of defeat in the 2020 election.

Such lies, which have been roundly rejected by federal and state election officials along with Trump's own attorney general and judges he appointed, transformed Cheney from an occasional critic of the former president to the clearest voice inside the GOP warning that he represents a threat to democratic norms. She's the top Republican on the House panel investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol by a mob of Trump supporters, an attack she referenced in nodding to her political future.

"I have said since Jan. 6 that I will do whatever it takes to ensure Donald Trump is never again anywhere near the Oval Office — and I mean it," she said.

Four hundred miles to the east of Cheney's concession speech, festive Hageman supporters gathered at a sprawling outdoor rodeo and Western culture festival in Cheyenne, many wearing cowboy boots, hats and blue jeans.

"Obviously we're all very grateful to President Trump, who recognizes that Wyoming has only one congressional representative and we have to make it count," said Hageman, a ranching industry attorney who had finished third in a previous bid for governor.

Echoing Trump's conspiracy theories, she falsely claimed the 2020 election was "rigged" as she courted his loyalists in the runup to the election.

Trump and his team celebrated Cheney's loss, which may represent his biggest political victory in a primary season full of them. The former president called the results "a complete rebuke" of the Jan. 6 committee.

"Liz Cheney should be ashamed of herself, the way she acted, and her spiteful, sanctimonious words and actions towards others," he wrote on his social media platform. "Now she can finally disappear into the depths of political oblivion where, I am sure, she will be much happier than she is right now. Thank

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you WYOMING!"

The news offered a welcome break from Trump's focus on his growing legal entanglements. Just eight days earlier, federal agents executing a search warrant recovered 11 sets of classified records from the former president's Florida estate.

Cheney's defeat would have been unthinkable just two years ago. The daughter of a former vice president, she hails from one of the most prominent political families in Wyoming. And in Washington, she was the No. 3 House Republican, an influential voice in GOP politics and policy with a sterling conservative voting record.

Cheney will now be forced from Congress at the end of her third and final term in January. She is not expected to leave Capitol Hill quietly.

She will continue in her leadership role on the congressional panel investigating the Jan. 6 attack until it dissolves at the end of the year. And she is actively considering a 2024 White House bid -- as a Republican or independent -- having vowed to do everything in her power to fight Trump's influence in her party.

With Cheney's loss, Republicans who voted to impeach Trump are going extinct.

In all, seven Republican senators and 10 Republican House members backed Trump's impeachment in the days after his supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol as Congress tried to certify President Joe Biden's victory. Just two of those 10 House members have won their primaries this year. After two Senate retirements, Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska is the only such Senate Republican on this year's ballot.

Cheney was forced to seek assistance from the state's tiny Democratic minority in her bid to pull off a victory. But Democrats across America, major donors among them, took notice. She raised at least \$15 million for her election, a stunning figure for a Wyoming political contest.

Voters responded to the interest in the race. With a little more than half of the vote counted, turnout ran about 50% higher than in the 2018 Republican primary for governor.

If Cheney does ultimately run for president — either as a Republican or an independent — don't expect her to win Wyoming's three electoral votes.

"We like Trump. She tried to impeach Trump," Cheyenne voter Chester Barkell said of Cheney on Tuesday. "I don't trust Liz Cheney."

And in Jackson, Republican voter Dan Winder said he felt betrayed by his congresswoman.

"Over 70% of the state of Wyoming voted Republican in the last presidential election and she turned right around and voted against us," said Winder, a hotel manager. "She was our representative, not her own."

Article on 'fat' Arab women sparks uproar over body-shaming

By ISABEL DEBRE and MAGGIE HYDE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — To Enas Taleb, the headline felt like a spiteful punch line.

"Why women are fatter than men in the Arab world," it read in bold, above a photograph of the Iraqi actress waving onstage at an arts festival.

The Economist article ran through possible explanations of the obesity gap of 10 percentage points between men and women in the Middle East, then cited Iraqis who see Taleb's curves as the ideal of beauty.

"Fat," a word now considered taboo in much of Western media, was repeated six times.

The article triggered torrid criticism on social media. Twitter users blasted it as misogynistic. Local rights groups issued denunciations. Some writers were appalled by what they described as demeaning stereotypes about Arab women.

Taleb, 42, said she's suing the London-based magazine for defamation.

While analysts acknowledge an epidemic of obesity in the Arab world and its connection to poverty and gender discrimination, Taleb's case and the ensuing uproar have thrown a light on the issue of body-shaming that is deeply rooted yet rarely discussed in the region.

"If there's a student who goes to school and hears mean comments and students bullying her for being fat, how would she feel?" Taleb told The Associated Press from Baghdad. "This article is an insult not only to me but a violation of the rights of all Iraqi and Arab women."

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The Economist did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Fat-shaming is offensive enough in the United States that when two sports commentators called some female athletes overweight on air earlier this year, they were swiftly fired.

In the Middle East, the report argued, the desirability of fleshy women may help explain why the region has experienced an explosion of obesity.

But the angry backlash over the article — and Taleb's horror that her photo was used to illustrate growing waistlines of Arab women — contradicts the oft-repeated belief that being heavy is widely seen as sign of affluence and fertility in the region.

The globalization of Western beauty ideals through branding, TV and social media has long given rise to unrealistic body standards that skew women's expectations of themselves and others in the Arab world, research shows.

In a forthcoming study on Egypt, Joan Costa-Font at the London School of Economics said he found that although some older women in rural areas still view rounder women as affluent, "it's not true in Egypt that being overweight is a sign of beauty. ... Western standards are more relevant."

Demand for cosmetic surgery has boomed in Lebanon. Some 75% of female Emirati students reported dissatisfaction with their bodies, and 25% are prone to eating disorders, according to a 2010 study at Dubai's Zayed University.

And yet, many say, fat-shaming remains widespread and acceptable in the region, compared to the U.S. and Europe, where self-esteem movements have gained momentum and galvanized public discussions around inclusivity.

"Our politicians in Lebanon keep making these horrible, sexist comments about women's bodies. If they come under fire that doesn't necessarily lead to rising awareness," said Joumana Haddad, a Lebanese author and human rights activist.

Haddad noted that new forays into female empowerment have provoked "reactionary discourse and anger" from Lebanon's patriarchal society. Even cavalier public comments about weight can be deeply painful to young women who struggle with insecurity and a pathological will to alter their bodies in pursuit of beauty, she added.

"I'm a 51-year-old harsh, angry feminist and I still weigh myself every single morning," Haddad said. "You can imagine how hard it is for people who have been less privileged."

Ameni Esseibi, a Tunisian-born woman who overcame social stigma to become the Arab world's first plus-sized model, said body positivity remains taboo in the Middle East even as populations have become more overweight.

"Kuwaitis are plus-sized, Saudis are plus-sized. But people are ashamed. They weren't taught to be confident in this judgmental society," Esseibi said. "We always want to be skinny, to look good, to get married to the most powerful guy."

But, she said, there are signs of growing awareness. After years of ignoring vulgar comments about women's bodies, Arabs are increasingly turning to social media to vent their anger.

The Economist article's depiction of men "shutting women up at home" to keep them "Rubenesque" touched a nerve.

The Baghdad-based Heya, or "She," Foundation, which advocates for women in media, denounced the report as "bullying" and demanded the magazine apologize to Taleb.

The Malaysia-based Musawah Foundation, which promotes equality in the Muslim world, said the backlash shows that "women in the region are building a collective discourse that rejects and calls out sexist, racist, and fat-phobic acts and their colonial legacies."

Taleb, a talk show host and star in blockbuster Iraqi TV dramas, said she had no choice but to speak up.

"They used my photo in this context in a hurtful, negative way," she said. "I am against using one's body shape to determine the value of a human being."

Her lawyer, Samantha Kane, said she has begun legal action, first sending a letter to The Economist demanding an apology for "serious harm caused to (Taleb) and her career."

Kane declined further comment pending the magazine's response.

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Taleb said she hopes her defamation case serves as “a message” for women “to say, I love myself ... to be strong, to confront those difficulties.”

It’s a message that resonates in a region where women see the odds as stacked against them. Traditional attitudes, discriminatory legislation and pay disparities, on top of rigid beauty standards, hinder women’s advancement.

“Women don’t get equal salaries. They don’t get high-level positions. They are forced to keep silent when they are harassed. And in media, they have to be thin and beautiful,” said Zeina Tareq, Heya Foundation’s director.

In Taleb’s home country of Iraq, where safety is scarce after years of conflict, outspoken women also face the threat of targeted killings.

Iraqi journalist Manar al-Zubaidi said the fat-shaming of Arab women comes as no surprise in a world where “most media outlets commodify women and make them into objects of ridicule or temptation.”

“There is nothing to deter them,” she added, except ever-louder “campaigns and challenges on social media.”

Former Australia PM says secret powers were needed in crisis

SYDNEY (AP) — Scott Morrison said Wednesday that giving himself extra powers when he was Australia’s prime minister was necessary during the coronavirus crisis, as criticism rose the moves were deceptive and undemocratic.

Current Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is seeking an opinion from the solicitor-general on the legality of some of Morrison’s moves.

Many of Morrison’s own colleagues were blindsided by his decision to secretly appoint himself to five ministerial roles, which have only been revealed in recent days. Some have called for him to resign from Parliament, where he is now an opposition lawmaker after losing the general election to Albanese earlier this year.

But Morrison told reporters in Sydney that while he apologized for causing offense to his colleagues, he stood by his actions.

The expectation early in the COVID-19 crisis was that as prime minister, he was responsible for everything — “every drop of rain, every strain of the virus, everything that occurred over that period of time,” Morrison said. “I believed it was necessary to have authority, to have what were effectively emergency powers, to exercise in extreme situations that would be unforeseen, that would enable me to act in the national interests.”

He said he’d rather be criticized for overstepping the mark than for not taking action. Asked why he didn’t let his own Cabinet colleagues know about the appointments, let alone the broader public, Morrison said his moves could have been misunderstood.

“I was concerned that these issues could have been misconstrued and misunderstood, and undermined the confidence of ministers in the performance of their duties at that time, and I did not consider that to be in the country’s interest,” Morrison said.

Albanese on Tuesday revealed that between March 2020 and May 2021, Morrison was appointed minister of health, finance, home affairs, treasury and industry — moves which appeared to have given him equal powers to the ministers already appointed to those positions. News Corp. media had revealed some of the appointments over the weekend.

“How about an apology to the Australian people?” Albanese said after Morrison spoke. “The Australian people went to an election not knowing that any of this had occurred, not knowing that there was a shadow government operating in darkness.”

Albanese told reporters in Brisbane that he found it incomprehensible that the appointments weren’t publicly announced at the time. He alluded to the secrecy in the movie “Fight Club.”

“The first rule of power-grab club is don’t talk about power-grab club, and Scott Morrison broke that rule today,” Albanese said. “Scott Morrison was evasive, he was defensive, he was passive-aggressive and of

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course, he was self-serving. So at least he was true to himself today.”

Morrison used his additional powers on at least one occasion, to overturn a decision by former minister Keith Pitt to approve a contentious gas project off the New South Wales coast.

Pitt said in a statement he was unaware Morrison had joint oversight over his ministerial portfolio and that he stands by the decisions he made at the time.

At the time, Morrison said he was vetoing the project in his capacity as prime minister, and did not mention that he had joint oversight over the portfolio.

Morrison on Wednesday said there were different circumstances in that particular case than with his pandemic-related portfolios, and he stood by his decision which he believed was in the national interest.

Morrison’s appointments were authorized by Governor-General David Hurley, who said he followed processes consistent with the constitution by signing an “administrative instrument on the advice of the prime minister” — which was Morrison — to give Morrison the extra powers.

Karen Andrews, who served as home affairs minister under Morrison, said Morrison never told her that he was also being appointed to the portfolio. She said Morrison should resign.

“The Australian people have been let down, they have been betrayed,” she said. “For a former prime minister to have behaved in that manner, to secretly be sworn into other portfolios, undermines the Westminster system, it’s absolutely unacceptable.”

Wind energy boom and golden eagles collide in the US West

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

CODY, Wyo. (AP) — The rush to build wind farms to combat climate change is colliding with preservation of one of the U.S. West’s most spectacular predators — the golden eagle — as the species teeters on the edge of decline.

Ground zero in the conflict is Wyoming, a stronghold for golden eagles that soar on 7-foot (2-meter) wings and a favored location for wind farms. As wind turbines proliferate, scientists say deaths from collisions could drive down golden eagle numbers considered stable at best.

Yet climate change looms as a potentially greater threat: Rising temperatures are projected to reduce golden eagle breeding ranges by more than 40% later this century, according to a National Audubon Society analysis.

That leaves golden eagles doubly vulnerable — to the shifting climate and to the wind energy promoted as a solution to that warming world.

“We have some of the best golden eagle populations in Wyoming, but it doesn’t mean the population is not at risk,” said Bryan Bedrosian, conservation director at the Teton Raptor Center in Wilson, Wyoming. “As we increase wind development across the U.S., that risk is increasing.”

Turbines blades hundreds of feet long are among myriad threats to golden eagles, which are routinely shot, poisoned by lead, hit by vehicles and electrocuted on power lines.

The tenuous position of golden eagles contrasts with the conservation success of their avian cousins, bald eagles, whose numbers have quadrupled since 2009. There are an estimated 346,000 bald eagles in the U.S., versus about 40,000 golden eagles, which need much larger areas to survive and are more inclined to have trouble with humans.

Federal officials have tried to curb turbine deaths, while avoiding any slowdown in the growth of wind power as an alternative to carbon-emitting fossil fuels — a key piece of President Joe Biden’s climate agenda.

In April, a Florida-based power company pleaded guilty in federal court in Wyoming to criminal violations of wildlife protection laws after its wind turbines killed more than 100 golden eagles in eight states. It was the third conviction of a major wind company for killing eagles in a decade.

Despite the deaths, scientists like Bedrosian say more turbines are needed to fight climate change. He and colleague Charles Preston are finding ways wind companies can reduce or offset eagle deaths, such as building in areas less frequented by the birds, improving habitat elsewhere or retrofitting power poles to make them less perilous when eagles land.

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"It's robbing Peter to pay Paul, but it's a start and I think it's the way to go," Preston said. "It's a societal question: Is there room for them and us? It's not just golden eagles. They are kind of a window into the bigger picture."

Dangling from a rope 30 feet (9 meters) above the ground with a canvas bag slung around his neck, Bedrosian shouldered his way into a golden eagle nest lodged in a cliff ledge in northwestern Wyoming. As an adult eagle circled in the distance, the scientist made an awkward grab for the young eagle in the nest, slid a leather hood over its head then wrestled the bird into the bag.

The 6-week-old bird was lowered and carefully extracted by Preston, a zip tie around its feet as a precaution against talons more than an inch long.

"The key is not to forget later to cut the zip tie," Bedrosian said.

The eaglet went on a scale — about 7 pounds (3.2 kilograms). Bedrosian drew some blood from a wing to test for lead exposure, and Preston clamped onto each leg a metal band with numbers for identification if the eagle's recaptured or found dead.

Golden eagles don't mate until about 5 years old and produce about one chick every two years, so adult eagle deaths have outsized impacts on the population, Bedrosian said.

Illegal shootings are the biggest cause of death, killing about 700 golden eagles annually, according to federal estimates. More than 600 die annually in collisions with cars, wind turbines and power lines; about 500 annually are electrocuted and more than 400 are poisoned.

"Wind mortality wasn't a thing for golden eagles 10 years ago," Bedrosian said. "I don't want to pick on wind as the only thing. ... But it's the additive nature of all these things and several are increasing. Vehicle strikes are increasing. Climate change is increasing. Wind is increasing."

Federal officials won't divulge how many eagles are reported killed by wind farms, saying it's sensitive law enforcement information. The recent criminal prosecution of a subsidiary of NextEra Energy, one of the largest U.S. renewable energy providers, offered a glimpse into the problem's scope.

The company pleaded guilty to three counts of violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and was ordered to pay more than \$8 million in fines and restitution after killing at least 150 eagles — including more than 100 goldens at wind farms in Wyoming, California, New Mexico, North Dakota, Colorado, Michigan, Arizona and Illinois.

Government officials said the mortality was likely higher because some turbines killed multiple eagles and carcasses are not always found.

Prosecutors said the company's failure to take steps to protect eagles or to obtain permits to kill the birds gave it an advantage over competitors that did take such steps — even as NextEra and affiliates received hundreds of millions of dollars in federal tax credits for wind power.

The company remained defiant after the plea deal: NextEra President Rebecca Kujawa said bird collisions with turbines were unavoidable accidents that should not be criminalized.

Utilities Duke Energy and PacifiCorp previously pleaded guilty to similar charges in Wyoming. North Carolina-based Duke Energy was sentenced in 2013 to \$1 million in fines and restitution and five years probation following deaths of 14 golden eagles and 149 other birds at two of the company's wind projects.

A year later, Oregon-based PacifiCorp received \$2.5 million in fines and five years probation after 38 golden eagle carcasses and 336 other protected birds were discovered at two of its sites.

The number of wind turbines nationwide more than doubled over the past decade to almost 72,000, according to U.S. Geological Survey data, with development overlapping prime golden eagle territory in states including Wyoming, Montana, California, Washington and Oregon.

USGS scientists concluded in a recent study that if anticipated growth in wind energy by 2040 occurs, increased turbine-caused deaths could cut golden eagle populations by almost half over 10 years.

However, the fact that no population-wide declines have been seen in recent years suggests some uncertainty in the projections. said lead author Jay Diffendorfer.

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Federal wildlife officials are pushing wind companies to enroll in a permitting program that allows them to kill eagles if the deaths are offset.

Companies with permits can pay utilities to retrofit power poles, so lines are spaced far enough that eagles can't be easily electrocuted. Every 11 poles retrofitted typically means one eagle death avoided annually.

Nationwide, 34 permits in place last year authorized companies to "take" 170 golden eagles — meaning that many birds could be killed by turbines or lost through impacts on nests or habitat.

For each loss, companies are responsible for ensuring at least one eagle death is avoided somewhere else. Using conservative estimates that overcount potential deaths could even mean a gain of eagles in the long run, said Brian Millsap, who heads the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's eagle program.

"This sounds crass but its realistic. Eagles are going to be incidentally killed at wind farms," he said. "We've got to reduce other things that will allow wind energy development."

Agency officials would not disclose which companies hold permits. An Associated Press public records review shows most are wind farms.

Federal officials collect golden eagle death data through an online reporting system used by government agencies, companies, scientists, tribes and private groups.

Fish and Wildlife Service officials declined to release the data because they said it could be used in future law enforcement cases.

The nests where Bedrosian and Preston are doing population studies are about 60 miles (96 kilometers) from the nearest wind farm — 114 turbines that PacifiCorp began operating about two years ago near the Wyoming-Montana border.

Personnel on site scan the skies with binoculars for eagles and can shut down turbines when the birds approach.

"We tend to see more golden eagles in prairie areas where you're going to have the best wind regimes," said Travis Brown, a biologist with PacifiCorp. "It's almost like competition for the wind resource because the birds are using it for movement."

Ten PacifiCorp wind farms have permits authorizing the incidental killing of eagles and an application is pending for two more, the company said.

Company representatives declined to say how many eagles have died under its federal permits. They said PacifiCorp's been building a "bank" of retrofitted power poles to offset eagle deaths and also wants to try new approaches such as painting turbine blades to be more visible and easier to avoid.

"We're working as hard as we can to avoid and minimize (deaths) up front, and then anything we can't we're mitigating on the back end," Brown said.

EXPLAINER: Winners, losers in water cuts for Western states

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — People in Arizona and Nevada won't face bans on watering their lawns or washing their cars despite water shortages on the Colorado River.

But officials said Tuesday there will still be less water available next year from the river that serves 40 million people in the West and Mexico. Observers say a reckoning is still coming for the growing region.

New cuts will build on this year's reductions — which all but eliminated some central Arizona farmers' Colorado River water supply and to a much lesser extent, reduced Nevada and Mexico's share.

Tuesday's decision and what was left out point to growing uncertainty in the West.

Lake Mead and Lake Powell — the two largest reservoirs on the Colorado River — are about a quarter full, threatening water supplies and the generation of hydroelectric power used by millions of people.

Along the reservoirs' edge, "bathtub rings" of minerals outline where the high water line once stood, highlighting the challenges the West is facing as a 'megadrought' tightens its grip on the region.

A look at who is affected by another round of water cuts in the West.

WHICH STATES WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE CUTS?

Arizona was hardest hit, again, and will receive 79% of its total share next year. But that's only 3% less than what it got this year, after federal officials slashed its supply.

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Nevada will receive about 92% of its total supply next year. Most residents will not feel the cuts thanks to water conservation, reuse and the state not using its full Colorado River allocation.

California has been spared from cuts because it has more senior water rights than Arizona and Nevada.

Mexico will get roughly 93% of its total supply. The water is used in cities and farming communities in Northwestern Mexico, where a severe drought is taking place, too.

WHO WILL SEE THEIR WATER SUPPLY CUT?

Farmers in central Arizona, among the state's largest producers of livestock, dairy, alfalfa, wheat and barley, lost most of their Colorado River allocation last year when the government announced its first shortage. Some farmers were compensated with water through deals with cities like Phoenix and Tucson.

More farmers will likely need to fallow land — which some of the region's farmers have been paid to do — and rely even more on groundwater. Others will have to grow more water-efficient crops and find other ways to use less water.

Western water suppliers have planned for such shortages by diversifying and conserving their water supply. Still, regular cuts amid intensifying drought that is depleting reservoirs faster than scientists predicted will make it harder to plan for the future.

Phoenix, the nation's 5th largest city, will lose some of the water it would otherwise store in underground basins as a water savings account, said Cynthia Campbell, the city's water resource management advisor. That happened this year, too. The city will rely more on the in-state Salt and Verde rivers, which boost its Colorado River supplies.

The city's residents will not be affected by cuts next year, Campbell said.

Meanwhile, Nevada recycles the majority of the water used indoors and doesn't use all of its Colorado River water. That means residents will barely feel next year's cuts.

WHO DOES LAKE MEAD SERVE?

Lake Mead supplies water to millions of people in Arizona, California, Nevada and Mexico.

Cuts for 2023 are triggered when predicted water levels fall below a certain threshold — 1,050 feet (320 meters) above sea level.

Additional cuts will be triggered when projected levels sink to 1,045 and 1,025 feet (319 and 312 meters). At a certain point, water levels could drop so low that water can no longer be pumped from the reservoir.

Eventually, some city and industrial water users will be affected.

Lake Powell's levels are also falling and extraordinary steps have been taken to keep water in the reservoir on the Arizona-Utah border.

After the lake fell low enough to threaten the roughly 5 billion kilowatt hours of energy generated each year at the Glen Canyon Dam, federal officials said they would hold back some water to ensure it could still produce energy. The dam produces enough electricity to power between 1 million and 1.5 million homes each year.

Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming get water from tributaries and other reservoirs that feed into Lake Powell. Water from three reservoirs in those states has been drained in recent years to maintain water levels at Lake Powell and protect the electric grid powered by the Glen Canyon Dam.

HOW IS THE RIVER WATER SHARED?

Water stored in Lake Mead and Lake Powell is divvied up through legal agreements among the seven Colorado River basin states, the federal government, Mexico and Native American tribes. The agreements determine how much water each entity gets, when cuts are triggered and the order in which the parties have to sacrifice some of their supply.

Under a 2019 drought contingency plan, Arizona, Nevada, California and Mexico agreed to give up shares of their water to maintain water levels at Lake Mead. This year's cuts are part of that plan — and as a result, they were predicted by states and others.

WHAT WAS LEFT OUT OF TUESDAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT?

Much more significant water cuts. In June, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation told the basin states — Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming — to figure out a plan to use at least

15% less water from the river next year — to prevent reservoir levels from dropping even further.

The deadline to reach that deal has passed and states failed to reach an agreement. Federal officials on Tuesday did not say how much time states will have to reach one.

Texas to execute man for slaying of Dallas real estate agent

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A man who fatally stabbed a real estate agent inside a model home in suburban Dallas faces execution Wednesday evening, more than 16 years after the slaying.

Kosoul Chanthakoummane was on parole when he was condemned for killing 40-year-old Sarah Walker in July 2006. She was found stabbed more than 30 times in the model home in McKinney, about 30 miles (48 km) north of Dallas.

Prosecutors say Chanthakoummane entered the model home and then beat Walker with a wooden plant stand and stabbed her before stealing her Rolex watch and a silver ring, which were never found. DNA evidence showed Chanthakoummane's blood was found in various places inside the model home, including under Walker's fingernails.

Walker had been a top-seller for home builder D.R. Horton. She had been recently divorced and had two children.

Chanthakoummane, 41, the son of immigrants from Laos, has acknowledged he was in the model home but said he only went inside to get a drink of water. He had been on parole in Texas after serving time in North Carolina for aggravated kidnapping and robbery.

"I am innocent," Chanthakoummane said in a letter filed in federal court in March.

His attorneys had asked the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals to stay his execution, challenging the DNA evidence, which was previously described by the appeals court as the "linchpin of the state's case." The appeals court this week denied the request. Eric Allen, one of Chanthakoummane's attorneys, said he hadn't decided if he would file a final appeal with the U.S. Supreme Court.

His attorneys had argued new science raises the possibility Chanthakoummane's DNA could have been transferred to Walker's fingernails without any direct contact between the two.

But authorities say prior DNA testing in his case has failed to clear Chanthakoummane.

"Any belief by Chanthakoummane that further DNA investigation would yield results that will be helpful to his case is a fantasy," lawyers with the Texas Attorney General's Office wrote in court documents last month.

On Monday, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles declined to grant Chanthakoummane either a 120-day reprieve or a commutation of his death sentence to a lesser penalty.

Chanthakoummane's attorneys say their concerns about the DNA evidence is part of a pattern by prosecutors of using faulty evidence in the case.

At Chanthakoummane's trial, a forensic dentist testified the death row inmate was the source of a bite mark on Walker's neck. Such evidence has since been discredited and in 2016, Texas became the first state to call for banning bite mark analysis in criminal cases.

The two witnesses who said they saw Chanthakoummane near the murder scene were hypnotized by officers with the Texas Department of Public Safety, or DPS, to help identify him.

A 2020 report by the Dallas Morning News found most Texas judges still allow evidence derived from hypnosis despite criticism it can distort memories and lead to wrongful convictions. In January 2021, DPS stopped using hypnosis. Last year, Gov. Greg Abbott vetoed a bill that would have banned people who have been hypnotized from testifying in a criminal trial.

In October 2020, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals found that while the bitemark testimony would no longer be admissible in court, Chanthakoummane's attorneys had failed to discredit the hypnosis-related testimony.

The appeals court also found the DNA evidence was still strong.

At his trial, Chanthakoummane's attorney, Keith Gore, told jurors his client was guilty "and he wanted to

rob (Walker), and it didn't go the right way, and he killed her."

Walker's father, Joseph Walker, who died last year, had opposed Chanthakoummane's execution and had told the Times Union in New York in 2013 he had forgiven his daughter's killer.

If Chanthakoummane is executed, he would be the second inmate put to death this year in Texas and the ninth in the U.S.

While Texas has been the nation's busiest capital punishment state, the use of the death penalty in the state has reached near historic lows. Juries have continued to issue fewer death sentences and in the last couple of years most executions have been delayed by the pandemic or by legal questions over what spiritual advisers can do in the death chamber.

Serena Williams loses to Raducanu; US Open next

By MITCH STACY AP Sports Writer

MASON, Ohio (AP) — The second stop on Serena Williams' farewell tour was a short one.

The 40-year-old Williams fell to 0-2 in matches since announcing "the countdown has begun" on her career, losing 6-4, 6-0 to U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu in the Western & Southern Open on Tuesday night.

Williams said last week in a Vogue magazine essay and an Instagram post that her career was winding down, although she did not explicitly say the U.S. Open, which begins Aug. 29 in New York, would be her last tournament.

The Cincinnati event was the second U.S. Open tuneup for Williams, and the next time she takes the court will be at Flushing Meadows. She lost to Belinda Bencic in straight sets last week in Toronto. A day before the announcement, Williams beat Nuria Parrizas-Diaz for her first match win since the 2021 French Open.

Williams is a 23-time Grand Slam champion, most recently in 2017 at the Australian Open, when she was pregnant with daughter Olympia. She said wanting to expand her family was a big reason she plans to step away.

Raducanu, ranked No. 19 in the world, was sharp as she dispatched Williams — and quieted the vocally pro-Williams crowd — in 1 hour, 5 minutes.

"I can't believe I just played Serena Williams," the 19-year-old Raducanu said. "It's something that I think I'm really fortunate to have been able to do, and for our careers to have crossed when there's such a big (age) gap and watching her growing up, it was an amazing experience to just play her."

Williams did not speak to reporters after the match.

Fans cheered heartily when Williams was introduced, and again when she won her first point on a Raducanu error in the second game. Williams yelled in frustration when she double-faulted and screamed even louder and pumped her fist when she won the third game of the first set.

"I just knew how important every single point was because you let up a little bit, yeah, she's going to be all over you," Raducanu said. "She's just such a legend."

Down 2-0 in the first set, she fought back within 4-3 and then 5-4, but Raducanu closed out the set at love. Raducanu rolled from there, with Williams looking frustrated and even resigned near the end.

Williams was sidelined for a year by a torn hamstring suffered last year at Wimbledon, and her late-career injuries have contributed to inconsistency on the court.

The players thrilled the crowd with an exciting rally in the fifth game of the second set, won by Williams with a forehand volley. But she double-faulted on the next point on the way to being broken.

She briskly left the court after the match, waving to the crowd as she exited.

"I think that the crowd was pretty electric," Raducanu said. "The stadium was really packed, and even if they were cheering for Serena ... I was prepared for that."

Raducanu, who faces veteran Victoria Azarenka in Wednesday's second round, has not won a title since her out-of-nowhere triumph at the U.S. Open last year.

In the men's draw, top-ranked Daniil Medvedev of Russia advanced to the third round, beating 24th-ranked Botic van de Zandschlop 6-4, 7-5.

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Medvedev, banned by Wimbledon for his country's invasion of Ukraine, was coming off a second-round loss to Wimbledon finalist Nick Kyrgios last week in Canada.

Kyrgios beat Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 7-5, 6-4 on Tuesday.

Also Tuesday, four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka was eliminated by Shuai Zhang, 6-4, 7-5.

The tournament lost another big name, Coco Gauff, when she retired from her match against qualifier Marie Bouzkova with a left ankle injury. Gauff had her ankle taped after the first set and dropped out after the first game of the second set.

Karolina Pliskova advanced with a 7-5, 6-1 win over Williams' older sister, Venus. Bencic fell to Sorana Cirstea, 6-2, 6-7 (3), 6-4.

Rafael Nadal, sidelined since withdrawing from Wimbledon with an abdominal tear, practiced before a large crowd. The 22-time Grand Slam champion is scheduled to play Borna Corcic on Wednesday.

Explosions rock Crimea in suspected Ukrainian attack

By PAUL BYRNE Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Explosions and fires ripped through an ammunition depot in Russian-occupied Crimea on Tuesday in the second suspected Ukrainian attack on the peninsula in just over a week, forcing the evacuation of more than 3,000 people.

Russia blamed the blasts in the village of Mayskoye on an "act of sabotage," without naming the perpetrators.

Separately, the Russian business newspaper Kommersant quoted residents as saying plumes of black smoke also rose over an air base in Crimea's Gvardeyskoye.

Ukraine stopped short of publicly claiming responsibility for any of the blasts, including those that destroyed nine Russian planes at another Crimean air base last week. Russia seized the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and has used it to launch attacks against Ukraine in the war that began nearly six months ago.

If Ukrainian forces were behind the explosions, that would represent a significant escalation in the war. Such attacks could also indicate that Ukrainian operatives are able to penetrate deeply into Russian-occupied territory.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy alluded to Ukrainian attacks behind enemy lines when he included individuals "who oppose the occupiers in their rear" in a list of people he thanked for supporting the country's war effort.

In a video address Tuesday night, he also warned people not go near Russian military installations and storage sites for ammunition and equipment.

In another reported act of sabotage, Russia's Tass news service quoted the FSB security agency as saying Ukrainian operatives blew up six high-voltage transmission towers earlier this month in Russia's Kursk region, close to Ukraine.

The Kremlin has demanded that Kyiv recognize Crimea as part of Russia as a condition for ending the fighting, while Ukraine has vowed to drive Moscow's forces from the peninsula on the Black Sea.

Videos posted on social media showed thick columns of smoke rising over raging flames in Mayskoye, and a series of explosions could be heard. The Russian Defense Ministry said a power plant, electrical lines, railroad tracks and apartment buildings were damaged.

"We came out to take a look and saw clouds of smoke coming from the cowshed where the military warehouses are," said resident Maksim Moldovskiy. "We stayed there until about 7-8 a.m. Everything was exploding — flashes, fragments, debris falling on us. Then the emergency guys came and said they were evacuating everybody."

Crimea's regional leader, Sergei Aksyonov, said two people were injured and more than 3,000 evacuated from two villages.

"The detonations are rather strong. Ammunition is strewn all over the ground," he said, adding that several homes burned down.

In what may have been retaliation for the attacks in Crimea, Russian warplanes fired missiles at a military

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airfield in Zhytomyr, 87 miles (140 kilometers) west of Kyiv, damaging a runway and vehicles, Ukrainian officials reported.

Crimea is a popular summer destination for Russian tourists, and last week's explosions at Crimea's Saki air base sent sunbathers on beaches fleeing as flames and pillars of smoke rose over the horizon.

Ukrainian officials warned Tuesday that Crimea would not be spared the ravages of war.

Rather than a travel destination, "Crimea occupied by Russians is about warehouse explosions and a high risk of death for invaders and thieves," Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said on Twitter.

Russia blamed last week's explosions on an accidental detonation of munitions, but satellite photos and other evidence — including the dispersed blast sites — pointed to a Ukrainian attack, perhaps with anti-ship missiles, military analysts said.

Britain's Defense Ministry said in an intelligence update that vessels in Russia's Black Sea Fleet are in an "extremely defensive posture" in the waters off Crimea, with ships barely venturing out of sight of the coastline. Russia's flagship Moskva went down in the Black Sea in April, and last month Ukrainian forces retook strategic Snake Island.

The Russian fleet's "limited effectiveness undermines Russia's overall invasion strategy," the British said. "This means Ukraine can divert resources to press Russian ground forces elsewhere."

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu charged that in addition to supplying arms to Ukraine, Western allies have provided detailed intelligence and instructors to help Ukraine operate weapons that can hit deep in occupied territory.

"Western intelligence agencies not only have provided target coordinates for launching strikes, but Western specialists also have overseen the input of those data into weapons systems," Shoigu said.

In other developments:

— A U.N.-chartered ship loaded with Ukrainian grain set out for the hunger-stricken Horn of Africa in the first such relief delivery of the war. The shipment was made possible by an internationally brokered deal to free up grain trapped in Ukrainian ports by the fighting and establish safe corridors through the mined water of the Black Sea.

— U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres plans to travel to Ukraine for a meeting Thursday in the western city of Lviv with Zelenskyy and Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. They are expected to discuss the grain shipments and a possible fact-finding mission to the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which Russia and Ukraine have accused each other of shelling. Guterres will also visit Odesa on Friday. During Guterres' last trip to Ukraine, in April, Russia forces launched an airstrike on Kyiv while he was visiting the capital.

— Samantha Power, head of the U.S. Agency for International Development, said the United States is giving more than \$68 million in additional funding to the U.N. World Food Program "to purchase, move, and store up to 150,000 metric tons of Ukrainian wheat to help respond to the global food crisis."

— Russian shelling killed at least two civilians in the industrial Donbas region in the east and in the city of Kharkiv in the northeast, Ukrainian authorities said.

Biden signs massive climate and health care legislation

By ZEKE MILLER and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden signed Democrats' landmark climate change and health care bill into law on Tuesday, delivering what he has called the "final piece" of his pared-down domestic agenda, as he aims to boost his party's standing with voters less than three months before the midterm elections.

The legislation includes the most substantial federal investment in history to fight climate change — some \$375 billion over the decade — and would cap prescription drug costs at \$2,000 out-of-pocket annually for Medicare recipients. It also would help an estimated 13 million Americans pay for health care insurance by extending subsidies provided during the coronavirus pandemic.

The measure is paid for by new taxes on large companies and stepped-up IRS enforcement of wealthy individuals and entities, with additional funds going to reduce the federal deficit.

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In a triumphant signing event at the White House, Biden pointed to the law as proof that democracy — no matter how long or messy the process — can still deliver for voters in America as he road-tested a line he will likely repeat later this fall ahead of the midterms: “The American people won, and the special interests lost.”

“In this historic moment, Democrats sided with the American people, and every single Republican in the Congress sided with the special interests in this vote,” Biden said, repeatedly seizing on the contrast between his party and the GOP. “Every single one.”

The House on Friday approved the measure on a party-line 220-207 vote. It passed the Senate days earlier with Vice President Kamala Harris breaking a 50-50 tie in that chamber.

“In normal times, getting these bills done would be a huge achievement,” Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said during the White House ceremony. “But to do it now, with only 50 Democratic votes in the Senate, over an intransigent Republican minority, is nothing short of amazing.”

Biden signed the bill into law during a small ceremony in the State Dining Room of the White House, sandwiched between his return from a six-day beachside vacation in South Carolina and his departure for his home in Wilmington, Delaware. He plans to hold a larger “celebration” for the legislation on Sept. 6 once lawmakers return to Washington.

The signing caps a spurt of legislative productivity for Biden and Congress, who in three months have approved legislation on veterans’ benefits, the semiconductor industry and gun checks for young buyers. The president and lawmakers have also responded to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and overwhelmingly supported NATO membership for Sweden and Finland.

With Biden’s approval rating lagging, Democrats are hoping that the string of successes will jump-start their chances of maintaining control in Washington in the November midterms. The 79-year-old president aims to restore his own standing with voters as he contemplates a reelection bid.

The White House announced Monday that it was going to deploy Biden and members of his Cabinet on a “Building a Better America Tour” to promote the recent victories. One of Biden’s trips will be to Ohio, where he’ll view the groundbreaking of a semiconductor plant that will benefit from the recent law to bolster production of such computer chips. He will also stop in Pennsylvania to promote his administration’s plan for safer communities, a visit that had been planned the same day he tested positive for COVID-19 last month.

Biden also plans to hold a Cabinet meeting to discuss how to implement the new climate and health care law.

Republicans say the legislation’s new business taxes will increase prices, worsening the nation’s bout with its highest inflation since 1981. Though Democrats have labeled the measure the Inflation Reduction Act, nonpartisan analysts say it will have a barely perceptible impact on prices.

Senate Minority Whip John Thune, R-S.D., on Tuesday continued those same criticisms, although he acknowledged there would be “benefit” through extensions on tax credits for renewable energy projects like solar and wind.

“I think it’s too much spending, too much taxing, and in my view wrong priorities, and a super-charged, super-sized IRS that is going to be going after a lot of not just high-income taxpayers but a lot of mid-income taxpayers,” said Thune, speaking at a Chamber of Commerce event in Sioux Falls. The administration has disputed that anyone but high earners will face increased tax scrutiny, with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen directing the tax agency to focus solely on businesses and people earning more than \$400,000 per year for the new audits.

The measure is a slimmed-down version of the more ambitious plan to supercharge environment and social programs that Biden and his party unveiled early last year.

Biden’s initial 10-year, \$3.5 trillion proposal also envisioned free prekindergarten, paid family and medical leave, expanded Medicare benefits and eased immigration restrictions. That crashed after centrist Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., said it was too costly, using the leverage every Democrat has in the evenly divided Senate.

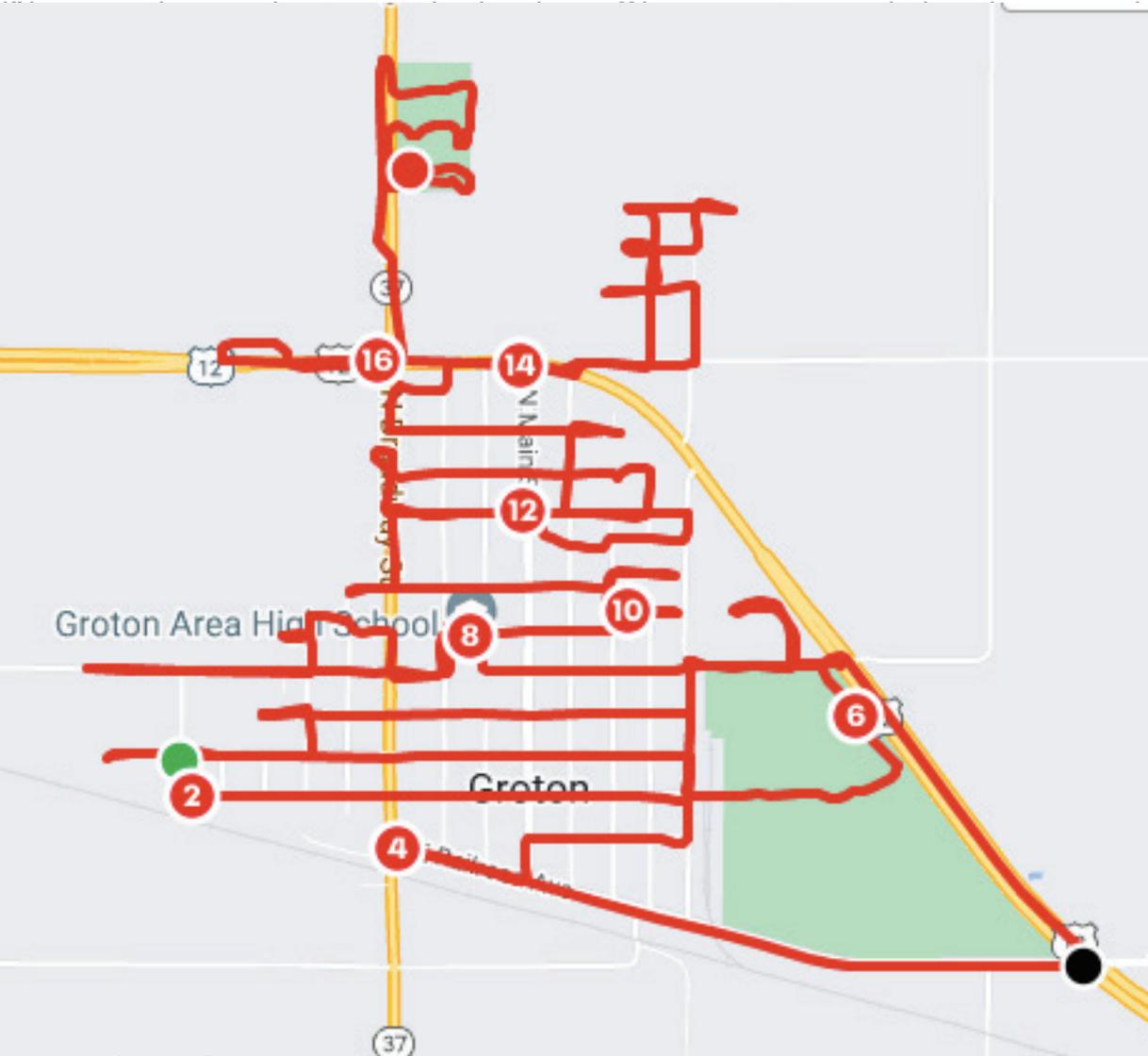
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During the signing event, Biden addressed Manchin, who struck the critical deal with Schumer on the package last month, saying, "I've always been a fan of the White House, Manchin said he has always maintained a "friendly relationship" with Biden and it has "never been personal."

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Before the law, Climate Action Tracker calculated that if every other nation made efforts similar to those of the U.S., it would lead to a world with catastrophic warming of 5.4 to 7.2 degrees (3 to 4 degrees Celsius) above pre-industrial times. Now if the best case scenario, which Hare said is reasonable and likely, U.S. actions, if mimicked, would lead to a world with 2.7 degrees (1.5 degrees Celsius) of warming. If things don't work quite as optimistically as Hare thinks, it would be 5.4 degrees (3 degrees Celsius) of warming, the analysis said.

Even that best case scenario falls short of the overarching internationally accepted goal of limiting warming to 2.7 degrees warming (1.5 degrees Celsius) since pre-industrial times. And the world has already warmed 2 degrees (1.1 degrees Celsius) since the mid-19th century.

Other nations "who we know have been holding back on coming forward with more ambitious policies and targets" are now more likely to take action in a "significant spillover effect globally," Hare said. He said officials from Chile and a few Southeast Asian countries, which he would not name, told him this summer that they were waiting for U.S. action first.

16.73 Miles
South Wind 15-20 mph
5 gallons of Evolve 4x4
Temperature 75 to 80 degrees

And China “won’t say this out loud, but I think will see the U.S. move as something they need to match,” Hare said.

Scientists at the Climate Action Tracker calculated that without any other new climate policies, U.S. carbon dioxide emissions in 2030 will shrink to 26% to 42% below 2005 levels, which is still short of the country’s goal of cutting emissions in half. Analysts at the think tank Rhodium Group calculated pollution cuts of 31% to 44% from the new law.

Other analysts and scientists said the Climate Action Tracker numbers makes sense.

“The contributions from the U.S. to greenhouse gas emissions are huge,” said Princeton University climate scientist Gabriel Vecchi. “So reducing that is definitely going to have a global impact.”

Samantha Gross, director of climate and energy at the Brookings Institution, called the new law a down payment on U.S. emission reductions.

“Now that this is done, the U.S. can celebrate a little, then focus on implementation and what needs to happen next,” Gross said.

Trump’s angry words spur warnings of real violence

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A man armed with an AR-15 dies in a shootout after trying to breach FBI offices in Cincinnati. A Pennsylvania man is arrested after he posts death threats against agents on social media. In cyberspace, calls for armed uprisings and civil war grow stronger.

This could be just the beginning, federal authorities and private extremism monitors warn. A growing number of ardent Donald Trump supporters seem ready to strike back against the FBI or others who they believe go too far in investigating the former president.

Law enforcement officials across the country are warning and being warned about an increase in threats and the potential for violent attacks on federal agents or buildings in the wake of the FBI’s search of Trump’s Mar-a-Lago home.

Experts who study radicalization and online disinformation — such as Trump’s aggressive false claims about a stolen election — note that the recent increase was sparked by a legal search of Trump’s Florida home. What might happen in the event of arrests or indictments?

“When messaging reaches a certain pitch, things start to happen in the real world,” said former New Jersey Attorney General John Farmer, a onetime federal prosecutor who now directs the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. “And when people in positions of power and public trust start to echo extremist rhetoric, it’s even more likely that we’re going to see real-world consequences.”

Amplified by right-wing media, angry claims by Trump and his allies about the search are fanning the flames of his supporters’ distrust of the FBI — though it’s led by a Trump appointee — and the federal government in general. And at least a few of Trump’s supporters now appear to be acting on his anger.

Last week a man wearing body armor and armed with an assault rifle and a nail gun tried to breach the FBI’s Cincinnati office. He was later shot and killed by police after exchanging fire with officers. Authorities say they believe the man had posted dark messages on Truth Social, Trump’s online platform, including one that said federal agents should be killed on sight.

Another man drove his car into a U.S. Capitol barricade Sunday and began firing gunshots into the air before he fatally shot himself.

On Monday, the Department of Justice announced the arrest of a Pennsylvania man who had made repeated threats on the lives of FBI agents on Gab, a platform popular with Trump supporters.

“You’ve declared war on us and now it’s open season on YOU,” he wrote in one post shared by authorities.

A joint intelligence bulletin from the FBI and Homeland Security warns about an increase in violent online threats targeting federal officials and government facilities. Those include “a threat to place a so-called dirty bomb in front of FBI headquarters,” along with calls for “civil war” and “rebellion,” according to a copy of the document obtained by The Associated Press.

Mentions of “civil war” on platforms including Facebook and Twitter increased tenfold in the hours im-

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mediately after last week's search of Mar-a-Lago, according to an analysis by Signal Labs, a firm that analyzes social media content.

Many of the posts contained baseless claims suggesting President Joe Biden ordered the FBI to search Trump's home, or that the FBI planted evidence to incriminate Trump.

"Biden sending the FBI to raid a former President, Mr. Donald Trump's home is a declaration of WAR against him and his supporters," wrote one poster on the Telegram platform.

The intelligence bulletin also noted federal law enforcement officials have identified multiple threats against government officials involved in the Mar-a-Lago search, including calls to kill the magistrate judge who signed the search warrant.

The names and home addresses of FBI agents and other officials have been posted online, along with references to family members who could be additional targets, according to the intelligence documents.

The threats are ominously similar to the online rhetoric that preceded the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, says Rep. Bennie Thompson, a Mississippi Democrat who chairs the House Jan. 6 committee and the Committee on Homeland Security.

"These threats of violence and even civil war – coming predominantly from right-wing extremists online – are not only un-American but are a threat to our democracy and the rule of law," Thompson said.

The search of Trump's residence was executed based on a lawfully obtained warrant signed by a judge. But that's beside the point for Trump and his allies.

"This is an assault on a political opponent at a level never seen before in our Country," Trump wrote Monday in a post on his Truth Social. "Third World!"

Republican Rep. Paul Gosar of Arizona equated the investigation with "tyranny" and tweeted, "We must destroy the FBI."

Another Arizona congressman, Republican Andy Biggs, sought to place some blame on the individual agents who executed the search. "This looked more like something you would see in the former Soviet Union," Biggs said this week. "Why did all those agents willfully go along?"

Republican Sen. John Thune told reporters in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on Tuesday that though the Justice Department has shown it followed legal protocols in obtaining the search warrant, its reticence about the Trump investigation has caused people to question law enforcement's motives.

"There's just a lot of unanswered questions that, left to a vacuum, create lots of suspicions among the American people, and the one thing you don't want is people not trusting law enforcement," Thune said.

Other Republicans have tried to temper the rhetoric, as Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson did during an appearance over the weekend on CNN. "We need to pull back on casting judgment on them," Hutchinson said of the agents. "The FBI is simply carrying out their responsibilities under the law."

But many in the conservative media haven't heeded that advice.

"The raid on Mar-a-Lago was not an act of law enforcement, it was the opposite of that," Tucker Carlson said on his Fox News show Monday night. "It was an attack on the rule of law."

Fox also shared a doctored photo that falsely depicted the judge who signed the warrant receiving a foot massage from Ghislaine Maxwell. Maxwell was sentenced in June to 20 years for helping her boyfriend Jeffrey Epstein abuse underage girls. The original photo was not of the judge but of Epstein, who committed suicide in 2019 while awaiting trial. Fox News' Brian Kilmeade later said the doctored image was shared as a joke.

The roots of Republican anger at the FBI go back to the 2016 election and investigations of the Trump campaign's alleged ties with Russia and of Hillary Clinton's handling of classified material in a private email account. That fury has only increased as new investigations focus on Trump, his efforts to overturn the 2020 election and his handling of classified material since leaving office.

Baseless claims that the FBI secretly framed Trump supporters for their violent actions on Jan. 6 also stoked the ire of conservative social media users.

"Well guys you started this civil war," wrote one poster on Gab "And others are going to sure end it for you."

Wolfgang Petersen, blockbuster filmmaker of 'Das Boot,' dies

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wolfgang Petersen, the German filmmaker whose World War II submarine epic "Das Boot" propelled him into a blockbuster Hollywood career that included the films "In the Line of Fire," "Air Force One" and "The Perfect Storm," has died. He was 81.

Petersen died Friday at his home in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Brentwood after a battle with pancreatic cancer, said representative Michelle Bega.

Petersen, born in the north German port city of Emden, made two features before his 1982 breakthrough, "Das Boot," then the most expensive movie in German film history. The 149-minute film (the original cut ran 210 minutes) chronicled the intense claustrophobia of life aboard a doomed German U-boat during the Battle of the Atlantic, with Jürgen Prochnow as the submarine's commander.

Heralded as an antiwar masterpiece, "Das Boot" was nominated for six Oscars, including for Petersen's direction and his adaptation of Lothar-Günther Buchheim's best-selling 1973 novel.

Petersen, born in 1941, recalled as a child running alongside American ships as they threw down food. In the confusion of postwar Germany, Petersen — who started out in theater before attending Berlin's Film and Television Academy in the late 1960s — gravitated toward Hollywood films with clear clashes of good and evil. John Ford was a major influence.

"In school they never talked about the time of Hitler -- they just blocked it out of their minds and concentrated on rebuilding Germany," Petersen told The Los Angeles Times in 1993. "We kids were looking for more glamorous dreams than rebuilding a destroyed country though, so we were really ready for it when American pop culture came to Germany. We all lived for American movies, and by the time I was 11 I'd decided I wanted to be a filmmaker."

"Das Boot" launched Petersen as a filmmaker in Hollywood, where he became one of the top makers of cataclysmic action adventures in films spanning war (2004's "Troy," with Brad Pitt), pandemic (the 1995 ebolavirus-inspired "Outbreak") and other ocean-set disasters (2000's "The Perfect Storm" and 2006's "Poseidon," a remake of "The Poseidon Adventure," about the capsizing of an ocean liner).

But Petersen's first foray in American moviemaking was child fantasy: the enchanting 1984 film "The NeverEnding Story." Adapted from Michael Ende's novel, "The NeverEnding Story" was about a magical book that transports its young reader into the world of Fantasia, where a dark force known as the Nothing rampages.

Arguably Petersen's finest Hollywood film came almost a decade later in 1993's "In the Line of Fire," starring Clint Eastwood as a Secret Service agent protecting the president of the United States from John Malkovich's assassin. In it, Petersen marshalled his substantial skill in building suspense for a more open-air but just as taut thriller that careened across rooftops and past Washington D.C. monuments.

Seeking a director for the film, Eastwood thought of Petersen, with whom he had chatted a few years earlier at a dinner party given by Arnold Schwarzenegger. Eastwood met with Petersen, checked out his work and gave him the job. "In the Line of Fire" was a major hit, grossing \$177 million worldwide and landing three Oscar nominations.

"You sometimes have seven-year cycles. You look at other directors; they don't have the big successes all the time. Up to 'NeverEnding Story,' my career was one success after another," Petersen told The Associated Press in 1993. "Then I came into the stormy international scene. I needed time to get a feeling for this work -- it's not Germany anymore."

Petersen considered the political thriller — which cast the heroic Eastwood as the tired but devoted defender of a less honorable president — an indictment of Washington.

"When John's character says, 'Nothing they told me was true and there's nothing left worth fighting for,' I think his words will resonate for many people," Petersen told The Los Angeles Times. "The film is rooted in a profound pessimism about what's unfortunately happened to this country in the last 30 years. Look around — the corruption is everywhere, and there's not much to celebrate."

After "Outbreak," with Dustin Hoffman, Rene Russo and Morgan Freeman, Petersen returned to the

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presidency in 1997's "Air Force One." Harrison Ford starred as a president forced into a fight with terrorists who hijack Air Force One.

"Air Force One," with \$315 million in global box office, was a hit, too, but Petersen went for something even bigger in 2000's "The Perfect Storm," the true-life tale of a Massachusetts fishing boat lost at sea. The cast included George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg but its main attraction was a 100-foot computer-generated wave. With a budget of \$120 million, "The Perfect Storm" made \$328.7 million.

For Peterson, who grew up on the northern coast of Germany, the sea long held his fascination.

"The power of water is unbelievable," Petersen said in a 2009 interview. "I was always impressed as a kid how strong it is, all the damage the water could do when it just turned within a couple of hours, and smashed against the shore."

Petersen's followed "The Perfect Storm" with "Troy," a sprawling epic based on Homer's Iliad that found less favor among critics but still made nearly \$500 million worldwide. The big-budget "Poseidon," a high-priced flop for Warner Bros., was Petersen's last Hollywood film. His final film was 2016's "Four Against the Bank" a German film that remade Petersen's own 1976 German TV movie.

Petersen was first married to German actress Ursula Sieg. When they divorced in 1978, he married Maria-Antoinette Borgel, a German script supervisor and assistant director. He's survived by Borgel, son Daniel Petersen and two grandchildren.

What's in big Biden bill? Health, climate goals become law

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden arrived at the White House promising to "build back" America, and legislation he signed Tuesday delivers a slimmer, though not insignificant, version of that once sweeping idea.

Approved by the divided Congress, the bill brings the biggest investment ever in the U.S. to fight climate change. Also in the legislation is a \$2,000 cap on out-of-pocket prescription drug costs for Medicare recipients as well as a new 15% corporate minimum tax to ensure big businesses pay their share.

And billions will be left over to pay down federal deficits.

All told, the Democrats' "Inflation Reduction Act" may not do much to immediately tame inflationary price hikes. But the package, an election year turnaround after loftier versions collapsed, will touch countless American lives and secure longtime party goals.

Democrats alone supported the package, as Republicans lined up against it. Republicans deride the 730-page bill as big government overreach and point particular criticism at its \$80 billion investment in the IRS to hire new employees and go after tax scofflaws.

Voters will be left to sort it out in the November elections, when control of Congress will be decided.

Not as robust as Biden's initial ideas to rebuild America's public infrastructure and family support systems, here's what's in the estimated \$740 billion package — made up of \$440 billion in new spending and \$300 billion toward easing deficits.

LOWER PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Launching a long-sought goal, the bill would allow the Medicare program to negotiate some prescription drug prices with pharmaceutical companies, saving the federal government some \$288 billion over the 10-year budget window.

The result is expected to lower costs for older adults on medications, including a \$2,000 out-of-pocket cap for older adults buying prescriptions from pharmacies.

The revenue raised would also be used to provide free vaccinations for seniors, who now are among the few not guaranteed free access, according to a summary document.

Seniors would also have insulin prices capped at \$35 a month.

HELP PAYING FOR HEALTH INSURANCE

The bill would extend the subsidies provided during the COVID-19 pandemic to help some Americans who buy health insurance on their own.

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Under earlier pandemic relief, the extra help was set to expire this year. But the bill would allow the assistance to keep going for three more years, lowering insurance premiums for some 13 million people who are purchasing their own health care policies through the Affordable Care Act.

BIGGEST U.S. INVESTMENT 'BY FAR' IN CLIMATE CHANGE

The bill would infuse nearly \$375 billion over the decade in climate change-fighting strategies that Democrats believe could put the country on a path to cut greenhouse gas emissions 40% by 2030, and "would represent the single biggest climate investment in U.S. history, by far."

For consumers, that means tax rebates to buy electric vehicles — \$4,000 for used vehicle purchase and up to \$7,500 for new ones, eligible to households with incomes of \$300,000 or less for couples, or single people with income of \$150,000 or less.

Not all electric vehicles will fully qualify for the tax credits, thanks to requirements that component parts be manufactured and assembled in the U.S. And pricier cars costing more than \$55,000 and SUVs and trucks priced above \$80,000 are excluded.

There's also tax breaks for consumers to go green. One is a 10-year consumer tax credit for renewable energy investments in wind and solar.

For businesses, the bill has \$60 billion for a clean energy manufacturing tax credit and \$30 billion for a production tax credit for wind and solar, seen as ways to boost and support the industries that can help curb the country's dependence on fossil fuels.

The bill also gives tax credits for nuclear power and carbon capture technology that oil companies such as Exxon Mobil have invested millions of dollars to advance.

The bill would impose a new fee on excess methane emissions from oil and gas drilling while giving fossil fuel companies access to more leases on federal lands and waters.

A late addition pushed by Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., and other Democrats in Arizona, Nevada and Colorado would designate \$4 billion to combat a mega-drought in the West, including conservation efforts in the Colorado River Basin, which nearly 40 million Americans rely on for drinking water.

HOW TO PAY FOR ALL OF THIS?

One of the biggest revenue-raisers in the bill is a new 15% minimum tax on corporations that earn more than \$1 billion in annual profits.

It's a way to clamp down on some 200 U.S. companies that avoid paying the standard 21% corporate tax rate, including some that end up paying no taxes at all.

The new corporate minimum tax would kick in after the 2022 tax year and raise more than \$258 billion over the decade.

There will also be a new 1% excise tax imposed on stock buybacks, raising some \$74 billion over the decade.

Savings from allowing Medicare's negotiations with the drug companies is expected to bring in \$288 billion over 10 years, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office.

The bill sticks with Biden's original pledge not to raise taxes on families or businesses making less than \$400,000 a year.

Yet money is also raised by boosting the IRS to go after tax cheats. The bill proposes an \$80 billion investment in taxpayer services, enforcement and modernization, which is projected to raise \$203 billion in new revenue — a net gain of \$124 billion over the decade.

Sinema was instrumental in doing away with other tax proposals and shaping the final plan.

EXTRA MONEY TO PAY DOWN DEFICITS

With some \$740 billion in new revenue and around \$440 billion in new investments, the bill promises to put the difference of about \$300 billion toward deficit reduction.

Federal deficits spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic when federal spending soared and tax revenues fell as the nation's economy churned through shutdowns, closed offices and other massive changes.

The nation has seen deficits rise and fall in recent years. But overall federal budgeting is on an unsustainable path, according to the Congressional Budget Office, which recently put out a new report on long-term projections.

WHAT'S LEFT BEHIND?

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The package, nowhere near the sweeping Build Back Better program Biden once envisioned, remains a sizable undertaking and, along with COVID-19 relief and the GOP 2017 tax cuts, is among the more substantial bills from Congress in years.

While Congress did pass and Biden signed into law a \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill for highways, broadband and other investments that was part of the White House's initial vision, the Democrats' other big priorities have slipped away.

Gone, for now, are plans for free pre-kindergarten and community college, as well as the nation's first paid family leave program that would have provided up to \$4,000 a month for births, deaths and other pivotal needs. Also allowed to expire is the enhanced child care credit that was providing \$300 a month during the pandemic.

Kraft Heinz recalling contaminated Capri Sun juice pouches

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

Kraft Heinz is recalling thousands of pouches of Capri Sun in the U.S. after some cleaning solution accidentally mixed with the juice on a production line.

The company said it's recalling about 5,760 cases of Capri Sun Wild Cherry flavored juice blend. The "Best When Used By" date on the packages is June 25, 2023.

Kraft Heinz said the diluted cleaning solution is used on its food processing equipment. The company said it discovered that the solution had accidentally mixed with the juice after getting consumer complaints about the juice's taste.

The recall does not apply to products sold outside of the U.S.

Kraft Heinz, which is co-headquartered in Pittsburgh and Chicago, said in a statement Friday it is working with retailers to remove the product from circulation. Consumers who bought the affected Capri Sun should not consume it and should return it to the store where it was purchased to receive a refund.

Monkeypox can spread to pet dogs, doctors report

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Health officials are warning people who are infected with monkeypox to stay away from household pets, since the animals could be at risk of catching the virus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for months has had the advice in place as monkeypox spreads in the U.S. But it gained new attention after a report from France, published last week in the medical journal Lancet, about an Italian greyhound that caught the virus.

The dog belongs to a couple who said they sleep alongside the animal. The two men were infected with monkeypox after having sex with other partners and wound up with lesions and other symptoms. The greyhound later developed lesions and was diagnosed with the virus.

Monkeypox infections have been detected in rodents and other wild animals, which can spread the virus to humans. But the authors called it the first report of monkeypox infection in a domesticated animal like a dog or cat.

Pets that come in close contact with a symptomatic person should be kept at home and away from other animals and people for 21 days after the most recent contact, the CDC advises.

'Pop Idol' and stage star Darius Campbell Danesh dies at 41

LONDON (AP) — Performer Darius Campbell Danesh, who went from a British reality television show to a stage and music career, has died at the age of 41.

The singer's family said Tuesday that he was found unresponsive in his apartment in Rochester, Minnesota on Aug. 11 and pronounced dead by the local medical examiners' office.

"The local police department have confirmed that there were no signs of intent or suspicious circumstances," the family said. "The cause of his sudden death is unknown at this stage while medical exami-

nations continue.”

Born in Glasgow to a Scottish mother and Iranian father, Campbell Danesh appeared on reality show “Popstars” in 2001, making a splash with his intense interpretation of Britney Spears’ “...Baby One More Time.”

He had more success later the same year on “Pop Idol,” an early Simon Cowell reality-talent show hybrid that aimed to find a new singing star. He came third behind Gareth Gates and Will Young but topped U.K. charts in 2002 with the single “Colourblind,” from his debut album “Dive In.”

Campbell Danesh went on to major roles in musicals, including West End productions of “Chicago” and “Guys and Dolls,” and starred as Rhett Butler in a musical stage adaptation of “Gone With the Wind.” The big-budget show opened in London in April 2008 but closed two months later after poor reviews and ticket sales.

In 2010, he won another reality show, “Popstar to Operastar” and afterward performed in a production of “Carmen” at London’s O2 Arena.

He also made a foray into Hollywood as a co-executive producer on the 2016 horror film “Imperium,” starring Daniel Radcliffe.

Campbell Danesh married actress Natasha Henstridge in California in 2011; they divorced a few years later.

Kenya’s Odinga says he will challenge close election loss

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Opposition figure Raila Odinga said Tuesday that he would challenge the results of Kenya’s close presidential election with “all constitutional and legal options” after Deputy President William Ruto was declared the winner, bringing new uncertainty to East Africa’s most stable democracy.

Now the country faces weeks of disputes and the possibility that the Supreme Court will order another election. Religious and other leaders have pleaded for calm to continue in a nation with a history of deadly post-election violence.

“Let no one take the law into their own hands,” Odinga said to his often-passionate supporters. In Kisumu, a city in his western Kenya stronghold, some residents said they were tired of going into the street and being tear-gassed.

It was Odinga’s first appearance since Kenya’s electoral commission chairman declared Ruto the winner Monday with almost 50.5% of the votes. Four of the seven commissioners abruptly announced that they couldn’t support the results, and Odinga supporters scuffled with the remaining commissioners at the venue where the announcement was made.

Shortly before Odinga spoke, the four commissioners asserted to journalists that the chairman’s final math added up to 100.01% and that the excess votes would have made a “significant difference.” They also said he didn’t give them a chance to discuss the results before making his declaration.

“What we saw yesterday was a travesty and blatant disregard of the constitution,” Odinga said, calling the election results “null and void.”

The president-elect has called the commissioners’ allegations a “sideshow” and said they had no effect on the declaration’s legality. A U.S. Embassy statement on Monday called the declaration “an important milestone in the electoral process.”

The 77-year-old Odinga has pursued the presidency for a quarter-century. His campaign has seven days after Monday’s declaration to file a petition with the Supreme Court, which would then have 14 days to make a ruling.

Odinga is renowned as a fighter and was detained for years in the 1980s over his push for multiparty democracy. He was also a supporter of Kenya’s groundbreaking 2010 constitution.

His claim that the deeply troubled 2007 election was stolen from him led to violence that left more than 1,000 dead. Though he boycotted the 2017 vote, his court challenge led to election reforms.

The electoral commission was widely seen as improving its transparency in this election, practically inviting Kenyans to do the tallying themselves by posting online the more than 46,000 results forms from

around the country.

On Tuesday, the local Elections Observation Group announced that its highly regarded parallel voting tally corroborated the official results in an important check on the process.

But Odinga asserted that the chairman improperly withheld the election results from the rest of the commission until he declared the winner. "The law does not vest in the chairperson the powers of a dictator," he said, and insisted that the commission's decisions must be made by consensus.

There was no immediate statement from the electoral commission or its chairman. A screen at its tallying center that had been showing cumulative presidential election results stopped being updated Saturday and was later turned off.

Odinga's campaign had expected victory after outgoing President Uhuru Kenyatta, in a political twist, backed his former rival Odinga instead of his own deputy president, with whom he fell out years ago. Some Kenyans have noted that Kenyatta appointed the four dissenting commissioners last year.

The 55-year-old president-elect, Ruto, appealed to Kenyans by making the election about economic differences and not the ethnic ones that have long marked the country's politics with sometimes deadly results. He portrayed himself as an outsider from humble beginnings defying the political dynasties of Kenyatta and Odinga, whose fathers were Kenya's first president and vice president.

Still, the turnout in last Tuesday's vote dipped to 65% as Kenyans across the country of 56 million expressed frustration and lack of confidence that the candidates would address the problems of rising prices, high unemployment and widespread corruption. The now-wealthy Ruto himself has denied multiple allegations of land grabs and other graft.

Ruto's past also includes an indictment by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity over his role in the 2007 election violence, though the case was dropped amid allegations of witness intimidation.

As a growing number of African leaders issued statements congratulating Ruto, Kenya's outgoing president remained silent.

Afghanistan marks 1 year since Taliban seizure as woes mount

By RAHIM FAIEZ and EBRAHIM NOROOZI Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Taliban on Monday marked a year since they seized the Afghan capital in 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 victory parades on foot, bicycles and motorcycles in the streets of Kabul. One 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.

The U.N. humanitarian chief for Afghanistan warned that unless donors provide \$2.6 billion very soon the country faces "pure catastrophe" over the coming winter with millions of lives at stake.

Ramiz Alakbarov told a virtual news conference from Kabul that the U.N.'s \$4.4 billion humanitarian appeal for Afghanistan this year has received only about \$1.8 billion, leaving a \$2.6 billion gap in funding for desperately needed food and other aid.

He said around 35 million are living in poverty, and 6.6 million are classified in the emergency level just one step from famine.

Alakbarov said he just visited several hospitals and saw "heartbreaking scenes" of malnourished children who will not survive the winter without additional support.

While the Afghan people are known for their resilience and ability to survive, he said, unfortunately "negative coping strategies" including the selling of organs and the selling of children will be seen again "if support is not provided."

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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 sprung up.

Natalia Kanem, executive director of the U.N.'s sexual and reproductive health agency, said in a statement that Afghan females must not be forgotten.

"As the world faces multiple, overlapping crises, we must not forget the women and girls of Afghanistan. When women's and girls' basic rights are denied, we are all diminished," she said.

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."

During a gathering to mark the anniversary, the Taliban deputy prime minister, Abdul Salam Hanafi, offered congratulations to "the entire nation on the day of the conquest of Kabul, which was the beginning of the complete end of the occupation."

In remarks broadcast live by state radio and TV, he boasted of what he described as "great achievements" under the Taliban, such as an alleged end of corruption, improved security and banned poppy cultivation.

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.

Jill Biden tests positive for COVID-19, has 'mild' symptoms

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

KIAWAH ISLAND, S.C. (AP) — First lady Jill Biden tested positive for COVID-19 and was experiencing "mild symptoms," the White House announced Tuesday. President Joe Biden continues to test negative after recently recovering from the virus but will wear a mask indoors for 10 days as a precaution.

The Bidens have been vacationing in South Carolina since Aug. 10, and the 71-year-old first lady began experiencing symptoms on Monday. Jill Biden, like her husband, has been twice-vaccinated and twice-boosted with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. She has been prescribed the antiviral drug Paxlovid and will isolate at the vacation home for at least five days.

"Close contacts of the First Lady have been notified," her communications director, Elizabeth Alexander, said in a statement "She is currently staying at a private residence in South Carolina and will return home after she receives two consecutive negative COVID tests."

The president tested negative for the virus on Tuesday morning, the White House said, but would be wearing a mask indoors for 10 days. He plans to return to Washington on Tuesday to sign Democrats'

landmark climate change and health care bill in the afternoon, before continuing to his home in Wilmington, Delaware.

He recovered from a rebound case of the virus on Aug. 7.

"Consistent with CDC guidance because he is a close contact of the First Lady, he will mask for 10 days when indoors and in close proximity to others," the White House said. It said it would increase the president's testing cadence and report those results.

Jill Biden will no longer travel to Florida later this week. She previously had announced her participation in events Thursday night and Friday at Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando in support of her Joining Forces initiative for military families.

Ezra Miller seeks treatment for 'mental health issues'

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After a string of arrests and erratic behavior that spanned Hawaii to Vermont, "Flash" actor Ezra Miller said they have begun treatment for "complex mental health issues."

The 29-year-old Miller, who identifies as non-binary, issued a statement late Monday. On Sept. 26, Miller is due to appear for arraignment in Vermont Superior Court after being cited for felony burglary in Stamford, Vermont. Authorities last week said Miller had taken several bottles of alcohol from a residence while the homeowners weren't present.

"Having recently gone through a time of intense crisis, I now understand that I am suffering complex mental health issues and have begun ongoing treatment," Miller said in a statement. "I want to apologize to everyone that I have alarmed and upset with my past behavior. I am committed to doing the necessary work to get back to a healthy, safe and productive stage in my life."

Miller was arrested twice earlier this year in Hawaii, including for disorderly conduct and harassment at a karaoke bar. The second incident was for second-degree assault.

The parents of 18-year-old Tokata Iron Eyes, a Native American activist, earlier this year filed a protection order against Miller, accusing the actor of grooming their child and other inappropriate behavior with her as a minor from the age of 12. Tokata Iron Eyes has disputed that.

Representatives for Miller have not responded to requests for comment on those allegations or previous arrests.

Miller's personal troubles have been a particularly pressing issue for Warner Bros. and DC Films. After appearing in several "Justice League" movies as the Flash, Miller stars in an upcoming standalone film about the speedy superhero due out next summer. Principal photography on "The Flash" was completed last year. David Zaslav, chief executive of Warner Bros. has said that the studio is committed to releasing the film.

Honor or cultural appropriation? Hospital name spurs debate

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — While segregation was still casting its ugly shadow over the U.S., the Homer G. Phillips Hospital was providing top-notch medical care to a predominantly African American part of St. Louis and training some of the world's best Black doctors and nurses.

The 660-bed hospital closed 43 years ago, but the facility named for the man who led the fight to open a first-rate hospital for Black residents in segregated St. Louis is still revered by the city's Black community. So a white developer's decision to call a new three-bed facility the Homer G. Phillips Memorial Hospital has been met by a strong backlash that includes a lawsuit, protests and newspaper editorials decrying what some see as cultural appropriation.

"That smacks of racism to me," said Zenobia Thompson, 78, who trained at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in the 1960s before eventually becoming its head nurse. "We are laser-focused and determined that that name will come down."

Darryl Piggee, a Black attorney who serves on the board of directors for the new hospital that is expected to open next spring, said it was his idea to name it after Phillips — to honor his legacy, not profit from it.

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"I'm from here, OK? So the idea that it was an appropriation isn't true," Piggee said. "I think the board is satisfied we are spreading word of the name of someone people should know about."

The new hospital, which is in a different section of north St. Louis than the old hospital site, is part of developer Paul McKee's NorthSide Regeneration project. Funded in part with nearly \$400 million in tax increment financing, NorthSide seeks to transform a blighted area north of downtown with new housing, commercial projects and job-creating industry.

The hospital is a small but necessary part of the development. Medical care is scarce in north St. Louis, where about three-quarters of residents are Black and the median household income is 40% below the poverty line.

St. Louis' prominent Black newspaper, the St. Louis American, noted in an editorial that it wasn't opposed to the new medical center "but rather the insensitivity shown by the developer toward a community's concern for his appropriation of the name of one of the Black community's most hallowed and esteemed institutions."

In July, Thompson and other nurses who worked at the original Homer G. Phillips Hospital filed suit, claiming trademark infringement. The suit seeks unspecified financial damages and a new name for the center.

Homer G. Phillips was a prominent Black attorney who a century ago led the fight for a new St. Louis hospital for Black residents in what was at the time one of America's most segregated cities.

Passage of a bond issue provided the funding and the new hospital opened in 1937. Phillips didn't live to see the hospital that would bear his name — he was shot to death in 1931 in an attack that remains unsolved.

Dr. Will Ross, a physician who is associate dean for diversity at Washington University School of Medicine and co-author of a book on the legacy of Homer G. Phillips Hospital, said it was the "social, health and economic anchor" of its neighborhood.

Walle Amusa, a longtime Black activist, recalled how the neighborhood around the hospital thrived. Scores of businesses served the nurses, doctors, staff and visitors. Well-manicured brick homes surrounded the hospital.

"It was like a family affair inside that hospital, and it was like a family community outside," recalled Jobyna Foster, 86, a nurse for many years at the hospital.

Thompson agreed. She grew up in the neighborhood and recalled seeing the nurses walking proudly in their white uniforms.

"That's when I decided to be a nurse," she said.

Segregation created the need for the hospital, and many in the Black community say racism spelled its demise.

The two city-run hospitals became desegregated in the 1950s. For the next two decades, Homer G. Phillips remained open and continued to thrive, said Yvonne Jones, 75, who was a nurse there at the time.

Still, by the late 1970s, city leaders decided there was no longer a need for two city-run hospitals and ordered the closure of Homer G. Phillips, allowing the one in the white area of St. Louis to remain open. Amusa was among hundreds of people who formed a human blockade to stop the removal of patients and equipment from Homer G. Phillips, but it didn't work and the hospital closed in 1979, six years before the other city-run hospital shut down.

Today, the massive brown-brick building that housed Homer G. Phillips still stands tall, serving as housing for senior citizens. The area around it has hit hard times. There are few businesses nearby, and many homes are vacant and condemned, with smashed-out windows and caved-in roofs. Crime is common and poverty pervades.

"When the hospital was closed it was like the death knell of the community," Amusa said.

Piggee said the new medical center, and the NorthSide Regeneration project overall, will help revitalize north St. Louis.

NorthSide Regeneration has had its stops and starts since launching a decade-and-a-half ago. Some north St. Louis residents have complained that the hundreds of parcels of land purchased by the developer are nuisances, with few signs of progress. McKee did not respond to messages seeking comment.

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But a new gas station and a grocery store have opened as part of the project. The most notable success was the federal government's decision to build a \$1.75 billion campus for the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency on nearly 100 acres (40 hectares) within NorthSide Regeneration's boundaries, creating thousands of high-paying jobs. It's expected to open in 2025.

The new facility sits a couple blocks from the NGA site. Hospital President Fred Mills sees it as a vital part of McKee's plan for the area.

Mills, who spent decades leading larger hospitals, said Homer G. Phillips Memorial will offer 24-hour emergency room care capable of treating up to 15 patients at a time. The 15,500-square-foot facility includes an MRI imaging machine and amenities such as ports offering easy access to emergency dialysis and a room designed to make sure those with behavioral disorders are kept safe.

The developers have said the plans eventually call for expansion that could include a medical school, housing, a hotel and office space.

"Our dream and the goal is to have a larger facility, but you have to start somewhere," Mills said.

Jones, who is president of the Homer G. Phillips Nurses' Alumni, agreed that the new facility is badly needed. She just wants it called.

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

With much fanfare, ship after ship loaded with grain has sailed from Ukraine after being stuck in the country's Black Sea ports for nearly six months. More quietly, a parallel wartime deal met Moscow's demands to clear the way for its wheat to get to the world, too, boosting an industry vital to Russia's economy that had been ensnared in wider sanctions.

While the U.S. and its European allies work to crush Russia's finances with a web of penalties for invading Ukraine, they have avoided directly sanctioning grains and other goods that feed people worldwide.

Russian and Ukrainian wheat, barley, corn and sunflower oil are important to countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, where millions rely on subsidized bread for survival. As the war spiked food and energy prices, millions of people have been pushed into poverty or closer to the brink of starvation.

Two deals that the U.N. and Turkey brokered last month to unblock food supplies depend on each other: one protects ships exporting Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea and the other assures Russia that its food and fertilizer won't face sanctions, safeguarding one of the pillars of its economy and helping ease concerns from insurers and banks.

The agreement allowed a Western shipper to move two vessels of grain out of Russia in a matter of weeks. It used to take months because Western banks refused to transfer payments to Russia. Although U.S. and European Union sanctions don't directly target Russian agriculture, Western banks have been wary of running afoul, hindering buyers' and shippers' access to Russian grain.

"You have to invest time with the banks to make them understand this whole thing because the authority says, 'Go ahead there's no sanction,' but the banks self-sanction," said Gaurav Srivastava, whose company Harvest Commodities buys, ships and sells grains from the Black Sea region.

He called the process with banks a "labor intensive exercise."

What's changed in recent weeks, Srivastava said, is "the appearance ... of this being sort of a truce between all parties."

The deal mattered to Russia because it's the world's biggest exporter of wheat, accounting for almost a fifth of global shipments, and the country is expected to have one of its best-ever crop seasons this year. Agriculture accounts for around 4% of Russia's gross domestic product, according to the World Bank.

"What is more important is employment," said Russian economist Sergey Aleksashenko, referring to jobs created by agriculture. "It's like 7 to 8% of employment."

Farming provides 5-6 million Russian jobs, with some regions almost entirely dependent on it for their livelihood, he said.

Srivastava, whose company operates from Los Angeles and Geneva, hopes to be able to ship out 10-15 million tons of Russian grain over the coming year.

He also has been able to move out two chartered ships that were stuck at Ukrainian ports since the start of the war on Feb. 24. He said the company is aiming to pick up 1 million tons of grain from Ukraine

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under the four-month-long U.N. deal.

"We are a commercial business, but we are trying to help the plight of farmers in both Russia and Ukraine," Srivastava said. "I'm very optimistic, especially in the last couple of weeks."

Russia's demands for the deal included public statements from the U.S. and EU that sanctions don't target Russian food and fertilizer. It also raised issues around financial transactions to the Russian Agricultural Bank, access for Russian-flagged vessels at ports and ammonia exports needed for fertilizer production.

A week before Russia signed the agreement, the U.S. Treasury Department issued statements with such assurances. It made clear that Washington hadn't imposed sanctions on the sale or transport of agricultural commodities or medicine from Russia.

Treasury also issued a broad license to authorize certain transactions related to agricultural commodities, saying the U.S. "strongly supports efforts by the United Nations to bring both Ukrainian and Russian grain to world markets and to reduce the impact of Russia's unprovoked war on Ukraine on global food supplies and prices."

The EU also reiterated that Russian agriculture hadn't been sanctioned and blamed the global spike in food prices on the war and the Kremlin's agricultural export caps meant to protect its domestic market. The 27-nation bloc said its sanctions provide exceptions, such as allowing EU countries to authorize access to ports for Russian-flagged vessels for trade in agricultural or food products.

Russia says it's still facing challenges.

The country's agriculture ministry says difficulty with the supply of imported farming equipment, which isn't directly sanctioned, also threatens the grain harvest. It said domestic needs would be met, but that exports might be affected.

Even after the deal was signed, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov chided Western assurances that agriculture was exempt from sanctions. During a diplomatic tour of Africa focused on food exports, he said a "half-truth is worse than a lie" while pointing to the chilling effect of sanctions.

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres "committed himself to press the Western countries to lift those restrictions," Lavrov said. "We'll see whether he can succeed."

Meanwhile, Russian and Ukrainian grains are ever more critical to averting hunger in developing countries. S&P Global Commodity Insights said in a June report that 41 million tons of Russian wheat could be available for export this year.

But overall, the world is expected to produce 12.2 million tons less wheat and 19 million tons less corn for the 2022-2023 harvest compared with the previous year, International Grains Council Executive Director Arnaud Petit said. This is in part due to the war in Ukraine and drought in Europe, he said.

While a strong U.S. dollar and inflation may force some countries to ration food imports, Petit noted that some countries are imposing export controls that could impact the availability of grains in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East.

Today in History: August 17, Fulton steamboat on the Hudson

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Aug. 17, the 229th day of 2022. There are 136 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Aug. 17, 1982, the first commercially produced compact discs, a recording of ABBA's "The Visitors," were pressed at a Philips factory near Hanover, West Germany.

On this date:

In 1807, Robert Fulton's North River Steamboat began heading up the Hudson River on its successful round trip between New York and Albany.

In 1863, federal batteries and ships began bombarding Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor during the Civil War, but the Confederates managed to hold on despite several days of pounding.

In 1915, a mob in Cobb County, Georgia, lynched Jewish businessman Leo Frank, 31, whose death sentence for the murder of 13-year-old Mary Phagan had been commuted to life imprisonment. (Frank,

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who'd maintained his innocence, was pardoned by the state of Georgia in 1986.)

In 1945, the George Orwell novel "Animal Farm," an allegorical satire of Soviet Communism, was first published in London by Martin Secker & Warburg.

In 1978, the first successful trans-Atlantic balloon flight ended as Maxie Anderson, Ben Abruzzo and Larry Newman landed their Double Eagle II outside Paris.

In 1987, Rudolf Hess, the last member of Adolf Hitler's inner circle, died at Spandau Prison at age 93, an apparent suicide.

In 1988, Pakistani President Mohammad Zia ul-Haq and U.S. Ambassador Arnold Raphel (RAY'-fehl) were killed in a mysterious plane crash.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton gave grand jury testimony via closed-circuit television from the White House concerning his relationship with Monica Lewinsky; he then delivered a TV address in which he denied previously committing perjury, admitted his relationship with Lewinsky was "wrong," and criticized Kenneth Starr's investigation.

In 1999, more than 17,000 people were killed when a magnitude 7.4 earthquake struck Turkey.

In 2004, at the Athens games, Romania won its second straight Olympic gold medal in women's gymnastics; the United States took silver while Russia won the bronze.

In 2011, Vice President Joe Biden arrived in Beijing to meet with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping.

In 2020, Texas joined New York, New Jersey and California as states with at least 10,000 confirmed coronavirus deaths; about 80 percent of the Texas deaths were reported since June 1, after the state embarked on one of the fastest reopenings in the country.

Ten years ago: In Moscow, a judge sentenced three punk rock-style activists, members of the band Pussy Riot, to two years in prison for hooliganism for briefly taking over a cathedral in a raucous prayer for deliverance from Russian President Vladimir Putin; the court decision drew protests around the world. (One of the three defendants was later released on probation; the other two were released several months short of their two-year sentence in December 2013.)

Five years ago: A van plowed through pedestrians along a packed promenade in the Spanish city of Barcelona, killing 13 people and injuring 120. (A 14th victim died later from injuries.) Another man was stabbed to death in a carjacking that night as the van driver made his getaway, and a woman died early the next day in a vehicle-and-knife attack in a nearby coastal town. (Six suspects in the attack were shot dead by police, two more died when a bomb workshop exploded.)

One year ago: In an effort to reassure world powers and fearful Afghans, the Taliban insisted that they would respect women's rights, forgive those who fought them and ensure that Afghanistan would not become a haven for terrorists. Heavy rain from Tropical Storm Grace forced a temporary halt to rescue and recovery efforts from a devastating weekend earthquake in Haiti. The Jacksonville Jaguars waived Tim Tebow, ending the NFL career of the 2007 Heisman Trophy winner who switched from quarterback to tight end in hopes of making a comeback; he had also spent five years playing baseball in the New York Mets' organization while never making it to the big leagues.

Today's Birthdays: Former Chinese president Jiang Zemin (jahng zuh-MEEN') is 96. Former MLB All-Star Boog Powell is 81. Actor Robert DeNiro is 79. Movie director Martha Coolidge is 76. Rock musician Gary Talley (The Box Tops) is 75. Actor-screenwriter-producer Julian Fellowes is 73. Actor Robert Joy is 71. International Tennis Hall of Famer Guillermo Vilas is 70. Rock singer Kevin Rowland (Dexy's Midnight Runners) is 69. Rock musician Colin Moulding (XTC) is 67. Country singer-songwriter Kevin Welch is 67. Olympic gold medal figure skater Robin Cousins is 65. Singer Belinda Carlisle is 64. Author Jonathan Franzen is 63. Actor Sean Penn is 62. Jazz musician Everette Harp is 61. Rock musician Gilby Clarke is 60. Singer Maria McKee is 58. Rock musician Steve Gorman (The Black Crowes) is 57. Rock musician Jill Cunniff (kuh-NIHF') is 56. Actor David Conrad is 55. Singer Donnie Wahlberg is 53. College Basketball Hall of Famer and retired NBA All-Star Christian Laettner is 53. Rapper Posdnuos (PAHS'-deh-noos) is 53. International Tennis Hall of Famer Jim Courier is 52. Retired MLB All-Star Jorge Posada is 51. TV personality Giuliana Rancic is 48. Actor Bryton James is 36. Actor Brady Corbet (kohr-BAY') is 34. Actor Austin Butler is 31. Actor Taissa Farmiga is 28. Olympic bronze medal figure skater Gracie Gold is 27.